

Ambassador



National Italian American Foundation

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Puppets of Palermo
Chef Nick Stellino Holidays Special
Venice's Moveable Opera
The Bergamot Quest
Wine Lover's Holiday Wish List
NIAF's 2017 Photo Contest Winners

SICILY

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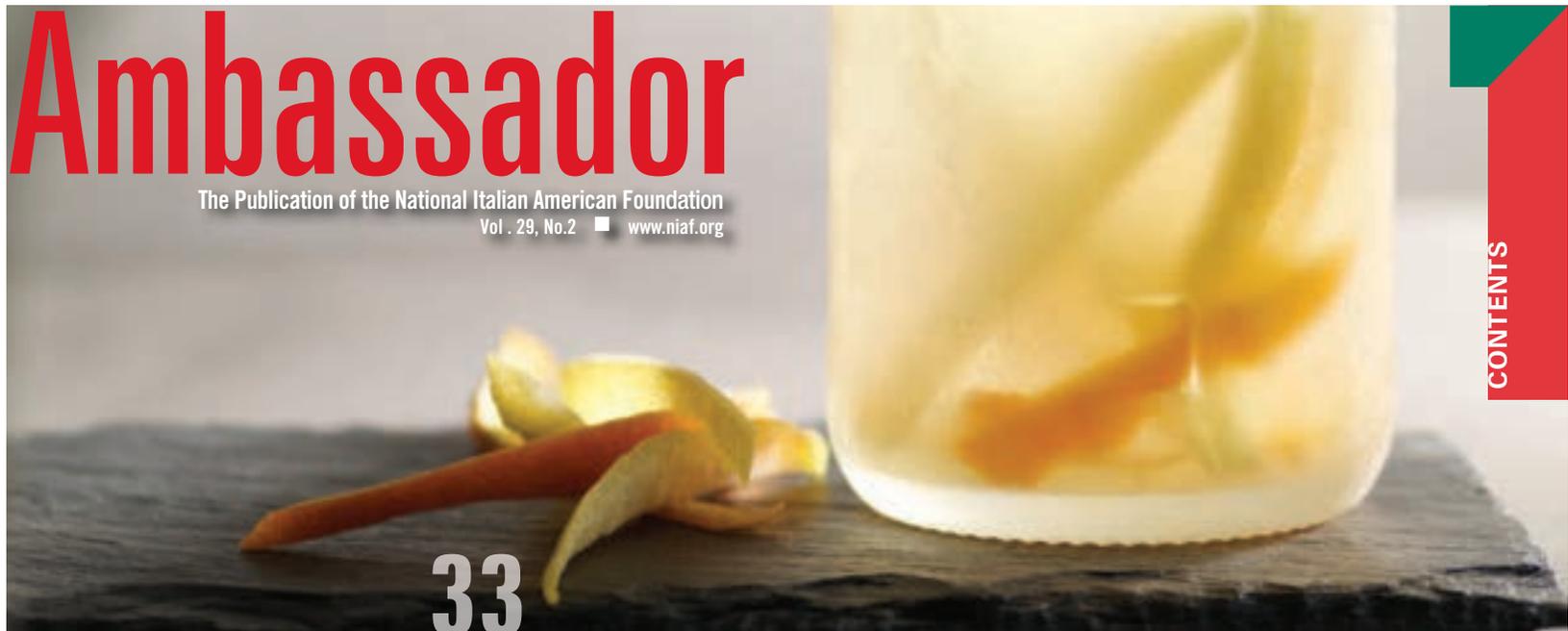


Regione Siciliana

Ambassador

The Publication of the National Italian American Foundation
Vol . 29, No.2 ■ www.niaf.org

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On the Cover: Sicily's remarkable marionettes and historic Opera dei Pupi (puppet theater) are as distinctive a part of Sicilian culture and identity as its colorful carretti and an image of Mount Etna smoking. Handcrafted by famous Palermo puppet maker Mimmo Cuticchio, these chivalric medieval knights are iconic of the Sicilian puppetry genre that dates back centuries.

Cover photograph: Armando Rotoletti

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A HOLIDAY MESSAGE

from the NIAF Co-Chairs

You know the saying that Christmas is not so much a day or a season, but a state of mind. By the time you receive this Winter issue of Ambassador magazine, we expect you'll be well into that state of mind, embracing the holiday spirit and the joy that makes our most beloved traditions and family gatherings so meaningful. Knowing that, like us, you're busy preparing for your festive holiday celebrations, we'll keep our seasonal greeting brief.

Speaking of family gatherings, we at NIAF just celebrated a big one at our 42nd Anniversary Gala Weekend, where an Italian American state of mind was evident everywhere and our 2017 Region of Honor, Sicily, was the toast of the town! More than 1,500 members, guests and friends attended the Gala Awards Dinner; and throughout the weekend, more than 3,000 visitors came to our Expo Siciliana, the largest and most fun Italian festival in Washington, D.C.

If you weren't there, we wish you had been. Maybe next year! Meanwhile, please take a look at the NIAF Insider coverage of the Gala Weekend in his issue. Even more photos and our detailed Gala review are online at www.niaf.org. Every year, it's a not-to-be-missed, exciting and enthusiastic celebration of our heritage, culture and values.

In the spirit of this holiday season, we'd like to give heartfelt thanks to all of you who have supported the National Italian American Foundation over this past year, and through the many years. Grazie mille! Without your kindness and generosity, we could not achieve our mission of protecting

and preserving Italian American culture; promoting and inspiring a positive image and legacy of Italian Americans; providing financial assistance and guidance to tomorrow's Italian American leadership; lending an influential voice on behalf of the Italian American community in the Nation's Capital; and strengthening ties between the United States and Italy.

In the next few weeks, as the final days of 2017 quickly approach, and a new year of resolutions, possibilities and challenges arrive, please consider making an end-of-year charitable donation to NIAF. Passing forward our heritage to our younger generations is what we do. And all that we do is made possible by you.

On behalf of NIAF's Board of Directors, we wish you a happy holiday season and a prosperous and healthy New Year!

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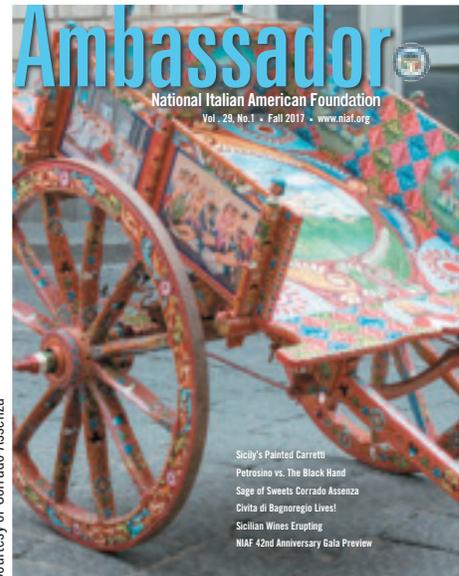
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Reader Feedback

LETTERE



Courtesy of Corrado Assenza



Sicilia on My Mind

The Fall issue of Ambassador Magazine brought my recent visit to Sicily back to mind. The article about the craftsmanship of the wonderfully painted *carretti* reminded me of how the Sicilians combine style and beauty with function, as they were, after all, delivery carts. The story on Corrado Assenza reminded me of the artistry in presentation and wonderful taste of Sicilian deserts. And the story on Princess Beatrice reminded me of the many cultures that are infused in the Sicilian DNA and the fascinating and diverse Sicilian culture that evolved as a result.

—Joe Cosentino
NIAF-IALC Member
Washington, D.C.

Love at First Bite

Who knew? Living dead alive and well in early-1900s Calabria (Fall 2017 Ambassador)!

—G. Bernardi
Venice, Fla.

In Defense of Columbus

As an Italian American, I am disheartened that we seem to be losing real perspective and unreasonably denying individuals' contributions to humanity. Unfortunately, it has become fashionable that, in a time when we are rewriting history, we use today's moral standards to judge individuals of the past. Many of those individuals made great contributions despite their human flaws and frailties. Example: Jefferson, Washington and Wilson.

Columbus made four trips from Spain across the Atlantic in search of a direct ocean route to Asia. He accidentally stumbled on the Americas.... The hero part is that Columbus opened the world of exploration. That cannot be denied. And it should be noted that he discovered the Americas, *not* America.

Critics contend that, to the natives of the Bahamas, where Columbus landed, his arrival "marked the start of consuming genocide." But

Columbus didn't go there to exploit natives; others later did, such as the Spanish, French and British. Let's not forget that Columbus was eventually punished for his treatment of the Indigenous people and put in jail on his return to Spain.

While I agree that individuals who fought against the United States should not be honored, we forget that to err is human, whether yesterday or today.

—Dr. J. Robert DiFulgo
Author and Retired Teacher,
Fairfax County Public Schools
Fairfax, Va.



Correction

In the print editions of the Fall 2017 Ambassador magazine, in the Paesani section, Fred Gaudelli's name was misspelled.

We Want to Know What You're Thinking!

Letters to the Editor may be e-mailed to ambassador@niaf.org or mailed to Letters to the Editor, Ambassador Magazine, 1860 19th Street NW, Washington, DC 20009. Include your full name and address. Letters may be published and edited for length and clarity.

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Honoring Sergio!

Eva Franchi Carries on the Legacy

Renown tenor Alfio sings under the banner of Sergio Franchi



By Gabriella Miletì

Every summer on her expansive estate in Stonington, Conn., Eva Franchi puts on what is lauded as the most loved musical event and a staple of New England’s summer season—the Sergio Franchi Annual Memorial Concert.

The Memorial Concert was born three years after the passing of Sergio Franchi, when fans across the world wrote letters expressing how much they missed his voice. So, the two organizations that Franchi passionately supported, Boys Town of Italy and the National Italian American Foundation, decided to come together to create one memorial concert in Franchi’s honor that would all take place on the grounds of his beloved home he shared with his beautiful wife, Eva.

Now in its 24th year, the Sergio Franchi Memorial Concert is Eva’s love song to her late Sergio, and it shows. Every detail is curated in Eva’s style and she can be seen throughout the grounds ensuring the devoted fans are taken care of and having a wonderful time.

Speaking of a good time, it’s impossible not to have one, since guests are encouraged to bring their



Photos by Gabriella Miletì

Above: Eva Franchi
Left: Filippo Voltaggio and Alfio

own food and wine and enjoy the dazzling musical performances ranging from famous operatic arias, from Verdi’s “Libiamo ne’ lieti calici” from *La Traviata* and Puccini’s “Nessun Dorma” from *Turandot* to Neapolitan favorites “Dicitencello Vuie” and “Malafemmena,” plus more modern hits such as “You Raise Me Up.”

The time, organization and energy that it takes to put on such a concert of its stature is all worth it. Eva Franchi does it all for Sergio, as she exclaimed from the stage in front of more than 3,000 supporters. And she does it not only for the memory of her late husband, one of Italy’s greatest tenors, but for the young, talented, artists who take the stage, among them Alfio, James Valenti, Roberto Iarussi, Filippo Voltaggio and Giada Valenti. All of them have

benefited from Eva Franchi’s guidance and support and that of two proud Foundations through the NIAF Sergio Franchi Scholarship Fund.

During the National Italian American Foundation’s 42nd Anniversary Gala, on November 4, NIAF was proud to recognize Eva Franchi and the Sergio Franchi Music Foundation from the podium for all its efforts in ensuring that the education and development of our young artists are supported.

By building on its history with such a strong commitment to quality and education in the performing arts, the Sergio Franchi Memorial Concert has a bright future—all in honor of one of Italy’s proudest sons and NIAF’s dear friend, Sergio Franchi. And none of it could be accomplished without the dedication of Eva Franchi. ▲

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Finding Italy in Baltimore

Whether it's the best Italian restaurants, most popular festivals, or must-visit markets and museums, Italy's influences in America are everywhere. In NIAF on Location, our members and friends provide insider information on special places that make them feel more Italian in their own hometowns. This issue, longtime NIAF friend and associate Charles Gueli finds Italy in Baltimore.

What is the Italian part of your city?

Gueli: Baltimore is lucky enough to have its own "Little Italy" situated between the revitalized Inner Harbor and historic Fells Point. This ethnic enclave was settled during the mid- and late-1800s mostly by immigrants from southern Italy. Rows of two-story townhouses, many passed down from generation to generation, line the streets surrounding St. Leo The Great Catholic Church, the community's religious and social anchor since the 19th century. The area is known for its restaurants, especially along High Street, many of which have been family owned and operated for decades. As with most predominately Italian neighborhoods, family, faith and food play central roles.

What are your favorite Italian restaurants?

Gueli: My family's favorite restaurants are La Scala on Eastern Avenue and Aldo's on High Street. Nino Germano opened La Scala in 1995. Known for its Sicilian specialties and an indoor, full-sized bocce court, its fresh gnocchi and cannoli, handmade by Nino's mother, keep us coming back. Aldo's opened in 1998; Its owners, the Vitale family, serve the traditional Feast of the Seven Fishes on Christmas Eve. It's an elegant postscript to holiday mass at St. Leo's.

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

Gueli: DiPasquale's is the classic Italian restaurant everyone wishes would open in their neighborhood. For more than



Charles Gueli and Joe DiPasquale at DiPasquale's

100 years, the same family has run this Highlandtown hybrid. It's a deli and market specializing in fresh cheeses, meats, imported wines, fresh-baked bread and frozen meals, but also a cozy cafe serving homemade dishes like eggplant lasagna, breaded chicken cutlets, and *arancini*. All food is made on the premises using family recipes. Chiapparelli's and Sabatino's, both on High Street, have been owned and operated by the same namesake families, serving Southern Italian fare for more than six decades. Vaccaro's Bakery is worth a visit for pastries, gelato, cookies and traditional Italian desserts, like authentic grain pie for Easter.

For a dose of Italian culture, where do you go?

Gueli: Many venues and activities here relate to Italian culture, such as visiting Walters Art Gallery, which boasts a large collection of 2nd-century A.D. Roman sculpture and artifacts, and its sculpture court of the original 1908 building replicates the cortile at Genoa's Palazzo Balbi; attending the popular St. Anthony Festival to celebrate Little Italy's surviving the 1904 Baltimore Fire, and the popular street fair of St. Gabriel Festival; spending summer nights at the outdoor Italian film festival; or catching a game of bocce on Stiles Street.

Where do you go for hard-to-find ingredients to cook an authentic Italian meal?

Gueli: Discerning chefs could try Trinacria on Paca Street, a quaint,

century-old, grocery store with a good selection of Italian wines, dried pasta, homemade Italian sausages, imported cheeses, and products from Italy. Casa di Pasta on Albemare Street also attracts foodies, who can pick up homemade pasta and sauces to accompany them.

What is the most Italian day of the year in your community?

Gueli: Baltimore hosts one of the longest-running Columbus Day parades in the country. This year will mark its 127th celebration. During World War II, local Italian Americans used it to show their patriotism by purchasing war bonds to support the Allied cause. In recent years, events have broadened to include the city's other ethnic groups. Part of our cultural heritage is to honor traditions, sustain our community through difficult times, and embrace all Americans as part of our big Italian family.

Is there a special monument, museum or cultural event?

Gueli: The Baltimore Museum of Art has over 95,000 holdings, including a terrific European collection. The pieces by Italian masters, such as Raphael, Titian, Botticelli and Gino Severini, are worth a visit. Fine artistry of Italian statues can be found around the city, most notably, Antonio Capellano's eight-foot-tall Lady Baltimore atop the Battle Monument that commemorates the 1814 Battle of Baltimore, which inspired the lyrics to the "Star Spangled Banner." ▲

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BOTTEGA NIAF

By Gabriella Mileti

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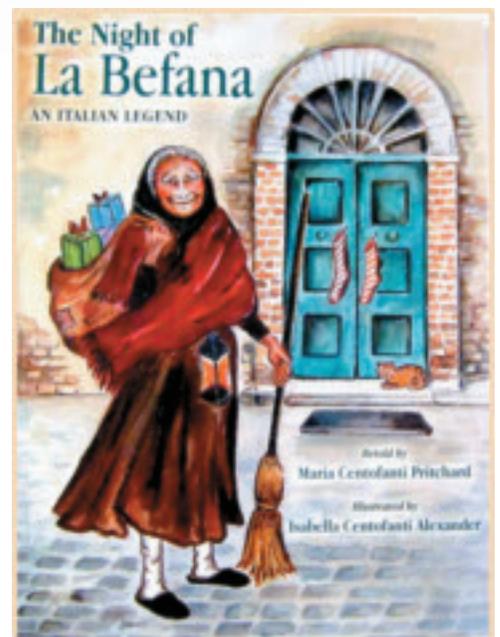
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Viva Viva La Befana!

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Giochiamo!

Nothing says Natale in an Italian household like a wholesome game of Tombola! This time-honored, Italian “bingo” is a perfect way to gather *la famiglia* during the holidays. Tombola in a Tin Box: \$59. www.ItalianChildrensMarket.com



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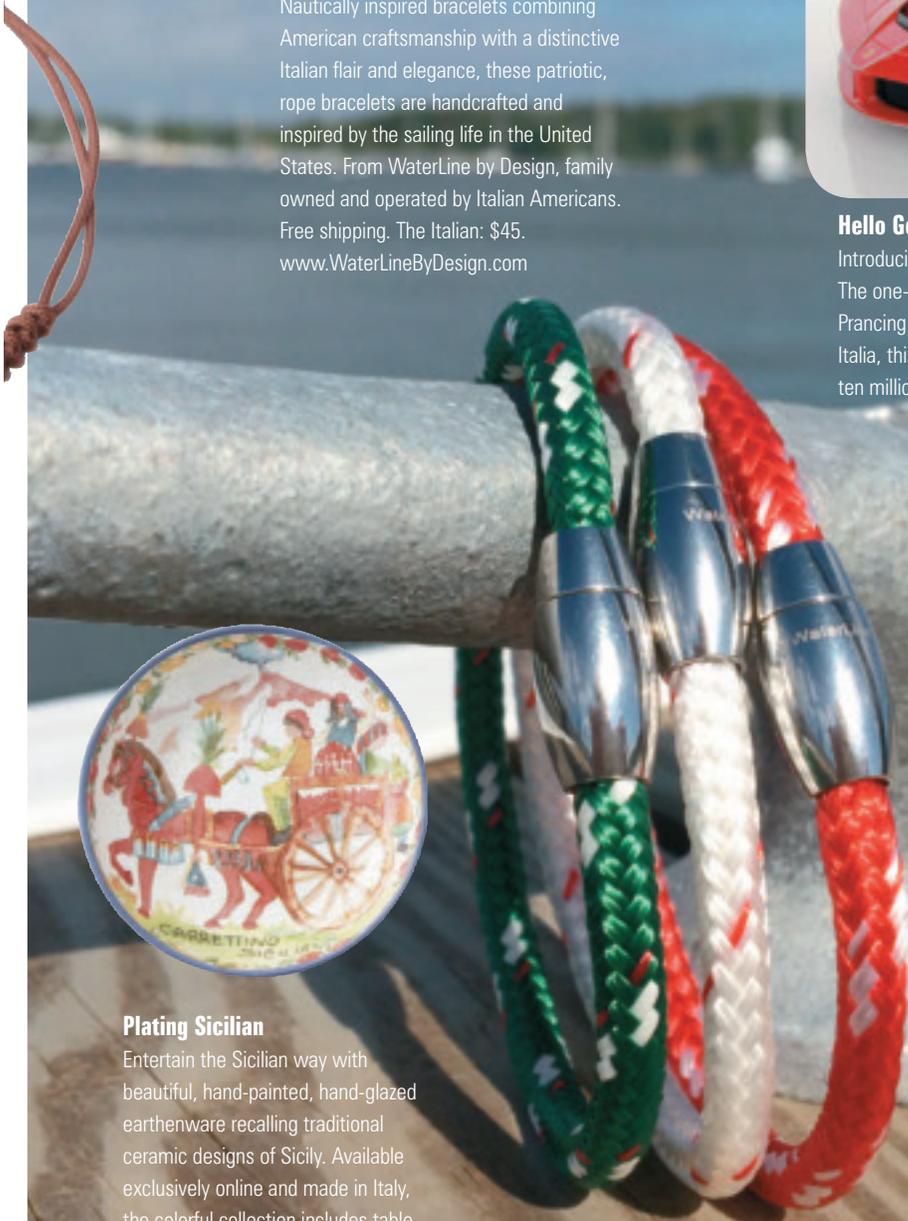


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PAESANI

Philly Sound

The notes and vocals from Philadelphia’s music style during the mid-1970s formed “sophisticated soul,” says Philly native Bill Nicoletti. He’s the producer and director for the upcoming documentary “The Sounds of Philadelphia,” set for a Fall 2018 release.

Nicoletti credits the “four pillars” for Philly’s sound—recording engineer Joe Tarsia, songwriter Kenny Gamble, musician Leon Huff, and arrangements by Thom Bell.

Sigma Sound Studios of Philadelphia was founded by Tarsia in 1968, and was home to numerous sessions using the relatively new 24-track recording technology. Patti LaBelle, Teddy Pendergrass, The O’Jays, and The Spinners helped put Sigma and the “Sounds” on the map. Philly’s WMMR radio station aired a live studio concert from Sigma in 1972 featuring Billy Joel performing “Captain Jack.”

Nicoletti owns Visual Innovations, a creative production company that he founded in 1991. While renting space from Tarsia, he sat in on sessions at the studio after hours. One night back in ’91, Tarsia told Nicoletti that David Bowie recorded “Young Americans” at Sigma in 1974.

“Joe, we got to tell this story some day,” said Nicoletti. So, Bowie’s presence at Sigma created a recording phenomenon for the studio.

