

Ambassador

A Publication of the National Italian American Foundation

Vol. 23, No. 2 • Winter 2011 • www.niaf.org

Season's Greetings!

 **Cooking Italian for the Holidays**

 **The Rampini Ornaments
of Gubbio**

 **Torino's National
Risorgimento Museum**

 **Best Pizza in America?**

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Cover photo of Rampini ornament by Carrie Holbo. Visit her website at www.carrieholbophotography.com.



Jerry Colangelo, Chairman

AMBASSADOR Magazine is published quarterly by the National Italian American Foundation (NIAF), 1860 19th Street NW, Washington DC 20009. POSTMASTER: Send change of address to NIAF, 1860 19th Street NW, Washington DC 20009.

Five Dollars

Don Oldenburg, Editor
Elissa Ruffino, Director of Communications

ISSN 1000-9999

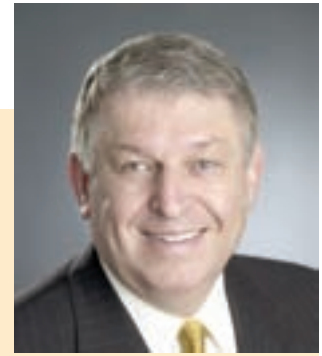
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NIAF — 1860 19th Street NW, Washington, DC 20009
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Designed by Barbieri & Green, Inc.
Printed by Mosaic.



From the NIAF Chairman



With the arrival of winter and the frenzy of fall activities suddenly behind us, it's no wonder poets often write of this season as an ideal time for reflection and rededication. Despite a global climate of economic uncertainty and national atmosphere of political divisiveness, we at NIAF can look back at 2011 with well-deserved satisfaction and look forward to 2012 with great expectations.

At NIAF's 36th Anniversary Convention and Gala in Washington, D.C., in late October, President Barack Obama joined us in celebrating Italy's 150th Anniversary and more than three and a half decades of NIAF's continued fulfillment of its mission. While toasting the accomplishments of our impressive group of honorees, including business leaders, public servants, philanthropists and entertainment legends, from Italy and the United States, we also took time during the Gala, with the help of the U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano, to contemplate the sobering events of 9/11 and the 10 years since that historically tragic day.

Many other leaders and luminaries joined us as well, including House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi, Virginia Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli, actors Joe Pantoliano, Tony LoBianco and David Faustino, and sports notables Mike Piazza and Washington Nationals General Manager Mike Rizzo, to name just a few. Together, more than 2,000 of us embraced our core values as Italian

Americans, acknowledged our accomplishments, and renewed our sense of purpose for the coming year. Please turn to our NIAF News section for photos from this year's spectacular Gala and Convention weekend and visit NIAF's website at www.niaf.org for a complete review of the Gala and Convention and more photos.

Beyond the Gala, NIAF had other achievements to celebrate. We again awarded scholarships and grants, in 2011 totaling \$1.2 million, helping to support the educational aspirations of 195 students as well as such important projects as the Lorenzo Da Ponte Italian Library at UCLA. We also held a star-studded NIAF West Coast Gala in Santa Monica last May that honored prominent Italian Americans in California and the western states.

As we go forward into 2012, let's renew our commitment to preserve and protect our heritage and culture and work on behalf of the next generation of Italian Americans. The New Year will offer many opportunities for you to become more involved in NIAF and to give back to your Italian American heritage. I look forward to seeing you in 2012.

Jerry Colangelo, NIAF Chairman

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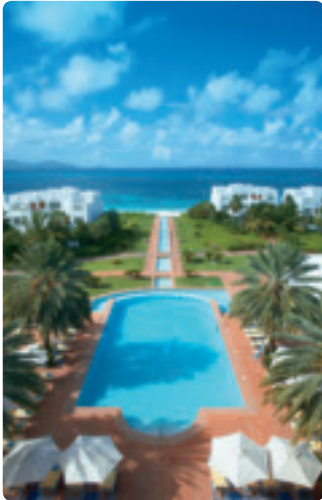
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Reader Feedback

LETTERE

Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire

I read with great interest Dr. Steven Austin Stovall's informative article on the centennial of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire (Ambassador, Fall 2011). I appreciate Dr. Stovall highlighting the two heroic elevator operators Joseph Zito and Gaspar Mortillalo. Since 2001, I have been performing my one-person play, "Soliloquy for a Seamstress: The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire," portraying the story of the Saracino sisters from East Harlem, also highlighting Joe Zito and the onsite reporter William Gunn Shepherd. (See link www.lululolo.com)

I grew up learning about the fire from my father Pete Pascale, an Italian American radical social worker who devoted his life to the community of East Harlem. For the 2011 centennial, I organized the "Procession of 146 Shirtwaists and Sashes" for the Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition and Workers United that marched down Broadway to the site of the Triangle Factory fire.

Thank you for bringing this history to the attention of the readers of Ambassador.

LuLu LoLo,
a.k.a. Lois Pascale Evans
East Harlem, New York City

Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire—II

Thank you for your article on the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire. ...Now that the Triangle Centennial has passed, the Coalition is embarking on another project: building a permanent public art memorial of the fire and the lives it claimed. Many of the victims were Italian immigrants. The history of the Triangle fire is our history. The Triangle memorial is a rare opportunity to take an active part in shaping the way that history is remembered. Please join us in making it happen.

Mary Anne Trasciatti, Ph.D.
Chair, Triangle Memorial Committee
Hempstead, New York

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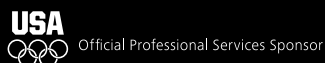

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“Reconstructing Italians in Chicago”

By Don Oldenburg

“For many years, Italian American culture has been preserved in the home and, more likely than not, in the basement . . . where grandpa made wine, where grandma had a second kitchen, and now where we store our material legacies,” writes Fred Gardaphé in the book “Reconstructing Italians in Chicago: Thirty Authors in Search of Roots and Branches.”

What Gardaphé is all about is moving the Italian American legacy out of the basement and into the sunshine. But that proves to be some heavy lifting.

During the National Italian American Foundation’s 36th Anniversary Convention and Gala, October 28-29, coeditors Gardaphé and Dominic Candeloro discussed their book’s introspective concept and informative content.

“Reconstructing Italians in Chicago” is a 380-page anthology of short stories, history, genealogy, fiction, sociology and personal reminiscences by more than 30 writers focusing on the evolution of the Italian American community in Chicago. Based on a NIAF-supported conference held at Chicago’s Casa Italia in May 2008, the book’s eclectic approach serves as a possible model for other Italian Americans looking to preserve, understand and embrace the Italian American experience in their cities.

The problem, Gardaphé said, is that for so many Italian Americans, “The only thing we have to share is our past.” Besides organizations such as NIAF, there’s too little that says this is what it means to be an Italian American today.

“Every community that ever had an Italian American presence needs to have this kind of book, because it reflects writers, religious stories, personal stories, public stories and academics,”

said Gardaphé, who grew up in Melrose Park, a gritty Italian-American suburb of Chicago, and is now professor of English and Italian American Studies at Queens College, CUNY. “This is for our community.”

Dominic Candeloro, who grew up in Chicago’s Heights neighborhood and is now a retired professor of Italian American history and currently curator at the Italian Cultural Center at Casa Italia in Stone Park, outside Chicago, said, “For me, the mission is the preservation of the Italian American past, especially as this has to do with Chicago.”

As Candeloro was speaking of Casa Italia’s impact on Chicago’s Italian American community identity, NIAF Chairman Jerry Colangelo walked into the panel session. With Candeloro and Colangelo both sporting big smiles, Candeloro deferred to his childhood playmate, the talented pitcher he caught behind the plate playing schoolyard baseball in Chicago’s Heights.

Commending Gardaphé and Candeloro on their book and efforts to connect with what it means to be Italian American today, Colangelo said, “The one thing I really believe is that trying to get everyone in the same room and on the same page is almost



Fred Gardaphé and Dominic Candeloro

impossible, but as long as you are doing something.”

Explaining that he has always told his 13 grandchildren, who genetically are “mix of a whole bunch of things,” that the only thing that matters is that they’re Italian, Colangelo said that, in today’s homogenized society, embracing one’s roots is challenging for each successive generation.

“I was always proud of being Italian,” he said. “Today, many people don’t even know where they came from. . . . I think back (to the old neighborhood) and that’s what makes us as people. If we can get more people passionate about where they came from, it would make a big difference.”

To order “Reconstructing Italians in Chicago: Thirty Authors in Search of Roots and Branches” (\$29.99 + \$2 s/h) contact: Books, Casa Italia, 3800 Division St., Stone Park, IL 60165 or email info@CasaItaliaChicago.org or call 708-345-5933. The book is also available at Amazon.com and other online bookstores. ▲



Jerry Colangelo and childhood pal Dominic Candeloro

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Walk of Honor Unveiling

On Friday, October 28, during the National Italian American Foundation's 36th Anniversary Convention and Gala weekend, NIAF friends, supporters and staffers withstood a blustery cool morning to gather for ceremonies unveiling the long-awaited NIAF Walk of Honor.

Located directly at the front entrance of The Ambassador Peter F. Secchia Building, in Washington, D.C., the Walk of Honor is destined to become a memory-filled footpath for business and political leaders visiting NIAF's national headquarters, and a symbolic gateway for the Italian American community in Washington.

Beforehand, patrons who purchased Walk of Honor bricks honoring their parents and grandparent and reminding their children of their roots looked for their bricks in the walkway and admired the impressive setting.

"Very, very moving," said Brent Chambers of seeing for the first time the two bricks he and his wife Lynn Chambers bought. "It's very nice."

The Chambers, from Alexandria, Va., had one brick inscribed "La Famiglia Scapes" in honor of Lynn's grandparents who came to the United States from Sicily in 1910. The second brick was dedicated to themselves. "I thought it was very touching and so meaningful for family—and it will always be there," says Lynn Chambers.

The Walk of Honor offers NIAF members an opportunity to place a permanent icon of their family's contribution to the

preservation of the Italian heritage. The purchase of a custom commemorative brick at the Walk of Honor helps NIAF fulfill its important mission and continue to serve as the voice of Italian Americans in the nation's capital. In the spirit of NIAF's dedication to maintaining and preserving the Italian American legacy, these specially engraved bricks, priced from \$250 for a 4-by-8-inch brick to \$10,000 for a large 8-by-8-inch brick set in the prominent center landing, stand as a cherished piece of the emblem of strong Italian pride.

"As I look at the walk here, I am reminded of our organization's mission to promote, strengthen and preserve the Italian and the Italian American culture in this country and abroad," said NIAF Development Associate Kathryn Rictor, with the crowd applauding as she cut the ceremonial ribbon to officially open NIAF's Walk of Honor.

"The Walk of Honor serves as a reminder of the mission that allows us to preserve the heritage that is so very important to every one of us."

Through the generosity of donors and patrons purchasing Walk of Honor bricks, supporters become part of the building blocks at NIAF that enable the Foundation to pave the way for many Americans of Italian descent to realize their dreams academically, artistically and culturally through scholarships and grants.

"Your wonderful support allows us to keep our doors open and do the important work that

we do," said Rictor, announcing that future phases of the Walk of Honor will completely fill the front steps and walkway at NIAF with names and memories.

Following the ceremony, friends and patrons proudly found their bricks and thought of the sacrifices their parents and grandparents made that brought them to this time and place.

"It honors my parents and they deserve it," said Dino Caterini, originally from Cleveland, Ohio, and now living in the Washington, D.C., area, as he located the brick dedicated to Dino and Fran Caterini. "My father and mother were both born in Italy, so I'm first generation here. They worked hard here in the United States."

Nearby, Joan Festa chatted with a small group of women who came for the Walk of Honor ceremony from New Jersey. The founder of The Dante Alighieri Women's Society of Central Jersey, she said the group, founded in 1965, consists of about 50 women devoted promoting the Italian heritage and doing charity work. Their \$5,000 brick, she added, is tangible evidence of their legacy of good work.

"We are very proud about the brick," she said.

For more information on purchasing a brick at NIAF's Walk of Honor, please visit <http://www.niaf.org/walkofhonor>. To view and order photos from the Gala and Convention weekend, please visit the online galleries of NIAF's official Gala photographers Derek Parks and Nick Khazal at <http://smu.gs/vZzIrs>. ▲

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Let the Music Play!

The Annual Sergio Franchi Memorial Concert Draws Fans and Raves

Sergio Franchi's home town of Cremona, Italy, in 1960

Remarkable! No other way adequately describes the 17th annual Sergio Franchi Memorial Concert that mesmerized 7,000 people, most of them from the New England shoreline, with a pleasing mix of operatic arias, popular songs and show tunes, the very music that the late tenor Sergio Franchi was known for and crusaded for throughout his 28-year career. Under a shimmering sun, 17 performers, backed by conductor Jeffrey Domoto and his 32-piece orchestra sang their hearts out for three and a half hours before more than 4,000 people, who came to the concert as many of them have year after year.

They poured onto the 250-acre Franchi estate even though Eva Franchi, who hosted the event as she has since she created it in memory of her late husband, had said last summer's concert would be her last. But under heavy pressure by phone and e-mail from hundreds of people, she changed her mind and promised to make this year's event – "Let the Music Play" – the biggest and best yet. She didn't disappoint.

Interrupted only by a 20 minute intermission, the crowd, sitting on folding chairs and lawn chairs in a large field on the Franchi estate, was as much a part of the concert as the talented performers, the Sergio Franchi young tenors, sopranos and some young musicians who transformed a sunny Saturday afternoon into a magical carpet ride.

There was Australian native



Eva Franchi with the tenors of the 2011 Sergio Franchi Memorial Concert

Alfio, whose rich, resonant voice is equally comfortable singing arias or love songs. Latonia Moore's interpretation of Gershwin's "Summertime" had the crowd cheering. Jesus Garcia's rendition of "Granada" had every toe in the crowd tapping. Elizabeth de Trejo gave a moving performance of "Quando me'enm vo" from Puccini's "La Boheme" and Giada Valenti sang "La vie en rose" in a way that would have made Edith Piaf proud.

Richard Tucker Award-winner James Valenti sang "E lucevan le stelle" from Puccini's "Tosca" with a booming voice that resonated throughout the concert field, hitting the high notes with effortless ease. "Wow!" a New York opera singer sitting in the crowd said when he was through. "I have goose bumps."

Lisa Wilson drew loud applause with "Don't You Know," a tune made famous by Della

Reese, before joining forces with de Trejo, Moore and soprano Jacqueline Ballarin in a rousing interpretation of "Sempre libera" from "La Traviata" by Verdi. They were having obvious fun with this high-octane aria, each of them has a vibrant, distinctive voice, bouncing off each other vocally and building to a rousing conclusion that earned them a standing ovation.

Later, Ballarin returned on stage to perform for Eva's special request from a Hungarian Operetta that is rarely performed in this country. Her voice, her performance, with that Gypsy tinge, the words soaring and shimmering, brought Eva Franchi to her feet to dance.

There were many more memorable moments before the concert finally ended, including stints by Laurence Broderick with "What Kind of Fool Am I" and a wildly inventive "I Am What I Am" from "La Cage aux Folies,"



More than 4,000 fans enjoyed a sunny day and nonstop talent onstage at the concert.



The invitation to the 2011 Sergio Franchi Memorial Concert

by Filippo Voltaggio. Michael Amante, a great favorite of the Franchi crowd throughout the 17 years, thrilled the audience with his creative version of “Till” and Sergio Franchi’s signature song, “Core N’grato.”

For the finale, the six Sergio Franchi tenors finished with a rousing rendition of “Ole Sole Mio” and “Nessun Dorma,” concluding the concert with an emotionally moving tribute of “New York, New York,” which was dedicated to the survivors and

victims of 9/11.

When the concert’s last note finally faded, the audience made it clear that once again, they had become part of something very special and confirmed for Eva Franchi that the Sergio Franchi concert must never die.

As the concert was letting out, one Branford, Conn., woman expressed the thoughts of the entire crowd when she said: “This is unlike anything I have ever seen. The talent is remarkable; they sing from the heart and the

mixture of what they do in an informal, gorgeous setting cannot be duplicated. This concert must not be allowed to die. It is worthy of Sergio’s memory.”

Amen.

—By Robert C. Pollack
(The Shoreline Times)

Edited by Eva Franchi

Eva Franchi invites all NIAF members and friends to attend the next Sergio Franchi Memorial Concert on September 8, 2012, and experience for yourselves the magic of this special event. ▲

A Christmas Adventure in Little Italy



A heartwarming family story set against the backdrop of a 1950s-era Italian neighborhood.

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Photo by Albero di Gubbio

The world's "largest Christmas tree" constructed each year on the slopes of Monte Ingino rising above the city of Gubbio in Umbria

Did you know that the largest Christmas tree in the world is in Italy? This masterpiece is a lighting illumination, in the shape of a Christmas tree, installed on the slopes of Monte Ingino outside the city of Gubbio, in Umbria. The tree stands at over 2,000 feet high, 1,100 feet wide, and is covered with over five miles of multi-colored lights. The amazing site can be seen from a distance of 30 miles away.

This luminary tradition started in 1981 when the people of Gubbio decided to celebrate in a unique way. In 1991, "The Guinness Book of Records" named the Gubbio tree "The World's Largest Christmas Tree." Every year, a group of more than 40 volunteers spend nearly three months preparing the tree, which is lit from December 7 through January 6, the feast of the Epiphany.

The Christmas tree is formed by various types of lights that create a unique chromatic effect. The lights mounted on wooden poles form the outline. More than 250 green-colored lights sketch the shape of the tree and the inside is filled with more than 3,000 multi-colored lights.

This year marks the 850th anniversary of the death of Saint Ubaldo, patron saint of Gubbio. To commemorate this historic feast, Pope Benedict XVI was scheduled to virtually "attend" the December 7 lighting ceremony, connecting to Gubbio using modern technology that webcast the event worldwide.

A small and well-preserved medieval town, Gubbio's historic center has a notable selection of Gothic and Renaissance monuments built of gray limestone. Most impressive about this town, is its breathtaking views of the Umbrian countryside.

Historically, Gubbio is known for being the place where St. Francis tamed the famous wolf. But it is also

famous for something else—its ceramics. In fact, the production of ceramics in the medieval town was its economic resource in the Middle Ages. Gubbio's idyllic geographic location attracted affluent aristocratic families during the Renaissance and contributed greatly to the development of arts and crafts. While the art form might be vanishing elsewhere, it remains vibrant and alive in this small Umbrian town.

