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On the Cover: Visitors to Sicily are awestruck when first seeing the island's kaleidoscopic carretti. Sicilian artisans have been crafting the traditional work carts for centuries, so it's no surprise that their intricate artwork and colors tell so much about the island's culture and history. As NIAF celebrates Sicily as its 2017 Region of Honor, look for more stories about Sicily in this issue and our upcoming Winter issue.

Cover photograph: Shutterstock / Alanstix64

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From the NIAF Co-Chairs

Since our previous issue of Ambassador magazine, we've gone from Spring to Summer, and now Fall is already at our doorstep. Change is in the air. That's certainly true lately at the National Italian American Foundation headquarters.

After six progressive years, the Foundation's young leader, John M. Viola, has announced his resignation as NIAF's President and Chief Operating Officer, effective as of the end of this year.

We always knew John was sort of on loan to us from the exceptional business-world opportunities that await his talents and energy, so it really was just a matter of time. His thoughtful and passionate commitment to his Italian American heritage, culture and values, and to this Foundation, has helped shape our vision of what the Italian American community can be today—and tomorrow. In his time here, he has guided NIAF, as well as the younger generation of Italian Americans and our network of other Italian American organizations nationwide, toward a proactive, promising and bright future.

We will miss John. And, yet, as the premier Italian American organization in the United States, NIAF will continue to preserve and protect our heritage moving forward. True to our mission and purpose, NIAF remains the authoritative voice on issues of importance to Italian Americans in the Nation's Capital, and serves as a resource and thought leader for politicians, policy makers and diplomats.

While our advocacy role has never been more powerful, we are expanding our work in enriching educational opportunities through scholarships and grants for Italian American students and scholars, and in establishing cultural, commercial and strategic connections between the United States and Italy. More than ever, NIAF is actively building a civil society of new leaders who share an affinity and passion for Italian American culture and are willing to take on larger roles as community shareholders, linked by common interests, to ensure through a strong and vibrant network that the Italian American identity survives for future generations.

Meanwhile, please page through this latest issue of Ambassador magazine. You'll find engaging stories about Italian Americans and about Italy, including our 2017 Region of Honor, Sicily, that further connect us to our heritage and culture and instill pride in who we are.

Finally, as NIAF's new Co-chairs, we want to personally invite all of you, from our loyal and longtime supporters to our newest members, to join us for the NIAF's 42nd Anniversary Gala, November 3-4, at the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel in Washington, D.C., to renew old friendships and make new ones, and celebrate our distinguished honorees, embrace our heritage, and strengthen our ties to our families' homeland of Italy. And to offer best wishes and bid farewell to John, knowing his nearly lifelong relationship with NIAF isn't ending, it's just changing.

Patricia De Stacy Harrison NIAF Co-chair

Faliniel a Battieta

Gabriel A. Battista NIAF Co-chair

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in the Italian American Community?

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The NIAF-IALC Working Breakfast Anniversary Gala Weekend in Washington, D.C.



Interested in representing your Italian American community when IALC members and NIAF Leadership gather to strategize implementing community outreach priorities? Join the Working Breakfast on Nov. 4, during the Gala Weekend. Discussion will include these projects:

- **Community Leadership**—Improving life in Italian American communities by encouraging Italian American leadership in community service.
- **Thought Leadership**—Supporting academic initiatives of Italian Americans in all fields that seek to improve quality of life for individuals, families, and society.
- Italian Studies—Supporting academic initiatives of all Americans, no matter their ethnic background, that seek to disseminate Italian and Italian American studies.
- Art & Cultural Preservation—Supporting artists and art forms that preserve and publicize Italian American culture in a positive and historically accurate way.
- Italian Language—Supporting translations, language education, and programming that increase the study and use of the Italian language among Italian Americans and throughout the United States.

To join the IALC and reserve your place at the Gala NIAF-IALC Working Breakfast, please contact Ana Elisa Huser at 202-939-3117 or ahuser@niaf.org.

Reader Feedback



Visit NIAF Headquarters

The Italian Club of Lindenhurst High School would like to thank the National Italian American Foundation for an informative and pleasant visit. We never expected the giftbag full of food and all that information. High School students are always happy with a jar of Nutella.

This trip was designed to introduce new chapters in the students' eyes of the Italian culture. NIAF extended its classroom lessons. Mr. Viola had a super presentation on the generations of Italians and their contributions in America. He brought out a good message about culture. Our club is mixed with many cultures, but students didn't have to be Italian to appreciate it.

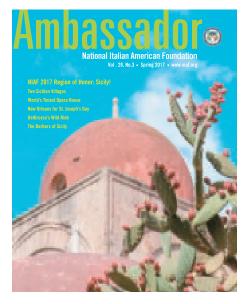
> —John Rossillo Lindenhurst High School Lindenhurst N.Y.

Tale of Two Sicilian Towns

Grazie for Theresa Maggio's splendid and wonderfully literary telling of her experiences in two small Sicilian towns (Spring 2017 Ambassador). She is some excellent writer. The quality of photography matched the excellent narrative and made me wish the story had been more than two Sicilian towns—and twice as long.

> —G. Esposito New York, N.Y.

WWII Enemy Aliens Injustice



On behalf of myself and the millions of Italian survivors, we thank the NIAF for your interest, hard work and support of our two Italian Congressional Bills (H.R. 4146 and H.R. 4147). The 114th Congress did not listen to our claim, so our Bills were not passed. We will try again with our 115th Congress. But, first, our Congressmen must be educated about the mistreatment that 600,000 Italian immigrants, classified as "Enemy Aliens," were forced to endure here in the United States during World War II. Only about three percent of the American public has any knowledge of these injustices. Congress must understand that what we ask for is deserved and long overdue.

— Chet Campanella San Jose, Calif.



Corrections

In the feature "Small Wonder: The World's Tiniest Opera House" in the Spring 2017 Ambassador print editions, an editing error identified the wrong opera house on page 42. The third paragraph should have begun: Every January, we bring our Venice-in-Winter photo workshop groups to Teatro La Fenice to photograph from Napoleon's box.

In the feature "Aglianico: Then & Now" in the Spring 2017 print edition of Ambassador, the caption on the wine cellar photo on page 53 should have read: The cellars at Vigneti del Vulture in Basilicata.

We Want to Know What You're Thinking!

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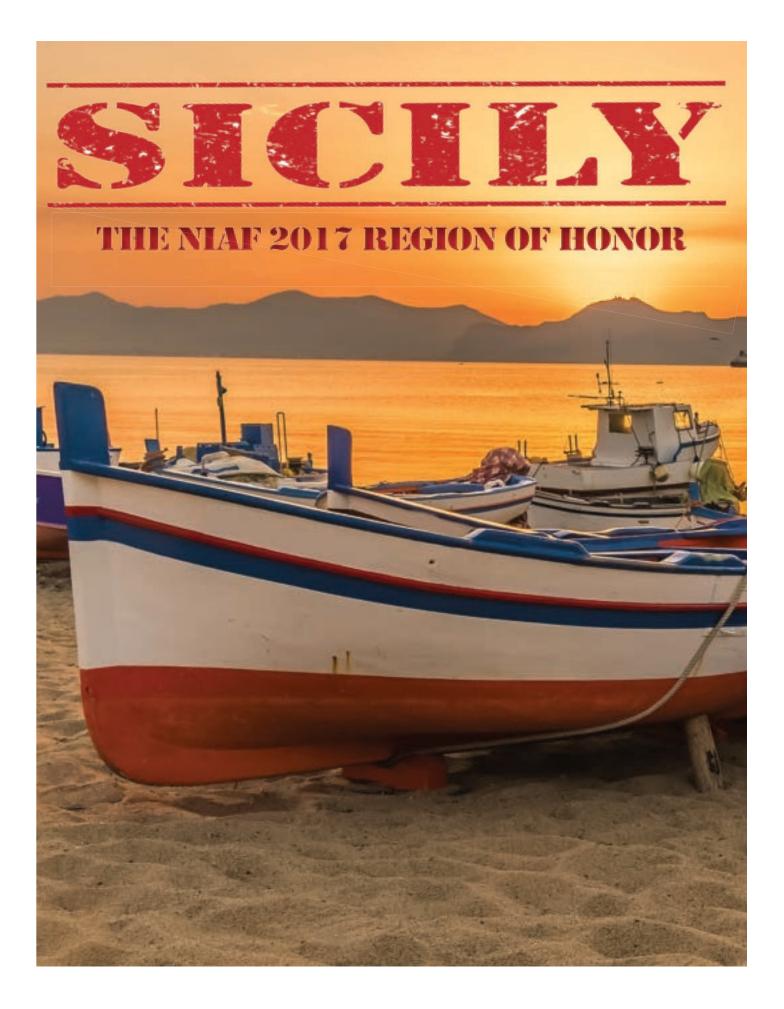
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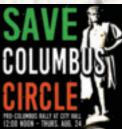
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SAVING CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS



By John M. Viola, NIAF President

As I watched the disturbing events unfold in Charlottesville weeks ago, I knew our Italian American community would soon be called to once again address the controversial issue of Christopher Columbus, his statues around the country, and the day named in his honor. For years, we have faced efforts to remake Columbus Day into Indigenous People's Day, compelling our 25-million-person community to "defend Columbus."

A few days later, Baltimore's Christopher Columbus monument, believed to be the first erected to the Italian explorer in America, was vandalized; then came calls to remove the iconic statue from New York's Columbus Circle, and now we've watched Columbus unceremoniously decapitated in Yonkers, N.Y.

As a 34-year-old Italian American community leader and a student of history and anthropology, I appreciate that even for some of our own, the celebration of Columbus is viewed as belittling the pain of indigenous peoples, but for countless Italian Americans, Columbus, and Columbus Day, represents an opportunity to celebrate our contributions to this country.

For a generation of maligned immigrants often caricatured as subhuman, Columbus was a figure to rally against the prevailing anti-Italianism of the time. Because even before our arrival here, Columbus was a popular and useful focus of national celebrations, a rare figure in early American history free from association with the recently vanguished British Empire. The earliest celebrations made little mention of his Italian origins, focusing on his exploration and the patchwork of ethnicities that made up these United States. In fact, Columbus's earliest critics were the same white supremacists preying on our nation today, who loathed the idea that a non-Anglo Saxon Catholic could be an American icon.

I have never been one to blindly uphold any single figure as the representative of all things Italian American, as all individuals whose legacies belong to the court of public opinion will be flawed, and all monuments represent a snapshot of our national history, now measured against 21st century sensibilities. Some undoubtedly require reevaluation, but that process should not include violence, vandalism and destruction of property. The "tearing down of history" does not change that history. In the wake of the cultural chaos that has ripped us apart over these past few weeks, I wonder if we as a country can't find better ways to utilize our material history to eradicate racism instead of inciting it. In a Wikipedia world, where fact is born of consensus, can't the monuments of the past be re-imagined to mean all things to all people?

There are many monuments to Franklin Roosevelt, and although he allowed Japanese Americans and Italian Americans to be interned during World War II, we as an ethnic group are not demanding his statues be destroyed. Nor are we tearing down tributes to Theodore Roosevelt, who in 1891, after 11 falsely-accused Sicilian Americans were murdered in the largest mass-lynching in American history, wrote that he thought the event "a rather good thing."

Ironically, though a fact conveniently overlooked by contemporary Columbus bashers, it was in reaction to these tragic killings that the early Italian American community in New York scraped together private donations to gift the monument at Columbus Circle to their new city. So, this statue being denigrated as a symbol of European conquest is in fact a testament to love-of-country from a community of immigrants struggling to find acceptance in their new home. Respect for historical monuments should not signify blind acceptance of the values and judgments of past societies; rather, they should be instructive tools in our quest to understand our history and use it to better meet the challenges of the present. If we allow this violent and uncontrolled tearing down of memorials, or turn a blind eye to political expediency in exploiting the mood of sadness and fear that is justifiably gripping the nation in the wake of the events in Charlottesville, then the greater damage will have been destroying what lies at the root of our history and democracy – a vigorous debate on the challenges that face us in our times. In his first inaugural address at the onset of the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln called on Americans to allow a national dialogue led by the "better angels of our nature." I think it is advice we need to consider today.

Each of us must do all we can to encourage reason and sensitivity in this moment of national pain, no matter what size our platform. We at the National Italian American Foundation strongly condemn the defacing of historical monuments and expect elected officials and law enforcement to protect our public memorials from further damage so that a true conversation on their place in modern society can be organized.

We believe Christopher Columbus represents the values of discovery and risk that are at the heart of the American dream, and that it is our job as the community most closely associated with his legacy to be at the forefront of a sensitive and engaging path forward.

NIAF's core commitment is to education, and we are willing to lead a multi-ethnic and nonpartisan commission to develop a platform that can tell Columbus's story from various perspectives, seeking mutual understanding and respect for people of all races and backgrounds.

American ingenuity is built on the continuous reexamination of technology, and today, we have the technology to build interactive monuments out of thoughts and not just of stones. We believe our Foundation, and the Italian Americans community, can lead the effort to reimagine America's monuments in a new light, and tell our story, the American story, in innovative and thoughtful ways. If we can do that, perhaps the legacy we leave will be one that doesn't face any controversy amongst future generations.

Rooted in Place

The 2017 Voyage of Discovery Students Explore Sicily

By Tim Heffernan

ike my mother and aunts and uncles, and many proud Italian Americans, I always perceived the possibility of going to Italy as a mythical, far off "someday." It was something I sought after, but would never have the resources, know-how or language skills to do it in a meaningful way that might lay bare the real country and culture of my family's origins.

Frankly, the idea of traveling to Italy was daunting. While my family zealously continued the Italian traditions passed down, and we bantered about how privileged we are to have Italian blood, and roots in the *Bel Paese*, Italy seemed no more feasible a travel destination than any exotic country you could imagine.

My family had never been to Italy, and I might have done the same had a professor not recommended I apply for the National Italian American Foundation's Ambassador Peter F. Secchia Voyage of Discovery travel scholarship program.

I could not believe it when I learned that I was granted a spot on the trip. My nearest Italian-born relatives were my great grandparents. I had never had the good fortune of knowing them and, because of this, I was acutely aware of how much knowledge of my family's Italian roots had passed with them. And that made me want to make an effort to preserve what we know about these incredible people who bridged my family to Italy—their stories, mannerisms and traditions.

I had undertaken some genealogical work and questioned my relatives at length trying to discover our unique Italian American story. But, faced with the prospect of going to Italy, I suddenly didn't feel particularly Italian. And I feared I would find no sense of belonging in the country that had peaked my personal and academic interest for so long.

At the Sicilian Cart Museum in Aci Sant'Antonio, the students observe one of Sicily's last cart artists, Gaetano Di Guardo, work his magic.



On the final night of the trip, the students meet with NIAF Board members and friends in Palermo. Pictured: Joseph Lonardo (left), Princess Beatrice (center) and Anita Bevacqua McBride (right) with some of the students.

Adding to this growing sense of apprehension as the departure date approached was the fact that I would be traveling for two weeks with a group of 19 other kids I didn't know, who were all probably radically different from me and my friends. So, I was blown away when the trip started and proved all my concerns unfounded.

My weariness from flying through the night evaporated as I looked upon the Sicilian countryside on the bus ride from the airport. I could not believe that I was actually here, and that Sicily was already exceeding my high expectations with its natural beauty and history.

Looking out as we passed the golden fields and oleander, the mix of historical architecture from so many eras, and the beautiful, if sometimes decrepit, old buildings that specked the countryside, I could only gesture in disbelief and exclaim "*Che bella*!" It was something I would variously repeat with no less wonder over the next two weeks.



Matt Picchiello and Joe Calabro enjoy arancini, a typical Sicilian street food, in Palermo.

abriella Mileti

That afternoon, standing on the beach and looking out across the sea to Calabria, with Mount Etna in its smoking majesty dominating the landscape to my back, I felt as though I hadn't the willpower to move my feet, to use the words of NIAF Board member Dr. John Rosa. I was rooted in place! Having spent the entire year prior in classes and in my personal time studying Italian history, language and culture, with an eye for making it a focus of my career, I found myself feeling a deeper connection to the country than I thought possible now that I was actually here.

Even ignoring my own personal affinity for the *Bel Paese*, everything about Italian culture, at least in my experience in Sicily, seemed to draw me in with an inviting, familial warmth—from the pre-dinner *passeggiate* of people of all ages shopping downtown, or enjoying an evening with friends or passersby, to the slow pace of dinner, and, of course, the *aperitivi* and *digestivi* which provide the excuse for easy, lengthy, far-ranging conversations with new and old friends alike. Everywhere we went, Italians listened with saintly patience as we butchered the elegance of their language with our broken, halting efforts.

As to my concerns about my Italian American travel companions, as soon as I cleared airport security and saw most of them congregated around the gate, a huge grin broke across my face, and I never looked back. After a few days, I felt like I'd known them all my life. And our days thereafter were filled with the perfect combination of salient conversation and joking around that characterizes my best memories throughout my life.





In the famous Greek Amphitheater in Taormina!



VOD students Danielle Infantino, Alexa Benear, Lena Ciborowski, Lauren Calderaro and Emily Cooper strike a pose in Modica.

It was astounding to me that 20 geographically disparate people could be so compatible. I'd never had strangers become like old friends so quickly, and the only thing I had in common with most was that we were Italian American.

Yet, around this one unifying factor, I found a group of outstanding individuals with shared values, attitudes and culture. Perhaps the greatest realization I had on this trip was how large a part the values and traditions that our Italian relatives imparted to us can play in shaping our identity. Here we were, a group people from all over the country and from all walks of life, who came together, unified by this one thing, and found ourselves kindred spirits and fast friends.

For these close friends, for my vastly expanded knowledge of Italian culture, and for the invaluable bond I now have with the vibrant Italian American community back home, I have the National Italian American Foundation and Ambassador Secchia to thank. I can never repay the debt I owe them for somehow, impossibly, instilling in me an even greater draw to Italy and penchant for all things Italian. I am already dreaming and scheming about how and when I can get back to the Beautiful Country.

Tim Heffernan is from East Wallingford, Vt., and is an Economics and History major (class of 2019) at the University of Vermont.



KEEPING UP WITH ITALIAN TRADITION, SOME THINGS NEVER CHANGE

Mike's Deli is proud to be a part of the 42nd Anniversary Gala weekend in Washington, DC. celebrating Italian-American culture and achievements. Drop by our booth at the Expo on Saturday, November 4 and say hello. When you're back in the old neighborhood, stop by Mike's Deli for lunch or dinner—where you'll be treated like family. Just minutes away from The Bronx Zoo, The New York Botanical Garden, Fordham University and Yankee Stadium.



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Finding Italy in Las Vegas

Italy's influences in America are everywhere. Whether it's the best Italian restaurants, most popular festivals, or must-visit markets and museums, in NIAF on Location our members provide insider information on special places that make them feel more Italian in their own hometowns. This issue, Angelo Cassaro, NIAF Italian American Leadership Council member, area representative for the National Italian American Foundation, and president of Italian American Club of Southern Nevada, finds Italy in Las Vegas.

What is the most Italian part of your city?

Unfortunately, there are no Italian neighborhoods in Las Vegas. Vegas is only 112 years old. Native Americans occupied the region known as the Wild West. When the railroad first came through Las Vegas in 1905, Mormons and miners established settlements, not Italians.

What are your favorite Italian restaurants?

Our Italian American Club is 56 years old and has been named the "Best Italian Restaurant" for many years. As president of the IAC, I may be partial, but the food, the service and entertainment is great. Otherwise, Vegas has many great Italian restaurants. I enjoy the local family operated restaurants such as The Bootlegger Bistro (the oldest in Vegas), Nora's Italian Cuisine, and The Sicilian Ristorante, to name a few.

Are there any "back in time," authentic, Italian-neighborhood restaurants you love?

The Bootlegger Bistro is owned and operated by the Perry family, four generations. Lorraine Perry Hunt Bono, our former Lt. Governor, took over from her father Al, and mother Maria, who just turned 100, is still part of the operation. It's a place The Rat Pack frequented and still has great food and great live entertainment.

When you need some Italian culture, where do you go?

Vegas isn't big on museums per se, but we do have Opera Las Vegas. The nonprofit organization has performances at the University of Las Vegas (UNLV) campus in the Judy Bailey Theatre or the Artemus Ham Concert Hall. It's most recent performance of Verdi's "Rigoletto" was magnificent.

To cook an authentic Italian meal, where do you go to get those hard to find ingredients in your town?

We have some really good Italian Deli's and restaurants where you can buy fresh bread, imported cheeses, and all the cold cuts, including, *gabagool* (capicola), tripe, *scungilli*, and *sarde* sauce. On the northwest side is Roma Deli ll; mid-town across from UNLV is Cugino's; southwest is Plantone's Italian Market.

How about Italian fashion, shopping culture?

You should have asked my wife about shopping. I do know Vegas has become one of the premier shopping destinations comparing to New York, Paris and Rome. The casinos recognized shopping is equal to or greater than gaming revenue, so we have the best here. All of the Italian-themed resorts, like The Venetian, II Bellagio and Caesar's Palace, have the best Italian designer apparel.

What's the most Italian day of the year in your community?

Vegas used to have a huge Columbus Day Parade in downtown until The Fremont Experience made the street pedestrian-only, closing it off to vehicles. Our club still celebrates a Columbus Day dinner dance and our



Angelo Cassaro presents Distinguished Student Award to Erika Dagri

Saint Joseph Table event is always enjoyed at the club.

Where's the best morning espresso served?

My imported Sacca coffee/espresso machine at home satisfies my morning fix. All our Italian restaurants serve good espresso, maybe with a nice biscotti, or cannoli.

