



Antica Dolceria Bonajuto

The oldest chocolate factory in Sicily. Established in Modica, since 1880.

With over 150 years of activity behind us, **Antica Dolceria Bonajuto is the oldest chocolate factory in Sicily and one of the most ancient in Italy.** We've been **producing chocolate in Modica since 1880** and the cold cocoa processing method used by the Mesoamerican populations, which were brought to Europe by the Spanish Conquistadors, has been changed very little since that day.

"We savour looking to the past" is not an advertising slogan, it's a philosophy that distinguishes our small workshop, where chocolate is still made the ancient way even today. **Pierpaolo Ruta**, the owner of Antica Dolceria Bonajuto, **is the sixth generation of long-standing and prestigious dynasty of chocolatiers and has every intention of preserving his inheritance exactly as it was handed down to him: the exquisiteness of Modica and Sicilian tradition**, which can also be traced to Arabic and Spanish origins. And the key protagonist of our chocolate factory, which is listed among the top 100 companies of Italian excellence by Eurispes, has always been chocolate. The reason for Bonajuto's success? The fact that we have never industrialised the process.

A BRIEF HISTORY

1750 / The Bonajuto's in Modica

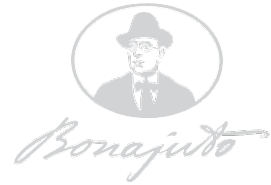
The roots of the Bonajuto family go deep down into the social and cultural fabric of a centre, "small capital" and vital core of a county seen as one of the most important of the Reign of Sicily: Modica, the town **notary Vincenzo Bonajuto** settles down after his marriage with a young local woman. Son of architect Natale Bonajuto, Vincenzo holds different administrative jobs, until he becomes public prosecutor of the County at the court of Palermo.

1820 / Vincenzo dies in Palermo, leaving ten children behind.

The father's premature demise will lead his **son Francesco Ignazio** to invest the capitals of the paternal profession in a series of business activities. Being a skilful businessperson, Francesco Ignazio will add other and safer earning sources to the profitable, but risky business of snow, such as the opening of a scent shop, a sewing shop and a sorbet and ice cream parlour. Besides selling spices of all kinds, cocoa, pickled citrus fruits, "colonial imports" and confectionery, **he also owns a "fattojo del ciccolatte", a place used to produce chocolate, which allows him to control the whole production chain: from cocoa beans to raw paste, up to the finished product.**

1854 / "Fattojo del ciccolatte"

When Francesco passes away, his son Federico inherits the **"chocolate factory including all pertaining orders"**. Federico decides to abandon the most unsafe investments progressively and to rather focus on the activities of chocolatier and ice cream maker: commerce thrives again and Federico can leave a lively and dynamic business in Francesco's hands, his son.



1880 / Gli ideali di un grande uomo

Multifaceted intelligence, ideals and a very fine entrepreneurial intuition feature the character of **Francesco Bonajuto**, who will definitely change the company image and lays solid foundations of what nowadays still represents the **Antica Dolceria Bonajuto**.

In 1880, Francesco inaugurates the company “F. Bonajuto” in Corso Umberto I in Modica, revolutionizing his father’s business.

The scent shop and the sewing shop disappear and make way for a pastry-making laboratory, while the old sales shops turns into an elegant coffee shop that will soon become a reference point of the city life. **Don Ciccio, this is how they used to call him, embodies a new businessperson that is careful towards the challenges of modernity:** he widens the product line, invests in training people, buys advertising spaces on local newspapers, mechanizes some of the production stages of chocolate and refines its production even more.

Thanks to the persisting work of product enhancement, Francesco’s chocolate hits the headlines and achieves the gold medal at the International Agricultural Industry Exposition of Rome (1911).

