



Ambassador

The Publication of the National Italian American Foundation

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Holiday Joy!

Sicilian Angela Tripi's Nativity Scenes
Italian-Accented Holiday Cuisine
Life in Calabrian Town of Monasterace
Designer Jane August Makes It in Italy

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Features

On the Cover:

Terracotta nativity scene hand sculpted by Sicilian artist Angela Tripi.
Photograph by Traci Badalucco



10 A Way in a Manger

Angela Tripi has made her world-famous handmade nativity scenes in her Palermo, Sicily, workshop for more than 35 years.

By Traci Badalucco

14 Against the Current

After so many centuries, Venice's iconic gondola is still built to last.

By Maria Garcia

18 Holiday Cuisine with a Festive Italian Accent

Five celebrity chefs give you the gift of Italian American cuisine for the holiday season.

36 To Remain Here

What it means to live a lifetime in the Calabrian town of Monasterace.

By Calcagno Cullen

42 Making It in Italy

Designer Jane August fashions her luxury handbags with Italian artisan craftsmanship.

By Carla De Landri

48 Jovanotti in America

Italy's biggest rock-rap star attracts a U.S. following.

By Laura Blomquist



CONTENTS

Sections

Lettere	4
Foundation Focus	7
Foundation Focus	9
NIAF News	31
Books	51
On Film	57
On Sports	61
Opinion	63
Crossword	64



Jerry Colangelo, Chairman
John Viola, Chief Operating Officer

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From the NIAF Chairman



Fall is all about transition, and never more so than in years like this one when both stormy weather and Chicago voters show up early and often. But, then, the entire year of 2012 has been about significant transition—for the nation and for the National Italian American Foundation.

Across the country last month, voters went to the polls to decide the course this nation will take for years to come. At NIAF, throughout the eventful year of 2012, we've been deciding the course this Foundation will take, starting with the important appointment of John Viola as the new Chief Operating Officer. Not only did John bring his love, passion and dedication for his Italian heritage to NIAF, he brought a wealth of experience in managing nonprofit organizations as well as fresh ideas on how to usher NIAF into the 21st century, how to make it more efficient and effective in fulfilling its mission, and how to guide it through these difficult economic times.

Over the past several months, we've seen some of those new ideas in action, making 2013 more than ever a year of high expectations at NIAF. Our East Coast Gala in April introduced a new streamlined format that proved to be a huge success. It set the new standard for galas, reflected in both the engaging West Coast Gala in June and NIAF's fantastic Anniversary Gala in Washington, D.C., in October.

Speaking of the Anniversary Gala, which will be the last during my tenure as NIAF Chairman, I'd like to point out that Major League Baseball legend, future MLB Hall of Famer, Mike Piazza stepped up to the plate, I mean podium, and emceed a wonderful evening in which NIAF

recognized a distinguished roster of honorees whose accomplishments and positive impact can make all Italian Americans proud. On this celebratory night in the Nation's Capital, more than 1,500 of us from all across the country and from Italy were reminded of our core values as people of Italian decent. We together embraced our friendships and shared culture, and renewed our sense of purpose for the coming year. If you weren't there, or even if you were, please turn to the NIAF News section for photos from this year's Gala weekend and visit NIAF's website at www.niaf.org for a complete review of the Gala and more photos.

As we head into 2013, let's renew our commitment to preserve and protect our heritage and culture. Let's support NIAF's work on behalf of the next generation of Italian Americans. Let's renew our memberships and reach out to our Italian American family and friends and bring them into the NIAF neighborhood as well.

The New Year will offer you many opportunities to become more involved and active in the new NIAF. More than ever, in these tough economic times, this Foundation needs your support, your ideas, and your active participation. And, if you think about it, you and your children and grandchildren need NIAF more than ever. Because NIAF is your heritage going forward.

Jerry Colangelo, NIAF Chairman

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Reader Feedback

Ellis Island Myth Debunked

What a great fact-filled article on the Ellis Island name change myth (Ellis Island Changed Our Name; *Ambassador*, Fall 2012). Aliza Giammatteo presents an excellent case of defense for the employees of Ellis Island. For years, they have been demonized for changing names even within families. I have already been involved in arguments regarding the article because some will just not accept the possibility that that their information was a myth. My Grandfather changed our name due to discrimination after his arrival thru Ellis Island. Now, I refer people to your magazine and Aliza's article to help them understand and maybe begin to dispel the myth.

—Mike Ferrier Jr. (nee Ferrieri)
Delray Beach, Fla.

Second Opinion

Robert Allegrini's review (In Pursuit of a True Italian History; *Ambassador*, Fall 2012) of David Gilmour's book, "The Pursuit of Italy," a work which challenges the way Italy became a united nation, was not very carefully considered.

Gilmour and Denis Mack Smith are not revisionists. The self-serving revisionism was perpetuated by the Italian state from 1860 until circa 1945, when a truly free press was introduced. Gilmour's views are shared by numerous Italian historians, including Pino Aprile, whose insightful "Terroni" was recently published in English. I have no axe to grind with the Savoy or with Mr. Allegrini, but let's stick to the facts. More recently, several regions, including Sicily and Alto Adige, have been granted semi-autonomy comparable to that of Scotland, Bavaria and Catalonia.

Last year, as some in Italy sought to "celebrate" unification, outspoken groups of scholars from both North and South decried the deceptions of 150 years and the effects in their respective regions. Books were published, pro and con, and conferences were held at universities. Incidentally, few of those

scholars challenged Italian unification per se so much as the way the patchwork of states was strung together to form a nation.

—Lou Mendola
Palermo, Italy

Photogenic Umbria

I attended the Experience Umbria workshop given by Frank Van Riper and Judith Goodman in October, 2011 (Italian Heritage in Focus; *Ambassador*, Fall 2012). ... We visited a different Umbrian town every day, and each location provided unique and spectacular opportunities for photographs. Every town had its own flavor and texture, as well as an assortment of wonderful restaurants. Our days were full of photographic activity with time out for very leisurely lunches. I had such a good time and was so smitten by the Umbrian countryside that I am contemplating doing it again.

—Gana Browning
Washington, D.C.

Double Exposure

Frank Van Riper and Judy Goodman's Umbrian Photo Workshop was one of the most memorable vacation trips my wife and I have taken. ... Regardless of your level of experience as a photographer, the workshop will improve your skills.

Besides, you're in Umbria, which is what Tuscany was before it was discovered by the tourist trade a generation ago. You would have to try assiduously to have a bad time. ... The overall experience of photographing and indulging in Italian culture, food and wine makes the workshop a can't-miss trip. The camaraderie with the other workshop participants makes for photos and memories you will cherish for years to come.

—John Kupiec
McLean, Va.



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Ambassador Editorial

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Eva Franchi and Alfio at the concert

Sergio Franchi Memorial Concert Delights Audience

By Alice Bernardi

The rain could not stop the music from playing. Undeterred by a darkening sky, on September 8, Eva Franchi opened the doors of her 240-acre estate in Stonington, Conn., once again to hold the 18th annual tribute concert honoring her late husband, the world famous tenor Sergio Franchi.

This year, the concert also celebrated the life and legacy of Mrs. Franchi's mother Anyu, who passed away over the summer.

Mrs. Franchi welcomed thousands of music aficionados who attended what can only be described as a memorable event—a joyous afternoon filled with music and support for a talented line up of young performers. She shared with them her home, where thousands of Sergio's memorabilia, awards and pictures are housed. And, for car lovers, Sergio's antique car collection was also on display.

The concert opened with a stirring rendition of Aida's "Marcia Trionfale" by the 32-member Sergio Franchi Music Foundation Orchestra directed by Jeff Domoto. Fans of Puccini were not disappointed by the program, which included "O mio babbino caro," the spectacular aria from "Gianni

Schicchi" performed by the young and talented Corinne Winters; "O Soave Fanciulla" and "Quando m'en vo" from "La Bohème"; "Recondita Armonia" from "Tosca" and "Un Bel di" from "Madame Butterfly," beautifully performed by Latoonia Moore.

French Opera was also featured, with John Dominick performing "Le Veau D'Or" from Gounod's "Faust," and Jesus Garcia and Steven LaBrie's beautiful take on Bizet's "Au Fond Du Temple Saint."

Crowd-pleasing classics filled the fresh Connecticut shoreline air as well, including "Granada," performed by Jesus Garcia, and "Il Mondo," beautifully sung by Alfio. An emotional Alfio also played the guitar and performed "Mamma," Cesare Andrea Bixio's classic, in honor of Mrs. Franchi's mother.

As in past years, the concert proceeds benefitted the Sergio Franchi Scholarship Music Foundation. "Having grown up listening to Sergio's unforgettable performances, I am extremely thankful to Mrs. Franchi for organizing such a wonderful celebration of Sergio Franchi's greatness and also for her continuous support and mentorship of young talents," said the National Italian American

Foundation's Chief Operating Officer John Viola.

"The Sergio Franchi Memorial Concert is an amazing opportunity for both the performers and the audience to indulge in the joy of giving and the pleasure of listening to wonderful music," said Alfio.

Mrs. Franchi's event received accolades from generations of spectators—from the younger crowd to the more seasoned opera aficionados—many of whom were already looking forward to next year's event as the concert was coming to a close.

The concert was an extraordinary experience for everyone, performers and the audience alike. In the words of Mrs. Franchi, "Let the Music Play!"

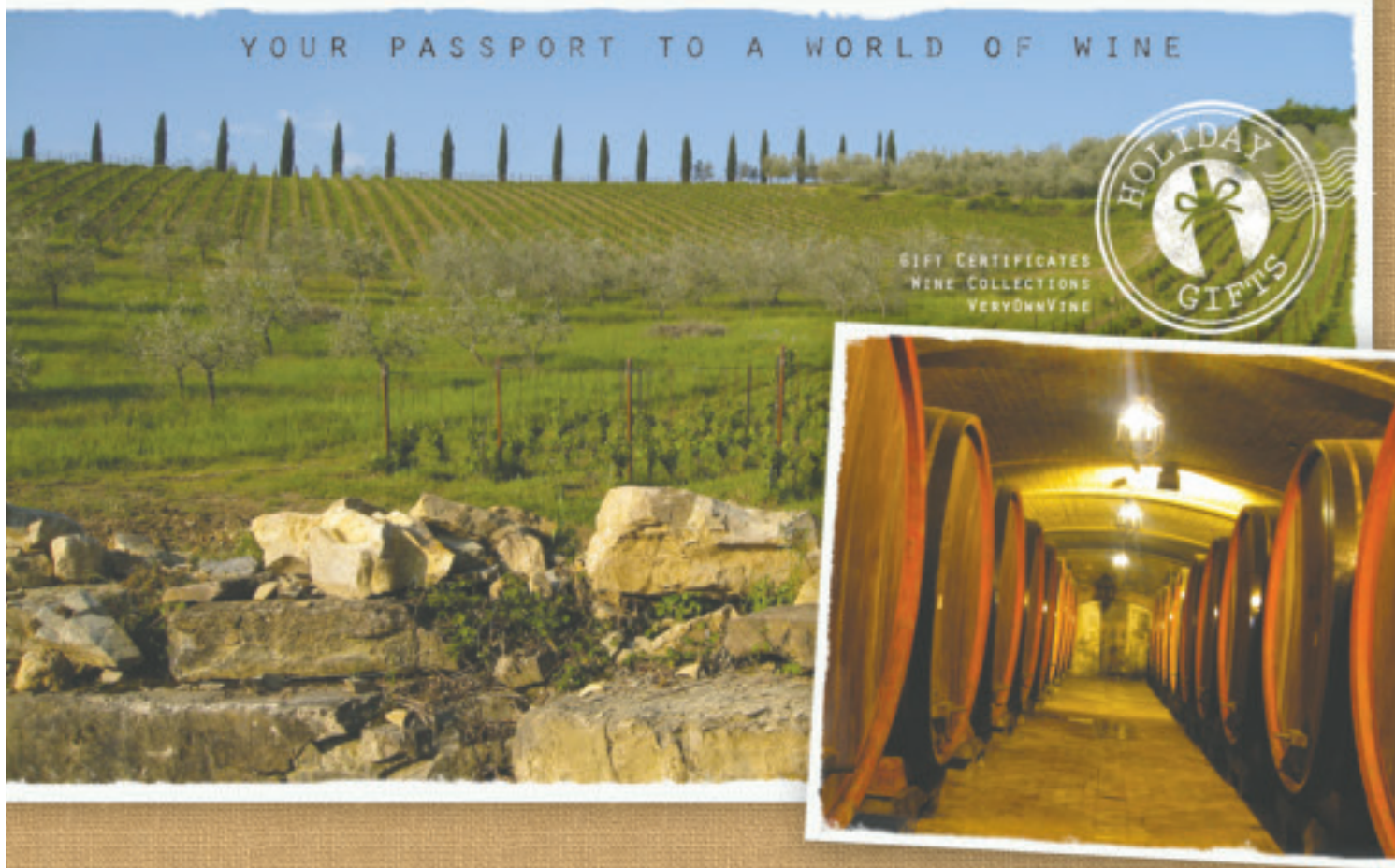
Eva Franchi invites all NIAF members and friends to attend the 19th annual Sergio Franchi Memorial Concert next September, 2013. Look for announcements at the Sergio Franchi Music Foundation website (www.sergiofranchi.com) and at the National Italian American Foundation website (www.niaf.org). ▲

Alice Bernardi is a native of Tuscany and the National Italian American Foundation's chief financial officer.



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Kenneth Rictor Photography

Panelists Anita Bevacqua McBride, John F. Calvelli, Patricia De Stacy Harrison, John Viola and Dominic Massaro

Gala Conference Looks Toward NIAF's Future

By Don Oldenburg

One of the most thought-provoking panel discussions during NIAF's Gala weekend was the "NIAF—Ieri, Oggi, Domani" session on Saturday afternoon, October 13.

Moderated by Fred Gardaphe, professor of English and Italian American Studies at Queens College, CUNY, the discussion focused on the history of the National Italian American Foundation, its plans for 2013 and beyond, and how NIAF is evolving to meet the needs of Italians and Italian Americans. Midway through, what was expected to be a subdued history lesson and state-of-the-foundation report turned into a lively and passionate "shareholders meeting" involving the panelists and the audience.

To start, Gardaphe introduced the panelists: NIAF Board Member Anita Bevacqua McBride, NIAF Secretary John F. Calvelli, NIAF Vice Chair Patricia De Stacy Harrison, NIAF Historian Judge Dominic Massaro, and NIAF Chief Operating Officer John Viola.

Massaro summarized NIAF's history from its beginnings in the late '70s, when Founding Chairman Jenò Paulucci recognized a need and an opportunity in Italian American communities at a time "when embracing your ethnicity became the trend."

But, Massaro added, NIAF had a "tough beginning." Offering a "whole new paradigm" of a centralized organization, and not then even a membership organization,

NIAF seemed to fly in the face of the localized "lodge" concept in place in urban centers populated by Italian Americans nationwide. "But NIAF has always stayed faithful to its original mission of teaching Italian language, seeking the appointments of qualified individuals, and being the continuous voice in Washington of the entire Italian American community," he said, adding that evolving demographics as Italian Americans have increasingly been assimilated has required changing with the times.

The challenge is how we make that bridge from "a nation of immigrants" to the future, said Calvelli. "We are among the last as the children of immigrants . . . and yet nearly 18 million in this country chose to identify themselves as Italian American on the census."

Among the examples Calvelli offered for bridging the past and future were the "special relationship between the United States and Italy" that NIAF facilitates, NIAF's advocacy role in the nation's capital, and the resurrection of Little Italys as a connection to the past. "We need to figure out as a community what are the issues that will tie us back to our heritage," Calvelli said. "And where will we be in the next 25 years?"

For McBride, one answer is to continue strengthening NIAF's mission of promoting education. When Italian Americans came to this country, "they wanted better education for themselves and their children," she said. "And that is

the heart of what we do."

Harrison emphasized connecting to younger demographics. "Ironically, to keep us modern you have to go back," she said. As Italian Americans, we're extremely unique because our core goes back to people like Cicero and Julius Caesar. Our challenge is to keep our heritage as our core."

Gardaphe walked the microphone around the audience for questions and feedback. One college-age student asked how NIAF was going to connect with his generation. Someone else asked about Italian American organizations cooperating more. Italian American organizations cooperating more.

Viola said Italian American organizations all face membership challenges as assimilation dilutes ethnic identities. "As we assimilate, membership in one (organization) is as good as membership in another as long as we're moving toward our goals," said Viola. "We can each serve different paths of the same mission. We have to find ways to raise the waters so the ships all rise together."

One audience member asked if NIAF wants to be the glue that keeps all other organizations together? "I don't know that NIAF's mission is to be the glue among all the organizations," responded Harrison. "I think there are ways to partner and everyone keep their own identity. . . . But NIAF can become a thought leader about issues of importance to all Italian Americans and the nation."▲





A WAY IN A MANGER

Angela Tripi's
Renowned
Nativity
Scenes
Handmade
in Sicily

*Story and photos by
Traci Badalucco*





Angela Tripi finishes a sculpture of a wise man in her workshop.



It all starts with a ball of clay.

And a vision.

This combination unleashes a string of creativity, and from this creativity an art is born:

I presepi di Angela Tripi.

The nativity scenes of Angela Tripi.