Tarsia sold the studio in 2003. By 2014, Nicoletti had a successful career and time to start producing the documentary. “My hope would be that viewers of the film will be surprised with how much great music came out of Philly,” says Nicoletti. Website: www.visualin.com

—Robert Fanelli Bartus Jr.



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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.



Lost and Found in L.A.

As a historian and the executive director of the Italian American Museum of Los Angeles (IAMLA), Marianna Gatto says her work is like “chasing ghosts,” looking for clues into the history of Italian Americans in Southern California.

Her research began when she was a college undergraduate, but her love for history and U.S. immigration history goes back to an early age. “My father’s values were rooted in that Italian sensibility of family, hard work, doing your best and having reverence for those who came before you and made your life possible,” she says. “This is, in a sense, what led me to history, the idea of documenting the stories and lives of others who are responsible for where we are today.”



History of Italian Americans in Los Angeles was so scarcely documented that Gatto didn’t learn until she was in college about Italian Hall, that served as the Italian community’s gathering place in Los Angeles until the 1950s. It now houses the IAMLA.

Gatto was at the forefront of fundraising efforts that led to its opening in August 2016. As the IAMLA’s director, her approach is to make Italian American history relevant to everyone. “It’s about the immigration experience,” she says. “I see people of all ancestries and generations really relate with this content.... We all share a lot more than we often would like to believe.” Visit IAMLA online at italianhall.org.

—Silvia Donati

NIAF's



Sinatra's Beat

If you've heard Frank Sinatra crooning "Witchcraft," then you've heard Frank DeVito on drums. A jazz percussive icon, DeVito has held the beat down for the Beach Boys on "Surfin' USA" and Cher on her hit record "Bang." He has worked with everyone from Billie Holiday and Charlie Parker to Nat King Cole to Elvis Presley. He toured three years with Sinatra and is on the historic 1999 CD release "Sinatra '57 in Concert."

"We grew up in a section of Utica, N.Y., called Little Harlem," he says. "We were an Italian family, and like many Italian families, we all lived together. When my grandparents first came over to America, they spoke no English and all they knew was work hard."

DeVito's family came from southern Italy near Naples. His uncle Tubby always encouraged him. "When I told him I wanted to be like Gene Krupa, he co-signed the idea," says DeVito. "He was a beautiful guy and a war hero who won the Purple Heart during World War II."



DeVito says he inherited strong musical genes from his paternal grandmother who had four brothers, all musicians. His mom's brother was one-half of the famed Vaudeville act, DeVito and Denny, that toured the world. Frank has continued their legacy, still performing in Los Angeles with the Tracy Wells Big Swing Band, Tom Rainier, and others.

—Dee Dee McNeil

Serendipitously Sicilian

For many readers, Frances Mayes' "Under the Tuscan Sun" was the introduction to the idea of creating a new life in Italy. But Mary Taylor Simeti's "On Persephone's Island: A Sicilian Journal" predated it by a decade and provides a gritty tale of a young woman's adjustments to life on an island that wasn't nearly as glamorous as many find it today.



Like many romantic stories, Simeti's love affair with Italy happened by chance. After graduating from Radcliffe College, she met her Sicilian husband, Tonino, in Palermo while volunteering at social activist Danilo Dolci's Dolci Center.

Simeti soon became Italian American by marriage, intending to travel the world, doing development work and using Sicily as a home base. Her husband's familial situation kept them tied to the homestead, and eventually they renovated the farmhouse on the land that is now Bosco Falconeria (www.boscofalconeria.it), a certified organic farm that produces olive oil, wine and produce.

Simeti published several books after her memoir, including "Bitter Almonds: Recollections & Recipes from a Sicilian Girlhood," with renowned pastry chef Maria Grammatico. Her latest effort, "Sicilian Summer," recounts a summer cooking project with her four grandsons. She calls the book "a meditation on food and family," and it is available at Amazon.com and Barnes & Noble.

—Michelle Fabio

Persons of Interest



PAESANI

Peace Food Security

With a public service and business career that spans more than four decades, David Beasley is the executive director of the United Nations' World Food Program (WFP) in Rome. But he isn't always in the Eternal City, as he travels to over 30 countries per year promoting peace, meeting donors, and leading conferences and missions.

"I've traveled to the four countries at the brink of famine—northeast Nigeria, South Sudan, Somalia and Yemen," says Beasley, an Italophile who, when in Rome, loves all that the city has to offer. "I enjoy restaurants and sights in the San Saba and Testaccio areas,"

A former governor of South Carolina, in his post-gubernatorial years, Beasley has been working with influential leaders and program managers in over 100 countries on projects to foster peace, reconciliation and economic progress. He has worked to strengthen

cooperation and communications between stakeholders, businesses and political and NGO sectors in regions with long-standing political, ethnic and religious tension.

Beasley continues to exercise his diplomatic skills to ensure food access to internally displaced people: "Developing and encouraging personal relationships is absolutely critical to the task of feeding the most vulnerable. The more we can reduce those conflicts, the easier it will be to reduce hunger and build long-lasting economic transformation in areas where hunger exists."

—Allyson Portee



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All in the Font

On legendary graphic designer Louise Fili's first trip to Italy at age 16, the first image that greeted her was a billboard for Baci Perugina chocolates featuring a couple in a passionate embrace. "This is when I fell in love at once with food, type and all things Italian," says Fili.

Since then, her passions have led her to specialize in brand developing for food packaging and restaurants. She has designed nearly 2,000 book jackets for Pantheon Books and has received many awards, including Gold and Silver Medals from the Society of Illustrators and the New York Art Director's Club, as well as the medal for Lifetime Achievement from the AIGA, the professional association for design, and the Type Directors Club.

Fili is also the recipient of three James Beard-award nominations and is a member of the Art Directors Hall of Fame.

Her books "Italianissimo: The Quintessential Guide to What Italians Do Best" and "The Cognoscenti's Guide to Florence" are delightful homages to her beloved Italy. And "Elegantissima" is a 256-page monograph detailing Fili's nearly 40-year career.

Her latest release is a new font, Montecatini, based on a style of hand-lettering used on posters during Italy's Stile Liberty (Art Nouveau) period.

See more of her incredibly beautiful designs at the website of her graphic design studio, Louise Fili Ltd: www.louisefili.com.

—Michelle Fabio



NIAF's Persons of Interest

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City of the Tricolor Flag

REGGIO EMILIA'S PATRIOTIC PIZZA

By Mary Ann Esposito

Last summer, while visiting dear friends in Reggio Emilia, I had a special request. I wanted to visit the Museo del Tricolore (Museum of Three Colors). In the museum, not far from my friend Lorenza's house, is the stately Risorgimental Hall.

Reggio Emilia is a peaceful, prosperous city and a place where famous foods of the region of Emilia Romagna, like prosciutto di Parma, Parmigiano Reggiano cheese and *tagliatelle al ragu* are legendary. But Reggio Emilia is also famous for a flag. In fact, the city is called La Città del Tricolore.

What is little known by travelers is that the first national flag of Italy was created in Reggio Emilia on January 7, 1797. On that day, the cities of Reggio Emilia, Bologna, Modena and Ferrara confirmed that green, white and red would be the banner colors of the Cispadane Republic.

Many have speculated as to why those particular colors in Italy's flag, and when I posed that question to Lorenza, her answer made perfect sense to me. Green is for the plains and hills; white for the snowy Alps; and red for the blood spilled in the Italian Independence Wars. A more spiritual explanation assigns green as hope, white as faith and red as charity.

The flag changed in appearance with a variety of coats of arms and symbols added by various city-states. Between 1848-1861, many subsequent

events led to the Risorgimento and the independence and unification of Italy. Throughout this period, the *tricolore* was the symbol that united all the efforts of the Italian people towards freedom and independence. In its current form, the flag was adopted on January 1, 1948, with the introduction of the republican constitution, and the end of the rule of the House of Savoy over Italy.

The Italian Constitution states that "The flag of the Republic is the Italian tricolor: green, white and red, in three vertical bands having equal dimensions."

January 7 celebrates flag day in Italy (La Festa del Tricolore). On that day, politicians, ordinary citizens, school children and the military gather in Reggio Emilia to honor the flag. The President of the Republic makes his remarks in the Sala del Tricolore (Tricolor Hall). He greets the crowd and the national anthem is sung with fervor.

It would be remiss of me, with this national Italian holiday near, not to mention that the flag is also represented in the foods of Italy. Case in point, pizza Margherita, created by *pizzaiolo* (pizza maker) Raphael Esposito (no relation) and named for Queen Margherita when she visited Naples in the late 19th century. The pizza sports the colors of the flag—green for basil, white for mozzarella cheese, and red for tomatoes.

Pizza Margherita

Ingredients

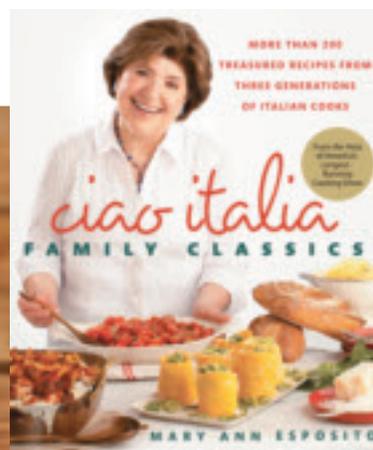
1 pound homemade or prepared pizza dough
3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
4 ripe plum tomatoes, cut into thin rounds
2 cups diced fresh *fior di latte* mozzarella cheese
12 fresh basil leaves
½ teaspoon fine sea salt

Directions

- Preheat the oven to 425°F.
- Divide the dough in half and, with your hands, spread each piece on a floured surface into a 13½ -inch round, and place each one on a lightly oiled 13-inch pizza pan. Place the dough on two wooden peels, dusted with cornmeal, if you plan to use baking stones to bake the pizza.
- Brush each round with 1 tablespoon of the olive oil.
- Divide the cheese and sprinkle it on top of the dough.
- Top the cheese with the tomato slices.
- Add the basil leaves on top of the cheese.
- Drizzle the pizza with the remaining one tablespoon of oil.
- Bake the pizzas for 25-30 minutes, or until the top and bottom crusts are nicely browned.
- Cut into wedges and serve immediately.



Alexey Borodin



Tip: If using baking stones, preheat the stones in a 450°F oven for 20 minutes. Just before placing the pizza on the stone from the baking peel, sprinkle each stone with a handful of cornmeal. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, or until the crust is nicely browned on the bottom.

Recipe www.ciaoitalia.com ▲



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That's **Amore!**

The NIAF Fifth Annual Photo Contest Winners



Grand Prize Winner

Gli Amanti In Siena

Nicole Alexandra Cacchiotti
Melrose, Mass.

Photo Equipment Used: Nikon D7000

It was early evening in Siena, Italy, when people were getting off work, and the streets were starting to darken. As I looked around a corner, I saw a young couple walking quietly side by side. I waited till they approached mid-point, then tilted my camera to frame them between the buildings. Just then, they reached out to take each other's hand, and I thought, now "That's Amore!"

Our Annual Photo Contest has become a much-anticipated tradition here at NIAF since we launched it five years ago. Each year, it has grown in the number of entries as well as in the quality of the photographs.

And, each year, the contest theme changes. In our first year, photographers—both professional and amateur are invited—were challenged to submit images that expressed *italianità*, the Italian spirit. One of our favorites was last year’s wonderfully vague “An Italian Moment.” While many entries immediately embraced the romantic meaning of this year’s theme, “That’s Amore,” borrowed from the great

song Dean Martin made immortal, others reflected amore in the love of anything, especially anything Italian.

Following the October 10 deadline, judges considered two dozen semi-finalists we had pared from the hundreds of photos that flooded our contest inbox, taking into consideration technical quality, composition, and how they expressed the theme.

When votes were counted, the 2017 NIAF Photo Contest Grand Prize Winner turned out to be a talented, young photographer from Melrose, Mass., named Nicole Alexandra Cacchiotti!

As the Grand Prize Winner, Nicole won a NIAF Anniversary Gala pack-

age for two, including flights, hotel accommodations and tickets to all events during our November 3-4 Gala Weekend, plus a one-year NIAF Associate membership. We were delighted to greet Nicole at our Gala here in the Nation’s Capital.

Our five Second Place Winners also won one-year NIAF Associate memberships. And all six winning photos were displayed during NIAF’s Expo Siciliana, Washington’s largest annual Italian festival, during the Gala Weekend.

Keep an eye open and your cameras ready for the NIAF 2018 Photo Contest to be announced next Summer! ➤



Second Place Winner

Childhood Friends

Angelo Greco
Washington, D.C.
Photo equipment used: iPhone 6

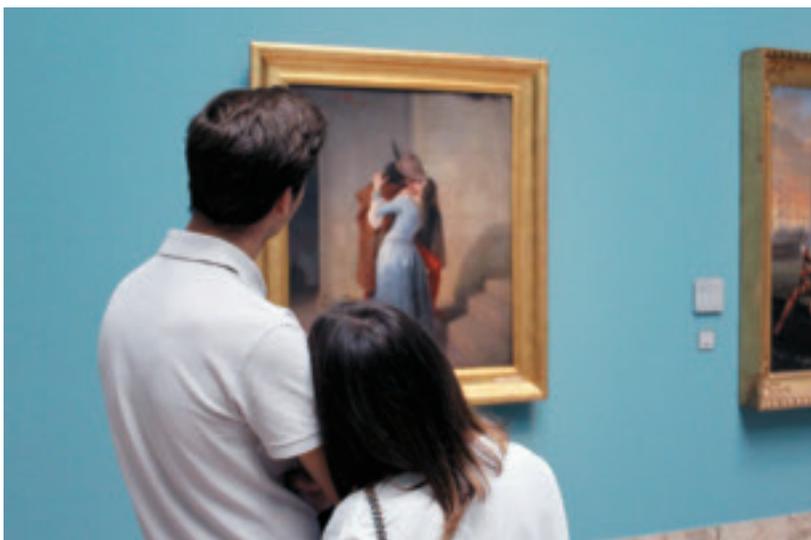
Taken November 13, 2016, in Gela, Sicilia. Antonio, Calogero and Calogero meet in the communal villa as they have every day for over 50 years!

Second Place Winner

Amore in The Museum

Silvia Silvestri; Milano, Italy
Photo Equipment Used: Canon EOS 1200

Every first Sundays of the month, all the state museums in Italy have free admission. I was visiting the Pinacoteca di Brera in Milan, in October last year, and wandering among the countless masterpieces on my way. Suddenly, in the messy crowd, something magic happened: two young lovers, embraced, admiring “The Kiss” by Francesco Hayez, one of the emblematic images of the Pinacoteca and, perhaps, the most widely reproduced Italian painting. Two young dreamers, in love with life, art and future.





**That's
Amore!**

Second Place Winner

Wedding Day with Grandfather

Joanna Fedeli; Chesterland, Ohio

Photo Equipment Used: Canon EOS 6D

This is my grandfather and me on my wedding day last year in Italy. Nothing filled my grandfather, an Italian immigrant, with more love than witnessing his granddaughter wed in the country where his life and dreams began. This moment captures a precious milestone shared and the love between generations. Behind his tears is unconditional love, and in those hands, years of endless hard work. Two of the greatest gifts he has shared with me.



Second Place Winner

First Bite

Alberto DeCicco; Niles IL

Photo Equipment Used: Camera

“Amore al primo morso!” Love at first bite! You’re never too young to find your first true love, especially when it is pizza! At two years old, Mila found amore in the shape of a margherita pizza from Eatly Chicago!



Second Place Winner

Torvaianica Lovers

Gianlorenzo De Donno; Rome, Italy

Photo Equipment Used: Konica Tomato with Ilford 125

Two old lovers walking away on the shore of Torvaianica (in the province of Rome), as the love that has been in the past is in risk to disappear in today’s world. But they are walking together and so tight that I can feel this love touching me, if I only pay attention. So, it is real, is in all of us, and all we have to do is to spread it out in our world. “Don’t Forget That’s Amore!” Taken in August 2017.

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 FREGOLI

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A Holidays Culinary Special

Relax!
Chef Nick Stellino is in the House!



Nancy Stellino

WWW.NIAF.ORG

What you may not know about Chef Nick Stellino, one of America's most popular and prolific TV chefs, is that years ago he gave up a lucrative career on Wall Street to run down his dream of a culinary life. On his way to a celebrated kitchen stint, he detoured as a dishwasher—and he was the best dishwasher.

Now, here we are, the first season of his program, "Storyteller in the Kitchen," which marks Chef Stellino's 22nd anniversary of cooking shows

broadcast on public television, and proves to all of us that the path to success can be as twisted as a strand of spaghetti stuck to the wall.

Today, Chef Stellino has multiple TV series to his credit, along with 12 cookbooks and a long history of philanthropic service. His cooking shows are seen on public television stations across the United States and are syndicated throughout Latin America, Eastern Europe, South Africa and the Middle East. He has made guest appearances on

news and talk shows, from ABC's "Good Morning America" and NBC's "Today" to "The Oprah Winfrey Show." He has been featured in The New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, Bon Appétit, The Magazine of La Cucina Italiana, and Robb Report. Did we mention he was one of NIAF's distinguished 42nd Anniversary Gala honorees in November? He was.

So, it seems we have a lot to learn about Nick Stellino, which is why we're delighted to let Nick speak for himself in this insightful Q&A. Read on:

Your fabulous, new, digital cookbook, "Storyteller in the Kitchen," isn't just easy yet delicious recipes, its recipes are interspersed with chapters of your life's story. What motivated you to do this?

Stellino: I wanted to share that side of me because, as I wrote the stories in the book, I rediscovered so many of the moments from my past which led me to become the man I am today. In a certain way, this book became an introspective journey into my own past, and how my actions have brought me to this present, and how much drive I still have in me as I am pushed by my ambition to accomplish even more of this dream I have inside of me. Sharing it, with others in my book, made it even more real for myself.

Family plays an important part in your book. Tell us a little about your background—growing up in Palermo, moving to the United States at age 17. What do you remember about your childhood in Italy? Your grandparents?

Stellino: I am the byproduct of the family I was lucky to have been born into. My grandparents were always mythical figures, bigger than reality. My Sicilian grandfather Nicolo', I carry his name, rose from the rank of field laborer to land owner, on his own, at a time when the division of classes and income was so severe in Sicily that day laborers in the wheat fields were treated worse than animals. He was a John-Wayne-like figure in his community—tough, hard and strong like a bull.

My father used to say that my grandfather was, at all times, the most dangerous man in the room. He never backed down and he was always ready to tussle some. The position he acquired was not granted or given to him. He made something of himself, with his bare hands, with almost no formal education.

He sent my dad to school in Rome, where my dad met my mom and he never returned to the family business. My father became an art dealer, following his own passion, and another generation later, I did the same thing to him and I ended up as a guy with a cooking show on TV for 22 years.

No, this was never my plan. This was the life I was granted, and I have no regrets.

How did a 17-year-old Italian immigrant boy become a successful Wall Street stockbroker?

Stellino: I was a market research analyst for a big insurance firm when I first got out of school. These financial professionals would come by to peddle ideas of financial vehicles for the company's portfolio. Most of them could not explain the complex financial thoughts and they all dressed in the best-quality, tailored clothes, drove expensive luxury cars, and ate at fancy restaurants. I figured maybe I was sitting on the wrong side of the desk. And this is how I started my career in the financial world when I applied for a job as a broker at Merrill Lynch!

And, then, what led a successful stockbroker to walk away from Wall Street to start as a restaurant dishwasher, working to become a chef? How hard was that to do?

Stellino: My Uncle Giovanni, my favorite uncle, almost a second dad to me, died of cancer. I had gone to Italy to see him and say my goodbyes. All my cousins came from all over the world, where each of us had emigrated, to pay respects to this man who had meant so much to us. On my way out of the hospital room, he grabbed my hand and, without any rhyme or reason, looking at me straight in the eyes, he said: "A man should not die without following his dreams." And, just like that, he let go of me and waved at me as my mom ushered me out of the room.

That comment exploded inside of me and it created the biggest existential crisis I ever faced. We have a proverb in Sicily that says: "Money makes a wonderful slave but a horrible master." I always had the dream to do something with cooking, but as a well-dressed man with such soft and manicured hands, all I could get as a job in the restaurant business was to be a dishwasher.

I never felt ashamed. I figured that if this is the way it starts, then this is what I will do. I became the best dishwasher that restaurant ever saw. There is no point in doing things half way. Life is short, and your work speaks of who you are. ➤

Bracirole della Nonna Grandma's Bracirole

Serves 4

Ingredients

For the stuffing:

- 3 cups day old bread, cut into half inch pieces. For a quicker result, shred the bread in a food processor
- 1½ cup whole milk
- 4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 6 garlic cloves, sliced thick
- ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- ½ cup onions, finely chopped
- 6 ounces chopped Italian dry salami, I prefer soppressata
- ½ cup white wine
- 2 tablespoons fresh parsley, chopped
- 1 egg
- ½ cup grated pecorino or Romano cheese

For the Bracirole:

- 2½ to 3 pounds of top round beef cut into slices, pounded thin and each cut into a rectangular shape, approximately 4 inches by 5 inches each
- 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1½ cup Italian style breadcrumbs
- 3 tablespoons extra light olive oil
- 3 cups tomato sauce
- 1 cup beef stock

Directions

- Start with the stuffing. In a bowl, mix the bread and the milk and let it sit for 10 minutes until most of the milk has been absorbed, then squeeze out as much of the milk as you can and set the bread aside.
- In a large saucepan, pour the extra virgin olive oil. Add the red pepper flakes and cook over medium heat until it is hot, about two to three minutes.