However, Francesco was not only a dynamic businessperson. Philanthropist and good-hearted, Don Ciccio welcomes and later adopts a girl coming from a very poor family, who will be loved as if she was his own child: **Rosa Roccaro. And thanks to little Rusidda, the fate of the Bonajuto’s will meet the one of the Ruta’s.**

1932 / Going to Bonajuto, or rather the institution of common taste

When Francesco dies, **his wife Carmela Di Martino takes control of the company.** Rosa’s fiancé, who is one of the most efficient and reliable collaborators of Don Ciccio, helps Carmela in this touch stage; his name is Carmelo Ruta.

The company’s artisan character and processing methods are passed down through generations and families, but basically remain the same. Therefore, Carmelo Ruta and his wife Rosa will have the difficult task to guide the company and its ideals through the post war period and the economic boom, characterized by recovery of consumptions, but also by the gradual disappearance of artisanship of the sector.

1992 / The ambassador and the magician

When Carmelo dies, his son Franco and his grandson Pierpaolo take over the management of the Dolceria, and launch a revolutionary process of cultural recovery of old Hyblean recipes, and above all of the cold-processed chocolate, **real gastronomic “fossil” that was doomed to disappear.**



An entrepreneurial bet arose from a “small crazy dream”, a patient work including historical, culinary and scientific research, as well as a careful distribution of achieved results: **Franco Ruta is the first one that triggers the boom of black gold of Modica**, becoming very soon ambassador of Chocolate of Modica and one of the most known faces among gourmets from all over the world.

2016 / Franco Ruta passed away

Franco Ruta passed suddenly on the 21st of February: an immense and irremediable loss for the family, the town of Moidica and his chocolate.

It would be impossible to describe his figure and role in the commercialisation of Modica chocolate the world over and the cultural life of the town and the people he met in just a few words.

Now Pierpaolo has the task of continuing the work they started together in 1992.



BONAJUTO CHOCOLATE

Bonajuto chocolate is processed at very low temperatures, using the original, age-old Aztec method, that never exceeds more than 42° to 45°. This prevents the sugar crystals from melting, giving the chocolate its rough and grainy texture.

Cold processing was the norm in Europe, until the industrial revolution of the nineteenth century led to changes in the production processes, introducing new techniques, like conching and tempering, which altered the taste and consistency.

But in Modica, a County with strong links to the Spanish Crown, the traditional cold processing method managed to survive until the present day, also thanks to an extraordinary concatenation of historical, geographical and cultural factors that have moulded the territory.

As well as having a complex bouquet with hundreds of notes and aromas, cocoa is high in flavonoids, vitamins and active ingredients that have positive health benefits. **Cold processing maintains these qualities intact, creating a product that releases all its volatile substances on the palate, sensations that are normally lost with the modern-day, high-temperature conching process.**

As well as the two historic cinnamon and vanilla varieties, Antica Dolceria Bonajuto currently produces a wide variety of chocolate bars (70%, 80%, 90%), including a 100% cocoa mass chocolate bar and a range of aromatic chocolate bars: orange, lemon, salt, ginger, marjoram, cardamom, white pepper and nutmeg. The sugars used are muscovado and fructose, while the single-origin beans all come from Perù, Venezuela, Madagascar and Tanzania. In June 2018, we introduced the mandarin chocolate bar which, just like the other chocolate bars in the range, is made using dried peel which, thanks to our special processing methods, maintains and conveys all the fragrance and sensations of our island.

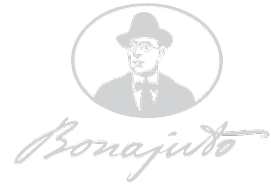
The range has also seen the introduction of pralines, chocolates, liqueur chocolates and other chocolate products. Furthermore, in collaboration with the **Rocca dei Conti brewery, Antica Dolceria Bonajuto now produces Bonajuto Beer that is made with cocoa beans.**

BONAJUTO LAB

While tradition is the pillar of our confectionary, innovation and research are just as important and have always been an integral part of the company's ethos.

Knowing where you come from helps you understand where you want to go and this approach has led to the creation of new and unique Bonajuto products, like jasmine 'absinth', created in 2015 in collaboration with the Malvarosa Nursery, which was inspired by a recipe that doctor Francesco Redi prepared for the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Cosimo III de' Medici.

