

Ambassador



National Italian American Foundation

Vol . 30, No.1 ▪ Fall 2018 ▪ www.niaf.org



**SPECIAL
GALA
ISSUE**

How Puglia's Wine Stacks Up

Hiking the Via degli Dei

Restoring Sacred Art in Puglian Caves

Visiting Tomie dePaola's Studio

The 43rd Anniversary Gala Preview

Eye Witness to WWII Atrocity



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Ambassador

The Publication of the National Italian American Foundation
Vol. 30, No. 1 ■ www.niaf.org

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On the Cover: Announcing NIAF's 2018 Region of Honor: Puglia! Known as the "heel of the boot," this charming region stretches along the Adriatic and Ionian seas, and features natural beauty, stunning beaches, a slow pace, authentic food and picturesque villages. The iconic cover image is of trulli in the town of Alberobello. The traditional, 16th-century dry-stone huts with conical roofs are unique to Puglia. Look for stories from and about Puglia in this and upcoming issues of Ambassador magazine.

Cover photograph: Diego Fiore/Shutterstock

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

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Single issue price: \$5.00
ISSN 1000-9999

NIAF
1860 19th Street NW
Washington, DC 20009
Tel. 202-387-0600
www.niaf.org

Design: Barbieri & Green, Inc.
Printing: Mosaic

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From the NIAF Co-Chairs

We are looking ahead at a dynamic year for NIAF as we welcome NIAF's new Chief Executive Officer Lawrence J. Purpuro.

Through his work on Capitol Hill, his success as an entrepreneur, and his lifelong affinity and promotion of all things Italian, Larry is a perfect fit for NIAF. He has already begun the work of strengthening NIAF programs and engagement on behalf of the Italian American community, and he is bringing his extensive knowledge of Italy and Italian culture and business to enhance our United States—Italy partnership here and abroad.

Larry is a native of the New York and New Jersey area. His family emigrated from the town of Benevento in Italy's Campania region. He has a bachelors degree in Political Science from Drew University and holds a Juris Doctorate from Seton Hall University Law School. He is a resident of Alexandria, Va., where he lives with his wife, Lori Purpuro, and twin sons—both of whom are studying Italian. Welcome to NIAF, Larry!

On October 12-13, we look forward to celebrating NIAF's 43rd Anniversary Gala, at the Washington Marriott Wardman

Park Hotel, in Washington, D.C. We will be featuring through our honorees the best of our culture, heritage and community. Take a look at the Gala Preview section in this issue for details of the Gala Weekend's events.

On behalf of the NIAF Board of Directors, we thank you for your support of our mission through our programs, the educational and cultural opportunities we provide to Italian American students to further their studies, and our commitment to preserve and promote the heritage and culture of 20 million Americans of Italian descent.

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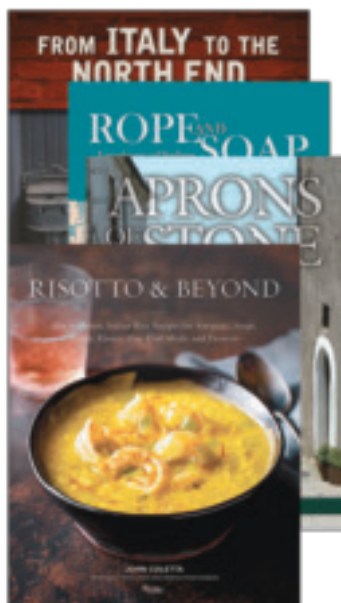
Reader Feedback

Booking It

I joined NIAF last year and really appreciate the Ambassador magazine. Thank you! The section I look forward to the most is Between the Pages. After I read it, re-read it and decide what books to read, I bring it to my local bookstore so the owner, a fellow Italian American, can use it as a guide to buy books for the store. It's so hard to find good books regarding our Italian heritage. I wonder—how do you select books to review?

Dr. Laura M. Alberghini Ventimiglia
Gloucester, Mass.

Editor's reply: We're delighted you enjoy the magazine's book review section. We are in constant contact with authors, agents and publishers of new books by Italian American and Italian authors, or books of interest to our Italophile readership.



Frank Van Riper

Altering Perception

The photos in Frank Van Riper's "The Most Beautiful Church in the World" cover story (Spring 2018 Ambassador) made me forget why I like getting the magazine—to read the articles! Those images of Umbria's Duomo di Orvieto are mesmerizing.