- Add the garlic and onions, and stir for two minutes until the onions start to soften.
- Add the chopped salami, stir into the mixture, and cook for two minutes.
- Now add the white wine, increase the heat to high, and stir until the wine reduces by half, about two to three minutes, then add the parsley and mix.
- Turn off the heat, add the bread, and stir into the mixture until all the contents are well mixed.
- Add the egg, cheese and additional bread crumbs to absorb excess moisture and combine with all the ingredients in the pan.
- Set aside and let the stuffing mixture cool to room temperature before you stuff the Bracirole.
- Place about two tablespoons of the mixture in the middle of the rectangular piece of meat. Fold the top and bottom pieces of the meat over the stuffing.

- Fold the two short sides of the meat over the stuffing, fold over the long side, and continue rolling to completely cover the stuffing.
- Secure each Bracirole closed with three wood toothpicks. (Do not use plastic toothpicks.) Repeat this process for all your pieces of meat.
- Brush each Bracirole with olive oil and coat with Italian breadcrumbs.
- In a large saucepan, pour the tomato sauce and beef stock, and bring to a simmer over medium heat.
- In a large sauté pan, heat the extra virgin olive oil until sizzling hot. Add the Bracirole and brown on all sides to sear in the juices. Once browned, place the Bracirole in the pot with the simmering tomato sauce. Cook on simmer for 30-40 minutes.
- Serve family style accompanied by a steaming pot of mashed potatoes.



Bracirole della Nonna

Dalen Muster

From dishwasher to chef to renown TV chef...it seems like at every pivotal point in your career, good things happen! How do you manage it?

Stellino: It took me 2,365 phone calls after I left the restaurant business to land the deal for my first TV series. I owe nothing to no one when it comes to my career. I advanced through the sheer drive of my will. No one helped me and no one gave me anything as a gift. Whatever I did wrong was solely my fault.... I was never jealous or wanted someone else's job in my industry.

Financing, distribution, satellite delivery, marketing and promotion, everything is done in house at my

company. To my knowledge, I am one of the few people in our business that owns the majority of his work. To me, life is a gladiator contest, and I am all in, hook line and sinker, with every project I develop.

The word "no" is just the beginning of a conversation. I do not believe in luck. And if I fail, I do not look for someone to blame. Just like a bull or a professional athlete, I get back up and start all over again. For as long as God shall grace me with this

will of mine and my good health, this is what I will do until my last breath.

I do not believe in being cocky. That is just a waste of time and it delineates an inner weakness. I do not like talking about things too much. I am no different from my father and grandfather, only here in America my ambition found a fulfillment beyond my own dreams. My shows are shown internationally as far as Africa, all of South America, Europe and the Middle East!

Ragu' di Gamberetti Shrimp with Asparagus, Peppers and Bacon

Serves 4

Ingredients:

1 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
 3 slabs thick artisanal bacon, cut into 1-inch pieces
 4 cloves garlic sliced thick
 1 cup fresh asparagus, bottom trimmed, and cut into 1-inch pieces
 1 whole red pepper, seeded and cut into ¼ inch dice
 1 pound shrimp shelled, deveined and cut into 1-inch pieces
 ½ cup white wine (for a different taste, try sparkling wine)
 3 tablespoons softened, sweet butter
 Salt and pepper to taste

Directions

- Pour the oil in a sauce pan and cook over medium heat; add the bacon and cook until it starts to brown, about three to four minutes.
- Add the garlic and the asparagus and cook for two minutes.
- Add the red pepper stir and continue to cook for one more minute.
- Stir in the shrimp and cook until they become pink, about two to three minutes.
- Add the wine and continue to stir until the wine has reduced by half, about two to three more minutes.

- Stir in the butter until it has completely melted into the sauce.
- Turn off the heat, add salt and pepper to taste, and serve in individual pasta bowls with plenty of bread on the side!



Dalen Muster



Ragu' di Gamberetti

You also have many other interests—from being a fine timepiece collector and expert, to designing clothes, to dedicating yourself to philanthropic efforts. Where do you find the time?

Stellino: I am, by nature, curious. I want to know how things work and why. Both watchmaking and tailoring require talent and vision. In watchmaking, I love the way in which one articulates raw materials into the spectacular ensemble of finely decorated metal pieces which encompass the movement of a watch—a magical instrument which captures the passing of time, reminding us of the brevity of life, while marking its passage via a beautifully designed timepiece.

Nancy Stellino



As for the tailoring, I look at it as a magical trade which, indifferent to the handsomeness of a man, when properly executed, a great blazer, a fine shirt and a skillfully tailored pair of pants can change the first impression generated by a person. But, more than that, it can increase the confidence and the happiness of those lucky enough to wear such magically crafted clothes. I like to create things that make people feel happy! ▶

Ambassador 29

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Tonno alla Puttanesca Tuna with Puttanesca Sauce

Serves 4

Ingredients:

3 tablespoons extra Virgin olive oil
 8 garlic cloves whole, peeled
 ½ teaspoon red peppers flakes
 ½ cup finely chopped red onion
 2 tablespoons fresh parsley, chopped
 1 tablespoon anchovy paste
 4 ounces capers drained and washed with cold water
 ½ cup fresh black olives, preferably Kalamata, pitted and cut in half
 ½ cup white wine
 1 cup chicken or fish stock
 1½ cups tomato sauce
 Four pieces of tuna about 5-6 ounces each
 ½ teaspoon salt
 ½ teaspoon pepper
 2 tablespoons extra light olive oil

Directions

- In a large sauce pan, add the olive oil and cook over medium heat.
- Add the garlic and the red pepper, stir gently as the oil becomes hot and the garlic starts to brown, about two to three minutes.
- Add the red onion and stir well, cooking for two minutes.
- Add the chopped parsley and stir.
- Stir in the anchovy paste until the paste melts into the other ingredients, about one to two minutes.



Tonno alla Puttanesca

Dalen Muster

- Add the drained capers and the olives, stir to combine, cook for one to two more minutes.
- Increase the heat to high, add the white wine, stir well for two more minutes until half of the wine has evaporated. Add the stock and the tomato sauce, bring to boil and simmer for 15-20 minutes.
- While the sauce finishes cooking, in a separate pan cook the tuna. Add the extra light olive oil to the pan and cook over medium high heat until it starts to sizzle, about two to three minutes.
- Season the fish with salt and pepper, then cook in the hot oil. Reduce the heat to medium, medium-low, and cook for about three minutes per side.
- When you are ready to serve the fish, pour the sauce on each individual serving plate, pour enough to coat the bottom of the plate and place the fish on top of it. Sprinkle with some fresh chopped parsley and bring it to the table. Serve with extra sauce on the side.



Nancy Stellino

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What do you love most about being a chef?

Stellino: From raw ingredients, to be able to create a great dish is a remarkable achievement. It is pretty much like dreaming and making magic! To be able to share it with others, and see the same joy in their eyes as they make my food, is like a dream come true!

What can you tell us about these dishes from your book?

Stellino: They are like my children. My brothers, my best friends. These dishes have given peace to my soul in times of sadness, they have accompanied me throughout my life and witness the best and the worst it happened to me. Cooking them always made me feel happy. I just wanted to spread the joy!

Zuppa Di Pesce Sicilian Fish Soup (a must!)

Serves 4

Ingredients:

4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
 ¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes
 4 cloves garlic, thickly sliced
 3 tablespoons chopped onion
 ½ teaspoon curry
 2 tablespoons fresh parsley, chopped
 ½ pound fresh mussels, cleaned
 ½ pound calamari cleaned and cut into one-inch wide rings. Use the tentacles as well.
 ½ cup white wine
 2 cups tomato sauce
 1 cup chicken or fish stock
 ½ pound shrimp, shelled and deveined
 ½ pound bay scallops, cut into large two-inch pieces
 ½ pound halibut or cod, cut into two-inch pieces
 Salt and pepper to taste



Zuppa Di Pesce

Directions

- In a large sauce pan, cook the olive oil over medium heat until it starts to sizzle. Add the garlic and the red pepper flakes. Stirring constantly, cook for one to two minutes.
- Add the chopped onion, stir well and cook for one minute or until the onions begin to melt, then add the curry.
- Stir in the chopped parsley and cook for one minute over medium, medium-low heat.
- Increase the heat to medium high, add the mussels and the calamari and stir into the base for about two minutes.
- Stir in the wine and cook until it reduces, approximately two to three minutes, then add the tomato sauce and the stock.
- Once the mussels begin to open, add the shrimp, scallops and the fish. Stir together all of the ingredients to combine well. Make sure you dispose of any mussels that did not open.
- Reduce the heat to a simmer and cook for 10 more minutes.
- Turn off the heat, add salt and pepper to taste, and serve.



Dalen Muster

How do you spend your holidays and what dishes are traditional for you to make during the holidays? Do any dishes you make this time of year originate from your childhood in Sicily?

Stellino: For the holidays, I cook whatever I feel like and it is never the same. I respect no traditions when it comes to my holiday table. It is always dependent on what I am experimenting with at that time. This year, we run the risk of making a Christmas Smoked Brisket, as I have taken on smoking the perfect brisket as my next challenge.

However, New Year's dinner is always the same, me and my wife alone at home, sipping on champagne and eating *Lenticchie* and *Cotechino*—lentils and a special Italian sausage you braise for over one hour. It is a typical meal that symbolizes the wishes for plenty of financial fortune for the New Year. ➤



Courtesy of Cooking With Nick Stellino

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Pasta Alla Norma

Pasta with Eggplant and Smoked Mozzarella

Serves 4-6

Ingredients:

- 1 cup extra light olive oil
- 2 medium eggplants, cut into ½ inch cubes
- 1 tablespoon fresh mint
- 2 tablespoons Romano cheese, grated
- 1 pound pasta, rigatoni or penne
- 4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 4 garlic cloves, thickly sliced
- ½ white onion, finely diced
- ½ cup white wine
- 1½ cups tomato sauce
- 1½ cups chicken stock or vegetable stock
- 6 ounces Scamorza (smoked mozzarella cheese cut into ½ inch cubes or 4 tablespoons grated ricotta salata, dry salted ricotta cheese)
- 4 tablespoons grated Romano cheese

Directions

- Add extra light olive oil to a large sauce pan and cook over high heat until it starts to bubble, then reduce heat to medium high.
- Deep fry the eggplant pieces about two to three minutes or until they start to brown. Using a large slotted spoon or skimmer, remove from pan and place into a bowl.
- While the eggplant pieces are still hot, add the fresh mint and the grated cheese. Stir well and set aside until you are ready to add them to the sauce.
- Bring a pot of water to boil. Add the pasta and cook two minutes less than the directions given on the package. (We will finish cooking the pasta in the sauce.)

- In a large Sautee pan, add the olive oil and cook over medium heat until hot.
- Add the red pepper flakes, cook two minutes while stirring, then add the garlic and cook for one minute more.
- Add the onion, stir well and add the white wine. Stir together and cook for two to three minutes.
- Now add the tomato sauce and the stock. Increase the heat to medium high.
- Bring to a boil, then simmer for eight to 10 minutes.
- Add most of the eggplant to the simmering sauce, saving some pieces for topping the finished pasta dish.
- Add the drained pasta and finish cooking into the sauce for two to three minutes.
- Turn off the heat and add the cheese. Stir well until most of the cheese has melted.
- Serve in individual pasta bowls, top with the reserved fried eggplant pieces and some grated Romano cheese.

Dalen Mustier



Pasta Alla Norma

Chef's Tip: If you are using ricotta salata instead of scamorza, just add more grated ricotta salata instead of the Romano cheese.

Recipes from Nick Stellino's new e-cookbook "Storyteller in the Kitchen," available at his website at nickstellino.com, where you can also find other cookbooks, cooking videos and great recipes by Nick Stellino. ▲



Nancy Stellino

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recipes and videos, in addition to more than 750 recipes we have now and even more videos. For a free sample, check this page: www.nickstellino.com. The future is now!

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For years, I have visited and written about the culture and cuisine of northern Italy, especially the areas around Bologna, Modena and Ferrara, birthplace of my grandparents.

Last February, I headed south to where the Apennines Mountains, the 750-mile mountain range that continues through the spine of Italy to the end at the “toe” in Reggio di Calabria, the largest city in Calabria. This is a region I have always been curious about exploring.

One day, outside the quaint town of Scilla, in the Costa Viola, a stretch of beautiful coastline looking towards the Aeolian Islands, North of Reggio, I visited a vineyard grown on shelved terraces, and rode on a rickety “monorack,” something like an old carnival train which broke down. When it’s working, it carries freshly picked grapes through the vineyards.

Another day, I was sampling an array of Calabresi specialties outside of the city. At Sirianni, an all women’s factory owned and operated by Angela Zappia, I tasted typical hot peppers of Calabria, chopped and packed in oil; the famous Tropea onions, cooked and turned into a condiment; and the region’s famous *’nduja* (pronounced en-DOO-ya), a spicy, spreadable pork salami.

I visited a family of cheesemakers an hour and a half drive up the narrow winding roads in the mountains, where I was treated to the best sheep’s milk ricotta I have ever tasted. Later, in a restaurant, I tasted it with fresh basil pesto mixed in and spread on a toast point. I ate at local restaurants and sampled local favorite dishes, including Cirò, now our table wine.

But, it was on this trip that I discovered my passion and fascination with the unique fruit called bergamot (*bergamote*). This pear-shaped citrus is slightly greenish, and is the result of crossbreeding lemon and orange trees. It was used in the original Eau de Cologne developed in Germany in the 17th century. The inside has a sour, bitter taste and is not edible. The outer skin of the nearly ripe fruit is what’s prized for its fragrant essential oil.

Most of us know its scent and flavor from Earl Grey Tea, however, it’s used in myriad ways, as I discovered. Bergamot is found in famous French perfumes, soaps, candy, marmalade, liquors, aromatherapy and even soft drinks. It is noted for its medicinal properties, and is said to have a calming effect when a few drops are applied to the skin.

Karen Haid, author of “Calabria: The Other Italy,” told me: “The first time I experienced the actual, real flavor of bergamot was in honey, [when] I had an upper respiratory infection. Looking for relief, I went into a general food store. They had a wide variety of local honey I asked the proprietor if she had any recommendations. Without any hesitation, she handed me a jar of honey with bergamot. The taste was exquisite!”

In my research, I found 80 percent of the world’s bergamot is grown on small trees along a narrow strip of coastline, 60 miles long, cushioned between the Ionian and Tyrrhenian Seas at the foot of the Aspermont Mountains of Reggio Calabria. The unique soil and climate conditions in this area are favorable for the cultivation of this special fruit.

I was in Calabria during the growing season and enjoyed a savory swordfish ceviche with the slight hint of bergamot, tasted several outstanding desserts highlighting its essence, and even bought the fragrant cologne. Today, the Consorzio del Bergamotto di Reggio Calabria governs the extraction of bergamot essence.

Recently, California has begun growing a close variety of bergamot in limited quantity, from January to March. To my elation, I purchased six beautiful bergamots, the last of the year’s California harvest. When the fresh fruit is unavailable, I recommend a good-quality, food-grade, bergamot essential oil and bergamot extract for these delicious desserts recreated from my Calabria journey as well as some I developed on my own.

THE BERGAMOT QUEST

Searching for Calabria’s
Unique Fruit

By John F. Carafoli
Photos by Francine Zaslow

Ambassador 33

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CREME ANGLAISE

In Calabria, I had this rich creamy sauce served over small puff pastry filled with whipped cream. It is the ideal ending for any meal.

Yields about 1½ cups

Ingredients

2 large egg yolks
1 cup heavy cream
⅓ cup white sugar
½ teaspoon each of orange liqueur such as Grand Marnier or Limoncello
1½ teaspoons bergamot extract

Directions

- Whisk egg yolks, cream, sugar, liqueurs and bergamot extract in a small saucepan until smooth.
- Place saucepan over medium-low heat and cook, stirring constantly with a rubber spatula, scraping the bottom, until the mixture is hot and thickens, and coats the back of the spoon, about 6 to 8 minutes.
- Remove from heat; strain out any over-cooked egg particles.
- Allow to cool. Serve over mini puff pastry shells filled with fresh-plain or bergamot-whipped cream.



BERGAMOT CAKE

This cake is wonderful served by itself or with a dollop of whipped cream. Each serving may also be served with a little sweetened fruit of raspberries or strawberries on the side.

Ingredients

2 cups all-purpose flour
¾ cups sugar
1½ teaspoons kosher salt
½ teaspoon baking soda
1½ teaspoon baking powder
1 cup extra-virgin olive oil
1¼ cups whole milk
3 large eggs
1 tablespoon each of grated lemon and orange zest
¼ cup fresh lemon and orange juice
1 tablespoon bergamot extract

Directions

- Heat the oven to 350° F.
- Butter a 10-inch Bundt pan.
- In a bowl, whisk the flour, sugar, salt, baking soda and baking powder.
- In another bowl, whisk the olive oil, milk, eggs, lemon and orange zest, juice and bergamot extract.
- Add the dry ingredients; fold until just combined. Do not over-mix.
- Pour the batter into the prepared pan and bake for one hour, until the top is golden and a cake tester comes out clean.
- Let cool for 30 minutes.
- Remove sides of pan and let cake cool for several hours before serving.

For the Glaze

- Mix 1 cup confectioner's sugar with 1 to 2½ tablespoons orange juice and ¼ teaspoon bergamot extract.
- Drizzle over top of cake and sprinkled with the zest of an orange.



BERGAMOT PANNA COTTA

This is one of my favorite desserts, served on a base of fresh summer strawberry or raspberry puree or an assortment of your favorite fruit on the side.

Makes 6 servings.

Ingredients

5 cups heavy cream
Thinly pared zest of 1 lemon and 1 orange
4 teaspoons unflavored gelatin
 $\frac{2}{3}$ cup cold milk
2 $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon bergamot extract
1 cup powdered sugar
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup orange juice
Raspberry or strawberry puree
Candied orange for garnishing

Directions

- Pour $3\frac{3}{4}$ cups of the cream into a saucepan, add lemon and orange zest, bring to a boil, then simmer until reduced by one third. Remove the cooked lemon and orange zest. Set aside.
- Sprinkle the gelatin over the milk in another small saucepan and soak until softened, about 5 minutes.
- Stir over low heat until the gelatin dissolves completely. Add to boiled cream mixture with 2 teaspoon bergamot and cool.
- Whip the remaining $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups cream with the powdered sugar and remaining $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of bergamot to form a firm consistency.
- Fold into the cooled cooked cream, and mix in the orange juice.
- Place a piece of cooked lemon and orange zest in each of the eight (6-ounce) custard cups, and pour in the cream mixture. Cover and refrigerate for at least two hours or overnight.
- When ready to serve, place each custard cup, one at a time, in warm water for a few minutes to loosen the dessert. Run a knife inside each cup, then turn out onto small dessert plate covered with raspberry puree.
- Garnish top with slivers of orange and lemon peel.

BERGAMOT INFUSED VODKA

You can buy a variety of citron vodkas, or for a more authentic flavor make your own with the bergamot in season. Once you have tasted your homemade variety, you will not go back to the store variety.

Use bergamot in season. Or, to simulate the bergamot flavor, use the peel from both an orange and a lemon. Another option is to use a drop or two of the bergamot oil in the vodka—but, be careful, use it sparingly!

Ingredients

1 bottle (700 ml.) 80-proof vodka
The peel of a large bergamot (if in season) or of an orange and a lemon
1 teaspoon of superfine sugar

Directions

- Slice the peel from one bergamot, or any of the other two citrus fruits, with the pith removed.
- Put the peel into the vodka bottle, add the sugar and shake well.
- Let the vodka infuse for 3-to-4 days or longer.
- Chill the vodka in the freezer. Serve in chilled shot glasses. ▲



John F. Carafoli, an internationally known writer, author and food stylist, wrote the definitive book on food styling, "Food Photography and Styling." He has published articles in Gastronomica and The Journal on Food and Culture. His latest book, "Great Italian American Food in New England," published this year; his upcoming book, "Great Cape Cod Food Finds," will be published in mid-November. He lives on Cape Cod.

Where to Find Bergamot

For Bergamot Fruit

(available only January to March)
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Gourmet Outlet
2301 Purchase Street
New Bedford, MA 02746
800-423-8333
www.sidwainer.com

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ALL STRINGS ATTACHED

Story and
Photography by
Armando
Rotoletti

THE MAKING OF PALERMO'S PUPPET THEATER

Popular since the Middle Ages, Sicilian marionettes and the puppet theatre came into its own, as we know it today, in the 18th century, and remain a distinctive element of Sicilian culture and identity. That's particularly true in Palermo, where the craftsmanship and string-pulling spirit of Italy's fictional Maestro Geppetto is, in reality, in good hands—indeed, handed down from one family generation to the next, from one master to the next.

Traditionally, Sicily's puppeteers, through their marionettes and storylines, depict medieval characters performing legendary events and later heroes—from Charlemagne's knights and the Norman knights of King Roger of Sicily to fierce Saracens warriors and Sicilian aristocracy. Beyond the historical is the hysterical: Opera dei Pupi (puppet theater) also features comedic drama, such as the farces of Nofriu and Virticchio, whose mixed-up schtick and double entendres have delighted audiences for decades.



Ranging in height, typically, from more than two feet to nearly four feet (depending on their origins—Palermo, Catania or Messina, for instance), the puppets are made of wood with cloth and metal accessories, from their garments to armour, shields, helmets and weapons. Authentic, hand-carved, hand-painted Sicilian marionettes are considered the benchmark in the world—and when you see them, you know why.



Over the decades, Sicily's Opera dei Pupi took a serious hit with the interruptions of two World Wars, and the advent of new entertainment technology such as motion pictures and television. But certain families specializing in marionette making and puppetry are carrying on the artistry into the future.

While there are many master puppet makers and puppeteers in Palermo, and elsewhere in Sicily, the Cuticchio family is considered distinctly important. Today, Mimmo Cuticchio, eldest son of the late master Palermo puppeteer Giacomo Cuticchio, who was instrumental in resurgence of the Opera dei Pupi before and after World War II, carries on the tradition.