In this case, Maris' inspiration came from the sea: a White Bonajuto chocolate praline with a Nori seaweed and Bottarga filling, covered in a layer of cocoa mass chocolate. Whereas, the pistachio praline is inspired by the land, with a white chocolate and Sicilian pistachio nut filling, covered with Bonajuto vanilla chocolate.



Taking the same approach as we did for the Jasmin chocolate, in the summer of 2017 we created 'Cicolata', Bonajuto's cold chocolate, a cold version of XICARA (a preparation for making hot chocolate at home). The cold chocolate recipe was created in honour of Michele Marceca and his 'Libro di secreti per fare cose dolce di vario modi' (Book of secrets for preparing sweet things in various ways), which dates back to 1748.

Finally, in spring 2017, after lengthy studies and research, we produced the first ever Bonajuto BEAN TO BAR chocolate bars: Gran Palo Blanco and Nativo Blanco, made with Peruvian cocoa. Then, in early 2018 we launched CHUAO, made from Venezuelan cocoa. That same year we also relaunched the **BONAJUTO FATTOJO BEAN TO BAR**, a new laboratory for the artisanal production of chocolate. A place where the public can see how the 'bean to bar' production process is carried out and where the **BONAJUTO FATTOJO BEAN TO BAR** chocolate bars are made. A production method that uses cocoa grains instead of cocoa mass, as usually occurs in the production of Bonajuto's traditional chocolate bars.

ANTICA DOLCERIA

Chocolate, obviously. Chocolate comes first and foremost. **Antica Dolceria Bonajuto preserves and passes down confectionery recipes from the Modica and Sicilian traditions, many of which are of Arabic and Spanish origin.**

From Coabita, a type of crunchy, sesame seed nougat; the more chewy, toasted nougat bars; **Teste di turco** (Moor's Head) desserts and **Cedrata and Aranciata** (candied slices of citron and orange peel), right the way through to 'Mpagnuccata; an ice cream recipe from the countryside; sugar coated almonds; **Nucatoli almond biscuits**, and other specialties, all our recipes have the flavour of days gone by.

Mpanatigghi biscuits, a typical Modica recipe, deserve a special mention for their unusual chocolate and meat filling. Then there's the ricotta **Cannolo**, which unlike other parts of Sicily, is made from cows' milk ricotta; **Bonajuto Cassata (and Cassatine)**, a version of the traditional Cassata of Palermo, made with Bonajuto Chocolate, and the cinnamon, toasted almond, lemon, chocolate and carob flavoured blancmanges called Geli.



PRESS COVERAGE

Antica Dolceria Bonajuto has received a lot of interest from the national and international press. You can view some of our press reviews at the following address: bonajuto.it/rassegna-stampa/

Below are a few 'cuttings':