Is there a special monument, museum, or cultural center?

Without an Italian neighborhood, or a Little Italy, I'd have to say the Italian American Club offers the most authentic Italian experience, also known as Vintage Vegas.

People think of Vegas as "Sin City" and just gambling. What would you say the Italians have contributed to Las Vegas?

We have approximately 150,000 Italian Americans living in Las Vegas. Besides the history of the Italian contractors who built today's Las Vegas, some of the greatest entertainers in the world played and lived here. Louie Prima, Mr. Sinatra, Dean Martin and Jimmy Durante, to name a few. I think most importantly, the Las Vegas Italian community in just the past 30 years has contributed and awarded over a million dollars in scholarships to Italian American students to help them achieve their educational goals.

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By Gabriella Mileti





Coastal Italy

Bring images of Sicily into your home with these handmade coasters. The ivory travertine tile recalls the beautiful palazzi of Rome, and the resin images of Sicily transport you to that magical island in the Mediterranean, all while adding a touch of color of your tabletop. Each set of four is made to order by hand in the United States. Sicily Coasters: \$30. www.Esty.com/shop/ReginaGraceDesigns



Striking Oil

The Greeks called it liquid gold and no Italian kitchen is complete without it. Along the hills that gently slope down toward a crystal-clear sea is the ancient Greek colony of Selinunte, Sicily. For centuries, olive groves have been cultivated where the organic farm Case di Latomie lies. The Centonze family, owner of the estate since 1953, has prioritized organic agriculture. Novellara del Belice olives are picked solely by hand and cold pressed within 12 hours resulting in an award-winning, organic, extra virgin olive oil, perfect for finishing your favorite Italian dish. 500 ml bottle: \$38. www.TheTuscanKitchen.com

Thinking Inside this Box

This one-stop wine kit by Cutting Board is handmade by woodworkers using olive wood from Southern Italy. The upper velvet lined lid includes five premium wine accessories with olive-wood accents: a metal wine pourer, a cork screw opener with folding knife, a wooden-ball bottle stopper, a drip ring with velvet cloth, and a foil cutter. The five-piece kit is just the right size for a bottle of your favorite vino! Wine Box: \$99.95. www.CuttingBoard.com

Breathe, Taste

Zafferano designer Federico de Majo knows a thing or two about glass design. Growing up, he learned hand-blowing glass techniques and artistic glass production in his family business on the Venetian island of Murano. The patented ripples at the bottom of the wine glass not only add a touch of style but are functional, facilitating swirling, oxygenation, and the entire wine-tasting process right up when wine glass touches lips, and wine the palate. Cin, cin! Nuove Esperienze Pinot Noir Glass Set of six by Zafferano: \$81. www.YLiving.com



Reminder of What's Possible

David Reiss founded Match in 1995, when he discovered the possibilities of this rich, warm material while traveling through Italy. There, he found family-owned workshops that had been producing pewter for generations. Decorate your desk with this handcrafted Italian pewter box with the Italian phrase *"Tutto e'*

Possibile" etched into the lid, and "Anything is Possible" inscription on inner lid. Available in two sizes. Starting at \$120. www.Match1995.com

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Patriotic Percolator

Fratelli d'Italia never sounded better in this patriotic Bialetti moka pot. Featuring the official logo of the Italian federation of soccer, this stovetop coffee maker plays the Italian national anthem when your coffee is ready. It's a fun twist on an Italian kitchen icon. Moka Melody Italia: \$59.99. www.Bialetti.com



Do you know of a fantastic new product or design made in Italy or of interest to Italian **Americans? Contact** bottega@niaf.org.



Chilling out

Viva Terra literally means "living earth" and this company is inspired by a dedication to creating harmony with nature, and blending eco-conscious design with a modern twist. Style your backyard with this reclaimed oak wine barrel beverage chiller. Wine Barrel Chiller: \$398. www.VivaTerra.com

Sicilian Cooking 101

From the best-selling author and talented chef Giorgio Locatelli comes an authentic cookbook on Sicilian cuisine. This beautiful cookbook is full of not only Sicilian

recipes, but most importantly the

stories and history behind them. Mapping a culinary landscape marked by the influences of Arab, Spanish and Greek colonists, the recipes in "Made in Sicily" showcase the island's diverse culinary heritage and embody the Sicilian ethos of quality ingredients over pretentiousness or fuss in which "what grows together goes together." Hardback: \$24. www.Amazon.com

A Pisa Cake!

Send your love with this quirky, play-on-words, blank greeting card. For anyone who considers cats and dogs essential to a quality life, Pam Braun's designs will satisfy expressions of love, celebration and the sporting life in a variety of styles. Box of 10 cards/ and 11 envelopes: \$19. www.CiaoBellaStudio.com



Next time you're lying on your couch, daydreaming of la bella Italia, lay your head on this colorful pillow celebrating the beauty of Italy and its rich culture. Hand-embroidered with 100-percent organic cotton and accented with black velvet piping. 20-inch-by-20-inch pillow: \$168. www.CatStudio.com J



Interstellar Dreaming

Mike Massimino is a native of Franklin Square, N.Y., who knows about climbing the corporate ladder to stellar heights—in his case, 350 miles above the Earth as a mission-specialist astronaut for NASA from 1996 to 2014.

His first two spacewalks were in 2002 aboard space



shuttle STS-109 Columbia, and two additional spacewalks in 2009 on space shuttle STS-125 Atlantis. All four were for upgrading and repairing the Hubble Space Telescope. During the '09 mission, Massimino went into history books as the last human to work inside st person to tweet from space

Hubble and the first person to tweet from space.

Massimino is now on terra firma as a professor of engineering at Columbia University. With a bachelor's degree from Columbia University, two master's degrees and a doctorate in mechanical engineering from MIT, plus a NASA career, he's the epitome of tenacity—accepted for the astronaut program on his fourth attempt.

Bolstered by his Sicilian heritage and never-quit attitude, he remembers a lesson from his mom and dad: "Try to be a good person, work hard, and do something in the service of others."

Education, hard work and resilience are "the right stuff" found in Massimino's book, "Spaceman: An Astronaut's Unlikely Journey to Unlock the Secrets of the Universe." The book, published in 2016, instills his message of determination. Massimino believes "pursuing your dream" is a goal that can inspire all people. Visit his website at www.mikemassimino.com.

— Robert Fanelli Bartus Jr.



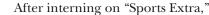
Off Field Behind Camera

Fifty-five-year-old Fred Gaudelli recalls listening to the Metropolitan Opera broadcasts sponsored by Texaco when he was little. "I went to my grandfather's home on Saturday afternoons," he says. "He used to make wine in the cellar, and occasionally, he'd let me attend to the siphon."

All four of Gaudelli's grandparents were born in Italy, and they introduced Italian culture to him. "The Sunday dinners, the emphasis on family, being Italian is a great way to live," he says.

But Gaudelli's passion eventually was sports. He played for a UNICO baseball team in Harrison, N.Y., but when he was 13, he says, "I knew I wasn't going to be a professional athlete."

So, he announced games in college. "I didn't have a broadcaster's voice like Al Michaels or Marv Albert," explains Gaudelli, who, as the executive producer of NBC's Sunday Night Football and Thursday Night Football, now works with Michaels.



which aired on WNEW-TV Channel 5, Gaudelli realized his calling was working behind the scenes. Stints with ESPN and ABC followed.

Now, the 20-time Emmy Award-winner's Sunday Night Football is on pace to be television's number one primetime show for a record sixth consecutive year. And guess who's in charge—a smart kid who knew his future was behind the cameras instead of in front of them.

— Douglas J. Gladstone

Ambassador's Paesani department profiles in short form the lives of Italian Americans, Italians and others doing extraordinary things of interest to Italian Americans. Know someone who should be in Paesani? Send suggestions to paesani@niaf.org.





Watery Reality

Marine biologist, scientist and Verona native Maddalena Bearzi developed a love for nature when she was a young child spending summers with her family on a secluded beach in Sardinia.

"It was along this beautiful and untouched shore that I started exploring the creatures of the sea snorkeling with my

dad and brother. And it was here that my true passion for nature began," says Bearzi.

With a doctorate in biology from UCLA in 2003, Bearzi's life is immersed in the oceanic world. She's president of the Ocean Conservation Society, which she co-founded in 1998 with headquarters in Marina del Rey, Calif. The Society's mission is to provide research and conservation data about whales,

dolphins, sea lions and other marine life to academic and environmental organizations, and all people.

Aboard the Society's research vessel, Bearzi works with volunteers and fellow researchers off Southern California's coast gathering critical information about the migration and health of ocean mammals. She hopes this research will have an "active impact" on present and future conservation efforts. As an author and speaker, she emphasizes the need to protect and preserve sea life.

Bearzi recalls what her parents taught her about living life: "Be passionate and curious about the world...push myself and work hard to reach my goals, and be an independent thinker." Visit her website: www.oceanconservation.org

- Robert Fanelli Bartus Jr.



Power of Pasta

When fire ravaged California's award-winning Italian White House Restaurant in Anaheim last February, chef and owner Bruno Serato received a consoling phone call from Sophia Loren. It was like a "hug through the phone," admits Serato.

Meanwhile, Serato wouldn't let the blaze destroy his giving spirit. His philanthropic endeavor of feeding hungry children is still dishing out the pasta. "When things go bad, you have to stand up and keep going," he says.

Serato started working in his family's Veronese trattoria at age 14. In 1980, the 24-year-old future chef arrived in America and labored his way up the restaurant food chain. He eventually went on to purchase the White House restaurant in 1987.

In 2005, Serato's mother, Caterina, was visiting from Verona. On a tour at the Boys & Girls Club of Anaheim, where Serato is a board member, they noticed a child eating potato chips for a meal. Caterina asked her son to go to his restaurant and cook pasta for the children. That same year, the nonprofit Caterina's Club was established. Since 2005, the charity has served more than 1.5 million free dinners to children in Southern California.

With 100 percent of the profits from Serato's autobiography (to be published in October) going to Caterina's Club, his book is aptly titled, "The Power of Pasta: A Celebrity Chef's Mission to Feed America's Hungry Children." Website: www.anaheimwhitehouse.com — Robert Fanelli Bartus Jr.







To Bee or Not to Bee

When Hunter College Professor Alba Amoia retired to the tiny town of Torrice, in Italy, she expected that her buzzing research career would end.

One summer evening, however, an encounter with a beehive lodged in her living room window upended those plans. To remove the threatening bees, Amoia called on Dr. Francesco Patrizi, the president of the Beekeepers' Association of Lazio, and neighbor who works throughout the region harvesting honey from his own hives.

When Patrizi mentioned his hypothesis that the chemical compounds of propolis—a resinous substance bees



use to caulk their hives could be isolated to cure Lazio's olive trees infected by invasive species without using pesticides, Amoia's interest was piqued. The duo subsequently became fast friends, and have now joined forces in a new scientific venture.

Amoia is the principal philanthropist behind Società Aurora, a bio-dynamic research laboratory that she, along with Patrizi (right) and biologist Mauro Iannucci (left), will soon inaugurate in nearby Ripi. Harnessing the resources of farmers and beekeepers in the region, the team is busy conducting studies on how organic tinctures made from propolis affect the diseased groves.

Amoia reports, "Our preliminary research reveals the promise of local, all-natural responses to ecological crises at a time when large multinationals are trying to dictate the future of agriculture in Italy."

-Zach LaRock

Cruising the Amalfi Coast

Sharing the beauty of the Amalfi Coast is personal for Valeria Carrano. Growing up near New Haven, Conn., Carrano's great grandmother regaled the family with tales of her hometown Amalfi.

Family ties back to Italy remained strong and were passed down to Carrano's father who brought her to Italy when she was 18. That's when Carrano's love affair with the Amalfi Coast truly began. After that trip, she returned to the Amalfi Coast every summer, falling a little more in love each time.

After college and working in the hustle and bustle of New York City, the hectic pace of city life had taken its toll. "My cousins had been telling me for years to just come

and stay on the Amalfi Coast, so in 2011, I finally took their advice and booked a one-way ticket," she says.

Fast forward six years and she now runs Exclusive Cruises—the fastest



growing luxury boat charter company on the Amalfi Coast—with her Italian husband Francesco, who she met after moving to the Amalfi Coast.

"I'm incredibly grateful my family maintained such a strong bond with our Italian heritage, which eventually led me back," she says. "When I can share my love and deep connection to the Amalfi Coast with our clients as they experience this beautiful area on a boat excursion, it feels like I've come full circle."

See more at www.exclusivecruisescapri.com. —*Laura Thayer*

NIAF's Persons of Interest

Artisan foods made in Italy!



The Product:

Here at Cibo Italia we specialize in Italian deli meats and Prosciutto Italiano is one of many we import direct from Italy. Prosciutto Italiano is An Italian made prosciutto that rivals in quality the famous DOP brands that are made in Italy but with a much better value. It's a gluten free, all natural product packed with good protein! Made with no artificial ingredients; it's just top quality pork meat, Mediterranean Sea Salt and fresh Italian air. As a major US importer of Prosciutto Italiano we carry whole form that is perfect for deli and also pre-sliced packages, convenient for all types of retail markets.

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Prosciutto products are trending upwards and appearing more and more at the dinner table, as snacks and in parties all over the world. Prosciutto Italiano has endless cooking options and the market availability is growing and growing. Cibo Italia has recognized this trend and provides the food service Industry, retailer and wholesalers with multiple products that can fit any customer. Our services include a state of the art facility that can provide pre-sliced packages in vacuum and gas packed trays in all sizes, plus private branding with your label. We can handle any size order and deliver anywhere in the world. Currently Prosciutto Italiano is being distributed in Europe, North America, and Asia.

<image>

Contact us today 201-440-1234 or visit us at www.cibo-italia.com



ITALY'S MUSHROOM WITH A VIEW

By Mary Ann Esposito

Italians are mad for mushrooms (aka *funghi*) and go to great lengths to keep their favorite foraging areas a deep, dark secret.

One bright September day when I was driving towards the small town of Teverina, not far from Cortona in Tuscany, I noticed quite a little roadside market going on. There were trucks, cars and small tables with *"Funghi Freschi"* signs. This was my chance, I thought, to enjoy in-season mushrooms right from their source! I had to stop.

A frail, elderly woman with a basket on one arm and what looked like an ancient sickle tucked under the other, stood ready to make a sale. A quick glance into her basket revealed some awesome-looking mushrooms, but my attention was drawn to the porcini, probably the most revered in the mycological mushroom kingdom for Italians.

When I asked about the ones in her basket, she became animated, calling them out by various names. There was brunette, probably because of its brownish color; and ovoli, egg shaped ones with a brilliant orange color; and the most coveted of all, the handsome and plump, brown-reddish porcini, affectionately known as "little pigs." I asked her how she prepares them. Thin sliced, she said, drizzled with extra virgin olive, and *basta*!

I bought all that she had and I drove home dreaming of grilled porcini, porcini sauce for fettucine, and a marinated porcini salad. I stored them in the *limonaia* that night, vowing to have a porcini-thon the next day. What I did not realize is that fresh

A porcino mushroom growing in Etna National Park, Sicily

porcini do not last long. Leaving them for just a day caused worms to appear everywhere and I had to throw them away. Lesson learned.

Why do Italians love mushrooms so much? Because they lend themselves to so many dishes, and the beloved meaty porcini, with their fat caps and short, stubby stems, have an earthy and nutty taste that is succulent and rich. They are found worldwide and belong to the Boletus genus of mushrooms. They grow in symbiosis with oak, chestnut, pine, fir and beech trees.

The best porcini, according to Italians, are those harvested in the fall. There is such great demand for them that Italy requires a permit to prevent overharvesting, and how much one can gather is limited.

Back home in New Hampshire, I could not let the porcini craving go, so I traipsed through the woods with my mycologist friend, Dennis Chesley, to find them. While we found some nice, edible, forest mushrooms, no dice on the porcini.

There is something magical and secret about elusive wild mushrooms. Their discovery is best left to those who are wise, cautious, experienced and respectful of the environment. Looking for the wild fungi is almost a meditative experience that should always be done with experts, not amateurs.

Telltale signs for spotting them include looking for small mounds of dry leaves lurking around the base of birch and beech trees. Brushing away those leaves could mean finding mushrooms! Porcini tend to have large caps and thick stems, without gills.

For me, porcini mushrooms are a free gourmet gift from the forest floor. Still, delicious mushroom dishes can be made with generic button, cremini, Portobello and oyster mushrooms, to name just a few of the many cultivated mushrooms available.

So don't be in the dark about mushrooms, thinking they are only good stuffed or sautéed. Every region of Italy has a favorite way or two of preparing *funghi*. Broaden your perspective and your taste-buds about mushrooms and give these recipes a try.

Mushroom Carpaccio

Serves 4

Ingredients

¹/₄ cup plus 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
Juice two lemons
1 small clove of garlic, finely minced
¹/₂ teaspoon salt
¹/₄ teaspoon dried chili pepper
Fresh ground pepper
2 tablespoons minced parsley
¹/₂ pound meaty mushrooms (porcini, king oyster or button), brushed cleaned, stems trimmed and thinly sliced lengthwise
1 cup arugula leaves form into pieces

1 cup arugula leaves, torn into pieces Shavings of Pecorino Romano cheese

Directions

- Whisk the ¼ cup olive oil in a bowl with the lemon juice, garlic, salt, chili pepper and fresh ground pepper.
- Place the mushroom slices in a rectangular casserole and pour the dressing over them. Cover and allow them to marinate for a couple of hours at room temperature.
- When ready to serve, transfer the mushrooms to a serving platter and sprinkle the parsley.
- In a bowl, mix the arugula with the remaining olive oil and season with salt.
- Mound the arugula on top of the mushrooms in the center of the platter. Sprinkle the shaving of cheese over the top and serve.

Mother Earth Mushroom Ragù

Earthy mushrooms slow cooked in butter make a wonderful side dish to steak or a sauce for pasta or risotto. For this simple *ragù*, try porcini or oyster mushrooms which lend a velvety texture and a mild flavor. For a bolder taste, try shitake or cremini. This is the perfect topping for slices of grilled polenta, too. To maximize the flavor of mushrooms, be patient; do not be in a hurry to stir them. Leave them alone to cook gently without stirring until their edges begin to brown. Your patience will be rewarded.

Makes about 2 cups

Ingredients

- 6 tablespoons butter
- 2 heaping tablespoons fresh thyme leaves
- 2 medium size shallots, peeled, ends trimmed, and minced
- 1 pound porcini, oyster or shiitake mushrooms, damp wiped with a paper towel, and thinly sliced.
- ⅔ cup light cream
- Fine sea salt to taste

Generous grinding black pepper

Directions

• Melt the butter in a medium size sauté pan; stir in the thyme and shallots and cook over medium heat until the garlic is soft and the mixture smells fragrant.

Fried porcini mushrooms with fresh thyme in cast iron skillet



- Add the mushrooms and cook over medium-high heat without stirring until the mushrooms begin to release their liquid. Stir and continue cooking until all the liquid from the mushrooms has evaporated.
- Slowly pour in the cream and mix well to combine. Cover the pan, reduce the heat to low, and cook covered for about 5 minutes.
- Uncover, season the *ragù* with salt to taste and a good grinding of black pepper.

Cook's Secret: Never leave mushrooms in plastic bags or plastic wrap; mushrooms need to breathe. Store them in paper bags in the refrigerator and use within two days of purchase. Recipe from Ciao Italia Family Classics



Mushroom, Spinach and Cheese Quiche

Portobello are cultivated mushrooms that are the big brothers of the simple button mushroom. They are popular marinated and grilled, but stuff their large caps and they become the "crust" for this spinach and cheese "quiche."

Serves 4

Ingredients

One 10-ounce box frozen spinach, defrosted and squeezed dry

- 1½ cups fresh mozzarella cheese, cut into bits
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons fresh thyme leaves
- 4 large Portobello mushrooms, at least 4 inches in diameter stems
- removed and caps wiped with a damp paper towel Salt to taste
- Generous grinding black pepper >

Directions

- Preheat oven to 350°F
- Chop the spinach coarsely and place in a bowl. Stir in the thyme and half of the cheese. Add salt and pepper to taste. Set aside.
- Heat 2 tablespoons of the olive oil in a 12¹/₂-inch ovenproof sauté pan over medium heat.
- Add the mushrooms, cap side down and cook them for 2 or 3 minutes, covered.
- Off the heat, cool the caps, then divide and fill each cap with some of the spinach and cheese mixture. Sprinkle the remaining cheese evenly over the spinach.
 - Drizzle the caps with the remaining oil.
 - Cover the pan and bake for 25 to 30 minutes. Uncover the pan and continue cooking until the filling is hot, and the cheese is bubbly.
 - Serve hot.

Cook's Secret: cut each cap into quarters and serve as part of an antipasto.

Mary Ann Esposito with expert mushroom hunter Dennis Chesley foraging for prochini mushrooms in a New Hampshire forest

Enter the

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Mushroom Salad

Mushroom salad is a delight, especially when made with a variety of mushrooms like oyster, shiitake, enokl and cremini. If none of these is available, use all button mushrooms. The success of this salad depends on using the freshest mushrooms and using a good extra-virgin olive oil.