Sammie Lucchese
Florida Gulf Coast

Editor's reply: Read about noted photographer and Ambassador contributor Frank Van Riper in this issue's Paisani section.



Frank Van Riper

Correction: In the Spring 2018 issue of Ambassador, in the story "How You Play the Game: Ken Aspromonte's Big-League Life," due to editing error, a sentence in the fourth paragraph should have read "Aspromonte's time with the Red Sox in the 1957-58 seasons was just part of a varied and fascinating life." And, inadvertently, Sandy Koufax was added to a list of Italian American major leaguers who played amateur baseball at Brooklyn's Parade Grounds. The Hall of Famer Koufax played there, but he is not Italian American.



By Felix Lipov

In Italian, Per Favore

Following NIAF's Capitol Hill screening of the PBS documentary "The Italian Americans" in March, I told the Italian Embassy's Deputy Chief of Mission Maurizio Greganti I was impressed his country would send a representative to this event celebrating our heritage and history.

I also told him about taking my cousins, visiting from Firenze last year, to tour Ellis Island. They wanted an Ellis Island history book in Italian. At the historic site's bookstore, they only had them in Spanish and Japanese—not Italian. I wrote to U.S. Department of Interior Ryan Zinke asking why, to which I received nothing back.

We are a proud people and our contribution to the building of America is significant and should be made available to all visitors at Ellis Island. This is certainly not a priority for Italy's government or ours, but every small oversight contributes to a diminution of our heritage and contribution.

Daniel Zucchi
Jupiter, Fla.

We'd Love to Hear from You! Let us Know What You're Thinking!

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

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Puglia

**DOVE L'AGRICOLTURA
GARANTISCE**

• UNA LUNGA VITA FELICE •

The Allure of Puglia

NIAF's 2018 Region of Honor

By Gabriella Mileti

Famously known as the “heel of the boot,” stretching along the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, is the ever so charming region of Puglia. With its unapologetic, raw, natural beauty, its slow pace, stunning beaches, authentic food and picturesque villages, Puglia is one of Italy’s shining stars, and yet it is still relatively untouched by mass tourism. ▶



Polignano a mare



Paolo Gallo / Shutterstock.com



Stefano Valeri / Shutterstock.com

Sunny morning in Gallipoli, province of Lecce



Gabriella Miliati

The 2018 Ambassador Peter F. Secchia Voyage of Discovery students on the rooftop of their hotel in Ostuni



Gabriella Miliati

Explore the street that is unofficially known as “la via della pasta” in Bari’s historic center.

Considered the second Florence in Italy, Lecce is famous for its baroque architectural style.

end with its mysterious past. The centuries-old countryside is home to olive groves, vineyards, fruit groves and wheat fields, making it the perfect place to eat farm-to-table, the trending way to dine nowadays though the Italians have been doing it for centuries.

Steeped in culinary tradition, Puglia is the land of the highest quality of extra-virgin olive oil, Cerignola olives, taralli, friselle, Primitivo wine, DOP bread from Altamura and creamy burrata cheese. Home to authenticity, Puglia is a paradise for any lover of nature and food. Burn off all those calories by walking in the 900-million-year-old Caves of Castellana, a karst cave system some 76 yards below ground and the length of two football fields. The grandiose natural beauty will leave you in awe.

The various towns in Puglia are lovely, but you’ll need a car to navigate between them as they are spread out like jewels on a necklace. Characteristic of Puglia are small whitewashed, limestone towns like Ostuni and Locorotondo that will make you want to forget the world and get lost in their winding, narrow, quaint streets. Along the coastline are scenic towns like Otranto, Gallipoli and Polignano a Mare, where white sandy beaches and Caribbean-like waters meet the cliffs. It’s no wonder they say many people come to Puglia but only some go home.

From the countryside to the seaside, it’s Puglia’s rural simplicity and unconditional warmth that makes it one of Italy’s most unique regions. It’s a year-round destination perfect for the traveler seeking history, food, adventure, culture and, above all, authentic Italian life. ▲

Like many regions in Southern Italy, the history of Puglia is a tangled one. Due to its position in the Mediterranean, it was vulnerable to invasions and colonization. But as we know from other Southern regions, not all invasions are bad; all have left a cultural, architectonic and gastronomic footprint making it one of the most electric regions of Italy.