- **THE WALL STREET JOURNAL** - "Small chocolatier Uses Old Methods for New Taste" – August, 2002;
- **THE TIMES** - "Six generations of family chocolatiers have been making the bittersweet Modica chocolate, to an ancient Aztec recipe" - Joanne Harris (author of *Chocolat*) - February, 2014;
- **THE INDEPENDENT** - "Antica Dolceria Bonajuto is a delightfully creaky place" - Harriet O'Brien - February, 2013;
- **THE TELEGRAPH** - "You've also got to visit Antica Dolceria Bonajuto, the oldest chocolate shop in Sicily" - Joanne Harris – June, 2014;
- **THE WALL STREET JOURNAL** - "Antica Dolceria Bonajuto, established in 1880, is a destination in itself" – Charlotte Druckman - January, 2017;
- **THE NEW YORK TIMES** – R.W.Apple Jr "...chocolate of astonishingly pure, powerful flavor..." – December, 1999;
- **MAIL TODAY** - "A pilgrim centre for chocoholics" – June 2013;
- **HERALD TRIBUNE** – "Since 1880 the high temple of archetypal chocolate in Modica has been the Antica Dolceria Bonajuto..." - Kate Singleton - June, 1999;
- **AUSTRALIAN GOURMET TRAVELLER** – "Modica, and the town is still full of establishments selling cioccolato di Modica in myriad shapes and forms. Today the best place to go to taste it is Antica Dolceria Bonajuto, founded in 1880" - April, 2017;
- **FINANCIAL TIMES** – "In this way, none of the taste or beneficent nutritional proprieties of the cacao are lost" "Modica and its heavenly sights" – Dan Hofstadter – June, 2009;
- **HIDEAWAY REPORT** – "Antica Dolceria Bonajuto, founded in 1880, is the city's best-known chocolate-maker" September 2011;
- **LA REPUBBLICA newspaper** - "Una cioccolata con Sciascia. La bottega che prendeva gli scrittori per la gola" (Chocolate with Sciascia. The bottega that tempted the palate of writers) - Attilio Bolzoni –February 2014
- **SPECCHIO (LA STAMPA) newspaper** – "Il cioccolato come piaceva ai conquistadores" (The chocolate loved by the Conquistadors) – 2004
- **VOGUE Italy** – "Le più belle uova di Pasqua del 2015" (The most beautiful Easter egg of 2015);
- **VERDE OGGI** (Linea Verde) magazine – "" Qui si produce un cioccolato unico al mondo" (Here they produce the most unique chocolate in the world)
- October 1999 THE GUARDIAN - "Antica Dolceria Bonajuto, a 19th-century chocolate factory in Modica, Sicily, assiduously testing the various flavours on offer" - Kevin Rushby - July 2016
- **FINANCIAL TIMES** - "Family-run Bonajuto has been making chocolate since 1880 and sells antique flavours such as jasmine, cinnamon and vanilla as well as new introductions such as salt and seaweed" - Laura Rysman - JUNE 2017
- **Pasticceria Internazionale magazine** - "...Franco Ruta's merits are countless. It is to him that we owe the salvation and recovery of ancient provincial recipes; it is to him that we owe the studies of the presence of chocolate in Sicily and his conch-free process. It is thanks to him that Modica is once again the centre of interest for numerous visitors and the subject of research books, in-depth studies, and works by authors of every nationality, who have come here to study the many fascinating twists and turns of its gastronomical history. His Antica Dolceria Bonajuto is a small, elitist meeting place for sensitive souls and gourmet enthusiasts, which produces an increasingly vast range due to its ever-increasing fame..."



Over the years, Dolceria Bonajuto has been featured in numerous television broadcasts, including: RAI (TG2, TG3, EAT PARADE RAI 1; MEDITERRANEO, EAT PARADE; LINEA VERDE - UNO MATTINA – LINEA BLU – VERDE MATTINA – LA VITA IN DIRETTA - VIAGGI E SAPORI – GEO&GEO), RAI INTERNATIONAL (SQUISITO), CANALE 5 (MAURIZIO COSTANZO SHOW, Gusto, TG5), RETE 4 (Parola di pollice verde) Fuji Tv Tokio, TV3 Catalunya, Alice, (canale satellitare), NHK Japan; TVB – HONG KONG, **and numerous radio programmes:** RAI, RTL 102.5, Radio 24, BBC4.

MILESTONES

Over the years the Dolceria has been involved in numerous historic food research programmes, particularly with regard to traditional desserts and the history of chocolate in Sicily. The team has also collaborated with many specialist magazines in the confectionery and gastronomy sector.

As well as this, the company has been chosen for various events organised by fashion houses, including **Bulgari, Gianfranco Ferré and Fendi.**

The famous Italian restaurant owner Piero Selvaggio, commissioned Bonajuto to make the dessert for the dinner of the 1997 Brunello presentation, in Montalcino.

In 1997, we received the La penna d'oro (Golden Pen) award for culture in journalism award (previously awarded to the likes of Nando Martellini, Enrico Ameri, Sandro Paternostro, Sergio Zavoli, Bruno Vespa, etc.) for our communication campaigns.