Serves 4

Ingredients

- 3 cups thinly sliced button or mixed mushrooms
- 1 cup thinly sliced celery
- ¹/₄ cup minced parsley
- Grinding of black pepper to taste
- ¹/₂ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon coarse sea salt
- Shavings of Parmigiano Reggiano cheese

Directions

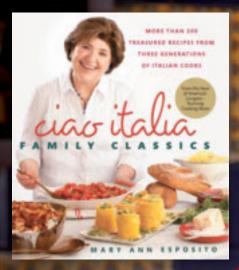
- Toss the mushrooms with the celery, parsley and black pepper in a salad bowl. Pour the olive oil over the mixture and toss again.
- Spoon the mushroom mixture onto a serving platter. Sprinkle the salt over the top and the shavings of cheese.

Recipe from Ciao Italia Family Classics

CONTEST TODAY!

Deadline for Submission October 10 at 12 noon EST

Read contest rules before entering www.niaf.org/photocontest



Mary Ann's latest book, *Ciao Italia Family Classics*, is available now!

CiaoItalia.com



with Mary Ann Esposito

Keeping Italian traditions alive on America's longestrunning cooking show



When visitors to Sicily first see a kaleidoscopic, painted Sicilian carretto, their inner child probably recalls the first time they rode on a carousel with its brightly painted horses and colorful circus carts.



A horse-drawn Carretto in Agrigento

Detail of a Sicilian cart. Painting by master Damiano Rotella.

Arguably the precursor of the painted Sicilian carretto was the two-wheeled Roman chariot. Depictions of those ancient Roman carts bear a striking similarity to modern Sicilian carts. Chariots used during festivals for a Roman deity were often highly decorated, and the fanciful paintings and carvings of the modern *carretti*-one of the most beautiful folk-crafted technologies in all of Italy-carry on that tradition today.

Their bright primary colors celebrate the sun, lemons, the sea, green olives, and the glowing lava from Mount Etna-the passions of the Sicilian people. Carretti are painted and carved with images of Christianity, paganism, war, passion, nature, opera and mysticism. Using images, they told tales in centuries past to a mostly illiterate population. Carretti also illustrated the varied cultures that left their mark on Sicily: Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, Turks, Bourbons, Arabs, Normans and Spanish. The battles of Charlemagne and his Paladin Knights are a popular theme, as are tales of martyrs and legends. Different styles of decoration exist: some carving directly on the structure, others attach the carved elements; some use paint without carvings, others use no paint all.

In the early 1800s, the roads throughout Sicily were being restored, repaired and expanded, which helped the carretti come into the light. This is the period in which French writer Jean Baptiste Gonzalve de Nervo became the first European to write about *carretti*, even though its current basic form is said to have originated in the 8th century A.D., or earlier.

Ragnettonaladino 🗐 by 3 0

Carretti allow a horse or donkey to transport goods between the mountain villages. Ancient sentieri (donkey paths) have been lovingly maintained after endless assaults from volcanos, earthquakes and landslides. These paths are still used daily-a necessity, since most villages are on rugged hilltops and homes cling to cliffs. The paths link house to village and village to towns, and are wide enough for donkey and cart. While Carretti today are pulled mainly by horses, the upward angle of the two shafts attached to the beast is a throwback to their original design used with shorter donkeys that were better suited to the switchbacks common on the sentieri.

In 1885, famous French writer Guy de Maupassant described the carts as "a walking puzzle" because of their vast array of decorative elements. Wood parts are carved elaborately with additional features applied to their wooden surfaces, such as carved figures, shells, stone, mirrors or saint figurines. The wheels are painted in wild geometric or floral patterns; tassels are often attached to the hubs.

Horses pulled *carretti* mostly in the city and flat plains; the more maneuverable donkeys were used in rough terrain. Carretto del Lavoro (work carts) hauled heavy loads of grain, lemons, wood, vegetables, almonds, grapes and barrels of wine. The carts were called Carretto de Garra when used for festive occasions, such as weddings and parades. On farms or in towns as delivery vehicles, they were used the same way the three-wheeled, gas-powered treruote is throughout Italy today.

Master Damiano Rotella paints the wheels of a small Sicilian cart.





Modern interpretations of the painted *carretti* include a *treruote*, Vespa and other kinds of carts

As tradesmen traveled from village to village, offering their services or selling their wares, their carts were often decorated with advertising. These vendors were considered luckier than most—having a *carretto* meant they could work farther from home and earn more. When they returned home late at night, they would unhitch their beast, tilt its shafts to the sky, remove the wheel hubs and the decorative sideboards, and bring them into their one-room home to keep them safe while they slept.

A *carretto* is always custom-built considering two factors: its height and length based on the size of the beast to be hitched to it; and the diameter of the wheels that depend on landscape where it will be used; large-diameter wheels for remote rocky areas and smaller wheels for flat paths and streets.

Many types of artisans are used in creating a traditional *carretto*: coach builders, wheelwrights, carpenters, carvers, blacksmiths, leather craftsman and, to finish it, the decorator and painter. It can easily take more than three months to complete a *carretto*. Today, the Sicilian *carretti* are used for festivals, weddings, religious events and other special occasions. During the Festa di San Alfio, in Trecastagni, Catania, held the first week of May, *carretti* leave from Catania and other areas at night and arrive in the morning to assemble in the village square.

Different areas of the island sport different styles of carretti. On the Palermo version, the wheel axle is embedded in a carved and painted wooden beam, adorned with wrought-iron arabesques and topped by two wooden shelves; and the bed of the carretto is divided into four sections with a trapezoidal shape. Castelvetranese carretti, found in the western provinces of Trapani and Palermo, use wheel axles and shelves like those of Trapanese carretti, but lateral sides like the Palermo type. What distinguishes the Trapanese style is its large-diameter wheels, and four vertical posts that divide the sides of the case into three panels, topped by a horizontal bar. Catanese carretti, seen throughout eastern Sicily, is similar to the Pelermitano style but much smaller.

There is one tradition of *carretti*

that can't be seen in a museum because it must be heard: the *Carretto* song. Cart drivers cup their hands behind their ears and sing chants that emote daily prayers from Muslim *minarets*—more evidence of Sicily's blended cultures. In acapella style, they challenge other drivers with their songs; they sing of love, war and hard times; they sing the Blues. In August, during the Festa di San Giuseppe in Bagheria, you can see *carretti* and hear the songs of the *carrettiera*.

Visitors to Sicily in the late 1800s were compelled to carry home souvenirs of the *carretti* depicted on postcards or as small models called *carrettino*, complete with tiny passengers and goods. Queen Mary brought one home as a souvenir after a visit in 1925. Beautifully crafted *carrettino* can still be found in Sicily's gift shops.

Modern *carretto* artisans have also carried on the tradition, some still making magnificent artisan-built carts, and others painting motorized vehicles. While visiting Sicily, you might come across multicolored Vespa scooters, the ubiquitous painted *treruote*, even Fiat 500s decorated with dazzling patterns.

Fashionable designers like Dolce & Gabbana have gotten on board, elevating this unique Sicilian style in their Sicilian Carretto Special Collection, featuring sunglasses, clothing, shoes, desk accessories, kitchen appliances, Christmas balls and refrigerators—all decked out in the patterns and colors of *carretti*.

If you are in Los Angeles before January 7, you can get a look at *carretti* artistry at the Italian American Museum of Los Angeles, a show in collaboration with Sicily's MUSCÀ Museum and Dolce & Gabbana. The exhibit, entitled "The Sicilian Cart, History in Movement," is free and features two vintage *carretti*.

Still, there's no better way to experience the tradition of *carretti* than by visiting Sicily. ▲

After a decades-long career as an advertising photographer in his Manhattan photography loft studio, Jerry Finzi is restoring his 1868 home in Bucks County, Pa., with his wife and teenage son. His photography is alive as ever. You can read about Italy on his blog: GrandVoyageItaly.com.



Sally Valenti and her Sicilian Cart

My **Carretto** Siciliano

By Sally Valenti



Details of her Sicilian Cart

Sicilia bedda, nun ti potzu chiu scordari....That's the beginning of a song my mother, Angelina, used to sing as I was growing up. The nostalgia in her voice became more evident as I matured and understood the depth of her feeling. Once established in this land of opportunity, she was a loyal, devoted wife to a traditional Sicilian husband, and a mother of four, but never saw her parents again, never returned to the homeland she left at age 16. My memories of her, however, are this smiling, loving, caring perfection of motherhood, with dark hair combed straight back into tightly and neatly tied bun highlighting that round, kind face.

Is it any wonder, then, years after my mother's death, when I spotted a Carretto Siciliano at an antique shop in Atlantic City, why my heart started to pound? A perfect, beautiful reminder of the land of her birth, it was an authentic, full-size Carretto Siciliano!

I approached the proprietor nonchalantly complimenting him on the unusual display in his window. He replied, "Yes, but it's too big. I'll have to get rid of it."

Now my heart was racing. I asked, "Are you selling it?"

Not only did he sell it to me, he volunteered to deliver it to my home in Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 140 miles away, free of charge. The papers he gave me proved its authenticity. With my heart bursting, the deal was made.

I knew I had a treasure, but its value has always been a reminder of the colorful, humble beginnings of my immigrant parents. They, as many other Sicilians, came to America young, poor, and desperate, seeking a better life for themselves and their families back in the old country. How beautifully those struggling Sicilians embellished their working day by creating that now rare Sicilian cart to help in their daily chores. Even the donkey that pulled it was decorated.

My Sicilian cart, now complete with a hitched, plumed donkey, has moved from house to house as we did. A special construction was added to each home to provide a spot for all to see as they entered our home. The artist's name and its place of origin are prominently displayed: Cateno Previtera, Taormina, Italy. The paintings depict a duel and historic events. The metal work is unbelievably crafted and the vibrant colors still glow when I turn on the light under it. It has moved five times and is still in perfect shape.

"This is obviously a Sicilian home" is the greeting comment my Sicilian husband, Pat, and I often heard. Pat was so Sicilian that one of his many hobbies was to make trinachria paper weights for friends. Even at his funeral mass, the symbol of Sicily, La Trinachria, was printed on the mass card.

Yes, I'm proud of my Sicilian heritage, but equally proud and grateful for the opportunities in this country given to my parents who succeeded in raising four children, all educated on scholarships. Their two sons, the first two Italian brothers to graduate from West Point, and their two daughters, one an educator, the other a medical doctor, never cease to marvel at their parents' accomplishments, despite their never having had a formal education. It was that drive and longing for a better life they learned in Sicily, and the strength to see the beauty in even the most desperate of situations, that prompts me to see the beauty and wonder of them in my carretto Siciliano.

On the plane to Florida, after retiring as an educator in Alpine School, N.J., I met Dr. Peter Sammartino who encouraged me to join his Italian cultural organization in Palm Beach. After much cajolin, my husband and I agreed: "It's not nice to refuse the founder of Fairleigh Dickinson University!"

Thirty-one years later, here I am, executive vice president of II Circolo and Public Relations Chair, having served in many capacities on the Board of Directors, and loving it! Since my husband died four years ago, my family, all living in New Jersey, have become more concerned about my being alone in Florida. They know that my II Circolo famiglia became my Florida family. So I'm now a snowbird with a private residence attached to my daughter and son-in-law's home in Haworth, N.J., and a rented apartment in Ocean Ridge, Fla., for the winter.

Beaulie of Bourbon Two Sicilies

In the Footsteps of Her Benevolent Ancestors Who Ruled Southern Italy and Contributed to World Culture

By Cav. John Napoli

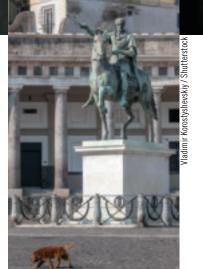
I am extremely proud of my Neapolitan and Sicilian ancestry, so I was happy to learn that NIAF's 42nd Anniversary Gala in Washington, D.C., will be honoring the Region of Sicily. It's always great to see the Jewel of the Mediterranean get her due, but it will surely be a challenge for the organizers to cover nearly 3,000 years of history in a mere weekend.

Even more exciting was the announcement that Her Royal Highness Princess Beatrice of Bourbon Two Sicilies was going to receive the NIAF Special Achievement Award in Philanthropy at the fête. Known for her warm generous spirit and kindness, the Princess is committed to helping the poor in the historic territories of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and personally oversees philanthropic and cultural activities, including the restoration of historic sites.

Princess Beatrice maintains a close rapport with local nobility and the public in general. In the past year, she has visited Sicily, Calabria and Campania frequently, and often visits people in need, off-camera, to personally tend to them. She is involved in promoting products and companies of southern It-

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Statue of Charles III of Bourbon, the founding father of the Bourbon dynasty in Naples, Italy. Sculpted by Antonio Canova in 1819.



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aly and in fostering their development.

She is multilingual and speaks Neapolitan, French and English. She is a Dame Grand Cross of Justice of the Sacred Military Constantinian Order of Saint George and is Gran Prefetto of the Order.

The illustrious Bourbon family is not only a part of our southern Italian cultural heritage, but also an important part of European history. Today, the Bourbons are very active in many charitable endeavors and in promoting southern Italian cultural and spiritual identity.

Considering how some 87 percent of Italian Americans hail from southern Italy, many from Sicily, this should be of great interest to our community. However, it's been my experience that too many Italian Americans are woefully misinformed about their own history and where the Bourbons fit into it.

A Brief Look at the Bourbons

Their Sicilian Majesties (as the Bourbons were called) came to power in 1735, when Prince Charles of Bourbon, son of King Philip V of Spain and Princess of Parma Elisabeth Farnese, expelled the Austrians from Naples and Sicily. Marching from Florence to Naples, Charles decisively defeated the Austrians at Bitonto on May 25, 1734. Sailing to Sicily, he quickly took the island, and on July 3, 1735, was proclaimed King in the Cathedral of Palermo.

spe Passire

Returning to his capital city of Naples, Charles began governing his kingdom, implementing reforms and investing in monumental works, including the construction of the Teatro di San Carlo, the Reale Albergo dei Poveri, and the Foro Carolino, among others. Included in his many artistic and commercial initiatives was the production of prized porcelain at Capodimonte and the excavations of Pompeii and Herculaneum. Most importantly, after centuries of foreign domination, King Charles restored the independence and sovereignty of the ancient kingdom.

With the death of his cousin Ferdinand VI in 1759, Charles ascended to the Spanish thrown, abdicating the Kingdoms of Naples and Sicily to his third son, Ferdinand. Administered by a regency council of eight ministers until his coming of age, the young king continued his father's reforms until the murderous outbreak of the French Revolution.

Driven from his capital twice during the turbulent Napoleonic period, Ferdinand retook his continental kingdom from the French invaders and Jacobin collaborators with the widespread support of his loyal subjects, as well as Great Britain and Imperial Russia. After the Congress of Vienna (1814–1815), he chose to officially unite his two realms and ruled as Ferdinand I, King of the Two Sicilies.

Among his many accomplishments were the construction of numerous educational institutions, including a university at Palermo. Ferdinand I also established the Academy of Science and Arts in Naples and a free school for boys and girls in every town.

When Ferdinand's eldest son, Francis I, succeeded him, the kingdom was prosperous and at peace. In fact, his realm was the wealthiest and most industrialized of all the pre-unitary Italian states. Although his reign was brief, King Francis I is primarily remembered for combating the Barbary Corsairs and successfully negotiating the withdrawal of the financially >



National Museum of Capodimonte. It is Italy's largest museum and holds Neapolitan painting, decorative art and important ancient Roman sculptures.



King Charles VII left his mark on Naples with his building projects. Built 1737, The Teatro San Carlo turned the city into a musical epicenter.

Kenneth Rictor Photography



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Princess Beatrice of Bourbon Two Sicilies joins NIAF Regional Vice President for Southern Italy Alfonso Ruffo at NIAF's 2013 Anniversary Gala to announce Campania as the NIAF's 2014 Region of Honor

burdensome Austrian army, which was stationed in the kingdom since the 1820-21 Carbonari Revolution.

To help facilitate economic improvement, the King founded the Royal Order of Francis I, an order of knighthood to reward notable achievements in commerce, science and the arts.

On November 8, 1830, Ferdinand II ascended to the throne. In 1832, he married the extraordinarily pious Princess Maria Cristina of Savoy who was popularly called *Reginella Santa* by her adoring subjects. Tragically, the Queen died on January 31, 1836, shortly after giving birth to their son and heir, Francis. Nearly two centuries later, Pope Francis beatified blessed Maria Cristina on January 25, 2014.

In 1848, Ferdinand II crushed a revolt in Sicily, which earned him the unflattering moniker "Re Bomba" from his enemies. Unfortunately, the revolutionary subversion spread across Europe, causing political turmoil and upsetting the West's traditional order.

Committed to a federal and Catholic Italy, which respected the sovereignty of the various Italian states, Ferdinand II repeatedly had to deal with seditious Mazzinians, radical republicans, Masons, socialists and communists, as well as the ambitions of King Charles Albert of Savoy, who was more interested in annexing Lombardy and the Veneto than "liberating" them from the Austrian Empire.

On December 8, 1856, while celebrating the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, an attempt was made on the King's life by Mazzini sympathizer Agesilao Milano. Though Ferdinand II survived the would-be assassin's bayonet charge, many believe a recurring inflammation caused by the attack ultimately caused His Majesty's untimely death.

Like his predecessors, the King's accomplishments are too many to list here. Suffice to say, Ferdinand II did a great many things for the good of his Kingdom and his faithful subjects deeply mourned his loss..

Francis II succeeded his father on May 22, 1859, at the age of 23. Shortly into his reign, Garibaldi and his band of revolutionaries invaded the island of Sicily with the support of Great Britain and Piedmont. Wishing to spare his capital the devastation of war, King Francis withdrew his forces north to Capua as the red-shirted *garibaldini* advanced towards Naples. Capitalizing on Garibaldi's success and the young Neapolitan Monarch's inexperience, King Victor Emanuel II of Savoy invaded the Kingdom from the north.

Sham plebiscites were orchestrated by Garibaldi to legitimize his conquest, but the King and loyalists still held out. After his valiant defense along the banks of the Volturno and at the Fortress of Gaeta, Francis II was eventually forced to surrender to General Cialdini.

A deeply devout and ethical man, King Francis II made the difficult decision to go into exile expressly stating his desire to spare the civilian population further bombings and indiscriminate summary shootings. Setting off on a French corvette to the Papal States as guests of Pius IX, Francis II and Queen Maria Sofia lived the remainder of their lives in exile.

HRH Francis II died on December 27, 1894, in Arco, in the Trentino region of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Now buried inside the Basilica di Santa Chiara in Napoli, many are working towards the beatification of this devoutly Catholic King.

The Bourbons were Catholic monarchs who believed in safeguarding their population by investing in infrastructure, education, and access to medical care, and by attracting foreign investors because they were focused on the public good. Under them, southern Italy prospered; without their leadership, southern Italy has never recovered.

However, we still have our culture and our traditions, and that was a good part of what made the Kingdom great. The Bourbons are helping us preserve that, in Italy and the diaspora communities across the globe. *Viva 'o Rre!*

Cav. John Napoli is a practicing Roman Catholic, a Knight of Merit of the Sacred Military Constantinian Order of St. George, a contributor to the Il Regno blog, and member of the St. Rocco Society of Potenza in New York City. THE POWER OF RED IS BACK



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By Susan Van Allen

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A Piece of

I'm trying not to gush. Sitting across from me is a superstar, Corrado Assenza.

He has been praised all over the world for everything from his gelato to his pastries. Here at his headquarters, at the Caffe Sicilia, in the southeastern Sicilian hill town of Noto, Sicily's Wizard of Sweets sets a humble tone. We're at an outside table, in the hazy afternoon light, as Noto natives pass by with respectful "Buon Giorno, Corrado." He nods back like a Godfather Don.

For centuries, Sicily has been famous for its sweets: gelato, cannoli, biscotti flavored with almonds and pistachios, *granite* (those fabulous fruit-flavored ices), *torrone* (a brick-shaped nut-and-honey treat). And then there is my favorite, what Assenza calls "the most elegant expression of Sicilian culture." *Cassata Siciliana*.

The classic *cassata* is a heavenly cake that's filled with a mix of ricotta, sugar, nuts, cinnamon and candied fruit, encased in a liqueur-soaked sponge cake, covered with marzipan, sweet white glaze, and a swirly candied fruit decoration. Finishing it off is that universal symbol of perfection—a cherry on top. It's a cake straight out of a fairytale.

That cherry on top brings me back to my grandparents' Newark, N.J., dining room where cherry-topped cakes were the grand finales to all our celebrations. They were made by my grandfather, who once worked at a *pasticceria* in Naples. He was a master at mixing together eggs, flour and milk to make the classic crema. I'd sit at the kitchen table, licking the spoon he'd hand me—a gesture of such comfort and kindness. He'd slather white cakes with that delicious yellow *crema*, stack those cakes, and cover the tower with whipped cream. With his wrinkled, shaky hands, he'd give me the cherry to top it all off.

I've been indulging my-cherry-on-top *cassata* obsession all over Sicily, testing these scrumptious cakes everywhere. I found every one so very satisfying in its own unique way.

In Palermo, they were styled like round jewelry cases. In chic Taormina, *cassata* dazzled me in a *pasticceria* display case, gleaming with candied pastel fruits. On the folksy Aeolian island of Lipari, hidden in an alley past the port, I found an almond-less version, soaked with the local malvasia wine, and sprinkled with chopped pistachios. In Catania they were boob-shaped, to honor Saint Agata, the city's patron, whose breasts are revered in sculptures, paintings and pastries all over town.

Clearly, no foodie police have laid down cassata rules,

standardize pizza Napoletana. When it comes to *cassata* in Sicily, the attitude is everybody goes their own sweet way. My way has led to Noto, lured here by Renee Restivo, a Sicilian American

as they did to

friend who runs Noto's Soul of Sicily cooking school. "You must come to Noto, to the Caffe Sicilia, to taste the best *cassata*!" she emailed me.

