



The record for being the oldest cultivated pulse appears to belong, by right, to the lentil. In a well-known incident in the Bible, Esau gave up his birthright to his brother Jacob, in exchange for a dish of steaming lentils.

In the centuries that followed, lentils were very popular and were consumed thanks to their low cost, earning them the title of meat for the poor. The tradition of preparing lentils for New Year's Eve supper to ward off bad luck comes from the ancient custom of giving a gift of a purse full of lentils, with the wish that these would change into doubloons (gold coins). This tradition is centuries old and has remained unchanged in our lands, where the cultivation of lentils has always been organic.

On the hilly land of the valleys, rich in clay, lentils and wheat were cultivated in rotation – one year lentils, one year wheat and the third year was left free for grazing. Then the cycle began again. This system has no interruptions and avoids over-use of the land. In the area, legumes are localized in narrow, plateau areas like Castelluccio di Norcia and also Annifo and Colfiorito, areas in which the climatic conditions result in high quality products. The lentils of Castelluccio are undoubtedly the best-known in this category, with their valuable nutritional and organoleptic characteristics that earned them the European recognition of PGI.

At the end of spring, the appearance of the Piana di Castelluccio plain, with the legendary and mysterious Monti Sibillini mountains in the background, is amazing, thanks to the simultaneous flowering of the meadows and the lentil fields, transforming the valley into an immense rainbow of colours.

The road that leads directly to the heel of Castelluccio passes through the centre of the plain,

where some of the most renowned lentils in Italy and in the world are produced, famous for their delicate flavour and minute size.

Since 1997, the lentils of Castelluccio di Norcia have received the recognition of PGI (Protected Geographical Indication).

Every year about 3000 tons are picked. As well as their size, other characteristics of these lentils are the mixture of three types – green, reddish and grainy – and their tender skin, meaning that they do not need to be soaked prior to cooking.

The lentils of Colfiorito also deserve to be mentioned. They are cultivated in the Colfiorito plateau, at an altitude of 900-1000 metres, in the presence of a fertile lake. This environment results in a product that is particularly nutritional and rich in protein, factors typical of this legume, and also one that is easy to cook, thanks to its particularly thin skin.