In the year 2000, Bonajuto collaborated with the Florence University on a study about the use of almonds in cooking and desserts.

Over the years, many big international names from the culinary world have collaborated with Bonajuto, including **Gaetano Trovato, Fulvio Pierangelini, Piero Selvaggio, Mark Picone, Ciccio Sultano, Pino Cuttaia, Accursio Craparo and Vincenzo Candiano.**

In partnership with the Contadi Castaldi wine cellar, we carried out an experiment on the pairing of chocolate with their PINODISE wine.

Franco Ruta was the President of the Italian association for pure chocolate and a member of the national CNA food directive.

Dolceria Bonajuto was one of the few Italian chocolate producers to represent Italy in the debate on the quality of chocolate, held in Brussels after the approval of the now renowned laws on vegetable fats.

Various international (US, Australian) cookery schools have organised confectionery making internships at our workshop.

Bonajuto collaborated with the National Library of Florence on the 'Cioccolato Squisita Gentilezza' exhibition.

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In 1911, Bonajuto received the Gran Premio and Medaglia D'oro, at the International Exhibition of Rome, for its work as a chocolate factory.

In 2001, Franco Ruta was knighted by the Order of the Merit of the Italian Republic for his work in raising awareness and appreciation of typical products.

In 2007, a study on Bonajuto was published by the Department of Enterprise, Culture and Society of the Catania University (Università degli Studi di Catania).

In 2008, Bonajuto was listed among the 100 companies of Italian excellence by Eurispes.

In 2009, Antica Dolceria Bonajuto received the "Best in Sicily" award as the best patisserie in Sicily.

In 2009, Bonajuto was included in the RAPPORTO BITLAB report, a project that consists in the mapping of the most acclaimed, Italian historic, artistic, cultural and panoramic destinations and features by the international press.

In 2010, Bonajuto was nominated one of the best 80 chocolatiers in the world, in the 'Chocolate Unwrapped' book by British author Sarah Jane Evans.

In 2010, Bonajuto was featured in 'The Whispered Directory of Craftsmanship' book. Commissioned by Fendi, the volume is an authentic guide on artisanal craftsmanship that can be compared to art and the very best Made in Italy products, from Borsalino hats to Bonajuto chocolate.

In 2011, Bonajuto was included in an exhibition in Turin on the 150 years of history of chocolate in Italy.

In 2018, Antica Dolceria Bonajuto and its Cinnamon and Vanilla chocolate bars were included in FATTO BENE, Italian Everyday Archetypes, a volume published by the Corraini publishing house. The book is an atlas of Italian culture and a journey into the artisanal and industrial history of our country, through 'simple' products that, over the course of the years, have become authentic icons of everyday life.



CULTURAL COMMITMENT

Antica Dolceria Bonajuto's commitment to culture is constant and varied.

Some of these activities include: :

- Small literary editions like "Il biscotto di legno" (Wooden Biscuit), told by the Modica-born author Raffaele Poidomani and 'Voltaire e la cioccolata di Modica' (Voltaire and Modica Chocolate), which tells the story of Leonardo Sciascia's relationship with our chocolate.
- Sponsorship of film festivals, like the Festival Internazionale del Cinema di Frontiera and the Salina Film Festival, photographic exhibitions and cultural tourism events.
- Sponsorship of the "Pasta Amara" documentary (directed by Ivano Fachin) on the last of the travelling chocolatiers of Europe; the "Vasa Vasa" documentary by Alessia Scarso, and the photographic book "Nzuliddu" by Simone Aprile;
- Production and realisation of the 2015 "Vespro. Gelsomini, cioccolatte e diletto" (Vespers. Jasmine, Chocolate and Delight) event in Modica, which saw the participation of Pino Cuttaia, Carmelo Chiaramonte, Accursio Craparo, Marella Ferrera, Birra Tarì and Vivai Malvarosa di Giarre.
- Sponsorship of the annual Acquisition gala dinner to raise funds for the National MAXXI Museum of 21st Century Art in Rome.