Salvatore Bumbello (above) at his puppet-manufacturing shop in Palermo's historic neighborhood of Capo; (Left) Mimmo Cuticchio at the Cuticchio Puppet Theatre in Palermo; (Bottom left) Palermo puppet maker and puppeteer Enzo Mancuso

Having grown up learning from his father, Mimmo formed his own puppeteering company, Figli d'arte Cuticchio, in 1971, focusing on working for schools. Two years later, he opened the Teatro dei Pupi Santa Rosalia in Palermo, where the main aim is upholding, teaching and handing down the heritage of the Opera dei Pupi.

In 1977, he founded the first association of puppeteers recognized by the Ministry of Culture that has led to the improvement and development of the traditional crafts of the Opera dei Pupi performances—from staging, to making puppet amors, to carving the wooden *pupi* bodies, to creating their clothes. Twenty years later, Mimmo opened his workshop and founded the first school for puppeteers and storytellers to ensure the future for the Opera dei Pupi. His performances take place at the Cuticchio Puppet Theatre at Via Bara all'olivella in Palermo. ▶



Enzo Mancuso (left) with one of his knights drawn from the "Matter of France," a traditional and popular storyline for the Opera dei Pupi. (Below) Mimmo Cuticchio with his puppets; (Bottom left) Salvatore Bumbello displays Paladins of France knight.





(Left) Detail of a Charlemagne knight from Enzo Mancuso.
 (Below) In Salvatore Bumbello's puppet-making shop.
 (Bottom) Mimmo Cuticchio's marionettes

Another famous Sicilian puppeteer is Enzo Mancuso. The last descendant of the “family” of puppeteers that opened a small theater in 1928 in Palermo’s Borgo Vecchio neighborhood, Enzo is the grandson of the Knight Antonino Mancuso, a specialist in creating armors with Greek and Roman helmets, a puppeteer who once performed his theater throughout Palermo and nearby towns from the back of his truck before opening a stage on Palermo’s Don Luigi Sturzo square.

Enzo’s father, Nino Mancuso, who learned as his own father’s helper and began staging his own puppet performances at age 14 in Misilmeri, Palermo, was considered a foremost expert in the art of creating puppets until his death in 2013.

Meanwhile, Enzo, creator of The Company Charlemagne, started at age 13 using restored puppets inherited from his grandfather. Considered the youngest puppeteer of Palermo, Enzo, 43, is devoted to the ancient techniques and old story plots of elderly masters, characteristics evident in his puppets and performances.

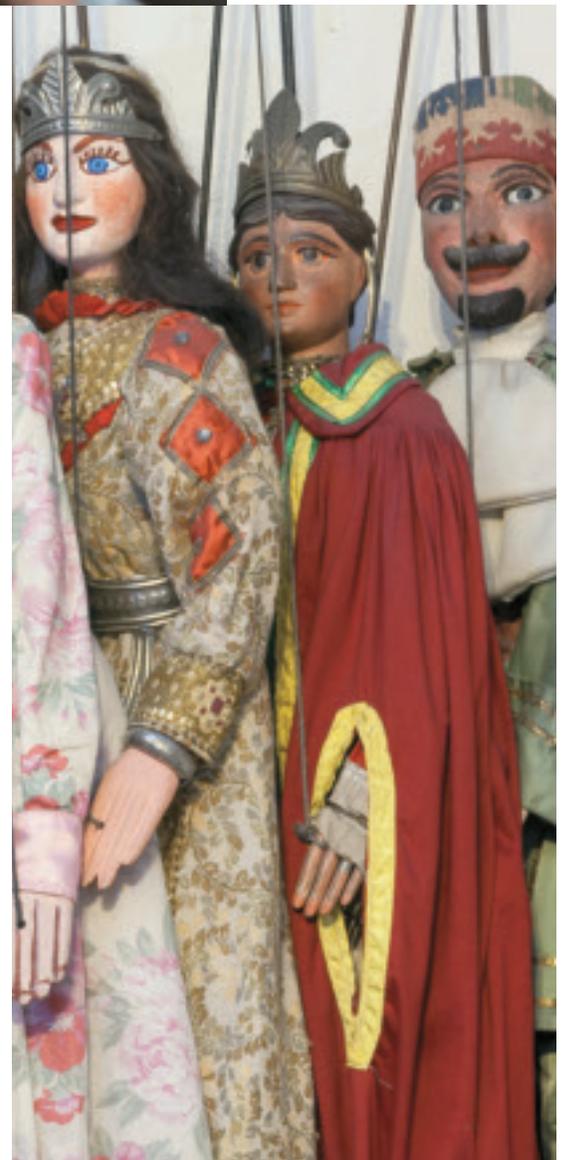
Palermo-born Salvatore Bumbello, who has a puppet-manufacturing shop in Capo, is a skilled puppet maker who learned techniques from his father, Luciano. And like his father, Salvatore manufactures authentic puppets not only for his own company, but for puppet lovers and serious collectors—taking 20 days of patience and meticulous work to complete each puppet. He made his first puppet at age 12 and has never looked back.



In recent years, Salvatore has performed with his Pupi Brigliadoro Opera Company, dedicated to traditional puppetry arts, and has worked with the International Puppet Museum Antonino Pasqualino in Palermo.

And, for visitors to Palermo, besides the workshops and theaters of the most famous puppeteers, a not-to-be-missed destination is The Antonio Pasqualino International Puppet Museum housing the late Antonio Pasqualino’s renowned puppetry collection of more than 3,000 pieces from Italy and elsewhere.

Born in Messina, Sicily, Armando Rotoletti studied photography at the University of Westminster, in London. His work has appeared in such prominent publications as Corriere della Sera, Vanity Fair and The Sunday Times. His interest in cultural and social environments of micro communities has realized photo collections, exhibitions, and seven books whose topics range from small Sicilian villages (in books “Barbers of Sicily,” “Conversations in Biancavilla” and “Etna’s Wine and People”) to Italy’s wine-producing Langhe area (“Barbaresco People”). To view a selection of his work, visit: www.armandorotoletti.com. ▲



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In the Footsteps of St Francis

The Mission of Palermo's Fra Biagio

By Theresa Maggio

When Leoluca Orlando, mayor of Palermo, Sicily, made his acceptance speech for the honor of his city being named the “Italian Culture Capital for 2018,” he reminded the world that Palermo's real cultural strength goes beyond its panoply of monuments, from Norman-Arab chapels and Art Deco villas, to exquisite 18th-century palaces. It comes from being “the city of welcome in hard times like these.”

Orlando believes a city's level of culture is measured by how its “haves” treat its “have-nots.” In this respect, Palermo shines.

One bright example of this city's burgeoning ethos started in 1990 when Biagio Conte, then 27, the troubled, pampered son of a wealthy construction-firm owner in Palermo, returned from a walking pilgrimage to Assisi. He came home a changed man. His story a modern-day parallel of the saint who inspired him, Conte began sleeping on the sidewalk outside Palermo's train station with the homeless people he'd always seen there. He slept there two years, “with those bundles of suffering, enclosed in their blankets and cardboard boxes out of shame, out of necessity...,” he wrote in his 2006 autobiography, “La Citta` dei Poveri; La mia vita per gli ultimi” (“The City of the Poor; My Life with the Least Ones”).



Theresa Maggio

Fra Biagio greets brothers and mission volunteers at a pre-Easter celebration at the men's farm in Scopello.



Welcomed brother at the men's farm where, inside, there's a permanent life-sized creche the resident farmers created. The manger was a home when there was no room at the inn, so it is special to homeless people.



Fra Biagio with Suor Lucia, Suor Alessandra and Fra Giovanni look on as Boy Scouts play guitar during Mass at the new Scopello men's farm

Conte set up a burner and cooked them hot soup. He kept two old men off the sidewalk by having them sleep in his sister's Fiat 500. First came students with blankets and food, and then scouts, then pensioners, then parishioners with warm clothes. Then the archbishop said Mass for them in the station chapel which made them widely visible. After two years, one of the old men said, "Biagio, find us a home, a bed, a shower so we can wash every day. Then we can start over."

Conte became a self-styled monk and founded the order of the Missionaries of Hope and Charity, whose seven members, numerous benefactors and hundreds of volunteers now house and feed a thousand people in three urban centers and at outlying farms. No one who follows the rules is ever asked to leave. The mission has workshops and equipment to teach trades—tailoring, metal work, carpentry, kitchen and bakery work, mill

work, and, for the disabled, pottery at a potter's wheel. The mission has received gifts of land that Fra Biagio turned into organic farms to feed his homeless brethren and heal the farmers—ex-cons, recovering addicts, refugees tortured by traffickers, and migrant women, often raped and pregnant, always traumatized. Destitute clandestine immigrants arrive from Africa with nothing more than Fra Biagio's name.

About 700 migrant men live in The Citadel, a former military barracks in Via Decollati near the railroad station. Some 200 men needing physical or psychiatric care are housed in the Mission of Hope and Charity, a former city disinfection headquarters. And some 100 women and children live at the Women's Shelter in a former abandoned convent near Piazza Rivoluzione. Fra Biagio went on hunger strikes and slept on a cot in the street to wrest these structures from the government.

Then, he and his cadre of homeless tradesmen and volunteers rebuilt them to suit.

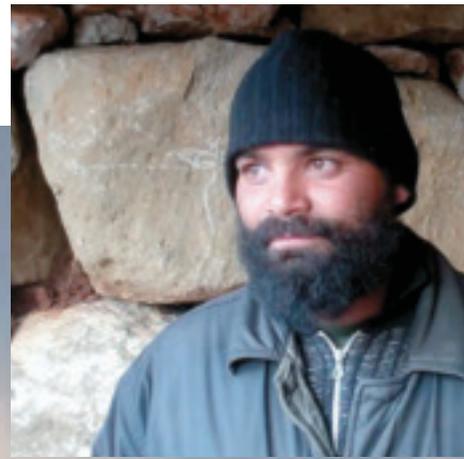
Imagine running a thousand-bed hostel in three locations with no training, experience, or paid staff, a hostel where you had to go on hunger strikes and walk barefoot for a year to get the three buildings, then reconstruct them. Imagine running three kitchens to serve three hot meals a day to all the guests, even catering to many who have dietary restrictions.

The food is either donated, or bought with donations, or planted, grown and harvested from donated ex-urban land and prepared by the hostel guests. You don't always know where the next meal is coming from, but you've known the egg man to show up with surplus eggs just when there was nothing. Your guests may be sick, or alcoholic, or hooked on heroin, or fresh out of jail. They have diabetes, arthritis, post-traumatic stress disorder, Alzheimer's disease or mental illness. ➤



A view from the women's farm in Castellamare, Sicily, where geraniums glow red against the backdrop of a dusty mountain.

Theresa Maggio



Theresa Maggio

Csaba, a homeless Hungarian brother who later became the seventh ordained member of the Missionaries of Hope and Charity, stands in the grotto he built at the men's farm in seaside Scopello

Fra Biagio opens a fava pod, Castellamare women's farm



Theresa Maggio

Some are pregnant, some are grieving, some are nursing. Some are infants and children. You provide counseling, dentistry, medical care and job training. Your guests come from several continents, cultures and religions, and speak obscure languages and dialects. Your hostel is always full. None of your guests has any money. And, nightly, you drive out to feed the people who remain in the streets.

That and more is what Fra Biagio does, with the help of his missionaries, volunteers and benefactors. In 2012, the European Union named him "European Citizen of the Year." I first met him that year when he was in a wheelchair, crippled by his efforts. When I met him again 14 months later, he was walking, said to have been cured by a miracle at Lourdes.

A couple of times, he has quit in a fit of pique, given the buildings back to the city, exhorting it to care for his thousand. But he always took up his cross again. Literally. When his homeless brethren don't get the support they need, he shoulders a wooden cross on epic walks around Sicily, and now Italy. He carried the cross 574 miles to Rome where Pope Francis received him in a

half-hour private audience.

In October of last year, the start of cold weather, a standing-room-only hall full of hundreds of volunteers listened to Fra Biagio's instructions for those who would deliver hot food to street people in a camper van donated by Palermo's Lions Club. "Don't turn on the heat in the cab because street people have no heat," he said. "Don't ask their names. Say, 'Can I call you brother?' Bring a smile. Ask if they want shelter."

Six nights a week a volunteer driver, team captain and six helpers left at nine sharp to deliver hot tea and milk, bread and cheese, warm *pasta al forno*, a frittata, some fruit, along with blankets, shoes and sweaters. For two hours, they made stops on a route drawn up by the volunteer who takes calls from citizens reporting the locations of new, needy street people.

Fra Biagio's mission was one of five Palermo non-profits whose volunteers brought supper to the homeless. Sometimes they crossed paths until the street people complained of being woken up too often to eat. Since then Palermo's non-profits have coordinated their deliveries, freeing up Biagio's volunteers for other tasks, such as

driving his homeless guests to their doctors' appointments, and staying with them in the hospital, like family.

I first met Fra Biagio at the original mission in Via Archirafi, the one with the green neon cross beaming from the smokestack, a beacon for the Least Ones. He and his supporters had turned the disinfection plant into a peace-filled haven with shade trees, flowers, a splashing fountain and a white statue of Saint Francis feeding the birds. Fra Biagio wanted to show me their new chapel. He warned me not to question guest brothers on the way because some had come unhinged when they lost their jobs, then their wives and families. In the cool, verdant garden, two such men with gray stubble beards walked up to his wheelchair, bent down and kissed him.

He rolled into the bright chapel that homeless tradesmen had built and pointed to the symbol at the center of its new tile floor: the barren stump of a tree with fresh shoots sprouting from it. ▲

Theresa Maggio, the granddaughter of Sicilian immigrants from Santa Margherita di Belice (AG), is the author of two books about Sicilian culture, "Mattanza" and "The Stone Boudoir." She is seeking representation for her third work of nonfiction, "Heart of Palermo."

For more information about Fra Biagio's Mission of Hope and Charity, visit https://www.ilmiodono.it/it/organizzazioni/?id_organizzazione=985

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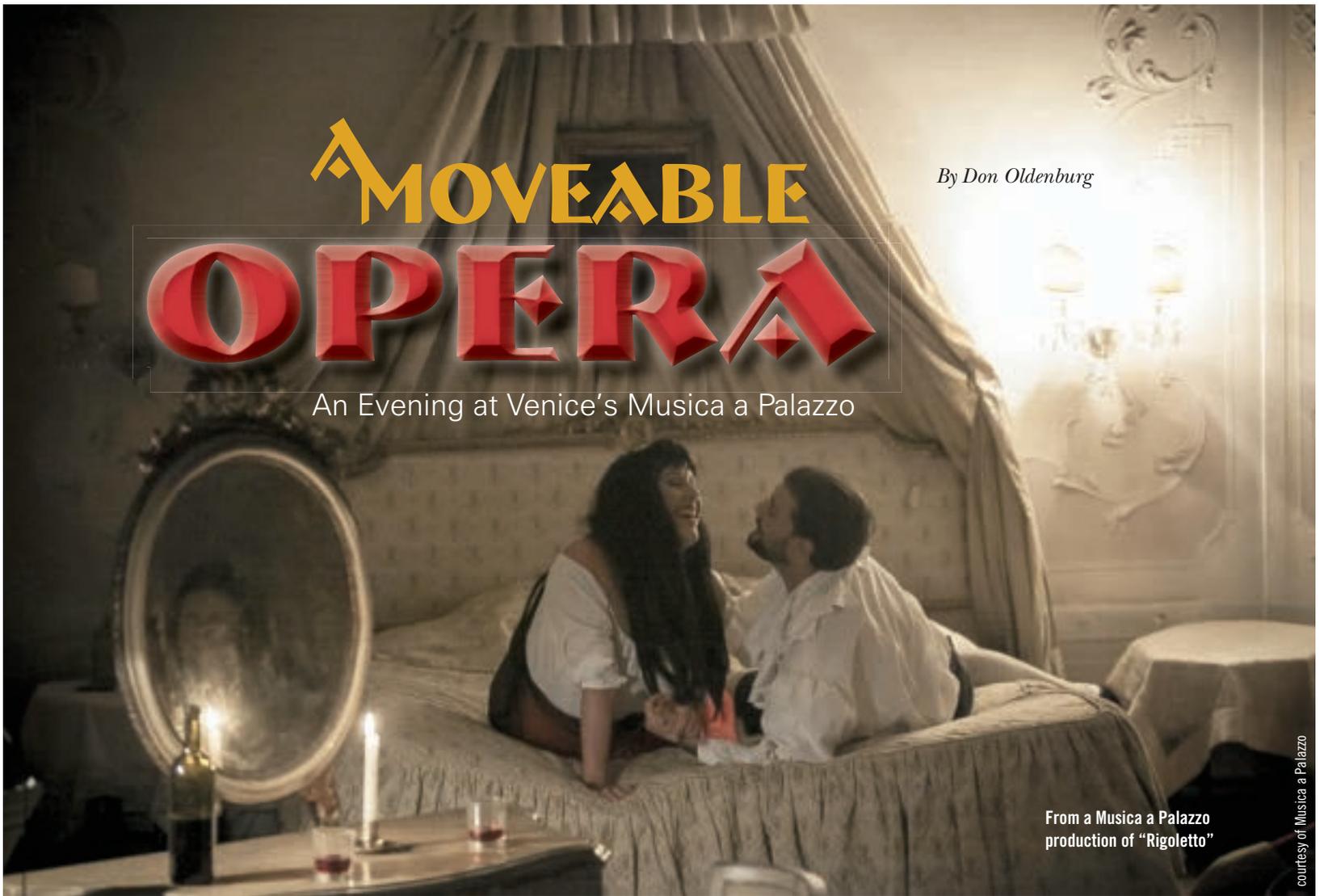
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MOVEABLE OPERA

By Don Oldenburg

An Evening at Venice's Musica a Palazzo



From a Musica a Palazzo production of "Rigoletto"

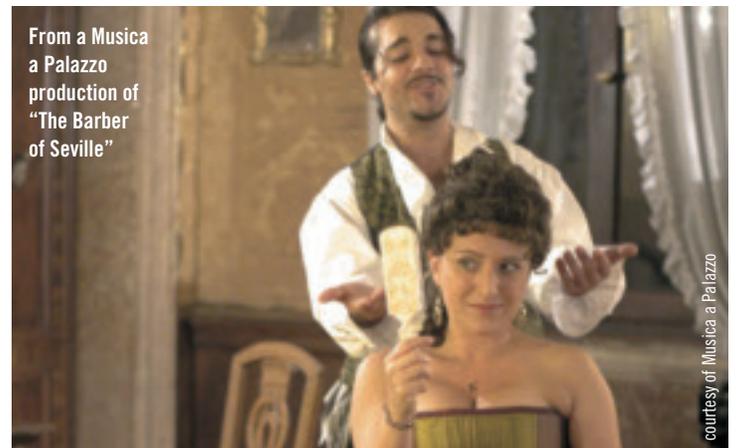
courtesy of Musica a Palazzo

In a city whose main streets and attractions are overrun with sightseers and shoppers, only occasionally do you find something so out-of-sight and yet magnificent as Venice's "Traveling Opera."



From a Musica a Palazzo production of "La Traviata"

courtesy of Musica a Palazzo



From a Musica a Palazzo production of "The Barber of Seville"

courtesy of Musica a Palazzo



From a Musica a Palazzo production of "Rigoletto"

courtesy of Musica a Palazzo

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courtesy of Musica a Palazzo

Each opera performance is accompanied by a musical quartet



courtesy of Musica a Palazzo

From a Musica a Palazzo production of "The Barber of Seville"

The palace's Tiepolo Salon



courtesy of Musica a Palazzo

Seven evenings a week, in the elegant halls of Palazzo Barbarigo Minotto, a 15th-century Venetian-Gothic palace overlooking the Grand Canal, performers of Musica a Palazzo stage Italian operatic classics for small audiences.

In Venice, in early June, we maneuvered southward from our hotel in the Cannaregio district, walking through this beautiful city's crowded streets, over canal bridges, and along narrow alleys, excited to see Musica a Palazzo's adaptation of Rossini's comedic drama "The Barber of Seville." Had we gone the next two evenings, we could've seen Verdi's "La Traviata" and "Rigoletto." In retrospect, we should have.

That same night, "The Barber of Seville" was playing at the famed Teatro La Fenice, just minutes away. But ours was a different experience, not high-culture opera, but arguably opera as it was once and, on any given

night, as it should be.

Musica a Palazzo bills itself as carrying on "the historic tradition of traveling opera," and in a way it does. In the early 1600s, itinerant opera companies traveled from one city to another, performing the earliest operas ever written in palazzos and privately-owned buildings, decades before the first opera houses were built. Venice laid claim a century later as "The Opera Capital of the World" with 10 public opera houses.

But, unlike the grand operas that would soon become the cultural benchmark of the genre, with large casts and orchestras, and lavish stage productions, performed in spectacular opera houses such as Teatro La Fenice and Milan's Teatro alla Scala, those first traveling opera companies required small ensembles and portable stage scenery, costumes and effects. They were scaled-down experiences as well, requiring per-

formers to be versatile enough to play more than one role, even join in with the four-musician ensemble on an instrument.

That modest tradition was revived in the late 19th century when, due to the public popularity of opera, arias could be heard everywhere, from Venice's drawing rooms to its concert halls, and even whistled in the streets. Parlor music was also trending then, placing operettas and other smaller-scale works in private homes, accompanied by a few string instrumentalists and a pianist and a small audience. This was chamber opera in Venice.

