

Renata Pompas

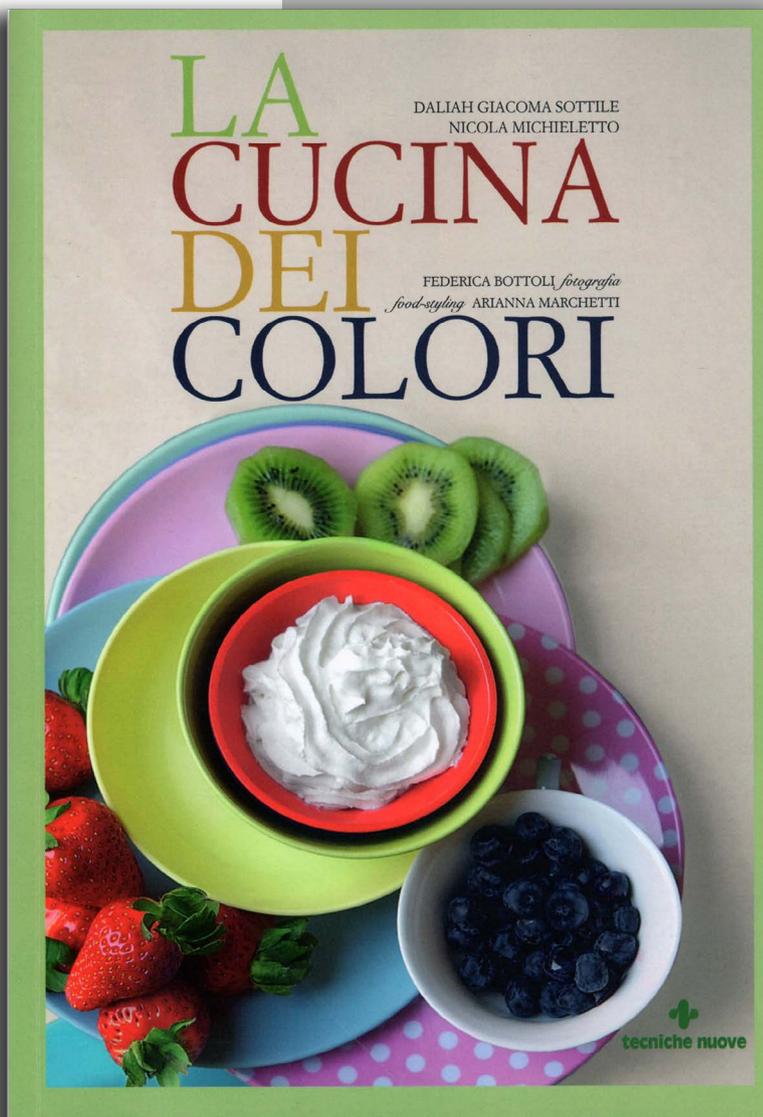
REVIEW

Food, colour and art

While the presence of the five colours (red, green, yellow, white, black) and of the five tastes (bitter, sweet, salty, sour, spicy) in a meal is a sign of a balanced and healthy diet in Eastern cuisine, there is no equivalent tradition in the Western world. However, the general public and many artists too have recently focused more and more on the colours of food.

In 1997, French artist Sophie Calle was inspired by a text by writer Paul Auster for her work known as “Le régime chromatique” (“The Chromatic Diet”), consisting of six photographs of monochromatic meals she ate for six days. Each photo portrayed a monochromatic table setting with food of the same colour, along with the relevant menu caption: Monday orange, Tuesday red, Wednesday White, Thursday green, Friday yellow, and Saturday pink. The seventh photograph depicted all these colourful meals on a black background.

Two recent books categorise food by colour.



La cucina dei colori (“The kitchen of colors”. Tecniche Nuove, Milano, 2011. “The kitchen of colors”)

results from the cooperation of four authors: Daliah Giacoma Sottile for the texts, Nicola Michieletto for the recipes, Federica Bottoli for the photographs, and Arianna Marchetti for food styling. It includes accurate and sophisticated images that form a sort of visual hypertext.

The idea to design a chromatic diet came when Daliah Giacoma Sottile studied the texts of French doctor Jean Valnet, who is considered the father of contemporary phytotherapy and aromatherapy, and the studies on colours by Wolfgang Goethe and Rudolf Steiner.

As she was interested in chromotherapy, Daliah Giacoma Sottile came to believe that food too should follow chromatic rules and designed eighty recipes with chef Nicola Michieletto in order to explore a variety of vegetable ingredients classified into five colours: black, white, yellow, green, and red. These are further divided into bright tones to be used from morning to lunchtime, versus dull tones to be used in the second half of the day. For instance, watermelons, strawberries, tomatoes and peppers are ‘bight red’, whereas beetroots, pomegranates, and beans are ‘dull red’.

Coloribo. Colori da mangiare e Cibo Multisensoriale (“Coloribo. Colors to eat and Multisensory food”. Mario Adda Editore, Bari, 2012)

is the work of artist Bice Perrini, who transformed the natural ingredients of Apulia, her homeland, into colourful sauces to be used to “paint” food with a brush in “multi-sensory food-painting” workshops. ‘Coloribo’ is a combination of the Italian words ‘colore’ (colour) and ‘cibo’ (food). Originally it was the name of a performance by Bice Perrini at the Galleria Bluorg in Bari, it has now become a brand known for its tagline ‘Eating with eyes’, dealing with food production and sale, catering, food tasting, workshops, and art events. Bice Perrini wrote: ‘The inputs of colours, smells, tastes, and sounds are the gateways that allow the universe to come into us and to make us feel precious emotions’ and she invited us to ‘experience food as a work of art’. ‘Coloribo sauces’ are served with bushes and come in seven colours: yellow, green, red, orange, violet, white, and black. The book also suggests some flavours to be used on a specific day of the week: white and blue on Monday to start off, yellow on Tuesday to step up, orange on Wednesday to keep up, violet on Thursday to reflect and go on, green on Friday to be more confident and hopeful, red on Saturday to get ready for action, and pink on Sunday to relax.

This blend of food, colours and art shows Eastern and Western cultural influences.