On a warm and sunny October day in Palermo, Sicily, I passed the main cathedral on Via Vittorio Emanuele and approached Tripi's famous shop. Actually, she has two shops, one on the main street where you can buy souvenirs, and the workshop, hidden in a quaint piazza nearby. The workshop is where the magic is born. This is where nativity scenes come to life.

Tripi greeted me and offered a coffee at the bar next door where I met her entire family, some of

whom work there. Everyone greets her with a smile and a kiss. Her warmth radiates wherever she goes.

Tripi's adoration for nativity scenes started as a child. She grew up in the countryside of Sicily, near the town of Monreale. This mystical environment embedded a sense of enchantment in her, especially around the Christmas season. She would often wander off into the woods looking for moss and rocks to build the family's

nativity scene. This wasn't just her passion, it was her family's passion. Leading up to Christmas, her family together would assemble the nativity scene, adding a new piece to the collection each year. Young Angela would spend hours gazing at the little figurines, perplexed by their beauty.

With time, Tripi put this passion on the back burner. She was busy with other things, like family, her love for painting, ▶





Angela Tripi's earliest sculptures included Sicilian farmers and vendors

and poetry. Then, one Christmas, more than 35 years ago, she had an “awakening” at her uncle’s home as she passed a glass case. Inside was an old nativity scene by Sicilian artist Giovanni Matera that sparked something within her. At that moment, she felt driven to create the beloved nativity scenes that she so adored as a child.

Tripi began immediately. She told her husband about her epiphany and asked if she could use his warehouse to build her figurines. She purchased a second-hand oven to bake the pieces and began working.

Tripi never formally studied sculpting. As she worked, she read books on sculpting and, by trial and error, began mastering the

art. When I asked how she learned, her reply was, “With my own two hands and my mind.”

This seems almost impossible given the beauty of these pieces, each so exquisitely sculpted. “At the beginning, my pieces had somewhat strange faces, but I loved them the same,” she says in Italian. These characters came to life for her, she adds, they became her friends. She often talked to them. They became her world in that little workshop in the warehouse.

After about six years, Tripi knew if she wanted to expand her work she’d need help, but she couldn’t choose just anyone. They had to be skilled, talented and passionate in their craft. She knew these figurines could come to life only by the hands of the best, she recalls.

As I walked through Tripi’s workshop, her employees were hard at work, sitting calmly with a figure in one hand, a paintbrush in the other. With each stroke of the brush, a face comes alive, a burst of color explodes. These same workers have been with her since she chose them. Asked who taught them to sculpt and paint in this unique style, she replies simply, “me,” adding, “and now we’re like a family.”

The business has changed over the years. Tripi started by creating the people of her land, Sicily, which is how her farmer and fruit vendor figurines emerged. But after two years, she started sculpting what she really wanted to sculpt—shepherds of the nativity, and later The Last Supper scenes. She was adamant that they look authentic. Many of her early clients weren’t sold on the new look. But, little by little, loyal collectors shared her enthusiasm for the new, detailed pieces. Tripi says the recipe was simple: The pieces had beauty, and with beauty the customers come.

The actual process is an arduous one, hence the hefty price, which ranges from 200 euros to 800 euros per piece, depending on the size, and 3,000 euros for a complete set consisting of at least eight pieces. Sizes of the pieces





range from four-and-a-half inches to the height of a grown adult.

This isn't just an ordinary art, but a meticulous one that takes talent and patience. The sculptures are formed from wet clay by hand, and then placed in the oven to bake. After they've been removed from the oven and cool, it's time to paint the figures.

Their clothing is an art in itself. Fine attention to detail can be seen in every piece of clothing which is made out of cloth, wetted, then placed carefully on the clay and set aside to dry. Once dry, the clothing is hand painted in detail. The process for one piece, from start to finish, takes at least 20 days.

I watch, amazed, as Tripi systematically chooses pieces for photos, effortlessly maneuvering them with undivided attention to create a scene. I ask her what makes her pieces different. "There are no two faces the same," she says. "They are all completely different, all completely unique. And that's why they are so special. They are one of a kind."

The delicacy of the pieces makes shipping long distances difficult. They cannot be shipped to the United States. They can, however, be shipped to other countries in Europe for customers travelling abroad, and they can be ordered

in advance online and picked up at the store in Sicily. Visitors also drop in and purchase pieces without appointments.

When I asked Tripi why she loves Christmas so much, her reply was, "It's the celebration of Jesus. It's a time when family comes together. It's a beautiful holiday."

Her nativity pieces only add to the beauty of Christmas. Her sculptures are high-end commodities sought throughout the world. She travels often for her work, as far as Japan. She even designed a piece for Pope John Paul II.

After spending two hours with Tripi, I asked one last question: What is it about the island of Sicily that inspires you?

"Questa è la mia terra. Ogni mattina mi sveglio guardando il sole ed il mare. Io amo la mia terra. La Sicilia è un'isola completa, trovi tutto quello che desideri," she replies.

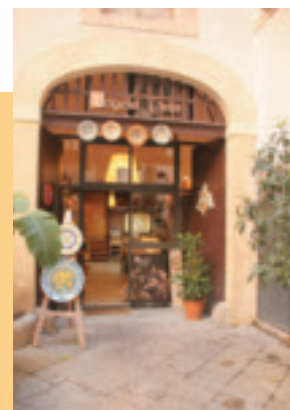
I had to write it as she said it in Italian. It's too beautiful to translate plainly. But the translation is: "This is my land. Every morning I wake up and look at the sun, the sea. I love my land. Sicily is a complete island, with everything a person could want." ▲

Traci Badalucco is an English teacher and freelance writer who divides her time between Palermo, Italy, and her hometown, Kansas City, Mo.

Creating clothing for the nativity pieces



Angela Tripi's shop in Palermo, Sicily



Angela Tripi's nativity scenes store is open year around at

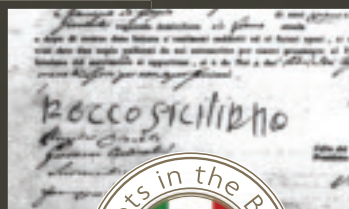
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Story and photos by Maria Garcia



View of the Grand Canal from a gondola

Download a 16th century map of Venezia to your iPad, and you will have little trouble locating the *calle* that leads to the door of your hotel. Venezia's quiriness does not end there.

A *calle* is a *strada* or *via* in Italian, but in *Veneziano*, a street is called by several names, among them *salizzata* or *rio terà* if it was once a canal, and *fondamenta* if it is alongside one. Many words in Venezia's distinctive *dialetto*, like the street names, can be traced to Italian, common Latin, German and Greek—but not “gondola.”

The enduring symbol of

Venezia, sleek and somber in mandated black, the gondola's first appearance in the city and the origin of its name are lost to history.

On a recent spring vacation with my husband, a voyage on the canals of Venezia was our sole respite from the crowds, a serene, private pleasure shared only with the gondolier. The moment the boatman helped me aboard, I felt as if I were stepping into a time machine, complete with a guide who would steer us safely through the centuries. The gondolier did just that, skillfully and with such brevity and intelligence, that the *gondole*





(the plural of *gondola*), and their builders and masters, became my key to grasping whatever small understanding any tourist can hope for in seven days spent in a city.

I started at Squero di San Trovaso, a boatyard where *gondole* are built and repaired. *Squero* is a *Veneziano* word, as are all the words that name the gondola's 280 or so parts, the artisans who craft them, and the methods used to construct the flat-bottomed boat. On Rio di San Trovaso, near the *campo* (a small piazza) of the same name, this *squero* owned by Lorenzo della Toffola had a half-dozen *gondole* undergoing reconstruction.

I then visited the Tramontin e Figli *squero*, also located in Dorsoduro, a *sestiero* or borough

strengthened by fire and softened by water to shape the graceful *gondola*. One side of every *squero* is open to a canal so the *gondole* can be brought ashore and launched entirely by hand by the *squerariòli*.

Outdoors, *gondole* sit atop a line of boat racks. Indoors, hand tools and power tools line the walls. Everywhere, the *squerariòli*, skilled carpenters, labor at their various tasks. While tourists rarely stroll in the outlying neighborhood of the Tramontin *squero*, they often line the opposite side of the canal from San Trovaso *squero*, on Fondamenta Nani, pausing in their shopping to gaze at the unusual sight of a gondola being lifted into the air.

The modern gondola weighs about half a ton, is five-and-one-

cially Vittorio Carpaccio (1485-1526) and Canaletto (1697-1768).

Every gondola represents the work of many men and women, beginning with the *squerariòli* who construct it from a form called the *cantier*. Both the San Trovaso and Tramontin *squero* may repair 30 or 40 *gondole* a year, but they make only one new gondola in those 12 months. The day I visited the Tramontin *squero*, the *intagiadòro*, or wood carver, was working on a new gondola's *trasto*, a horizontal section, the equivalent of a thwart on other boats, which is generally walnut or mahogany. Standard designs for the *trasto*, and several other elements of the gondola, may be customized by the gondolier, who also decides the position of the *careghini*, or passenger



Gondola carpenter
Matteo Tamassia
carving the *trasto* in
the Tramontin *squero*.



Roberto Tramontin, owner of the Tramontin *squero* where he's following the template used by the Tramontin family since the late 1800s to construct another gondola.

of Venezia, to watch the *squerariòli* fabricating a new gondola. Located on Rio delle Avogaria, near Ponte Sartorio, this *squero* has been making *gondole* since 1884, when it was the official gondola maker for Venezia's royal family. Signore Roberto Tramontin, the present owner, is a fourth-generation master builder. He recently restored a 19th century gondola, which was on display in 2011 at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

Entering a *squero*, first there is the pungent smell of paint and the black resin used to match it, and then the scent of fresh-cut lumber left to dry in the open air. Nine different types of wood from Europe, the Far East and Africa—among them oak, cherry, mahogany, and fir or plywood for the bottom—are

half feet wide, and slightly more than 35 feet in length, the right side nine inches longer than the left. The Tramontin family is credited with this mid-19th century asymmetrical redesign. It fixed the tendency of earlier *gondole* to veer to the left because of the position of the gondolier—he rows from the right side. The glossy black color of all *gondole* became law in 1562 after competition among the rich for the most luxurious boat offended the sensibilities of many *Veneziani*. The *felzè*, a detachable cabin, was dropped in 1930; it once shielded passengers from the weather, and was a place for secret trysts. Earlier versions of the *gondole* can be seen at the Naval Museum in Venezia, and in the work of Venetian painters, espe-

cially later, the carvings and other ornamental parts are gilded by the *battiloro* and *indoradòri* who beat gold sheets into the designs with hammer and mallet.

Along with the *remèri* who carve the oars and *forcole* or oarlocks, the *fravi*, the blacksmiths who fashion the gondola's six-pronged stainless steel *fero* at the bow, and many other craftspeople with workshops of their own, the *squerariòli* and the captains of the vessels comprise an industry unique and mostly unchanged for six centuries.

Luckily, passengers can touch this living record, and be contained ►





**TASTES LIKE
REAL
BREWED
TEA
BECAUSE IT IS**

FOR THE LOVE OF LEAVES





by it when they step aboard the small craft and feel it propelled, almost magically, as the gondolier rows noiselessly behind them. That gondolier, and now one *gondoliera*, Giorgia Boscolo, the first woman to receive a license, will likely speak their passenger's language. Each of the 450 or so gondoliers, all members of a guild, must converse in five languages, including English, and pass other exams that test their brawn and their knowledge of Venezia and its waterways.

It was early evening when my day at the *squeri* ended with Signore Tramontin walking us to the plank door of his boatyard. I ask which of his *figli* will carry on his business. "There is only my daughter," he replies in Italian, "and women cannot be boat makers."

Realizing he may have offended me, he smiles sheepishly. Similar attitudes are often heard about the *gondoliera*. While there is undoubtedly gender bias in the gondola trades, the remark

is more an expression in conservative Venetian society of disquiet at the prospect of a break with tradition. Enrico Sandon, a *squerariòlo*, overhearing my question, tells me that an *intagiadòra* is often hired by the boatyard, and that she works "*con grande maestria*," with great skill. Sandon is young, and not Venetian by birth, nor does he come from a family of gondola makers, as do so many in the workshops scattered about the city.

As we approach the door, I ask Tramontin about his name, which does not sound Italian. "My great-grandfather changed it from *Tramontina*," he recalls. "You know the verb *tramontare*?"

In response, I point to the setting sun.

"He did not want people to hear our name," he says, "and think of a place where the sun sets." Tramontina and Tramontin are both common surnames in the Veneto, but apparently the

family patriarch felt that Tramontina had too similar a cadence to *tramontare*. When the *squero* was established in 1884, the Savoys, the ruling family of the Kingdom of Italy, had worn their crowns for less than 20 years—and the Tramontins were their official gondola makers. Allusions to decline, or to sinking, were portentous, and Signore Tramontin's grandfather was obviously superstitious.

Assured that I understood all the implications of his ancestor's decision, Signore Tramontin offers a bracing handshake. I step outside and into Campiello Sartorio. Putting on my brimmed hat to shield my eyes from the late afternoon sun, I see that I have taken a little of the *squero* with me. Two lines of black resin cling to the crown. ▲

Maria Garcia, who writes the On Film column, has been to 18 different countries in the past 12 years, but Italy is the only one she has visited half a dozen times.

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Holiday festivities are a joy for everyone—including the cook. In many homes, especially the cook! For those of us who love nothing better than to give the precious gift of culinary happiness to family and friends this time of year, Ambassador thanks the five celebrity chefs who graciously are sharing some of their favorite season-inspired Italian recipes that are perfect for holiday entertaining. Check them out. Give them a try. We think you'll find they're like the bean baked inside the Befana Cake—not only a sweet gift but a sign of good fortune in the coming new year.

Buon Natale e Felice Anno Nuovo

HOLIDAY CUISINE WITH a FESTIVE ITALIAN ACCENT



ROCCO DISPIRITO

Cod with Peperonata

Cotechino with Lentils

You've probably heard the quip "the trouble with eating Italian food is that five or six days later you're hungry again." Well, in his beautiful new cookbook "Now Eat This! Italian: Favorite Dishes from the Real Mamas of Italy—All Under 350 Calories" (Grand Central Life & Style; \$26.99) celebrity chef and bestselling author Rocco DiSpirito tackles the myth that Italian cuisine is not for weight-conscious food lovers.

Cooking side-by-side in Italy with Italian mamas who know a thing or two about Italian food, DiSpirito recreated more than 90 classic Italian recipes, from *antipasti* to *dolci*, that retain the flavor and authenticity but significantly reduce the fat content and calories of the original dishes. In each of his recipes in the book, DiSpirito challenges readers to improve their diets while improving their cooking skills. He even provides before-and-after calorie counts of the original recipes compared to his.

So, for this holiday season, do yourself and someone you love a favor and try DiSpirito's healthier-better Italian dishes from his new cookbook. Check your local listings for his new TV show "Now Eat This! With Rocco DiSpirito." And, visit www.facebook.com/RoccoDiSpirito.

Cotechino with Lentils

Ingredients

½ cup small green lentils, such as du Puy lentils
Olive oil cooking spray
1 (20-ounce) piece pork tenderloin, trimmed of visible fat
Salt
Freshly ground black pepper
½ cup minced leeks
1 carrot, chopped
2 ounces dry-cured Italian salami, such as sopressata, minced
1 small celery root, peeled and finely chopped
1 quart fat-free, reduced-sodium chicken broth, such as Swanson's
½ teaspoon chopped fresh thyme leaves



Jonathan Pushtnik



Excerpted from "Now Eat This! Italian" by Rocco DiSpirito. Copyright © 2012 by Flavorworks Inc. Used by arrangement with Grand Central Publishing. All rights reserved.

Directions

- Place the lentils in a large bowl, cover with water, and soak overnight in the refrigerator.
- Preheat the oven to 325°F.
- Coat a large nonstick ovenproof skillet or Dutch oven with 8 seconds of cooking spray and place over medium-high heat.
- Season the pork with salt and pepper, place it in the pan, and brown it evenly on all sides, about 2 minutes per side.
- Remove the pork from the pan to a plate and add the lentils, leeks, carrot, salami and celery root. Pour in the broth and bring to a boil.
- Reduce the heat and simmer gently for 5 minutes.
- Add the pork, cover the pan, and place it in the oven.
- Cook until the pork is just cooked through, 10 to 15 minutes.
- Remove the pork and place it on a wire rack to rest.
- Return the pan to the stovetop

over medium heat; continue to cook the lentils until they are tender, about 15 minutes. Most of the broth will be absorbed, and you should be left with a tender lentil stew.

- Add the thyme and season with salt and pepper.
- Place the pork back in the pan and simmer for 2 minutes.
- Divide the stew among 4 bowls.
- Slice the pork ½ inch thick and place it over the lentils.

Fat Grams Before: 78

Calories Before: 1077

Fat Grams After: 8.5

Calories After: 339 ➤

Kritsada



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Cod with Peperonata

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 4 (5-ounce) fresh skinless, boneless cod fillets (or other lean white fish fillets)
- Salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon chopped fresh rosemary
- 4 cups mixed colored sweet baby bell peppers, stems and seeds removed, cut in half lengthwise
- 8 sun-dried tomatoes, roughly chopped
- 3 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon raw agave nectar

Directions

- Preheat the oven to 350°F.
- Heat the olive oil in a large oven-proof skillet over medium-high heat.
- Season the cod fillets with salt and pepper.
- When the oil is just starting to smoke, add the cod to the pan and brown on one side, about 1 minute. Remove the cod from the pan and turn off the heat.
- Add the rosemary and stir.
- Add the peppers to the skillet and cook, stirring, until they soften, about 3 minutes.
- Return the cod to the pan, placing it browned-side-up on top of the peppers.
- Cover, place in the oven, and bake for about 5 minutes.
- Remove the cod and place one fillet on each of 4 plates.
- Add the sun-dried tomatoes, vinegar, and agave nectar to the skillet and cook until the peppers have absorbed all of the liquid and are tender.
- Season with salt and pepper.
- Spoon the pepper mixture over and around the fish.