From the Greeks who left a form of dialect still spoken today in the southeast, and the Romans who completed the Appian Way through Puglia, to the Normans who left their Romanesque churches like those in Bari and Mandredonia, the Swabian fortifications like the one in Trani, and the Spanish bold baroque buildings like in Lecce, Puglia has been consistently trafficked.

Aside from its history, part of Puglia’s past remains a mystery. Take, for example, Castel del Monte, which is not a castle or a fortress. Octagonal in shape and built by Frederick II, to this day we’re not exactly sure why he built it. Or, what about those *trulli* of Alberobello? The 16th-century, conical-roofed, stone houses unique to Puglia have mysterious origins with little documentation on their unusual design.

But the allure of Puglia doesn’t

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Finding Italy in Hoboken

Italy's influence in America is everywhere, from the best Italian restaurants and popular festivals, to markets and museums. In NIAF on Location, our members and friends provide an insider's scoop on special places and events that make them feel more Italian in their own hometowns. This issue, longtime NIAF supporter Pat O'Boyle shows us around Hoboken, N.J.

What's the most Italian part of your city?

Hoboken as a whole is still authentically Italian. The city is one mile square, but two Italian National parishes are active there. In the 1960s, more than 60 percent of the population was either born in or descended from immigrants from Molfetta in Puglia. Hoboken had steady immigration from Italy into the 1970s, so it's not the museum piece many Little Italy's have become.

What are your favorite Italian restaurants in your city?

I don't eat Italian food out unless I have to because I eat it at home seven days a week. But Northern New Jersey is so Italian that you don't need to go to a special neighborhood to get a dish of linguini and clams. It's ubiquitous. Nevertheless, some Italian eateries are of historical note, like Biggies Clam Bar, once a saloon for longshoremen to get a beer and eat raw clams. Angelo's on Washington Street has been around since before World War II; it's like a Hoboken version of Rao's, you can't ever get into it, except it attracts the invading Yuppie and Hipster crowds. The Frank-Sinatra-themed Blue Eyes (Hoboken is the birthplace of Francis Albert Sinatra) is a true Neapolitan pizzeria on the waterfront, its owners from Italy. Also worthy of note are the pies at Dozzino Artisanal Pizza, which has a backyard bocce court.



Luigi Novi

Carlos Bake Shop

What are the most "back in time," authentic, Italian-neighborhood restaurants?

The original Carlo's Bake Shop, owned by Buddy Valastro, aka the "Cake Boss," has gotten more than enough publicity from his TLC network TV show. The other popular Italian pastry shop, Giorgio's, is the most authentic Italian establishment in town. Disclosure: My friends own it. Giorgio, an immigrant from Torre del Greco who learned the pastry trade working Italian Ocean liners, opened it in the 1970s. His daughter, Mary Grace, runs it now. Tell her you know me and she'll give you some free *pignoli* cookies.

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

In Northern New Jersey, you can get everything you need for Southern Italian cooking. Hoboken has a long tradition of mozzarella making. Fiore's, started in 1913, makes smoked provola, scamorza, etc. Its ricotta is from their cousins who own Lebanon Dairy in rural New Jersey. When the family immigrated from the Bari area in the early 1900s, one brother opened a *latticini* shop in Jersey City, another opened one in Hoboken, and the other farmed the dairy. Their roast beef with mozzarella and tuna with mozzarella sandwiches are famous. Vito's Deli, M & P Biancamano, and Lisa's Italian Deli also make outstanding mozzarella that's hours old when you get it. Hoboken even has an annual "muzz" contest.

How about Italian fashion?

There's Giovanni D'Italia, the shoemaker. No joke, he gives a great shine.

What's the most Italian day of the year there?

The Feast of St. Ann, on July 26, began in the early 1900s with immigrants from Monte San Giacomo where St. Ann is the patroness. The feast was eventually taken over by the Parish and became a broader Italian American devotion. So many people attend the Mass that they spill out into the street. The huge outdoor feast features the statue covered in a century's worth of offerings of jewelry. The procession goes for hours. The zeppoles are famous.

