

# THE OVEN ROOM



“... two underground olive-presses, of Basilian origin; the oven and the mill in which three Greek tombs were found”.

This is the first testament to the presence of an oven at Cerrate, when Luigi Pappacoda, Bishop of Lecce, made a pastoral visit to the complex. The “Acta decimae visitationis” of 22 May, 1667, provides a detailed description of the Abbey, where – alongside two underground olive-presses and a cereal mill – reference is also made to an old oven. The **production of bread** was the preserve of women: once a month, la fimmena te casa, the matriarch, would make

it at home and then bake it in the ovens. When ready, the dough was placed in cooking pots and pans to give it its final shape, then baked in **stone-and-brick ovens**. Once removed from the oven, the women would pinch the crust to check that it was properly cooked. It is said that the bread, in response, let out a “whisper” as a sign that it was fully baked. The bread was served on the table, offered at banquets, requested for almsgiving, and consecrated and venerated on the altar, accompanied by songs and prayers.

## STAMP FOR EASTER COMMUNION BREAD

During the latest excavations, in a ditch located near the church an extremely rare limestone object was found – the only one of its type so far discovered in Greek-speaking southern Italy. It is a stamp used for the preparation of the **communion bread** distributed to the faithful during the Easter festivities. Thanks to paleographic analysis, it has been dated to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Within a dual polylobate cornice, there is a highly stylised representation of the Anastasis (Resurrection). Preceded by a cross, the text that runs all around the stamp, is a verse from the Easter rite, written in Greek: “Christ is risen from the dead, trampling death with his death and giving his life to those who were in their graves”.



### 1 - MADIA MATTRABBÀNCA TABLE

Kitchen table with folding upper level; when open, it can function as a **bread-bin** (*màttra*). Inside, there is a copper-and-iron rolling pin (*mattaredda*)

### 2 - MATTRA ON STAND

At the edge of the bread-bin (*mattra*) sat a container (*cernatùru*), into which flowed the flour passing through the sieve positioned above.

### 3 - SITÀZZU OR FARNARU

Sieve for flour used to separate the *canigghia* (bran) and impurities from the ground flour.

### 4 - CAPASA AND CAPASÙNE

Receptacles made of terracotta (enamelled internally and only in the upper part, around the wide truncated opening), with no neck but two handles. They were used for the **preservation of foodstuffs** such as friselle, oven-cooked vegetables and dried figs, olives in brine, etc. The capasa has a capacity of 15 kg, while the larger capasùne has a capacity of 20 kg.

### 5 - TUMMENU, MEZZETTU, QUARTUDDU, STUPPIEDDHU

Cylindrical iron receptacles of various sizes, with a central iron bar across the rim; they were used to **measure** the quantity of cereals, vegetables, flour, etc, and constituted the unit of measurement. The tomolo (“*lu tummenu*” or “*lu tumanu*”) corresponded to 55.54 litres. The picciolo (*mezzettu*) was half of the tomolo and so contained around 27 litres. The *quartuddu* was 1/4 of a tomolo and contained 13.88 litres, corresponding to 8.33 kg. The stoppello (*stuppiedbhu*) was 1/8 of the *tomolo*, corresponding to around 6.8 litres (around 4.165 kg).