Originating from Gubbio, ceramicist Pietro Rampini opened his bottega d'arte in 1962. The main themes represented in his innovative and imaginative works were Gubbio and its history, medieval miniatures, classical mythology, nature, and Umbrian saints.

Now run by Pietro's son, Giampietro, the Rampinis remain strongly grounded in the tradition of individually created ceramic pieces of high quality and artistic value. The Bottega d'arte Rampini is



A ornament display at Bottega d'arte Rampini in Gubbio

Photo by Rampini





Giampietro Rampini and an assistant painting hand-made heirloom Christmas ornaments

recognized worldwide for the uniqueness of its products and working techniques. A number of renowned artists, including Australian artists Pippin Drysdale and Alan Peascod, have gone to the Rampini workshop to improve their craft.

The company prides itself in producing hand-made and hand-painted pottery in the Italian artisan tradition going back to the Renaissance. They have had a presence in the United States for about a decade now and are regulars at the prestigious New York International Gift Fair.

Among Giampietro's most unique creations are his ceramic Christmas ornaments. Created to celebrate his hometown and its prized Monte Ingino Christmas tree, each ornament is individually hand-painted and carefully glazed. The smallest and most simple decoration can be decorated in less than 15 minutes while the bigger, more intricate ones can take more than an hour.

The first phase is to form the ornaments. Rampini's potters use clay from the Tiber River to fabricate them. Once dry, the ornaments must be fired, at a temperature of almost 2,000 degrees, for the first time. The terracotta ornaments are then dipped in a white glaze so they can be decorated, and then fired once again at a lower heat so the glaze and paint can set. The result renders a shiny and glassy appearance. This technique is known as "majolica" and is recognized internationally. The more lavish ornaments containing touches of gold, platinum or mother-of-pearl are fired a third time.

Between the ornaments and dinnerware, Rampini produces about 2,000 pieces a month. Every model is prepared and decorated by hand. While the company's focus is on Italian and American markets, there is interest among European museums to develop custom-made pieces for their

gift shops. Many businesses are also using the ornaments as corporate gifts with their personalized logos on them.

"The idea for these Christmas ornaments came to me about eight years ago," says Giampietro Rampini. "I wanted to link this renowned art form, practiced and respected for centuries in our town, with the famous Gubbio Christmas tree."

Buon Natale!

Guimar Barbi Ochoa is a freelance writer who currently works at the National Endowment for the Arts. Previously, she has worked at the U.S. Embassy to the Holy See in Rome, and for Discovery Communications. She lives in Washington, D.C., with her husband and young daughter. ▲

The U.S. distributor for Rampini is Simpatico in St. Michaels, Md. Can't make it to the Eastern Shore before Christmas? Rampini's holiday ornaments, priced between \$25-\$50, can be found online at <http://www.simpaticostmichaels.com/> and www.napastyle.com. Giampietro Rampini can be contacted directly via e-mail at info@rampiniceramiche.com.



Photo by Carrie Holbo



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Courtesy of the National Museum of the Italian Risorgimento

The 17th-century Palazzo Carignano, in 1820 the birthplace of King Vittorio Emanuele II, and since 1938 the home of The National Museum of the Italian Risorgimento

Revisiting the Risorgimento in Torino

Putting “National” in The National Museum of the Italian Risorgimento

By Rebecca Heyl

In anticipation of this year’s 150th Anniversary of the Unification of Italy, the National Museum of the Italian Risorgimento in Torino closed its doors to the public in April 2006 to undergo its most extensive revision since the museum’s founding in 1878. While the previous exhibitions were focused on the role the city of Torino and the Piedmont region in the process of Italian unification, this new exhibition, which was opened in March 2011 by Italian President Giorgio Napolitano, places the Risorgimento within the wider European context.

The museum states that the aim of the new exhibition is to allow the visitor to see “the revolutionary explosions throughout Europe in the years immediately before and after 1848” and to look at “what was happening in various parts of Italy in more detail.”

The period of Italian history known as *il Risorgimento* does not simply mean the unification of Italy but rather the movement leading up to the eventual unification—the 100-year period from the French Revolution, through Napoleon’s rule over much of Italy, to the writing of the Albertine Statute in 1848 (later the Constitution of unified Italy), to finally the unification in 1861. It was an era of upheaval and awakening in which people from all over the Italian peninsula realized the value of unity in deposing foreign rule and claiming full independence.

The new exhibition of the Museum of the Italian Risorgimento features 2,579 items (selected from the 53,011 pieces in the museum’s possession) divided into 30 themed rooms. The items vary from the relics that belonged to King Vittorio Emanuele II located in the first room, to the reconstruction of the prison cell of the political dissident Silvio Pellico in Room 9.

Each of the 30 rooms has its own color and one significant object that illustrate its theme. An example of this theatrical layout is Room 13 which is set ➤



Historic reenactment of the Siege of Torino in 1708 takes place in front of the Baroque façade of Palazzo Carignano.



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A life-size version of Garibaldi on horseback in the National Museum of Italian Risorgimento

Rebecca Heyl

in deep red and holds artifacts relating to the various insurrections and revolutions across Europe in 1848 and 1849. At the center of room is an Austrian printing press, representing freedom of the press, granted after an insurrection in Vienna on March 13, 1848.

In addition to the many objects on display, video installations throughout the museum give the visitor a broad picture of this moment in Europe, highlighting artifacts from museums across Europe.

The revamping of the museum has added new technology, making the museum accessible to an array of audiences. Interactive touch-screen devices are available as audio and video guides in several languages, including sign language. These devices can be used simply to learn more information on specific objects or to follow self-guided tours ranging from 45 minutes to two hours. Docent guided tours can be reserved in advance.

For more studious or research-oriented visitors, the museum boasts a library with an important archive containing 167,750 books and pamphlets, as well as 1,916 issues of 19th century Italian periodicals. Its artwork room features more than 15,000 prints and posters. This considerable collection has been acquired over the last 130 years.

The National Museum of the Italian Risorgimento was founded in 1878 after the death of King Vittorio Emanuele II as a national memorial to the

king. Its intended home was the Mole Antonelliana, then undergoing completion. The objective was to unify within one building the symbol of the city of Torino and an exhibition to commemorate the recently achieved unification.

Six years later, printed material and artifacts were gathered from all over Italy to be shown in the temporary exhibition of the Italian General Exposition of 1884 that took place in Torino. Later, the exhibition found a temporary home in the Torino Civic Museum. It was not until 1908 that the museum opened to the public with the first complete exhibition in the Mole Antonelliana. In 1938, the museum was moved to its present location, the 17th century Palazzo Carignano, the palace where King Vittorio Emanuele II was born in 1820.

Today, Torino is a vibrant urban center of nearly one million residents in the city itself and another million in the surrounding metropolitan area. Torino was the first capital of unified Italy, from 1861 until 1865, when the capital was moved to Florence.

Yet Torino has remained a capital for industry and design, specifically the automobile industry with the founding of FIAT in 1899. Travelers should not miss Torino's wonderful car museum, the Museo Dell' Automobile di Torino, located in the Lingotto neighborhood not far from the original FIAT factory. The museum was also overhauled for the 150th Anniversary of Italy and its innovative design, inside and out, takes visitors on a tour of the evolution of the automobile with many beautiful cars along the way.

Torino, of course, is the home of the famous Shroud of Turin, kept at the Cathedral of Saint John the Baptist, but the relic thought by some to be the burial cloth of Jesus is rarely on display. However, another popular Torino destination open to tourists is the Egyptian Museum which



Bust of Giuseppe Mazzini in the Museum's Room 11

Rebecca Heyl

recorded more than 500,000 visitors the year Torino hosted the Olympics in 2006. The Museo Egizio is world renowned for having the largest collection Egyptian Archaeology outside of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo.

The Winter Olympics of 2006 reinvigorated the city and created new infrastructure, including, most notably, the MetroTorino, the eight-mile-long metro line. In addition, there are eight tramlines and 100 bus lines that make navigating the city easy and fast.

Torino is not included on the typical, Italian, three-city tour package of Venice, Florence and Rome. Yet it offers the visitor a glimpse of Italian life in a city that is both a center for industry and culture.

This year its streets have been steeped in tri-color flags to celebrate the 150th Anniversary. In making the trip to the National Museum of the Italian Risorgimento, you will learn the street names—Via Giuseppe Garibaldi, Via Giuseppe Mazzini, Via Cavour, Via Pietro Micca, Via dei Mille—that the Turinese walk everyday celebrating their forefathers.

Rebecca Heyl is a photographer and writer based in Boston and Umbria, Italy. In 2009, she covered the aftermath of the earthquake in Abruzzo for the Ambassador. She teaches photography at Chester College of New England and is the author of the 2008 photographic book "Windows in the Wall," published by Skira Editore in Milan. ▲



Porticos line the main thoroughfares in the center of Torino paying tribute to the Risorgimento

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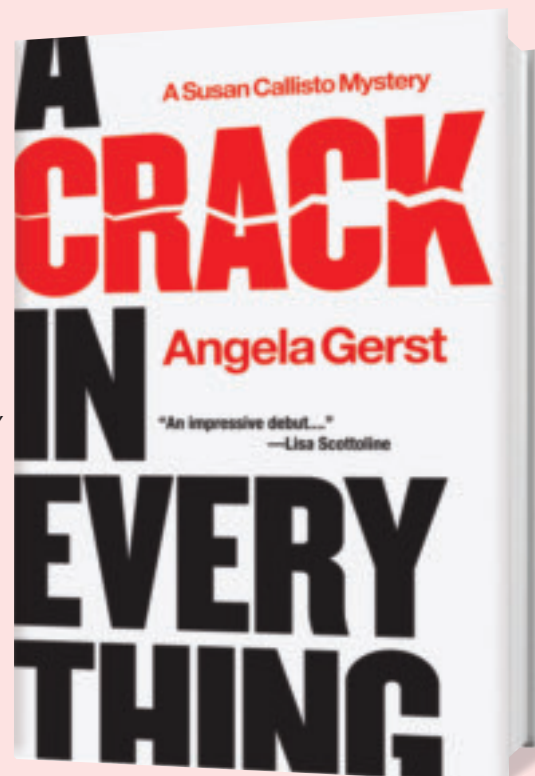
—Kirkus, starred review

"The plot unfolds like a set of nesting Russian dolls"

—Publishers' Weekly

A Crack In Everything is a compulsive read with "an exciting twist at the end... a promising new series"

—Library Journal



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Cooking Italian for the Holidays

'Tis the season to be eatin,' so Ambassador is giving the gift of culinary artistry! We asked six premier chefs, all with recently published Italian cookbooks, to serve up recipes that'll make you the shining star when entertaining your guests this holiday season. Some of these dishes are as traditional as an overloaded St. Joseph's Day table; others are innovative fare that goes hand in hand with the holiday spirit. They're all recipes you'll want try and save for years to come. And did we mention that our chefs' cookbooks make ideal gifts?

Buon Natale! Happy Holidays!

Mary Ann Esposito

Pork Tenderloin with Pomegranate Sauce and Lasagna Verdi Bologna Style



Mary Ann Esposito demonstrating the art of Italian cooking on the set of her long-running PBS show "Ciao Italia"



"For me, the holidays are all about carrying on the food traditions of my grandmothers and mother," says Mary Ann Esposito, host of the long-running PBS series "Ciao Italia" and author of 11 popular cookbooks, including her latest, "Ciao Italia Family Classics" (St. Martin's Press; \$40). "That means making panettone, ravioli, dozens of cookies and, of course, orchestrating the meal for Christmas Eve (La Vigilia) with the seven fishes dinner. It would be unthinkable not to include the beloved foods of Italy that I grew up with and now pass on to my family."

Esposito chose two recipes from her new book for the holidays. "I suggest the classic Lasagne Verdi alla Bolognese because it can be made ahead and serves a crowd," she says, "and the oven-roasted pork tenderloin with pomegranate sauce, something new but borrowing on traditional Italian ingredients like pork, rosemary and pomegranates."

Visit Esposito's website at www.ciaoitalia.com.

Oven-Roasted Pork Tenderloin with Pomegranate Sauce

Serves 4

3 to 4 pomegranates (to yield $\frac{3}{4}$ cup pomegranate juice)
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup pomegranate seeds
 1 teaspoon kosher salt
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon whole peppercorns or $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground black pepper

1 tablespoon fresh rosemary leaves
 1 clove garlic, peeled
 1 pork tenderloin, weighing about 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ pounds
 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup orange marmalade or apricot jam

Directions:

- Using a sharp knife, cut off the crown of one pomegranate, about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch from the top. Slice the sections through the white membrane. (Do this part in a bowl of water to avoid staining your clothes or cooking surface.) Strain the seeds, removing any remaining membrane pieces and set aside.
- Cut the remaining pomegranates in half and juice them; you will need $\frac{3}{4}$ cup for the recipe. Strain the juice and set aside.
- Preheat the oven to 350° F.
- Grind the salt, peppercorns, rosemary and garlic together or mince them finely with a chef's knife. Spread the mixture out on a large sheet of wax paper.
- Dry the pork well with paper towels. Lay the pork over the salt mixture and use the paper to roll the meat in the seasonings, making sure it is evenly coated.
- Heat the olive oil in an oven-proof skillet to just below the smoking point. Add the pork and sear it quickly on all sides. Transfer the skillet to the oven and cook until a meat thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the meat registers between 155° F and

165° F, depending on how you like it cooked. This should only take about 7 to 10 minutes.

- Transfer the meat to a cutting board and cover loosely with foil while the sauce is prepared.
- Heat the jam with the pomegranate juice until the sauce becomes smooth, cooking the mixture over low heat for about 4 minutes. Stir in the pomegranate seeds and keep the sauce warm and covered.
- Cut the pork on the diagonal into medallions about one inch thick. Place on a serving platter. Spoon some of the sauce over top to serve. Pass additional sauce on the side.

Lasagna Verdi Bologna Style

This dish uses two sauces in its preparation—cream sauce, or besciamella, and a meat sauce known as ragù.

Basic White Sauce

Besciamella, white sauce, is most often associated with northern Italian cooking and is used in oven-baked pasta dishes like lasagne alla Bolognese or with vegetables or fish. It can be made ahead and refrigerated for 3 or 4 days but will thicken as it sits. To reheat it, thin the sauce with a little milk. The basic recipe does not have the addition of herbs or spices. Those ingredients should be added after the sauce is cooked and should be tailored to the dish being prepared.

Ingredients for the White Sauce

Makes 4 cups

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup unsalted butter
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup unbleached all-purpose flour
 4 cups hot milk
 Fine sea salt to taste
 Ground white pepper to taste



Oven-Roasted Pork Tenderloin with Pomegranate Sauce

Directions for the White Sauce:

- Melt the butter over medium-low heat in a 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ -quart saucepan; do not let the butter brown. Whisk the flour into the butter and cook it until a uniform paste is formed and no streaks of flour remain. Slowly whisk in the milk. Cook about 10 minutes, stirring slowly until the sauce coats the back of a wooden spoon. Season with salt and pepper. Add herbs if desired.
- Tip: adding the milk hot will prevent bringing down the temperature of the ingredients

Ragù Bologna Style

Bolognese ragù is the signature meat sauce of the region of Emilia Romagna. It is simmered for at least an hour to develop a complex layer of flavors and proper thickness. Cooking the ragù in a heavy duty enamel or similar pot will hold the heat steady and help to give a velvety texture to the ragù. Bolognese ragù is a classic sauce for lasagne and tagliatelle. The sauce freezes beautifully.

Ingredients for the Ragù

Makes 4 cups

$\frac{1}{4}$ pound pancetta
 1 medium onion, quartered
 1 medium carrot, peeled and quartered
 1 rib celery, quartered
 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
 $\frac{1}{2}$ pound ground chuck
 $\frac{1}{2}$ pound ground veal
 $\frac{1}{2}$ pound ground pork
 $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 teaspoon fine sea salt
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground black pepper
 4 tablespoon tomato paste
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup dry red wine
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup milk or cream

Directions for the Ragù

- Mince the pancetta, onion,

carrot, and celery together and set aside.

- Heat the olive oil in a heavy duty Dutch oven type pot.
- Cook the pancetta and minced vegetable mixture over low heat uncovered for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally.
- Stir in the ground meats, salt, pepper and brown them completely.
- Stir the tomato paste into the wine and add it to the meat mixture.
- Simmer the ingredients uncovered for 45 minutes, adding the milk or cream, a little at a time, to keep the mixture from sticking while it cooks. The milk also lends richness and creaminess to the sauce. The sauce should have a thick consistency.

Spinach Pasta

Spinach flavored pasta is an integral part of making a true lasagne verdi alla Bolognese. I prefer to make this in a food processor instead of by hand because the spinach blends in more easily.

Ingredients for the Pasta

Makes about 1 pound

- 10 ounces fresh spinach, stemmed and well rinsed
- 2 large eggs
- 3 to 3 ½ cups unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1 cup grated Parmigiano Reggiano cheese

Directions for the Pasta

- Place the spinach leaves in a pot without any additional water; cover and wilt them

down; this will take just a few minutes. As soon as they are wilted, drain it in a colander and when cool enough to handle, squeeze it very dry.

- Place 1 cup of the spinach in the bowl of a food processor fitted with a steel blade. Reserve any remaining spinach for another use.
- Add the eggs and pulse to combine well.
- Add the flour 1 cup at a time and process until a ball of dough forms that is not tacky or sticky. You may or may not need additional flour.
- Knead the dough on a lightly floured surface for two or three minutes then place a bowl over it and allow it to rest for at least a half hour to relax the gluten.
- Working with half the dough at a time, either by hand or using a pasta machine, thin the dough to about 1/16 inch thick and cut the pasta into 3-by-6-inch oblongs. Cook them in rapidly boiling salted water for about 1 minute. Transfer the cooked lasagna pieces into a dish of ice water to quickly cool them down, then pat them dry and lay them on a clean towel-covered cookie sheet.

Directions for assembling the Lasagna

- Preheat the oven to 350° F.
- Butter a 14-by-11-by-3-inch deep lasagne pan. Spread a thin layer of the besciamella sauce in the pan. Place a layer of the pasta sheets over the sauce. Spread another thin coating of the sauce over the pasta and then a thin coating of the ragù sauce over it. Sprinkle the top with about 2 tablespoons of the grated cheese.
- Continue making layers as above until all the ingredients have been used up, ending with a layer of cream sauce and a sprinkling of cheese. Reserve about ½ cup of the besciamella sauce and ½ cup of the cheese for this top layer. Be sure to spread the sauce evenly over the top layer to completely cover the pasta.
- Cover the dish tightly with aluminum foil and bake for about 30 minutes. Uncover and continue baking until the lasagne is hot and the top has a nice crust.