And, logistically, that's what defines Musica a Palazzo today. Though it only travels, act by act, from one of the Palazzo Barbarigo Minotto's antiquated, ornate, candle-lit halls to another, with the audience following amid the rich stuccos, period furnishings and art of Baroque masters from Giambattista Tiepolo to Carpoforo ➤



Don Oldenburg

Before the start of the opera's raucous Act I, scene 2



From a Musica a Palazzo production of "La Traviata"

courtesy of Musica a Palazzo



courtesy of Musica a Palazzo

The Canal side of the Palazzo Barbarigo Minotto

Tencalla, the scale and intimacy of the productions are true to the tradition and spirit. At the start of the 20th century, an heiress to the Palazzo Barbarigo Minotto, a countess and famous opera singer herself, having retired, would invite friends to the palazzo for private opera performances. Almost like these.

So, never mind your opera glasses. Reviewers call this "accessible opera," and "stunningly personal," because it is opera at arm's length. For those in front-row and aisle seats, especially, that's no hyperbole. A virtuoso quartet provides the musical accompaniment for almost two hours of lively entertainment, including remarkable arias and duets sung by performers whose talents translate to any stage, local or international, large or small, but here only a few feet away.

Soon after the lights dim for the first scene of Act I, the audience, never more than 80 people, becomes embedded in the performance. Spellbound, not knowing what to expect, we are suddenly quite inside the opening scene. As huge-personality Figaro sings his boastful introduction, he pulls from his smock two barber's scissors and, to a wave of laughter, strolls along the aisle, sizing up audience members' hair, mine included, and clips away (not really). At the end

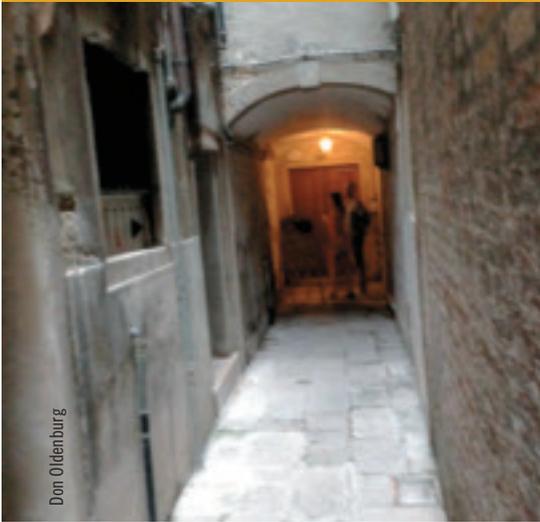
of the scene, when Figaro needs to discard two theatrical wigs he'd used for disguises, he deposits one on my head. My biggest moment in opera.

For the opera's raucous Act I, scene 2, that followed a pleasant Prosecco-tasting intermission, my son and daughter-in-law, J.B. and Lara, quickly found the next salon and a couple of isolated chairs against a wall opposite the rest of the audience. Another couple sat in an antique sofa near them. Friends of ours claimed first-row seats to the right. They all became on-stage props; cast members interacted with them, sat on their laps, sang in their faces, gestured humorously at them—all perfectly within the context of the opera, and much to the audience's delight.

In the boudoir scene, in Rosina's bedroom, Act II, Scene 2, the audience is less embedded, as it were, though the darkened candle-lit room and surrounding aged pale walls engage us all the more inside the opera plot. The drama sustains right up until Figaro blows out the lantern to leave the bride and room in total darkness...until a standing ovation and shouted bravissimos interrupt to end an evening that is as engaging, exhilarating and memorable as any you'll find, even in La Serenissima, a city made of such evenings. ▲

Getting There and On Time

Part of an evening's drama of attending a performance at Musica a Palazzo is finding the Palazzo Barbarigo Minotto. Look on Trip Advisor and you'll find many visitors who had so much trouble that they arrived late for the show. In fact, you can be wandering within a couple of blocks of the palace and walk right past the small alley leading to its entrance.



So here are some pointers: From Palazzo Hotel Abadessa, where we stayed, it was supposed to be a 20-minute walk. As we discovered, the closer you get, the route to the Grand Canal sort of disappears (it's a Venice thing). With three tech-savvy sons (highly recommended) tracking our every turn on their iPhones, through dark narrow alleys and damp walkways along small canals, with only one or two wrong detours, we made it ahead of time. If you're lucky, you'll notice a sign or two (see landmark photos) along the way.

But, to be clear as possible, the palazzo is only a five-minute walk from Piazza San Marco. It's close to Campo Santa Maria del Giglio, and sits right on the Grand Canal. Cross over the small bridge near the side of the landmark Baroque church Santa Maria del Giglio, follow the waterside street Fondamenta Duodo o Barbarigo nearly to its end, and go down the alley branching off to the right. Musica a Palazzo is the last gate (number 2504) on the left.



The evening will bedazzle your opera-reluctant children or spouse. The performance is in Italian, but the staff sells Italian-English librettos (5 euros) that include a summary of each act so you can figure out what's happening.

For the \$102 price of admission, you are not purchasing a ticket but rather "joining the cultural association." Book your seats ahead. Doors open at 8 p.m.; the show starts at 8.30 p.m. For more information and tickets, visit www.musicapalazzo.com.

Don Oldenburg

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POLITICS OF THE common GOOD

CONTROVERSIAL
MAYOR LUIGI DE MAGISTRIS TURNING NAPLES UPSIDE-DOWN

By Tony Mastroianni

It's Ferragosto—the pinnacle of Italian siesta, a second Labor Day, the official day of rest and relaxation for anyone and everyone outside of the hotel business. Anyone and everyone, except for Neapolitan Mayor Luigi De Magistris.

With the city shut down for the day, and most of its inhabitants were reclining on beach chairs, the so-called *sindaco di strada* (mayor of the streets) takes Ferragosto as an opportunity to visit with the city's youth at the Centro Polifunzionale San Francesco's summer program for the integration of disabled children.

Between his stage-esque charisma, typical of Neapolitans, and the fact that he stands a head taller than most of the population, De Magistris is larger than life, shaking hands, taking photos, and genuinely engaged hanging out with a group of 10-year-olds in a parking lot.

As De Magistris heads back to his car, a *scugnizzo* (street urchin) throws him a basketball, which he sinks for a first-



Mayor De Magistris at the Centro Polifunzionale San Francesco's summer program for disabled children

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Tony Mastroianni

touch three-point shot to solidify his status amongst boys. However, a good reputation amongst boys isn't entirely what has kept the controversial Mayor of Naples in office for two terms.

In 2012, The Telegraph crowned Naples' Toledo Station as one of the most beautiful metro stops in Europe, subsequently putting Naples back on the world map. From its first mezzanine, a mosaic history of the city extends along the station's descent underground, created to simulate a voyage under sea level. Commuters find themselves in a corridor of holographic waves. Celeste tiling with alternating lights blinking across the ceiling mimic the to-and-fro of a scintillating Mediterranean above.

On top of winning a "Public Building of the Year" award, Toledo station grabbed positive headlines for Naples for the first time in ages. For decades, Naples' seedy reputation for crime and garbage transformed the Southern Italian capital into a mere pit stop on the way to Capri and the Amalfi Coast. Though the reputation hasn't faded away entirely, former magistrate and recent mayor reelect Luigi De Magistris has quietly pulled his city's image out of the trash and made Naples, once again, a handsome destination for tourists and businesses alike.

When De Magistris came into office in 2011, he inherited a garbage crisis and a reputation that had been stuck to Naples like a bad smell. "The image of Naples," De Magistris says, "was that of a city submersed in waste."

Refuse had clogged the alleyways and narrow streets that made up the heart of Naples. While efforts by past politicians, down the line from ex-prime minister Silvio Berlusconi to former mayor Antonio Bassolino, had little impact on the issue, De Magistris inevitably had to make a strong first move in office.

While prior plans revolved around the construction of new incinerators (as nearby landfills were already chock full of waste from all around the peninsula), De Magistris moved in a different direction. One of his earliest mandates called for citizens to take a larger hand in



Mayor De Magistris with some of his youngest constituency

resolution. With the incinerators put on hold, strict, new recycling laws were implemented, as well as new laws regarding the time of day in which people are allowed to bring their trash outside. The tons of trash that crowded Naples' already crowded streets disappeared shortly after.

Though reforms in recycling, restorations and restyling don't rank as radical, De Magistris' means to an end are far from typical in the world of Italian politics. For him, autonomy is the name of the game. In a country fundamentally built on pizza, Fiat and bureaucracy, the mayor's headway related to his tight relationship with citizens. In the morning, he's greeting the Muslim community in Piazza Mercato for the final day of Ramadan. In the evening, he's attending a public assembly in the tradition of Naples' Ancient Greek roots.

De Magistris' penchant for moving against the grain dates back long

before running for office. Though some consider his public spats with Italian officials a political move in itself, Naples' first citizen has consistently run outside of the major Italian political parties. In 2012, he founded the Orange Movement, meant to be a home for disenfranchised politicians of the left. In 2016, he ran his re-election campaign without any party at all. The platform was simply referred to as democratic autonomy or DemA. Despite the convenient abbreviation, democratic autonomy appears to be exactly what De Magistris intends to see through. Participating in public assemblies is only the beginning of his aim of cutting out as much government as possible and letting the community make decisions.

Over Twitter, he has stated, "As a visionary, I think the most advanced phase of democracy is that of anarchy, I dream of communities that self-manage themselves without higher >

Tony Mastroianni

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Mayor De Magistris in the streets of Naples

powers, only love!” Elaborating that, “it would be difficult to achieve in our lifetime, but what I mean is that there’s need for it in Naples, a need for strong public participation, for self-governing and self-management by citizens.”

Meanwhile, De Magistris’ vision for the modern city and its relationship with government is making do with what he refers to as a “*mezza strada*”—a half-way point. His administration’s open support for programs like Massa Critica are critical in the evolution of Naples. Massa Critica is a movement that functions as a sort of public think tank, holding public assemblies across the city to discuss the future and general concerns, and to voice complaints. De Magistris not only supports Massa Critica, but actively participates, considering it a point of reference for Italy and a new Europe that should be rebuilt from the ground floor, while remaining what he calls, “horizontal.”

Despite bolstering tourism rates that beat out Venice and Florence, and his clear aim for a closer rapport with the community, not everyone is

enamored with Naples’ mayor. From supporting organizations that some believe undermine the government to calling out Italy’s head of state, De Magistris is no stranger to making national headlines. He’s taken more pot shots at major parties and politicians than the Daily Show, once going as far as offering then Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi a diaper because he [De Magistris] was going to make him defecate his pants.

While some of his statements are major attention grabbers in the press, the mayor, calm as ever, acknowledges that he’s a controversial figure, but that his controversial status is a byproduct of courage.

“I believe I’m an anomalous mayor,” he says. “It’s not possible to put what we’re doing inside a familiar frame. [We’re doing] something profoundly diverse.”

Just outside his office in Palazzo San Giacomo lies the equivalent of a Neapolitan City Hall Park. For years, Piazza Municipio wasn’t much more than a maze of overgrown grass, chain link fences and porta potties that

principally served as a bus stop and a make-shift home for civil protest.

Piazza Municipio, where De Magistris’ re-election party was held, is now a transformed, two-tiered piazza with a fountain of Neptune as its centerpiece, overlooking the Maschio Angioino castle, the port, and a certain volcano that looms in the distance.

Just across the way from Neptune is the recently finished Municipio metro stop. It is fully functional, though not finished, as plans had to be adjusted in the early stages of construction when five Roman naval vessels were discovered in the digging phase. A portion of the station will be turned into a museum dedicated to the ancient ships.

While Naples’ bright yellow subway cars zoom back and forth past their roots in antiquity, if all goes as planned, it will be the Naples zooming further into a new kind of modernity. ▲

Tony Mastroianni lives in Naples, Italy. His work can be seen in Lotus-Eater, Able Muse Review and the Bicycle Review.

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SICILIAN CURIOSITIES

And Where to Find Them on Your Next Trip to Sicily

By Michelle Fabio

Sicily can seem exotic and shrouded in mystery even to Italians.

Perhaps that's only because of its geographical position as an island separate from mainland Italy, but the **curiosities** below certainly add to that mystique.

There's simply no denying that *Sicilia* is speciale.



Black Madonna of Tindari

Ancient Tindari near Messina in northeastern Sicily dates back to 396 B.C. It is one of Sicily's most impressive Greek-Roman archeological sites, with Roman baths and houses, stunning floor mosaics, an amphitheater, and incredible views across the Tyrrhenian Sea.

Overlooking all of this is the Sanctuary of the Black Madonna, which houses a cedar statue of *Madonna Nera* whose origins are disputed. She most likely came from the Middle East, possibly brought to protect Sicily during the Iconoclastic Wars in the 8th century, or placed high up on the mountain for safety by shipwrecked sailors.

Below the sanctuary is the gorgeous *linguetta di sabbia* (tongue of sand), which creates a lagoon said to have formed when a mother refused to pray to the Madonna because she was black. When the woman's baby slipped from her grasp into the sea below, as the legend goes, the Madonna lifted parts of the land to save the baby, giving rise to the lagoon. ➤



Patti

The Black Madonna of Tindari

2 Noto and Caltagirone Flower Festivals

On the third weekend of May, the Baroque village of Noto in southeastern Sicily is lined with *il tappeto fiorito*, a carpet made of flowers. Artists, both local and international, collaborate to create the colorful designs made of the petals of flowers grown specifically for *L'infiorata*. Parades and other activities round out the weekend, and then, on Monday, children are let free to destroy the artists' work as symbols of destruction and revival.

Meanwhile, during the last two weeks of May, picturesque Caltagirone, noted for its ceramics and located about 50 miles southwest of Catania, holds a flower festival on its famous 142-step, colorfully tiled staircase, which connects the lower town with the Church of Santa Maria del Monte and the old upper town above. The flowers are laid in a swirly pattern in honor of Our Lady of Conadomini, the town's patron saint.



marat

The Sicilian Flower Festival in Noto, Sicily



lapas77 / shutterstock

Palermo vehicle with I Beati Paoli image

3 I Beati Paoli

Everyone knows about the Mafia's connection with Sicily, but fewer have heard of Palermo's secret society that may have been a precursor to the criminal organization. Although the existence of I Beati Paoli is in dispute, it is commonly believed that Luigi Natoli's novel by the same name was at least partially a historical account. In the book, as Sicily passed from Spanish to Piedmontese to Austrian rule in the early 18th century, this underground group of men fought against both the Church and the State

in favor of the common man. They are said to have gotten their name because by day they dressed as monks of St. Francis of Paola, while by night they wore black hoods and met in a cave in the Capo quarter of Palermo near the Church of Santa Maria di Gesù, also called Santa Maruzza.

The church is still there, and though the cave entrances have been blocked off, there is now a restaurant near the spot that pays homage to this mysterious tidbit of Sicilian history.

4 Capuchin Catacombs of Palermo

Toward the end of the 16th century, burial space for Capuchin monks in Palermo was scarce, so in 1599, the first monk was buried underground. The spot started out exclusively for monks, but the Order began accepting special requests from wealthy benefactors to be buried there.

About 8,000 preserved corpses hang on the walls, lay on shelves, and are posed on chairs in the cool, stale air of the Capuchin Catacombs of Palermo. The bodies are separated in sections for men, women and children, professionals, priests, and even

virgins. Many of their clothes are still in fairly good condition, and walking through the catacombs can be feel like an eerie, historical fashion show of religious robes, military uniforms, housewives' attire, and children's best outfits from the 17th century through the beginning of the 20th century.

No corpse is more striking than that of two-year-old Rosalia Lombardo, who died in 1920, and looks like she is merely taking a nap thanks to the secret embalming method of Dr. Alfredo Salafia.



Gandolfo Cannatella / shutterstock

Catacombs of the Capuchin

Incidentally, Savoca also has catacombs in its Capuchin monastery, if you're planning a Sicilian catacomb tour.



Gandolfo Cannatella

Palermo's original street-food, the spleen sandwich

5

Palermo's Spleen Sandwich

Sicilian cuisine has been exported around the world, which means that delicacies such as *arancini* (fried rice balls) and ricotta-filled cannoli are widely known. One culinary delight that hasn't quite made the jump into the mainstream is *pani ca' meusa*—the street-food sandwich made of fried beef spleen and a slice of lemon and sometimes grated caciocavallo cheese.

The legend behind the spleen sandwich mixes the city's Jewish and Arab heritage. During the Middle Ages, many Jews were butchers who prepared boiled offal with lemon and salt to sell on the streets. Contemporaneously, Arabs were making a ricotta and caciocavallo sandwich as their street food of choice.

It is said that around the time of the Inquisition in the 1500s, these two typical street foods combined into a form similar to the spleen sandwich we find in Palermo today, and served during NIAF's Anniversary Gala's Expo Siciliana in November by Mike's Deli—The Original Arthur Avenue Italian Deli, in the Bronx.



vive / shutterstock

Tribute statue of Francis Ford Coppola created by Savoca artist Nino Uchino

The Godfather Villages of Savoca and Forza D'Agro

Many people know of the village of Corleone in western Sicily, which lends its name to "The Godfather" book and films as the last name of the crime family at the center of the drama. Lesser known, however, is that some of the movies were shot in two rustic hill towns on the eastern coast of the island, just outside of Taormina.

Filmmaker Francis Ford Coppola thought Corleone was too developed. So, for some scenes in the first movie, including Michael's talk with Vitelli about courting his daughter, Apollonia, at Bar Vitelli, and their wedding at the Church of San Nicolò/Santa Lucia, filming took place in the beautiful hillside village of Savoca. For "Godfather II," filming shifted to Forza d'Agro and its Convento Agostiniano for when young Vito escapes Don Ciccio's men by hiding in a donkey's basket. ▲



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WINE LOVER'S HOLIDAY WISH LIST

A SMART SHOPPER'S TASTING GUIDE
TO SOME OF ITALY'S FINE WINES

BY DICK ROSANO

Castello di Brolio near Gaiole in Chianti
Below: Francesco Ricasoli, current baron
of Castello di Brolio, and scion of the
wine-making family that has lived there
continuously since 1141.

Photos courtesy of Castello di Brolio



An old saying goes, “It’s better to give than to receive.” But if you’ve been good this year – well, maybe even if you haven’t – you may be on the receiving end of this transaction. So, to make sure your loved ones know what they should give you this holiday season, we’ve put together a Wine Lover’s Wish List of some of Italy’s best exports.

It’s not hard to find great wines from the Old Country; it’s just hard to keep the list down to a manageable few pages. The approach taken here is to highlight some of the best categories of wine and offer a sampling of each. So, herewith, are the recommended wines, with some serving suggestions to go along with them.

Just rip this sheet from the page and hand it to your significant other. And remind them that your Christmas stocking is far too limiting for this bucket list. ▲

BUBBLIES are tailor-made for the holidays, showing bright fruit flavors, lively acidity, and a festive sparkle in every glass. Italy has more than a few sterling examples to fill the shopping basket, beginning with the little-known Franciacorta from northern Italy, and random, non-specific, sparkling wines labeled “brut.” But Prosecco is the current darling in the American market and is very easy to find in wine stores around the States. Here are two outstanding examples.

LaMarca Prosecco (\$17).
Light, lively and fresh; impressions of peach and apricot with a hint of ginger on finish. Score: 86 (Importer: Gallo)

Zardetto (\$14).
Fine bead, silky yet medium bodied, soft honeysuckle and spice notes. Score: 86 (Winebow)

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Dick Rosano’s columns have appeared for many years in The Washington Post and other national publications. His novels set in Italy capture the beauty of the country, the flavors of the cuisine, and the history and traditions of the people. Rosano 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.”

56 Ambassador



Many wine drinkers have fallen for the false narrative that Italy doesn't make **WHITE WINE**. Sure, the reds from the country are monumental, but there are many white wines from the various regions that would be perfect as an aperitif, a social lubricant in pre-prandial gatherings, and even as the featured wine at elegant dinners. Choose from Gavi, Verdicchio, Orvieto, and many others.

There are too many categories to properly handle here, but Pinot Grigio deserves a second look. Not the weak, watery wine many people recall from the 1990s, now it's bright and aromatic and would satisfy anyone who's looking for a thirst-quenching, flavorful wine.

Albino Armani 2016 Pinot Grigio Valdadige Corvara (\$16).

Bright, brisk and clean, fruity and zesty, tangy green apple, a perfect warm weather wine. Score: 85 (Folsom Associates)

Franz Haas 2016 Pinot Grigio Vigneti delle Dolomiti (\$35).

Bright aromas and flavors, fresh on the palate, lightly creamy, soft acidity. Score: 85 (Empson)

Franz Haas 2016 Pinot Grigio (\$28).

Medium bodied and smooth, apple and pear flavors, lemon accents, tangy finish. Score: 87 (Empson)

Arneis is seldom talked about, but the grape is responsible for some of the country's most aromatic, textured whites.

Damilano 2016 Arneis (\$23).

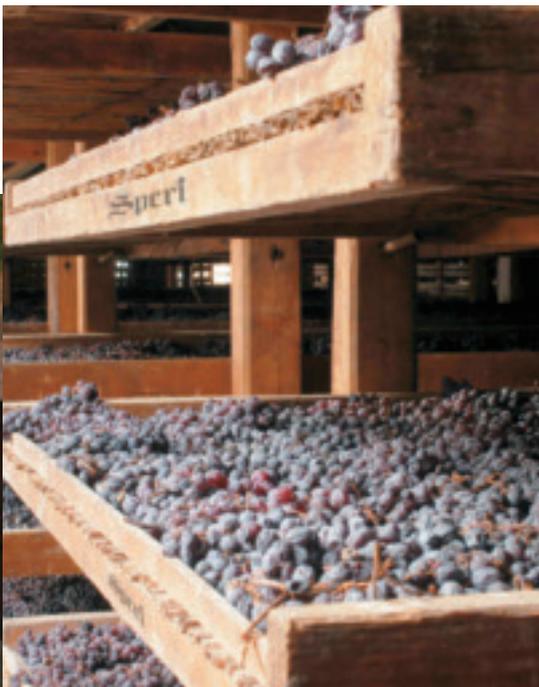
Subtle aromas but opens to pear, peach, and green apple, tangy grapefruit accent on finish. Score: 88 (Vias)



Above: Valentina, Ernesto, Davide and Anna Abbona at the Marchesi di Barolo vineyards in the Langhe Photo: Frederick Wildman and Sons, Ltd

Below: Speri vineyard drying racks; and vintage photo of the Speri Winery in 1959 Photos: Speri Winery

Far left: Castello Banfi, the historic fortress that crowns the Banfi estate and vineyards, located in Montalcino Photo: Castello Banfi



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No question, the motherlode of classic wines in Italy are **RED**. The Three B's – Barolo, Barbaresco and Brunello di Montalcino – headline most wine lovers' list, but none would be complete without paying due respect to Amarone and Chianti Classico.