Second is the Feast of Madonna Dei Martiri, patroness of Molfetta and protector of fisherman and sailors. The procession is stunning, replicating the hometown procession with a canopy, a statue of San Corrado, a model votive fishing boat, and fireworks. The best part is they take the stage and procession on the Hudson River via ferry boats and sail to the tip of Manhattan.

Where's the best morning espresso served?

Monte San Giacomo Social Club, but they won't let you in if you're not from Monte San Giacomo. The Madonna Dei Martini Club, but they won't give you coffee unless you're from Molfetta. Maybe you have to wear a Juventus jersey to get coffee from the Juventus Club, I never tried. Better off to stick with Starbucks. ▲

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By Gabriella Mileti

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On the Map

The Etsy shop, Graficious, owned by an Italian artist, takes a creative spin on the Italian regional maps using the names of the provinces to map out the region. Digital download. Map of Puglia: \$4.79 www.Etsy.com

Juicin' Style

Dolce & Gabbana have teamed up again with the Italian, iconic, houseware brand, Smeg to bring ordinary household appliances to life in vibrant colors that recall the Southern Italian coast. Made in Italy. Dolce Gabbana x SMEG Sicily Is My Love Juicer: \$650. www.NeimanMarcus.com



Breath of Fresh Puglia

The iconic "pumo Pugliese" takes on a new form with this home fragrance diffuser. The ceramic pumo is made and hand-painted in Puglia, available in different colors and fragrances. Change it up with different styles like the pomegranate or prickly pear. 100-ml bottle: \$52; 200-ml bottle: \$75 www.PumoPugliese.com

Throw a Fit

Robert and Lydia Mondavi partnered with Williams Sonoma to bring you a home collection inspired by their Napa Valley and Southern Roots. With earthy tones and natural materials, the home accents, like their tartan throw, bring warmth and style in soft Italian lambswool to your favorite couch. Rob and Lydia Mondavi Garmay Italian Lambswool Throw, neutral: \$149 www.Williams-Sonoma.com



Sparkling Puglia

Gioielli Dop pieces are 100 percent designed and handmade in Italy by passionate Italian craftsmen. The luxury Puglia bracelet recalls the components of the local Pugliese culture: orecchiette pasta, green olives, the Trulli of Alberobello, taralli and burrata cheese. NIAF members receive a 20-percent discount on Gioielli DOP products and free two-day worldwide shipping using code NIAF20 at checkout. Sterling silver Puglia bracelet: \$299. www.gioiellidop.com



Bottled Puglia

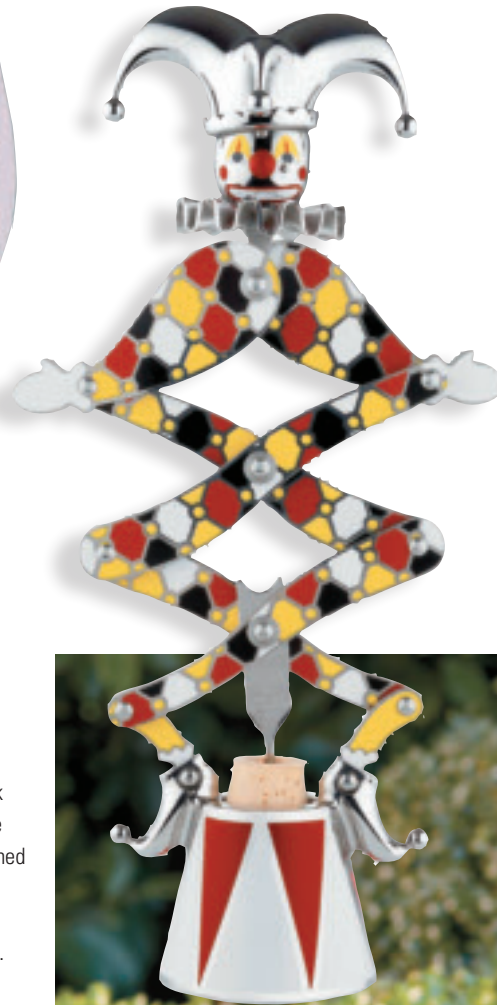
Essentia Puglia features organic and natural products indigenous to the region, like extra virgin olive oil from ancient olive trees and vintage grapes from the vines of Alto Salento and Valle d'Itria. Products range from creams and body washes, to home fragrances and sunscreens. Made in Puglia. Extra Virgin Olive Oil body cream: \$36.99. www.EssentiaPuglia.com





Walking the Talk

Let your shoes do the talking with every step you take in these fun, dusty, rose-canvas espadrilles. Made to conform to your feet, these comfortable slip-on loafers are a staple in every closet. \$75 www.Soludos.com



Bottega NIAF wants you to tell us about fantastic products or designs that are made in Italy or of interest to Italian Americans. Let us know! Contact bottega@niaf.org.