Lidia Bastianich

Lobster Fra Diavolo and St. Joseph Fig Cookies



Lidia Bastianich gathering fresh ingredients

Lidia Bastianich hardly needs an introduction. One of the iconic figures in today's culinary world, she is the author of numerous best-selling cookbooks and one of television's most visible chefs. She's also cofounder of the artisanal Italian culinary mecca in New York City—Eataly. She chose two recipes from her new cookbook, released in October 2011, "Lidia's Italy in America" (Knopf; \$35).

"The Lobster Fra Diavolo is a very festive, and beautiful dish," says Bastianich. "In the Italian American community, La Vigilia is felt throughout, and this pasta dish, whether used with lobster, or shrimp, is spaghetti 'dressed up!' And what better time to dress up, and be festive, than during the holiday season. Everybody loves this dish, and when served with pasta it is such a crowd pleaser. Although it has all the makings of an Italian dish, everything I have read about this dish points to it being an Italian American invention, mostly likely invented in New York. Now in Italy, they do make a sauce with lobsters with which they dress pasta and risotto, but it is in the form of brodetto, lighter and made with onions instead of garlic and no oregano. Here I give you a delicious version that combines both.

Bastianich describes St. Joseph Fig Cookies as a classic Italian American favorite that have always been among the St. Joseph's table

full of offerings.

Visit Lidia Bastianich's website at www.lidiasitaly.com.

Lobster Fra Diavolo

Serves 4 to 6

Ingredients:

- 2 (1 ½ pound) lobsters
- ½ cup vegetable oil
- All-purpose flour, for dredging the lobster
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 medium onions, finely chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, crushed and peeled
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 2 (28-ounce) cans Italian plum tomatoes, preferably San Marzano, crushed by hand
- ½ to 1 teaspoon peperoncino flakes
- 1 ½ teaspoons kosher salt
- 1 pound spaghetti
- ½ cup packed basil leaves, shredded

Directions:

- To prepare the lobsters, cut with a large chefs' knife as follows. If desired, stun the lobsters a bit by putting them in the freezer for 15 minutes. Put the tip of your chef's knife on the lobster's head, about 2 inches or so back from the eyes. Push the knife straight down, then through to split between the eyes. Hold the lobster with a towel where the claws meet the body and twist to remove the claws. Twist or break claws from the knuckles and crack both with the back of the knife to make it easier to open when serving. Twist little legs off the body. Split lobster body and tail in half



Lasagna Verdi Bologna Style



Lobster Fra Diavolo

lengthwise, clean body cavity, leaving in the tomalley. Cut tail from body.

- Bring a large pot of salted water to boil for pasta. In a large Dutch oven, over medium-high heat, add vegetable oil. Spread the flour on a rimmed baking sheet. Dredge cut-side pieces of lobster body and tail (but not the claw pieces or little legs) in the flour, tapping off the excess. Add to pot, cut side down and cook just to seal the meat, about a minute or so. Remove to a plate. Add claw pieces and cook just until they begin to change color, about a minute. Remove to a plate.
- Pour off vegetable oil, return pot to medium heat and add 3 tablespoons of the olive oil. Add the onions and garlic. Sauté a few minutes, then add ½ cup of the pasta cooking water and simmer to soften the onions, another 2 to 3 minutes. Increase heat to let the water boil away and clear a space in the pan. Drop in the tomato paste, let sizzle a minute or 2, then stir the tomato paste into the onions. Add the crushed tomatoes and slosh out the cans with 2 cups of the pasta cooking water, adding that to the pot as well. Bring sauce to a rapid boil and stir in pepperoncino and salt. Add all of the lobster, except for the tail pieces and let simmer until sauce is thickened, about 10 minutes. Add the tail pieces and simmer until meat is just cooked through, about 2 to 3 minutes more.

Meanwhile, add spaghetti to the boiling water. When the sauce is ready, transfer about half of the sauce (without the lobster) to a large skillet and bring to a simmer. When

pasta is al dente, remove with tongs to the simmering sauce. Drizzle with remaining tablespoon of olive oil and sprinkle with the shredded basil. Toss to coat the pasta with the sauce. Serve pasta in shallow bowls, with the extra sauce and lobster pieces over top.

St. Joseph's Fig Cookies

Makes about 4 ½ dozen

Ingredients:

½ cup honey
6 tablespoons grappa or brandy
4 teaspoons orange juice
2 cups diced dried black figs
3 ¾ cups all-purpose flour
½ cup sugar
1 ½ teaspoons baking powder
¼ teaspoon kosher salt
2 large eggs
6 tablespoons milk
2 teaspoons lemon zest
¼ teaspoon cinnamon
½ cup walnut pieces

Glaze:

1 ½ cups confectioner's sugar
3 tablespoons milk, or as needed

Directions:

- In saucepan, bring honey, grappa and orange juice to boil. Add figs and bring to a simmer. Simmer until figs are plumped, about 2 to 3 minutes. Remove from heat and let cool thoroughly while you make the dough.
- In a food processor, combine flour, sugar, baking powder and salt. Pulse to combine. In a small bowl, beat together eggs and milk. With the processor running, pour egg/milk mixture into dry ingredients and process

until dough forms a ball, about 15 to 20 seconds. Knead dough on counter once or twice, then wrap in plastic wrap and let rest in the refrigerator at least 1 hour or until firm.

- When the filling is cool, scrape into a food processor and add lemon zest and cinnamon. Process to make a smooth paste. Add the walnuts and pulse a few times, leaving the nuts slightly chunky. Transfer filling to a bowl and freeze until firm, about ½ hour.
- Preheat oven to 350° F. Divide dough in half and roll one half, between parchment paper, into a rectangle about 16-by-7 inches. Cut strip in half to make 2 long strips. Roll a quarter of the filling into a log that fits down the center of one strip. Wet the edges of the strip with water and use parchment as a guide to roll into a log and seal. Flatten the top slightly with the palm of your hand. Repeat with remaining dough and filling.
- Using a wet knife, cut logs into 1-inch lengths and place with the cut sides facing out on parchment lined baking sheets. Bake until golden, about 15 to 20 minutes. Transfer cookies to wire rack and cool completely.
- To glaze cookies, sift confectioner's sugar into a bowl and whisk in milk to make a smooth glaze. Dip a cookie in the glaze. It should stick to the cookie in a thin layer. If not, adjust consistency of glaze with more milk or confectioner's sugar. Dip cookies in glaze and let dry on wire racks.



St. Joseph Fig Cookies

Mamma Agata

Zeppole and Sausage and Red Pepper Pasta with tomato sauce

"The Christmas season is a beautiful moment when hearts and families come together," says Mamma Agata Lima, who shares her belief that "cooking is love" with her daughter Chiara Lima, founder in 1994 of the Mamma Agata Cooking and Wine School, in Ravello, on Italy's Amalfi Coast. Chiara also is the author of "Mamma Agata: Simple and Genuine" (MA-Hidden Treasures; \$50).

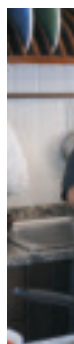
"It is such joyous time around the table, reconnecting and laughing while sharing stories and, of course, good food!" adds Mamma Agata.

Cooking since she was a young girl, eventually for noted celebrities visiting Italy such as Humphrey Bogart, Jacqueline Kennedy and Elizabeth Taylor, Mamma Agata now spends hours in the kitchen with Chiara and Gennaro Petti, Chiara's husband who is a professional sommelier. They'll be preparing their traditional Christmas dishes and there is always an abundance of food. "The more food you have, the longer everyone stays together around the table," says Mamma Agata, "and the more holiday memories that you make!"

Every Christmas, one of the most treasured recipes is Mamma Agata's zeppole, the fried donuts traditionally prepared for the holidays that everyone eagerly awaits to enjoy them while they are still hot! For a wonderful holiday entrée, she loves serving her Pappardelle con peperoni e salsiccia (sausage and red pepper pasta) with tomato sauce.

"For us, Christmas is truly the time to leave any worries or problems at the doorstep and simply savor the time together with our family," she says.

Visit Mamma Agata's Cooking School website at www.mammaagata.com.





Mamma Agata and daughter Chiara Lima at their Cooking School kitchen in Ravello, Italy



Mamma Agata's Zeppole

- Ingredients:**
about 1 pounds potatoes
½ cup whole milk
10 ½ tablespoons butter
3 ½ tablespoons cake yeast
(or substitute dry yeast)
2 ¼ pounds flour (Fine “00”
or white pastry flour)
cup sugar
3 teaspoons cinnamon
(powder)
2 tablespoons baking
powder
1 pinch sea salt
1 teaspoon pure vanilla
extract/essence
Finely grated zest of one
lemon
6 eggs
1 quart peanut or vegetable
oil for frying (note: do not
use olive oil)
1 cup granulated sugar
2 teaspoons cinnamon
powder

- Directions:**
• Prepare all of your ingredi-
ents to be able to make the
dough quickly, including the
potatoes (below), sugar,
cinnamon, baking powder,
sea salt, vanilla, lemon zest
and eggs.

- Put the butter and milk in
a pan and set aside (to help
the process go faster later).
- Crack all of the eggs into a
bowl.
- Boil the potatoes in salted
water until they are soft but
not mushy. Remove the
potatoes from the water and
let them cool to the touch.
Remove the skins from the
potatoes and discard the
skins. Set the potatoes aside.
- Mamma Agata's Secret:
Boil the potatoes with the
skins on, starting in cold
salted water and cooking for
approximately 50 minutes.
Letting the potatoes cool
before peeling them
enhances and preserves the
flavor of the potatoes.
- On your workstation,
create a circular mound of
flour with a hole in the
center.
- Add sugar, cinnamon,
baking powder, salt and
vanilla to the flour.
- Add the lemon zest to the
flour.
- Mix the ingredients
together with your hands.
- Once again, create a hole
in the center of the mound.
- Mash the meat of the
potato with a potato masher
or ricer and work the
mashed potatoes into the
flour mixture.
- Heat the milk and butter
that we put in the pan
earlier over low heat just
until the butter is melted
(not too hot—as too hot or
too cold will kill the yeast).
- Once the butter is melted,
immediately remove the pan
from the heat and let it
return to a little warmer
than room temperature, so
the butter does not re-solid-
ify, but it is not too hot.
- Dissolve the cake yeast into
the milk and butter mixture.
Starting from the center of
the mound, with your hand,

- stir in a circle, incorporating
the melted butter, milk and
cake yeast to the flour and
mix.
- Add the eggs. Mix and
knead the dough for at least
five minutes. Lift the dough
and let it fall onto the work-
top a couple of times to
create a nice soft consis-
tency.
 - Cut off a small amount of
dough and roll it into long
sausage-like, cylindrical
shape, with a 1-inch diame-
ter/width. Note: The width
of the zeppole is what
matters for frying. You may
play with the length as
desired. Create circles with
the individual pieces by
marrying the ends of the
dough.
 - Place the circles of dough
on a floured tray and set
aside in a nice, warm loca-
tion (away from drafts and
air conditioners. Allow the
dough to rise for about 90
minutes before frying.
 - Using a deep frying pan
(about 3 to 4 inches and 10
inches across) with handle,
add oil generously until it's
about 1 inch from top of
pan. Oil should be very hot,
at least 374° F before frying.
The oil is ready if a small
amount of the batter floats
to the top and starts to really
bubble.
 - While the dough is frying,
combine the sugar and
cinnamon in a bowl.
 - Once the zeppole are
golden brown on both
sides, remove them from
the oil and quickly drain
any excess oil from the
dough. Dip the zeppole in
the cinnamon sugar
mixture immediately so that
they will absorb the flavors
of the topping. Serve hot!

Sausage and Red Pepper
Pasta
Serves 4

- Ingredients:**
½ pound long, broad pasta,
wider than Fettuccini
(pappardelle pasta is best)
2 ¼ pounds of red and
yellow sweet bell peppers
3 ½ tablespoons butter (a
little less than a ½ stick)
4 tablespoons extra virgin
olive oil
½ small red or white onion
(chopped)
1 pound sweet Italian
sausage
2 ¼ pounds fresh cherry

- tomatoes quartered (you
can use half Roma or San
Marzano and half cherry
tomatoes)
5 fresh basil leaves (torn)
2 pinches sea salt
1 cup Mamma Agata's
tomato sauce



Sausage and Red Pepper Pasta

- Directions:**
• Prepare Mamma Agata's
Tomato Sauce (see below).
• Wash peppers and remove
the stems. Cut each pepper
in half and remove and
discard the seeds. Slice the
peppers lengthwise, not too
thin and not to thick.
• Sauté the peppers in
peanut oil for 10 to 15
minutes until soft. This
makes them easier to digest
and also brings out the
flavor.
• Place cooked peppers on a
paper towel to soak up the
excess oil.
• In a separate pan, melt the
butter and olive oil over low
heat. Mamma Agata's Secret:
When you cook certain
dishes (such as Bolognese,
Neapolitan Ragu, and this
sauce) for a longer length of
time, adding butter to the
olive oil maintains the
flavour intensity through the
end of the cooking process.
Olive Oil loses its flavor after
30 minutes of cooking.
• Add the chopped onion
and cook until golden
brown.
• Add the sausage to the pan
and sear on all sides. Cover
the pan and cook for an
additional two minutes.
Note: Chop the sausage at
the end of the cooking
process to preserve the
intense flavor. You can



Mamma Agata's Zeppole



Mamma Agata's tomato sauce

mince some of the sausage for the sauce and chop bigger pieces to serve on top of the pasta.

- Uncover the pan and pierce the sausage with a fork on both sides, to allow the juice of the sausage to flow in the pan and enhance the flavor of the pasta sauce.
- Add the peppers to the pan with the sausage, placing the sausage on top of the peppers. Add the chopped cherry tomatoes, fresh torn basil, salt and the cup of Tomato Sauce to the pan.
- Cover the pan and cook on a low flame for 30 minutes.
- Once cooked, remove the sausage and cut into small pieces, and place it back into the pan.
- Cook the pasta in salted water until al dente. Drain the pasta and add it to the sausage and pepper sauce and cook on low heat for two additional minutes, to marry the flavors.
- Add a handful of grated Parmigiano cheese and serve hot!

Mamma Agata's Tips:

This is a flexible recipe because you can actually use it as two recipes in one. You can prepare half of the sausage and peppers for a pasta dish, and the other half of the sausage and peppers can be served as a separate meat course. You can keep this sauce in the refrigerator for few days. It will make a nice risotto,

garnish a pizza or make a panino. It is a great thing to make when you have a hectic week and not much time to cook!

Mamma Agata's Tomato Sauce

Ingredients:

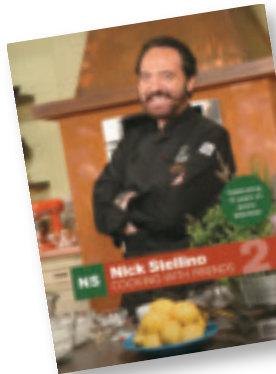
- 1 quart of vine-ripened sweet Roma tomatoes (puréed)
- 10 fresh cherry tomatoes
- 5 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 2 cloves of fresh garlic
- 3 fresh basil leaves

Directions:

- Add the olive oil, garlic and basil to a large saucepan. Note: When you add the olive oil, garlic and basil to the pan, do so all at the same time. Do not heat the oil first, then add the garlic and basil to the pan, but rather place all three ingredients into the pan at room temperature and then heat the pan.
- Heat the ingredients over a high flame to release the natural oils contained in the fresh garlic, greatly enhancing the flavors of the tomato sauce. Be careful not to allow the garlic to burn or the oil to smoke. If this happens, you must throw it out and start over. The garlic and oil should only be on the high flame for one to two minutes before proceeding to the next step.
- When the temperature of the oil begins to rise, add the tomato purée and fresh vine-ripened cherry tomatoes to the pan. Note: If the tomatoes are not ripe and sweet, it is okay to add a spoonful of sugar to sweeten the tomato sauce.
- Be careful not to burn yourself or let the oil or tomatoes splash on you. You should hear a nice sizzling sound. Soon you'll enjoy a wonderful aroma from the fragrant ingredients releasing their oils and combining to make this delicious sauce!
- Cook the sauce, first over on a high flame just until the sauce begins to boil. Then, lower the flame to simmer the sauce for a total of 30 minutes (including the time it took to bring it to a boil).

Nick Stellino

Veal Milanese with Tomato Pesto, Salad & Shaved Parmesan
and Tiramisù with Strawberry Sauce



Nick Stellino shopping for fresh produce



Listen to Nick Stellino talk about the family table, during the holidays and all year 'round, being "our last tribal meeting ground, where we all sit together and share stories surrounded by great food, great wine, our family and friends," and there's no doubt he's Italian.

A native of Palermo who came to the United States in 1975, Stellino gave up his job in 1991 as a Wall Street stockbroker to pursue his dream and true calling—becoming a chef. To this day, he has no regrets about starting out as a dishwasher and working his way up the culinary ladder to become one of this country's most successful TV chefs and the author of nine bestselling cookbooks, including his latest, "Nick Stellino: Cooking With Friends 2" (Stellino Productions; \$45.95).

The Los Angeles-based Stellino launched his first PBS show in 1995 and his popularity has continued for 15 years. In April, PBS the

start of "Nick Stellino Cooking with Friends II," a show that expounds his basic philosophy: "A family that eats together stays together."

For this holiday season, Stellino offers two traditional favorites—with a slightly different twist!

Visit Nick Stellino's website at www.nickstellino.com.

Veal Milanese with Tomato Pesto, Salad & Shaved Parmesan Serves 4 to 6

Ingredients:

- 2 eggs
- 2 tablespoons whipping cream
- 1½ pounds veal scaloppine
- 3 cups Italian-style bread crumbs
- 10 tablespoons Pompeian® Extra Light Tasting Olive Oil, divided
- 3 ounces arugula salad
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 ounces shaved Parmesan pieces

For the tomato pesto:

- 3 cups tomatoes, peeled, seeded and finely diced
- 6 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon C&H® or Domino® sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- ½ teaspoon onion powder
- ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 2 tablespoons basil, freshly chopped
- 1 cup Pompeian® Extra Virgin Olive Oil



Veal Milanese with Tomato Pesto, Salad & Shaved Parmesan

Directions:

- To prepare the tomato pesto, mix all the ingredients in a bowl and let it sit undisturbed for at least an hour. All the flavors will come together as the ingredients marinate together.