From back in Los Angeles, I read raves about Assenza's Caffe Sicilia, and set off to meet the Wizard. Noto inspires immediate wows. It's one of Sicily's most elegant spots, nicknamed "The Garden of Stone," adorned with the purest of Sicilian Baroque architecture—a mix of smiling putti, curlicued archways, and ornate balconies the perfect backdrop to frou-frou *cassatas*.

Where did all this Noto beauty come from? A devastating tragedy. A massive earthquake in 1693 leveled this whole area. For the next 50 years, an amazing recovery took place, as architects who had been to Rome and seen Bernini's Fountain of the Four Rivers in Piazza Navona rushed to the rescue, inspired to rebuild. They designed churches and palazzos that out-Baroque'd any Baroque in Europe.

Instead of building over the rubble, as was done in the nearby Ragusa and Modica, a vacant plateau was chosen to compose a new town from scratch. Since it had no port, Noto wasn't going to gain money from trade, so it was created to be a showpiece to attract the upper classes, a playground for priests and aristocrats.

This is not the Sicily of the immigrants I grew up around at the Jersey shore—with *nonnas* piling baked ziti on to my plate, lamenting, "In the old country, all we had to eat was dirt!" No, this is the Sicily that evokes bygone days of *principessas*, decked out in wide pastel skirts and parasols, riding in gaily painted carriages down this grand Via Vittorio Emanuele. They'd have splendid evenings at Noto's opera house, and end the night at Caffe Sicilia, with the perfect *Cassata Siciliana*.

The place I'd read so much hoopla about turns out to be so low key. You'd imagine since it's been around for more than 100 years, that it would be done up in the style of Italy's classic historic cafes, but the Caffe Sicilia is a pious pastry chapel, simple and narrow, with a hint of glitz in the back salon where there's a chandelier made of vials of Assenza's world famous honey.



Nothing distracts from the Wizard's impeccably arranged display. He has distinguished himself in the gourmet universe by bringing inventive twists to the classics which explains such wonders I'm browsing, like licorice gelato, and shimmering layer cakes flavored with bergamot and cinnamon. My eyes land on miniature *Cassata Sicilianas*, labeled *cassatine*, each adorned with two perfect candied orange diamonds bordering a cherry on top.

A beaded curtain sways and out from the kitchen he arrives: Corrado Assenza. With a warm welcome, he takes time for me at his outside table, telling me how he grew up in Noto, left to study bees at the University of Bologna, and then returned here to the family business where his childhood toys became his tools.

"Nature is the key to pastry making," he says. "We must understand nature and the changing landscape, then bring in our new ideas so that history and tradition are still respected, but the *caffe* doesn't become a museum."

I leave with my selected treat. Sitting across the via from Caffe Sicilia on the grand cathedral steps, I plunge a plastic fork into Corrado's *cassatina*. My taste buds meet the happiest mix of sweetness they've ever encountered, far better than any other *cassata* I've tasted. The ricotta is creamier, with just the right balance of citrus zing; the marzipan encircling it is divine, smooth, sweet, almond.

Layer by layer, this *cassatina* symbolizes more than a thousand years of Sicilian history. The sugar cane, the almond, the lemons and oranges, were brought here by



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9th -century Arab invaders. The *pan di spagna* (sponge cake) is from the Spanish; the white *fondente* icing from the French. The marzipan is dyed green in homage to the days when bakers could afford to use pistachio paste made from those famous nut trees flourishing in the nearby village of Bronte.

Cathedral bells clang cueing thoughts of the cake's holy history. Busy Sicilian nuns of medieval days got the recipe for kas'at (meaning bowl) from the Arabs, then renamed the bowl-shaped cake *cassata*. Nuns started a tradition of making *cassata* for Easter, as a rich reward to break the Lenten fast. Convents got so swept up with the *cassata* craze that, in 1574, a bishop stepped in and ordered a stop to the cake making, because it was taking the nuns away from their Holy Week prayers. Meanwhile, Sicilian Jews were making *cassata* for Purim parties. How amazing to know that, centuries ago, Muslims, Catholics and Jews lived together in peace and harmony, celebrating with such a cake!

I finish the *cassata* on the steps, licking the fork clean. It's the sweetest flow I could have wished for. A cherry-ontop moment.

Susan Van Allen is the author of three books about Italian travel, including "100 Places in Italy Every Woman Should Go." She also designs and hosts Golden Weeks in Italy: For Women Only tours. More info: www.susanvanallen.com



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LTJOSEPH PETROSINO vs THE BLACK



Stephan Talty on His New Book about America's Heroic Italian American Police Detective and the Deadly Criminal Organization He Fought

HAND

he early years of the 20th century witnessed a concerted crime wave that first terrorized the public in New York City, and then spread its intimidation and panic nationwide. Death threats, child kidnappings, bombings, execution-style murders of innocent victims—the deadly violence and destruction were the despicable acts of a secret society of criminal Italian immigrants whose calling card was the symbol of a black hand print. As the Black Hand organization's lurid crimes fueled disturbing news-

paper headlines and stoked ethnic animosities, one fearless New York cop, the nation's first Italian American police detective, made his life-and-death mission bringing Black Hand members to justice.

It's the kind of gripping crime tale Stephan Talty can't resist. The bestselling author of five non-fiction books, including "Empire of Blue Water" (the story of the great pirate captain Henry Morgan), "Escape from the Land of Snows" (an account of the Dalai Lama's escape from Tibet in 1959); and "Agent Garbo" (the story of the greatest double agent of World War II), Talty has also written, among others, crime novels "Black Irish" and "Hangman," and co-authored "A Captain's Duty," an account of the tension-filled confrontation at sea with Somali pirates that was made into the 2013 Tom Hanks movie "Captain Phillips."

Talty took time out from a busy book tour to answer questions about his latest book, "The Black Hand: The Epic War Between a Brilliant Detective and The Deadliest Secret Society in American History."





Above: Detective Lt. Joseph Petrosino (left), Inspector Carey and Inspector McCafferty escorting hitman Tomasso "The Ox" Petto (second from left) in 1903

While most Americans probably don't know the name Joe Petrosino, his story is fascinating and so telling of the early 1900s, and of immigration issues then and now, that it's hard to understand why. Perhaps your book and the upcoming Leonardo DiCaprio film version will change that?

Talty: Petrosino was absolutely a hero of the early 20th century and it's curious how little he's known today. We imagine that the first people to go up against Italian crime and the early Mafia were the FBI and big city police departments. But, in fact, it was Italians, led by Petrosino. I think the rise of the Mafia also erased the memory of the Black Hand, and that led to the detective being forgotten. I do hope the book and a potential film will re-introduce Petrosino to Americans. He's such a fascinating figure, both personally and culturally. His story reveals so much of what it takes to become an American, and how painful that process was for the first wave of Italian Americans. It's really one of the great immigrant narratives in our history.

You've written both nonfiction and fiction stories of courage, overcoming great odds, amazing tales about homicide detectives, spies, secret missions and secret agents, even man-versus-nature tales. How does the story of Petrosino and The Black Hand fit into your wheelhouse?

Talty: It's something I recognize only in looking back at my previous books. I'm not sure why, but I'm drawn to stories where an exceptional individual faces off against a system or an institution. Captain Henry Morgan vs. the Spanish Empire. The young Dalai Lama vs. the Chinese state. They're stories of defiance and struggle, and for some reason they appeal to me. Petrosino was an isolated figure in many ways. Many Italians thought he'd sold out to "the whites" and the Irish and the WASPs by taking on the Black Hand. And, of course, the criminal leaders wanted him dead. But he persevered-he was sure of himself in a way that I find intriguing. It must have been a lonely existence, with possible assassins passing you on the street every day, at least until he got married. The fact that he carried on so relentlessly ... I find it admirable and rare.

When and why did you first start looking into this story? What about it appealed to you personally and as a writer?

Talty: I read a lot of nonfiction and I'd come across his name years ago. It's funny, I told my agent about Petrosino and he thought about it and got back to me. His verdict was: "It's an amazing story, but here's my problem with it. He lost." That prevented me from writing the book for years-the idea that the detective had, in the end, been defeated by the Black Hand, But when I looked further into the archives, I found that he'd actually laid out the blueprint for destroying it, and in that way he'd succeeded.



Joseph Petrosino memorial plaque in Lower Manhattan

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Joseph Petrosino's coffin placed in hearse during his funeral on April 12, 1909, after his assassination a month earlier in Palermo, Italy

The Black Hand was sort of the precursor to the Mafia in America, right? To what degree did the conditions experienced by Italian immigrants in the United States at that time give rise to the Black Hand as a quasi-protective organization, which sometimes is the romantic view of the Mafia? And to what degree was the Black Hand simply a murderous, criminal, terrorist organization that, ironically, often targeted Italian immigrants? Talty: It was completely the latter. The Black Hand began as extortionists. You'd receive a series of letters that grew more and more threatening, saying if you didn't pay a certain amount of money, your home would be blown up or your children would be kidnapped. And those things happened all the time. The "protective" aspect was introduced when a stranger knocked at your door and said he knew the Black Hand criminals and perhaps could negotiate with the barbarians. This new "friend," of course, was working with the Black Hand. Italians did experience harsh, alienating, sometimes terrifying conditions in America, but the Black Hand was part of the terror and never a true ally of the new immigrant.

Petrosino's life in America was shaped by the same immigrant experience as the Black Hand leaders but he emerged very differently than they did. Why?

Talty: It's mostly about his character, I think, and the fact that he came to America as a teenager. He loved the country; he was patriotic in the way that many immigrants are. So, he'd absorbed the ideals of his new home and saw the Black Hand as a threat to other Italians doing the same. For him, it was about more than crime and punishment. It was about clearing the way so that Italian immigrants could be accepted as true Americans.

At the end of the 19th century, Petrosino, the first Italian police detective in the United States, was at the start of "scientific policing." In his dogged pursuit of the Black Hand members, did he employ new techniques

Talty: Both. He was a smart guy, and he used new methods to try to catch Black Hand leaders. Handwriting analysis—at one point, he ordered every Black Hand



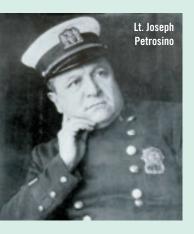
1910 New York Police Department wanted poster for Black Hand members Vito Sorisi, Rosario Castelli and his wife Giovanna Castelli for kidnapping a child

suspect into their local precincts to get a sample of their handwriting to compare them with the threatening letters that innocent people were receiving. He was brilliant with disguises. He created the NYPD bomb squad and traced explosives back to their makers. And he used the press to get the public on his side. At the same time, if he thought a suspect was guilty and was holding out on him, he was fully capable of handing the guy a beatdown, which was accepted in the society at that time.

In those days, some Americans viewed Italian immigrants as more like Black Hand types instead of the Petrosino types, correct? Was Petrosino aware that he was the poster boy for helping to improve the image and lives of Italian immigrants in America?

Talty: Italians in the early 1900's were widely seen as conspirators, natural-born criminals, members of secret societies. The Black Hand was fuel to that fire. After they arrived, the stereotype hardened and was broadcast from one coast to the other.

Petrosino was acutely aware of this. He felt the Italian would always remain an outsider if the Black Hand continued to define what it meant to be Italian. And he gave interviews to the New York Times and other places talking about what being Italian really meant: love of family, a joy in the simple pleasure of life, hard work. He wanted to counteract the dark image.



How long and to what lengths did you research Petrosino and the Black Hand to write this book? And, in the process, what fascinated you, surprised you, and amused you the most about Petrosino the man?

Talty: I'd been studying him for years. What really helped me along in my research were two things: Susan Burke, Petrosino's granddaughter,

agreed to give me the family archives, which were filled with intimate details of his life; and Anthony Giacchino, a documentary filmmaker who'd researched the detective's life for years, gave me access to his files, which were extensive. That really broke open the floodgates. My parents were both immigrants, from rural Ireland. They didn't have the easiest lives when the came over, and so Petrosino's story appealed to me. I loved the action of the story, the intensity of it, and I was fascinated by Petrosino's almost spiritual mission: to reclaim the good name of Italians in America. That made it more than a story of cops and bad guys.

Same question but about the Black Hand. While, probably, not much amused you, what fascinated and surprised you about it? **Talty:** The interesting thing is that, statistically, Italians in the early 1900s committed less crime per capita than many other ethnic groups. So, why did groups like the Black Hand get so much publicity? Part of it was prejudice, of course, but when you look at their methods, you see they were designed to terrify. They would write these elaborate letters, for instance, that slowly grew



more menacing. They put the sweat equity in; they really studied their craft. The Black Hand was theatrical, operatic-they had a psychological brilliance that their Irish counterparts lacked.



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CIVITA DI BAGNOREGIO

The walkway viewed from Bagnoregio





By Frank Van Riper Photos © Goodman/Van Riper Photography

IT SITS ATOP A SMALL MOUNTAIN OF VOLCANIC STONE, ACCESSIBLE ONLY by a footbridge, its miniature towers set against an azure sky.

You look at it from afar and, at first, you cannot believe what you are seeing. But, in fact, Civita di Bagnoregio, arguably the smallest and most unspoiled of Italian hill towns, does exist—even if it is called "*la citta che muore*," the city that is dying.

My wife Judy and I first went there more than 33 years ago on our honeymoon. We were staying in Venice on the first of what would be many visits to the floating city, and ran into a couple who just had been there. "Oh, you must go to Civita," they

told us, "you won't believe it." And so we did. It was amazing. For a place that was founded by the Etruscans some 2,500 years ago, and later ruled by the Romans, Civita to-

later ruled by the Romans, Civita today seems remarkably vibrant, if also ecologically threatened. If the city is dying, it certainly will

If the city is dying, it certainly will be a magnificent corpse. This is not your average Italian hill town, like, say Todi, where there is bustling life within its ancient walls. Or Orvieto, where a magnificent cathedral anchors the town's center. Or even Montefalco, where the breathtaking views have earned it the sobriquet "the balcony of Umbria."

Truth to tell, once you traverse the long uphill foot bridge leading into the town, you come to Civita's charming, though tiny, town square, and little else.





But that's the point. The term "unspoiled" can be overused, but it applies here. Cast your eye away from the several first-class restaurants and cafes that cater to the tourists and you have walked back centuries in time. No markets, no drugstores, no post office, no ATMs.

"Civita is an artist's dream, a town in the nude," says travel writer Rick Steves. Without doubt, he adds, it is his favorite Italian hill town.

The Renaissance largely bypassed Civita, so what you see there is largely medieval, and because of that, breathtaking, if not also unique.

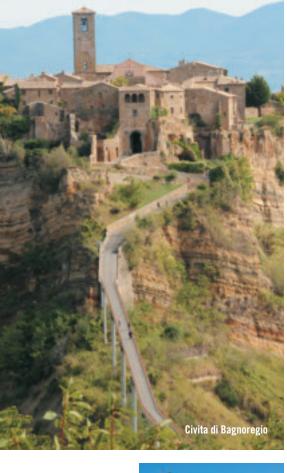
Located two hours from Rome in the north of Lazio in Italy's center, and near the Umbrian border, Civita is as isolated as it is (think of an Italian Brigadoon) because of erosion and earthquake. Where once a pathway for donkeys linked Civita with its larger, more stable neighbor, Bagnoregio, now there is only the comparatively narrow footbridge, passable only by pedestrians and the occasional moped that brings supplies and food into the sparsely populated town. How sparse? In winter, the permanent population fluctuates between six and 12; at the height of tourist season, its inhabitants may reach only 100.

Among these is Allessandro Michele, the 44-year-old fashion tyro who was named in 2015 to be Gucci's new creative director. Michele and his partner Giovanni Attili, a professor of urban planning, understandably fell in love with Civita a couple of years ago and have lovingly restored and decorated their country house, built from the ruins of an old monastery, sitting over a network of Etruscan caves.

Visiting Civita, one is aware not only of the beauty but of the quiet.









Catholic church of San Donato



With none of the noise of modern life from cars, buses, boom boxes, large tour groups, etc., you relax—and, if you are smart, revel—in Civita's tranquility. This is a place where you linger over your espresso or *aperitivo* at an open-air bar or *bruschetteria* and realize that the only ambient noise is from footsteps and conversation.

Typical Civita building

A cadre of resident cats and kittens usually can be counted on for comic relief. And a walk behind any of the town's thick stone walls usually will offer up a stunning and well-tended garden.

Civita's public square is dominated by the Catholic Church of San Donato. It was built centuries ago over the ruins of an Etruscan, and later, Roman, temple. In fact, Rick Steves notes that you can see remnants of the pillars of these pagan temples "sitting like barstools" in front of San Donato's simple, elegant entrance.

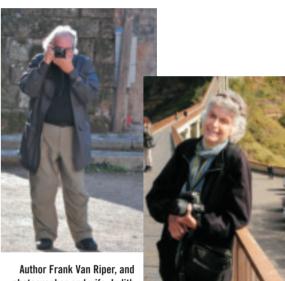
Inside, the church is a surprisingly open, inviting, and, in the hot summer, a pleasantly cool place to pass an hour or so, poring over its treasures. The town has two patron saints represented here. An urn containing the ashes of the martyred Santa Vittoria is displayed at the left altar. On the right, and far more dramatic, are the reliquary remains of Sant' Ildebrando (Saint Hildebrand,) the town's 9th century bishop. He is laid out in full regalia in a glass coffin, so that visitors can gaze on his waxy face and beard. Among the legends surrounding Hildebrand is the one of his resurrecting a cooked partridge, given to him for dinner as he lay old and sick. Noting that it happened to be a time of fasting, Hildebrand is said to have prayed over the bird until it was revived and took flight.

Civita's most famous son was San Bonaventura (Saint Bonaventure), who was born in the town around 1221 and is credited with helping to sustain the order of St. Francis in the years after that most famous of Italian saints founded it. Born Giovanni Fidanza, Bonaventure was said to have been healed as a child by Francis,









Author Frank Van Riper, and photographer and wife Judith Goodman in Civita

who blessed him with a new name "*O Buona Ventura*"—in effect predicting a bright future for the boy.

For centuries, great chunks of Civita have been falling away into the Tiber valley. Today, you literally can see ancient walls with windows facing the sky, seemingly at the town's edge. But that's only because the rest of the building has vanished.

The volcanic *tufa* on which the town is built is porous and friable, meaning geologically unstable. In addition, erosion and the passage of centuries have contributed to the honeycomb of caves on which the city rests.

This can be a mixed blessing. During World War II, these caves served as bomb shelters, and many serve as perfect wine cellars. But caves, of course, can collapse. There are plans to reinforce the plateau on which Civita rests with steel rods, and today you can see sophisticated measuring devices that monitor any movement.

There also is a serious move afoot to place the city on UNESCO's list of world heritage sites. The campaign already has garnered support from many of Italy's political and artistic elite, who argue that so unique a place in Italy, if not the world, must be preserved for future generations. Being a world heritage site would make Civita eligible for more restoration and preservation money, but the entire vetting process takes time—something Civita does not have.

In an age when plastic and disposable are the norm, Civita di Bagnoregio is a place worth saving.

Frank Van Riper is a Washington, D.C.-based photographer, journalist and author who works in collaboration with his wife and professional partner Judith Goodman. For information on their book, "Serenissima: Venice in Winter," and on their photography workshops in Venice and Umbria, go to www.veniceinwinter.com and www.GVRphoto.com. You can read Frank's online photography column at www.TalkingPhotography.com.

Presenting the Italian American Museum of Los Angeles

Southern California's Little-Known History of Italian Americans Unveiled

By Silvia Donati

Secondo Guasti arrived from Piedmont in Los Angeles in 1883 with \$3 in his pocket. Working his way up from cook to winemaker, he founded the Italian Vineyard Company, which became the largest winemaking operation in the world. In less than 20 years, Guasti had become one of the world's richest men.

A.P. Giannini, the son of Italian immigrants, founded the Bank of Italy in 1904 in San Francisco (later to become Bank of America), the only banking institution stepping up to provide loans to working-class people—especially following the 1906 San Francisco earthquake—allowing scores of individuals to rise out of poverty.

Frank G. Mancuso was the first Italian American to become a film studio head when he was named chairman of Paramount in 1984; under his guidance, the company produced such box office hits as "Top Gun," "Indiana Jones," "Star Trek" and "The Untouchables."



These are just three of the inspiring stories you will discover at the newly opened Italian American Museum of Los Angeles (IAMLA), dedicated to the little-known history and important contributions of Italian Americans in Los Angeles, Southern California, and the nation. Inaugurated in 2016, the 5,000-square-foot museum is located in El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument, the birthplace of the city of Los Angeles, where the first Italians who arrived in Southern California settled.

California was not even a state when Italians began arriving in Los Angeles. In fact, the first to settle in the area, Giovanni Battista Leandri, arrived in 1827 when the region was part of Mexico. The area's Latino roots made it easier for Italians on the West Coast to adjust to life in the new country: Italians shared a similar language, Latin culture, and the Catholic religion with the Mexican Californio community. In addition, the California landscape resembled the Mediterranean environment; many Italians found jobs (and became successful) in





From the IAMLA collection of vintage photographs

agriculture, viticulture and fishing, which made the move less shocking, as most immigrants were impoverished peasants from the South of Italy.

For these reasons, at least until World War II, when things began to change, Italians on the West Coast were able to assimilate and rise to a higher social status much more quickly than Italians in other parts of the country.