Fat Grams Before: 17

Calories Before: 560

Fat Grams After: 5

Calories After: 206

Kritsada



Brian Bowen Smith

VALERIE BERTINELLI

Lasagna Alla Besciamella Nonnie's Gnocchi

“One of my most treasured memories is of being in my Aunt Adeline’s basement kitchen as she, my Nonnie (grandma), my Aunt Norma, and my mother made dinner for the extended family during the holidays. Sauce simmered on the stove and the air was infused with garlic. You want to know what loves smells like? It smells like that basement.

“I’ll never forget being at the big kitchen table with my Nonnie, watching her knead and roll dough for her incredible gnocchi. I sat transfixed as she pressed the dough in her palm and told me stories of her childhood in Turin, Italy.

“Nonnie’s gnocchi are my madeleines—they take me right back to that kitchen table every time. The holidays are the perfect time for me to share these recipes with my own family and friends. Not only is the result delicious, but the preparation is an opportunity for me to build new memories with my loved ones. Who knows, maybe in the not-to-distant future I’ll be the new Nonnie behind Nonnie’s Gnocchi!”

—Valerie Bertinelli

Just out in November, Valerie Bertinelli’s new cookbook “One Dish at a Time: Delicious Recipes and Stories from My Italian-American Childhood and Beyond” (Rodale Books; \$30) is an appetizing wealth of more than 100 recipes for Italian dishes the actress grew up with in her Italian American home, where so many of her most cherished memories were made.

Visit www.valeriebertinelli.com.

Lasagna Alla Besciamella

Serves 8-10

The idea of using besciamella, a white sauce, in lasagna never occurred to me until my husband Tom and I visited Tenuta Torciano, a charming vineyard just outside the enchanting walled town of San Gimignano in Tuscany. After tasting the lasagna there, I instantly felt compelled to change my mother’s and Nonnie’s recipe (with lots of mozzarella and red meat sauce)—the first dish my mother taught me how to make—forever.

Ingredients

- 1½ quarts meat ragu
- 12 oven-ready lasagna noodles (from one 16-ounce package)
- 2½ cups Besciamella
- 2¼ cups finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese

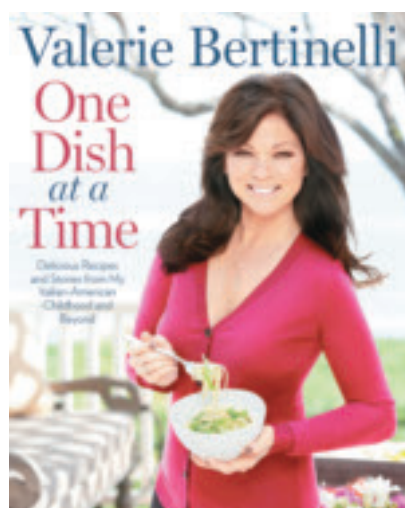




Directions

- Preheat oven to 350°F. Spread an even layer of the meat ragu sauce over the bottom of a 9-by-13-inch baking dish.
- Arrange 3 lasagna noodles over the sauce. Avoid overlapping or allowing them to touch the sides of the pan (they expand as they cook).
- Press down slightly to let the sauce spread around them.
- Cover with one quarter of the Besciamella and sprinkle with $\frac{2}{3}$ cup of the cheese.
- Repeat with another layer of ragu, noodles (pressing down slightly on the noodles), Besciamella, and cheese, and repeat one more time.
- Over the final layer of noodles, spread the remaining Besciamella and ragu.
- Cover pan with foil and bake until heated through, about 35 minutes. Remove the foil and continue baking until the top is brown and bubbling, about 20 minutes more. During the last 10 minutes of baking, scatter the remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ cup cheese all over. Let the lasagna stand for 10 minutes before serving.

Per serving (when serving 8):
514 calories, 29 g protein,
35 g carbohydrates, 26 g total fat,
12 g saturated fat, 3 g fiber,
987 mg sodium



Nonnie's Gnocchi

Serves 6

Ingredients

- 2 pounds russet potatoes
- 2 cups all-purpose flour plus more for dusting surfaces
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon kosher salt
- 3 cups meat ragu

Directions

- Preheat the oven to 375°F.
- Scrub the potatoes well and pierce in several places. Bake on a baking sheet until cooked through, about 1 hour. Set aside to cool.
- Once cool enough to handle, peel the potatoes and pass the flesh through a ricer or the finest holes of a food mill.

- Place $\frac{1}{2}$ cups of the flour on a clean work surface and put the potatoes in the middle.
- Season with the salt.
- Knead the potatoes and flour together until it's a smooth ball of dough that's slightly sticky. If the dough is too sticky, add more of the remaining $\frac{1}{2}$ cup flour gradually to achieve the smooth consistency.
- Divide the dough into 4 equal pieces and cover 3 of them with a dampened kitchen towel.
- Roll the uncovered piece of dough into a 1-inch-thick rope. Cut into $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch pieces.
- Turn a fork over and hold at a 45-degree angle, with the tines touching the work surface. Working with one piece of dough at a time, roll it down the fork tines, pressing with your thumb to make ridges on one side.
- Place on a large baking sheet lined with a kitchen towel.
- Repeat with the remaining pieces of dough.
- Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add half the gnocchi and cook until they bob to the surface of the water. Transfer to a shallow bowl and cook the remaining gnocchi. Serve with the meat ragu.

Per serving: 393 calories,
17 g protein, 59 g carbohydrates,
9 g total fat, 3 g saturated fat,
4 g fiber, 499 mg sodium

ROSSELLA RAGO



Camelloni with Meat Cartellate

"I've always prided myself on being a Brooklyn native, but nothing makes me prouder than

being able to recount my Christmas memories and traditions. You see, Italian Americans in the borough of Brooklyn take the holidays very seriously, and although it might not be the most

glamorous get together for many, for those of us who live it, we wouldn't have it any other way.

"For starters, in my family, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day is spent squeezing nearly 30 people into Nonna Romana's basement! There really is nothing like it. The energy, the heat, the volume, the smells of cartellate frying! It is the most wonderful feeling of togetherness.

"It's on these occasions that I'm so thrilled to be able to live in such close proximity to my Nonna. Every year since I was about 15, she and I will make a traditional Christmas pastry from my family's native village, Mola di Bari. Cartellate, or in dialect "*I scartaghiat*," are the one thing that really makes it feel like Christmas. They're made from simple pastry dough ►





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that is scalloped with a Ravioli cutter and then delicately arranged into a rose shape. The arranging has taken me a few years to get down as well as Nonna's, but I think I'm getting there.

The cartellate are then deep fried or baked before they are soaked in either honey or Vin Cotto, a traditional fig juice reduction. This recipe has been in my family for generations and was perfected by my Great Grandmother, Nonna Regina, who would make and sell them every Christmas in her grocery store in Italy. No matter how hot or crowded or chaotic Nonna's Brooklyn basement gets around Christmas time, we carry on our tradition every year. Otherwise, it wouldn't be Christmas at all!"

—Rossella Rago

Join Rossella and her Italian Nonna at CookingWithNonna.com where you will find recipes for traditional Italian Christmas cookies and other dishes, video instructions for making some dishes such as these, as well as the opportunity to win a free tour to Italy from Perillo Tours

Cartellate

Makes about 40

Ingredients

2 pounds of flour
 1¾ cups dry white wine
 ½ cup olive oil
 2 cups Vin Cotto (made from figs) or honey
 Cinnamon powder
 Olive oil for frying

Directions

- In a stand mixer bowl, add the olive oil and the wine and mix the two.

- Add the flour and continue to mix until the flour and the liquids are completely amalgamated and the dough is firm.
- Cut a handful of the dough and pass it thru the pasta roller set at 3 until you have a flat and long strip of dough about 3 inches wide by 10 inches long.
- Lay the strip on a wood board and with a ravioli cutter cut it into strips 1 inch wide and 10 inches long.
- Fold each strip every other inch and attach the strip to the remainder of the strip in a circle to form a rose.
- Fry all the cartellate in olive oil until they are lightly golden.
- Heat the Vin Cotto in a pan and while the Vin Cotto is still warm, dip each cartellate in the Vin Cotto until it is completely covered. (If you do not have Vin Cotto, you can substitute honey.)
- Drain any excess juice and place in a platter for storage.
- Before serving add a sprinkle of cinnamon.

Cannelloni with Meat

Serves 4 - 6

Ingredients for the Crepes

1 cup flour
 2 eggs
 ½ cup milk
 1 cup water
 2 tablespoons butter, melted
 Pinch of salt

Ingredients for the filling

1 pound mixed beef, veal and pork ground meat
 3 (28 ounce) cans of tomato sauce
 ½ pound Prosciutto di Parma
 1 cup diced mozzarella
 1 cup grated parmigiano cheese
 1 onion
 ½ cup white wine
 Fresh black pepper
 Nutmeg
 Extra virgin olive oil
 Salt

Directions for making the Crepes

- In a bowl, mix all the crepes ingredients well to get a very liquid batter.
- Add some butter to a crepe pan, make it hot, and pour 1 ladle of batter.
- Move the batter quickly around the bottom of the pan to cover the entire bottom uniformly.
- Cook for about 1-2 minutes. Flip the crepe if you can, and slide the finished crepe into a plate for later use.
- Make all your crepes and put aside.

Directions for filling preparation

- In a pot, add 3 tablespoons of olive oil and the onion finely chopped.
- Sauté onion until translucent and add the meat.
- Sauté meat for a few minutes, and add the white wine.
- Let the alcohol evaporate and add the tomato sauce.
- Cook the meat for about 40 minutes at medium heat.
- Once cooked, let the meat cool a bit and drain the excess sauce.
- Put meat in a food processor, add the prosciutto and run the food processor for about 10 seconds.
- Pour the content in a bowl, add the mozzarella, parmigiano cheese, fresh black pepper as desired and a dash of nutmeg.



Directions for cannelloni preparation:

- Cover an oven pan with a layer of the tomato sauce.
- Take each crepe, deposit two tablespoons of filling on one side of the crepe, spread it long ways and roll the crepe.
- Place the cannelloni in the pan.
- Prepare all cannelloni and fill the pan.
- Cover each cannellone with sauce and a generous sprinkle of parmigiano cheese.
- Bake for 20 minutes at 400°F. ➤





MARY ANN ESPOSITO

Capone al Forno *Torta di Befana*

“We always had a houseful for Christmas and Mom insisted that we would all fit around the table even with the almost human-size nativity set in place. For her, the nativity figures were the most important royal guests and she would not have them banished to some obscure place where their impact on the day would be lost.

“On Christmas Day, Nonna Galasso had the seat of honor, and we all crammed ourselves in around the table elbow to elbow. The irony was that we could not really see those sitting opposite us because of the height of the nativity figures, so we pretty much talked to the person sitting on either side of us.

“The problem, as I saw it, was that there was no room on the table for the home-made pork sausage, the roast capon, deep-dish lasagne, or the multitude of vegetable dishes that came with it, not to mention where to put the jugs of wine!



“Mom always had a solution and Dad just went along with whatever was dictated because it was easier that way. So he carved the capon in the kitchen, and he and I went around to each person balancing platters like professional wait staff so that our guests could help themselves. By the time the roast chestnuts and spumoni were served as part of dessert, the table

looked like a war zone with chestnut shells, breadcrumbs, splatters of tomato sauce, and red wine blotches, all too visible at the feet of the nativity figures.

“And that just wouldn’t do. So right after dinner, the table was cleared, the nativity moved carefully like antique furniture and with great ceremony, and a clean tablecloth waved its way down into place. The figures were returned to their rightful place and all was well again with the world.

“On January 6, Feast of the Three Kings, Mom once again worked her magic in the kitchen. Only this time, it was just our family who paid homage to the royal guests. Cheese ravioli, lentils and sausage, and Befana cake were her classic standbys. On January 7, all the Christmas decorations came down and each nativity figure was well wrapped in layers of towels and laid in boxes for their journey back to the dreaded attic.”

—Mary Ann Esposito
(excerpt from “Ciao Italia Classics.”)

Ambassador magazine’s culinary columnist, Mary Ann Esposito is the author of 12 books on the art of Italian cooking. Her latest is “Ciao Italia Family Classics” (St. Martin’s Press; \$40). Her PBS-TV cooking show “Ciao Italia” is one of television’s longest-running culinary programs. For more information, recipes and cooking videos, visit www.ciaoitalia.com.

Capone al Forno **Roast Capon** *Serves 8*

Except for the occasional stuffed turkey breast, Mom stuck to Italian tradition and served capon (capone) which, to be blunt, is a castrated male chicken that’s very flavorful and moist. To this day, that is what I serve at Thanksgiving and Christmas, too. But I do something very non-traditional with the bird. I brine it first. Since capons are small in size, anywhere from 6 to 11 pounds, this recipe is perfect when you don’t want a large turkey.



Ingredients for brine

- 10 whole cloves
- 4 whole bay leaves
- 10 whole black peppercorns
- 2 quarts apple cider or apple juice
- 2½ cups brown sugar
- ¾ cup kosher salt
- 3 oranges quartered
- 2 large lemons, quartered
- 1 capon weighing between 10 and 11 pounds, rinsed and dried

Directions

- Place the cloves, bay leaves and peppercorns in a small piece of cheesecloth and tie into a small bundle with kitchen string. Set aside.
- Pour the apple cider into a large soup pot and stir in the sugar and salt. Add the oranges and lemons and bring the mixture to a boil. Cook for 2 minutes to dissolve the sugar and salt.
- Remove from the heat and let the mixture come to room temperature. (This can be made and refrigerated done several days ahead).
- Place the capon in a large clean garbage bag. Carefully pour the apple cider mixture in the bag. Tie the bag tightly.
- Place the bag in a large roasting pan or disposable aluminum roasting pan and refrigerate for 2 days, turning the bag often to evenly brine the capon.
- When ready to roast, preheat the oven to 425°F.
- Drain the capon from the brine and pat dry with paper towels.





Discard the brine. Place the capon, breast side up on a rack in a roasting pan and brush the skin all over with olive oil.

- Roast for 1½ hours or until an instant read thermometer inserted in the thickest part of the bird registers 165°F and the juices run clear.
- Allow the capon to sit loosely tented with aluminum foil for about 20 minutes before carving.



www.ciaoitalia.com

Torta di Befana New Year's Befana Cake

All good children wait for the good witch Befana to fill their stockings on New Year's Day. They also look forward to a slice of Befana cake. Lurking in some lucky slice is a dried fava bean, symbol of good fortune.

Ingredients

- 1¼ cups raisins
- ½ cup diced, candied lemon peel
- ½ cup diced, candied orange peel
- ¼ cup brandy (optional)
- 1 tablespoon active dry yeast
- ½ cup warm (110-115°F) water
- 5 cups plus 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- ½ cup sugar
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon grated lemon zest
- 1 stick unsalted butter cut into pieces, softened
- 2 large eggs
- ½ cup warm milk
- ½ cup chopped almonds
- 1 dried fava or other large dried bean
- 1 egg yolk
- 2 tablespoons coarse brown sugar

Directions

- Put raisins in bowl, cover with warm water and set aside to plump.
- In a bowl, mix citrus peels with the brandy and set aside. If not using brandy, use hot water
- In a medium bowl, dissolve the yeast in warm water. Add one cup of the flour and mix until a ball of dough is formed.

- Fill a large bowl ⅔ full with warm water. Place the ball of dough in the water, cover with bowl with plastic wrap and let the "sponge" rise in a warm place until doubled, about 20 minutes.
- In a food processor, combine 4 cups of the flour, sugar, salt and lemon zest. Add the butter, eggs and milk, and process to a slightly stiff dough. With a slotted spoon, scoop the risen sponge from the water and add it to the dough.
- Process until thoroughly incorporated into the dough. If the dough seems too stiff, add a little water.
- Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface and knead for a few minutes. Butter a large bowl, place the dough in the bowl, and turn to coat it in the butter.
- Cover with plastic wrap, then a towel, and let rise in a warm spot for one hour or until doubled in size.
- Butter a 10-by-3½-inch round cake pan or tube pan. Dust with flour and shake out excess.
- Drain the raisins, pat dry with paper towels and toss with one tablespoon of the flour.

- Drain the candied citrus peels, reserving the brandy. Toss the peels with the remaining 1 tablespoon of flour.
 - Punch down the dough. Turn the dough out onto a floured surface. With your hands, work the raisins, candied peels, almonds and dried bean into the dough, and knead until you have a uniform ball of dough. It should feel slightly tacky.
 - Place the dough in the pan, cover with a towel and let rise in a warm place for one hour, or until doubled in size.
 - Preheat the oven to 350°F.
 - In a small bowl, beat the egg yolk and reserved brandy together. Brush the top of the cake with this mixture and sprinkle with the coarse sugar.
 - Bake 45 minutes, or until nicely browned.
 - Let the cake cool for 10 minutes in the pan. Carefully run a knife around the sides of the pan to loosen the cake, and turn the cake out onto a cooling rack to cool completely.
 - To serve, cut into wedges.
- Note: To freeze, wrap the cake well in aluminum foil. Freeze for up to a month. ➤



ROSETTA COSTANTINO

Calabrian Christmas deserts

“December is the month most rewarding to the Calabrian sweet tooth. In the Cosenza province, where I am from, Christmas means grispelle, also known as zeppole in other parts of Calabria—warm yeasted fritters drizzled with honey. When made in a ring shape, they are called cuddurieddi.