- To prepare the veal Milanese, in a bowl, whisk together the eggs and the cream.
- Dip each of the scaloppine in the egg mixture and then the bread crumbs; make sure both sides are coated evenly. Place the scaloppine on a tray until ready to use.
- Pour half the extra light tasting olive oil into a large sauté pan and cook over high heat for about 2 minutes until it starts to sizzle. Add half of the breaded scaloppine and cook over medium heat, 1 minute per side. To prevent the scaloppine from curling while you cook them, place small incisions with a sharp knife on each side of the scaloppine (along the silver skin.)

**Tiramisu & Strawberry Sauce**

- Place the cooked scaloppine on a tray lined with brown paper.
- Clean the sauté pan and dispose of the oil. Cook the second batch of scaloppine in the remaining oil, following the same directions as above. Cover and keep warm.
- Place the arugula in a stainless-steel bowl, and dress with 2 to 3 tablespoons of the tomato pesto. Add salt and pepper to taste.
- To serve, place the scaloppine in single-serving dishes. Top each of the scaloppine with a portion of the arugula salad and garnish with pieces of shaved Parmesan cheese. Pour some addi-

tional tomato pesto on the side of each of the scaloppine. You should have enough for seconds.

Tiramisu & Strawberry Sauce
*Serves 8 to 10***Ingredients****For the Tiramisu:**

2½ cups strong coffee, cooled
½ cup coffee liqueur
2 packages ladyfingers cookies
9 eggs, yolks and whites separated
1¾ cups C&H® or Domino® sugar, divided
1½ pounds mascarpone cheese
1½ teaspoons vanilla extract
1 cup semisweet chocolate, finely chopped
½ cup sweet cocoa powder

For the Strawberry Sauce

1 10-ounce package whole frozen strawberries, partially thawed
2 tablespoons crème de cassis liqueur
¼ cup C&H® or Domino® sugar

Directions:

- Mix the cold coffee and the liqueur in a large bowl. In batches, dip the ladyfingers in the coffee mixture. You want them to be moist on the outside but still crunchy on the inside.
- Beat the egg yolks with half of the sugar until the mixture is thick enough to form a long ribbon when you lift the beater out. (If you are concerned about using raw eggs, once you have beaten the egg yolks, cook them in a double boiler, whisking constantly until they become as thick as a custard cream. Be careful not to overcook them, or they will become scrambled eggs. After cooking the

*Nadia G***Gnocchi poutine****Nadia G cooking***Marianna Larochelle*

yolks, proceed with the recipe.)

- Add the mascarpone and beat for 2 to 3 more minutes. Set aside.
- Beat the egg whites, adding the remaining sugar a bit at a time, until they form stiff peaks and have a glossy sheen, about 4 minutes.
- Gently fold the egg whites into the mascarpone mixture until the mixture is all the same color. Add the vanilla and chopped semisweet chocolate, and gently fold them into the mixture.
- In a 9-by-17-inch glass baking dish, assemble the dessert. Layer the bottom of the dish with the soaked cookies. Top with a layer of the mascarpone-chocolate mixture. Repeat the procedure to make 1 more layer.
- Using a flour sifter, cover the top of the tiramisu with a thin layer of sweet cocoa powder.
- Place the tiramisu in the refrigerator and let it rest for at least 5 hours; it's even better if refrigerated overnight. Serve it with pride!

Strawberry Sauce:

- Place the frozen strawberries in a food processor. Add the cassis and sugar. Pulse until pureed. Taste.
- If the texture of the strawberry seeds bothers you, strain through a fine-mesh strainer or cheesecloth-like strainer to remove the seeds; otherwise, it is ready to serve.

“I have such warm memories of Xmas: The family shkoﬄing Zuppa di Pesce around the table, orange peels burning in the fireplace, my uncle holding back my cousin as she lunged to attack my Grandmother....,” laughs Nadia G, the young funny chef on the Cooking Channel’s comedy-culinary show “Nadia G’s Bitchin’ Kitchen.”

The show, now in its second season, is a funfest at the stove and features comedy themes such as Back-of-the-Fridge Bachelor Fest, and Dysfunctional Family Pizza Night. And, her new cookbook, “Nadia G’s Bitchin’ Kitchen: Cookin’ for Trouble” (Ballantine Bantam Dell; \$22), is a deliciously entertaining twist on a traditional cookbook.

Nadia G has chosen for her holiday recipe Italian-Quebecois fusion appetizer at its best: Crisped potato gnocchi, smothered in rich beefy gravy, topped with melted fresh cheese curds.

Visit Nadia G’s website at www.cookingchanneltv.com/nadia-gs-bitchin-kitchen/.

Gnocchi poutine*Servings: 6 appetizers***Ingredients:**

4 tablespoons organic unsalted butter
3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
2 shallots, minced
¼ cup good red wine



Ryan Szulc

Nadia G's Italian-Quebecois fusion dish Gnocchi poutine

- 2 cups organic beef stock
- ¼ teaspoon dried thyme
- ½ teaspoon organic brown sugar
- Sea salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
- 1 cup fresh cheese curds
- 1 pound fresh gnocchi from an Italian Specialty Store

Directions:

• Start by making the roux. Heat a small pot on medium and melt 3 tablespoons of unsalted butter. Add 3 tablespoons of flour, and whisk it together for about 6 minutes until the roux is amber-colored and it begins to smell nutty. Take it off the heat and set aside.



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Empanadas with Lamb and Artichoke Stuffing

To make the Gravy:

- In the medium-sized saucepan, heat 2 tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil over medium heat.
- Add the minced shallots and sauté until the edges are crisp and golden, about 5 to 6 minutes.
- Deglaze the saucepan with red wine, and reduce for 30 seconds.
- Add the organic beef stock, dried thyme, brown sugar, sea salt, freshly ground black pepper, roux and whisk together.
- Bring the gravy to a simmer and let it reduce for 15 minutes, stirring frequently. In the last 45 seconds of cooking, mix in the cheese curds so they melt slightly.
- Remove the gravy from heat, and cover.

To make the Gnocchi:

- Boil the gnocchi in salted water for about 1 minute, or until they begin to float to the top. Once they float, boil for another minute. The water must remain at a rolling boil to fully cook the gnocchi. Do not let the water temperature drop by adding too many gnocchi at once.
- Heat 1 tablespoon of extra-virgin olive oil and 1 tablespoon of unsalted butter in a non-stick pan over medium-high heat.
- Add the gnocchi in a single layer, and pan sear them for about 1 minute per side, or until slightly golden.

Shkiaffing it Together:

- Plate a portion of pan-seared gnocchi in a shallow bowl (about 15 gnocchi). Ladle on about ½ cup of cheese-gravy. Lightly mix together and serve piping hot.



Polenta Layer Cake with Meat Sauce

Julia Della Croce

Empanadas with Lamb and Artichoke Stuffing and Polenta Layer Cake with Meat Sauce



Julia Della Croce at a cooking demonstration



The maternal side of my family is from Sardinian stock and these recipes have trickled down from my grandmother and namesake, Giulia Esu," says Julia della Croce, one of America's foremost authorities on Italian cooking and the author of more than 15 cookbooks, including her most recent, "Italian Home Cooking: 125 Recipes to Comfort Your Soul" (Kyle Books; \$29.95).

Sardinia is a pastoral island, "so lamb predominates, thus the little pies," della Croce says of the lamb empanada (Sardinian spelling), one of her two heirloom recipes she believes are largely undiscovered by dishes for Americans. "While they may sound more Spanish than Italian, empanadas are a legacy of Alghero, the ancient Spanish-built port on the island of Sardinia. They are delicious little appetizers for the holiday meal—savory little bundles enveloping big flavors."

The polenta layer cake, says della Croce, is "like its cousin, baked layered lasagna." It's a special dish prepared for the holidays, combining a winy ragù (beef or lamb) and tangy young sheep-milk cheese, spread between the layers of polenta. "The whole thing is baked, resulting in a savory cake of sorts," she adds. "Nonna Giulia died long before I was born, but her recipe for this provincial Sardinian dish, called pasticciata di polenta in Italian, was one

of her jewels."

Visit Julia Della Croce's website at www.juliadellacroce.com.

Nonna Giulia's Empanadas with Lamb and Artichoke Stuffing
Makes about 18 empanadas

Dough Ingredients:

- 1 recipe New World Flaky Pastry Dough (follows)
- 1½ pounds lean boneless lamb (pork or beef can be substituted)
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 large cloves garlic, minced
- 1 cup roughly chopped cooked fresh or frozen artichoke hearts

Filling Ingredients:

- 4 ounces stale bread
- ½ cup meat stock or milk, for soaking bread
- 4 tablespoons chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
- ½ cup freshly grated pecorino, Parmigiano-Reggiano, or Grana Padano cheese
- 2 large egg yolks (reserve egg whites)
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon freshly milled black or white pepper
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh rosemary, or 1½ teaspoons dried rosemary
- 1 whole egg beaten with 1 teaspoon water

Directions:

- Make the pastry (recipe developed by my friend, food writer and pastry expert Susan Purdy, evolved from a lard-based millefoglie into a richly flavored Ameri-



can-style pie-type crust).

- To make the filling, dice the lamb and grind it in a food processor fitted with a metal blade.

- In a skillet, warm the oil. Add the onion, garlic and artichokes and sauté over medium heat until the onion is wilted, 3 to 4 minutes. Add the meat and sauté gently until lightly browned on the surface and bright pink inside, about 2 minutes. Transfer the mixture to a medium bowl.
- Trim crusts off the bread. Place bread in a bowl and pour in enough stock or milk to cover. Soak until softened. Squeeze the bread dry and crumble it; discard the stock or milk.

- Add crumbled bread, parsley, grated cheese, egg yolks, salt, pepper, and rosemary to the meat mixture. Mix well.

- Preheat oven to 375°F. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper. On a floured work surface, roll out the dough until just less than ¼ inch thick. Using a 3-inch cookie cutter, stamp out as many rounds as possible. Transfer to prepared baking sheets. Gather scraps together; roll out again and stamp out additional disks. Brush the rounds with the reserved egg whites.
- Place a generous tablespoon of the filling in the center of each dough disk. Fold the dough over the filling to create a half-moon shaped impanada, lining up the edges. Use a fork to firmly crimp the edges. Use extra dough to make decorations. Brush the surface with the egg wash. Bake until golden, about 30 minutes. Serve warm.

Pastry dough:

I call this "New World" pastry dough because flaky pie crusts, which I love, are an English and American invention. I have incorporated them into my cooking because when it comes to pies in general I prefer them to the pasta frolla-type pastry crust of the Italians. This exceptional pie crust recipe was developed by my friend, food writer and pastry expert, Susan Purdy. It is buttery in flavor, flaky in texture, and incredibly easy to handle. This dough is

most quickly prepared in a food processor fitted with a steel blade; for best results, use a combination of frozen butter and well-chilled or frozen solid vegetable shortening (measure it out onto wax paper and place in freezer about 30 minutes before starting).

Ingredients:

3 cups all-purpose flour
¾ teaspoon salt
Optional sweetener for dessert pies: 1½ to 2 tablespoons sugar
12 tablespoons unsalted butter, well chilled or frozen, cut up
6 tablespoons trans-fat-free solid vegetable shortening such as Crisco or lard, chilled or frozen
1 large egg (or one large yolk, see note above)
1 tablespoons lemon juice or unflavored vinegar
3 to 5 tablespoons ice water, just as needed

Optional Glaze:

1 whole egg beaten with 1 teaspoon water

Directions:

- To prepare pastry in a food processor, combine flour, salt and sugar (if used); pulse a few times to blend. Add butter and solid vegetable shortening and pulse only until fat is cut into bits the size of peas. Through the feed tube, add the egg and lemon juice or vinegar, pulse once or twice, then add ice water one tablespoon at a time, pulsing once or twice between additions, only until dough begins to show some clumps. Do not form a dough ball on the blade.

- Turn dough out onto a piece of wax paper (if it looks sandy and dry, sprinkle on a tiny bit more water) and use your hands to bring it together into a ball; dough should hold the form of your fingers when squeezed. Wrap up dough and refrigerate at least 30 minutes. To use, roll out on lightly floured surface with floured rolling pin. Note: If butter and vegetable shortening were frozen, dough can be rolled without prior chilling.
- Optional: To give a golden finish to the tops of formed pies or tartlets, use a pastry brush to coat them with egg

glaze just before baking.

Glaze: 1 whole egg beaten with 1 teaspoon water.

Nonna Giulia's Polenta Layer Cake with Meat Sauce

Serves 8

Ingredients:

1 recipe Basic Polenta (follows)
For the sauce: 6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1 onion, minced
1 carrot, chopped
1 small celery stalk with leaves, chopped
1 teaspoon pulverized fennel seeds
1 pound ground, lean pork or mixed ground pork and beef
½ cup good quality dry red wine
3 tablespoons tomato paste
1 35-ounce can plum tomatoes, drained, seeded and chopped, juices reserved
3 tablespoons minced fresh basil leaves
1 teaspoon sea salt
½ pound semi-soft pecorino cheese such as Fior di Sardegna, or Tuscan caciotta, or substitute Spanish Manchego, shredded
olive or vegetable oil for oiling polenta board or work surface

Directions:

- To make the sauce, warm the oil in a skillet. Stir in the onion, carrot and celery and continue to sauté until vegetables are soft, 10 minutes. Add fennel seeds and the pork and sauté over low heat until the meat colors lightly, stirring occasionally, about 4 minutes. Stir in the wine and allow to evaporate, 1 minute. Add the tomato paste diluted in a few tablespoons of the reserved tomato juices followed by the tomatoes, another ½ cup reserved tomato juices, basil, and the salt. Stir well.
- Partially cover and simmer over the lowest possible heat for 1 hour, stirring frequently. The sauce should become thick and fragrant. If necessary, add a few tablespoons of the reserved tomato juices if the sauce seems to be drying out.
- Lightly oil a 9-inch-by-13-inch baking dish and set aside. Make the polenta and turn it out onto a lightly

oiled board or counter surface. Use a rubber spatula or knife dipped into hot water to spread it out into a rectangle about ¼ inch thick. Let stand until cooled completely and firm, about 15 minutes. Cut into 3-inch squares. Set aside.

- Heat an oven to 450°F. Arrange half the polenta squares in the bottom of the baking dish. Pour half the sauce over the polenta squares and spread to cover. Sprinkle half the cheese over the sauce. Repeat with another layer of each. Bake until the "cake" is heated through and the cheese is golden brown, between 15 and 20 minutes.
- Let stand for 10 minutes. Cut into squares and serve.

Basic Polenta

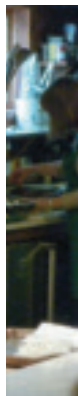
Serves 6

Ingredients:

7 cups water
1 tablespoon kosher salt
2 cups polenta cornmeal (do not use cooked ground corn used for corn bread)
boiling water, as needed

Directions:

- Bring the water to a boil in a deep pot. Add the salt and bring the heat down to medium. Add the cornmeal to the boiling water very slowly, almost in a trickle, to prevent lumps from forming. Keep the polenta at a constant simmer. From the instant the cornmeal is added to the water, continuously stir it with a long-handled wooden spoon or whisk, always in the same direction. After all the cornmeal is absorbed, continue to stir until the polenta is thick and pulls away easily from the sides of the pan. If the polenta is quite thick but still not pulling, add a little more boiling water and continue to stir until it is ready. It should be perfectly cooked, thick, and creamy in 25 to 30 minutes.
- If serving loose, pour into a platter at once, dress according to your recipe, and serve. For polenta crosstini, pour the hot polenta out onto a clean oiled work surface and use a rubber spatula to spread to a thickness of ¼ inch. Allow it to set and grill or fry, as preferred.





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NIAF NEWS

A PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL ITALIAN AMERICAN FOUNDATION

*Photographs by
Derek Parks and
Nick Khazal*



President Barack Obama gave the keynote address at the Gala



NIAF Chairman Jerry Colangelo, House Democratic Leader Hon. Nancy Pelosi, Mistress of Ceremonies Maria Bartiromo and NIAF President Joseph V. Del Raso welcome President Barack Obama to the Gala.

House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi congratulates honoree Emma Marcegaglia, President of Confindustria, who received the NIAF Special Achievement Award in Women's Leadership.



NIAF Board Members Gerard S. LaRocca and Michael A. Zampardi with NIAF Secretary John F. Calvelli



If You Weren't at NIAF's 36th Anniversary Gala Here's What You Missed!

On October 28-29, 2011, the National Italian American Foundation celebrated its 36th anniversary holding a convention and gala at the Washington Hilton in Washington, D.C. The weekend's activities culminated in more than 2,000 people attending the black-tie dinner where President Barack Obama delivered the keynote address and U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Janet Napolitano spoke of the heroes of 9/11.

The evening's eight honorees were President of Confindustria Emma Marcegaglia,

who received the NIAF Special Achievement Award in Women's Leadership; Hon. Santo Versace, president of Gianni Versace S.p.A., and chairman of Fondazione Operation Smile Italia Onlus, who accepted the NIAF Special Achievement Award in Philanthropy; Claudio Bozzo, president of the Mediterranean Shipping Company (USA) Inc., who received the NIAF Special Achievement Award in International Business; Paolo Scudieri, CEO of Adler Plastic S.p.A., who was awarded the NIAF Special Achievement Award in International Business; Minority Leader of the Ohio Senate Hon. Capri Cafaro, who received the NIAF Youth Leadership Award; Hon. Frank J. Guarini, former U.S. Representative and NIAF Chairman Emeritus, who received the NIAF Lifetime Achievement Award in Leadership; Rock and Roll Hall of Famer Dion DiMucci, who received the NIAF Special Achievement Award in Entertainment; and Frank G. Mancuso Sr., former chairman and CEO of Paramount Pictures and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios, who accepted The NIAF Jack Valenti Institute Award.

Please take a look at this photographic retrospective of this very special weekend . . .



Actor/singer Frankie Avalon presented the NIAF Special Achievement Award in Entertainment to honoree rock legend Dion DiMucci.



Secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano



Actor/singer Robert Davi and House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi

36th Anniversary Gala



Matthew DiDomenico Sr. presents NIAF's eighth annual Teacher of the Year Award to Kerri Titone during the Victoria J. Mastrobuono Education Luncheon.



NIAF leadership at the Mastrobuono luncheon: Robert E. Carlucci, Michael A. Zampardi, Jerry Colangelo and Matthew DiDomenico Sr.