"The story of the region's Italians is inextricably linked to the history of the region itself," says Marianna Gatto, IAMLA executive director and the museum's exhibition author. "It's a really fascinating chapter of the Italian American diaspora that is so relevant to Italian Americans all over. It's not a coincidence that in the same years that Italians were being lynched in the South [in the 1890s], an Italian American was becoming the president of the Los Angeles City Council."

The early part of the Italian American experience in Southern California is explored in the museum's first three exhibits, called "Pioneers," "Settlement: Part I" and "Settlement: Part II." In addition, the IAMLA's permanent



exhibition wing includes chronologically and thematically arranged exhibits, among them "Italian Hall," "Italians in Hollywood," "Culture" and "Dago!" Exhibit cases display historic artifacts and provide in-depth accounts. The stories are accompanied by about 1,000 images, many of them rare or never before published, and include relevant historical documents.

The entire exhibition is accessible online through Google Cultural Institute, something Gatto is especially proud of: "The walls of the museum are no longer a barrier," she says.



Two exhibits—"Dago!" and "Italians in Hollywood" focus on controversial topics not often included in the discourse about Italian Americans: the history of Italian discrimination in the United States, and the portrayal of Italian Americans in the media. The bittersweet "Dago!" examines the years of World War II, when many Italians who were not yet U.S. citizens were declared enemy aliens.

Meanwhile, their American-born sons were fighting in the U.S. military to defend America," Gatto says.

"Italians in Hollywood" illustrates how, while Italians had prominent roles in the development of the movie industry, their portrayal on screen was, and continues to be, mostly stereotypical. "Even if there's really no reality behind it, it's still considered fair game to portray Italians as mobsters and criminals," says Gatto.

One of the exhibits is entirely devoted to the history of the building that houses the museum, the Italian Hall, which is the oldest remaining structure from Los Angeles' Little Italy.

While the city's early Italian enclave no longer exists, swallowed by buildings, freeways, parking lots, and even a jail, the survival of the Italian Hall is especially relevant. Since its opening in 1908, the Hall served as the Italian community's social and cultural gathering place; it hosted countless receptions, banquets, weddings, and musical performances, and provided assistance and advice to Italians who had just made the move to the United States.

Several Italian organizations were headquartered there. When Italians began moving out of the downtown area to the suburbs, and new local community centers were created, the Italian Hall stopped being the community's focal point. Starting in the 1950s, the building was gradually abandoned and fell into disrepair. In 1989, it risked being demolished to make room for a commercial development. It was then that the local Italian community mobilized to save the building and, with it, an important part of Italian history in Los Angeles.

"The museum stands as a monument to the early Italian immigrants who founded our city," says Marcella Leonetti Tyler, the National Italian American Foundation's regional vice president for the Far-West Region South. She is one of the founders of the Historic Italian Hall Foundation, the non-profit established to promote awareness of the Italian Hall's historic significance and to raise funds for its restoration. "One of the things that this hall provides is the preservation of Italian heritage for future generations, and that's what we really had intended 25 years ago when we went to the Los Angeles City Council to get the authority to start this project."

It's a project that has required patience. It is a project that has encountered setbacks, including hostility toward the idea of having an Italian cultural center in an area that had become known as a Mexican marketplace; and, in more recent years, a water leak caused considerable damage to the building, putting the project on hold.

Showing the same resiliency of the early Italian immigrants, the foundation's members did not give in, and the IAMLA is now finally open.

"I had it in mind to do something big, and I did it," Sabato Rodia, one of the Italians mentioned in the museum's Culture exhibit, once said. He is the man behind the Watts Towers, 17 interconnected steel and mortar spiraling structures located in Watts, a neighborhood in South Los Angeles, considered one of the nation's finest works of folk art.

Like him, many other fellow countrymen who chose Southern California as their new home hoping to make a better life for themselves attained great things. The IAMLA is a tangible reminder of all that Italians have endured, achieved and ultimately contributed to the United States of America.

Silvia Donati is a freelance journalist and a contributing editor at ITALY Magazine. A native of Bologna, she divides her time between Italy and California, which she considers her second home. Silvia specializes in everything Italy-related and has a passion for Italian-American topics.

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Author Francis Marion Crawford's Coastal Calabrese Refuge and the Vampire Tales It Inspired

By Karen Haid

Arco Magno, the natural arch on the coast of San Nicola Arcella in the province of Cosenza

"And now I knew that those white, misty arms had been round me, too; I knew it in a flash, and I shuddered as I remembered that I had heard the night owl then, too. But it had not been the night owl. It was the cry of the Thing."

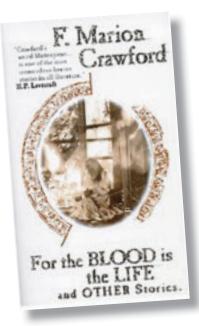
-Francis Marion Crawford

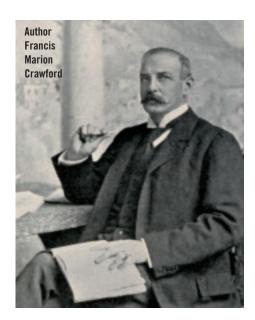
Its pointy fangs were poised on the moonlit hillside just beneath the rocky promontory. Far-off Transylvania, perhaps? The sea was eerily calm, but those looking down from the watchtower above enjoyed a cool breeze, or was it an icy chill? A story by Bram Stoker? No, not Romania, but Italy!

An imposing 16th-century tower perched on Calabria's rugged coastline set the scene for the classic vampire tale, "For the Blood Is the Life," by Francis Marion Crawford. First published by Collier's Weekly in 1905, this innovative story of supernatural horror still delivers a hair-raising shiver today. Crawford's straightforward, conversational style matter-of-factly draws the reader into an otherworldly realm and leaves no reason for doubt. The vampiress, called Cristina by day and The Thing by night, seduces her victims, lyrically and sensually, in the shadow of the thick-walled tower, starkly rectangular, sitting on a spit of land jutting out into the Tyrrhenian Sea, and dramatically surveilling the craggy coast of the town of San Nicola Arcella in the northwest corner of Calabria.

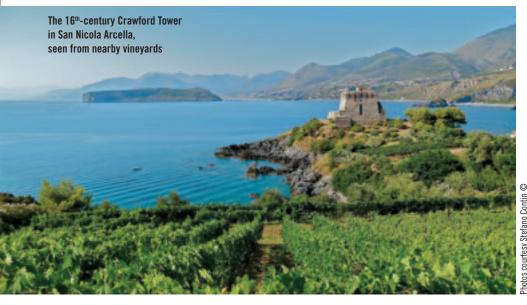
The Torre San Nicola Arcella was built as one of many towers along the region's long seashore. Planned at seven-and-a-half miles apart as protection from Saracen attacks, they were constructed in varying shapes and sizes and survive in diverse states of disrepair.

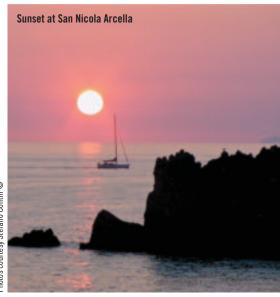
At the outset of his fantastical short story, Crawford describes this fortress built by Holy Roman Emperor Charles V: The tower stands in one of the loneliest spots in Southern











Italy, at the extremity of a curving, rocky promontory, which forms a small but safe natural harbor at the southern extremity of the Gulf of Policastro, and just north of Cape Scalea, the birthplace of Judas Iscariot, according to the old local legend. The tower stands alone on this hooked spur of the rock, and there is not a house to be seen within three miles of it.

Traveling in his yacht along the southern Italian coast down to Sicily, Crawford sailed past this tower many times. He liked stopping off at its bay, going ashore with his family and picnicking by the tower which was then locked up tight with heavy old chains. One day, in 1887, he quietly left his little party after lunch, making his way to the nearby village. To his wife's shock, he returned with a large, rusty key, declaring he had bought the place. Actually, he had leased it for 50 years at the rate of \$25 per year!

Crawford fixed up the tower in modest fashion, and used this simple, isolated spot as his refuge, a quiet place for writing, far away from modern life. More than a century later, the tower and surrounding landscape remain largely unchanged. The locals still pay homage to their illustrious former resident who even spoke the local dialect. They call the architectural landmark Torre Crawford. But who was this man who would choose such an abandoned, desolate place for inspiration?

Francis Marion Crawford was born

of American parents in 1854 in the Tuscan town of Bagni di Lucca, where a street has been named after him. He is descended from a distinguished New England family that includes the revolutionary war hero General Francis Marion. His father was the sculptor Thomas Crawford, who designed the Statue of Freedom on the top of the U.S. Capitol; and his aunt was Julia Ward Howe, who wrote the lyrics to the "The Battle Hymn of the Republic."

Crawford was a world traveler. He spoke 16 languages and, although he lived most of his life in Italy, saw himself as a patriotic American–not surprising considering his lineage. However, he was also a citizen of the world, and great Italophile. He loved Italy. >



The Italian peninsula and its people fueled his imagination and romantic spirit. The prolific writer set 20 novels on Italian soil and wrote four lengthy histories and numerous articles about Italy. His approach was meticulous, only writing about subjects of which he had intimate knowledge. For example, he learned the art of silversmithing, personally designing and hammering out metal forms to knowledgeably describe the protagonist's profession in his novel "Marzio's Crucifix" (1887). Likewise, with glassblowing in "Marietta" (1901), a love story set in Renaissance Venice. To learn winemaking, he went on an autumn walking tour through Calabria. He dressed as an itinerant and went from one vineyard to another, giving a hand to the locals while learning the craft.

Crawford is fondly remembered in San Nicola Arcella for the fame he brought to their little corner of the world. Italians know the vampire story in translation under the title "Cristina." Just up the coast, the citizens of Sant'Agnello, neighbor to the better-known Sorrento, also hold dear the memory of the American writer. His principal Italian residence, quite a contrast to the secluded Calabrian refuge, was a beautiful villa along the Sorrentine peninsula, today a hotel run by the Salesian Sisters of Don Bosco. He built this luxurious mansion for his family. For himself, he preferred simpler accommodations and, interestingly, when in New York, he felt more at home in Little Italy than on Fifth Avenue.

While Torre Crawford hasn't changed much in the past 100 years, the solitude that the author sought out and enjoyed is not what it once was, particularly during the summer tourist season. San Nicola Arcella and the larger, adjoining town of Scalea are exclusive beach locales in a region that doesn't lack for stunning shorelines. Just to the north, off the coast of Praia a Mare, is the captivating Isola di Dino with its many grottos. However, memorable amongst the spectacular is the large, natural arch called Arco Magno.

This chalky rock, weathered into a graceful arc of roughly 65 feet high, dramatically protects its pebbly beach with natural spring below. The iridescent water shimmering between azure and green invites beachgoers to take a dip in this natural Mediterranean playground. Unfortunately, expanding tourism can be at odds with the delicate environment, and the community of San Nicola Arcella wants to keep this precious gem intact for future generations.

The town of about 2,000 sits on a nearby hill along the area of coastline designated the Riviera dei Cedri for its noted cultivation of the citron. The original inhabitants would have been fishermen, but today, in addition to agriculture, the principal focus is tourism. To preserve the area's natural wonders, an effort is underway with a petition for signatures on change.org to request that the Arco Magno be recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Crawford discovered this area of incredible natural beauty over a century ago. Today's travelers can visit his former refuge, the Torre Crawford, by appointment, and perhaps find their own Calabrian inspiration in this captivating southern region.

Karen Haid is a free-lance writer focusing on all things Italian. She is the award-winning author of the non-fiction book "Calabria: The Other Italy" and blogs at www.CalabriaTheOtherItaly.com.



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PELLINI

TOP

Sicilian Wines

By Dick Rosano

Workers at one of Tasca d'Almerita's vineyards G oethe's oft-quoted description of Sicily is over 200 years old, but the mystery, intrigue and traditions of this island-once-nation continue to inspire artists to dream and lovers to swoon. From teeth-chattering eruptions of Mount Etna on the east coast, to the "bread basket" middle regions that supplied the Roman Empire with wheat, to the cinematically picturesque beaches of Trapani on the west coast, Sicily delivers exotic dishes and mouth-watering wines.

Although indigenous grapevines have long grown in Sicily's volcanic soils, most cultural historians credit the Greeks with introducing the vine to the island about 800 B.C.

But, what of the wines? Are there any nebbiolos such as grace the Barolo and Barbaresco of Piemonte? Or any sangiovese that make up the bulk of Tuscan Chianti? Or even arneis or freisa that we find in the north, or aglianico and primitivo from the south?

Well, no. But, then, Americans have not fully explored the unique grapes and wines of the region that Wine Enthusiast calls one of the "Ten Best Wine Destinations for 2017." Renowned for its bold flavors and silky textures, the nero d'avola alone could shoulder the entire wine market in Sicily. Many of the most highly prized Sicilian wines are based on this red grape. There's also Cerasuolo and Nerello Mascalese, Zibibbo and Grecanico, and the ephemeral Malvasia, known to produce one of Italy's greatest dessert wines.

It's settled that Italy is a source of great wines, but sub-regions and micro-climates like this rich environment are continually being discovered. Still, today, the quality of the wines in Sicily outpaces their prices—for now!

So many grapes being turned to wine by the island's 130 current wineries that there's not enough space in this column to list them. Which means wine lovers should focus more of their attention on the island to the south. Toward that end, here's a guide to show off some of Sicily's best wines. For easier buyer tracking, each wine's distributor is parenthetically noted.

"To have seen Italy without having seen Sicily is to not have seen Italy at all, for Sicily is the clue to everything." Johann Wolfgang von Goethe



TastingNotes

SPARKLING

Feudo di Santa Tresa (non-vintage) Il Grillo di Santa Tresa Brut (\$20). A gentle, soft bead introduces this fruity, lightly sweet sparkling wine. Score: 85 (Vias Imports)

WHITE

Donnafugata 2015 Anthìlia (\$16). Aromas and flavors of

cream, toast and light spice. Score: 86 (Folio Wine)

Donnafugata 2011 Chiarandà (Chardonnay; \$40). Typical of a Chardonnay, with pure fruit flavors

layered with vanilla and light spice. Score: 87 (Folio Wine)

Feudo di Santa Tresa 2015 Grillo Viognier Terre Siciliane (\$13).

Medium body, apricot and mango flavors, long finish. *Score: 85 (Vias Imports)*

Hauner 2015 Salina Bianco (\$18).

Scents of melon and mango, soft gentle mouthfeel, melon and mango continue on palate. *Score: 85 (Empson)*

MandraRossa 2015 Fiano Costa Dune (Fiano; \$11).

Floral approach, tropical fruit including mango and pineapple, green herb highlights. *Score: 87 (Palm Bay)*

MandraRossa 2015 Grillo (Grillo; \$14).

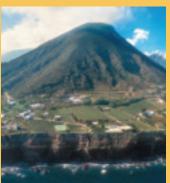
Fresh aromas of peaches and white apple, refreshing acidity, short on finish. *Score: 86 (Palm Bay)*

Tasca d'Almerita 2015 Regaleali Bianco (\$13).

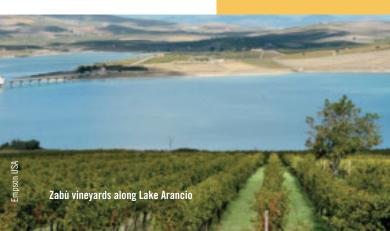
Tangy and forward, green apple and slice of lemon on the approach, hint of green herb. Score: 87 (Winebow)

Tenuta Rapitala 2015 Grillo (\$14).

Light bodied and refreshing, light melon and peach flavors. A hint of lime on mid-palate. Bright and brisk. *Score: 87 (Wildman)*



Tasca d'Almerita's Capofaro estate



Hauner Winery owner Carlo Hauner Jr. and Vineyard Manager Stefano Mirenda, whose vineyards are on Sicily's Aeolian Islands.

Famed Tuscan consultant Carlo Ferrini is the winemaker at Le Casematte Winery near Messina

USA Empson

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Lucio, Giuseppe and Alberto Tasca of the Tasca d'Almerita wineries

Brothers Mario and

Michele Faro founded the

Pietradolce Winery in 2005



ROSÉ

Le Casematte 2015 **Rosematte** (Nerello Mascalese; \$20).

Pale salmon, floral aromas, impression is one of pink champagne without the bubbles. Score: 86 (Empson)

Tasca d'Almerita 2016 Le Rosé di Regaleali (\$14).

Light bodied, bright fruit, tangy acidity with a lemon zest on finish. Score: 86 (Winebow)

RED

Baglio del Sole 2014 Nero d'Avola (Nero d'Avola; \$15). Evolving aromas of red fruit and soft spice, tart but even on palate, flavors of cranberry and blackberry. Score: 86 (Vias Imports)

Donnafugata 2011 Mille e Una Notte (Nero d'Avola, Petite Verdot, Syrah, other red grapes; \$80).

Huge wine, with black cherry, licorice, coffee, and mint on the nose with intense black fruit flavors. Score: 92 (Folio Wine)

Donnafugata 2014 Sedàra (Nero d'Avola, some Cabernet, Merlot, Syrah, and other red grapes; \$16). Earthy aromas, hints of cranberry and black cherry, dry but slightly tart on finish. Score: 86 (Folio Wine)

Donnafugata 2015 Sherazade

(Nero d'Avola; \$20). Rich red fruit scent, earth tones with oak and vanilla on nose, cherries, plums and light finish. Score: 85 (Folio Wine)

Donnafugata 2011 Tancredi

(Cabernet Sauvignon, Nero d'Avola, Tannat, and other red grapes; \$40).

Black cherry and blackberry aromas accented by leather and earth, slight tobacco hint on black fruit palate. Score: 88 (Folio Wine)

Feudi del Pisciotto 2012 Giambattista Valli (Cerasuolo; \$33).

Forest floor aromas, brilliant red fruit and tobacco accents, velvety mouthfeel. Score: 88 (Vias Imports)

Feudi del Pisciotto 2013 Nero d'Avola (Nero d'Avola; \$35).

Deep cherry scent, intense flavors of cranberry and plum, toasty oak accent. Score: 87 (Vias Imports)

Le Casematte 2014 Faro (\$34).

Dense and chewy, earthy scents of wood floor and herb, flavors tend toward black fruit, light tannins on finish. Score: 85 (Empson)

Le Casematte 2015 Nero d'Avola (Nero d'Avola; \$13).

Tangy and forward, ripe red fruit on nose, tangy acidity complements the broad red fruit flavors. Score: 86 (Empson)

Hauner 2014 Hierà (Alicante 60%, Nocera 30%, Nero d'Avola 10%; \$20).

Richly textured, aromatic and forward, crushed blackberry flavors accented by light acidity. Score: 86 (Empson)

MandraRossa 2014 Cartagho (Nero d'Avola; \$25).

Lightly spicy nose, earthy flavors, including toast and forest floor, subtle raspberry flavors on gentle palate impression. Score: 88 (Palm Bay)

MandraRossa 2015 Nero d'Avola Costa Dune (\$12).

Bright and floral on nose, fruity & forward, slight pepper accent, soft focused tannins. Score: 86 (Palm Bay)

Pietradolce 2013 Archineri (100% Nerello Mascalese; \$37).

Gutsy and robust, dark fruit with light accents of herb and earth. Score: 86 (Empson)

Pietradolce 2014 Contrada Rampante Etna Rosso (100% Nerello Mascalese; \$37).

Medium red, rustic but with an elegant fragrance, cherries, plums, a touch of cardamom. Score: 88 (Empson)

Pietradolce 2013 Vigna Barbagalli Etna Rosso (100% Nerello Mascalese; \$105).

Scents of earth, roasted coffee. and crushed walnuts, dark brooding flavors of cranberry, blackberry, and plums, accented with eucalyptus and brown spice. Score: 94 (Empson)

Planeta 2015 Cerasuolo di Vittoria (Cerasuolo; \$24).

Delicious aromas and flavors, medium body, hints of cherries and raspberries on palate. Score: 85 (Palm Bay)

Planeta 2013 Eruzione 1614 (Nerello Mascalese; \$35).

Dark fruit and white pepper on nose, cranberries, ripe bing cherries, slight pepper on finish. Score: 86 (Palm Bay)

Planeta 2015 Frappato (Frapato; \$22). Fruity, cherry flavors,

simple and direct. Score: 84 (Palm Bay)

Tasca d'Almerita 2014 Regaleali

Nero d'Avola (\$13). Aromatic and spicy, black cherry focus, light and focused. Score: 85 (Winebow)

Tasca d'Almerita 2014 Lamùri Nero d'Avola (\$20).

Ripe red fruit, herb and forest accents, a bit tangy and precocious. Score: 87 (Winebow)

Tasca d'Almerita 2012 Rosso del Conte (\$70).

A brilliant approach of red berries and herbs, licorice, black coffee and leather accompany the dense red fruit, last kiss of mint on finish. <u>Score:</u> 91 (Winebow)

Tenuta Rapitala 2014 Nero d'Avola Alta (\$23).

Cranberry, tar, and cigar smoke on nose, medium body, plums, cherries, and licorice on palate. Beautifully balanced, rich, velvety finish. Score: 91 (Wildman)

Tenuta Rapitala 2014 Nadir Syrah (\$18).

Very elegant, smooth on the approach, but with hints of bacon and dried cherries. Soft kiss of licorice on finish. *Score: 91(Wildman)*

Tenuta Rapitala 2015 Nero d'Avola Campo Reale (\$14).

Rustic aromas of roasted nuts, dried herbs, and wild fruit, explosion of cherry flavors, with soft finish. *Score: 87 (Wildman)*

Vigneti Zabù 2014 Il Passo (70% Nerello Mascalese, 30% Nero d'Avola; \$20).