Some superb examples of these categories are listed below, but don't be afraid to venture farther afield. Try Barbera or Dolcetto from the north, Nero d'Avola, Negroamaro or Primitivo from the south, and Aglianico, Corvina and Grignolino from all over.

The following list focuses on the classic categories found on most store shelves, in most collectors' wine cellars, and they are grouped in each class. Happy Holidays!



Asili is one of the historic vineyards located within the village of Barbaresco.
Photo: Vias Imports

Barone Ricasoli Brolio 2014 Chianti Classico (\$24).

Black currant on nose and palate, raspberry and light herb accents, medium body and long finish. Score: 90 (Liber USA)

Castello di Volpaia 2015 Chianti Classico (\$22).

Ruby red, crushed cherry fragrance, black cherry dominates on the palate with tea leaf, tobacco, a cool eucalyptus finish. Score: 90 (Wilson Daniels)

Castellare di Castellina 2015 Chianti Classico (\$24).

A nose of cranberry and cherry, with soft tobacco leaf accents, great mouthfeel and finish. A note of rosemary creeps in on back palate. Score: 92 (Winebow)

Col d'Orcia 2012 Brunello di Montalcino (\$55).

Soft approach focused on plums, cherries, and tobacco, dense and chewy. Be patient, hold for five to 10 more years. Score: 94 (Palm Bay)

Castello Banfi 2012 Brunello di Montalcino (\$80).

Intense grape and black cherry flavors, laced with bitter almond and tobacco. Give this one 10 years to develop. Score: 95 (Banfi)

Count Francesco Marone Cinzano, chairman of Col d'Orcia, longtime winery making organic Brunello in the heart of Montalcino Palm Bay Imports

Poggio Antico 2012 Brunello di Montalcino Altero (\$73).

This wine features amazing potential, closed now but after breathing it opens with amazing clarity and fragrance. Cherry flavors, with accents of tobacco and pencil lead, a big, brooding wine that just keeps on giving. Score: 95 (Monsieur Touton)

Poggio Antico 2012 Brunello di Montalcino (\$62).

Fragrant, evocative of raspberry and crushed red berries; touch of soft tobacco and leather heightens the senses. Needs 10-15 years. Score: 94 (Monsieur Touton)

Marchesi di Barolo 2012 Barolo (\$51).

Taut and restrained, showing dried cherry and strawberry flavors, a touch of leather and mint. Drink now through 2030. Score: 93 (Wildman)

Bruno Giacosa 2012 Barolo Falletto (\$250).

Explosive with fruit and savory aromatics. This is a huge wine with fruit, tobacco, licorice and all the accents hoped for in a Barolo. Give it 15 years to unfold. Score: 96 (Folio Wine Partners)

Pio Cesare 2013 Barolo (\$77).

Taut, only opening slowly, but this Barolo features hallmark aromas of black fruit, leather, tobacco and herbs. Might need 15 years to mature, but would be drinkable as early as 2022. Score: 94 (Maison Marques & Domaines)

Produttori del Barbaresco 2014 Barbaresco (\$40).

Medium ruby red, intense scent of cherries with and herbal accent, dense and chewy, flavors tend toward black cherry and blackberry, very approachable wine, but best from 2018-2030. Score: 94 (Vias)

Vietti 2012 Barbaresco Masseria (\$105).

Scent of pencil lead and cherry, with a touch of mint on nose, dried cherry and blackberry on the palate, hint of tobacco leaf, with a savory thread of sage and thyme. Best from 2020-2032. Score: 92 (Dalla Terra)

Gaja 2013 Barbaresco (\$240).

Medium brick red, earthy,

soft aromas of forest and lightly toasted oak; black cherry core, with strawberry accents, soft but dry tannins on mid- and back-palate; long finish. Score: 94 (Terlato)

Allegrini 2013 Amarone della Valpolicella Classico (\$85).

Subtle red berry fragrance, hint of mint and licorice on nose and palate, crushed berry and raspberry flavors. Score: 90 (Gallo)

Masi 2011 Amarone della Valpolicella Classico Costasera Riserva (\$80).

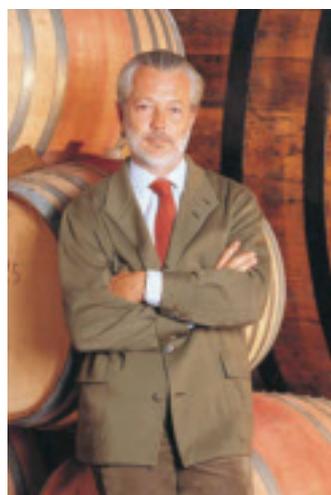
Crushed red fruit, intense flavors of cherry and raspberry, hints of violets and light herb. Soft and supple; long finish. Score: 91 (Kobrand)

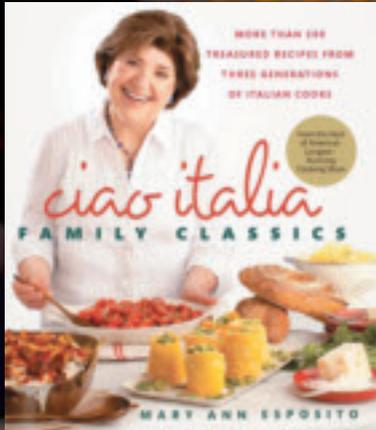
Masi 2011 Amarone della Valpolicella Classico Vaio Armaron Serego Alighieri (\$85).

Smooth from start to finish; elegant mouthfeel; focused flavors of dried cherry and fig, with hints of tea leaf and herbs. Score: 93 (Kobrand)

Speri 2012 Amarone della Valpolicella Classico Vigneto Monte Sant'Urbano (\$78).

Subtle and seductive on the approach, a beautifully balanced wine with soft tannins and brooding cherry and raspberry flavors; a delightful hint of orange zest on finish. Score: 93 (Empson) ▲





Mary Ann's latest book,
Ciao Italia Family Classics,
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CiaoItalia.com

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alive on America's longest-
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THE *Winter* ITALIAN AMERICAN READER

What can you say about winter that hasn't been said a million times before?
That there will be a "cold snap"?
That "baby, it's cold outside"?
That Jack Frost will be "nipping at your nose"?
That come "the dead of winter" there will be a "blanket of snow"?
Thread-worn, winterlong phrases like these are "just the tip of the iceberg."

But, 'tis the season when originality is overrated, and tried-but-true phrases, old song lyrics and carols, and warmed-over, warm-hearted sentiments echoing years gone by seem better than ever.

The books on this year's holiday reading list, however, are originals. Any of them might make a great gift for the right person. They are all written by Italian American and Italian authors or are of interest to Italian American readers, or both. We provide a brief but telling passage from each book as well as its cover. Our short reviews are meant to provide a glimpse inside the covers.

So, as it has been said so many times before, Season's Greetings, Happy Holidays and Merry Christmas!

Buona lettura! And Buon Natale!



Serena Cosmo

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Serena Cosmo



BETWEEN THE PAGES

THE ULTIMATE PASTA AND NOODLE COOKBOOK

By Serena Cosmo
Cider Mill Press
800 pages; \$39.95 hardcover

A quip about using your noodle when cooking would be a cheap intro to Serena Cosmo’s new culinary tome, “The Ultimate Pasta and Noodle Cookbook.” Except there’s nothing cheap (well, maybe the price) about this fabulous, gigantic, definitive, encyclopedic cookbook of more than 300 recipes for pasta, pasta soups and related dishes.

And, use your noodle you will, just contemplating the illustrated descriptions of the nearly 350 types and shapes of pasta from around the world. As dizzying as that may seem, Cosmo reiterates something most readers of this magazine already know: “Making pasta isn’t rocket science. At the end of the day, it can be as simple as combining two ingredients: eggs and flour, or flour and water.”

Browsing through the 800 pages of delectable food photos and the author’s conversational narrative leading into each new section and recipe, you’d never guess this is Cosmo’s cookbook debut. A native of the small city of Ivrea, in Italy’s region of Piemonte, she came to America as a child with her family. Professionally, she has grown into a popular columnist, blogger, food educator and photographer, creating the impressive foodie website RusticPlate.com, which you really must visit.

But, about all you really need to know about Cosmo and her relationship with pasta, besides the fact that she owns 27 wooden cooking spoons, comes in her book’s foreword: “My first vivid memory of food recalls a slice of lasagna,” she writes. “I ate it at a gathering organized around my family’s departure from Italy to the United States. I was nine.”

The book is a compendium of pasta and noodle ingredients, tools, cooking tips, history and, of course, recipes. And not just Italian pasta recipes: In these sure-to-be sauce-stained pages, you’ll find everything international, from Spätzle and potstickers, to sesame noodle stir-fries and Singapore rice noodles, even a chapter on Imposter Noodles such as spaghetti squash, zucchini and tofu noodles.

When it comes to Italian dishes, Cosmo connects with classic recipes such as Ravioli with Sausage and Broccoli Rabe; Cappelletti with Pork and Prosciutto Filling in Broth (think Christmas!); Cannelloni with Butternut Squash, Ricotta and Sage; and Bucatini All’Amatriciana.

This is a great Pandora’s box of everything pasta, filled with so many inviting recipes that anyone who opens it will find it impossible not to head into the kitchen, roll up the sleeves, and start from scratch. ▶

— Don Oldenburg

Ambassador

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AMY'S STORY: A NOVEL

By Anna Lawton
New Academia Publishing
248 pages; \$28 hardback

Amy does not want to speculate about tomorrow. She clicks on Stella's Story, brings up the digitized manuscript, and plunges into yesterday.

On 9/11, Italian native Amy, now a successful publisher in New York, reaches for her computer and her childhood friend Stella's memoir. Amy makes the memoir into a novel to remember the pre-9/11 America to which both women emigrated.

Named for America, Amy grew up in Italy with an exotic twist: an American father who invited his daughter to spend a summer in New York at age 10. Though Amy begged Stella to come, too, Stella refused. Stella eventually followed her American lover to the States, and her journey, from an Italian villa with rose gardens and lemon groves to America's West Coast, becomes Amy's work of fiction, capturing life amid Vietnam War protests, feminism, John F. Kennedy's assassination and Watergate.

Amy writes Stella's story because Stella's voice steadies a quest the two undertake to explore questions of identity, country, language, and the cultural influences that Italy and America exert on each other.

Lawton's deft use of dual perspective, dialogue and dialect blends with her adept threading of characters' internal worlds in a story about finding voice.

— Kirsten Keppel

NON-DISCLOSURE

By George Dapra
Outskirts Press
232 pages, \$16.95 paperback

Those who broke with the rules and decided to cooperate with the government and enter the Witness Security Program experienced an additional layer of anxiety.

In the mood for a fascinating book about the life of an inspector in the U.S. Marshal's Witness Security Di-

vision? Well, if you read "Non-Disclosure" by New York State native George Dapra, you'll discover what it takes to protect witnesses from criminals who want them dead—before they testify in court.

As an inspector, Dapra had to sign a non-disclosure agreement with the Marshal's Service, but after several drafts, he received final approval from the Witness Security Division in February of this year to publish his book. Understandably, certain individuals couldn't be named in the book.

From 1985-2002, Dapra (now retired) was an inspector in New York City. With assignments in other U.S. cities and Italy, his list of protective details runs the gamut. From a Hells Angel biker to organized crime informants, Dapra seamlessly describes how the life of a witness goes from lawbreaker to an everyday citizen with a new identity in a new city.

With notable names from the U.S. government conducting the war on crime against infamous members of crime families, Dapra's authentic writing brings you with him on his detailed "ride-along" narrative. You'll enjoy his book for its real-life drama and his dedication to his profession, family and country. And, as he says in the epilogue: "My family values are Italian; my civic values are American."

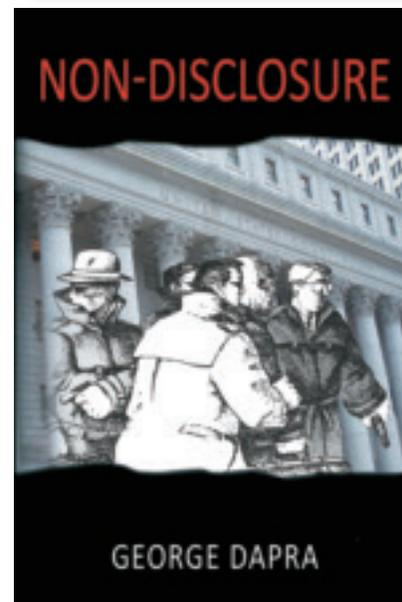
— Robert Fanelli Bartus Jr.

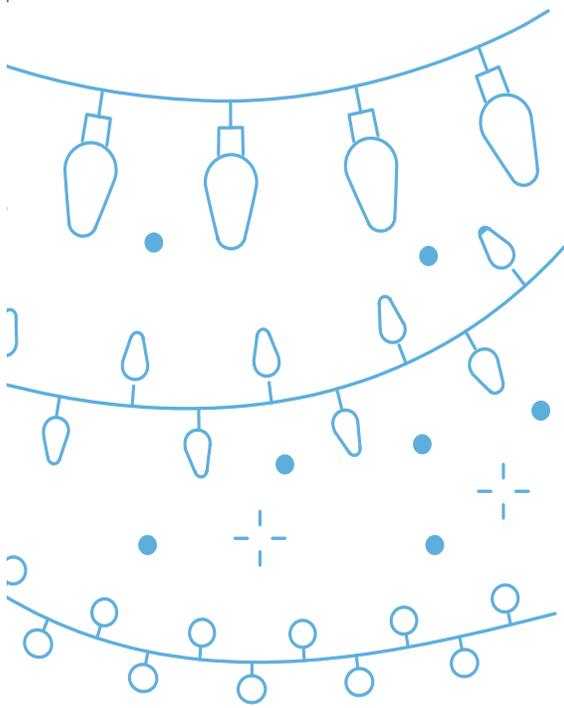
KISS CARLO

By Adriana Trigiani
HarperCollins Publishers
522 pages; \$27.99 hardcover

That we looked out for one another—that we watched out for each other's kids and shared the harvest of our gardens and took care of our old people, and when we did the little things, like bake a cake, we'd bake two, one for our home and one for the neighbor.

Adriana Trigiani, the beloved Italian American author of "The Shoemaker's Wife," returns with her latest novel, "Kiss Carlo," which follows the story of two Italian families making a life for themselves in the United States after World War II. Against a backdrop of a decades-long family feud, this





Some of a novel follows the interwoven lives of these family members, struggling to find their way in Philadelphia, New York and Italy.

Although the cast of characters is vast and colorful, the stars of the show are clearly Nicky Castone, a cab driver in the family's company who sneaks away at work to pursue his dreams of the stage, and Calla Borelli, the director of the local theater. Their love story forces Nicky to choose between the practicality and expectations of his Italian family, and the promise of a more fulfilling, exciting life as an actor.

Like each of her other bestselling novels, Trigiani brings her characters to life on the page, providing the reader with the heart-warming (and sometimes painful) experience of being a part of an Italian family—and falling in love.

— Danielle DeSimone



SALENTO BY 5: FRIENDSHIP, FOOD, MUSIC, AND TRAVEL WITHIN THE HEEL OF ITALY'S BOOT

By Audrey Fielding, Luciana Cacciatore, Carlo Longo, David Fielding, Lucia Erriquez
Gemelli Press
172 pp.; \$32.23 paperback

Salento is the warm womb of Mother Earth. It is heat and water and salt and iron-filled dirt. Think of things round (bosoms, olives, grapes, melons, tomatoes) and rippling (the abs on young Italian men at the seashore, the shimmer of wind on water and olive leaves). This is Salento.

“Salento by 5” regales the experiences of its five co-authors—two American and three Italian—in the Salento, the southernmost part of Puglia that extends from Brindisi to Santa Maria di Leuca with Lecce in the middle. The Salento is contained by the Ionian Sea on one side and the Adriatic on the other, and it encompasses its own little world among Italian destinations.

All five of the reader's senses are transported to the Salento by Audrey's meticulously curated tales of travel around the heel of Italy's boot, Luciana's stories of familial

land ownership, Carlo's lyrical prose about local music, David's evocative pen-and-ink drawings and watercolors, and Lucia's divine descriptions of traditional food and recipes.

Visually stunning and beautifully produced, “Salento by 5” is a worthy addition to the library of anyone drawn to this oft-neglected, exceptionally beautiful part of Italy.

— Michelle Fabio

BENEATH A SCARLET SKY

By Mark Sullivan
Lake Union Publishing
509 pages; \$14.95 paperback

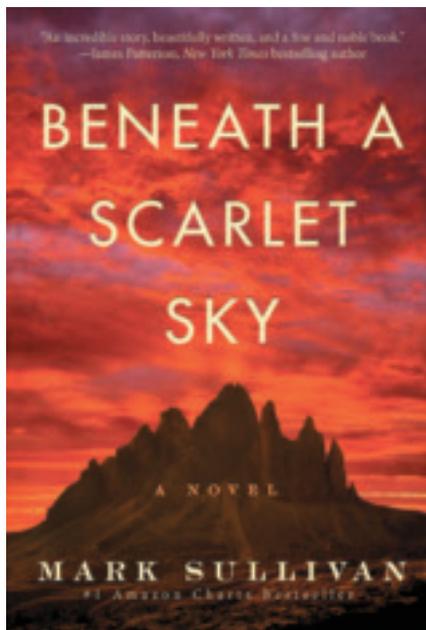
“The Nazis have killed priests helping Jews. They've pulled them right off the altar while they were saying Mass.”
“We have heard that, too,” the priest said. “But we can't stop loving our fellow man, Pino, because we're frightened. If we lose love, all is lost. We just have to get smarter.”

In this non-stop World War II thriller, Mark Sullivan tells the real-life story of the challenges that many young Italians faced during one of history's most gruesome wars.

The protagonist of “Beneath a Scarlet Sky,” Pino Lella, is a typical Italian teenager whose simple life in northern Italy is destroyed by the war. His parents, frightened by Pino's sudden passion for smuggling Jews over the Alps to save them from concentration camps, force their son to enlist in the German army with the hope that this will keep him out of the crossfire. However, Pino's new position as the personal driver for Hitler's left hand in Italy puts him in the perfect position to spy for the Allies.

With a fast plot and relatable characters, the author takes readers into the heart of the Nazi occupation of Italy, following Pino's desperate attempts to bring down the Nazi regime from the inside—and also to survive, intact, and return to his true love.

Based on the true-life story of Pino Lella, an unsung World War II hero who is still alive today, this novel is being adapted into a feature film. ▶



TIME OUT FLORENCE CITY GUIDE

Crimson Publishing
320 pages; \$19.95 paperback

Why Florence? "For the Renaissance" is the obvious answer. But, the City of the Lily is so much more than a place to see Michelangelos and Botticellis.... As a visitor, there are few downsides to Florence, and with the help of our insider tips, even the crowds can be circumvented.

Time Out has been publishing city guides since 1968, and its latest effort on Florence is another hit. Full-color photographs and street maps compliment well-written descriptions and lots of helpful tips and advice.

The book starts with a Top 20, ensuring that readers know the highlights that shouldn't be missed on any visit to Florence, from classics like the Uffizi Gallery and the Duomo to more experienced-based suggestions such as enjoying gelato and the café culture. Themed itineraries for fashion, family and budget, along with sections dedi-



cated to accommodations, eating and drinking, shopping, nightlife and performing arts provide additional value.

If you're headed to Florence, this compact guide packed with information would be an excellent travel companion, but a fair warning: Just flipping through its pages could inspire you to book a trip right now.

— Michelle Fabio

IN CALABRIA

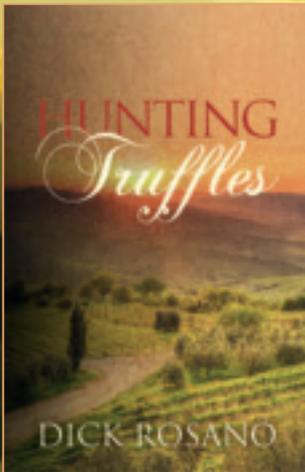
By Peter S. Beagle
Tachyon Publications; 176 pages; \$19.95

For a second time, Bianchi asked, "What do you want of me? Are you here to tell me something?" The unicorn only looked calmly back at him. Bianchi fought to clear his throat, finally managing to speak again. "Am I going to die?"

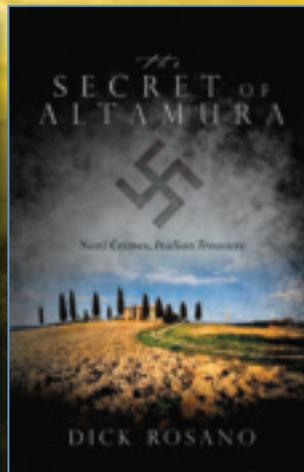
Beagle is famous for writing about unicorns. His 1968 novel, "The Last Unicorn," became an animated film in the 1980s. In his new release, "In Calabria," he places a pregnant unicorn on the land of Claudio Bianchi, a brusque farmer who values his privacy yet embraces the romantic poet inside of him with the arrival of the mysterious creature. Soon others learn of the unicorn's presence, though, and Bianchi's property becomes overrun with curiosity seekers, including some with nefarious intentions.