NIAF Executive Vice President Dr. John P. Rosa wins one of two Super Bowl XLVI packages donated by The Pepsi-Cola Company at the Celebrity Auction and luncheon.

Former NIAF Vice Chair Aileen R. Sirey with NIAF Executive Vice President Hon. Marie L. Garibaldi



30



At NIAF's tribute dinner to U.S. and Italian military forces, NIAF President Joseph V. Del Raso and legendary NFL coach Dick Vermeil congratulate Navy HM3 Jay Rafetto, who was awarded NIAF's Wounded Warrior Recognition.



Gen. Raymond T. Odierno and NIAF vice chairman Vincent Viola



Hon. Amato Berardi and honoree Santo Versace



NIAF Executive Vice President Salvatore M. Salibello and Maria Bartiromo



NIAF Board Member Hon. Anita Bevacqua McBride and NIAF Vice Chairman Hon. Patricia de Stacy Harrison at NIAF's military tribute dinner.



Nicola Arena and honoree Claudio Bozzo

36th Anniversary Gala



Robert Pisano presented The NIAF Jack Valenti Institute Award to Frank G. Mancuso Sr.



NIAF Vice Chairman Hon. Patricia de Stacy Harrison and NIAF President Joseph V. Del Raso



NIAF General Counsel Arthur J. Furia with actor/model Fabio at the VIP reception



Maria Bartiromo with Italy's ambassador to the United States Hon. Giulio Terzi di Sant'Agata and Italy's Minister of Youth Policy Giorgia Meloni



Gala Convention Chairman Dr. Thomas M. Scalea



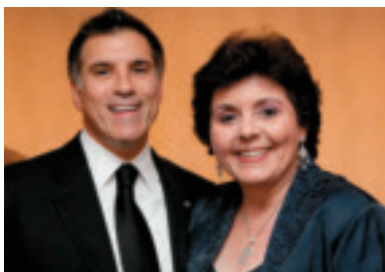
Rev. Raymond Nobiletti, M.M. and NIAF Regional Vice President Jeffrey M. Capaccio



Matthew DiDomenico Sr. and honoree Paolo Scudieri



NIAF Board Member Kenneth J. Aspromonte, NIAF Chairman Jerry Colangelo and NIAF Treasurer Gabriel A. Battista who served as the 2011 Gala Chairman.



NIAF vice chairman Vincent Viola and NIAF Board Member Linda R. Carlozzi



Former U.S. Sen. Hon. Alfonse D'Amato and honoree Hon. Capri Cafaro

To view and order photos

from the Gala and Convention weekend, please visit the online galleries of NIAF's official Gala photographers Derek Parks and Nick Khazal at <http://smu.gs/vZzlrS>

Announcing Spring 2012 Travel Packages to Italy!

The National Italian American Foundation (NIAF) continues its popular travel programs to Italy by offering four nine-day/seven-night tours departing from John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK) in New York City beginning in March 2012:

- Campania...A Land That Will Capture Your Heart
- The Enchanting Hill Towns of Umbria & Eastern Tuscany
- Grand Tour of Sicily 2012
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Holy Rosary Church, 595 Third St., NW, Washington, D.C. 20001
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Contact: Kyla McKenna, 202-939-3117 or kyla@niaf.org

March

NIAF Night of Hockey with the New York Islanders

March 10, 2012, 5 p.m. pre-game cocktail; 7 p.m. game time
Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum, Uniondale, N.Y.

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Contact: David Sibelman, 516-501-6851 or david.sibelman@newyorkislanders.com.

To purchase tickets: www.newyorkislanders.com/niaf

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Wigwam Resort, Arizona

Contact: Rebecca Bartello, 202-939-3114 or rbartello@niaf.org

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East Coast Gala

April 12, 2012

Cipriani 42nd Street

Contact: Rebecca Bartello, 202-939-3114 or rbartello@niaf.org

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June 21, 2012

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Contact: Jerry Jones, 202-939-3102 or jerry@niaf.org





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**Italy's National Culinary Tradition Began with
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The year 2011 marks the 150th anniversary of the Risorgimento and the 100th anniversary of the death of Pellegrino Artusi. The former represents a political victory. The latter celebrates an equally important event in Italian history—the creation of a national cuisine.

Italy?

By Maria Garcia

**Above: Detail from an Italian still life of fruit,
circa 1860, an oil painting by Trieste artist Francesco Malacrea.**

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Ambassador

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Thirty years after unification, in 1891, Artusi self-published his cookbook, “Science in the Kitchen and the Art of Eating Well.” At the time, there were few earmarks of cultural unity in Italy, and the average Italian had very little to eat. A retired banker who may never have chopped a sprig of parsley, Artusi nevertheless understood how culinary traditions are created. His was the first Italian cookbook written especially for le casalinghe, the housewives.

The rest, as food and wine critic John F. Mariani might say, was a history of how Italian food conquered the world.

Artusi’s cookbook, written in the Tuscan dialect, was so successful that he eventually sold it to a publisher, and it remained a standard text for the home cook well into the next century. In a telephone interview from Westchester, N.Y., Mariani, who writes for Esquire Magazine and Bloomberg News, and is the author of the 2011 book “How Italian Food Conquered the World,” explains the significance of the cookbook: “It stabilized what Italian food included. Also, the Tuscan language itself became formal Italian.”

The irony of “Science in the Kitchen” is that, in the year of its first publication, the promise of Italian unification had not even begun for the vast majority of Italians. The emigration of millions from their homeland to escape starvation, which had started in 1861, was at its peak in the late 1890s. For the most part, the emigrants fared better, having landed in places where food was plentiful. Those who remained were subsisting, even after the diaspora had relieved the strain on food supplies.

“In 1861, nearly all the peasants in the North were eating polenta by itself, and suffering from diseases because of it, including pellagra,” says Luigi Ballerini, describing the iron deficiency that causes skin lesions. “In the South, they were eating cabbage.” An author, a poet and professor of Italian

Literature at UCLA, Ballerini wrote the introduction to the latest English edition of “Science in the Kitchen.”

Artusi, whose cookbook is rife with delightful anecdotes about food preparation and Italian society, spent most of his life in the prosperous and relatively peaceful city of Florence. He makes no references in “Science in the Kitchen” to the miserable circumstances the majority of Italians endured at home, although in some recipes, he admits to the troublesome reality of finding suitable ingredients, and he also suggests alternate cooking methods.

In 1861, most Italians were illiterate, and spoken “Italian” consisted of dozens of regional dialects. But by 1891, even those with only a few years of schooling could read the Tuscan dialect. “The notion of writing for people who are not rich and who do not know there is a gastronomic tradition is remarkable,” Ballerini explains in an interview in Greenwich Village. “More than that, Artusi connects that tradition to the time of the Roman Empire, as well as to the Renaissance — and he is writing for the emerging bourgeois class.”

Food historian Carol Helstosky, an associate professor at the University of Denver, is the daughter of Polish immigrants who were restaurateurs. She has lived and studied in Italy, and written two books on the roots of Italian cuisine, “Garlic and Oil: Food and Politics in Italy” and “Pizza: A Global History.” Helstosky describes the country’s gastronomic roots as a “cuisine of scarcity,” which inspired culinary simplicity.

“You can see the construction of Italian nationalism, or what nationhood means, most clearly in food,” she says in a telephone interview from Denver. Helstosky recalls fondly what steered her to this conclusion: At dinner with Italian colleagues in Rome, a long debate ensued over some new ingredient in the pizza.

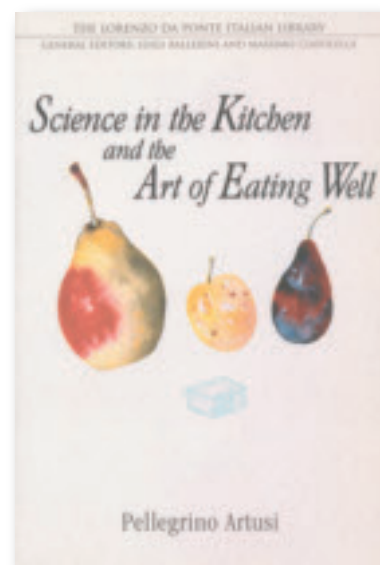
As an historian, Helstosky first looked to Risorgimento-era Italy



Cover of Pellegrino Artusi's first edition of “Science in the Kitchen and the Art of Eating Well,” the canon of Italian culinary tradition he self-published in 1891



The 1909 edition of Artusi's cookbook which was reprinted 13 times and sold more than 52,000 copies in the years before his death in 1910



The 2003 University of Toronto Press English edition of Artusi's cookbook





Earliest commercial photo of Frank Pepe, founder of Frank Pepe Pizzeria Napoletana, who, like other Italian immigrants, brought along the simple and humble food of his homeland when he came in 1909 to the United States from Maiori, on the Amalfi coast, southwest of Naples.



Frank and Filomena Pepe at the original location of Frank Pepe Pizzeria Napoletana, established in 1925 in the Wooster Square neighborhood of New Haven, Conn.



Bust of Pellegrino Artusi at the cemetery of San Miniato al Monte.

to understand the Italian culture of food so evident in her colleagues' conversation. Scarcity, she writes in "Garlic and Oil," naturally led Italians to a preoccupation with food preparation. "Everybody had to rise to this challenge of creating something out of nothing," she observes. "What is fascinating is how sophisticated this cuisine is, even at the time of unification.

"Historians are used to thinking that these were just peasants, but it's brilliant what Italians did with pasta—the number of shapes made from a simple dough. It feels like you're making a different meal from each of them."

Helstosky points to pizza, a Neapolitan dish—and a Neapolitan word—for decades after unification, as another example of Italian ingenuity. "You can put any kind of ingredient on it," she says. "It's simple and incredibly creative."

Italy's inventive and varied cuisine, only recently having achieved the status of French cuisine, is actually one aspect of a great and varied cultural heritage: The Rinascimento began in Italy 500 years before it was a nation. In classical music, Italy's influence is immeasurable; and in opera, the art form founded by Jacopo Peri and Claudio Monteverdi, it is unparalleled. Giuseppe Verdi, a luminary in Risorgimento-era Italy, once remarked that when he heard a delivery boy whistling one of his arias, he knew he had gotten it right.

"There are many historical accounts by travelers to Italy at the time of unification which remark on the fact that construction workers would whistle the tune of an aria while they worked," Helstosky says. "Every town of any size had an opera house, and although the military would occupy the front rows, the poor would be in the back." Opera, she observes, as much as the "cuisine of scarcity," helped to unify the new nation.

Some Risorgimento-era foods, Ballerini points out, pop up in

contemporary regional cuisines. "In Italy, right now, you will pay a fortune for a dish of wild greens like arugula, which used to be an ingredient in peasant soups," he says. "Also, the Slow Food movement has created a market for cheeses, for instance, that are produced no differently than they were in 1861 or centuries before that."

If we could travel back to 19th century Italy, Helstosky cautions, we would be disappointed in the quality of the food. "We might love to go to Tuscany and eat polenta and wild boar," she says, "but we are thinking in very gourmet terms. Actually, the polenta might be rancid and the wild boar would have a lot of gristle."

Unless we were sipping a local wine, a Barolo in the Piemonte, for instance (Barolo was a sweet wine then), it would be as dissatisfying as our meal. "Wines did not travel very well in those days," Mariani says. "There were few containers and you couldn't cork things very well."

The iconic ingredient of Italian cuisine, the tomato, *pomo d'oro* or "golden fruit" in Tuscan, was yellow when it first arrived in Spain from the New World with Christopher Columbus. In his book "Pomodoro! A History of the Tomato in Italy," author David Gentilcore writes that the tomato traveled to Italy by the mid-16th century, but was first appreciated solely for its ornamental value.

By 1861, Ballerini says, it was being used to flavor meats, soups and stews, and in Campania, tomatoes had already been added to the other ingredients—pepper, olive oil and pecorino cheese—traditionally mixed into spaghetti. The tomato was red by then and of the varieties we would recognize today.

Artusi included in his cookbook recipes for "sugo di pomodoro," stewed tomatoes to which one added celery, basil and parsley, and "salsa di pomodoro," a sauce any modern cook would pour over pasta.

Gentilcore, a history professor at the University of Leicester in ➤



The popular seasonal fresh tomato “apizza” (in the Neapolitan dialect) from Frank Pepe Pizzeria Napoletana, which still serves The Original Tomato Pie (tomatoes with grated cheese, garlic, oregano and olive oil) that Frank Pepe made in 1925.

Britain, explains in an email exchange that the origin of the tomato Italian Americans now use for making sauce from fresh tomatoes is not Italian at all. “The ‘Roma’ was developed at the Plant Industry Station in Beltsville, Md., in the mid-1950s,” he says.

In Risorgimento-era Italy, ridged tomatoes that look somewhat like the ones we call “heirloom” today, were “losing ground” in the South to an early version of

the San Marzano, today’s most common canned tomato, writes Gentilcore. The stature of the tomato grew along with that of Italian cuisine. “More than anything else, the invention and popularity of pasta al pomodoro as a symbol of Italian cooking,” he observes, “is behind the success of the Italian tomato worldwide.”

In the fertile soil of Campania, the tomato flourished and became an important part of

Southern Italians’ summer diet in the 19th century. “My guess would be that tomato eating began in the South because tomatoes tasted better there,” Helstosky says. “The volcanic ash would have produced a tomato with less acid.”

Tomato sauce, which took decades to spread northward, was associated in the minds of some Italians with patriotism, with Giuseppe Garibaldi and his “Red Shirts.” Yet a more fitting tribute to the Risorgimento would be to remember our Italian grandmothers who fashioned meals from pasta, olive oil and garlic.

Each year, in Artusi’s hometown of Forlimpopoli, the Festa Artusiana celebrates gastronomic unification with a prize awarded to an amateur chef, and cooking classes conducted by housewives.

Maria Garcia, a regular contributor to “On Film” for Ambassador, was apprentice cook to her Italian grandmother before she was tall enough to see the top of the stove. Her previous article on Italian cuisine, “In Search of the Perfect Pastiera,” appeared earlier the Spring 2010 Ambassador (Vol. 21, No. 3). ▲

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By Don Oldenburg

Lombardi's in Manhattan's Little Italy

So, the U.S. Congress recently classified what passes for pizza in school lunches as a vegetable. Sure, tomato paste counts for something on nutritional charts, but that was a dough-saving decision that had little to do with good health, or good pizza for that matter.

Maybe Congress should undertake the tough task of deciding what's America's best pizza?

No, strike that, bad idea. Congress presumably has better and even more impossible issues to contemplate, and the last thing this country needs are pizza political action committees cropping up.

But why ask Congress when there are more than 17.8 million Italian Americans in this country who, thanks to nature and nurture, are undoubtedly best suited to judge what's the best pizza in America?

Speaking of judges and pizza, probably you heard that earlier this year U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, the son of Sicilian immigrants and someone who has plenty of experience with opinions and pizza, did his best to reignite this longstanding culinary debate when asked how he rated New York pizza.

"I think it is infinitely better than Washington pizza, and infinitely better than Chicago pizza," Scalia told California Lawyer Magazine, clearly a traditionalist in both law and in pizza. "You know these deep-dish pizzas—it's not pizza. It's very good, but . . . call it tomato pie or something." Scalia since then has added coal to the brick-oven fire, explaining in a speech in Chicago that "Real pizza is Neapolitan. It is thin. It is chewy and crispy. . . ."

But Scalia's ruling may have some premier contenders in the nation's pie polemic suggesting he chew on this! Some of the legends of New Haven-style "apizza," like the iconic Frank Pepe's Pizzeria Napoletana, for instance, list only "tomato pies" on the menu. And Pepe's remarkable char-and-chew pies are nothing like the deep-dishers at Chicago's Original Gino's East.

Of course, anyone with a passion for pizza has sound bites about the best they've ever had. NIAF Chairman Jerry Colangelo will tell you Pizzeria

Bianco in Phoenix serves "one of the best pizzas in America," adding that "people willing to wait three hours to be seated says it all!" Atlantans swear by the "artisan craft" of the tiny, tables-in-the-kitchen Antico Pizza near Georgia Tech. In the nation's capital, 2Amys and Pizza Paradiso get high marks.

So is it Pepe's? Or Sally's, a block down Wooster Street in New Haven's Little Italy? Or the aficionado-acclaimed Grimaldi's in New York City, the heralded Di Fara's Pizza in Brooklyn, or the classic Lombardi's, which was founded in 1905 in Manhattan's Little Italy and claims to be the first pizzeria in the United States? What about the West Coast's gourmet-trendy 'zas with artichoke hearts and squash blossoms, like at San Francisco's Flour + Water or Los Angeles' Pizzeria Mozza?

So tell us, what's the best pizza in America? The best pizzeria? And why? ▲



Courtesy of Frank Pepe's Pizzeria Napoletana

The seasonal fresh tomato pizza from Frank Pepe's Pizzeria Napoletana in New Haven

Send your pizza opinions to us, along with your name, city and phone number, by email at don@niaf.org or to Don Oldenburg, Editor, Ambassador Magazine, 1860 19th St. NW, Washington, DC 20009. We'll publish the results, along with your opinions, in the next issue.



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THE SUPREME COURT'S TENTH JUSTICE

*Learned in the Law, Solicitor General Don Verrilli
Argues on Behalf of the United States*

By Tony Mauro

The solicitor general of the United States is required by statute to be “learned in the law.” Donald Verrilli Jr. fits the bill well, and that’s a good thing. He will need every ounce of that learning in the months ahead.

Nominated as solicitor general by President Barack Obama in January and confirmed by the U.S. Senate in June, Verrilli stepped into the daunting job of number one defender of the Obama administration’s health care reform law. As the government’s top advocate before the Supreme Court, Verrilli will also find himself in the thick of landmark legal disputes ranging from same-sex marriage to affirmative action.

“It’s all a little bit overwhelming,” Verrilli confessed in an interview with Ambassador Magazine this summer. He said that serving as solicitor general, one of the most coveted jobs in the legal profession, “makes me feel a very, very weighty sense of responsibility that I better do this job pretty darn well.”

No one doubts he will. With a degree from Columbia Law School, a Supreme Court clerkship and 12 Supreme Court arguments under his belt before he became solicitor general, Verrilli is one of the most respected Supreme Court advocates in the nation. Even-tempered and soft-spoken, Verrilli has earned a high level of credibility and admiration from fellow advocates and from the Court.