Deep red, woody scent accented by mint, blackberries and cranberries on palate, intensely fruity but velvety smooth. Score: 90 (Empson)

DESSERT

Colosi 2009 Passito di Salina Malvasia delle Lipari (375ml ; \$40).

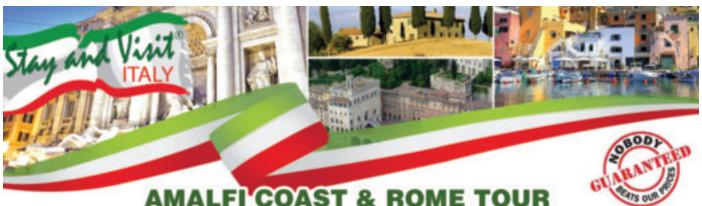
Delicious honey, vanilla, apricot aromas and flavors, full-bodied, medium sweet, long floral finish. *Score : 92 (Vias Imports)*

Donnafugata 2013 Ben Ryé Passito di Pantelleria (Zibibbo, 375 ml; \$40).

Intense and floral on approach, apricots and candied fruit, accent by dried fig on finish. Score: 92 (Folio Wine)

Planeta 2014 Passito di Noto (Moscato Bianco, 375ml; \$41).

Creamy and mouth filling, vanilla, apricot and mango sweetness with hint of ginger in mid-palate. *Score: 90 (Palm Bay)* Dick Rosano's columns have appeared for many years in The Washington Post and other national publications. His series of novels set in Italy capture the beauty of the country, the flavors of the cuisine, and the history and traditions of the people. He has traveled the world but Italy is his ancestral home and the insights he lends to his books bring the characters to life, the cities and countryside into focus, and the culture into high relief. Whether it's the workings of the winery in "A Death in Tuscany," the azure sky and Mediterranean vistas in "A Love Lost in Positano," the intrigue in "Hunting Truffles," or the bitter conflict of Nazi occupation in "The Secret of Altamura," Rosano puts the life and times of Italy into your hands.



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+ VENICE EXTENSION

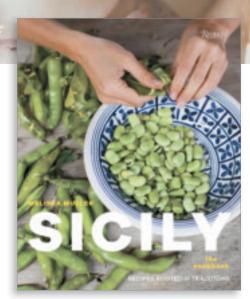


the fall merican alian fall merican Neader Photography by Sara Remington Autumn leaves, comfy sweaters and sweatshirts, fresh crisp air, a crackling fire, family together for Thanksgiving, The World Series, truffles, Octoberfest beers, fall festivals, walking weather, pumpkin pie, empty beaches, picking apples, chestnut vendors, the color orange, football season, the grape harvest, candy corn, there are lots of reasons why Fall is a cool season, including that weather-wise it's cool.

And here's another reason: If you need an excuse to read books, Fall qualifies.

We think we've found some titles that qualify as well. All are recently published books written by Italian American or Italian authors, or are of interest to Italian American readers, or all of the above. For each book, we provide the book cover, a brief but telling passage, and our short review meant only to whet your appetite.

Buona lettura!



Sicily: The Cookbook By Melissa Muller Rizzoli; 336 pages; \$40

> I have yet to meet a home cook on the island who can provide specific quantities of ingredients or exact cooking temperatures and times of these old family recipes. Such details are factors that need to be felt with the senses, with a sort of culinary intuition....

Soon as you start paging through "Sicily: The Cookbook" to check out its recipes, you'll discover much more than a cookbook. Combining classic and contemporary recipes with her informative, astute narrative, author and chef Melissa Muller tells the story of Sicily's food, history and culture plus the background story of her experience and lifelong passion for this unique Mediterranean island.

See, Muller knows Sicilian food firsthand, starting in childhood. She grew up spending summers in Sant'Anna di Caltabellotta, the Sicilian village where her grandmother was born. Since college and culinary school, she has run three acclaimed Manhattan restaurants, including Eolo Seasonal Sicilian Kitchen and Pastai. Always, Sicily has been the inspiration for her culinary quests, so much so that she followed her heart (and taste buds) to remote, rural Sicily where she now lives on an organic farm.



But back to the cookbook. Its 10 chapters start with an insightful explanation of the use of essential ingredients in Sicilian cooking—from oils, herbs, nuts and fruits to must-make condiments and sauces such as caper pesto, onion marmalade and anchovy sauce. The rest of the chapters are divided into stories, histories and exceptional recipes under headings ranging from Breads & Savory Bites and Antipasti to Seafood, Meat and Pasta.

Turn to almost any page to find authentic easy-to-follow recipes (with specific quantities and directions), often accompanied by knockout full-color photos. Maybe try Muller's grandmother's *mbriulata*, a rolled bread filled with fennel sausage and braised Swiss chard. Or the picture-perfect and delicious *insalata di mare*, a Sicilian seafood salad with octopus, scallops, calamari and mussels served on a spreading of avocado cream. Or the *arancine cu i spinaci*, a variation on the traditional Sicilian rice ball using spinach rice balls stuffed with provolo cheese. Or the *pesce spada ale staminate*, a sweet-and-sour swordfish with mint sauce. Or the *masala cu cioccolatu*, an intense seared pork tenderloin with Sicilian chocolate sauce. Or.... well, you get the idea.

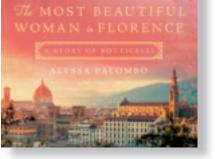
Besides chapter after chapter of recipes like those, Muller also postscripts recommending some of her favorite pastry shops and restaurants in Sicily, festivals in Sicily, and sources for buying some harder-to-find ingredients.

While the dimensions of this book (8.8 inches by 10.3 inches), along with the gorgeous photography of Sicily, Sicilians and mouth-watering food, suggest perfect coffee-table enter-tainment, odds are it won't take long for these glossy pages to get stained in busy kitchens. This will quickly become your reach-to cookbook for Sicilian fare.

-Don Oldenburg



Lou



The Most Beautiful Woman in Florence: A Story of Botticelli By Alyssa Palombo St. Martin's Griffin; 320 pp.; \$15.99

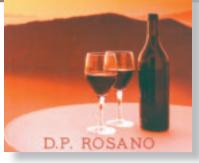
Slowly, he slipped the cloth from the face the painting. In that instant, Lorenzo de' Medici was struck speechless a sight no man could claim having witnessed before.

In this engaging work of historical fiction, Palombo fills in gaps about the life of the famously beautiful Simonetta Cattaneo, the muse of Renaissance painter Sandro Botticelli.

Palombo's fluid prose transports the reader to 15th-century Florence, a world in which privilege ruled and a woman's beauty was valued far more than her mind. After being thrust into the illustrious de' Medici circle through her marriage to the handsome and well-connect-ed Marco Vespucci, "la bella Simonetta," as she has been known, fought against this constraint from the inside.

Still, thanks to her combination of brains and beauty, she became the object of desire of several men, including the dashing Giuliano de' Medici. Her relationship with Botticelli, however, is what led to her immortalization on his canvas in one of the world's most famous paintings: "The Birth of Venus."

"The Most Beautiful Woman in Florence" is a well-written, captivating, coming-of-age story about a short but remarkable life; Simonetta died at the age of 22. Lovers of romance and Renaissance Italy will enjoy this read. — Michelle Fabio



A Love Lost in Positano By D.P. Rosano Creativia; 130 pages; \$10.99

I feel like I've spent my whole life with Gaia. Yet I can't picture her – or me – in any place other than Positano.

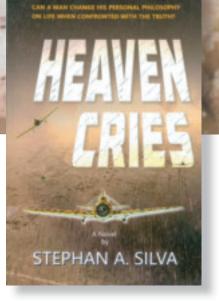
Halfway through this love story full of a fugue's counterpoint, a mystery novel's suspense, and a travelogue's delight, you'll find yourself wondering whom you might cast onscreen in a romance that alights, then dissipates, within days.

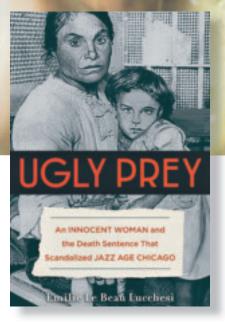
War-weary American translator Danny D'Amato leaves Kabul to replenish his spirit in Positano. He meets Gaia, a mysterious, multilingual beauty. The next days become a romantic blur on the Amalfi Coast. One morning, Gaia disappears.

For three years, they search for one other in Positano, chasing after an imagined future. Danny's journal notes provide counterpoint to letters Gaia leaves behind for him. Other voices join in as the mystery slowly unravels. Hotel guest Mike leaves a journal with his own story of hope. Desk clerk Umberto observes and soothes frayed nerves. Hotel owner Piero stocks blank books as plentifully as other guest amenities. Nonetheless, the past impacts the present as fault lines run like fine lines underneath Positano's shimmering surface.

The wine columnist for this magazine, Rosano writes succulent descriptions that will have you seeking Sorrento lemons, seafood, tiramisu and limoncello as you savor each page.

- Kirsten Keppel





Heaven Cries By Stephan A. Silva Penmore Press; 382 pages; \$19.50 paperback

> He looked into the demitasse and saw the bitter black liquid separating from its brown foam. He realized the world was getting more polarized and violent. Things were not as simple as life had been on top of the mountain in his youth. Since Mussolini's march on Rome, Artemio had thought that things in Italy were getting better. Tonight had proved this was not the case.

Accounts of courage and sacrifice of Italians immigrants who left their homeland for America in search of a better life abound. But what of those who stayed behind? That's the underlying, compelling plot of Stephan Silva's debut novel that takes readers into the lives of Italians caught up in 1940s fascist Italy and World War II.

A fictionalized account of the adventures of the author's great uncle, a Regia Aeronautica fighter pilot, the novel tells the dramatic story of Artemio Battaglia, who grew up on a farm near Piacenza. At the war's outbreak, patriotic Artemio and his college buddies enlist in Italy's Air Force. Soon, they're fighter pilots in North Africa. Artemio is shot down, rescued in the desert, and severely wounded at Tobruk. Discharged, he follows his conscience and joins the partisan movement.

Silva fills the novel with full-blown characters, from Artemio, the idealistic hero, to best friend Mario, a fascist rich boy, to beautiful Gabriella, a resistance fighter who, like Artemio, is a traveler "along the road of good and evil."

The book is loaded with history, from life inside Mussolini's fascist Italy, to northern Italy's partisan brigades; and its characters and unexpected twists keep you returning. By the end, while idealism has suffered, love survives. — Don Oldenburg Ugly Prey: An Innocent Woman and the Death Sentence That Scandalized Jazz Age Chicago By Emilie Le Beau Lucches Chicago Review Press; 336 pages; \$26.99 hardcover

In October, Sabella would be led up a staircase onto a wooden stage and positioned above a trapdoor. Her hands would be tied behind her back, and her legs bound together.

Emilie Le Beau Lucchesi's true-life book, "Ugly Prey," is a fascinating courtroom account about Italian immigrant and mother Sabella Nitti, who was arrested in 1923 for murdering her husband, Francesco, near Chicago. Nitti was also the first woman sentenced to hang in Chicago.

Lucchesi's detailed prose coupled with diligent research examines a case of injustice, ethnic stereotyping and classism, where Nitti was labeled "ugly" and unclean by reporters covering the trial.

The case against Nitti was based on circumstantial evidence from a decomposed male body found in a catch basin in 1923, near the border of two towns, Berwyn and Stickney. With an aggressive deputy sheriff and prosecutors, a hardworking farm woman who didn't fit into the societal norms of "beauty" falls into the perception of "she's guilty" by the all-male jury. Nitti's first defense attorney was lackluster and that, in turn, led to a guilty verdict. Attorney Helen Cirese (one of the founding members of the Justinian Society of Lawyers) stepped in with a small group of attorneys for the appeal and tries to save Nitti from the gallows.

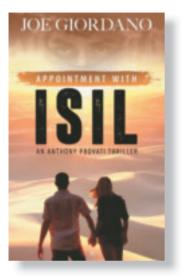
Lucchesi conveys personalities, emotions and courtroom procedures so well that any non-legal layperson will find this story a compelling read. And, for all the legal eagles out there, this is a worthwhile book for its historical content. It's an insightful exploration of immigrant intolerance and the legal process that reverberates even today. — *Robert Fanelli Bartus Jr.*

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Appointment with ISIL: An Anthony Provati Thriller

By Joe Giordano Harvard Square Editions; 240 pages; \$22.95



I surprised him with two sharp stabs in the gut with my stick. He went down, and I took off. I'd avoided a beating that would've put me into Bellevue Hospital....

In his latest novel, "Appointment with ISIL: An Anthonyl Provati Thriller," Joe Giordano delivers an absorbing storyl with abundant scenes of nefarious activities and subplots. Russian and Italian mobsters, duplicity, and terrorists possessing two dirty bombs destined for holyl sites, provide for a tantalizing read.

Good-hearted New York City piano player and gallery owner Anthony Provati is a likable character with Casanoval tendencies. His amorous interlude with Sophia, the girlfriend of Russian Mob boss Gorgan Malakhov, proves to be a life-altering experience.

Malakhov and his bodyguard, Zmeya, have a thirst for revenge after Provati stabs Zmeya to defend himself in a Manhattan neighborhood. Meanwhile, Sophia wants Malakhov dead. Through a series of circuitous events that involves a vendetta and a stolen Vermeer painting, Provati embarks on a globetrotting journey where his life intertwines with terrorism.

The author off the 2015 novel "Birds off Passage," Giordano cleverly infuses the plot-thickens storyline with unforgettable characters and enough tension to keep youn eyes glued to the pages. To keep the drama on edge, he adds NYC mobster Uncle Frank (Provati's uncle); *guappd* off Naples, Italy, Giuliettal Zangara; Israeli and Russian government agents; a smuggling art collector living in Malta; and a Soviet Foxtrot submarine.

With Giordano's imaginative writing breathing life into the narrative, you'll soon realize why "Thriller" is in the title.

-Robert Fanelli Bartus Jr.

NEW ACADEMIA



ANNA LAWTON

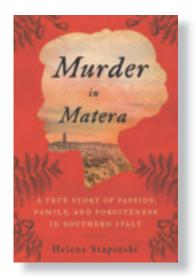
"Spellbinding. Mysterious, brave and captivating." —Joe McGinniss Jr., author of Carousel Court

After Elena Ferrante, another powerful Italian voice brings us **a tale of immigration** with two women characters at its center, set against the background of American history from the late 1960s to 2011.

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Murder in Matera

By Helene Stapinski HarperCollins Publishers; 289 pages; \$12.99 paperback



We would be the first in four generations to visit the town of our ancestors, on the arch of Italy's boot. Vita had left and had never looked back. And neither had her children or grandchildren or even her great grandchildren.... I had no clue about the isolated world I was stepping into, or how long it would actually take to find Vita's true story, a story more tragic—and eventually more triumphant – than anything I could have imagined.

Helen Stapinski's "Murder in Matera" touches on notions that are all-too-familiar to many Italian Americans: that insatiable desire to learn about your family that came from Italy, and a wonder as to why they ever left.

In Stapinski's case, however, the answer to that second question was a shock: her great-great-grandmother Vita fled southern Italy in 1892 after committing murder. The reader follows Stapinski in this nonfiction account of investigating her family's history (and Vita's dark deed) as she travels to the region of Basilicata, searching for answers.

The author, a native of New Jersey, tells the story with a distinct voice and a sense of humor that is necessary when exploring southern Italy, its vibrant culture, and its people. In the end, Stapinsky realizes that there is much more to her great-great-grandmother's story—and to her own, as well.

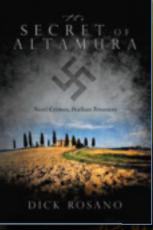
This memoir is perfect for readers intrigued by murder mysteries and rediscovering family, along with plenty of helpings of boisterous, southern Italian culture.

—Danielle DeSimone

"Dick Rosano stages mysteries with the insider knowledge, finesse and flare of the accomplished wine, food and travel writer he is. And it all happens in Italy!"

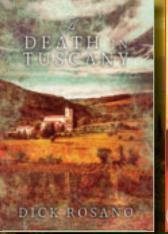


Bodies of slain truffle hunters are showing up. An investigation finds the multi-million dollar truffle harvest has been stolen.

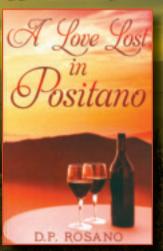


An art collector in modern-day Italy seeks a secret hidden from the Nazis in 1943. Evil stalks those who try to reveal it.

Available on Amazon.com



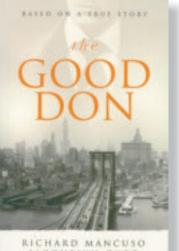
A young man mourns the suspicious death of his grandfather while preparing to take the reins of his family's Tuscany winery.



In the sunshine and blue waters of Positano, two strangers fall in love. Then, suddenly, she's gone. And years of searching begin.

The Good Don

By Richard Mancuso and Jacquelyn Gutc Outskirts Press; \$15.95; 130 pages



ACQUELYN GUTC

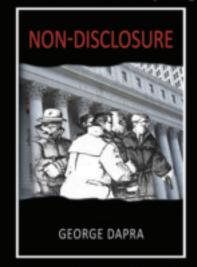
"We need to have a long, long talk," he said. "You know how I always called myself Honest Sal? I want you to know I wasn't always honest Sal."

The set up for Richard Mancuso's debut novella is an 87-year-old father asking his adult son to fly home to Upstate New York where he needs to tell him the truth about his past. That begins the story of the fascinating life of Sal Mancuso, and a classic tale of early 20th century struggles of Italian immigrants in America.

Think 1929, The Great Depression, a time when so many nationwide were out of work, and no less so in the immigrant Henry Street neighborhood in Manhattan's Lower East Side. At age 15, Sal dropped out of school to find work to help his family survive. But the entrepreneurial kid quickly progressed from peddling papers at a newsstand, to selling his own race sheet, earning enough to take care of his family, and aunt and uncles. He became a neighborhood bigshot, his kindness and discreet loans helping to get dozens of families through tough times. But loan making tugged him dangerously close to the dark world of organized crime.

Described as fiction "based on a true story," the book reads like a true story maybe fictionally tuned. Richard Mancuso's characters are believable, personal. His neighborhood comes alive. The narrator's voice is so down-to-earth and credible that the novel's pages practically turn themselves. By the end, you'll wish there were more to turn. *Don Oldenburg*

Take a wild ride with former Witness Security Inspector George Dapra for a rare, insider's look into the Witness Security Program.



An absolutely riveting account....George Dapra's first-hand experience as a United States Marshal in the battle against the Organized Crime Syndicate and al Qaeda is as compelling as it is engaging. — Col. Cole C. Kingseed co-author of "Beyond the Band of Brothers: The War Memoirs of Major Dick Winters"

Available on Amazon or Outskirtspress.com/nondisclosure



Sofia Coppola Directing

By Maria Garcia

The Filmmaker's Latest: The Beguiled







Sofia Coppola

wrote and directed her first feature film, "The Virgin Suicides," (1999) at the age of 28.

It was an adaptation of Jeffrey Eugenides' novel in which the female characters, five sisters from a strict Roman Catholic family, become objects of desire for a group of neighborhood boys. The narrative voice of Coppola's film is male, mirroring that of the novel. Except for brief shots of them at home, the girls are seen solely from the boys' point of view. In scene after scene, the writerdirector depicts their voyeurism so that, as the movie unfolds, the audience witnesses a shocking process of dehumanization. >

Clockwise from op left: Nicole Kidman in Sophia Coppola's Civil War-period drama "The Beguiled"; Colin Farrell in "The Beguiled"; Kirsten Dunst in Sophia Coppola's "The Virgin Suicides"; Screenshot from "The Beguiled" CINEMA

Near the end of "The Virgin Suicides," after the sisters die, the boys continue to fantasize about them by rifling through family pictures they find discarded outside their home. This act of exploitation is illustrated by Coppola through head shots of the boys inserted into photographs of the girls. No sexual overtones are attached to these images; they are presented as a seizure of the sisters' identities.

In fact, the movie is entirely devoid of eroticism, even when one of the sisters has sexual encounters on the roof so that the boys can see her. This is after she is seduced and cruelly abandoned by a boy at school. The result is an overturning of Eugenides' male gaze, and a decidedly incisive examination of the ways in which women are objectified.



Oscar-winning composer Carmine Coppola, became the first woman to be nominated in the Best Director category for "Lost in Translation." It was her second film, about an aging actor (Bill Murray) and a young woman just out of college (Scarlett Johansson) who find each other at a Tokyo hotel bar. She did not win the director prize, but instead received the Oscar for Best Original Screenplay. She

ic castration, he briefly goes on to terrorize them. The women's desire for McBurney (Colin Farrell) is never in doubt; but Coppola treats this as entirely natural, as she does the competition for his attention, even among the young girls.

In an era when women and girls led sheltered lives, and their relations with men were determined by strict social conventions, McBurney is a nov-



The consensus at the time was that Coppola had made a credible debut film, yet few of the mostly male critics grasped the feminist intent of the young writer-director's work. In interviews, Coppola was frequently asked about her father's collaboration on the project. Francis Ford Coppola was the film's producer, a role that may signal some artistic control, although producers generally act as advisors, or as problem solvers, especially during production when small mistakes can prove disastrous for a movie's budget. Sofia Coppola was the picture of grace. Perhaps feeling compelled to respond to the question of her father's role, she said in one in-

terview that he had quelled her fears over an early cut of the movie. In 2004, Sophia Coppola, the daughter of an Oscar-winning film-

maker, and granddaughter of the

is one of only two women who represents a third-generation Oscar-winning family-Angelica Houston being the first. In 2017, she garnered the Best Director prize at Cannes for "The Beguiled," based on Thomas Cullinan's novel. She is the only American woman ever to win that award.