“Cannariculi are also traditional at Christmas in the Cosentino, as is pitta ’mpigliata—pastry rosettes with a filling of walnuts, raisins and cinnamon.

“Scalille (or scalidde), meaning “ladders,” are Christmas fritters made with a dough similar to the cannariculi dough but shaped either to resemble a ladder, with two long parallel sides and shorter cross bars, or in a long corkscrew-like spiral made by wrapping a rope of dough around the handle of a wooden spoon, then dipping the spoon into the hot oil. According to Ottavio Cavalcanti, a Calabrian scholar with deep knowledge of the local food traditions, the ladder and spiral shapes symbolize the possibility of rising to heaven.

“In the southern part of Calabria, in the region of Reggio Calabria, the Christmas dessert table will likely include petrali, half-moon turnovers filled with dried figs, nuts, chocolate, mosto cotto, orange peel and candied citron, and glazed with white or chocolate icing. And it’ll have pignolata—tiny fritters about the size of chick peas glazed with lemon or chocolate icing.”

—Rosetta Costantino

Cookbook author and culinary teacher Rosetta Costantino was born and raised in Verbicaro, a small wine-producing hill town in Calabria. Her family moved to the Bay Area in California when she was 14 years old, where despite the fast pace of life they kept their traditions. Costantino shares her story, family traditions, and over 150 recipes in “My Calabria: Rustic Family Cooking from Italy’s Undiscovered South”

(W. W. Norton & Company; \$35). She is currently writing her second book, *on the desserts of Southern Italy, to be published in the fall 2013. Visit www.cookingwithrosetta.com.*

Cannariculi Fried Ridged Pastry with Warm Honey Glaze

Makes about 20 dozen cannariculi, enough to serve 16 to 20

Ingredients for cannariculi dough

- 4½ cups (1 pound 6 ounces) unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ pound unsalted butter, melted and cooled
- ¾ cup white wine
- ¼ cup light rum or liqueur of your choice
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 2 large eggs, at room temperature
- Vegetable oil for frying
- 1 cup honey

Directions

- Sift the flour and baking powder together into a bowl and set aside.
- In a large bowl, combine the melted butter, wine, rum, sugar, vanilla and eggs. Whisk until well blended.
- Add the flour to the egg mixture one cup at a time, blending with a fork.
- Once you have incorporated all the flour, knead the dough briefly in the bowl with one hand until it is soft and smooth. It will be moist and a little sticky, but refrain from adding flour.
- Cover the bowl and refrigerate the dough for 30 minutes.
- To shape the cannariculi, work with a little dough at a time. Cut off a piece about the size of a cigar and roll on a very lightly floured work surface into a rope about ⅜ inch in diameter. (If you flour the board too heavily, you may have a hard time stretching the dough into a rope.)
- Cut the rope into 1-inch pieces.
- Lightly flour a gnocchi paddle. Put a piece of dough on the paddle. Using the index and middle fingers of your dominant hand, press down on the dough, then pull toward you to make the dough curl into a “C.” The dough is soft, so you don’t need to press hard.
- As you shape them, transfer the pieces to a tray lined with a kitchen



Photos by Sara Remington

towel, keeping them in a single layer so they don’t stick to each other. Repeat with the remaining dough, lightly flouring the gnocchi paddle as needed to keep the dough from sticking.

- Put 4 inches of vegetable oil in a heavy 6-quart pot and place over moderately high heat.
- While the oil is heating, warm the honey in a small saucepan over moderately low heat until it thins enough to drizzle; remove from the heat.
- When the oil reaches 375°F, begin frying the cannariculi. Work in batches so you don’t overcrowd the pot. Using a large, shallow stainless steel skimmer or a slotted spoon, transfer about 20 pieces of dough to the hot oil. They will puff immediately.
- Fry the cannariculi, keeping them constantly in motion until they are golden all over, 1 to 1½ minutes.
- Transfer them to a tray lined with paper towels to drain briefly, then put them on a serving platter. Before frying the next batch, drizzle some of the warm honey over the cannariculi, coating them generously.
- Continue frying and glazing the cannariculi, mounding them on the platter, until you have done them all.
- Let cool before serving.

Cicirata Variation:

Using the same dough, roll into ropes ½ inch in diameter. Cut the ropes into ½-inch pieces. Fry and glaze with honey as for cannariculi. When the cicirata are cool, mound them like a mountain and serve.

Chiacchiere Variation:

Using the same dough, flatten with a pasta machine or a rolling pin into a ⅛-inch-thick sheet, dusting with flour as needed to prevent sticking. With a fluted pastry cutter, cut the dough into strips about 1 inch wide and 6 inches long. Cut a 2-inch slit length-





wise in the center of each strip. Pick up a strip, insert one end through the slit, and pull it through. Fry as for cannariculi. Dust heavily with confectioner's sugar while still warm.

Pitta 'mpigliata
Rolled Pastry Rosettes with Walnuts, Raisins and Cinnamon

Makes one 8-inch pitta; serves 7

Ingredients for dough

2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon baking powder
Pinch of kosher salt
1 large egg
¼ cup olive oil
¼ cup sweet white wine, such as Muscat, passito or vin santo
2 tablespoons anisette, Strega, Sambuca or rum, or a mixture

Ingredients for filling

3 tablespoons blanched almonds
1 cup walnut halves
1 cup raisins

2 tablespoons sugar
2 teaspoons grated orange zest
½ teaspoon cinnamon
¼ teaspoon ground cloves
1 cup honey, or more as desired

Directions for the dough

- In a bowl, sift together the flour, baking powder and salt.
- Make a well in the center of this mixture and put the egg, olive oil, wine and liqueur(s) in the well.
- Stir these liquid ingredients with a fork, then gradually incorporate the flour mixture.
- Knead the dough briefly in the bowl with one hand, steadying the bowl with the other hand, until the dough is smooth, silky and well blended.
- Cover the surface of the dough with plastic wrap and let rest for 30 minutes. You can also make the dough several hours ahead and refrigerate until ready to use it.

Directions for the filling

- Preheat the oven to 350°F.
- Toast the almonds until lightly colored and fragrant, about 10 minutes. Let cool.
- Coarsely chop the almonds and walnuts together.
- In a bowl, combine the chopped nuts, raisins, sugar, orange zest, cinnamon and cloves. Toss together with a fork until well blended.

Directions for making the pitta

- Divide the dough into 7 equal pieces.
- To make the base of the pitta, flatten one of the pieces of dough with a rolling pin into a very thin 10-inch round. Place the round on the bottom of an 8-inch springform pan so that the dough comes about 1 inch up the sides of the pan. This sheet of dough will hold the rosettes together in the shape of a cake.
- Working with one piece of dough at a time, roll each of the remaining 6 pieces into a thin rectangle 15 to 16 inches long and a little more than 3 inches wide, flouring the work surface if necessary to prevent sticking.
- Alternatively, flatten the dough into the specified shape with a pasta machine.
- With a fluted pastry cutter, trim the long edges so that the strip of dough is exactly 3 inches wide. Reserve and re-roll the trimmings to make a seventh rectangle of the same size.
- Sprinkle ⅓ cup of filling lengthwise down the center of each strip of dough. With the palms of both hands, nudge the filling into a straight line down the center.
- Carefully lift the dough along one of its long edges and fold it over the filling, taking care not to squeeze out the filling. Line up the long edges of the dough but do not seal them.
- Working from the end of the dough closest to you, gently roll the dough away from you into a neat coil. Try not to let any of the filling escape and be sure to keep the open edges open, not pinched together.
- Place the coil, folded edge down, on a work surface and secure the end of the coil by pressing it gently into the dough. The coil will resemble a flower, with the filling visible between the "petals." If necessary, gently pry open the petals a little to expose the filling.
- Place the seven rosettes in the dough-lined pan. They should fit snugly, which will prevent them ▶



from unwinding during baking.

- Bake the pitta at 350°F until golden all over, about 45 minutes.
- If the honey is stiff, warm it in a small saucepan over moderately low heat until it is pourable.
- Remove the pitta from the oven and immediately drizzle with about ½ cup of the honey. Wait until the honey is absorbed, then drizzle with more honey, a little at a time, until it is all absorbed.
- Let the pitta cool completely before serving.

Mostaccioli con Mandorle Honey Cookies Filled with Almonds, Cocoa and Anisette

Makes about 5 dozen

Ingredients for dough

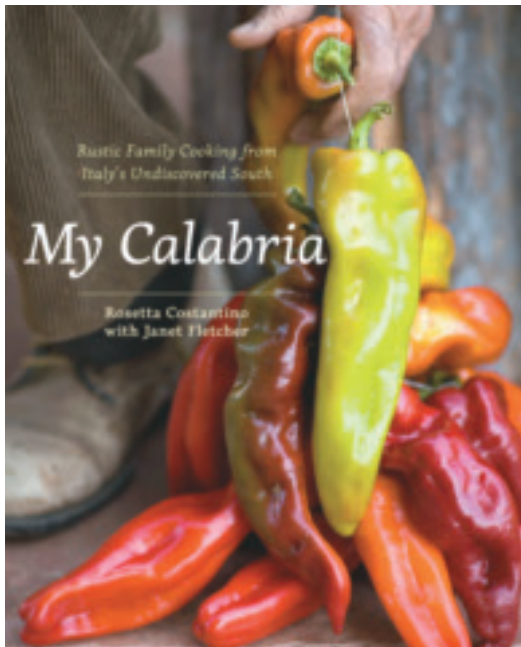
- 4 cups all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon baking soda
- 1 cup honey
- 2 large eggs
- 2 teaspoons orange juice
- 2 teaspoons anisette
- 2 teaspoons almond extract
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract

Ingredients for filling

- 2 cups whole blanched (skinless) almonds
- ½ cup honey
- ¼ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon ground cloves
- 2 teaspoons grated orange zest
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon almond extract
- 1 teaspoon anisette
- 4 ounces bittersweet chocolate, chopped into small pieces

Ingredients for egg wash

- 1 large egg
- Few drops vanilla extract



Directions for the dough

- Make the dough: In a bowl, stir together the flour, baking powder, and baking soda.
- Make a well in the flour and put the remaining dough ingredients in the well. Stir with a fork until the dough comes together, then knead it in the bowl with one hand, using the other hand to steady the bowl, until the dough is smooth, well blended, and similar in texture to a sugar cookie dough, about 2 minutes.
- Let stand for 15 minutes to allow the flour to absorb the moisture so it will be firm enough to roll. Divide the dough in half.
- On a work surface, arrange two sheets of parchment paper, each large enough to accommodate a 14-by-6-inch rectangle.
- Dust the parchment sheets lightly with flour. Put half the dough on each sheet and, with a rolling pin, flatten the dough into a 14-by-6-inch rectangle about ⅜ inch thick. Use your hands, if necessary, to straighten the dough edges to make a neat rectangle. Don't worry about overworking the dough; it is very forgiving.
- Let the elongated dough rest at room temperature while you proceed with the filling.

Directions for the filling

- Preheat the oven to 350°F.
- Toast the almonds on a baking sheet until lightly colored and fragrant, about 10 minutes. Set aside to cool.
- Raise the oven temperature to 375°F.
- Put the honey in a 1½-quart pot and warm it over low heat until it becomes fluid.

- In a small bowl, combine the cocoa, cinnamon, cloves, orange zest, vanilla and almond extracts, and anisette. Add to the honey along with the almonds and chocolate.
- Bring to a simmer and cook, stirring, until the chocolate melts and the mixture is thick and well blended, about 1 minute. Let it cool until it begins to stiffen and is no longer syrupy, 1 to 2 minutes, but don't let it cool too long or it will become too stiff to spread.

Directions for making the mostaccioli

- Arrange the dough rectangles horizontally on the work surface, so that the 14-inch side is nearest you. Working quickly with a spoon, spread half the filling on the bottom half of each sheet of dough, staying about 1 inch away from the edges.
- By lifting the parchment, carefully fold the top half of the dough over the filling to make a log about 14 inches long by 3 inches wide.
- Peel away the parchment and press the edges of the dough together to seal it all the way around. Be sure to make a firm seal or the filling may leak during baking.
- With the palm of your hand, flatten the top of each log to prevent an air pocket from forming between the filling and the dough.
- Line a 12-by-18-inch baking sheet with parchment paper. Transfer the logs to the baking sheet. With a fork, prick them decoratively, making about two dozen pricks in each log.
- Bake for 20 minutes.
- While the cookies bake, prepare the egg wash by whisking together the egg, 1 tablespoon water, and the vanilla.
- Remove the baking sheet from the oven and brush the two logs generously with the egg wash. (You won't need it all.)
- Return the baking sheet to the oven and continue baking until the logs are caramel brown and firm to the touch, 5 to 10 minutes.
- Cool on the baking sheet for about 10 minutes, then cool completely on a rack.
- With a serrated knife, slice on the diagonal into cookies about ⅓ inch wide. ▲





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NIAF NEWS

A PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL ITALIAN AMERICAN FOUNDATION



NIAF's 37th Anniversary Gala

On October 12-13, 2012, the National Italian American Foundation celebrated its 37th anniversary at the Washington Hilton, in the nation's capital, with a fantastic weekend of social activities, seminars, wine and food, music and partying, all culminating that Saturday evening with 1,500 guests attending at the annual black-tie Awards Dinner.

If you couldn't make it to this year's Gala, here's a photographic retrospective of what you missed. For a full review and more photos of the Gala, please visit NIAF's website at www.niaf.org.

And mark your calendars now for next year's Anniversary Gala, October 25-26 at the Washington Hilton, in Washington, D.C.



U.S. Supreme Court Justice Samuel A. Alito Jr. and NIAF Vice Chair Patricia De Stacy Harrison

31



Among those at the head table, (front row from left) NIAF Vice Chair Patricia de Stacy Harrison; NIAF honoree Ralph Izzo, chairman, president and CEO of Public Service Enterprise Group Incorporated; NIAF Historian Judge Dominic Massaro; Princess Beatrice of Borbone of the Two Sicilies; and former ambassador Francesco Paolo Fulci, president of Ferrero SpA.



Gala master of ceremonies and MLB All-Star Mike Piazza



NIAF Board members Robert V. Allegrini and Anita Bevacqua McBride

NIAF President Joseph V. Del Raso and NIAF Chief Operating Officer John M. Viola address gala guests.



Honoree Letizia Moratti, president of Friends of San Patrignano, and Italy's Ambassador to the United States Claudio Bisogniero



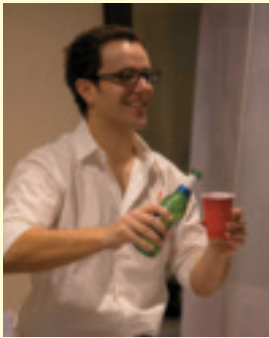
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NIAF's 37th Anniversary Gala



NIAF Chairman Jerry Colangelo, Gala honoree Geno Auriemma, head coach of Women's Basketball at the University of Connecticut, and ESPN sports commentator Tony Realì



Among those at NIAF Central's marketplace: David Greco of Mike's Deli, Giuseppe Desilvio of Peroni and Aliza Giammatteo of Roots in the Boot.

Honoree Mark Del Rosso, COO and executive vice president of Audi of America, accepts award with his son Anthony



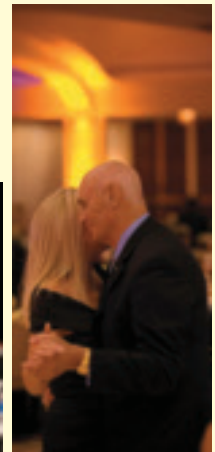
32



U.S. Olympic soccer star Hope Solo (right) and manager Whitney Unruh



Friday night featured jazz singer Steve Tyrell and his band, with a partying crowd, open bars, dining and dancing; NIAF Vice Chairman Joseph Della Ratta dances with Sheila Bechert.



NIAF Treasurer Gabriel A. Battista, Gala Chairman and NIAF Board member John F. Scarpa, and NIAF Board Member Robert E. Carlucci and Aileen Carlucci



Sommelier Luigi Diotaiuti, owner and chef of Al Tiramisu restaurant in Washington, D.C., oversees the Calabria wine tasting.



Tom and Roseann Vecchio, of Sterling, Va., celebrated 65 years of marriage by attending the Gala as an anniversary gift.



NIAF Board Member Kenneth J. Aspromonte finds his sign.

At the Celebrity Auction Luncheon, former NIAF President Salvatore J. Zizza won the Fiat.





Photos: Carlo Piccolo

NIAF Executive Vice President Dr. John P. Rosa and others view the palace's artwork.

NIAF Board Meets in Naples

In September, at the invitation of Princess Beatrice de Bourbon des Deux Siciles, NIAF Board members and friends visited Naples, Italy, and the 18th-century Royal Palace of Caserta (Campania, Italy), inspired by the Palace of Versailles.



NIAF President Joseph V. Del Raso (center) and a contingent of NIAF Board members, spouses and friends touring the Royal Palace of Caserta.