Beagle's writing is at once

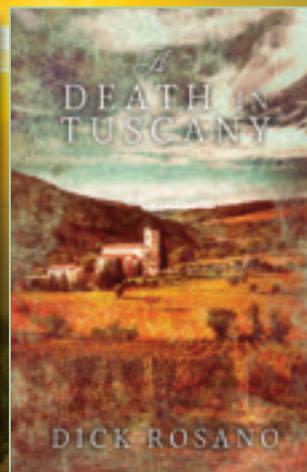
"Dick Rosano stages mysteries with the insider knowledge, finesse and flare of the accomplished wine, food and travel writer he is. And it all happens in Italy!"



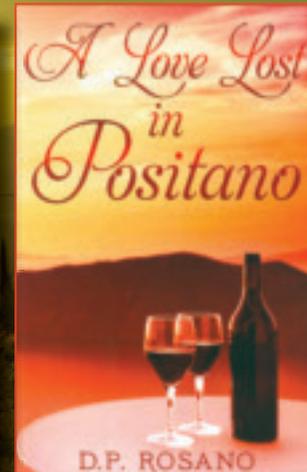
Bodies of slain truffle hunters are showing up. An investigation finds the multi-million dollar truffle harvest has been stolen.



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

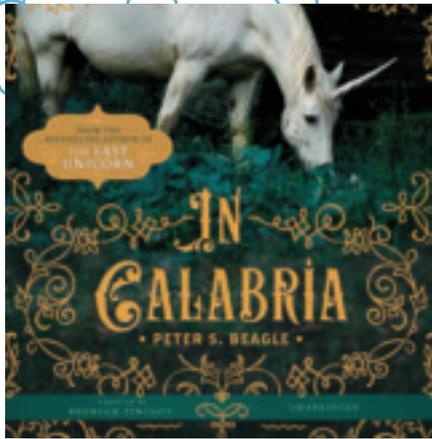


A young man mourns the suspicious death of his grandfather while preparing to take the reins of his family's Tuscany winery.



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

Available on Amazon.com



LOVE AT THE ITALIAN LAKE

By Darcie Boleyn
Canelo
249 pages; \$2.99 (Kindle)

Stop telling this stranger things about yourself! Just because he's a well-spoken Englishman does not mean he isn't a serial killer.

Set in one of Italy's most gorgeous locations on Lake Garda, "Love at the Italian Lake" is a delightful jaunt through the lives of Sophia and Joe, who meet by chance. Sophia, coming off a terrible break-up, is escaping to her Nonna's in Italy when she literally runs into handsome Joe, who happens to be helping his uncle run a hotel in the same lake town.

Their paths quickly merge, though not always smoothly, of course, through family secrets and dramas, including Joe's mother's denial of his father's dementia. Neither Sophia nor Joe is particularly looking for love, so both fight the attraction, adding more tension to the plot.

— Michelle Fabio



In this book, Boleyn has created full, likable characters and placed them among exceptionally beautiful scenery. Plenty of laugh-out-loud scenes mingle with rich, sensory descriptions of everyday life on the lake and make for a heartwarming read, especially for those who would like to escape to Lake Garda for a several hours. ▲

— Michelle Fabio

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

NON-DISCLOSURE

GEORGE DAPRA

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

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Eighteen-year-old conjoined twins Dasy and Viola supporting their family performing at weddings and holy communion festivities,

Co-joined TWINNS' Entangled Quest for Identity



Director **Edoardo De Angelis's**
New Film **"Indivisible"**

By *Maria Garcia*

Edoardo De Angelis's "Indivisible" is the story of conjoined twins

Dasy and Viola (Marianna and Angela Fontana, respectively).

They live in a faded beach resort on the Campania coast.

Their father, **Peppe** (Massimiliano Rossi) trained them to be performers.

The young women have long supported the family and **Peppe's** gambling habit.

When the movie opens, the twins are 17 years old and alert to their father's exploitation of them. They are also weary of weekends spent on the road, singing at parties and church functions. In a serendipitous encounter with a Swiss surgeon, Dasy and Viola learn of a relatively safe operation that separates conjoined twins. They need only raise the money to travel to Switzerland. Dasy longs for freedom, but Viola is saddened by her sister's desire to be free of her. She cannot imagine life on her own.

The Neapolitan writer-director's film is both a *favola*, a fable, and a quest story. "It is about people who are deeply connected, but this love is beginning to hurt them," De Angelis said in an interview at Leopard at des Artistes in New York City. "So, they need to separate and to grow up. To do that, they need to harm themselves, to cut off a part of themselves."

The twins are named for the conjoined Hilton Twins, Daisy and Viola (1908-1969). The British sisters were talented performers and had



Marianna and Angela Fontana play conjoined twins Dasy and Viola in Edoardo De Angelis's "Indivisible"

successful careers in vaudeville, but they were physically abused and exploited by their step-parents until they filed suit against them. Later abandoned while on tour in the United States, the twins spent the last decade of their lives working in a Charlotte, N.C., supermarket.

While De Angelis weighed the possibility of adapting the Hilton Twins' story for the screen, he admits that he did not want to make a film that focused on the anomaly or abnormality of conjoined twins. "When I met the Fontana girls," he said, "I realized there was the possibility of doing a story about attraction and repulsion, beauty and ugliness."

The Fontana twins, who are not conjoined and who make their screen debut in "Indivisible," are both comely and talented. In the film, after Dasy convinces Viola to have the separation surgery, they ask Peppe for the money in their savings account, only to discover that he has squandered it. The young women, who are still quite innocent of the world, decide to run away,

recalling an offer for representation from Marco Ferreri (Gaetano Bruno).

In the archetypal quest for identity, the hero's desire to live consciously leads him or her to an encounter with a bestial figure, a trickster who exposes their vulnerabilities. It is that character who propels the hero on the journey that will alter their lives. For Dasy and Viola, it is Marco, a local drug dealer and pimp, although the twins are unaware of his crimes. De Angelis cast Bruno to recall the Italian classic he co-wrote and directed, "La Donna Scimmia" ("The Ape Woman," 1964). Starring Annie Giardot and Ugo Tognazzi, the movie is based on the true story of a hirsute, Mexican woman, Julia Pastrana, exploited by her husband as a freak. "I wanted to layer the film," De Angelis said, "and Gaetano, who is a very good actor, does that. Everyone knows his movie. It is what could be the story of my characters."

Marco invites Dasy and Viola onto his yacht, and while he is true to his word about funding their journey to Switzerland, he also attempts to seduce

Dasy. The twins escape by jumping overboard, which represents another convention of the classic quest story and places "Indivisible" into the realm of myth and folklore. In the classic heroic tales, protagonists almost always cross a body of water, or are "baptized" by rain or snow; it marks their liminal transition to a more authentic identity. The touch of magical realism in this scene, when Dasy and Viola land on the beach, is brief. De Angelis then returns them to the gritty reality that is Castel Volturno.

The Campania seaside town was the site of the film's on-location shoot, not far from Portici and Caserta, where De Angelis spent his childhood. "It's beautiful but so broken," the filmmaker said. "Again, I strived for the contrast of beauty and imperfection."

The Fontana twins have a charming local accent that also felt right to De Angelis, no doubt because it reminded him of his boyhood. "First, I look for an actor's humanity," he said, "and then for their talent." ▶

Angela and Marianna spent weeks practicing how to walk and eat as conjoined twins. In the first scene, Dasy is masturbating as Viola sleeps, but she is soon awakened, as it is impossible for either of the twins to act independently. The sequence is handled with delicacy and humor, De Angelis providing a deft glimpse of his characters' distinct personalities.

"Indivisible" is the 39-year-old filmmaker's third feature, and the first to receive a theatrical release in the United States. In literature about the quest, as in Dante's "La Divina Commedia," 40 is the age when men embark on their second quest, mainly to make sense of their lives. Asked if he felt he was at such a juncture in his life, De Angelis smiled, but demurred: "We need to suffer very deeply if we really want, in the end, to find our own way to live."

During "Indivisible," the twins are subject to the cruelty of adults, especially their father and their priest, who want them to remain as they are. "There is a lot of violence in this story," De Angelis observed, "but in the

end, the girls find the strength to heal themselves. Dasy realizes she has to make sacrifices for her and her sister so that they can live independently."

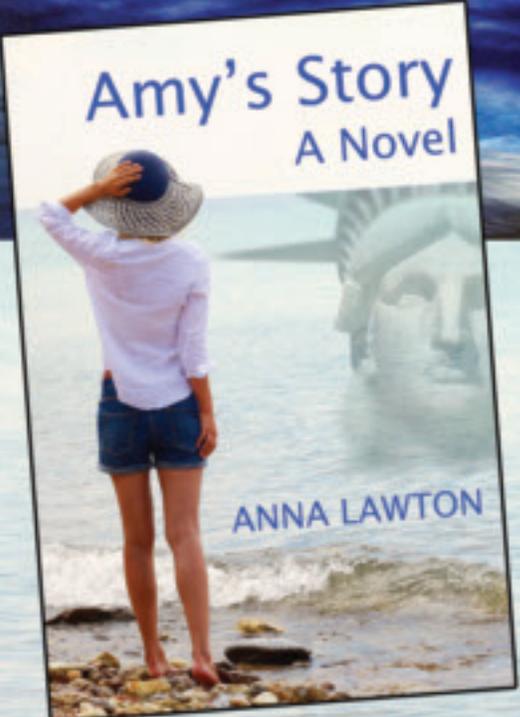
Several times in the film, the twins tell Peppe they want to sing Janis Joplin's "Mercedes Benz," but he will not permit it. "This song is like a prayer," the writer-director mused. "No one really knows what the lyrics mean, but it is something that is not here or now. It is like the 'language' of the twins, the one they share."

The score for "Indivisible" is by the gifted Neapolitan composer Enzo Avitabile (see Ambassador's review of Jonathan Demme's documentary "Enzo Avitabile Music Life," Fall 2013). "I love his work," De Angelis said, "because it is authentically Neapolitan." Avitabile's orchestral pieces, inspired by Neapolitan folk music, are the perfect accompaniment to this *favola* that celebrates the people of *il Sud Italia*. Naples, Campania's capital and Avitabile's hometown, has one of the most diverse and indelible musical legacies in all of Italy.

While offering a critique of Roman Catholicism in "Indivisible," De Angelis nevertheless draws on the Christ narrative that in its patterns and symbolic portent is the archetypal quest story. "What I like about making movies is that a movie is its own little world, a microcosm, but it's different from the world because things work," De Angelis said, slipping into Italian. "There is an order. Even in its imperfections and problems, there is order and meaning. It is hard to find meaning in the world."

Angela and Marianna Fontana, who were seated at the same table, overheard the last snippet of the writer-director's reply—and began singing "Mercedes Benz." ▲

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 book, "Cinematic Quests for Identity: The Hero's Encounter with the Beast," was published in 2015. Visit her website at mariagarciawrites.com.



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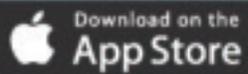
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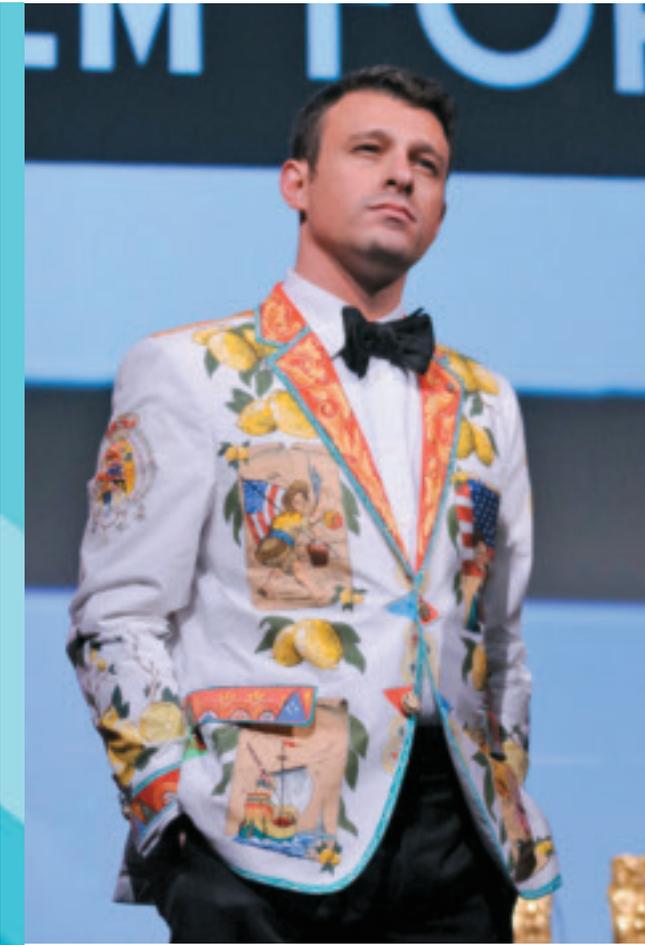
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My Sicilian Jacket

By John M. Viola, NIAF President



When you've been coming to the NIAF Gala for as long as I have, it's a lot more than just a charity fundraiser. For me, it's a birthday party, a giant family reunion, a trip to Disney World and the Oscars...all rolled into one. Over the past six years, I've had the great pleasure of being a part of the show, so naturally, the biggest decision I've had to make every year is what to wear.

At a black-tie affair, we gentlemen don't have the same burden of choice as the ladies do. A tux, no matter how you slice it, is always a tux. Sure, a nice lapel flower or a flashy bow tie adds a touch of personality, and once in a while, a colored dinner jacket helps you stand out. But, even for we Italians (clearly at the forefront of fashion), it's hard to defy the sartorial limitations of a black-tie event.

This annual struggle took on even greater significance this year, since our region of honor, Sicily, is where my grandfather's family comes from, and I've been fascinated by her visual culture my entire life.

For me, the defining icon of Sicily has always been the *Carrozza Siciliana*, the Sicilian donkey carts. Meticulously carved and covered in hand-painted designs by multi-generational artisan families, these joyous creations blend the practicality and functionality of the Sicilian character and cover it with detailed scenes that are testament to the incredible patience of this ancient culture, and the deep pride that comes with passing on one's story with every brush stroke. And, somehow, these sturdy carts, tasked with the most menial jobs and dragged behind the humblest beasts, are more human and accessible than other works of such fine craftsmanship.

So, not long after we announced this year's NIAF Region of Honor, I decided to take this opportunity to make myself into something of an ode to Sicily by painting my dinner jacket like a Sicilian cart. I wanted to use the garment to share the story of our Italian American experience, so I decided that the panels that usually tell of great moments in Sicilian history would be painted as scenes from the Italian American story.

Eventually I shared my grand plan with some fellow NIAF team members (who have often been stuck working with me until all hours of the night on one of my extracurricular artistic projects) and they recommended that I enlist some professional help. One of them told me of a friend who would be the perfect artist to bring my vision to life. Gaetano Di Guardo is a young artist in Catania whose family has been crafting some of the finest Sicilian carts for generations. But, Gaetano has not rested on his family name. He has built a reputation around the world for his commitment to applying this ancient art in modern and imaginative ways.

In many ways, I felt like he was trying to do for the Sicilian Cart what I was trying to do at the National Italian American Foundation—to honor its core values while moving it into the next generation. So, when it became clear that my time as president of NIAF was drawing to its natural conclusion, and that this Gala would be my last, this jacket took on an even deeper meaning for me.

When it arrived a few weeks before the Gala, to be honest, I was a little uncertain about wearing it to a professional event. But I quickly realized that it was perfect for me. Like Sicily herself, the jacket was a visual assault, an in-your-face and unapologetic testament to a proud culture, and I ►

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We are committed to enhancing our diverse academic community by actively encouraging people with disabilities, minorities, veterans, and women to apply. At CUNY, Italian Americans are also included among our protected groups. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment and will not be discriminated against on the basis of any legally protected category.

guess in these past six years, that's what I have tried to be. In a world where being proud of who you are is often criticized as small-minded instead of celebrated as honorable, I've spent the last six years of my young life wearing my love of culture on my sleeve, and now I would bring that cliché to life on the most Italian night of the year.

Ever since my first NIAF Gala Weekend nearly two decades ago, the event has served as a mile marker in my life, a yearly ritual, an annual return to the womb of our very special culture, the opportunity to recharge my "Italian American" batteries, to reconnect to who I am at my core. Here, we can bask unabashedly in the knowledge that we have the best of all worlds in our Italian American culture, and amongst our own we inoculate ourselves against an outside world where culture and tradition are being torn down as sacrifices at the altar of "progress."

So Gala Weekend isn't a just a job for me, it's a mission. I've worked hard to impart this weekend with

what I believe is our secret strength—the idea that being part of a family makes us safe, and that safety empowers us to do great things in the world.

If I've done what I set out to do, those of you who have shared this weekend with us should have felt like part of a great big Italian American family. This year, I was thrilled to see more young Italian Americans than ever before, because they need this weekend more than any generation ever has.

In the coming generations, fewer of us will have a "Little Italy" to come home to when the wider world is overwhelming us. Sadly, more of us are often too busy to stop and remember which day of the week it is, let alone honor the once-sacred tenet of "Sauce on Sunday." So, for my generation, and even more so for those ahead, the joys of a NIAF Gala Weekend will be those cultural markers.

So, like me, the jacket might have been a bit much, but it stuck out, and in a strange way it sparked

conversation. I've been doing this for a long time and never have I had more guests approach me during the Gala to tell me how they felt about the event, about our Foundation, and about our Italian American future.

One guest, a proud nonagenarian Sicilian woman whom I have known for a long time, asked me if she could have the jacket when the event ended, pointing out, that I'd never have cause to wear it again. I suppose she's right, there is something hyper-specific about a Sicilian hand-painted dinner jacket with a giant NIAF logo on the back that might eliminate it from the rotation of tuxedos I wear to other charity events, but I think I'll hold on to this one anyway. After all, who knows how long I'll be able to stay away from the NIAF Gala Weekend, and you might not recognize me to say hello if I'm there in just any old tux. ▲

John M. Viola's last day as NIAF President and Chief Operating Officer is December 31.

"BASTA!"
 ITALIAN NINETY-SOMETHINGS EMERGE FROM THE SHADOWS FOR THEIR LONG AWAITED DAY IN THE SUN.

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 AN ORAL HISTORY OF ITALIAN FOODWAYS FROM FASCISM TO DOLCE VITA

BY KARIMA MOYER-NOCCHI

"A remarkable insight into the realities of Italian food. This book lays bare the multiple dimensions of Italian gastronomy: geography, politics, social background, education and economics. It is an eloquent dissection of the nuances of the world's favorite cooking as well as a magical exercise in memory. A brilliant reconstruction of the kitchens and cookery (and much else besides) of a previous generation."

Tom Jaine - Food writer, critic, publisher, restaurateur

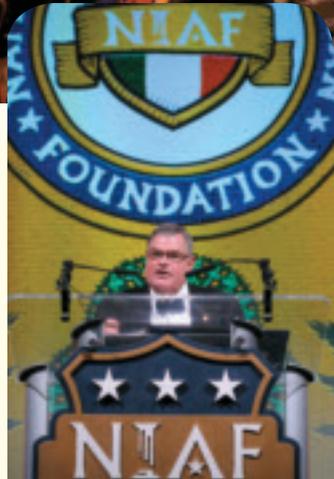
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NIAF INSIDER

NIAF's 42nd Anniversary Gala

Photos by Andy DelGiudice

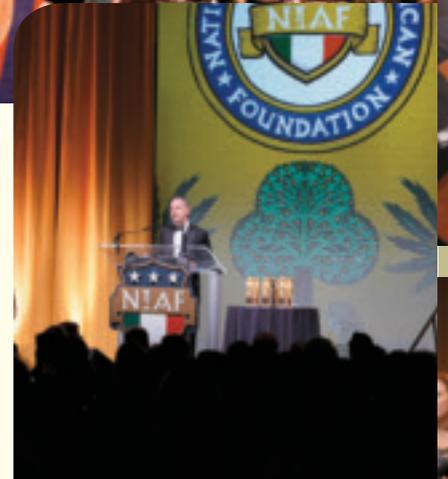
The Gala Awards Dinner was emceed by Fox Business Network Anchor Maria Bartiromo and NIAF President John M. Viola.



Actor and NIAF Celebrity Ambassador Michael Badalucco welcoming Gala guests



Italian tenor Carmelo Sorace sings the Italian and U.S. national anthems



Armando Varricchio, Italy's Ambassador to the United States

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On November 3-4, The National Italian American Foundation's 42nd Anniversary Gala attracted Italian Americans from across the country, along with officials and friends from Italy, for a long weekend of music, food, friendship, education, entertainment and Italian pride in celebrating our heritage and

culture at the Washington Marriot Wardman Park Hotel in Washington, D.C.

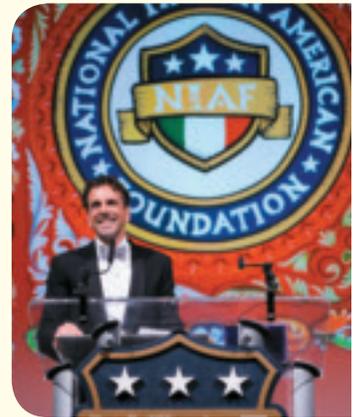
The nation's premier Italian American family gathering this year was presented by the 2017 NIAF Region of Honor, Sicily, and Unioncamere Sicilia, the association of Sicily's Chambers of Commerce. Highlighting a weekend jam-packed with

events was Saturday evening's centerpiece, the formal Awards Gala Dinner, featuring Sicilian fare and spine-tingling moments of entertainment that brought the crowd to its feet, while recognizing five outstanding honorees who have achieved special distinction and reflect the pride of our community with their accomplishments.