"The Beguiled" is not a remake of the film that starred Clint Eastwood. In the same way that Coppola subtracted the eroticism of Eugenidies' novel, she erases the male fantasy that is the core of Cullinan's story. In Coppola's movie, set during the Civil War, a group of Southern women and their students, in a school led by headmistress Miss Martha (Nicole Kidman), save the life of a wounded Union soldier. The deserter, who is also a mercenary, returns the favor by pursuing each of the women in turn. Later, accusing them of a symbol-

elty and, absent the war, might present the opportunity for a garden party. Indeed, the women make a fine dinner for him, and dress up to celebrate his recovery-and his planned departure.

Actually, McBurney is the wounded beast in their midst, encased in charm and muscle. He may represent a danger to their safety, but at first he is hobbled and confined to his bed. Miss Martha soon perceives his manipulation of the women, which imperils the solidarity that allows them to survive. The film unfolds from her point of view, and McBurney is hers to tame.

Kidman's intelligence as an actor hints at so much below the surface of her character's stern demeanor that the audience is never sure whether she will surrender to the chaos Mc-Burney represents. Just when it seems that she might, Edwina (Coppola regular Kirsten Dunst), her rival for

his sexual favors, appears, and McBurney attempts an apologetic embrace. Edwina pushes him away, and quite by accident sends him down a flight of stairs. That fall reopens his wound.

In contrast to "The Virgin Suicides," in which the characters likely perceived their objectification and, more significantly internalized it, in "The Beguiled," the pattern of male objectification of the women leads to palpable violence, an outward threat to the characters' safety. These are women who have lived with the threat of violence from the war for three years. Miss Martha opens the door to hungry Confederate soldiers wielding a pistol. She and Edwina, and their students, are not about to turn that fear inward and commit suicide.

Coppola's films, all narrative features, are distinguished by an astonishing singularity of vision, and a visual style that is always reflective of her subject matter. In "The Beguiled," for instance, Louisiana's misty delta suggests a concealed, feminine domain. Coppola is a skilled screenwriter as well, and one of only a few prominent female writer-directors (along with Italian Alice Rohrwacher) to consistently feature strong female characters, even in films such as "Lost in Translation" and "Somewhere" (2010) that have male leads. The latter is also about an actor (Stephen Dorff) whose extraordinary adolescent daughter (Elle Fanning) matures him. The filmmaker often works with the same actors, including Kirsten Dunst and Elle Fanning, both of whom appear in "The Beguiled." She prefers to shoot on-location, and on 35mm. "The Beguiled" reflects the latter preference-and Miss Martha's Antebellum mansion is real.

"The Beguiled" is a feminist reading of male deception, and women are likely to see it quite differently than men. In the opening sequence, 12-year-old Amy (Oona Laurence) is gathering mushrooms in the woods when she sees McBurney. Utterly without guile, and not unlike Little Red Riding Hood meeting the wolf, Amy is inveigled into helping him to his feet. Female viewers will see a desperate solider leaning on her for support, and his potential for violence against an innocent girl. (At the press screening, some female critics visibly flinched.) Male viewers, who as boys were not subject to cautionary fairy tales about male bestiality, will understand Amy's actions as the sensible choice. As for the self-contained Miss Martha who likely read Charles Perrault's "Bluebeard" in the original French (the language taught at her school)-well, you know how that ended.

Maria Garcia is a New York City-based author, writer and frequent contributor to Ambassador magazine. Her reviews and feature articles also appear regularly in Film Journal International and Cineaste. Her 2015 book, "Cinematic Quests for Identity: The Hero's Encounter with the Beast," is a feminist reading of the classic journey. Visit her website at mariagarciawrites.com.







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All-Star Michael Conforto

From a Dismal N.Y. Mets' Season Emerges the Team's Leader

By Wayne Randazzo

ew York Mets outfielder Michael Conforto won't ever forget June 25, 2016. After an exhilarating couple of months as a rookie in 2015, which included two home runs in game four of the World Series, he found himself headed back to the minors.

Conforto's sophomore year in the big leagues got off to a blazing start as he ripped through the season's first month with a slash line of .365/.442/.676. But by June 25, those numbers had careened to .222/.296/.431. It was a quick and painful slide from grace and a trip to the Mets' affiliate in Las Vegas.

"I gained a little perspective," Conforto said. "I was told by so many people to use it as an opportunity to work on some things and take the situation to use it as a positive. That's what I took away from it."

That perspective paid off. Fast forward to July 2, 2017. One year and one week after his descent to Triple-A, Conforto was headed to the Major League Baseball All-Star Game.

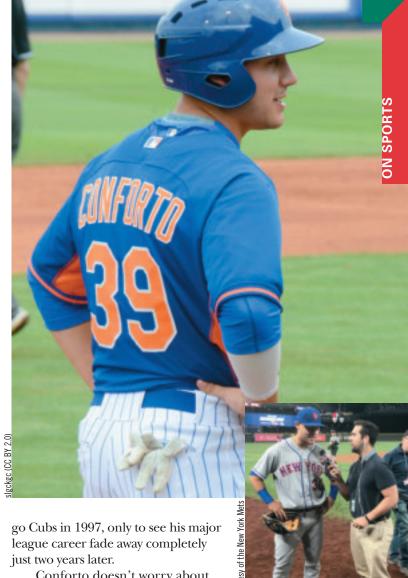
In a season that has already seen Conforto become just the third Mets player ever to hit 25 or more home runs by age 24, his trip to Miami for the Midsummer Classic made him the only Mets All-Star representative.

"It's pretty awesome," Conforto said. "I've watched some of these guys growing up. It's a pretty special thing for me. To be able to represent the Mets and the city of New York is really special."

Conforto was one of 28 first-time All-Stars in this year's game, as MLB once again lifted the curtain on a new slew of stars. Aaron Judge of the New York Yankees and Cody Bellinger of the Los Angeles Dodgers impressed as rookies with their might, but Conforto's journey makes his just a little more special.

As Judge and Bellinger have both slowed down in the second half of the 2017 season, perhaps now they are finding the blockade that Conforto did following his enormous success at the end of the 2015 season and postseason.

Baseball is a humbling game. It's up to the players to make the adjustments on the field and get back to the success that they are capable of. For every Michael Conforto who turned a Triple-A demotion into an All-Star nod, there's a Kevin Orie, who came up as a star prospect with the Chica-



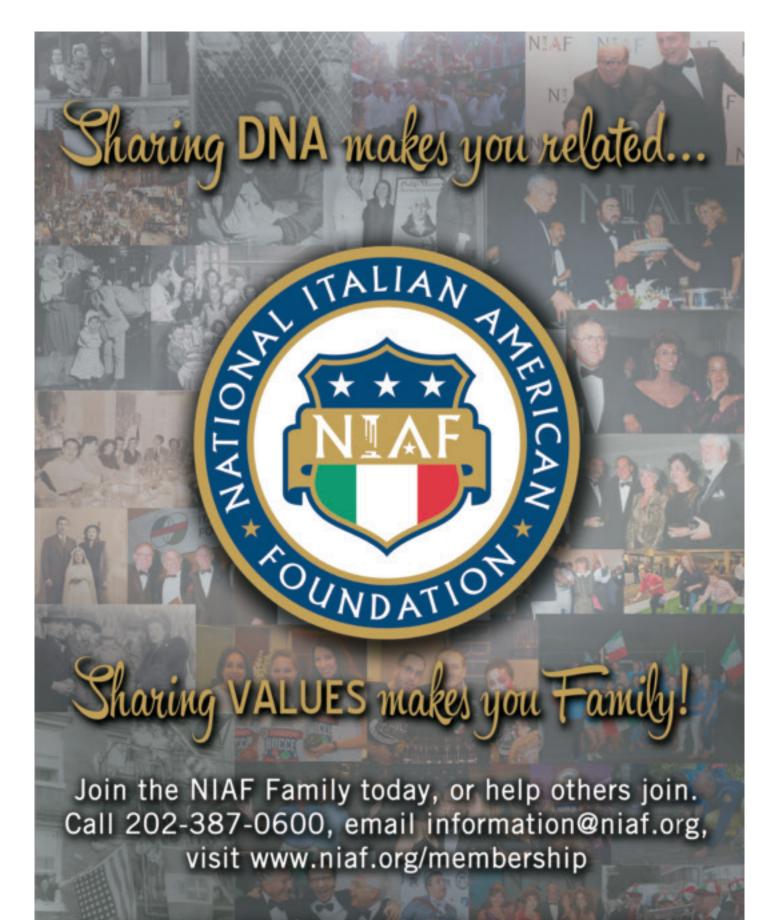
Conforto doesn't worry about those things. He just keeps hitting. The 12 home runs he hit from mid-July to mid-August were the second-most in the majors following the All-Star break, only behind the Marlins' Giancarlo Stanton.

Wayne Randazzo interviews Michael Conforto

As for the All-Star experience itself, Conforto did get a base hit, and nearly walked away with a free car as he had a chance to win the game for the National League in the bottom of the ninth inning. But he didn't. Seattle's Robinson Cano got the keys after a 10th-inning homer. Still, Conforto got the most invaluable thing of all—experience and the respect of his peers.

But baseball proved humbling again. In an August 24 game, Conforto dislocated his left shoulder, requiring surgery and months of rehab. Here's hoping there's always next season.

Wayne Randazzo is the New York Mets pregame and postgame show host and fill-in play-by-play announcer on WOR-AM. He's also a freelance television play-by-play announcer for ESPN and Big Ten Network. Related read: Randazzo's first-person column, "A Day in My Life," about being radio broadcaster for the New York Mets, in the Fall 2016 issue of Ambassador, is a classic.



The Amb. Peter F. Secchia Building - 1860 19th St. NW - Washington, D.C. 20009

Appreciation: Fred Rotondaro

By John M. Viola, NIAF President

I'll never forget the first time I had lunch with Alfred M. "Fred" Rotondaro. I scheduled a little time in the months preceding our 40th Anniversary NIAF Gala Weekend because I wanted to nominate Fred to receive an award that was very near and dear to my heart. It's an award we created upon my arrival at the Foundation to recognize those all-too-often unsung heroes of the Italian American community who have dedicated their lives, often behind the scenes, to serving Italian Americans everywhere with their good works. The NIAF Special Achievement Award in Community Leadership was meant to recognize those who had made their life's work about what they could do for other Italian Americans and the institutions that make our community what it is.

When I arrived for that lunch, it was with a dose of trepidation. Fred was an intimidating figure for me. In his 22 years as Executive Director of this Foundation, in the decades when NIAF grew from an organization finding its footing to one of the most important institutions not just in our community, but in the nation's capital, Fred was the straw that stirred the drink. He was the tireless heart and soul of our Foundation's formative decades.

I had known my two direct predecessors as the Foundation's Executive Director pretty well, both of whom I had the opportunity work with as a NIAF member since my teenage years. But Fred was always a figure from NIAF folklore, never an intimate that I had gotten to spend any time with. We met for an Italian lunch and I was quickly put at ease by how much we had in common.

Besides our deep love for and dedication to the Italian American community, we shared a sincere, thoughtful and deep Catholic faith. And above all, even though I had only been here three years toward his milestone 22, we could exchange the hilarious, frustrating, and endearing war stories that come with working for and with your own people day-in and day-out.

Fred was deeply humbled by the fact that we wanted to recognize him at an event as important as our 40th Anniversary Gala. In the weeks leading up to and following the event, he threw himself into our new friendship in ways that I would never have expected and will never forget. We started a constant e-mail chain between sharing with items of interest dealing with the community, our faith, and the random things that we encountered that made us think of one another. We had a few more lunches, and Fred and his wife Kathy invited me to their home when they hosted an event to support John Cabot University, another institution to which both gave so much of their time and energy.

Besides the convivial friendship, I found a great deal of solace and support having Fred as a sounding board and a mentor-a man who had gone through all of the ups and downs of my job for 22 years with a record of incomparable success. When I was anxious, he would calm me down. When I was overexcited, he would teach me the patience and wisdom he had acquired over the decades. When the struggles to build on the vision for our Foundation's future seemed overwhelming, Fred would help me to put them in perspective. And, in many ways, he taught me that our Foundation and its works are, and will always be, a mission and a movement greater than we are, greater than its component parts.

When I received the shocking



news of Fred's passing this summer, I immediately felt the incredible loss that our Foundation would suffer. Not just the loss of his incomparable experiences and stories, but the loss of a dear friend and an inspiration to so many people in the Italian American community.

On a personal note, I felt a loss that greatly outsized the amount of time that Fred and I got to spend together. Knowing he was there, just a phone call or e-mail away, was perhaps something that spoiled me a bit. I always knew that if things got hard I could turn to someone without ego and without agenda who had been there before, and in a job as unique as mine that is an all too rare source of comfort.

It breaks my heart to know that in one all-too-soon instance our community lost a great champion and I lost an irreplaceable friend and counselor. In the annals of our Foundation's proud history, many men and women have made indelible and uncountable contributions to who we are. I believe Fred Rotondaro belongs amongst the top of that list. And for my small part, I'll do all that I can to guarantee that his name, his contributions, and his memory remain ever alive at the National Italian American Foundation where he rightfully belongs amongst the pillars of who we are.





42ND NIAF'S ANNIVERSARY GALA PREVIEW

Come celebrate your heritage with us November 3-4, when the National Italian American Foundation hosts its singular, most special and engaging, annual weekend of Italian American pride! Did we mention fun? Yes, it is too much fun. It's the Biggest Italian Family Gathering of the Year!

Our 42nd Anniversary Gala takes place again at the fabulous Washington Marriott Wardman Park Hotel, in Washington, D.C. If you've come to any of our Galas in recent years, you already know these are life-changing, heartfelt events you will never forget.

How far we have progressed since 1975 when that small, visionary group of dedicated leaders came together to create a national organization designed to serve the Italian American community. The first NIAF Gala Dinner took place at The Washington Hilton and attracted more than 2,000 guests, including notables such as President Gerald Ford, presidential candidate Jimmy Carter, vice-presidential candidate Walter Mondale, and 150 Members of Congress. "Never before in history" has there been "a meeting with such political power present in one room," wrote Pulitzer Prize-winning Washington Post columnist Mary McGrory of that benchmark evening.

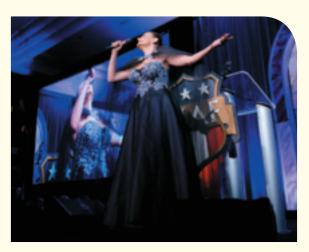
Now, NIAF invites you to join us this November to toast 42 years of fulfilling our mission as the only national organization dedicated to preserving and protecting the Italian American heritage, educating tomorrow's leaders of the Italian American community, speaking for Italian Americans in the Nation's Capital, and facilitating positive cultural, commercial and governmental connections between the United States and Italy. Don't be left out.

Today, the Italian American community is coming together like never before, working to guarantee that our Italian American story, heritage and values survive for our children and grandchildren, and beyond. That's what you support when you attend NIAF's Anniversary Gala!

But you'll join in on all the excitement, too. This year's Gala promises to be a weekend filled with guest stars, distinguished honorees, great entertainment and memorable moments! For two days, Italian Americans take over the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel with NIAF University sessions, a Friday-night Gala show with live entertainment and dancing, screenings from our Russo Brothers Italian American Film Grant winners, our famous all-day Expo Italiana festival including the crowd-magnet Mike's Deli free lunch, and wine tastings upon wine tastings!

It all comes together at Saturday evening's black-tie receptions and the anticipated NIAF 42nd Anniversary Gala Awards Dinner. Afterward, see you at the infamous After Gala Party, known to go all night long--Italian American style, fun and loud! If you haven't been there, well, you've missed out.

Make sure you don't miss out this year on all of the Gala events! Purchase your tickets today! Corporate sponsorships and program ads are still available at many price levels. For more information, contact Jerry Jones at 202-387-0600 or jerry@niaf.org. For the Gala's schedule of events and to register online, visit www.niaf.org/gala.





Ambassador

Carlo Butera & Band, Joe Piscopo, Lena Prima and Friends! It's the Friday Night Kickoff!

Prepare for a jazzy Friday night as NIAF kicks off its Anniversary Weekend by raising the roof with the Carlo Butera Ensemble's jazzy vibes and pounding the floor with the rousing New Orleans, dancecrazed, rockin' of Lena Prima (legend Louis Prima's daughter!) and her band. All the while, the amazing Joe Piscopo will bring back some of Sinatra's songbook and classic Italian greats! Australian-Italian tenor, songwriter, and musician Alfio, Italian tenor Carmelo Sorce and the Radio King Orchestra help make this one unforgettable evening not to miss!



The beat goes on late into the wee hours. Experience the 2017 Region of Honor, Sicily! Our open bars will be serving custom Italian cocktails! And check out the evening's selection of silent auction items and bid on once-in-a-lifetime live auction opportunities—including special trips to Italy!

What Insider's Know: NIAF's Dine Around list of nearby top-rated restaurants offers ticketholders to this event special dinner prices before the show! For a listing of participating restaurants, visit www.niaf.org/gala.

This ticketed event is open to the public. We are expecting a full house, so make your reservations now! Doors open at 9 p.m. For more information, call 202-939-3100 or buy tickets online at www.niaf.org/gala.



Expo Siciliana—Free! Open to the Public!

NIAF's annual Expo Italiana is now the largest Italian festival in the Nation's Capital and among the largest on the East Coast! Last year's Expo attracted more than 3,000 visitors! This year the focus is on Sicily, our Region of Honor!

We expect another huge, fun-loving, Italophile crowd! Gala guests staying at the Washington Marriott Wardman Park Hotel will find Expo Italiana an irresistible and easy place-to-go all day on Saturday, November 4. And the general public is encouraged to join in all the tastes, sights and sounds of Italian American life and of Sicily! Mingle among Sicilian and Italian American exhibitors. Meet guest stars! Taste foods and drinks, coffee and sweets provided by our premier partners, from Peroni Nastro Azzurro and Lavazza to DelGrosso Foods and Dolci Gelati, and the many exhibitors directly from Sicily!

Throughout the day, learn from experts about Italian dual citizenship, genealogy, language, and shop traditional Sicilian attire and travel programs. Visit the NIAF Exhibit of Italian American Culture. Watch a special Sicilian Marionette presentation by Tony De Nonno. Listen to the Sicilian Duo, Villa Palagonia. And take a look at the winning photos from NIAF's 2017 Photo Contest. Once again, Pinstripes of Georgetown is setting up a bocce court for your playing pleasure. And stop by the Expo photo booth for a photo of yourself! Expo Siciliana is the place to meet, mingle and feel at home during the NIAF Gala Weekend! This event is FREE and open to the public. No registration, no tickets to buy, just show up and enjoy! For more information, email sgordon@niaf.org



NIAF University

Spend a day exploring your Italian heritage at NIAF University! Join World Gelato Champion Gianluigi Dellacio of D.C.-based Dolci Gelati for a talk and tasting you won't forget. Learn basics of *la bella lingua* with the Italian Cultural Society of Washington, D.C. Enjoy a tasty cooking demo with chef and cookbook author Domenica Marchetti. Sit in on Sicilian history expert Gaetano Cipolla's lecture on Sicily's language and culture.

And check out the many sessions presented by the Italian American Studies Association (IASA)—everything from "What Ever Happened to Little Italy" and "Teaching the Godfather Films" to "Religion, Superstition and Magic in Italian America" and "Creative Writing: Poetry, Fiction and Memoir." For more information on IASA sessions, email lasa.conference.dc.2017@gmail.com. See scheduling updates at www.niaf.org/gala.

All NIAF University sessions are free and open to the public. Seating may be limited for some sessions. For more information, please email Stephanie Gordon at sgordon@niaf.org or call 202-939-3107.



NIAFINSIDER

The Russo Brothers' Italian American Film Forum

We are excited to announce the top three grant finalists for The Russo Brothers Italian American Film Forum, an initiative to fund film makers depicting and exploring the Italian American experience for the benefit of future generations. Join us in viewing all finalists' films. The winner will be announced during the Gala dinner.











Back by Voracious Demand! Mike's Deli's Free Lunch!

For the fourth consecutive Gala weekend, NIAF's great friend and partner, David Greco, and his world-famous Mike's Deli direct from Arthur Avenue in the Bronx, N.Y., will again serve up a complimentary, old fashioned Italian sandwich boxed lunch (while they last). If you want to pair your lunch with an incredible tasting of Italian wines, stop by the pavilion to purchase your wine tasting tickets in person, right next to Mike's Deli!



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Wait! There's More!

Throughout the Gala Weekend, other entertainment, workshops and seminars exploring topics of interest to the Italian American community are open to the public. Among them are a Medical Conference on "The Mediterranean Diet, Human Health and Longevity" and a Sicilian Marionette Show with Tony De Nonno, featuring Papa Miguel Manteo's authentic hand-carved, Orlando Furioso marionettes, and telling the exciting tale of 1,000 years of their origins and artistry.

The Black Hand— Author Talk and Book Signing



Meet awardwinning author Stephan Talty as he talks about his new, gripping book, "The Black Hand: The Epic War Between A Brilliant Detective and the Deadliest Secret Society in American History." Make sure to ask him about Leonardo DiCaprio making a movie from the book at the Q&A and book signing afterward.