Verrilli is best known for his deep knowledge and honest depiction of the facts of the cases he argues. That is especially important for the solicitor general who, by tradition, has a special bond with the Supreme Court and a responsibility to offer dispassionate counsel to the justices, untainted by partisanship.

“He is easily up to any challenge that lies ahead in the Supreme Court,” says Roy Englert Jr., another veteran advocate who argued against Verrilli in a death penalty case in 2008. “Interacting with him as opposing counsel served only to increase my admiration. The only thing that may exceed his ability is his professionalism and good character.”

Englert points to a letter written to the Senate in February in support of Verrilli’s nomination by top-tier Supreme Court advocates from across the political spectrum. “Don has a deeply ingrained habit of civility,” his peers told the Senate. In all interactions with Verrilli, they agreed, “Don maintains his equanimity and politeness and engages in calm, reason-based discussion.”

Verrilli’s enviable reputation has several sources. As a law clerk for the late Justice William Brennan Jr. in 1984 and 1985, he often reviewed eleventh-hour death row appeals. “I was struck by how poor the representation is for these individuals,” Verrilli told me in 2007. He was inspired to sharpen his skills, as well to improve the lawyering ➤

Tony Mauro

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Courtesy of the U.S. Department of Justice

Don Verrilli outside the Attorney General's office at the U.S. Justice Department with Associate Deputy Attorney General Stuart Delery

for those on death row. As a partner in the firm Jenner & Block, Verrilli spent as many as 200 hours a year in pro bono or unpaid representation for death row inmates on appeal, and other underrepresented clients.

But Verrilli learned his work ethic and principles as a lawyer even earlier. His father, now retired, was a lawyer for prominent New York City banks. "He was a consummate professional," said Verrilli.

Verrilli's great-grandfather Rocco came to the United States in the 1870s from a tiny town near Naples called Castelfranco in Miscano. He worked as a day laborer, saloon keeper, and finally a banker, in New York's Little Italy. The bank went bust in the Depression, but he was determined to send all eight of his children to college – and he did. One of those eight, Don Verrilli's grandfather, went to Columbia Medical School and became a physician. "Sort of extraordinary, if you think about it," says the solicitor general.

In 2000, Verrilli visited Castelfranco in Miscano, and with the help of a distant cousin, found the remnants of the house in which his great-grandfather Rocco grew up. It was his only trip to that town, but virtually every summer Verrilli, his wife Gail and daughter Jordan have spent a few weeks at a rented farmhouse in Tuscany. "The centrality of family to me is anchored in my heritage," Verrilli said. "There is little that gives me more pleasure than being around the table with family and friends."

When Jordan was young, Verrilli said, she was not too keen on vacationing in Italy. "She found it boring," he said.

"It's all a little bit overwhelming," confessed Verrilli, adding that serving as solicitor general "makes me feel a very, very weighty sense of responsibility that I better do this job pretty darn well."

But now that she is of college age, she appreciates it more. Jordan Verrilli is taking an Italian course at Dartmouth College and plans to study in Italy in her junior year abroad. That is just what her father did in 1977 as an undergraduate at Yale University — even though Yale did not have foreign study options at the time. "I actually graduated from Yale in seven rather than eight semesters by taking an occasional course," he said, "so I could have that semester free to go to Florence."

There was no time for a trip to Italy in the summer of 2011, because of his new job as solicitor general. The workload of his office is enormous, considering that only 20 or so lawyers work there. Every year, the solicitor general and his or her deputies and assistants review thousands of cases in which the United States is a party or has an interest, to determine if and how they should be appealed.

But Verrilli's most high-profile task will be arguing before the Supreme Court. By tradition, the solicitor general argues the most important cases in each of seven argument sessions every term.

In his debut as solicitor general on Oct. 5, Verrilli was in his comfort zone, arguing as he had as a private



practitioner in the field of copyrights and intellectual property law. His job that day was to defend an act of Congress that extended U.S. copyright protection to certain foreign creative works that were copyrighted in their home country. The law fulfilled U.S. obligations under an international copyright treaty, but it drew First Amendment protests from U.S. musicians and educators, among others. Why? Because the law had the effect of suddenly prohibiting artists from using foreign works that previously were in the public domain in the United States.

The law, said Verrilli, was “the price of admission to the international [copyright] system,” necessary if the United States wanted its own copyrighted works protected abroad and not pirated.

“General Verrilli, I don’t find that an appealing argument,” was Justice Antonin Scalia’s typically sharp response. Whether or not it fulfilled a treaty was not important if Congress had no power to pass the law in the first place, Scalia said. “I don’t think that powers that Congress does not have under the Constitution can be acquired by simply obtaining the agreement of the Senate, the President and Zimbabwe.”

Verrilli had a ready response for Scalia – complete agreement. But he said the Constitution had “no textual limit” that would preclude Congress from enacting the law at issue. The barrage of questions from most justices continued, and Verrilli never lost his cool.

By the end, there was little consensus about whether Verrilli’s brand of quiet persuasion carried the day. But win or lose, Verrilli more than held his own. Bigger battles lie ahead.



Courtesy of the U.S. Department of Justice

Verrilli with a U.S. Justice Department colleague

Tony Mauro is Supreme Court correspondent for The National Law Journal. He has covered the nation’s highest court for 31 years. ▲



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Paul Rao

Never at a Loss for Words Even When His Patients Are

By Don Oldenburg

Paul Rao at the National Rehabilitation
Hospital in Washington, D.C.

If you saw last year's Oscar-winning film "The King's Speech," the moving story about a stammering Prince George ("Bertie") who reluctantly ascended to the throne of England, and the unorthodox speech therapist who helped him find his public voice, you already know a lot about Paul Rao.

Serving this year as president of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), in Washington, D.C., and 41 years as a speech language pathologist, Rao has helped countless patients, famous and not, regain their lost voices and, therein, their lives.

Seated in his office last month at the National Rehabilitation Hospital in Washington, D.C., where he is vice president of operations and compliance, Rao recalls his therapeutic work with the late Pulitzer Prize-winning Washington Post columnist Mary McGrory, an eloquent and significant figure in 20th-century American journalism. Eight years ago, McGrory suffered a stroke that stole her ability to communicate.

Rao worked diligently to help her regain her speech. But before she was able to speak, she won the American Ireland Fund's Humanitarian Award. Rao remembers sitting alongside McGrory, U.S. Rep. Nancy Pelosi, TV news anchor Gordon Peterson, and others at the gala that night, tempering their expectations, explaining that at this stage of her rehabilitation McGrory could do no more than accept the award and nod to the audience.

"So she waddles up to the podium and says, 'Thanks you and God bless you.' And it was like God

came in and imbued her heart and soul," recalls Rao. "And everybody looks at me, like, 'Oh, yeah, you really know what you're talking about.'"

The only reason Rao was McGrory's therapist is because she had a thing for Italian men, he says. Rao is a third generation Italian American. His grandparents came from Calabria in 1912, to Argentina, and then to the United States, eventually Pittsburgh. "Third generation, but I bleed Italian," says Rao, whose father was an Internal Revenue Service agent, his grandfather a coal miner and his mother's father a mill foreman near Pittsburgh.

Rao grew up in Pittsburgh, attended a seminary after high school, then earned a bachelor's degree from St. Vincent College in Latrobe, Penn. After college, he took a job teaching seventh grade at St. Thomas Apostle Church in Washington, D.C. "I had a student, Hazel, who had a cleft palate and couldn't speak very well and I couldn't understand her," says Rao. "Each Wednesday, she would go to Catholic University and meet with a therapist, and come back and I could understand her a little bit better."

Intrigued by Hazel's therapy, Rao visited with the chairman of the Speech Pathology and Audiology Department at Catholic University. Due to a shortage of therapists back then, and Rao's enthusiasm, the chairman offered him a full scholarship to enter the program. Not only did Rao find his calling at Catholic University, he met his future wife, Martina, a speech therapist.

"She looked Italian, but she's Slovak," says Rao, proudly adding that they have a son, Jeff, a vice president at Fidelity Investments in Los Angeles, and a daughter, Angie, also a speech pathologist.

After graduating from CU, Rao started working at the Washington Hospital Center. By 1985, he became director of speech at the National Rehabilitation Hospital and by 1995 its executive director of clinical services. This year, he served as president of ASHA, which has grown since the mid-'70s from 17,000 to 150,000 members.

Rao's tenure as ASHA president has kept him busy, travelling throughout the United States and recently to Sao Paulo, Brazil, and San Diego. He gave more than 100 speeches in 2011, and yet he continued to work with at least one patient the entire time. To explain "what we do," Rao often quotes Daniel Webster: "If all my possessions were taken from me, with one exception, I would choose to keep the power of communication, because by it I would soon regain all the rest."

It is what he did for patients such as the late Democratic powerbroker Smith Bagley, the late humor columnist Art Buchwald, and U.S. Sen. Tim Johnson, who in 2008 suffered a stroke and couldn't speak. Only recently did Rao discharge the senator, who through therapy has gained a 99-percent recovery.

And when U.S. Rep. Gabriel Giffords was wounded in the head a year ago, Rao was one of the experts whose expertise and insight into her long recovery was sought by the media.

Rao attributes some of his passion for the work he loves to his Italian American mother, Ida. "What I got from her was compassion to a fault," he says. "She would talk to anybody, any place, at stores, churches; people she didn't know from Adam, she talked to, always pulling out her grandchildren's pictures. She was a saint. She had unconditional positive regard for everybody—and I'm kind of like that."

And Rao's favorite scene in "The King's Speech," which he confesses he has seen four times? "The scene in the cathedral where the king says, 'I have my voice.' It's a great scene because the words 'I have my speech' are what we do." ▲

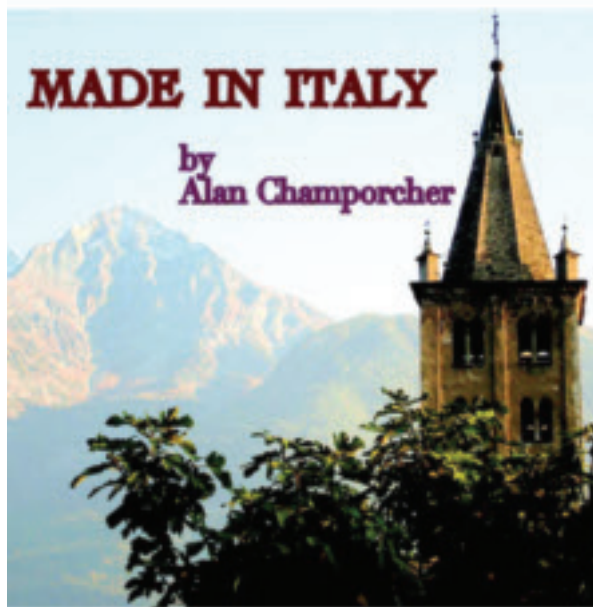
Paul Rao has volunteered to run the meatball stand at the Little Italy Festival in Baltimore annually for more than a decade. "It's a buck a meatball, the roll is free," he quips.



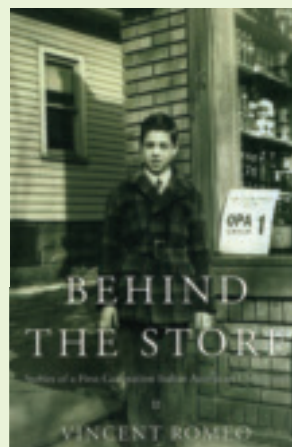
An American Olympian discovers
how deep his Italian roots go.

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A LITTLE ITALY in Los Angeles

L.A.'s New Museum Uncovers a Largely Unknown Chapter of Italian American History

By Marianna Gatto

When people speak of Italian immigration to the United States, Los Angeles seldom comes to mind. The Italian immigrant experience typically is viewed as an Eastern-seaboard phenomenon, and yet the Italian presence in the American West precedes the nation's founding and Los Angeles today possesses the country's fifth largest Italian population.

The Los Angeles Italian experience proves remarkable in how it differs from that of Italian immigrants elsewhere in the country and reveals the complexity of the Italian American diaspora.

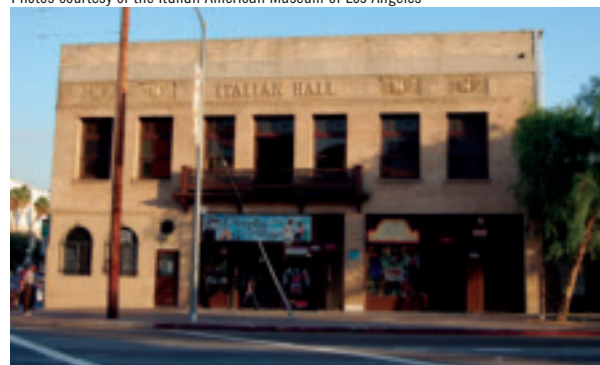
As early as the 16th century, accounts of Italian and Hispano Italian explorers, including the "Seven Cities of Cibola" report of Fray Marco da Niza in 1539, encouraged colonial interest in present-day California. Sicilian Jesuit Eusebio Chino explored early California and declared in 1702 that it was a peninsula, not an island, as previously believed. Until Spanish rule ended in California in 1821, the Italian population of Los Angeles remained small. Not until California became part of Mexico did Italian immigration to the region increase and a permanent Italian settlement took root.

While prejudice and discrimination punctuated the lives of Italian immigrants in many parts of the nation, this was not the case in Los Angeles. Until the late 1800s, Los Angeles remained a city profoundly influenced by its Spanish and Mexican heritage. Sharing a common "Latin" culture, Mexican Los Angeles embraced its Italian pioneers.

Los Angeles' first Italian enclave was located at the site of the city's original settlement where Italians lived side by side with the Mexican, French and Chinese communities. Arriving in 1827, Giovanni Leandri, a native of Sardinia, was the city's first Ital-

ian settler. Because Spanish remained the *lingua franca* of Los Angeles for much of the 19th century, Italian settlers often learned Spanish before they learned English. Some, including Leandri, assumed Spanish names.

Photos courtesy of the Italian American Museum of Los Angeles



The Italian Hall, today, home of the Italian American Museum of Los Angeles

The city's hospitable social climate provided considerable opportunities for upward mobility. By 1850, Italians had joined the ranks of the city's leaders and prominent business people. Other Italian immigrants, encouraged by Southern California's Mediterranean climate, pursued agriculture and viticulture, which formed the backbone for the state's early economy.

By 1869, Los Angeles was the wine capital of California and numerous Italian-owned wineries dotted the city's landscape. Secondo Guasti, an immigrant from Asti who would become one of the early 20th century's most prominent men, worked as a cook in little Italy before establishing the Italian Vineyard Company in 1883. Two decades later, his 5,000 contiguous acres constituted the world's largest vineyard. ➤

The Contessa Entellina Society was one of Los Angeles' many Italian regional clubs. Their members hailed from a town by the same name located in Corleone, Sicily.





A banquet, organized by Il Circolo Operaio Italiano (the Italian Worker's Club) that took place at the Italian Hall in 1919.



A 1917 footrace that began in front of the Italian Hall.

Los Angeles's Italian enclaves, like other Little Italys, functioned as an extension of the mother country and eased the immigrants' transition to the new land. In the most populous of the city's Italian enclaves—Lincoln Heights, just northeast of downtown, and North Broadway, once home to Frank Capra and now Chinatown—the melodic sound of Italian could be heard amidst bustling Italian grocery stores, bakeries, banks, pharmacies and cafes.

Meanwhile, scores of Sicilian and Ischitani fisherman lived south of downtown in San Pedro, the city's historic waterfront, where more than 40,000 Italian Americans reside today. By 1910, the Italian population of Los Angeles reached 3,800. Twenty years later, "La Colonia," as the Italian community came to be known, numbered 12,700. Its size supported several Italian language newspapers, of which *L'Italo Americano* remains, and was home to numerous socio-cultural and benevolent organizations, such as the Garibaldina Mutual Benefit Society, founded in 1888. For over 100 years, the community's ethnic churches, St. Peter's Italian Church and Mary Star of the Sea, have tended to the spiritual needs of Italo Angelenos while preserving cultural-religious traditions. Their celebrations for the feasts of St. Joseph, Santa Lucia, San Trifone and St. Peter are amongst the West Coast's largest.

In 1908, a community center was constructed in the heart of the enclave with the words "Italian Hall" emblazoned in gold lettering on its yellow brick façade. Listed today on the National Register of Historic Places, the Italian Hall served as the community's focal point, hosting countless social and cultural events. It held fundraisers for victims of natural disasters in Italy and the United States as well as other charitable causes. Over the years, it welcomed dignitaries, celebrities and historic figures, from early 20th century social and political activists Emma Goldman and the Flores Magon brothers, to Italian flying ace Francesco de Pinedo.

The building survived pivotal events in Italian American history, including the registration, relocation and arrests of so-called Italian "enemy aliens" during World War II. It saw the creation of Simon Rodia's artistic masterpiece, the Watts Towers, and the birth of industry empires such as Joseph Sartori's Security Trust and Savings Bank and Gaetano Uddo's canned food Uddo-Taormina Company (which became Progresso).

While remaining connected to their ethnic identity during the post-War years, neither nostalgia nor tradition bound Italians to the neighborhoods they first settled. In the 1950s, the community, numbering 30,000, ceased to use the Italian Hall and it fell into disrepair. Little by little, the city's Italian enclaves became masked by subsequent ethnic settlements or were erased entirely as a result of redevelopment.

In the late 1980s, a commercial development threatened to erase the Italian Hall's historic significance. The community then created a group, later known as the Historic Italian Hall Foundation, to restore the Italian Hall and create a museum. The late Joe Cerrell, public affairs legend and proud Italian American, advocated for the passage of legislation recognizing the building's importance and procured \$500,000 to fund the most critical repairs.

The Italian American Museum's reopening as an interactive museum and cultural center documenting the history and continuing contributions of Italian Americans and Italians to Southern California and the nation is slated for late 2012. A driving force for the preservation and promotion of Italian American culture in the region, the museum possesses a substantial photographic, archival and artifact collection and presents a variety of educational programming, including the landmark exhibition "Sunshine and Struggle: The Italian American Experience in Los Angeles." It hosts lectures on Italian American history and cultural events, including Italian Heritage Month, Taste of Italy and Vintage.

Earlier this year, the Los Angeles City Council introduced a motion to honor Joe Cerrell at the Italian American Museum. The Museum is currently working to memorialize Cerrell's contributions and those of other historic Italian Angelenos.

Should history prove as inextricably connected to memory as it is to place, the Italian American Museum promises to assist Italian Americans in their journey of self-discovery, and provide all visitors with a more meaningful understanding of the multi-layered history of Los Angeles and of the nation.