By the time guests arrived at Saturday evening's receptions and Gala Awards Dinner, they had already experienced one of the most heart-warming and memorable annual Italian American celebrations in the nation. For a detailed review of the Gala Weekend and hundreds of more Gala photos, available for purchase, visit www.niaf.org.



Clockwise from top left: NIAF Co-Chairs Patricia De Stacy Harrison and Gabriel Battista; Basil Russo, winner of the Russo Brothers' Film Forum Grant Roberto Angotti, NIAF President John M. Viola and Maria Bartiromo; Tenors James Valenti and Alfio; Honoree Jon DeLuca, director at Doctor's Associates/Subway Restaurants and philanthropist; Bringing Gala guests to a standing ovation, honoree and renowned Italian operatic tenor Vittorio Grigolo; Honoree and philanthropist Her Royal Highness Princess Beatrice of Bourbon the Two Sicilies; As NIAF Board Members pay tribute to him at his last Gala as NIAF President, John M. Viola bids farewell to Gala guests; World-renowned Italian classical guitarist Tom Sinatra plays during a video introduction of the NIAF Region of Honor, Sicily; Honoree Italian Business Leader Alessandro Profumo; Honoree TV Chef Nick Stellino.

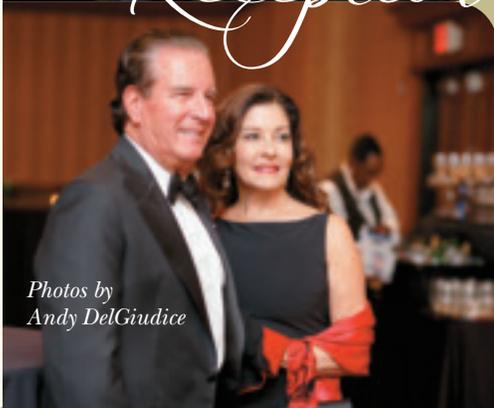


VIP Reception



Above from Left: Bruce Harrison, NIAF Co-Chair Patricia de Stacy Harrison, and Founder and CEO of Saber Partners, Joseph Fichera; NIAF General Counsel Joseph Lonardo with his daughter-in-law Julie Lonardo, and NIAF Board Member Gerard LaRocca with his daughter Allison LaRocca; Antonella Brancaccio Balzano, Sally Valenti, Mary Barba, Nina Nathel and Nuccia McCormick.

Below from Left: NIAF Vice President Robert Carlucci and Aileen Carlucci; Mary Ellen Cosentino, Gerry Cox and Claire DeMarco; Natalie White, Larry Gordon and Maria Gordon; Eva Franchi, Josephine Maitta and Dr. Aileen Sirey



Photos by Andy DelGiudice



Italy's Ambassador Hosts Reception

On Friday evening of the Gala, Italy's Ambassador to the United States Armando Varricchio hosted NIAF Board Members and Gala VIPs at his official residence, Villa Firenze, in Washington, D.C.



Photos by Carlo Piccolo

Above: Alyse LoBianco, Aileen Carlucci, Vassilissa Catalfamo, and Anne Del Raso.

Left: Former NIAF Chairman Joseph V. Del Raso and Board Member Dr. Antonio talk to a guest.



Right: NIAF Board Member Chris Berardini; Lorenzo Montanari; NIAF Executive Vice President Robert Allegrini; and Elaine Panter

Friday Night Kick-off



NIAF Celebrity Ambassador Joe Piscopo

Andy DelGiudice

Friday night marked the 42nd Anniversary Gala Kick-off Celebration, essentially a huge Italian American party, filled with singing, dancing and open bars featuring Italian cocktails. With the Radio King Orchestra keeping the beat and pulling partiers to the dance floor, NIAF Celebrity Ambassador Joe Piscopo opened the show with several standards, including "New York, New York" and

"Sing Sing Sing." In its American debut, The Carlo Butera Band played a mix of traditional Sicilian music and jazz; the Lena Prima Band brought its foot-tapping New Orleans swing and jazz, plus favorites from Lena's famed father Louis Prima; tenor Carmelo Sorce seared audio waves with his operatic vocals; and famed tenor Alfio turned the dance floor into happy chaos.



Nuccia McCormick and Joanne Brignolo at the Silent Action

Don Oldenburg



Tony Lo Bianco and Alyse Lo Bianco with NIAF Board Member Joseph Della Ratta and Sheila Bechert

Don Oldenburg



Popular break from the dance floor—The Photo Booth!

Andy DelGiudice



"Cooking With Nonna" Chef Rossella Rago and Antonella Pesca

Don Oldenburg



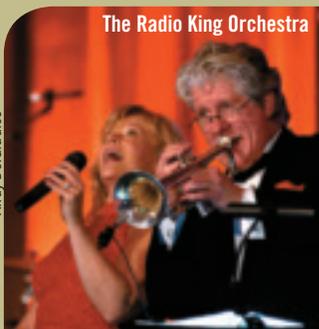
NIAF President John M. Viola and Joe Piscopo singing "My Way"

Don Oldenburg



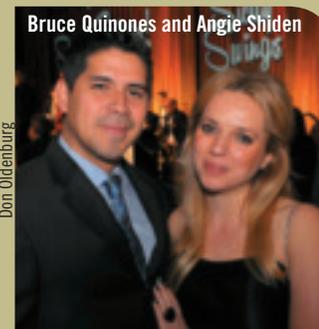
Sally Valenti tells Joe Piscopo she was his children's school teacher

Don Oldenburg



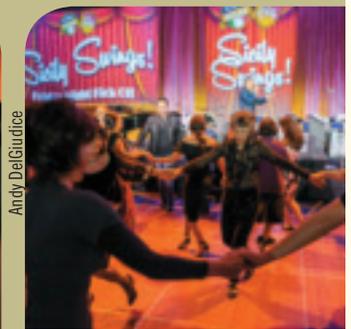
The Radio King Orchestra

Andy DelGiudice



Bruce Quinones and Angie Shiden

Don Oldenburg



Andy DelGiudice



NIAF Co-Chair Gabriel A. Battista and renowned Italian classical guitarist Tom Sinatra, who performed at dinner

NIAF Board, VIPs and Congressional Delegation Dinner



NIAF President John M. Viola and Madison Gesiotto



NIAF Board Member Peter Arduini, NIAF Vice Chairman John Calvelli and NIAF Secretary Linda Carozzi

On Thursday evening before the Gala Weekend, NIAF Board members, VIPs and members of Congress met for a relaxed, celebratory dinner at Franco Nuschese's Washington power-spot restaurant Café Milano, in Georgetown.

Gala Chairman and NIAF Board Member Michael Zarrelli welcomed guests and announced that NIAF would support a Louisiana State University symposium and scholarship for first responders, named for Rep. Steve Scalise, the House Majority Whip shot and seriously wounded in June. Italian American Congressional Delegation Co-Chair Rep. Bill Pascrell introduced members of the IALC, and praised IALC Co-Chair Rep. Pat Tiberi, who announced in October that he was resigning from Congress. In impassioned comments about the legacy of "our immigrant parents," Tiberi said, "It doesn't matter if you are a Democrat or Republican, it is what you and I share in our heritage... the link to the old country."



Rep. Bill Pascrell, Sen. Joe Manchin and NIAF Board member Dr. John Rosa.



Her Royal Highness Princess Beatrice of Bourbon Two Sicilies and NIAF Board Member Louis Tosi



NIAF Vice Chairman Kenneth J. Aspromonte and NIAF Chairman Emeriti Joseph V. Del Raso



Rep. Michael Capuano, Rep. Bill Pascrell and Rep. Mike Doyle

NIAF University on Friday

Through the Gala, NIAF University offered free and to-the-public programs that included numerous academic panels and lectures presented by the Italian American Studies Association (IASA) ranging from "What Ever Happened to Little Italy," to "Pasolini, Fellini and The Sopranos," to "Creative Writing: Poetry, Fiction and Memoir." Other popular NIAF University session included (right, top) a "Learn Italian" primer presented by the Italian Cultural Society of Washington, D.C.; Gelato 101 with Gelato Genius Gianluigi Dellaccio (right, middle); and the NIAF on Campus conference led by NIAF Board and IALC Members, including Anita Bevacqua McBride (right, bottom).



Photos by Andy DeGiudice



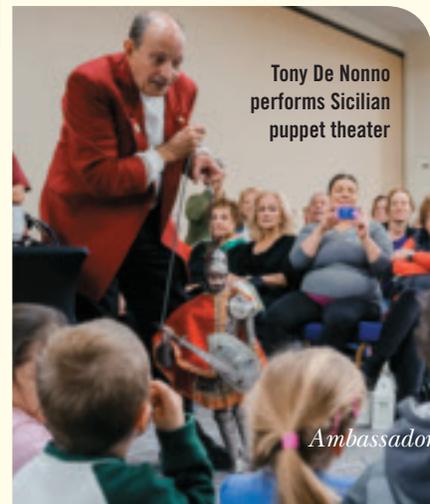
NIAF President John M. Viola and Dolores Alfieri, of the Italian American Podcast and New York Italian American Community Liaison, at the Ieri Oggi Domani panel discussion



Dr. John Rosa and Dr. Angelo Falcone at the Opioid Crisis session



NIAF Board Member Dr. Antonio Giordano heads a panel on the Mediterranean Diet



Tony De Nonno performs Sicilian puppet theater

Expo Siciliana Draws 3,000-plus!

Saturday's Expo Siciliana, each year the largest Italian festival in the Nation's Capital, attracted more than 3,000 visitors to its action-packed marketplace filled with food samplings, wine tastings, vendors and lively Italian music. The highly anticipated return of the famous Free Lunch, compliments of NIAF and Mike's Deli, the original Arthur Avenue Italian Deli from the Bronx, served more than 1,000 box lunches.

Also on hand were Peroni Nastro Azzurro serving Italian beer; Cibo Italia again attracting long lines for its sliced Italian meats and cheeses; mini-shots from the BIVI Sicilian Vodka booth; La Famiglia DelGrosso's hugely popular "Meatball Martinis"; the eye-opening LaVazza Café espressos; "Cooking With Nonna" chef Rossella Rago and her nonna; a new-product preview, bubble gum Tic Tacs by Ferrero; plus many products and tastings from Sicily, including wines from Cantine Settesoli!

Dolce Gelato gave away tastes of the best gelato anywhere; Alitalia let you experience its bed-like First-Class seating; and Maserati of Arlington brought two spectacular vehicles, including the new Maserati SUV. Other booths included My Italian Family, and Experience Sicily. All this featured the musical accompaniment of Vanessa Racci and others!



Andy DelGiudice

"Cooking With Nonna" Chef Rossella Rago's Nonna Romana with Deana Martin, Dean Martin's daughter, and husband John Griffith



Don Oldenburg

Claudia Siles with author George Dapra and Lea Archer at the Peroni booth



Andy DelGiudice

DelGrosso's Michael DelGrosso giving away the popular Meatball Martinis



Andy DelGiudice

Above: Mike's Deli served hundreds of free *Pane con la Milza* (Sicilian spleen sandwiches) and *pani ca'meusa* (chickpea-fritter sandwiches) through Saturday morning. Below: David Greco and his Mike's Deli crew



Andy DelGiudice

Too much fun at the Photo Booth



Andy DelGiudice



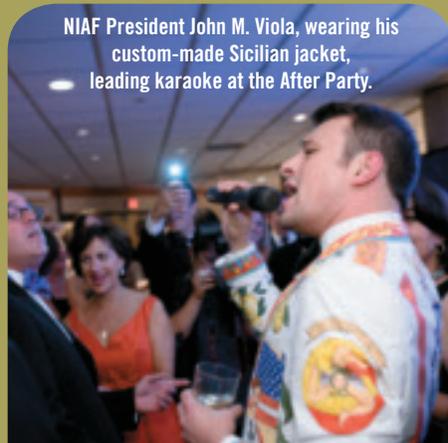
Gala After Party!

Photos by Andy DelGiudice

Ending the Gala Awards Dinner was crowd favorite Alfio once again getting guests on their feet with some Italian favorites, including "Luna mezz'o mare," which sent everyone toward the After Party happy! Once again, guests and late-night celebrators, tambourines embossed with the NIAF logo in hand, sang karaoke and danced to popular Italian and Italian American classics well into the morning!



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NIAF President John M. Viola, wearing his custom-made Sicilian jacket, leading karaoke at the After Party.



Columbus Day 2017

Despite controversy and political pressure concerning the proud and longstanding national recognition of Columbus Day, Italian Americans throughout the nation rallied to support a holiday that has come to mean as much about the Italian American experience as a historic figure who changed the world. From New York City's famed Columbus Day Parade, broadcast nationwide, to smaller events such as the Columbus Day recognition in the Nation's Capital, supporters stood up in meaningful ways.



NIAF President John M. Viola (right) leading the New York City Columbus Day Parade with New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, who has stated that as long as he is governor of New York, a statue of Christopher Columbus will always stand in New York City.



At the NYC Parade, NIAF President John M. Viola with longtime NIAF supporters, brothers Pat and Andrew O'Boyle



Above left: Renown singer Cristina Fontanelli and NIAF President John M. Viola. Above right: NIAF's float at the New York City Columbus Day Parade. NYC photos by John P. Della Fave



NIAF joined the National Christopher Columbus Association (NCCA), the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution and the National Park Service in the annual Christopher Columbus Memorial Ceremony at Columbus Plaza at Union Station in Washington, D.C. Above right: Anita Bevacqua McBride, NIAF's vice chair of Cultural Affairs, and Gabriella Mileti, NIAF's Government Affairs and Community Outreach manager, with Rachel Elizabeth Grace from Vienna, Va., first-place winner of the National Youth Columbus Essay Contest.



Neil DiSarno of the Lido Civic Club; Gabriella Mileti; Anita Bevacqua McBride; Italy's Ambassador to the United States Armando Varicchio; First Counselor for Consular and Social Affairs at the Embassy of Italy Catherine Flumiani; and Thomas Hogan of NCCA.

D.C. photos by Gabriella Mileti

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

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

DECEMBER 2017 NIAF Scholarship Applications available for 2017-2018

Online at www.niaf.org/scholarships
Date: December 1, 2017
Deadline: March 1, 2018;
11:59 pm EST
Contact: Julia Streisfeld at
202-939-3114 or
scholarships@niaf.org

NIAF Open House Christmas Party

By Invitation Only
Date: December 19
Location: NIAF Headquarters,
Washington, D.C.

MARCH 2017 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 & Program
Contact: Jerry Jones at
202-939-3102 or jerry@niaf.org

Applications Available for 2018 NIAF Ambassador Peter F. Secchia Voyage of Discovery Program

Apply online at:
www.niaf.org/voyageofdiscovery
Deadline: Sunday, February 4, 2018,
11:59 p.m. EST
Contact: Gabriella Mileti at
gmileti@niaf.org



Little Italy Days in Pittsburgh

Pittsburgh's 15th Annual Little Italy Days, the region's largest ethnic heritage celebration, again took over the city's Bloomfield neighborhood for four days, transforming Liberty Avenue into an Italian American themed food and entertainment destination. Event's included a kick-off with Pittsburgh Steelers Hall of Famer and NIAF 2016 Gala Honoree Franco Harris; a performance by Jimmy Sapienza and his band; celebrity bocce tournaments; an appearance by wrestling legend Bruno Sammartino; plus other talent and celebrities.



Ambassador 79

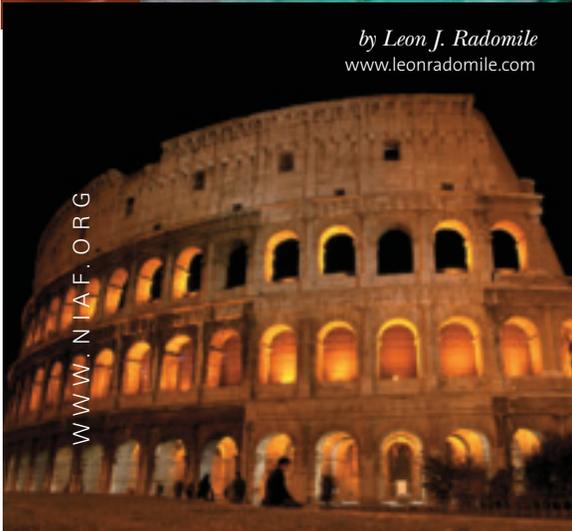
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Top Tourist Attractions of Italy's 20 Regions

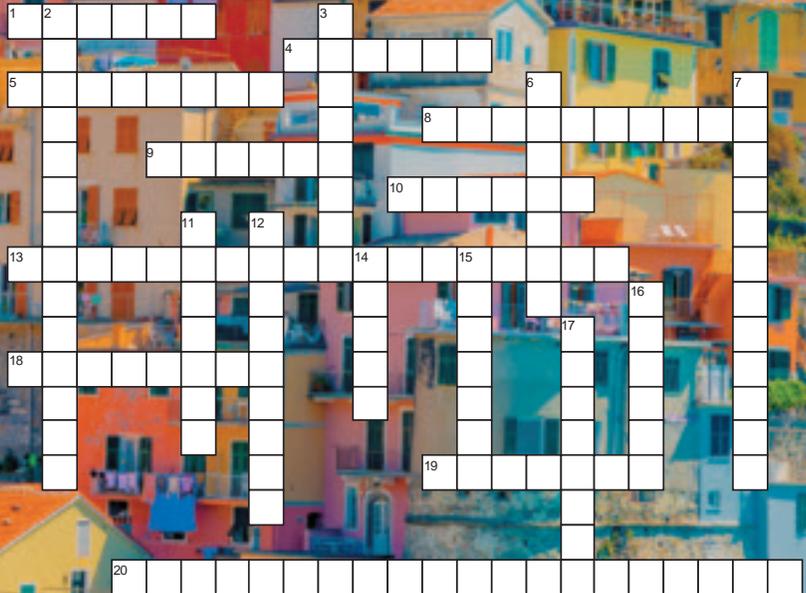
CROSSWORD



by Leon J. Radomile
www.leonradomile.com



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ACROSS

- 1 It was the most important city besides Genoa, Amalfi and Pisa, of the medieval maritime republics. St. Mark's Square is the epicenter for tourists.
- 4 The renaissance town of Urbino is a tourist favorite in this region.
- 5 Identify the region where the world's greatest miracle resides in the royal chapel of the Cathedral of Saint John the Baptist.
- 8 The Sassi di Matera are two districts of the Italian city of Matera, well-known for their ancient cave dwellings. In ancient times the region was known as Lucania.
- 9 Once part of the Abruzzi, this region came in official existence in 1970. One of the main attractions is the Castello Monforte, built in 1450.
- 10 Not only known for such festivals as the Ceri and Calendimaggio, tourists are attracted to the region's world esteemed jazz festival.

- 13 Panoramic views are enjoyed by tourists from the idyllic lakefront of Riva del Garda. To the south is the location for the historic 16th century Council of Trent.
- 18 The mountains of this southern region offer skiing and winter activities. The national parks: Pollino, Aspromonte and Sila are major attractions.
- 19 It is the birthplace of the Italian Renaissance. The regional capital city of Firenze, is home to Michelangelo's statue of David and numerous museums of art, such as the Galleria Uffizi.
- 20 Castello di Miramare is located in one of five autonomous regions of Italy, south of the regional capital of Trieste. Venezia, i.e. Venice, is not in this region.

DOWN

- 2 The Castello Estense ('Este castle') is a moated medieval castle in the center of Ferrara. Considered one of the

- richest regions of Italy with regards to its gastronomic and wine-making tradition, the capital is the home of the first university in the Western world.
- 3 A major magnet for this regions tourist industry is hosting international regattas, such as the RC44 championship and the Farr 40 World championship.
- 6 The capital city of Palermo is noted for its history, gastronomy and architecture. The region throughout history was the meeting point of Greek, Roman, Arabian, Norman and Aragonian cultures.
- 7 Italy's first national park, Parco nazionale del Gran Paradiso, was donated in 1920 by King Victor Emmanuel II's grandson King Victor Emmanuel III. Hint: this Italian region has two official languages, Italian and French.
- 11 Home of the Italian Riviera. Some of the notable towns are: Portofino, San Remo, and the five villages

- of the Cinque Terre.
- 12 The richest and most industrialized region of Italy, tourists are drawn by the beauty of lakes Garda, Como, Iseo and Maggiore.
- 14 This region's capital is also Italy's capital and the country's largest city. The Colosseum here is one of the most popular tourist attractions in the world.
- 15 The fortress of Civitella is the most visited monument in this Italian region, located in the Gran Sasso e Monti della Laga National Park.
- 16 It is one of the richest archaeological regions in Italy. The port city of Bari is well known as a university city as well as the city of Saint Nicholas. It is the second most important economic center of Southern Italy after Naples.
- 17 The Royal Palace of Caserta is one of the largest palaces erected in Europe during the 18th century. Think Pompeii and the Amalfi Coast.

SOLUTION

- 12 Lombardia
- 14 Lazio
- 15 Abruzzo
- 16 Puglia
- 17 Campania

- 2 Emilia-Romagna
- 3 Sardegna
- 6 Sicilia
- 7 Valle d'Aosta
- 11 Liguria

- 10 Umbria
- 13 Trentino-Alto Adige
- 18 Calabria
- 19 Toscana
- 20 Friuli-Venezia Giulia

- 1 Veneto
- 4 Marche
- 5 Piemonte
- 8 Basilicata
- 9 Molise

DOWN:

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