Reserve Your Room Now at the Washington Marriott Wardman Park Hotel

NIAF will be hosting its 42nd Anniversary Gala weekend at The Washington Marriott Wardman Park Hotel, one of the premier hotels in the nation's capital, located at 2660 Woodley Rd NW, Washington, D.C. Come experience a weekend at these accommodations, the classy ballroom and spacious exhibition area! Join your friends and support our efforts by booking your room(s) within our room block at the Washington Marriott Wardman Park for some of the best rates in town. Book your reservation at www.niaf.org/gala or call the hotel at 1-800-328-2000 and ask for a "NIAF room block" reservation.

Saturday Night Gala Dinner

NIAF's Gala Award Dinner is legendary and this year will be no exception. If you can attend only one of these



in your lifetime, think now. Besides a roster of fabulous honorees who's stories will make you swell with pride for being Italian American, we've got a great line up of entertainment as well, including singer

Alessandra Salerno, Italian jazz/folk singer Vanessa Racchi, Italian tenor Carmelo Sorce, Italian soprano Desiree Rancatore, and famed Italian classical guitarist Tom Sinatra! And many more!



NIAF's After Hours Celebration!

Unstrap that bowtie, change out of that gown! After the Gala ends, more late-night begins! Join in the most famous Italian Party in America, featuring live music and spirited sing-alongs. If you miss this After Hours Party, say you were there! It's that cool.



NIAF INSIDER

Questions?

For more information about the NIAF 42nd Anniversary Gala, contact us at 202-939-3107 or visit www.niaf.org/gala today!



Sunday Morning High Mass in Italian

Finish Gala Weekend at Holy Rosary Church, the Italian National Parish of Washington. Holy Rosary Church was established in 1913 to serve the Italian immigrants who first lived in its immediate neighborhood. 10:30 – 11:30 a.m.; 595 3rd St NW, Washington, D.C.



2017 GALA HONOREES

This year's honorees exemplify Italian and Italian American achievement at its highest levels!



Nick Stellino PBS television chef and noted cookbook author



HRH Princess Beatrice of Bourbon the Two Sicilies, Italian royalty and notable philanthropist



Jon Deluca Board of Directors, Doctor's Associates Inc/ Subway Restaurants, and son of Fred DeLuca, co-founder of Subway

VISIT WWW.NIAF.ORG/GALA FOR UPDATES ON HONOREES

special guests and celebrities attending the Gala, and for more information on purchasing tickets, sponsoring the gala and becoming part of

NIAF's 42nd Anniversary Gala.

NIAFINSIDER New York State

Photography by © Jason Isolini

Towering Renaissanceinspired marble columns and trays of Bellini cocktails set the stage for guests arriving at the legendary Cipriani 42nd Street for the National Italian American Foundation's annual New York Gala on March 22. Nearly 700 Italians and Italian Americans from New York and nationwide attended the event, the most successful New York Gala in the Foundation's history.

Emcee Joe Piscopo



New York Gala 2017

Master of ceremonies, NIAF Celebrity Ambassador, entertainer and radio host Joe Piscopo welcomed guests and the Gala's distinguished honorees, followed by the singing of Italy's national anthem, "Inno di Mameli," by Italian American singer Jenna Esposito, and of the American national anthem by NIAF member Christina Carlucci.

New York Gala Dinner Chairman and NIAF Board Member Gerard S. LaRocca thanked the Foundation's New York Committee and the evening's sponsors for making the New York Gala into the institution it has become. LaRocca then introduced operatic powerhouse The Sicilian Tenors (Aaron Caruso, Elio Scaccio and Sam Vitale), who serenaded guests with two beautiful Sicilian medleys-a perfect segue into a video showcasing the rich history, art and culture of Sicily, NIAF's 2017 Region of Honor.

After dinner was served, Piscopo kicked off the awards ceremony with a rousing rendition of "New York, New York." The importance of family, preservation of cultural values, and a healthy respect for hard work were themes of the honoree introductory videos and acceptance speeches throughout the evening. Among those honored: Goldman Sachs Managing **Director Anthony Cammarata** Jr.; SkyBridge Capitol Founder Anthony Scaramucci; Jackson Lewis P.C. Chairman Vincent A. Cino; and Cooking with Nonna Host Rosella Rago.



Displaying a reverence not just for the Italian Americans, but anyone contributing to the preservation of Italian culture, the NIAF One America Award was presented to InterArch Founder Shirley Hill and Metro Bank Founder Vernon W. Hill II.

Between awards, Emmy-winning singer-songwriter Alfio took the stage, singing the classic "Oh Mama," among other songs.

As the evening drew to a close, Matilda Cuomo, mother of New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo and wife of political legend Mario Cuomo, presented the Mario Cuomo Award in Public Service to Superintendent of the New York State Department of Financial Services Maria T. Vullo. "As an Italian American, Mario Cuomo was an inspiration," Vullo said. "Be proud to be Italian, be proud to be an American, stand up for your principles always, be willing to stand up for what is right rather than what is politically expedient."

The event marked the finale of NIAF's sitting Chairman of the Board Joseph V. Del Raso, who took the stage with NIAF President and Chief Operating Officer John M. Viola. In a moving tribute, Viola credited Del Raso largely for his own role at NIAF, reflecting on how they have worked together, passionately, to guide and grow NIAF. Del Raso closed the ceremonies thanking supporters, adding "I've served 29 years on this Board and it's been some of the proudest moments of my life to represent our community and celebrate our Italian heritage."

Ambassador





NIAF President John M. Viola, New York Gala Dinner Chairman and NIAF Board Member Gerard S. LaRocca, and NIAF **Executive Vice President John F. Calvelli**



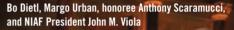
Outgoing NIAF Board Chairman Joseph V. Del Raso, **Executive Vice President Kenneth J. Aspromonte, and** incoming Co-Chair Patricia De Stacy Harrison

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Photography by © Jason Isolini



NIAF Board Member Frank Giordano, Dorothy Giordano, and IALC Member Jeanne Allen





WWW!



Actor Tony Lo Bianco and wife Alyse with Consul General of Italy to New York Francesco Genuardi (right)



The Sicilian Tenors Aaron Caruso. Elio Scaccio and Sam Vitale

Mario Cuomo Award in Public Service recipient Maria T. Vullo with honorees Shirley and Vernon W. Hill II, and their dog Duffy II



Matilda Cuomo and Carolyn Palmer

Umberto Mucci, NIAF Board Member Linda Carlozzi, and honoree Vincent A. Cino



Honoree Rosella Rago



At the NIAF Board meeting the morning after the New York Gala, outgoing NIAF Chairman Joseph V. Del Raso (right) hands off the ceremonial gavel to incoming Co-Chairs Patricia De Stacy Harrison and Gabriel A. Battista

NIAFINSIDER

Mission to Sicily



A food sampling hosted by Sicilian companies at the Grand Hotel Atlantis Bay's Sala Atlantide



NIAF Board Officers in meeting with Taormina Mayor Eligio Giardina (right)



Welcome Reception and Dinner at Ristorante Nettuno in Taormina hosted by the Region of Sicily



NIAF President John M. Viola, Baronessa Beneventano del Bosco, and NIAF General Counsel Joseph D. Lonardo at a special dinner hosted by Princess Beatrice of Bourbon Two Sicilies at Palazzo Beneventano del Bosco in Syracusa

Grand Hotel Atlantis Bay in Taormina

NIAF Board and IALC members Tour the Region of Honor

Every summer, an official delegation of NIAF's executive committee, Board members, and Italian American Leadership Council (IALC) members travel to Italy to meet with government leaders, corporate executives and entrepreneurs and tour the town and historical sites in that year's NIAF Region of Honor. The annual trip is part of the Foundation's mission to build cultural bridges and strengthen economic ties between the United States and Italy.

From June 18-24, new NIAF Co-chairs Patricia De Stacy Harrison and Gabriel A. Battista, and NIAF President John M. Viola, led the 2017 Mission to Sicily delegation to Sicily. Staying initially at the beachside resort Grand Hotel Atlantis Bay in Taormina, Mission participants kicked off their week in Sicily at Giardini Naxos for the Naxos Airshow Frecce Tricolori, followed by dinner in Taormina hosted by the Region of Sicily.

The next day, they met with the Mayor of Taormina, Eligio Giardina, at the remarkable 10th-century medieval palace Palazzo Corvaja, before touring the town of Taormina and nearby famous Greek Theater. That afternoon, the NIAF Board of Directors Meeting took place at Sala Atlantide in Grand Hotel Atlantis Bay.

The itinerary over the next several days included touring the Siracusa Cathe-

dral and Historic Center; viewing the world-renowned historic collections of Roman mosaics at Villa Romana del Casale near the town of Piazza Armerina; and visiting The Valley of the Temples in Agrigento, one of Sicily's most famous historical attractions consisting of eight temples built between about 510 B.C. and 430 B.C.

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In Palermo, Board and IALC members visited the Palazzo dei Normanni and Cappella Palatina, and toured the Cathedral of Palermo and the Church of Martorana. They also met with University of Palermo representatives at Palazzo Chiaramonte-Steri before joining with NIAF's 2017 Voyage of Discovery students at a concert at the Music Academy Vincenzo Bellini. On Friday, June 23, the

On Friday, June 23, the President of the Region of

Sicily, Rosario Crocetta, met with Board members met at Palazzo dei Normanni. Afterward, they attended a reception at Palazzo Gangi, the most sumptuous private residence in Sicily, built in the 15th century and made legendary when Luchino Visconti filmed the ballroom scene of "Il Gattopardo" there in 1963. That evening, Board members met with members of Sicindustria, an association of Sicilian industrialists.

On their last day in Sicily, in Monreale, the group toured the golden-interior splendor of the Monreale Cathedral, circa 1174-1185, and attended a memorable dinner at Casa Dragotto in Palermo, hosted by Sicilian entrepreneurs Tommaso Dragotto, founder of Sicilt By Car and Auto Europe, and Marcella Cannariato, president of A & C Broker.



In Taormina, Deputy Mayor of Taormina Salvatore Cilona, NIAF President John M. Viola, NIAF Board Member Peter J. Arduini, NIAF Co-chair Patricia De Stacy Harrison, NIAF General Counsel Joseph D. Lonardo, NIAF Vice Chair Anita Bevacqua McBride, NIAF Co-chair Gabriel A. Battista, NIAF Board Members Basil M. Russo, Dr. John P. Rosa, Louis E. Tosi, Gerard S. LaRocca and Nicholas R. Caiazzo.



NIAF Board Member and former Ohio Senator Capri Cafaro with Bob Blancato and Ohio State Senator Frank LaRose



U.S. Rep. Jimmy Panetta and NIAF General Counsel Joseph D. Lonardo



NIAF CFO John P. Della Fave, U.S. Rep. Steven Palazzo and NIAF Member Mark Caruso

Photos by Don Oldenburg

Italian American Congressional Delegation Recepion

On March 1, the evening of Ash Wednesday, NIAF Board and IALC members, and staff, welcomed the Italian American Congressional Delegation and its new members at a reception at the Amway House on Capitol Hill. Officials from the Italian Embassy joined Congressmen, congressional staffers and guests for Italian appetizers and drinks, plus a few words from NIAF President John M. Viola and IACD Co-chair Rep. Bill Pascrell.



NIAF Council Member Diana Femia and IACD Co-chair U.S. Rep. Bill Pascrell





St. Joseph's Day Table at NIAF

On the evening of March 16, NIAF celebrated a traditional St. Joseph Day at its headquarters in Washington, D.C., inviting guests to bring along a canned donation for a charitable cause and enjoy a St. Joseph's Day table decorated with authentic Italian pastries and baked goods, including Italian breads, cannoli, and the fried Sicilian pastry *sfinci*, with oranges and fava beans.

IALC members Joe Cosentino and Alfred Minite





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NIAF Annual Bocce Ball Tournament

For the first time in five years, on May 25, it didn't rain on NIAF's Annual Congressional Bocce Ball Tournament. Held in memory of former NIAF Board Member Mark Valente, the tournament featured 10 teams of participants from NIAF, the Embassy of Italy, and the Italian American Congressional Delegation.

Venable LLP hosted the event at its headquarters in the Nation's Capital, on its gorgeous rooftop bocce court with a citywide view. Members of Congress from both sides of the aisle came together to enjoy the much-beloved Italian game.

NIAF President John M. Viola





Paolo Toschi, the Italian Embassy's Congressional Affairs and Domestic Political Office counselor: Andrew Giuliani, public liaison assistant to President Donald Trump; NIAF Vice Chair Anita Bevacqua McBride; U.S. Rep. Virginia Foxx; Maurizio Greganti, deputy chief of mission at the Embassy of Italy; and IALC member Jeanne Allen



Italian Embassy First Counselor Gianluca Alberini and the **Embassy's Senior Press Counselor** Andrea Catalano take on Jon Vitale and his father **IALC Member Sam Vitale**



NIAF Vice Chairs Robert E. Carlucci and John F. Calvelli counting points

IALC Workshop Gone Wild

On May 4, the NIAF Italian American Leadership Council (IALC) took a walk on the wild side to hold an IALC Workshop at The Bronx Zoo and its Center for Global Conservation Building.

Twenty IALC and NIAF Board members, and NIAF staffers, gathered for an afternoon of working sessions focusing on further defining the role IALC members play in the Foundation's continued success. In addition, they discussed topics important to the Italian American community ranging from teaching of Italian language and Italian studies in elementary schools and high schools; to engaging young professional Italian Americans through mentoring and networking; to planning demographically varied regional events.

Afterward, participants made their way to the historic Little Italy experience at Arthur Avenue in the Bronx, and to Mike's Deli, where NIAF's longtime friend and supporter David Greco prepared a family-style dinner.

NIAF Vice Chair John F. Calvelli. who is the executive vice president of public affairs at the Wildlife Conservation Society, leading Marc Scarduffa, Antonio Biondi and Anthony DiSandro into the Bronx Zoo





Lunch at Mike's Deli on Arthur Avenue in the Bronx

Antonio Biondi. Marc Scarduffa, **Davide Cotugno** and NIAF **Vice Chair** John F. Calvelli with a friend





NIAF Annual New York Golf Tournament

On Monday, August 14, at the Old Westbury Golf & Country Club in Old Westbury, N.Y., NIAF once again hosted hackers and scratch players at its 13th Annual New York Golf Tournament. The annual tournament benefits the Foundation's scholarship and educational programs for the New York area and has become an event golfers and NIAF supporters anticipate each year.





Frank Mancini and Susan Paolercio present the winning score card to James Halpin.



NIAF scholarship winner Sofia Bruzzese and her mother Josephine Bruzzese with (from left) Joseph Bellina, Pietro Barberi, James Halpin, and NIAF Board Member Nicholas Caiazzo, who chairs the New York Golf Tournament,

NIAF On Campus at GWU

On April 26, NIAF On Campus, a Foundation program that nurtures young Italian American leadership on college campuses, hosted a talk by Italian Ambassador Armando Varricchio at The George Washington University in Washington, D.C. From left: Rachel Grasso, program assistant at the Foreign Service Institute at The George Washington University; Gabriella Mileti, NIAF program manager, Government Affairs and Community Outreach; Ambassador Armando Varricchio; John P. Della Fave, NIAF chief financial officer; Julia Streisfeld, NIAF program manager, Scholarship, Grants and Youth Engagement; and Lisa Femia, former NIAF manager of Public Policy



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

NIAF is offering the following special events in the coming months. For more information, visit niaf.org.

OCTOBER The NIAF-IALC Working

Breakfast — Washington Date: November 4 during NIAF's Anniversary Gala Weekend Location: The Washington Marriott Wardman Park Hotel, Washington, D.C. Contact: Ana Elisa Huser at 202-939-3117 or ahuser@niaf.org

NOVEMBER 2017 NIAF 42nd Anniversary Gala Weekend

Date: November 3-4 *Location:* The Washington Marriott Wardman Park Hotel, Washington, D.C. *Contact:* Jerry Jones at 202-939-3102 or jerry@niaf.org

DECEMBER 2017 NIAF Open House Christmas Party

By Invitation Only Date: December 13 Location: NIAF Headquarters, Washington, D.C.

MARCH 2018 NIAF New York Spring Gala

Date: April 10, 2018 Location: Cipriani 42nd Street, 110 East 42nd Street, New York, N.Y. Time: 6:30 p.m. Cocktail Reception, 7:30 p.m. Dinner Contact: Jerry Jones at 202-939-3102 or jerry@niaf.org

Festa della Repubblica at White House

On June 2, NIAF leaders were invited to the White House in recognition of Italy's Festival of the Republic, the annual Italian national holiday that celebrates Italy's vote in 1946 to become a republic. In an official letter, President Donald Trump expressed his "warmest wishes to the Italian American community and the people of Italy."



From left to right: Stefan Passantino, deputy White House counsel; Stephen Munisteri, deputy assistant to the president; Andrew Giuliani, public liaison assistant to the president; Rudy Giuliani, former mayor of New York City; NIAF Board Member Michael J. Zarrelli; Kellyanne Conway, counselor to the president; NIAF Vice Chair Anita Bevacqua McBride; Dan Scavino, White House director of social media; IALC Member Chris Berardini; NIAF President John M. Viola; NIAF Board Member Dr. John Rosa; and Maurizio Greganti, deputy chief of mission at the Embassy of Italy



ACROSS

- 2 The Aeolian Islands, known in ancient times as the domain of Aeolus, god of the winds, are a volcanic archipelago visible from Sicily's eastern Tyrrhenian coast. What is its more common name? Hint, the movie "Il Postino," was filmed on one of its seven islands.
- 3 Founded some 2,700 years ago, this capital city is noted for its culture, architecture, cuisine and history.
- 9 The G7 Summit is a group of economically advanced countries consisting of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States. Where in Sicily was the 2017 Summit hosted?
- 11 In the 9th century, what invaders introduced cotton, sugar cane and citrus fruits to Europe by way of Sicily.
- 12 This dessert came from the Palermo and Messina areas and was historically prepared as a treat during Carnivale season. It eventually became a year-round staple throughout Italy.
- 13 It is Sicily's greatest natural attraction and also its highest mountain.
- 14 The Italian tradition of St. Joseph's Day began in Sicily during the Middle Ages. When a disaster was averted by prayer, the people of the towns of western Sicily set up huge banquet tables and invited the poor to eat. This tradition followed Italian immigrants to the new world and continues to this day. St. Joseph's Day is celebrated on what date?
- 15 Name Sicily's longest river, which is 89 miles long and flows into the Mediterranean at the seaport of Licata.
- 17 Sicilian immigrants Vincent Taormina and his cousin Giuseppe Uddo merged their food importing companies in 1925. By 1927, both the New York and New Orleans operations were merged to form what well known company? Hint: Their popular soups were introduced in 1949.

19 Many credit this Sicilian American from New Orleans with the invention of Dixieland Jazz.

- 20 Born in Catania, Sicily, in 1801, this composer came from a family of musicians. His masterpiece, "Norma," was first performed at La Scala on December 26, 1831.
- 21 Founded by the Sicani people in 1100 B.C., it is the oldest surviving city in Sicily. In the Middle Ages, the town became known as Castrogiovanni. In 1926, it was changed back to its original name.
- 22 Sicilian novelist Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa's only novel is widely recognized as a masterpiece that also topped the bestseller lists internationally in 1957. Can you identify his novel?
- 23 Between 1898 and 1929, approximately 70,000 Italian immigrants, the majority from Sicily, entered this port city. They prospered in agribusiness and became the food kingpins of the state.

DOWN

- 1 The name given to this revolt against the French conqueror of Sicily, Charles I of Anjou. The event occurred on Easter Tuesday, 1282, resulting in the massacre of 2,000 French officials.
- 4 There are 20 regions in Italy. Five of them: Sicilia, Valle d'Aosta, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Sardegna, and Trentino-Alto Adige were constitutionally given what special status?
- 5 The son of Sicilian immigrants, he was born in Trenton, N.J., in 1936. In 1986, President Reagan appointed him to the Supreme Court. He was the first Italian American justice.
- 6 His father was a Sicilian immigrant from Lercara Friddi, near Palermo. His mother was born in Lumarzo, Province of Genoa, before immigrating as an infant. One of the best-known Italian Americans in the world, he has been described as an American pop-culture icon, and the epitome of style and technique.

- 7 It is the most commonplace surname in all of Italy at 7,867. Of that total, 4,448 are found in Sicily. Hint: It is the third-largest city on the island of Sicily.
- 8 Fico d'India is a typical Sicilian product. After Mexico, Sicily is the world's second largest producer of this plant that is both a fruit and vegetable. What is its English name?
- 10 The Allies opened their campaign against Italy in World War II by capturing what island off the coast of Sicily in June 1943?
- 15 Established as a Greek colony in 734 B.C. this Sicilian port city was the birthplace of Archimedes, "The Father of Mechanics."
- 16 Located on a plateau overlooking Sicily's southern coast is this city and the nearby Valley of the Temples. Also, in the vicinity is the birthplace of Luigi Pirandello, (1867-1937) the Nobel prize-winning author.
- 18 It is the unmistakable symbol of Sicily and is depicted on its civil and state flags.

SOLUTION

	23 New Orleans
	(Il Gattopardo)
	22 Тһе Leopard
	snn3 [S
	20 Vincenzo Bellini
18 Trinacria	19 Nick LaRocca
16 Agrigento	17 Progresso
15 Syracuse	15 Salso River
10 Pantellaria	14 March 19
8 Prickly Pear	13 Etna
snizs9M 7	ilonne) SI
6 Frank Sinatra	11 Arabs
5 Antonin Scalia	enimroeT e
suomonotuA 4	3 Palermo
1 Sicilian Vespers	2 Lipari Islands
роми	RCROSS

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