

ITALY

Cravé

by Patrizia Galliano



Mombracco (Cuneo). In June 2020 the family move up to higher altitude to look after the goats in the mountain pastures. They stay in a caravan and every day Jessica returns to the village to produce the cheese that she sells at weekends. They eat their meals quickly and for breakfast they often have freshly milked goat's milk.





JESSICA, FROM DANCER TO GOATHERD: A NEW LIFE IN THE MOUNTAINS

“Cravé” is the story of Jessica Cravero, a professional dancer who became a goatherd in the foothills of Monte Viso in Piedmont, where she lives with her husband and five children.

Here, in the heart of the Cottian Alps where the Occitan language is still spoken, Jessica tends to a herd of almost 200 animals. In the Piedmontese dialect *Cravé* means “goatherd”, but it is also the shortened version of Jessica’s surname: Cravero. Her day-to-day life is intimately entwined with nature,

her children and the home. The pace of life is determined by the needs of the animals: milking, grazing and the transhumance to the Alpine pastures.

The photographic project, which began in 2018, intended to illustrate the choice being made by the new generations – and in particular, women – to return to the mountain valleys to take up pastoral work. Such a choice is obviously well thought through beforehand and demands a certain determination: this lifestyle also involves sacrifices and toil. It means not only a return to a simpler life but also a repopulation of the previously abandoned rural foothills.



Mombracco (Cuneo). Jessica's family wear traditional dress as they celebrate the return from the mountain pastures in the autumn.



Barge (Cuneo). Beatrice, Jessica's oldest child, pictured on the day of her first communion. Jessica and her family are Catholic, they don't go to church but they are faithful believers in the religion. Even though this is a special day for the family, work also continues as usual.



Barge (Cuneo). A fruity snack in the summer.



Barge (Cuneo). In May, before the transhumance to the mountains, the goats are put to pasture in the meadows near the family home. Here Jessica leads them outside of the milking shed. Jessica encourages her children to interact with the animals and teaches them about the work she is so passionate about.



Barge (Cuneo). Breakfast in the kitchen (in the home where the family have lived since March 2020). From left, Jessica Cravero holds Matteo in her arms, standing on her right is her husband Claudio Biei, seated at the table is Caterina and Margherita can be seen from behind. Sitting on the right of the picture is Callie, a young American who has come to Italy with the WWOOF (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms) association.



Mombracco (Cuneo). In June 2020 the farm got its permits and could finally proceed with the first transhumance. It takes more than three hours to reach the mountain pastures on foot with the family following behind. Their destination is at an altitude of approximately 1300m.

Mombracco (Cuneo). Claudio, Jessica's husband, leads the herd down from the mountains during the return from the mountain pastures in the autumn.





Barge (Cuneo). Caterina is the second oldest child. Shy and reserved, she is the most sensitive of the girls.



Barge (Cuneo). The room on the farm where the family produce goat's cheese.



Barge (Cuneo). Beatrice does her homework all by herself but sometimes she needs some supervision from mum.



Mombracco (Cuneo). The girls lead the herd into the enclosure during the stop at Certosa di Mombracco (built in around 1248), situated half way between their home and the mountain pastures. A former Trappist convent, Certosa is located at the top of a mountain between the Saluzzese plain and Monte Viso.



Barge (Cuneo). Jessica's alarm goes off at at 5am and then she prepares for the first milking after having seen to the dogs, her precious and tireless helpers.



Barge (Cuneo). Matteo interacts with a newborn kid goat. Family life has adapted to fit in with Jessica's lifestyle and the children play and grow together with the animals.



Mombracco (Cuneo). Jessica, who is seven months pregnant, takes a rest in the mountain pasture.



Barge (Cuneo). Margherita (left) and Beatrice spend some time reading. In the background, sitting at the table, Caterina is doing her homework. The two older sisters began homeschooling in September 2020.

Barge (Cuneo). Goats in the stable. Lively, intelligent and curious, goats also live in wild and semi-desert environments. They can survive on dry herbs, dry leaves and bark and help keep woodlands clear and remove shrubby flora from pastures.





Mombracco (Cuneo). Claudio, Jessica's husband, leads the herd down from the mountains.



Barge (Cuneo). Jessica feeds a baby goat. Spring is the season when the goats give birth. They don't need assistance but, once born, the kids need a lot of care.



Barge (Cuneo). Beatrice, the oldest child, is an experienced shepherd and she also loves reading, devouring books. As is often the case in big families, the older children take care of the little ones. Beatrice has a strong maternal instinct and is determined and conscientious, while retaining the carefree air typical of childhood.



Barge (Cuneo). Margherita and Caterina (in the background) play in their room.



Mombracco (Cuneo). To celebrate 10 years of marriage, Jessica and Claudio renew their wedding vows at a ceremony in Certosa di Mombracco, timing the event to coincide with the climb up to the mountain pasture. Jessica leads the goats on the transhumance while wearing her wedding dress.