NIAF Hosts Dinner in Tampa Honoring Republican National Convention

On August 27, the National Italian American Foundation hosted a dinner honoring the 2012 Republican National Convention in Tampa, Fla. Two members of our Board of Directors, Hon. Anita McBride and Mark Valente III managed the event at Donatello Italian Restaurant.



NIAF Board Member Anita Bevacqua McBride and Rep. Pat Tiberi.



NIAF Board Member Mark Valente III and Virginia Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli



New Jersey Governor Chris Christie with NIAF Board Member Hon. Mike Ferguson and Rep. Phil Gingrey (middle)

NIAF Cohosts Reception at Democratic National Convention

On September 3, NIAF co-hosted a reception with the Italian American Democratic Leadership Council (IADLC) honoring the Italian American Delegates at the 2012 Democratic National Convention in Charlotte, N.C.

Maryland State Senator Jim Rosapepe of the IADLC oversaw the reception at Fiamma Italian Restaurant. Italian American delegates from across the country, NIAF Board Member Hon. Capri Cafaro, former White House Deputy Chief of Staff Jim Messina, NIAF Member Bob Blancato, Congressmen Frank Pallone Jr. and Bill Pascrell, among others, attended.



NIAF Board Member and Ohio State Senator Capri Cafaro, Wisconsin House Leader Peter Barca, Maryland State Senator Jim Rosapepe and Bob Blancato



Congressman Bill Pascrell addresses the reception

Photos: Ally Glavas



Jim Messina (President Obama's campaign manager) addressing the reception, with NIAF Council Member and IADLC Chairman Bob Blancato and Maryland State Senator and IADLC Vice Chairman Jim Rosapepe



Villa Taverna Book Reception

On September 19, several members of NIAF's leadership travelled to Rome to attend a reception and book presentation at Villa Taverna, home of the U.S. ambassador to Italy.

The project to publish the book on the history of Villa Taverna, a magnificent structure that dates back to the 16th century, was sponsored by NIAF, the Bank of Italy, BNL and BNP Paribas Group.



Ambassador Thorne with NIAF President Joseph V. Del Raso and daughter Katherine Del Raso



U.S. Ambassador to Italy David H. Thorne and his wife Rose Thorne with the Villa Taverna book



Ambassador and Mrs. Thorne with NIAF Board Member Mark Valente III and wife Claudia Valente

Photos: Carlo Piccolo

N.Y. Golf Reception and Tournament



NIAF Board Member John F. Scarpa, NIAF President Joseph V. Del Raso and NIAF Regional Vice President Nicholas R. Caiazza for Greater New York at the New York Golf Tournament

On June 13, NIAF sponsored a reception at the Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum in New York City, kicking off the NIAF 8th Annual New York Golf Tournament, held on August 13 at the Old Westbury Golf & Country Club. Michael Gargiulo, co-anchor for WNBC's "Today in New York" served as master of ceremonies.

Elissa Ruffino

34

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MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

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

JANUARY

NIAF Voyage of Discovery Application Deadline

Date: January 31

Contact Alexandra Dall at 202-939-3118 or adall@niaf.org

MARCH

The Chairman's Golf Invitational

Date: March (TBA)

Location: Wigwam Resort, Litchfield Park, Ariz.

Hosted by NIAF Chairman Jerry Colangelo. Contact Jerry Jones at 202-939-3102 or jerry@niaf.org

NIAF Scholarship Application Deadline

Date: March 1

Contact Alexandra Dall at 202-939-3118 or adall@niaf.org

APRIL

NIAF New York Spring Extravaganza

Date: April 4

Location: Cipriani 42nd Street New York, N.Y.

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

OCTOBER

NIAF 38th Anniversary Gala Weekend

Date: October 25-26

Location: Washington Hilton Washington, D.C.

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

Trips include round-trip flights from New York (JFK) and other amenities. Costs range from \$2,999 to \$3,999 per person based on double occupancy and month of departure. For information and reservations, contact: Marianna Pisano at mpisano@unitours.com or call 800-777-7432.

Mediterranean Cruises

Trek Tours Ltd. presents 10-day Mediterranean cruises through the end of 2012 and in the coming year. For details or to book your cruise, contact Pam Salimeno at Trek Tours, at 1-800-370-0357 or visit www.trektours.com.



Pay tribute to your parents, grandparents and ancestors who sacrificed so much in search of a better life! To purchase a custom-engraved commemorative NIAF Walk of Honor brick at the entrance of The NIAF headquarters in Washington, D.C., contact 202-939-3122 or visit www.niaf.org/walkofhonor.



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To Remain

A Story of the C



Giuseppe Cuteri



Francesca Armocida



Nicola Calabrese



Caterina Pultrone



Fortunata Carnuccio



“Paesano” Andrea Procopio



Raffaella Sinopoli



Francesco Lucifero

What does it mean to stay in one place? To remain where you were born and raised despite multitudes of friends and family leaving each year for the promise of a better life?

This question came up again and again during my stay in Monasterace, a small seaside town in Calabria, Italy. Despite the beautiful landscape, unbelievable bounty of fruits and vegetables, and the calming sight of the sea, Monasterace Superiore has a veil of melancholy covering everything from the crumbling castle walls to the strong yet graceful lonesome poppies that sprout in desolate spots of stone.

Calabrese people are known worldwide as having “testa-dura,” referring to being stubborn. Though this may be true, it comes from a hard life. Hot sun, hard work, cities plagued with emigration and the average age always rising. The people who remain in Calabrian mountain towns are like the red poppies that grow and bloom there in the cracked stones—beautiful, resilient and rare.

Hard work is a fact of life in Monasterace, and for





Here

the Calabrian Town of Monasterace

Story and Photos by Calcagno Cullen



Its panoramic location along the southern Ionian coast of Italy, Monasterace derives its name from the Byzantine "monasteraki," referring to the monastery site in its seaside hamlet of Monasterace Marina.

all of the hot and crooked stone steps, old age is put on hold for as long as possible. Andrea Procopio, who is 83 and as flirtatious as a teenager, limberly hops up on his donkey every morning to go to the farm. His hands, permanently stained with earth and wrinkles, tell his story.

Andrea's work varies from day to day to keep up with the ever changing needs of the landscape around him. One day he may be going through brush and weeds to find wild oregano, and the next he's harvesting buckets of fresh figs with his friend Nicolino. If there was one thing that seems constant, it is that every afternoon he returns to his wife for a large meal, usually pasta, and some conversation and laughter before a well-deserved afternoon break.

Andrea and the other residents of Monasterace are both the

inspiration and the subject of the art that I created while there. Upon my arrival, I quickly realized that as breathtaking as the countryside and medieval buildings are, what truly makes this town special are its people, the stories they tell, and their devotion to their home.

Artist Rose Taverniti linked me to this place through her ingenious artist-in-residence program, Lo Studio dei Nipoti. The pilot year was 2012. Taverniti was originally brought to Monasterace, as many Italian Americans come to find themselves in a small Southern Italian town, through her family tree. She has cousins here and found herself absolutely inspired by the old buildings and history of the town, creating a series of beautiful doorway drawings. Taverniti saw something poetic about bringing



Author and photographer Calcagno Cullen with Monasterace resident Mario Pultrone





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- 8 Breakfasts and 7 Dinners (*with wine and mineral water*)
- Lunch at “La Certosa”
- Light Lunch and Wine Tasting at “Dievole Winery”
- Lunch and Wine Tasting at Local Restaurant in Montepulciano
- Rome by Night Tour

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Reggia dei Savoia • Aosta • Cogne

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- May 13, 2013 – \$2999
- June 10, 2013 – \$3399
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- Sept. 23, 2013 – \$2999
- *Single supplement cost \$378*

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- Truffle Hunting Followed by a Traditional Lunch
- Wine Tasting at “Casa Vinicola Orsolani”
- Lunch at a Local Restaurant in Cogne
- Lunch and Wine Tasting at “Tenuta Montemagno”

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Southern Italian American artists back to Southern Italy to create, and so began the residency, a “long-lasting spiral across the sea.”

The program is slowly introducing the people of Monasterace to contemporary art. As unlikely a pairing as it is to make an 80-year-old farmer into a lover of conceptual abstract art, the people here are embracing the artists. They are curious about what is being made in their town.

My own art isn't about making objects. I struggle regularly to explain my interactive projects that sit at the intersection of sociology and journalism as being art at all. It became clear to me that what I needed to do while in Monasterace was document the community and bring recognition to the amazing people who have chosen to remain in such a difficult yet beautiful place.

Walking through Monasterace at dawn is a slow and beautiful event. Everyone sitting outside, sharing coffee and gossip, wanting to know: “Who are you? Where are you going? Would you like a cafe?”

I fumble through my poor Italian with them until my head hurts, desperate to understand why they are the ones who chose to stay when my family and all those other multitudes of Southern Italian Americans chose to leave. It's impossible to ignore the beauty here. The view from Superiore to the sea is enough of a sight to last anyone a lifetime. But, time and again, as I converse with the elderly here, they tell me with deep voices and heavy eyelids how their town has crumbled, how in their youth the town was full of people and babies and laughter and now so many have moved or died.

Just this past year has seen the closing of the only post office in Superiore. There is no bank, and without a car you are left either to hitchhike or hop on the once-daily school bus that takes the few children in Superiore down the hill at dawn and back up in the afternoon.

The town's only bus stop now serves more as a public bench, a place for people such as Nicola Calabrese to rest his feet in the shade and look over his photo collection. Nicola, an old war hero who suffers from chronic psoriasis, finds daily solace in a small pile of photos and letters that he looks over devotedly and shares with anyone willing to listen. The photos are of his family and of him when he was younger. There's also a letter from a Canadian family, perhaps *cugini* of his, emigrated from another generation. He treasures the photo of him and this family.

As I meander through town, I spot Fortunata Carnuccia beckoning me, standing tall between the beaded curtains in her doorway. She



Eighty-three year old Andrea Procopio travelling by donkey

is 83, with a face of a pillow with two shiny eyes sparkling through the folds of her eyelids. Wisps of grey hair escape her neat bun to create a glowing halo around her soft face. When I approach, my hand is instantly enveloped in her palms, cushions of succulent warmth.

Today, she immediately jumps into telling me of her deceased husband, her children and her grandchildren, emphasizing her loneliness now that the homes on her street are vacant and that most of her family has left for work in other cities. She brings

me inside to show me photos of her husband from World War II, and before I know it I am being fed fresh cut strawberries and sweetened espresso. I spot an oxygen tank in the corner and we begin to discuss her failing health. Diabetes, emphysema and a troublesome hip that was broken 10 years ago all keep her from leaving her home.

Fortunata then asks me directly unapologetic questions. I should point out that this is common here. Everyone asks how old you are and aren't afraid to tell you that they think you're fat. I've already been told by many that my name and the scar on my face are ugly. I don't let it bother me because, for one, it's the truth. And, for two, Nico “Un Curioso” Tedesco told me that it won't matter once I'm dead, which is exactly right.

Fortunata is asking about children this morning. “Are you married? How old are you? Why don't you have any children yet?” All this is followed by the advice that I'm getting too old and I need to start now. This is also a common conversation around town, and I have been told consistently that I am old and that when my husband comes I should conceive right away ... in Monasterace.

Fortunata knows I'm in my final week of my stay and begins to ask if I will return. In all honesty, I have no idea if I'll have the opportunity again and the chances are looking slim. However, with her small, hopeful eyes glistening at me over the last strawberry slice, I say simply, “I hope so, maybe next Spring.”

With that she smiles and tells me to bring my new baby next year, pretending to cuddle my future offspring in her arms as she rocks back and forth.

Being here has brought up many questions about life, love, loneliness, strength and persistence. Despite generational, cultural and lingual barriers, I have gotten to know these people. So I thought that perhaps the only way to share who they are and how I have come to know them is visually, through photographs.

Andrea once told me that “*Senza le mani non facciamo niente*” or “Without hands we don't do any-



thing.” These people survive through labor and know-how, recognizing the season for digging wild oregano and understanding where and when to hunt for mushrooms. They know when to pluck the tastiest snails from an orange tree and how to patch their ever-crumbling plaster walls. Their existence is not about progress, not about getting a promotion or a new car or fashionable shoes. Rather, this sort of existence is about survival, keeping their stomachs fed, their health good, and enjoying what free time they have with the friends and family that remain.

Down the hill a half mile or so from the main piazzas of Monasterace is a small speckling of houses, an extension of the downtown area. In one of these homes lives Francesco Lucifero and his wife Raffaella Sinopoli. Francesco, lovingly called “Lucifero,” or “Lucifer,” by the town, in keeping with both his spunky attitude and his last name, is as much of a farmer as he is a character. When I asked his age, he laughed and told me “*cinquanta*,” 50. I knew this wasn’t the case but humored him as his wife Raffaella shook her head and offered me a Crodino, a bitter citrus soda popular in Italy. I asked him about his work and he described himself as a “*contadino*,” a farmer, but his wife insisted that he was more of a “*paesano*” or countryman than an actual farmer. In the end, Raffaella won and he got the title of “*paesano*” for his photo.

Domenico “Nico” Tedesco is another notable character of Monasterace. Extremely outgoing and generous, Nico came regularly to our apartment with gifts of lemons and arugula, only asking in return that we didn’t tell anyone of his visit out of concern that the neighbors might get jealous. Nico’s *sopranome*, or nickname, is “Un Curioso.” I can’t help but to wonder now if perhaps the only reason he continually visited was because of his insatiable curiosity, collecting lemons as a mere excuse to see what I was up to. He frequently asked where my husband was and wanted



Nico Tedesco

to know if I am religious. Somehow, no matter the question, the conversation always ended with a story from his youth, usually the one about how he met God during a near drowning incident.

Nicolino Anania, a sculptor and handyman, was an invaluable resource in this project. Called “Il Canadese” by the people of Monasterace due to his many years spent in Montreal, he speaks English in an interesting Canadian-Italian accent and is indispensable for both his artistic eye and his interest in helping out with

projects such as mine. He lovingly calls his little Ape truck a “Ferrari.” In many ways he couldn’t be more right, it is a fantastic luxury vehicle. The small truck offers him the freedom to drive to his farm, buy things in the Marina, and even give a friend or two a ride on occasion.

For all of the opulence of food and panoramic views here, the people have a shroud of humility and modesty about them. Many initially refused to have their hands photographed, claiming that they are “*brutto*,” or ugly. I explained over and over again how their hands are beautiful because of the story they tell, how the dirt under their nails and each toughened wrinkle explains the life that they’ve lived, and the work that they do.

Almost all of the people that were photographed asked me if it will be shown in the United States and were excited about the prospect. I believe it was seen as a way to travel, and a promise that perhaps some of the people who left them may know that they are still there, in Monasterace, persisting. ▲

Calcagno Cullen is an artist and educator living in San Francisco, Calif. Her work has been shown in exhibits throughout the United States and abroad. In 2012, she was an artist in residence in Calabria, Italy, where she befriended and photographed many of the residents of the town of Monasterace.



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MAKING IT IN

Designer Jane August Fashions Her Luxury Handbags with Italian Artisan Craftsmanship

New York born and bred, designer Jane August is more Italian than many of us.

American in name only, the fast-talking, hard-charging August has adopted Italy as her native country and has red, white and green blood coursing through her veins.

August's love for Italy began with her first trip there as a teenager. Rome and Florence captivated her with their art, architecture, cuisine and, most of all, shopping. In the markets, August vividly remembers, it was the smell and feel of leather that made her swoon. And that moment marked the birth of her professional passion. She left for home with bags brimming with the bounty of her shopping spree—leather boxes, in every size, shape and color.

August knew that she had to go back to Italy; the culture and its impact were in her blood. But first, her career path took her to California and a Macy's training program where she learned the basics of buying and design. August travelled the world as a buyer for The



Jane August Murray Hill, \$3,300



ITALY

By Carla De Landri

Limited and finally returned to her beloved Italy for the superior textiles and manufacturing.

August's admiration for the beauty of Italian craftsmanship led her to research and understand the special qualities of Italian design, material and production, the factors that make the Made-in-Italy label so valuable in the modern world of mass production.

What makes "Made in Italy" so special and so desirable? For August, that authentic Italian quality begins with the luxury leather she finds only in Italy.

"Beautiful objects and creativity drive my love for Italian craftsmanship," says August, adding that Italian leather is unsurpassed and that no country competes. "The Renaissance did not happen by accident. No one cures leather like an Italian. Even the lowest grade of Italian leather is far superior to that of any other country."

Jane August left the corporate retail world behind in 2000 and created her company with the initial focus on the design and manu-

facture of luxury handbags. And there was no place other than her "adopted" home, Italy, where she even considered making her designs. "I knew I had to produce my collection in Italy," she says, "the vision was luxury and craftsmanship that could only be created in that country."

August began the business modestly, with orders in three styles and three colors for \$70,000.

Her biggest challenge striking out on her own and being an entrepreneur was financing. "You can have the most incredible, beautiful product, but if you do not have the ability financially to do it, it just doesn't happen, she says. "Cash flow is a very, very intricate part of doing any business."

This is a particular challenge with artisan, hand-made production, but August stays true to the timeless Italian craftsmanship that has always served as her inspiration.

What defines a Jane August design is elegance. August finds her inspiration in vintage fashion magazines, European flea markets and cherished photos of her sophisticated mother dressed in Italian designers for dinner parties. August reinterprets the classics, bringing an original and fresh approach, creating a modern sensibility all her own.