No Joke

Designer Marcel Wanders teamed up with Alessi to give the classic corkscrew a fun twist—a lively, jumping jester in a multi-colored diamond costume. Made of stainless steel, this corkscrew is limited edition with only 999 made worldwide. Corkscrew The Jester: \$1,500 www.Alessi.com

Aperitivo Pronto!

Carry everything you need for the perfect aperitivo in one trip! This mango-wood and bronze-coated wrought-iron caddy can hold two wine bottles, four stemmed wine glasses and five removable ceramic dishes. It even comes with a removable wood second tier for added serving space. Weston Wine Caddy: \$169 www.FrontGate.com

Pumo Pugliese

The *pumo*, or pine cone, represents a rose blossom ready to bloom. It symbolizes the end of winter, the coming of spring, and the beginning of a new life. Back in the day, pumos were placed on the balcony of noble palaces. According to local Pugliese culture, the upturned petals represents the welcoming of divine gifts, good luck, plenty, prosperity and fertility for the household. Handmade Pumo (eight inches) from Ostuni, Italy: \$52. www.CarellaOstuni.com

Unexpected Espresso

What happens when you open an espresso-machine shop next door to a design studio in Berkeley, Calif.? Wow! You get AnZa, a stunning-looking, fully-functional espresso machine that will bring new life to your countertop and deliver delicious home-espresso shots. Available in concrete or corian: \$899. www.AnzaCoffee.com



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The Jazz Singer

Singer Vanessa Racci remembers her grandfather, Nonno Frank, would come to all of her childhood performances. Afterward, he'd slip her \$20 bill and call her "my little celebrity."

"He was my biggest fan," says Racci, who grew up in the working-class neighborhood of Thornwood, N.Y., with family origins in Puglia, Bari, Calabria and Naples.

Nonno Frank lived in the downstairs apartment. "Every Sunday, he'd come upstairs and regale us with jokes," she says. "He'd bring a frittata and we would split a *pasta shuta*."

And he'd play old Italian Classics—Dean Martin, Frank Sinatra, Louis Prima, etc. That's where it began for Racci, who started singing at age 4. By 12, she was performing in community theater and at the Westchester Broadway Dinner Theater. At 18, she won a Helen Hayes Award for her role in "Phantom of the Opera."

Then she found jazz; she has been a jazz singer ever since. She tours with her own band and, in 2017, released her album, "Italiana Fresca," which reinvents

Italian American classics with modern jazz arrangements.

Birdland Jazz Club in New York City is one of Racci's most memorable shows, she says, but what made her "truly feel like a star" was singing Dean Martin classics in front of Dino's daughter, Deana Martin, at last year's NIAF Gala. This year, she'll sing at the Gala's Expo Italiana.

Keeping the Italian American classics alive is her mission, she says. "I think it's also my way of keeping my grandfather's memory alive."

Hear Racci's music at iTunes, CD Baby or Amazon; stream it on Pandora or Spotify. Visit www.vanessaracci.com.

— Don Oldenburg

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

Cooking the Books

Food writer and cookbook author Domenica Marchetti got her love of cooking from her mother, a post-World-War-II immigrant to the United States from Chieti, Abruzzo. Still today, Marchetti finds a lot of her inspiration in the kitchen comes from the recipes that her mother and three aunts taught her as a child, when she would spend her summers on the Abruzzo coast, and socializing revolved around food.

Italy itself also inspires Marchetti every day. "Italy is such a small country, but every region is vast and every region has so much in the way of culinary artistry and inspiration," she says.

A former newspaper reporter, Marchetti has authored seven cookbooks, the latest being "Preserving Italy: Recipes for Canning, Curing, Infusing and Bottling Italian Traditions." A fascinating journey into the Italian tradition of preserving food, it has 150 recipes and essays on Italian food artisans.