Marianna Gatto is the executive director of the Italian American Museum of Los Angeles and the author of "Los Angeles's Little Italy." ▲

For more information about the Italian American Museum of Los Angeles, please visit www.italianhall.org.

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Pietro Di Donato's "Christ in Concrete"

A Forgotten American Classic, an Italian American Masterpiece

By Joseph Luzzi

The Italian American author Pietro Di Donato (1911-1992) was an unlikely literary master writing in an unsung literary tradition. The son of a bricklayer and a bricklayer himself, Di Donato navigated a path to authorship that contained more than the usual set of obstacles. At the age of 12, he became his family's breadwinner after his father died in a construction accident that forced Di Donato to quit school and join the workforce.

Di Donato narrates the same searing rite of passage in his first and most acclaimed novel, "Christ in Concrete" (1939), a portrait of hardworking Italian

immigrants on the Lower East Side of Manhattan in the 1920s that Studs Terkel compared to John Steinbeck's "Grapes of Wrath." The protagonist, Paul, must also quit school and go to work after the patriarch Geremio dies on "Job"—the novel's allegorical name for an unsafe work-site that pushes employees to the limit, even the mortal one.

Drawing on Di Donato's raw depiction of a childhood spent in brutal labor, "Christ in Concrete" was immediately promoted as a rare piece of "proletarian" literature and adapted into a film by the blacklisted director Edward Dmytryk in 1949. The book

Pietro Di Donato's "Christ in Concrete," the 1939 Bobbs-Merrill edition

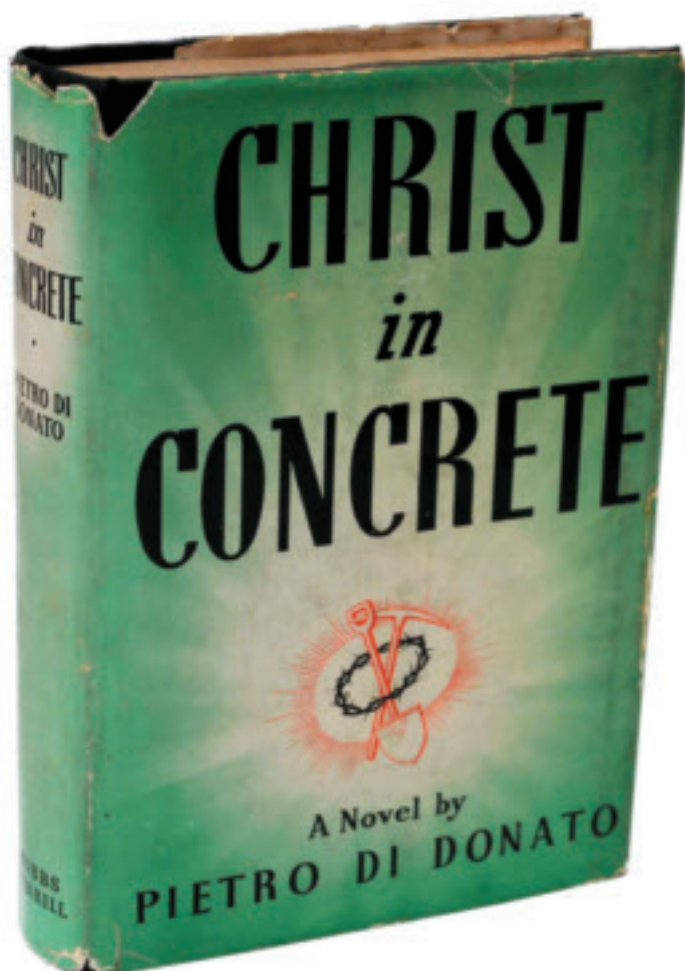
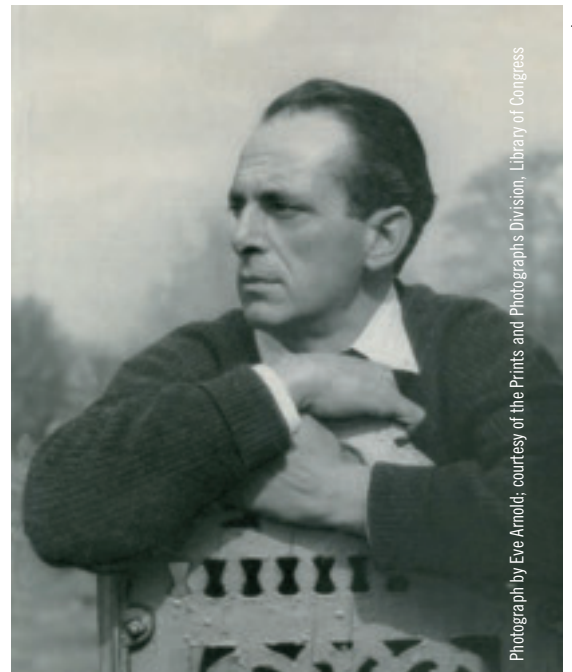


Photo courtesy of Raptis Rare Books, Brattleboro, Vermont



Pietro Di Donato in 1960

combines the folklore of Italian American immigrant culture with currents of Italian history and European literary culture.

And it is Di Donato's use of language that distills this unique perspective. From the first page on, the reader recognizes something unusual in the diction, which comes across as neither colloquial nor idiomatic. In the banter among workers in the opening scene, for example, one of them remarks, "The old age is a carrion." I remember hearing the Southern Italian immigrants of my youth saying, in the Calabrian dialect (rendered here in standard Italian), "*la vecchiaia è una carogna*," which translates bloodlessly as "old age is miserable."

Di Donato uses stiff literalizing of the expression (*carogna*, "carrion") to emphasize that we are not hearing the characters' original language. Instead, we're hearing an awkwardly phrased refraction of their Italian dialect that underscores their outsider status in an American culture that, time and again, treats them with either hostility or condescension. Consider the remark by Geremio's boss: "The Eytalians are good workers, when you watch them and take care of them like a wet nurse. But when not personally supervised they get themselves into all kinds of trouble."

Di Donato's registering of the muffled voices of Italian American laborers recalls an ancient and abiding Italian ➤

Photograph by Eve Arnold; courtesy of the Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress



Edward Dmytryk's 1949 film "Christ in Concrete" (aka "Give Us This Day"), based on the novel by Pietro Di Donato, starring Sam Wanamaker and Lea Padovani, is considered a classic.

crisis: the *questione della lingua* — "language question." Though a sense of Italian identity goes back to the Roman Empire, the nation was not politically unified until 1861, and only around that time did it begin to attain linguistic unity. It took several generations of compulsory education and, ironically, widespread forms of cultural expression like television before Italians throughout the peninsula could communicate with a common tongue. By presenting Italian workers as creatures of dialects that enjoyed no currency in their new immigrant home, Di Donato shows how the *questione della lingua* was exported beyond native Italian shores to the nation's many immigrant diasporas throughout the world.

Notwithstanding his slight formal education, Di Donato immersed himself in studying the great French and Russian writers. Indeed, the master of the 19th-century working-class novel, Émile Zola, casts broad shadows throughout "Christ in Concrete." At one point, the book describes how Paul arrived home from work and "removed his clothes and crept in among the five sleeping [siblings]." The scene recalls the soul-crushing poverty of the similarly bunched Maheu family, the impoverished coal workers in Zola's "Germinal" (1885), a landmark novel on the European labor union movement.

But despite such similarities, it is impossible to pigeonhole "Christ in Concrete" as merely an exposé of the capitalist system or portrait of the struggling Italian working class in Depression-era America, for the book's aesthetic issues

emerge no less prominently than its sociopolitical and ethnic ones.

For example, when Paul's Uncle Luigi is hospitalized because of a leg injury that will require amputation, Di Donato captures his despair in a dream sequence that generates a cascade of unpunctuated clauses whose desperate confusion matches Luigi's own. When he finally regains consciousness as a nurse comforts him, all Luigi can do is utter, "...Nurse-a...I no spick—I no can-a spick..." The stammered reply forms a jarring contrast to the verbal pyrotechnics that preceded it. Once again, we are in realm of eclipsed language: Only in Di Donato's writing can the silenced Italian workers speak out against their exploiters and articulate their untold story.

What is the "unsung" literary tradition to which "Christ in Concrete" belongs? "Elusive" might have proven just as accurate a description of it. Some of the names in the pantheon of Italian American literature may ring familiar: John Fante, Jerre Mangione, more recently, Mario Puzo and Gay Talese. Yet, in the introduction to "Voices of Italian American: A History of Early Italian American Literature with a Critical Anthology," Martino Marazzi writes: "The Italian America that speaks and writes in Italian and its dialects, above all in the literary sense, has disappeared forever." This would suggest that an intense ethnographical inquiry into immigrant life like Di Donato's belongs to a historical moment—and literary tradition—that has faded with assimilation and integration.

As Italian-American writers gradually become less connected to the language,

customs, and creeds of their immigrant ancestors, it may become more difficult for them to produce "Italian-American literature," in the original sense of that term. However one designates Di Donato's work—Italian American or American or both—its literary qualities speak for themselves. With a dazzling, eccentric mix of biblical rhetoric, Italian American history, and linguistic codes, "Christ in Concrete" offers an unsettling portrait of both the sacrifices required by assimilation and the afterlife of Southern Italian culture in the New World.

The book makes for a challenging read—fittingly so, considering the trials its characters face. And it is for them that Di Donato writes: "Life would never be a dear music, a festival, a gift of Nature. Life would be the torque of Wall's battle that distorted straight limbs beneath weight in heat and rain and cold. No poet would be there to intone meter of soul's sentence to stone, no artist upon scaffold to paint the vinegary sweat of Christian in correspondence with red brick and gray mortar; no composer attuned to the screaming movement of Job and voiceless cry in overalls."

We are indebted to Di Donato for giving this "voiceless cry in overalls" the accent of the Italian American laborer.

Joseph Luzzi, an associate professor of Italian and director of Italian Studies at Bard College, is the author of "Romantic Europe and the Ghost of Italy" (Yale University Press, 2008), which received the Modern Language Association's Scaglione Prize for Italian Studies. ▲



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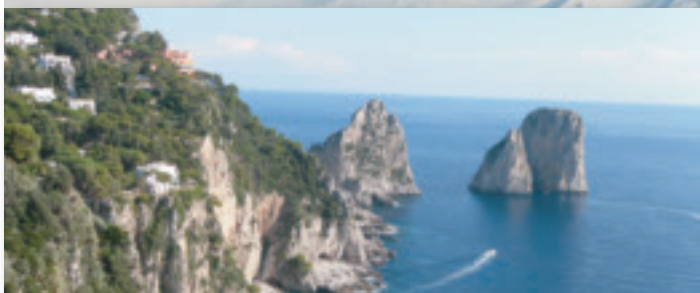
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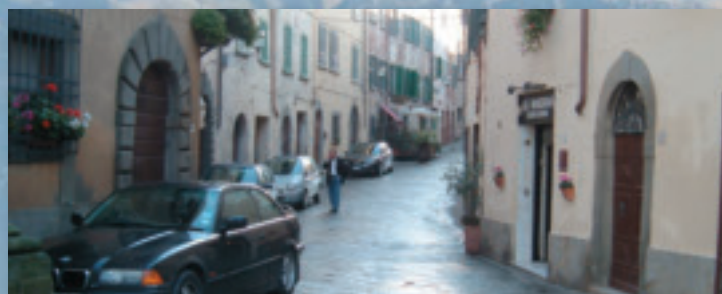
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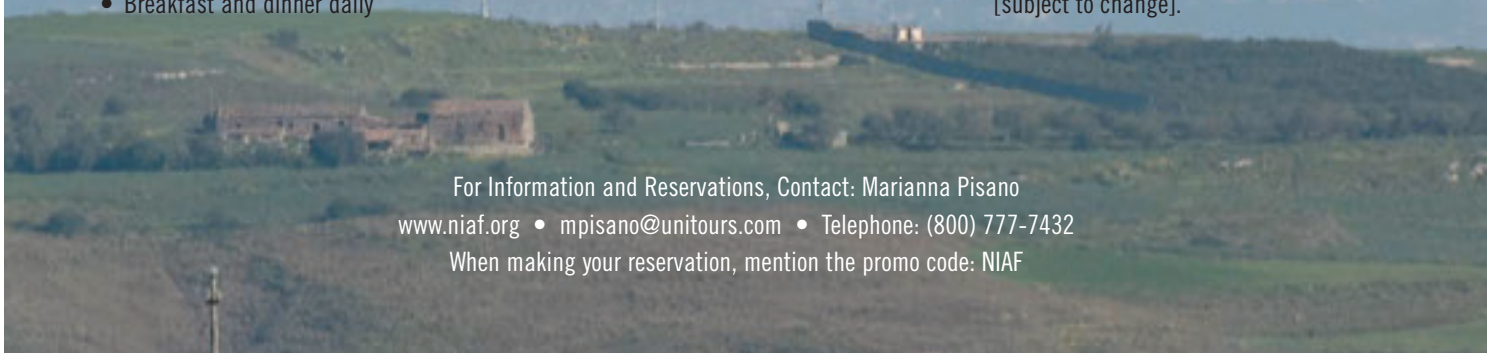
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THE HOLIDAYS

Italian American Reading List

By Don Oldenburg



La Seduction: How the French Play the Game of Life

By Elaine Sciolino

Times Books/Henry Holt and Co.
352 pages \$27 hardcover

Beginning: The first time my hand was kissed à la française was in the Napoléon III salon of the Élysée Palace. The one doing the kissing was the president of France.

In the fall of 2002, Jacques Chirac was seven years into his twelve-year presidency. The Bush administration was moving toward war with Iraq, and the relationship between France and the United States was worse than it had been in decades. I had just become the Paris bureau chief for the New York Times.

If you love Paris in the springtime, you'll love Paris—and, yes, the French themselves—in Elaine Sciolino's seductive analysis of how seduction not only is the game people play there, it's also the cultural voyeur's keyhole to understanding life in France.

The Paris correspondent and former Paris bureau chief for the New York Times, Sciolino applies her considerable journalistic skills and deft narrative talent in examining the nature of seduction in French culture—meaning seduction in a larger sense than the erotic or romantic, but that too. Sciolino's take is that the French excel few things better than their charm, allure and style. Seduction is the French philosophy of life. Witty, entertaining and insightful, Sciolino's book is the literary equivalent of full pouty lips, fine wine, and nice cleavage. It is the French way, n'est pas?



All the Things You Are: The Life of Tony Bennett

By David Evanier

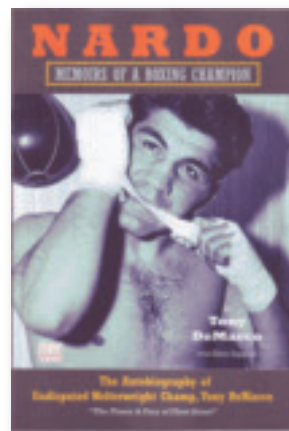
John Wiley & Sons Inc.
352 pages \$26.95 hardcover

Beginning: In 1966 Tony Bennett was singing "Lost in the Stars" at the Hollywood Bowl with Count Basie's band. A shooting star shot through the sky right over his head, astounding even a jaded Hollywood audience. The next morning Bennett's phone rang. It was Ray Charles, whom Bennett had never met up to that time, calling from New York. Charles said, "Hey, Tony, how'd you do that, man?"

Tony Bennett needs no introduction to this audience which has known him as a rising star since he showed up crooning along with so many other greats—including Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Perry Como. Well, Tony's the last man standing—and still singing after all these years.

But never mind introductions. Award-winning author David Evanier more than scratches the surface in telling this fascinating story of Bennett's life and career that has spanned 60 years, from his impoverished yet happy childhood in Depression-era Queens to his inspiring chart-topping career to his role now as one of America's most enduring musical icons.

Not only is this book thoroughly researched, probing Tony Bennett's life, from the high times of heady success to the low points of addiction, failed marriages and self doubt, it written with a storytelling narrative that is both empathetic and objective. If you, or someone you love, loves Tony Bennett, this book is for you.



Nardo: Memoirs of a Boxing Champion

By Tony DeMarco with Ellen Zappala Legas; 189 pages \$20 paperback

Beginning: It is sad that people in the limelight have many names. This is especially true for politicians, popular entertainers and athletes. For example, the late, great Frank Sinatra was called "The Crooner," "Old Blue Eyes," "The Leader of the Pack" and "The Chairman of the Board," just to name a few. As I rose through the ranks as a boxer, the same thing happened to me.

Called so many boxing nicknames it's hard to keep track, from "TD Two-Duked" to "The Little LaMotta," Tony DeMarco's favorite nickname was "Nardo." It came from his real name, Leonardo Liotta, and his childhood when his mother would call him home for dinner yelling out "Naaardo."

DeMarco's autobiography starts with his father Vincenzo coming to America from Sciacca, Sicily, around the turn of the 20th century. It follows DeMarco's life from his early days as a kid in the Fleet Street neighborhood of Boston's North End and his years rising through the ranks of boxing to become the undisputed Welterweight Champ to his later-life visit to Sicily to find himself and the present. A straight-forward, personal account of life in the ring, "Nardo" is a TKO for any boxing fan.

No sooner did we quote Umberto Eco in the fall Ambassador's roundup of books and the noted Italian novelist came out with a new title! So let's try the magic of books, along with the magic of the holiday season, and see if it works once more.

"A book is a gift you can open again and again," Garrison Keillor once said.

So, look for a new Keillor book in the coming months. Yes, we know he's not Italian American, but in one of his textured holiday stories, he once wished he were Italian: "Italians had ethnic customs. We just had turkey."

Here's our latest roundup of a few recently published books worth reading. As always, some are critically acclaimed and some fall short of the literary radar. But all of them are written by Italian American authors, or are of interest to Italian American readers, or both.

We provide the beginning few sentences of each book, because we believe new beginnings are just as important in books as they are in life, as our immigrant forefathers would attest to. We've also added a brief summary of each book, hoping to help you decide to give the gift of reading to someone you love this holiday season! Buona lettura!



The Prague Cemetery
By Umberto Eco
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt
464 pages \$27 hardcover

Beginning: A passerby on that gray morning in March 1897, crossing, at his own risk and peril, place Maubert, or the Maub, as it was known in criminal circles (formerly a center of university life in the Middle Ages, when students flocked there from the Faculty of Arts in Vicus Stramineus, or rue du Fouarre, and later a place of execution for apostles of free thought such as Etienne Dolet), would have found himself in one of the few spots in Paris spared from Baron Haussmann's devastations....