But it all comes back to Italy. Playing with proportion, hardware and materials, a contemporary chain handle evokes the opulent polish and design of an Italian 1940s-era link bracelet, while an exquisitely shaped evening bag brings to mind a vintage Florentine coin purse. Even the names of her handbags

harken back to Italy—the Dante, the Via Roma, the Ponte, the Rossini, the Capri.

During the past 12 years, August has produced her handbags in seven factories spanning Italy from Naples to Varese. But she soon saw a shift in the manufacturing. "I started to figure out that many of the factories where my bags were made were not near where I would place the orders," she says.

And it shocked her to discover that her bags, though technically "Made in Italy," were being produced by imported Chinese workers. "All around Florence, I started to see Chinese workers, Chinese restaurants and Chinese children playing soccer in the streets," she says.

Over the past decade, Chinese workers have become more numerous and noticeable in Tuscany. The city of Prato is now home to the largest concentration of Chinese in all of Europe, according to The New York Times. Some of the workers are legal; some are not. ➤



Jane August Sutter Street Python Tote, \$3,300



Jane August Murray Hill, in python and fur, \$3,200



Jane August St. Honore, in python, \$2,600



Jane August Viola handbag, in Hair calf, \$2,000

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Jane August Tricolor, in Python, \$2,700

There are reports of around-the-clock, assembly-line factories that pay workers a mere \$2 an hour. Once a major fabric producer and exporter, Prato is now responsible for a quarter of Italy's fabric imports from China.

August was determined that her luxury handbags would be made in Italy by the finest Italian craftsmen, and not by an imported labor force bending the rules for the sake of keeping the valuable "Made in Italy" label. So she began the search for a new factory, one where she could have a closer relationship to the manufacturing process.

One of August's Italian craftsmen, a handbag hardware maker, recommended a friend whose factory was looking for new business. In one hour, August was in the Mercanti Produzione Pelletteria factory in Fucecchio, near Florence. And this was a match. "The Mercanti factory was everything that I wanted," August recalls, "it is 100 percent Italian. There are no



Jane August's Italian hardware maker



Antonio and Sandra Mercanti with granddaughter Viola. The Mercantis own and operate the Mercanti Produzione Pelletteria in Fucecchio, Italy, the artisan factory where they make handbags for Jane August by hand.

production lines for piecework. It has the charm of old world and Renaissance craftsmanship that I had longed for."

To call the Mercanti operation a factory is really a misnomer. It bears no resemblance to what Americans would consider a factory. There is no production line with workers performing the same repetitive tasks. There is no foreman, unless you include the grandmother who cooks lunch each day for her son, the owner, Antonio Mercanti, and his wife Sandra. It is really a family workshop. Even the sewing machines are Old World Italian. "The older model machines have a totally different needle for the product that I create," says August.

Just one person makes each bag from start to finish. It does not go down an assembly line. Someone is actually looking at the bag as it is assembled.

"Working in a small factory with a husband-and-wife team is like nothing else," August muses.

"At 12:30, it is time for lunch, [and] that means a quick trip to the market and home for a home-cooked meal. The grandmother is there with fresh pasta and vegetables." By 2:30, they are all back at work hovering around the design table creating and crafting the next season's luxury must-haves. For Jane August, *la dolce vita* doesn't get any sweeter.

August spends three to five days a month in Italy working with the Mercanti family and with her trusted agent, Donata Fontinari. "She is like a sister to me," says August. And Donata, too, is "Made in Italy," in fact 100 percent Florentine.

Today, August has expanded her handbag collection using ultra luxury skins like python and crocodile. She works directly with a tannery in Tuscany and chooses colors and skins from hundreds of samples. The same tannery also supplies the big Italian luxury brands Prada and Gucci.

This season, the collection is ➤



Jane August
Via Roma handbag,
in Python, \$2,100

tacular. In newspapers, fashion magazines, blogs and department stores, Jane August handbags are raved about and their patrimony praised: “These truly luxurious creations are meticulously crafted in Florence, in an elegant assortment of styles for day and evening.” And, “the American designer, who when not travelling lives in Manhattan, has chosen Italy for the artisanal manufacture of her sophisticated creations.”

The Jane August logo, an arc embodying the connection be-

tween past, present and future elegance, symbolizes August’s belief in the inherent value of ageless fine design and confident individual style. That logo hovers protectively over the sacred words “Made in Italy.” Jane August is a one-woman ambassador of that label. “I am proud to contribute to the support of Italian craftsmanship,” she says. ▲

Carla De Landri is a veteran journalist who is now a communications consultant. She is a lover of all things Italian.

comprised of 15 unique styles including tote bags, clutches and handbags. The bags are sold abroad at Harvey Nichols and Bloomingdale’s. In this country, luxury boutiques from Texas to California carry the Jane August brand. The leather handbags range from \$800 to \$1,900; and the python handbags from \$1,400 to \$3,500. August’s website handles bespoke or custom creations.

Like the bags themselves, the reviews of them have been spec-



The Old World Italian sewing machine used to stitch Jane August’s handbags

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Jovanotti in America

Italy's Biggest Rock-Rap Star Attracts a U.S. Following

By Laura Blomquist



When one of Italy's most famous singer-songwriters, Lorenzo "Jovanotti" Cherubini, returned to the United States this summer for his second U.S. tour, he brought to stages across the country his energy and vibrancy, delivering original rap, rock, funk and eclectic lyrics—in Italian.

Not to worry. Audiences don't have to understand the Italian language to get into the groove. His onstage enthusiasm melts language barriers and brings concertgoers to their feet, dancing to the upbeat ritmo that is Jovanotti.

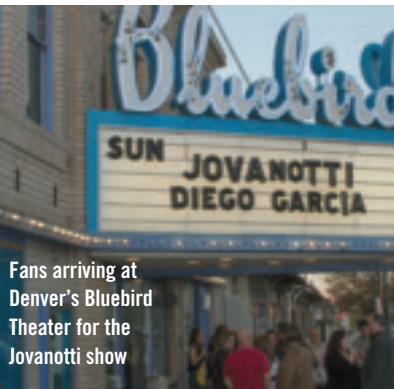
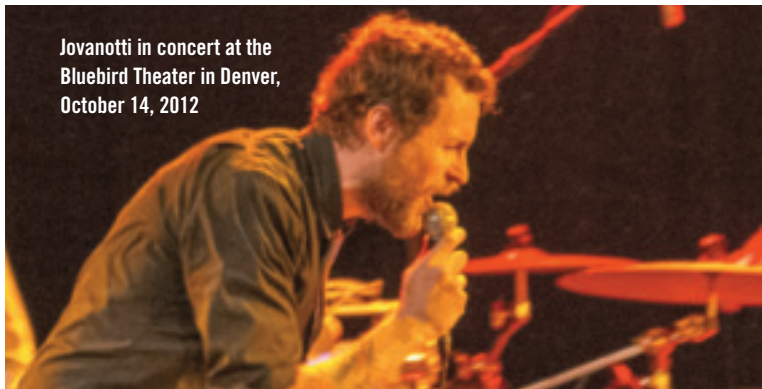
An hour before his mid-October concert at the Bluebird Theater in Denver, the Italian pop star, who is often called "The Bruce Springsteen of Italy," and who credits American rap for his earliest inspiration, took time out backstage to discuss how language, love and American culture have influenced his career

recording company founded in 2000 by Dave Matthews of The Dave Matthews Band.

Many Italians and Italian-Americans here were excited about Jovanotti's 2012 North American tour that opened at Toronto's Luminato Festival in June and ended in late October at The Grammy Museum in Los Angeles. They got to see their favorite singer up close in smaller venues—a rarity for fans of this artist who sells out entire stadiums in Italy.

Humbled to be performing in the United States, Jovanotti says that his U.S. tour allowed him "to see

Jovanotti in concert at the Bluebird Theater in Denver, October 14, 2012



Fans arriving at Denver's Bluebird Theater for the Jovanotti show



and, more importantly, his music.

"American music is so big, huge, various, amazing and astonishing," he says. So much so that there's even room for a pop musician from Tuscany: America is "a country always open to new flavors," he says.

His professional name linguistically derived from giovanotto (young man), Jovanotti began his career as a disc jockey in Milan but has emerged over the past 25 years as a charismatic artist, achieving rock star status in Italy, Europe and Latin America, and selling more than five million albums worldwide.

Earlier this year, he jumped across the pond to live with his family in New York and release his first retrospective album, "Italia 1988 to 2012." The collection of what is essential Jovanotti targeting an American audience (it even includes a new song in English) is his first U.S. album, released by ATO Records, the

more clearly, and feel a sense of nostalgia" before he returns to Italy for his 2013 tour in Italy. Overall, however, he describes his experience as "simply beautiful because [the United States] is the most important country in the world" in terms of its cultural relevance.

Despite smaller audiences than those in his homeland, Jovanotti gave his signature full-bodied performances at the Denver concert. His interaction with the audience, his onstage persona and fun loving antics, draw in those familiar and those newly introduced to his music.

"We're here to have fun, right?" he yells out to the audience at one point. And, in fact, his next tune is so upbeat that everyone in the theatre is dancing, waving and singing. The performance, like all his performances, is intense, fun, engaging and memorable.

Born in Rome and raised in the countryside of





Tuscany, Jovanotti was denied much the diverse musical influences found in other larger metropolitan areas. But the vibrancy of his stay New York City this year has shined a new light on his music. That new English song on the album? It's "New York for Life."

Says Jovanotti: "I didn't grow up in an urban society. Rome is another thing. It is not New York, not San Francisco, not Detroit, and not Denver."

Visiting these major U.S. cities, Jovanotti found the same special energy as when he discovered hip-hop at age 14. Though not the *vita urbana*, Tuscany did provide free-streaming radio that played American music and altered the young Italian's life. So "coming to the U.S. is like coming to the motherland for my music . . .," he says, "returning to my roots."

Jovanotti says his stay here is a great opportunity to learn about this country's music industry, to experience its cultural attributes, and to gain a better understanding of American values. And living in New York allows him to focus more on his musical aspirations.

Jovanotti wants to sprinkle his own spice into the mix. He compares American music to an ice cream shop: "[in a *gelateria*] there is vanilla, chocolate and a lot of other flavors. Then, there is someone that creates a new brand. That is what I'm trying to do."

This flavor permeates his music as he integrates bossa nova and hip-hop sounds with Sergio Mendez, evokes the sounds of summer with eclectic San Francisco Bay area artist Michael Franti, and is equally as comfortable as he performs with the Rome Symphony in the ancient theater in Taormina. His music is timeless; even his classic hits from the '90s, "L'Ombelico del Mondo" or "Ragazzo Fortunato," attract listeners and, after 20 years, Italian concertgoers still harmonize along when he sings them.

Over time, Jovanotti's music evolved under the influence of international, religious, philosophical and political ideals forming a distinctive political character. In the 1990s, after travelling to South Africa, the Middle East, India, South America and Cuba, he released several albums bringing his political views to the forefront. At the Sanremo Music Festival in 2000, he performed in support of cancelling Third World debt. Later, he teamed with U2's Bono in the international campaign called Cancel Africa's Debt. Throughout his career, he has promoted social justice through collaboration with international organizations such as Emergency, Amnesty International and Live8.

More recently, in 2010, Jovanotti spoke on human rights and music at a Harvard University conference. In 2012, he returned to Italy in the middle of his U.S. tour

to perform with other major Italian artists, filling a stadium of 150,000 people in a benefit concert for the earthquake victims of Emilia-Romagna in Northern Italy.

His music also stretches from political activism to education. More and more, Italian language instructors are using Jovanotti's simple lyrics in the classroom to teach vocabulary and the rhythm of the language, as well as modern Italian culture. When asked about his music being used to teach Italian, he says "pop music is the language used in . . . everyday language."

In fact, it's how Jovanotti learned English. "I learned English through the music," he says. "Music is always the best way to learn a language."

Or through love, he adds: "If you fall in love with an Italian, you will learn Italian in one month. If you fall in love with an Italian who likes music, it is half that time . . . and always, the best way is with love."

A romantic at heart, Jovanotti admits that many of his songs are love ballads, as if he is serenading someone. "I always have the intention of catching somebody's attention when I write songs," he says. "Some musicians write music in a very intimate way, as if they are talking to themselves or writing a book. My case, I am always searching for somebody to listen to me."

Jovanotti's "fango" brings people together with common, ordinary experiences such as "the perfume of the flowers, the smell of the city, the sound of scooters, the taste of the pizza." Through singing about shared experiences, he creates connections between himself and his listeners. "I know that I am not alone, even when I'm alone," he says.

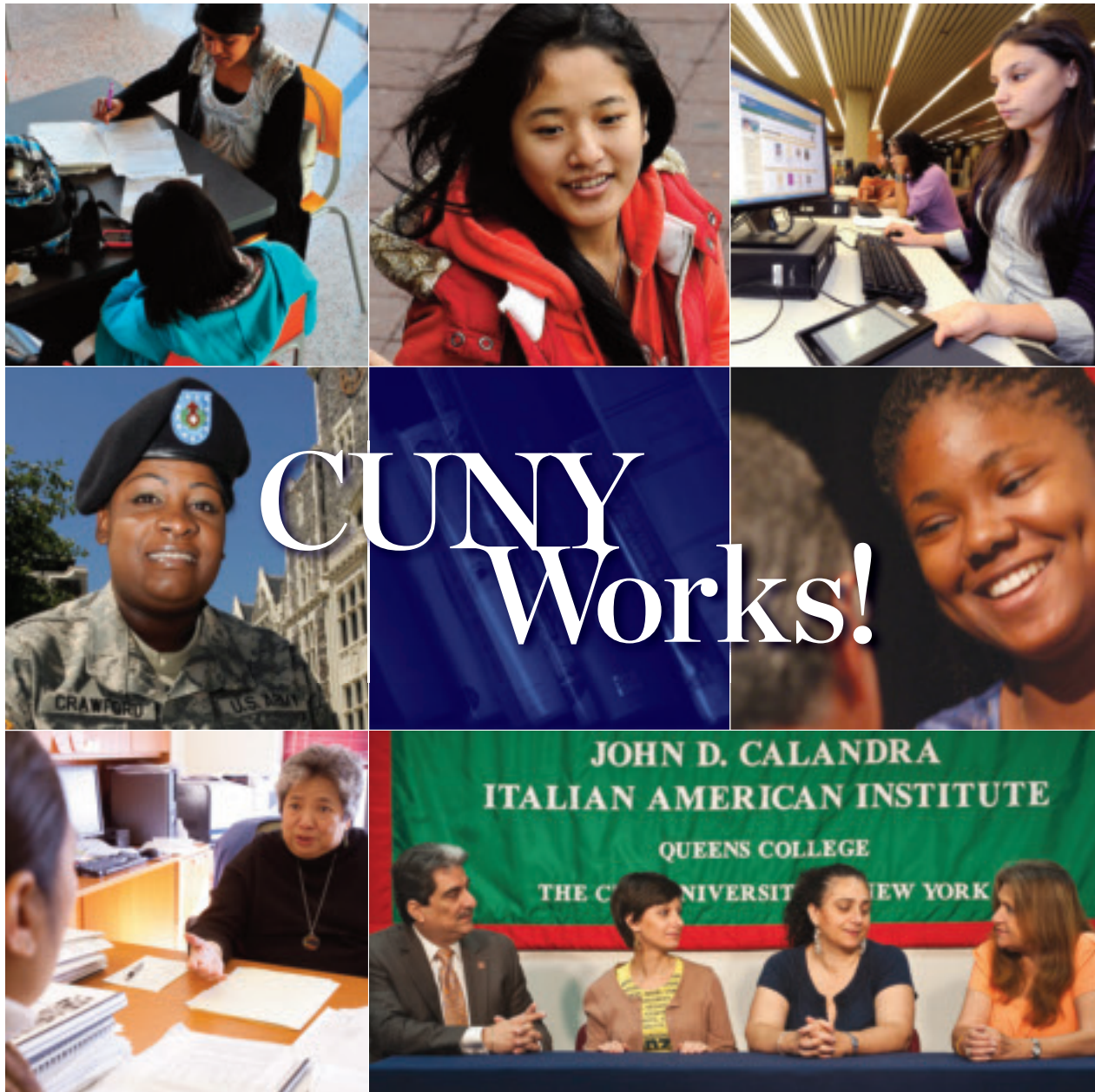
He believes the music itself expresses universal human experience. "I don't have a message," he says, "music is the message. The message is life. It is celebrating life with its beauty, anger and contradictions, but always celebrating . . . Everybody who does music is always celebrating life in a way. That's what I do."▲

Laura Blomquist is a Colorado-based economist who worked and studied in Italy, learned Italian in the classroom, and spent most of her free time in Italy listening to Italian music.



Jovanotti chats before the concert with friends Vittorio Gallianari and his son Danilo Gallianari (center), an Italian basketball player now with the NBA's Denver Nuggets.





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The Holidays Italian American Reading List

Finding the right holiday gifts can be an annual challenge to your yuletide sanity, not to mention your pocketbook. That's why a book can be a perfect gift. As author Neil Gaiman puts it, "Books make great gifts because they have whole worlds inside of them. And it's much cheaper to buy somebody a book than it is to buy them the whole world."

The point is, here's our holiday list of some books that might make great gifts. As always, some of them are critically acclaimed and some critically overlooked. But all of them are written by Italian American authors or are of interest to Italian American readers, or both.

