

**LEAVES FROM OUR  
TUSCAN  
KITCHEN; OR, HOW  
TO COOK VEGETABLES**

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Leaves from Our Tuscan Kitchen; Or, How to Cook Vegetables by Janet Ross

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**JANET ROSS**

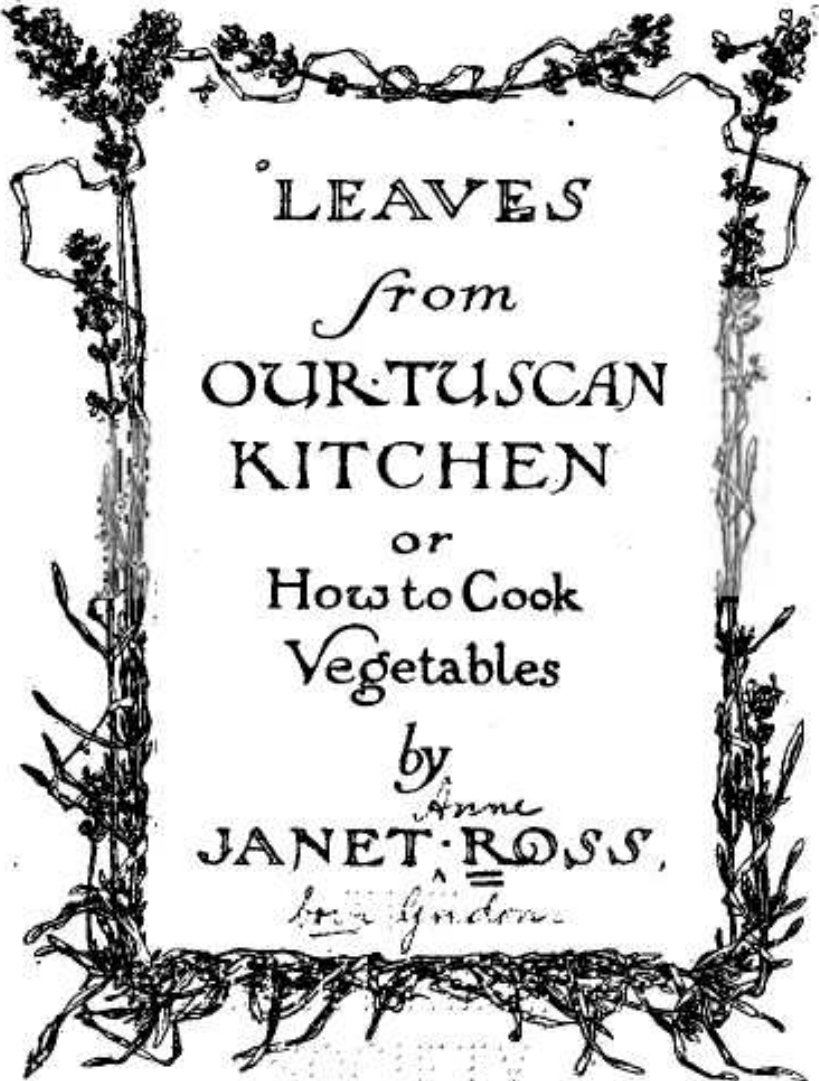
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*LEAVES FROM OUR TUSCAN KITCHEN*

*OR*

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*from*  
OUR TUSCAN  
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How to Cook  
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by  
*Anne*  
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*London*

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*To Mrs. G. F. Watts*

*Dear friend, will you accept this little book? It may  
sometimes bring a thought of Italy into your  
beautiful Surrey home*





## PREFACE

THE innate love of change in man is visible even in the kitchen. Not so very long ago soup was an exception in English houses—almost a luxury. A dish of vegetables—as a dish and not an adjunct to meat—was a still greater rarity; and even now plain-boiled potatoes, peas, cabbages, etc., are the rule. When we read of the dishes, fearfully and wonderfully made, in the old Italian *novelle*, we wonder whence the present Italians got their love of vegetables and macaroni.

Sacchetti tells us that in the fourteenth century a baked goose, stuffed with garlic and quinces, was considered an exquisite dish; and when the gonfalonier of Florence gave a supper to a famous doctor, he put before him the stomach of a calf, boiled partridges, and pickled sardines. Gianfigliuzzi's cook sent up a roasted crane to his master as a delicacy, says

Boccaccio; and a dish of leeks cooked with spices appears as a special dish in the rules of the chapter of San Lorenzo when the canons messed together. Old Laschi, author of that delightful book *L'Osservatore Fiorentino*, moralises on the ancient fashion of cooking in his pleasant rather prosy way: 'It would not seem that the senses should be subjected to fashion; and yet such is the case. The perfumes, once so pleasing, musk, amber, and benzoin, now excite convulsions; sweet wines, such as Pisciancio, Verdea, Montalcino, and others mentioned by Redi in his dithyrambic, are now despised; and instead of the heavy dishes of olden times, light and elegant ones are in vogue. Whoever characterised man as a laughing animal ought rather to have called him a variable and inconstant one.'

The dinner which set all Siena laughing for days, given to a favourite of Pius II. by a Sienese who substituted wild geese for peacocks, after cutting off their beaks and feet, and coloured his jelly with poisonous ingredients, forms the subject of one of Pulci's tales:—

'Meanwhile it was ordered that hands should be washed, and Messer Goro was seated at the

head of the table, and then other courtiers who had accompanied him ; and they ate many tarts of good almond paste as a beginning. Then was brought to Messer Goro the dish on which were the peacocks without beaks, and a fellow was told to carve them. He not being used to such office gave himself vast trouble to pluck them,<sup>1</sup> but did it with so little grace that he filled the room and all the table with feathers, and the eyes, the mouth, the nose, and the ears of Messer Goro, and of them all. They, perceiving that it was from want of knowledge, held their peace, and took a mouthful here and there of other dishes so as not to disturb the order of the feast. But they were always swallowing dry feathers. Falcons and hawks would have been convenient that evening. When this pest had been removed many other roasts were brought, but all most highly seasoned with cumin. Everything would however have been pardoned if at the last an error had not been committed, which out of sheer folly nearly cost Messer Goro and those

<sup>1</sup> Peacocks were skinned, not plucked, before cooking, and the skin with the feathers was put on to the roasted bird, and the tail opened out before placing the dish on the table. The 'fellow' ought to have cut the stitches and drawn off the skin, instead of plucking the feathers.