



### TOASTED FLOURS

mixture of at least three types of flours

I fill a frying pan halfway with the flours and let them brown on medium heat, stirring with a wooden spatula until they brown but don't burn. The house smells of roasted nuts. I store the flour in glass jars for no more than a week, and I use it as a base for various baby meals.

### MILK AND CHEESE PAPPA' (PORRIDGE)

I dilute flour in a little milk, rapidly warm it up on the stove, and add abundant grated Parmesan cheese.

### FRUIT PAPPA

1 cup carrots  
1 cup ripe fruit in season  
flour to thicken

The fruit must be peeled, since these days the skin contains more pesticides than vitamins. I blend the fruit with the carrots, which have been scraped and washed. I dilute the flour in the blended mixture, and at times I add a little honey, for sweetness.

### VEGETABLE PAPPA

1 cup carrots  
1 cup raw greens in season

1/2 t. Parmesan cheese  
flour to thicken

I choose the greenest parts, even if hard (one must be careful with spinach because it is bitter, and cabbage because it leaves green stains even on glass). I dilute the flour in the blended mixture, warm it up quickly and flavor it with Parmesan cheese, adding perhaps a drop of olive oil.

#### MEAT FLAVORED PAPPA

2 oz. ground horsemeat  
1/2 t. Parmesan cheese

I cook the meat in a double boiler for half an hour and then squeeze it. For the baby I only use the juice (the meat can be utilized for a meat loaf). I stir the flour into the meat juice, let it cool, and flavor with Parmesan cheese.

Tommaso cried all the time. His clinical chart read: “mournful cry.” Back home from the hospital, he still cried. My experienced girlfriends would tell me: “You’ll see, for the first forty days they all do that, and then they settle down.” Forty days went by, and my girlfriends said: “You’ll see, with the first solid foods . . .”

We didn’t have any money. The baby received presents of beautiful little clothes, but more savvy friends quietly brought us a box or two of powdered milk. I went back to work in desperation, dissatisfied even with the things that used to give me pleasure. My friends who were looking for their first job said: “It’s better for you this way, otherwise you will become too attached to the baby.” Massimo was doing the mothering, not by choice, and I would come home from work weighted down with anxieties and diapers.

The time for the first solid foods came: jars of baby food, vegetable broth, enriched pasta, but Tommaso kept on crying: large bottles of chamomile and linden tea would appease him for a few minutes, then he would start crying again, and would not sleep. He would quiet down during his bath (with the acrobatics of handling heating units, warm bath towels, checking the water tem-

perature with my elbow after the thermometer broke), but once out of the water he would start crying again.

The pediatrician, schooled in Catholicism, diagnosed colic and blamed us for making him eat too much. He suggested that Tommaso's greedy anxiety was a sort of vice to be eradicated as soon as possible with a strict diet, without indulging in pointless compassion so full of risks for the future. For the entire length of the examination Tommaso was screaming and kicking; when I put his clothes back on, he was covered with red patches down to his navel. I was sweating and exhausted.

My experienced friends began to suggest antihistamines, others advised letting him cry "so he would not become spoiled." Everybody talked about the whims of children, little monsters always ready to take advantage of us. We began to feel isolated, taking turns staying up with Tommaso and almost ashamed to admit it: their criticism of over-protectiveness did not help our nights, devastated by too much coffee and by his desperate crying.

By his fourth month, Tommaso had lots of curls and a single white hair, but his very deep blue eyes were always swollen, and he wore a furious expression; he was hardly sleeping at all. At best he slept half an hour, only after hours and hours of rocking and lullabies. Dissent around us was growing.

Part of my capacity to survive depends on the fact that I can count on two or three gods of the hearth, each with its own sphere of action: they don't cast judgments, and in crucial moments they provide guidance and set up action. I can trust them, I can even follow their advice. I still give daily mental thanks to the deity that suggested seeing a homeopathic physician, a solution that until that moment had eluded me.

We faced the prospect with a certain resignation: we had already seen so many doctors, and Tommaso had cried desperately with each white coat.

The homeopath was wearing house slippers and a corduroy jacket. He played with Tommaso, made him laugh, stretched him and checked him without complaints on his part. He proclaimed that the baby was starving; hunger was tugging at his stomach and his heart, he said.

Perplexed, we left the doctor's office with a recipe for toasted, whole wheat flour, a number of fruit and vegetable shakes, and horsemeat. Had we not been so desperate we probably wouldn't have tried this.

In the course of three or four days Tommaso began to be placated; there was no longer need for acrobatic maneuverings of bottle and pacifier to make sure he wouldn't choke on the milk, and he was even sleeping a little longer. A part of his emptiness was filled up.

But he did not stop crying at night with the sorrowful, terrible cry of a child who seemed to have lost something.