Because the beginning of a book can sometimes tell you more than its cover, we provide the cover and the first sentence or two, or even a more telling passage. We add a brief review or summary, just enough tease to get your attention. Alas, you probably won't find the holiday spirit in any of these books. But you might find the holiday spirit giving one of them to someone.

Buonna lettura!

By Don Oldenburg



Discovering Michelangelo: The Art Lover's Guide to Understanding Michelangelo's Masterpieces

By William E. Wallace
Universe; 260 pages; \$45

Beginning: When Michelangelo finished the large tondo of the Holy Family that hangs today in the Uffizi Gallery, he sent the found painting to its patron, Agnolo Doni, along with a note asking for payment of seventy ducats....

An exceptional gift for the art lover in your life, this beautiful guide combines the lush look of a coffee-table book with a fascinating analysis revealing the history, symbols and secrets behind Michelangelo's famous artworks, from "The Last Judgment" and "Doni Tondo" to "Pietà" and "Creation of Adam."

The author, William E. Wallace, is a professor of art history at Washington University in St. Louis and an internationally renowned authority on Michelangelo and his contemporaries, having written six books on Michelangelo, including "Michelangelo: The Complete Sculpture, Painting, Architecture." Scholarly, yet totally accessible, this book includes 50 full-page, full-color reproductions, and an innovative design that lets readers overlay each masterpiece with a page of die-cut windows and captions that focus on important details and hidden symbols.

In this year of the Sistine Chapel's 500th anniversary, no one needs to be reminded of the inspired aesthetics of Michelangelo's works. Why not set the ceiling higher, and gain greater insight into one of the world's greatest artists and his art. ➤

BOOKS

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The Ideal Museum: An Art Lover's Dream Collection

By Philippe Daverio

Rizzoli Books; 352 pages; \$50

Description of Diego Velázquez's "The Triumph of Bacchus": If you are sensitive, I would suggest observing the Spanish painter's drunkard from a distance, for if you get too close you will smell, mixed with the stench of sweat, the odor of wine, and I guarantee it is not of high quality....

Imagine if you could assemble, masterpiece by masterpiece, your own perfect art museum? That's the premise of this remarkable study by one of Italy's most renowned contemporary art historians, Philippe Daverio. This book is like setting loose a kid in a candy story. A professor at the University of Architecture in Palermo and of art history at the Politecnico in Milan, Daverio is the director of the famed art magazine *Art e Dossier*, and host of Italy's leading arts TV series "Passepartout." In other words, he's got the chops.



So what did he collect? To name a few: Dürer's "Portrait of a Young Venetian Woman," Edouard Manet's "Olympia," Botticelli's "Primavera" and Caravaggio's "Young Sick Bacchus." While the 250 color images of chosen masterpieces from the best of Western art are mesmerizing, and their placement in his ideal museum a fascinating exercise, the author's descriptions are not only informed and insightful, they're practically poetry.

Turning Point

By Charles Santangelo

Outskirts Press; 244 pages; \$25.95

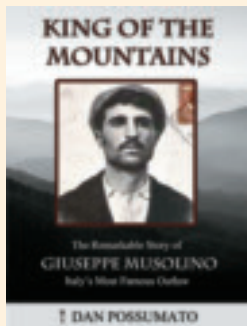
Beginning: "No sign of any bad guys," joked Air Force Lieutenant John "Rawhide" Cunningham from the cockpit of an F-16 Fighting Falcon. Flying at Mach .92 at an altitude of 20,000 feet over Nasiriyah, southern Iraq, the lieutenant seemed puzzled. "Just a lot of sand as far as the eye can see...."

You'll want to read this compelling political thriller by longtime NIAF member and political veteran Charles Santangelo before the 2012 presidential election recedes from current events status to history. Embedded in the context of a love story between a liberal Democratic environmentalist and a conservative Republican Air Force pilot, this



novel is based on political realities that have evolved, and that might have evolved, since the controversial 2000 presidential election when the Supreme Court stopped the recount of votes in Florida. Touching on modern election issues such as swing-vote states, negative campaigning, voting irregularities and divisive partisan politics, the plot also delves into the fictional what-ifs had the 2000 election turned out otherwise, delivering the insight into how our political choices shape our nation.

A White House aide during the Clinton, Bush and Obama administrations, Santangelo knows his way around national politics. And that enables him to bring to life, through some vividly drawn characters and insider-knowledge plotting, a story that fleshes out the problems and promise of American politics today.



King of the Mountains: The Remarkable Story of Giuseppe Musolino

By Dan Possumato
Smoky City Press;
55 pages; \$2.99 (Kindle)

Beginning: "The King of the Mountains is locked in jail, and he

too dreams of the beloved land." – Italian folk song. So began a 1956 Time magazine article noting the death of Giuseppe Musolino...

Nearly sixty years earlier Musolino had been dubbed "King of the Mountains" the by Italian press and his exploits had been front-page news....

Dan Possumato chronicles the life of outlaw Giuseppe Musolino, who from 1899 to 1902 evaded capture, defied the government, and made him a popular legend in Italy. Considered by historians as either "Italy's Robin Hood" or a depraved assassin, this well-researched book lets you decide.



Nonno's Pocket Watch

by Ray M. Vento
Vengiuigno Press;
48 pages; \$14.95

Beginning: Sam and Nonno Pete are sitting at the kitchen table. The morning sun pours into the kitchen through the window.

Sometimes on Friday night, Sam Caruso and his mother stay at his grandparents' house. . . .

Looking for a sweet children's book (ages 5-10) written from an Italian American family perspective? Ray Vento's story about young Sam's relationship with his grandfather is a simple tale of the gift of an old pocket watch that was passed down through generations from Italy to America, and the misfortune that befalls the watch when Sam takes it to school. The book offers lessons about what's important in life, family and heritage, and resolving anger.





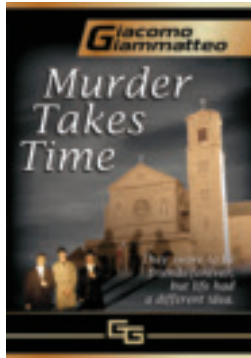
Murder Takes Time

By Giacomo Giammatteo

Inferno Publishing Company; 438 pages; \$17.99

Beginning: He sipped the last of the shitty cup of coffee and stared across the street at Nino Tortella, the guy he was going to kill. Killing was an art, requiring finesse, planning, skill—and above all—patience. Patience had been the most difficult to learn. The killing came naturally. He cursed himself for that. Prayed to God every night for the strength to stop . . .

Sometimes there's nothing like a gritty murder mystery. Giacomo Giammatteo's debut novel has a touch of Sopranos-like crime life, and at times it gets brutal. People behave badly and people die. Toggling between past and present, the plot follows the lives of four close friends who grow up together in a tough Italian-Irish neighborhood where they take a vow to always have each others' backs. Thirty years later, living in Brooklyn, their lives have taken diametrically different paths. And then those paths collide in a murder and investigation that dramatically tests old loyalties.



Giammatteo has adeptly developed these characters and convincing immersed them in a complex coming-of-age plot that speaks to

such larger themes of friendship, relationships, love, loyalty, betrayal, revenge and honor. This suspenseful thriller is more than a gritty murder mystery, it's realistic tragedy, the kind real life poses all the time though not always as poignantly.

Tuscan Blood

By Dick Rosano

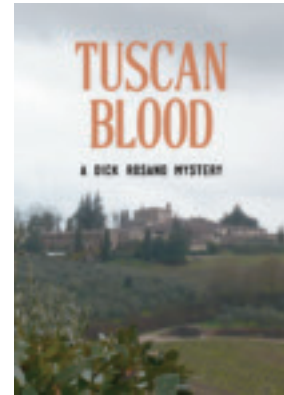
Hang Time Press; 245 pages; \$4.99 (Kindle only)

Beginning: It took a long time for him to reach this decision. Standing now, as he was, hands resting on the stone wall around this loggia, "his porch," peering out at the vines his grandfather had tended for so many years. "How will they fare?" he asked the wind that tickled his nose and rustled the leaves of grape vines heavy with fruit. "How till the vines prosper without Nonno Filippo to talk to them?"

As Dick Rosano's debut novel unfolds, Nonno Filippo has died mysteriously in Tuscany where he was the patriarch of the Trantino wine estate. The narrator is Filippo's namesake grandson, Filippo Trantino, who as a child left Italy for America with his family. Now he returns to investigate what seems to have been no accident at all.

The author is a noted wine, food, and travel writer and the author of "Wine Heritage: The Story of Italian-American Vintners."

And he's a notable winemaker himself, so it should come as no surprise, as he steers Filippo through the beautiful Tuscan landscapes and locales, that the investigation of Nonno's demise takes a back seat to the scenes, fine wine and food of Tuscany. The book is as much a crime novel as it is an authoritative travelogue and wine tutorial, an enjoyable read for Tuscany aficionados in particular.



Juno's Twins

By Michael Milone
Academic Therapy Publications; 240 pages; \$9.95

Beginning: Having learned the art of writing, I am able to tell this story so that others may know of our history. I am

Serena, the sister of Romulus and Remus. Because of them, our people have survived . . .

Author Michael Milone, a nationally recognized research psychologist, never liked the deadly ending of the legend of Romulus and Remus and the founding of Rome. So in this revisionist historical fantasy from 800 B.C., narrated by the brothers' sister, Milone changes the classical ending—and a lot more. For readers, change is good. Written for a general audience, this little book might especially interest high schoolers up on ancient mythology.



Rao's on the Grill

By Frank Pelligrino Jr.
St. Martin's Press; 176 pages; \$35

Beginning: Grilling, barbecue and cooking out. These are words that conjure up mouthwatering thoughts . . .

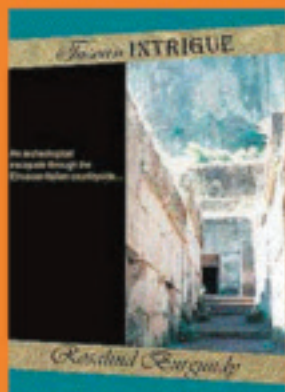
Don't know about you, but grilling through winter is standard culinary artistry at my house. Frank Pelligrino's savory take on grilling Italian, published in June, serves up plenty of inspiration, even in the off season. You may know how nearly impossible it is to get a reservation for one of the 10 tables at Rao's in New York City, but that doesn't mean you can't get a taste of Rao's from this grill-side companion. The cookbook covers Frank's family classics, from grilled seafood salad and grilled steak pizzaiola to veal modenese alla griglia and basic pizza on the grill. Don't wait for summer! ▲



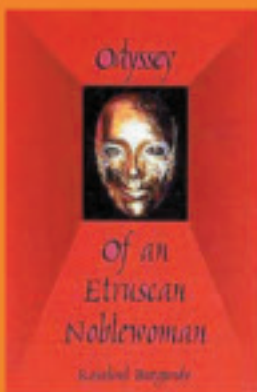


How Italy came to be the Italy We know and love

IMMORTALIZED IN ROSALIND BURGUNDY'S ETRUSCAN HISTORICAL NOVELS



Tuscan Intrigue



Odyssey of an Etruscan Noblewoman

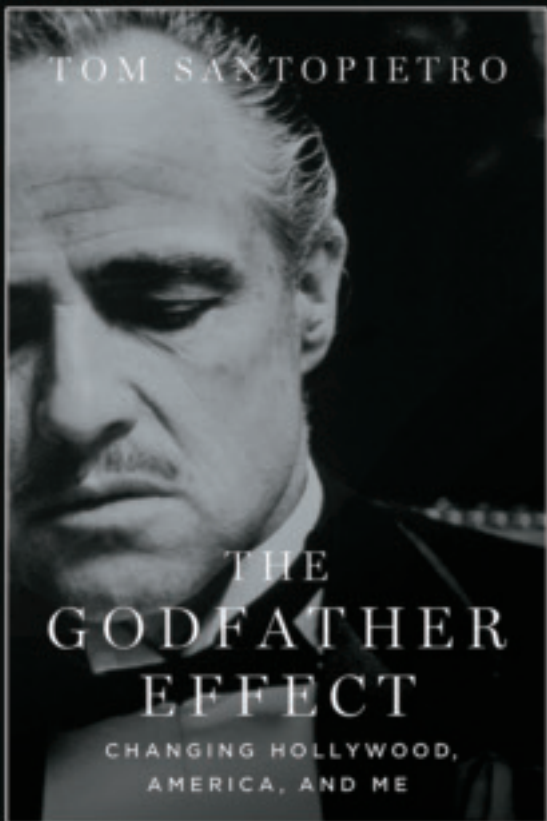


Song of the Flutist

Available from: amazon.com barnesandnoble.com

See: [http:// www.etruscan-italy.com](http://www.etruscan-italy.com) for reviews

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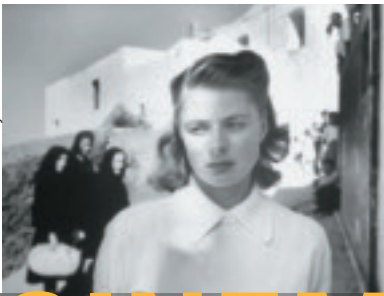
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Photos courtesy of NYFF



CINEMA ITALIANO



ON FILM

Drama at the 50th New York Film Festival

By Maria Garcia

Clockwise from top left: A pregnant Ingrid Bergman on location during the filming of "Stromboli"; Bergman and Rossellini, and Anna Magnani in the late 1940s.

Tragic tales set in Italy, of murder, adultery, treachery and tyranny, were part of the fall cultural scene in New York City this year—and not at the opera.

The 50th New York Film Festival screened three new movies and three classics by Italian and Italian American directors. Standouts among the recently produced films were Paolo and Vittorio Taviani's "Caesar Must Die," a film about a production of Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar" in Rome's Rebibbia prison, and Francesco Patierno's "The War of the Volcanoes," a 52-minute documentary short about the love triangle of Roberto Rossellini, Anna Magnani and Ingrid Bergman. (The third, Brian DePalma's "Passion," is too dreadful to be worthy of consideration here.)

The Festival's classic movies were the director's cut of Michael Cimino's "Heaven's Gate" (1980), Federico Fellini's "Satyricon" (1969), and Francesco Rosi's "The Mattei Affair" (1972). Cimino's Western, about a government-sanctioned land grab in 1892 Wyoming, was released by Criterion on DVD and Blu-Ray, but at this writing there is no word on the fate of the new "Satyricon" print, or on distribution of Rosi's

political thriller about real-life Italian businessman Enrico Mattei. He died under mysterious circumstances in 1962, after helping to secure significant but controversial oil contracts for post-war Italy's energy needs.

In "The War of the Volcanoes," Napoli-born writer-director Patierno depicts the mid-20th century scandal involving the famous director and two celebrated actresses entirely from archival film and still photos of the 1940s and 1950s. There are clips from movies the fiery trio made during this period, most notably Rossellini's "Stromboli" (1950), with Bergman in the leading role, and American director William Dieterle's "Volcano" (1950), which starred Rossellini's spurned lover, Magnani. Filmed simultaneously, a dozen miles apart on different Aeolian islands, both movies were box office flops.

While Rossellini and Magnani lived together in Rome, but never married, Bergman was a wife and mother when she began her affair with the director in 1949. She was also at the height of her beauty and stardom, having garnered an Oscar for "Gaslight" in 1944. During production on "Stromboli," in the midst of a highly publicized divorce and custody fight, Bergman,

then 35, became pregnant with Rossellini's child. Afterward, she was spurned by Hollywood for six years. Magnani, on the other hand, would go on to act in several of her best-known films, including "Bellissima" (1951) and "The Rose Tattoo" (1955), her Oscar-winning performance.

"Stromboli" also marked a turning point for Rossellini. In an interview at the festival, Patierno explained that, afterward, the director turned to television. "He was looking for a truth but one he could no longer find in cinema," he said.

"The War of the Volcanoes," which unfolds chronologically, begins with the tale of Rossellini's cousins whose screenplay the famous director plagiarized to write "Stromboli." It then moves swiftly to the postwar romance of Rossellini and Magnani who met during the filming of "Roma: Città Aperta" (1945), the Italian Neo-Realist classic.

In "The War of the Volcanoes," which at this writing does not have a broadcast date or theatrical release, Patierno uses movie clips to draw parallels between his subjects' creative work and their real lives. While the idea is not new, the short is insightful and expertly edited. Through sequences from ▶



Caesar, played by Giovanni Arcuri (serving 17 years for drug trafficking) entering the Senate, on location at Rebibbia Prison.



Caesar killed by Brutus, played by Salvatore Striano (serving 14 years for connections to organized crime).



Brothers Paolo and Vittorio Taviani directed "Caesar Must Die."

Rossellini's "The Human Voice" (1948), for instance, Magnani's sublime one-woman monologue, Patierno illustrates the actress' torment at the point when it became clear the director was in love with Bergman. For audiences familiar with the love triangle, the irony is immediately apparent: The 45-minute film had been written and produced over a year before the couple's real-life separation in 1949. As the narration in "The War of the Volcanoes" indicates, Magnani could not have missed its portent.

During a press conference, a journalist asked Patierno if he was comparing Bergman with Magnani because his impression was that Magnani had eclipsed her Swedish counterpart. Patierno smiled, and admitted to the *contrapunto*. "Unfortunately," he reflected, "there are no longer any actresses like Magnani." In the end, Patierno's short transforms the banner headlines of another era into an archetypal story of explosive and destructive passion.