"I know so many food artisans in Italy that are not making a lot of money, but they do what they do because they were born into it, and it's the way they express their love for the region and its products," she says. "The work they do is so important and I really love shining a light on them."

Marchetti also leads culinary tours to Italy, where participants have the chance to cook and eat with the locals. "I love bringing people to Abruzzo, the part of Italy that I spent my childhood and youth in," she says.

Follow Marchetti on her blog, www.domenicacooks.com, via her Instagram profile @domenicacooks.

— Silvia Donati





PAESANI

Maxine Lubarski

Dateline Hollywood

From Tom Hanks to Jodie Foster, from Jennifer Lawrence to Ben Affleck, from Clint Eastwood to Emma Stone, Francesca Scorcucchi has interviewed countless movie stars in her almost 20 years as an entertainment reporter from Hollywood. The ones she enjoys the most interviewing? Those from the previous generations.

“They tell you about the Hollywood of the past. They tell you stories about themselves. They’re less wary of their privacy compared to the younger actors,” she says.

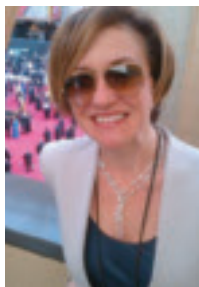
Originally from Savona (Liguria), Scorcucchi began her journalistic career in a small, local TV station where she eventually became the director. But local reporting was too small a world for her and when a colleague proposed to open a news agency devoted to the world of entertainment in Los Angeles, she was keen to take on the challenge.

That was 2001, when she co-founded Kika Press. Since then, Scorcucchi has split her time between Italy and California. “I feel at home in both worlds,” she says.

Scorcucchi has reported live from the Oscars and the Golden Globes. She was there when the wrong film was announced for Best Picture last year. “It’s the unexpected that makes this job fun,” she says.

Besides co-managing Kika Press and being a partner in The Spotlight Company, Scorcucchi writes about entertainment for Italian newspapers and magazines such as Vanity Fair, and she is the Los Angeles correspondent for ANSA, Italy’s largest news agency.

— Silvia Donati



Strings Attached

Since leaving his native Naples, Italy, in 1986 to study at Boston’s famed Berklee College of Music, celebrated bassist Lello Molinari has pulled many strings to get where he is today. Literally.

His studies at Berklee led to him teaching there. A master of both electric and upright acoustic bass, he has spent three decades touring as a bandleader with his quintet in both the United States and Europe. In 2000, he recorded the album “Multiple Personalities,” blending three Italian tunes into an album that also included Thelonious Monk compositions and featured renowned Italian vocalist Chiara Civello and saxophone icon George Garzone. In 2016, he released “Lello’s Italian Job, Vol 1” that included jazzy takes on traditional Italian folk songs, classical arias and pop songs.

Now Molinari is returning to his Italian roots on his new CD “Lello’s Italian Job – Volume 2.” Playing with an ensemble of master musicians who share his Italian heritage, he transposes a collection of Italian music into jazz, songs from a Respighi tone poem to popular Neapolitan standards.

“I had a desire to reconnect with my roots,” Molinari says. “I also wanted to incorporate these new things that I’ve learned over the years here in the States.”

— Dee Dee McNeil



Maxine Lubarski

Persons of Interest



Ed Cormican

Got The Blues

Luca Chiellini knows how to strike a chord with fans when he's playing the blues on his Hammond organ. Even though the 31-year-old musician holds a pharmacy degree, his love of blues music prompted him to leave Italy for Chicago in 2013 to "find himself."

In 2014, Chicago musician Mike Wheeler helped kick-start his career. Chiellini now travels the world with Chicago-based blues group Toronzo Cannon and his own band, the Luca Chiellini Blues Band.

Chiellini was born and raised in Volterra and started playing the piano at age 10. With lessons, self-teaching, and listening to music, he developed his keyboard skills.



What attracted him to the blues? "The blues is a music of feeling. I like that it is improvised, always different every night" says Chiellini. "It is a good way to express emotions, and I can be very energetic and spontaneous playing it."

He remembers his mom's encouraging words about pursuing a profession in music: "You can be anything you want; you have the strong will to do it."

In dedication to his mom, hometown, and his Italian heritage, the single from his album due out this fall is titled "Warm Heart," which is on his website. Chiellini has found his prescription for living life—playing the blues. Website: www.lucachiellini.com.