Love conspiracy theory novels? Then you must turn the next page (and the next and next after that) in Umberto Eco's dark, ghastly and, somehow, in the hands of this master storyteller, cleverly amusing novel about mysterious 19th century events, including freemasonry, the Italian Risorgimento, the Paris Commune and, the forgery of the slanderous "Protocols of the Elders of Zion"—the notorious forgery that later inspired Hitler.

"The Prague Cemetery" borrows all of its characters from actual history, except for its main character, who is fictional but whose grandfather, an actual historical person, authored that mysterious and actual letter that fueled modern anti-Semitism. The darkness, grimness, and foreboding of this novel cannot be over-estimated (corpse-filled sewers, erupting volcanoes, murders in the monasteries, female Satanists and Black Masses...); nor can Eco's brilliance.



The Art of Reading Italian American
By Fred Gardaphé
Bordighera Press 212 pages
\$15 paperback

Beginning: This book is the latest milestone in my life-long search for the book I wanted to write. I used to think that someday, some way, I'd find the book that would tell my story, and then I wouldn't have to write it, but over time I realized that this could never be done. If you don't write your book, no one else will. It's as simple as that.

If you don't know Fred Gardaphé, he's the professor who's class you wish you had taken. Outspoken, smart, irreverent and funny, he has been writing book reviews for years for Fra Noi, Chicago's Italian-American magazine, as well as essays published elsewhere, on the work of Italian American authors. This book includes most of them.

Where are the Italian American Writers? Gardaphé, who's a professor of English and Italian American Studies at Queens College, CUNY, in New York, not only tells you who they are and where they are, he tells you why they are and why you should read them. From Joe Amato to Janet Zandy, he reviews the work of 167 Italian American writers with narrative insight and charm. What might be otherwise viewed as an academic volume proves to be far more accessible. Think of it as a Cliff Notes on Italian American literature.



**The Spaghetti Set:
Family Served Italian Style**
By Rose Marie Boyd
AuthorHouse; 272 pages; \$15.75

Beginning: "Dio santo, I can't take this much more!" The skirt of her sundress flapping in the June gusts, the Italian took flight across the weaving deck and skidded to a halt at the ship's side rail. She grabbed hold of its top rung, hoisted herself up and leaned forward, parallel to the water. Dampened by the exertion, her hair clung to her scalp, the curls a tangle of seaweed.

Another passenger spotted the human gangplank and cried out. "Teresa Camara!" He dashed up to her and, snatching her by the waist, yanked her back to safety. "Sei pazza? I ought to have you committed!"

Rose Marie Boyd says to celebrate her Italian heritage, she wrote "The Spaghetti Set," a novel about two Italian-American families. "How the two families cope with the absurdities of love, intimacy and life unfolds in a comedy of errors, complete with laughter and tears," she says. And that about says it all. Her novel starts in war-torn Italy in 1947 and proceeds to paint the kind of ludicrous and dysfunctional characters, intimate moments and everything famiglia that will be all too familiar and make you laugh. As the adage goes, "Family is family, like it or not!"

Alice Rohrwacher's Debut Film "Corpo Celeste"

A Moving Coming-of-Age Tale Set in Reggio di Calabria

By Maria Garcia



Marta (Yile Vianello) on the terrace overlooking Calabria.

Alice Rohrwacher's first feature-length film, "Corpo Celeste," is about Marta, a 13-year-old girl grappling with her family's move back to their hometown of Reggio di Calabria. Having lived in Switzerland for most of her life, Marta is unaccustomed to the provincial ways of that Southern city, magnified immediately after her arrival by Father Mario's (Salvatore Cantaloupo) insistence that she enroll in Confirmation classes. Temporary alliances and her mother's love for her guide Marta through the indifferent and sometimes brutal adult world she is about to enter, but Marta also relies on her own judgment. She defends that inviolate part of herself from the influences of the Church and Rosa (Maria Luisa de Crescenzo), her insufferable older sister.

The 28-year-old Italian writer-director is unapologetic in her feminine preoccupations, yet she avoids the romanticism of genre films. Instead, "Corpo Celeste" ("Celestial Body"), which premiered at the 2011 New York Film Festival, simply takes every woman back to that tender age when she shed her undershirts.

The movie will also appeal to adolescent girls who have few

cinematic illustrations of their coming-of-age, although adults will have to prepare them for a scene in which medieval superstitions prompt the killing of a litter of kittens. While it is a disturbing sequence, that sacrifice cements Marta's resolve to keep alive in her heart the wonder of life on this celestial body. In the end, Marta returns to the burial site, discovering there the part of the city she can make her own, transforming it into a private and sacred space.

Excellent performances by Yile Vianello in the leading role, Pasqualina Scuncia as Santa, the Confirmation teacher, and Salvatore Cantaloupo ("Gomorra") as Don Mario, attest to Rohrwacher's skill in directing actors and the role acting plays in a film's ability to reach many audiences. This simple story about teenage angst is, in the Tuscan filmmaker's hands, a universal tale of our daily struggle to resist everything in this crazy world that drags us away from our inner lives. Rohrwacher's wonderful sense of the absurd, evident in the scenes of rustic religious celebrations, keeps the audience smiling, while Santa's frustrations—she's in love with Don Mario—and the insularity of the

South, lend a gritty reality.

Rohrwacher took time to speak with Ambassador at the Film Movement office in New York City. "Corpo Celeste" will open in movie theaters in March 2012.

MG: Marta has an uncommunicative and rather brooding side to her personality. Could you discuss this?

AR: I think that Marta is somebody who is restless, and not just because of her age, but because she is naturally very introspective. She is looking for her place in life. She is looking at the holy dimension. There is the shot of her, for instance, on the terrace where she is above it all, looking down at the city and seeing it from far away, but seeing it tilted to her perspective. She is trying to figure out how to enter the "body" of the city. At the same time, her own body is changing. I don't see her as a dark character. I see her as someone with a great light inside.

MG: While Marta is contemplating holiness or Confirmation, abstract notions, she gets her period, which of course connects her to physical reality. Does this experience define girls of that age?



AR: I did not want to exaggerate this point but I think that the sacrament of Confirmation is a right-of-passage—the moment when the child becomes a woman or a man. This is the first time in the Christian faith the individual is recognized and when they become responsible for their lives. In fact, I interviewed many girls who were about to be confirmed, and this right-of-passage for most of them coincided with their first period.

Don Mario, who seems to be a very cold and distant man, ends up sharing this experience with Marta. In a certain way, you can say that the body has taken the upper hand. Before this, we see him as someone preoccupied with position and political power. In this scene, he is close to life. Life is the primary element; the body itself prevails over everything. This event brings the two of them very close.

MG: The film came together for me when the older priest explains to Marta the Latin phrase she must repeat at Confirmation.

AR: Yes, the old priest was saying that Christ had human feelings. So, we should look for models that do not inspire perfection because if some-

thing is perfect, it is not necessarily sacred. Instead, we should look to human reactions. A perfect nature strikes us as false.

MG: When the audience leaves the theater, what do you want them to feel?

AR: One of the messages is that people should not be resigning themselves to things. Since Marta comes from outside this city, she is more vigilant than the people who live there. They are accustomed to what they see. They think of it as normal, but having lived in another city, Marta sees the dynamics more clearly.

Marta is a very young girl just trying to decide how she wants to grow. We have to be very alive to what is happening around us, as Marta is. The world we live in is a mess, yet there is something mysterious and sacred and holy. It is epitomized maybe in that final scene where you see the little boy and Marta holding the lizard's tail, which is a scientific phenomenon, but it's also a small and a large mystery. It is not to heaven that we should be looking for the sacred, but right here on earth. Here, there are things that fill us with awe and that help us to transcend the earth.

MG: This is your first feature film.

What was your biggest challenge as a writer-director?

AR: It was not the writing. For me, the hardest part is to accompany the finished film around the world. Every audience responds to “Corpo Celeste” in a different way. It sort of reminds me of the time when my daughter was born. After the pains of labor, I thought: “The worst is over.” Then the doctor said to me: “No, this is just the beginning.” It’s the same way with the film. You finish shooting and editing the film, and then it’s over—but, no, the life of the film begins afterward.

Now I have finished the film and it will be released. I’m here and I think this is happening under a very happy star.

MG: And what next?

AR: I am really focusing on writing another screenplay, so I am staying in Bolzano, a very German city. I like to spend time outside of the Italy I know, only to come back, to be amazed, to be filled with awe—a little like Marta.

Maria Garcia is a New York City-based freelance writer and a frequent contributor to Ambassador. Her reviews and feature articles also appear regularly in Film Journal International and Cineaste. ▲



In “Corpo Celeste,” the main character, Marta, assesses her changing body in a mirror.



“Corpo Celeste” writer-director Alice Rohrwacher, 28, is a native of Tuscany.





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Mico Delianova Licastro,
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Courtesy of the San Francisco 49ers



Courtesy of the Baltimore Ravens

Jim Harbaugh is head coach of the San Francisco 49ers

John Harbaugh is head coach of the Baltimore Ravens

The NFL's Harbaugh Brothers

By Wayne Randazzo

An embrace at midfield. That's how it all ended on Thanksgiving Night as the Baltimore Ravens handed the upstart San Francisco 49ers just their second loss of an impressive and surprising season. Baltimore improved to 8-3 with the victory and is well on its way to take their part in the NFL's thrilling postseason.

It seemed as normal as any other Thanksgiving football game as millions of families topped off their turkey dinners with dessert while enjoying America's most watched sport. This particular holiday battle, however, was not as ordinary as it seemed. For the first time ever, a pair of brothers was on opposite sidelines as NFL head coaches. John and Jim Harbaugh were destined for this meeting.

Born to an Italian American mother, Jackie, and a football coach for a father, Jack, the Harbaugh brothers were always spirited. Jim, two years younger than John, was louder and bigger than his older brother, but John was equally as competitive.

John turned to coaching first, following in Dad's footsteps. Jack Harbaugh ran the defense for Bo Schembechler at the University of Michigan before his own head coaching positions at Western Michigan and Western Kentucky.

Jim was an elite quarterback, drafted out of Michigan with the Chicago Bears' first-round pick in 1987. Jim stayed in Chicago for seven seasons, four as a starter before nearly leading the Indianapolis Colts to the Super Bowl. He played in the NFL through 2000, finishing with the Chargers before his head coaching career began at the University of San Diego in 2004.

Success came to Jim easily as the head man at USD. He extended himself to Stanford and oversaw the resurgence of that program while grooming top NFL draft prospect and Heisman Trophy candidate quarterback Andrew Luck. From there, the 49ers called. Jim has turned that franchise back to prominence in just one season.

"To the 49ers and to my brother, I can't tell you enough how proud I am of him and the job he's done building that football team," John said of Jim after the Thanksgiving affair. "That's a football team. The way they're built, it's pretty hard to figure out a way to beat them."

While Mom and Dad posed for pictures before the game, they didn't stay to watch the overwhelmingly emotional battle. They retired to John's house to leave the spotlight on their only two sons, who have gone from

racing each other up the stairs in their Michigan home to being mentors of grown men pitted against one another.

"There's a saying that says, 'As iron sharpens iron, so does one man sharpen another,'" Jim said. "And I have to say, my brother John is the sharpest iron I've ever encountered in my life."

As gritty, rough-and-tumble Midwesterners, it's no surprise that the Harbaugh brothers have turned out the way they have. With the two men now approaching 50 years old, and nearing the peak of their lives, their father, who celebrates his 50th wedding anniversary the day after "HarBowl I," summed up both of his sons with pronounced vision and clarity.

"I never once, ever, ever, ever, heard John be anything but totally supportive of Jim and so proud," Jack said. "He was the first one to call him after a game, or an experience, or whatever Jim achieved. And the same thing with Jim with John."

Wayne Randazzo is the editor of Red, White & Green, the official publication of the National Italian American Sports Hall of Fame. He's also the play-by-play voice of the AA Mobile BayBears Baseball Club and a freelance sports anchor for WGN Radio in Chicago. ▲

ON SPORTS

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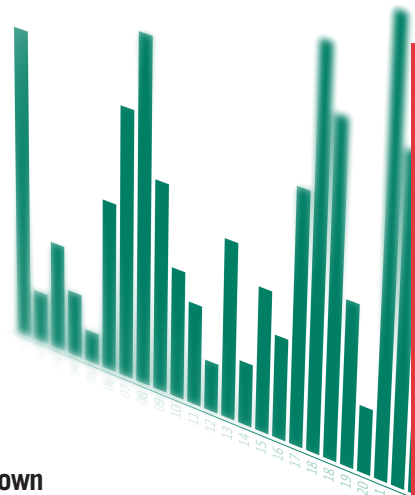
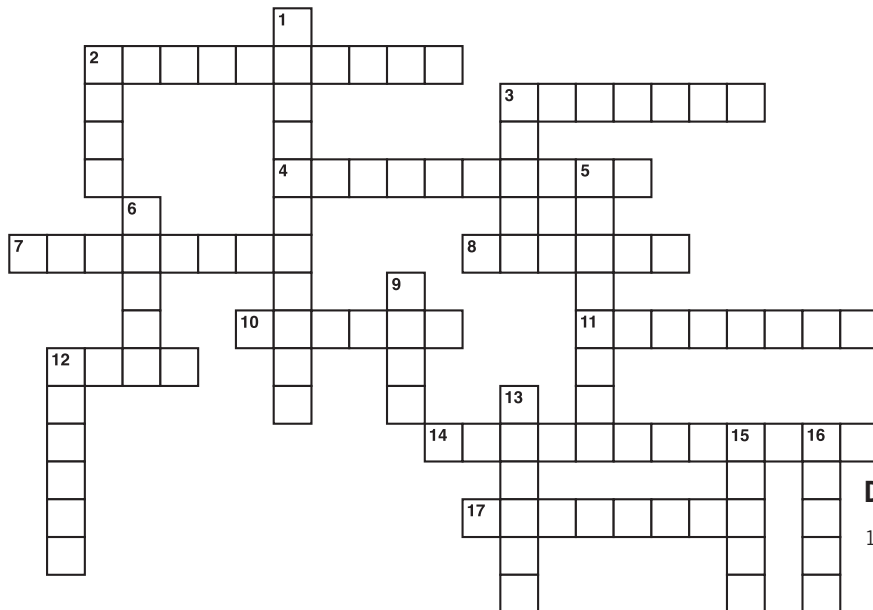
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Taking Care of Business!



CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Across

- 2 Peroni Brewery was established in the Lombardia region of Italy in 1846. Peroni is now among the best selling beers throughout the U.K. Peroni's best known premium lager beer worldwide is Nastro Azzurro. Translate to English.
- 3 For 67 years, this Italian American company has been the leader in first-class, fully escorted tours to Italy. In fact, it was the pioneer of the tour package concept. Name this three-generation business established in the Bronx, N.Y., in 1945.
- 4 Manhattan's Rao's Restaurant is renowned for its jukebox, its quirky decor, its unmatched hospitality, and, most of all, its spectacular cuisine. It's also notorious as one of the most difficult restaurants for getting a reservation. What type of Italian cuisine is Rao's famous for serving?
- 7 Nutella is sold in 75 countries around the world. This delicious chocolate spread is now gaining in popularity across America. Produced in Italy by Ferrero, what nut is utilized to create its unique flavor?
- 8 In addition to producing one of the best lines of Extra Virgin Olive Oil, Colavita also produces a quality line of pasta, vinegar, pasta sauce, marinated vegetables and more. Identify the Italian region where Colavita was born?

- 10 The man responsible for putting a hand-held dryer in every beauty salon and home in America is Leandro (Lee) Rizzuto. He is the chairman and president of what well known company that also owns Cuisinart and Waring?
- 11 CuisinArt Resort & Spa is located on what idyllic Caribbean island that is officially a British Overseas Territory?
- 12 With a 35-percent stake and an option to raise its ownership to 55 percent, this Italian auto maker's goal is to energize the Chrysler brand as well as its own line of fuel-efficient vehicles in the North American market. Name the company headed by its dynamic CEO Sergio Marchionne.
- 14 Identify the Italian men's clothing designer who said, "One must never compromise quality for quantity." He has been one of the world's leading purveyors of luxury attire for men for 30 years.
- 17 Versace is an Italian fashion label founded in 1978. Though the company's first boutique opened in Milan of that year, what region of Italy does the Versace family originate?

Down

- 1 You can now have Italy in your living room. This satellite TV company now offers seven Italian channels and euronews for under \$20 a month.
- 2 The name of this delectable dark chocolate and hazelnut confection that is produced by one of Italy's leading confectioner's, Perugina. Hint: Say "I love you" the Italian Way!
- 3 Truby Chiaviello is the publisher and editor of this esteemed Italo-American magazine that features in-depth articles on Italian American history, heritage, neighborhoods, accomplishments, current events and much more. A must subscription for all proud Italo Americans.
- 5 In the second year since its re-launch, this airline realized a 7.4 percent increase in business to 23.4 million passengers carried.
- 6 One of this year's NIAF Gala silent auction showcase items features a powerful, sporty, and oh-so stylish mode of transportation. Identify the vehicle that has become synonymous for the generic term motor scooter.
- 9 Since humble beginnings in 1978, D'Aquino Italian Importing Company has grown to be the No. 1 importer of this Italian product in California and No. 7 across the entire United States. D'Aquino imports this commodity from more than 19 different regions of Italy. What is it?
- 12 Chicago's outstanding magazine that features the best of Italy and Italian America has to offer on a variety of subjects.
- 13 Using recipes that have been passed down for generations, Roba Dolce has mastered various techniques to produce the very best of this traditional Italian treat.
- 15 Glacier Vodka was the recent NIAF Gala host of "Friday Night Extravaganza—Salute to the Martini." As maker of one of the world's leading vodka's, name the state where this potato source vodka is produced.
- 16 Author of 11 books on Italian cooking, Mary Ann Esposito is the creator and host of what PBS series that is the longest running cooking show in America?

Created by Leon J. Radomile

Visit Leon's Italophile website at www.myheritageculture.com

Solution

1 Wine
2 Dishnetwork
3 Baci
4 Primo Magazine
5 Alitalia
6 Vespa
7 Ciao Italia
8 Idaho
9 Gelato
10 Fra Noi
11 Anguilla
12 Fiat
13 Stefano Ricci
14 Calabria (Reggio di Calabria)
15 Mollise
16 Conair

Down

Across

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