"Caesar Must Die," which will be released theatrically in February 2013, was among the finest

movies screened at NYFF. Filmed in black and white and color, it follows the casting and rehearsals of a production of "Julius Caesar" in the melodious Southern Italian dialects native to the prisoner-actors. Its Tuscano-born writer-directors are best known in the United States for their semi-autobiographical movie, "The Night of the Shooting Stars" (1982), and among cineastes for "Padre Padrone" (1977). Based on a memoir by a well-known Sardinian linguist, this story of a boy and his domineering father is a classic of Italian cinema, and the only movie ever to win both the film critics' award and the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival.

This film, made entirely inside Rebibbia, began when Paolo and Vittorio were invited by a friend to an earlier production there, a play based on Dante's tale of Paolo and Francesca, adulterous lovers swept apart for eternity by the windy storms of the Inferno's Second Circle. The brothers, who make movies only when they are profoundly moved by the subject matter, observed the cathartic effect of acting on the prisoners, and put

aside all their pending projects to film "Caesar Must Die."

"What happens in the play—crime, conspiracy, friendship, betrayal and the exercise of power—these are all human impulses that the prisoners have lived through," Paolo says in an October interview in New York City. "The impulses are the reason they are in prison now, but acting was a way of liberating themselves from these experiences."

Vittorio explains that several of the actors are serving life sentences for violent crimes, yet during the weeks of production, he and his brother watched as Shakespeare's words transformed them. Unexpectedly, Paolo recalls, he and his brother were also changed. "It was as though we were young filmmakers again," he says.

The pathos of prison life lingers in their memories as well. "There's a line at the end of the film by Cosimo Rega, the one who plays Cassius," Vittorio explains. "'Since I have known art, this cell has turned into a prison.' The line was not in our script. He had discovered art, but at the same time it was fleeting."

In the course of the movie, another actor remarks that it is hard to believe he found "Julius Caesar" so tedious in high school. It is a sentiment many may share after watching "Caesar Must Die." ▲

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.





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Tedy Bruschi: Never Giving Up

By Wayne Randazzo

“Never Give Up.” That’s the name of the memoir penned by Tedy Bruschi in 2007 writing candidly about the stroke that threatened his life and nearly his ended his career in the National Football League.

“There was (Jerome) Bettis in my dream, running toward me. And there I was getting ready to wrap him up and make the sure tackle,” Bruschi writes in the book. “But this time there was no playful trash talking at the end of the play. This time my muscles contracted and there was tightness in my neck. My fists were clenched and my arms were in the air, as if I were bracing for something big. That’s how I awoke at 4 a.m. It was no longer a dream.”

Just months prior to his 32nd birthday, and days removed from the 2005 NFL Pro Bowl, on February 16, Bruschi began to experience a series of headaches, temporary numbness and blurred vision. Doctors at the hospital diagnosed a mild stroke and that he suffered from a congenital heart defect that leaves a small hole in the wall separating the left and right atria of the heart. He was also partially paralyzed and planned to sit out the entire 2005 season.

“I could have died,” Bruschi says. “The doctors told me that if the clot was a couple of millimeters in a different direction, I might not be sitting here talking to you now. But it wasn’t my time.”

Amazingly, Bruschi returned to the New England Patriots on October 29 and played against the Buffalo Bills. A few days later, he was named the AFC Defensive Player of the Week. Bruschi played in most of the remaining games to

finish the season and was selected as the NFL Co-Comeback Player of the Year with Carolina’s Steve Smith.

Born in Roseville, Calif., Bruschi lettered in three sports at Roseville High School, including football (all-conference defensive tackle), wrestling, and track and field.

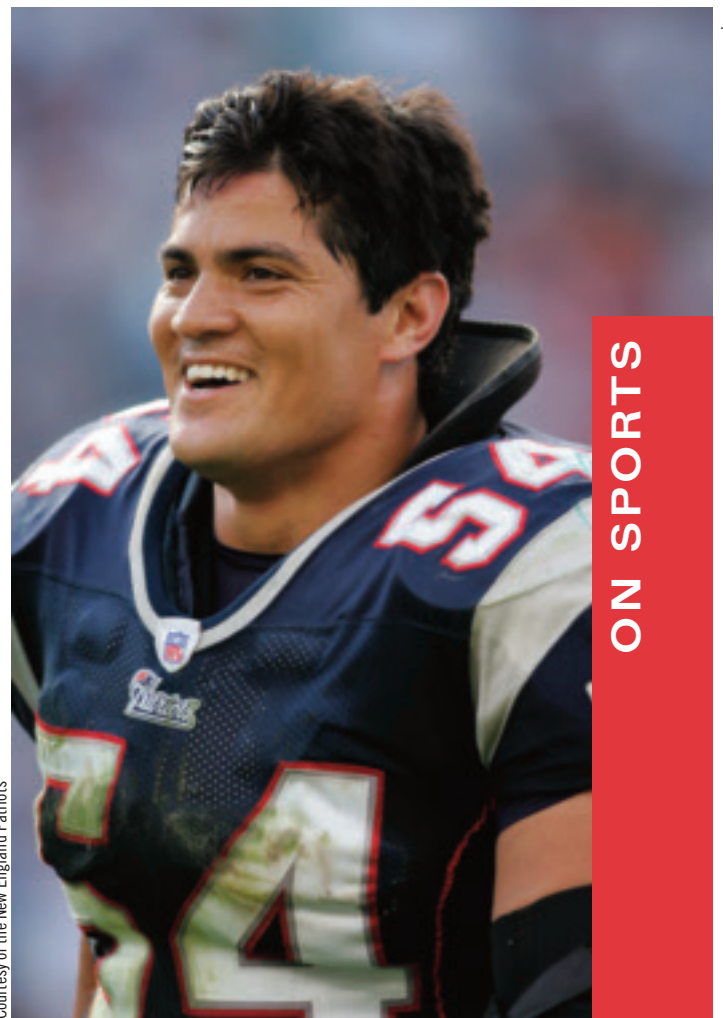
While at the University of Arizona, he matched an NCAA Division I-A record with 52 sacks and became a two-time consensus All-American and winner of the 1995 Morris Trophy for the best defensive lineman in the PAC-10.

Bill Parcells, then the head coach of the New England Patriots, selected Bruschi with the club’s third-round pick in the 1996 NFL draft. Bruschi played in every game as a rookie and concluded his season by sacking Brett Favre twice in Super Bowl XXXI.

Bruschi appeared in three more Super Bowls and helped the Patriots bring home the Vince Lombardi Trophy each of them—Super Bowls XXXVI, XXXVIII and XXXIX. After all 13 years of his career with the Patriots, he retired from the NFL prior to the 2009 season. He was a two-time winner of the Ed Block Courage Award, a two-time All-Pro and a member of the New England Patriots’ 50th Anniversary Team.

He joined ESPN soon after his retirement as an NFL analyst. He’s also a spokesman for the American Heart Association and

Courtesy of the New England Patriots



Tedy Bruschi played 13 seasons for the New England Patriots

founded Tedy’s Team, a foundation to raise funds for stroke research, inspired by Bruschi’s own experience. In fact, Tedy’s Team ran this year’s Boston Marathon, further inspiring stroke survivors and families of stroke survivors.

“So many people were looking my way for a small piece of inspiration,” Bruschi says. “So many runners on Tedy’s Team are stroke survivors. They have finished the Boston Marathon and inspired me. Many run for someone else who had a stroke, and they’re running in their honor.

“To finish a life achievement like this is to tell stroke, ‘you may have been the toughest thing I have ever gone through in my life, but I’m still standing, and I’m going to finish this race.’ ” ▲

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 Midwest League’s Kane County Cougars Baseball Club and an update anchor/talk show host for Chicago’s Sports Radio 670 the Score.

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A Nation Divided?

A Look at Bill Emmott's "Good Italy, Bad Italy"

By John Viola

When I hear news of a new book written in English about contemporary Italy, I always await its publication with an excitement usually reserved for Christmas morning. These are, after all, disappointingly rare additions to the American popular dialogue. So it was with bated breath that I opened my long reserved copy of "Good Italy, Bad Italy: Why Italy Must Conquer Its Demons to Face the Future."

Written by Bill Emmott, former editor-in-chief of *The Economist*, the book explores Italy's much maligned descent from a boom economy in the 1990s into today's largest "sick man of Europe." Emmott, who spent many years at *The Economist* in vocal opposition to Italy's former prime minister Silvio Berlusconi, is nevertheless a dedicated and objective scholar on our ancestral homeland. In the book, he lays out a theory, backed by fascinating examples and anecdotes on both sides, of an Italy which he sees as suffering from something akin to a national bipolar disorder.

Emmott sees a "Good Italy" of responsible family firms, deep-seated communities and creative genius, weighed down by a "Bad Italy" of corruption, disregard for the value of merit, and the crippling apathy of a young generation unable to access any real role

in the nation's future. The author illustrates this divide by examining the causes, examples and potential remedies for this fractured Italy.

The book is even more interesting when read from an Italian American perspective. His theme, that while Italian institutions are unhealthy the Italian people are still Italy's best commodity, is essentially the same idea that sits at the core of our entire immigrant experience. After all, we Italian Americans are the unique offspring of these exact conditions—the fruit of healthy Italian roots planted in the ever-fertile soil of American meritocracy.

Italy today is a nation that seems alarmingly akin to the Italy our ancestors were forced to leave in search of a better life, a land where the people are disconnected from the state, where opportunities to earn and achieve are blocked by entrenched interests that serve the few and discourage the many. It is no small fact that modern Italy is seeing the same trends in emigration that created our Italian American community, and similar Italian diaspora communities around the globe.

When Emmott lays out his designs for the types of institutional reforms he sees as imperative to Italy's hopes of regeneration, he speaks of

themes like a shrinking public sector, electoral reforms to encourage transparency, labor reforms to encourage merit over safety, women's rights, access to quick and efficient justice, encouragement of competition, and a culture of investment in human capital and development. Essentially, he is talking about risk, a concept that seems anathema to modern Italy, yet is at the core of America's founding.

When one thinks back to our ancestors, clutching their few belongings and a ticket for steerage, embarking for a new and alien world with nothing but hope, it is risk that we find at the beginning of our Italian American story as well. No matter if or when they became U.S. citizens, it is at the moment that each of them made the fearless decision to embrace complete risk that our ancestors became Americans. And, in reading Emmott's work, I could hardly turn a page without thinking that we Italian Americans represent the best model for future success in Italy. Maintaining the best parts of our Italian culture and traditions, while embracing the core tenant of the American dream—the courage to risk everything on the belief in your own abilities.

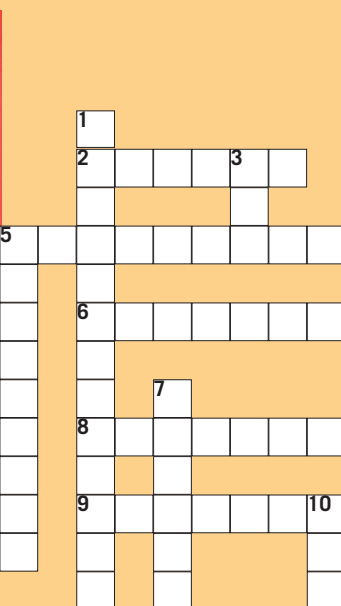
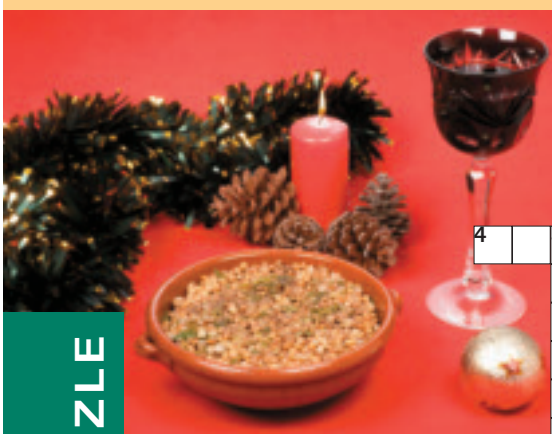
I highly recommend "Good Italy, Bad Italy." If you are a passionate student of Italy like I am, or just looking for a thoughtful assessment of our *madre patria*, Emmott provides a thorough and illustrative journey through the best and worst of *il Bel Paese*. Yes, at times, his appraisal of her ills may discourage the Italophile in all of us, but take heart in our own Italian American history.

I invite anyone writing Italy's early epitaph to look at our community as proof that these best qualities of the Italian character can achieve anything in a climate that rewards hard work, creativity, merit and the courage to risk. We are proof, after all, that while there are things wrong in Italy, they can't compare to what is right in the Italians. ▲

John Viola is the Chief Operating Officer at the National Italian American Foundation.

OPINION

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CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Christmas Menu Italian Style



By Leon J. Radomile

www.myheritageculture.com

Across

- 2 This large, gallinaceous bird of the family Meleagrididae is now popular throughout Italy as a Christmas main course.
- 4 Based on the 16th century English trifle of the Elizabethan court.
- 6 Give the Italian name for this roasted delight found both in Italy and America.
- 8 A type of stuffed pasta. Though most are savory, some are sweet.
- 9 On New Year's Day, this legume is eaten as a symbol of good luck and prosperity.
- 12 Food category that serves as the main course on Christmas Eve.
- 14 Traditional Christmas bread from Milan.
- 15 Crisp fried puffs dipped in honey, a popular Christmas dessert.
- 18 Popular flat cookie was

- first made in the region of Abruzzo in the 8th century.
- 19 Americano Christmas cocktail contains ice, ounce of sweet vermouth, club soda, slice of lemon and what popular Italian aperitif invented in Milan in 1867?
- 20 Whoever finds this in their slice of Befana cake is king or queen for the day.
- 21 A typical Italian Christmas dish throughout Italy and among Italian Americans using dried cod.

Down

- 1 Christmas lunch in the Marche region, this Italian egg-drop soup is typically associated with Rome.
- 3 Seafood that is a traditional item of the Christmas season in Naples and region of Campania.
- 5 Do not let the name fool you, this rich chocolate dessert from Ferrara is

- served from Christmas day to Epiphany.
- 7 Mad Monk Christmas cocktail contains ounce of gin, lemon juice, crushed ice and what Italian liqueur named after a 14th century Italian painter?
- 10 What traditional Christmas Eve dinner is known as the Feast of the ___?
- 11 Tasty dessert using leftover panettone bread.
- 13 Vanilla flavored omelets filled with chocolate ricotta.
- 16 In the Italian language, Christmas Eve is known as?
- 17 Traditional Sicilian Christmas dessert is filled with dried figs, almonds and walnuts.
- 20 From the Lombardia and Veneto regions of Italy, this ingredient is used in this ravioli filling giving it a beautiful rosy color.

Solution

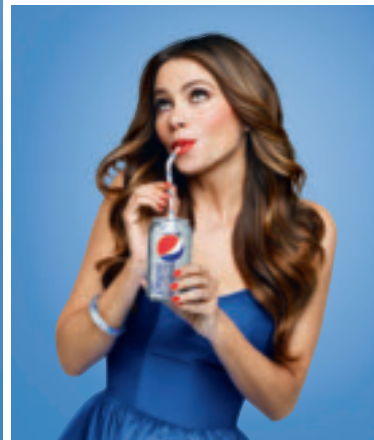
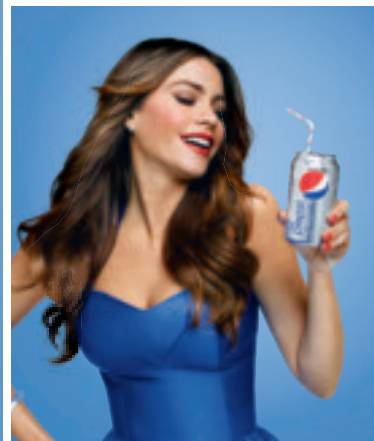
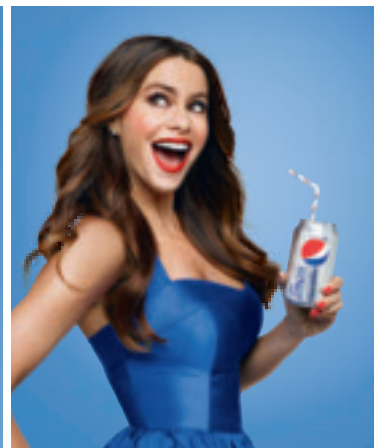
- Across**
- 2 Turkey
- 4 Zuppa Inglese
- 6 Castagne (Chestnut)
- 8 Tortelli
- 9 Lentils
- 12 Seafood
- 14 Panettone
- 15 Struffoli
- 18 Frittelle
- 19 Campari
- 20 Large dried bean.
- 21 Baccalà
- Down**
- 1 Stracciatella
- 3 Feg
- 5 Panpepato
- 7 Frangello
- 10 Feast of the Seven Fishes)
- 11 Panettone Pudding
- 13 Apostles' fingers
- 16 La Vigilia
- 17 Picciatelli
- 20 Beet

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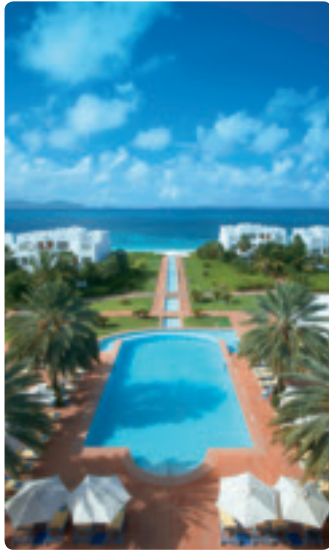
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