— Robert Fanelli Bartus Jr.



Parli Italiano?

In a city that regularly toasts its German roots with one of the country's largest Oktoberfest celebrations and myriad "Goettafests," Michele Alonzo is keeping a little pocket of Italy thriving in Cincinnati, Ohio. For more than 20 years, he has been the director of the School Amici, an Italian language school.

The classes meet once a week and levels range from beginner to advanced. Alonzo says students enroll for various reasons, but mostly because they're going on an Italy vacation, or they've researched their family roots and are headed to an ancestral village, or they're studying for business reasons.



One student returned to his grandfather's small town and immediately felt like a part of one big family when, using his language skills, he discovered people with his exact first and last name.

Alonzo, a Naples native, says it's important to maintain the language and the customs of Italy, simply because Italy has a glorious history. There is also an abundance of words we use every day that have Italian roots.

"I think Italy represents a constant dream, a romantic idea that everybody would like to follow," he says. "Italy has wonderful landscapes, a delicious cuisine, world famous art and music, fashion, sports cars, beautiful movie stars and a romantic sounding language for a laid-back lifestyle. Who would not wish to have all that?"

— Jan Angilella

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MILANO - 11.37 am



LAVAZZA

TORINO, ITALIA, 1895



My Lifelong Food Adventures in Italy

By Mary Ann Esposito

In my office library are more than 30 personal journals that I have written about my trips to Italy. They have been the backbone of the 13 cookbooks that I have written on Italian regional foods. People often ask when I am going to run out of information and my answer is always the same: Italy is so unique with its 20 diverse regions that it would be hard to capture all of its food history in a lifetime.

When I write a new cookbook, I travel back in time through those journals and the sites, smells and encounters I have had, all come back vividly alive.

For my current book, “Ciao Italia: My Lifelong Food Adventures in Italy,” I wanted to focus on the unusual stories behind the recipes that have really left a lasting impression on me, like the *Festa dei Ceri* that takes place every May in Gubbio, the oldest medieval town in the region of Umbria. In my new book, I write about this *festa*, which is centered around an unusual race that winds its way through the eye-of-a-needle streets to the finish line high atop Mount Ingino. But it’s who is in the race that is significant. The locals refer to it as the “race of the crazies.” Being there among the thousands of Eugubini and Italians from elsewhere, who come to cheer for their favorite competitor to win the race, is the most awesome example of witnessing a people’s faith and love for tradition. But the story does not end there because, as with any Italian event, there is the food to consider and lots of it.

It is difficult to choose from among the many hundreds of recipes that I have collected since the mid 1980’s, when I began my first adventure in cooking school in Sorrento, and have every year since traveled to all the regions, several times over.

The locality of the ingredients must be considered when recreating recipes for an American kitchen. I am mindful of that and try to use as many authentic Italian ingredients available to us as possible. I caution the reader

that the recipes will approximate, not duplicate, the exact taste of the dish. For instance, in making *spaghetti alla puttanesca*, we can get close to the original taste by using imported pasta, olives, capers and tomatoes that are made in Italy and are available here.

The most difficult part of writing a cookbook is deciding what to include, especially since there are so many favorites. I try to focus on which recipes would have most appeal. Pasta, for sure, is a favorite identifiable food, but I might leave out an offal recipe, for example, as cooking innards is not something most home cooks would do.

Availability of ingredients is key. If a recipe calls for fresh fava beans, are they as easy to find in Boston as they would be in Iowa? This is where the author should have some good substitutions to offer.

There is also the testing of recipes, the most time-consuming part of any cookbook, and then writing the instructions so that they are clear to both a beginner cook and a gourmet cook.

Along with the testing comes the tasting of the dish. For me, it has to have a wow factor or it's not worth its salt. There are over 150 recipes in "Ciao Italia: My Lifelong Food Adventures in Italy," all tested by me and, once they are created, tasted by family, friends and co-workers who give it thumbs up or down. The dried plum tart with balsamic vinegar and Luigi's slow cook lamb chops, are at the top of their list, but honestly, all the recipes are winners.

The drill and thrill of writing a cookbook is something that never gets old, especially when it is a passion to preserve Italy's rich food history.

The intensely flavored dried-plum tart always is in demand in my house. The effortless-to-make dough is pressed into a tart pan, no rolling involved. What makes this tart a winner is the balsamic vinegar reduction. It is a cold weather treat when fresh plums are all but a memory.



John Hession

Dried Plum Tart with Balsamic Reduction

Dried Plum and Balsamic Vinegar Tart Crostatina di Prugne al Balsamico

Serves 8

Ingredients for Pastry Crust

1½ cups flour
½ cup cold butter, grated
½ cup sugar
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 large egg, lightly beaten
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Ingredients for Filling

One 18-ounce box pitted dried plums
4 cups balsamic vinegar
¼ cup brown sugar
¼ teaspoon salt
Grated zest of one large orange

Directions

- Preheat oven to 400°F
- Mix the flour, butter, sugar and baking powder together in a bowl. Add the egg and vanilla to form a dough. If the dough is too dry, add a few drops of cold water.
- Flour your hands and press ⅔ of the dough into the bottom and sides of a 9-inch tart shell with removable bottom.
- Crumble the rest of the dough into small bits and set aside.
- Bake the crust unfilled for about 8 minutes. Cool, set aside.
- Place the plums in saucepan and cover with ⅔ cup water. Bring to a boil, lower the heat and cook until they soften.

- Drain well, transfer them to a food processor, and pulse until a thick, smooth paste is obtained. Transfer to a bowl.
- Pour the vinegar into a separate pan and cook uncovered over medium heat until it thickens and is reduced to about ½ cup; it will be thick. Cool for 10 minutes.
- Add the balsamic reduction to the plums along with the sugar, salt and zest. Combine well and transfer it to the cooled shell.
- Smooth the filling so it is even. Sprinkle the remaining dough bits evenly over the top and sprinkle 2 tablespoons coarse white sugar over the dough.
- Lower the oven temperature to 375°F and bake for about 30 minutes or until the top crust is nicely browned.
- Cool on a wire rack. Loosen the sides of the tart pan and carefully remove it. Place the tart on serving dish. Cut into wedges.

Whenever I am in Italy, I take the opportunity to learn about local foods from home cooks. Such was the case at the DiMajo Norante winery in Molise where winemaker Luigi DiMajo shared his favorite recipe for rack of lamb, served with a delicious sauce made with wine from his estate. ➤

Luigi's Lamb Chops *Costolette di Agnello di Luigi*

Serves 4

Ingredients

1 rack of lamb cut into chops (7 to 8)
2 red onions coarsely chopped
1 small hot pepper, seeded and finely chopped
1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil
3 tablespoons melted lamb fat, lard or butter
2 teaspoons fine sea salt
1 cup dry red wine, or more to taste
2 bay leaves
4 to 6 large plum tomatoes, peeled, seeded and quartered, or one 16-ounce can of plum tomatoes

Directions

- If you plan to use rendered lamb fat, cut enough off of the chops and melt it in a large pan to get 3 tablespoons and set it aside. In the same pan, raise the heat to high and brown the lamb chops on both sides. Set the meat aside.



Luigi's Lamb Chops

- In a Dutch oven or deep frying pan, combine the liquid fat with the olive oil and add the chopped onion and pepper. Add the salt and mix well.
- Cook the mixture over medium heat for 5 minutes and then add 1/2 cup of the wine. Cook for 5 minutes or until the vegetables have absorbed just about all of the liquid.
- Put the lamb chops into the pan, add the rest of the wine and cover

the pan; simmer for 1 1/2 hours or until meat is fork tender.

- Check the pan after about 20 minutes of cooking; if the mixture looks dry add more wine, some stock, or water.
- Remove the cover and add the bay leaves and tomatoes. Simmer until the tomatoes soften, about 10 to 12 minutes.
- Transfer the lamb chops to a platter and serve with some of the pan juices and vegetables. ▲



John Hession

Creator and host of the nationally televised PBS series *Ciao Italia*, Mary Ann Esposito is celebrating the show's 21st season, making it the longest running cooking series in television history.

She is the author of 12 cookbooks, most recently "*Ciao Italia: Family Classics*," and the recipient of the prestigious Premio Artusi Award. Her new book "*Ciao Italia: My Lifelong Food Adventures in Italy*," is scheduled for publication on November 1. Pre-order now at Amazon.com! Visit www.ciaoitalia.com.

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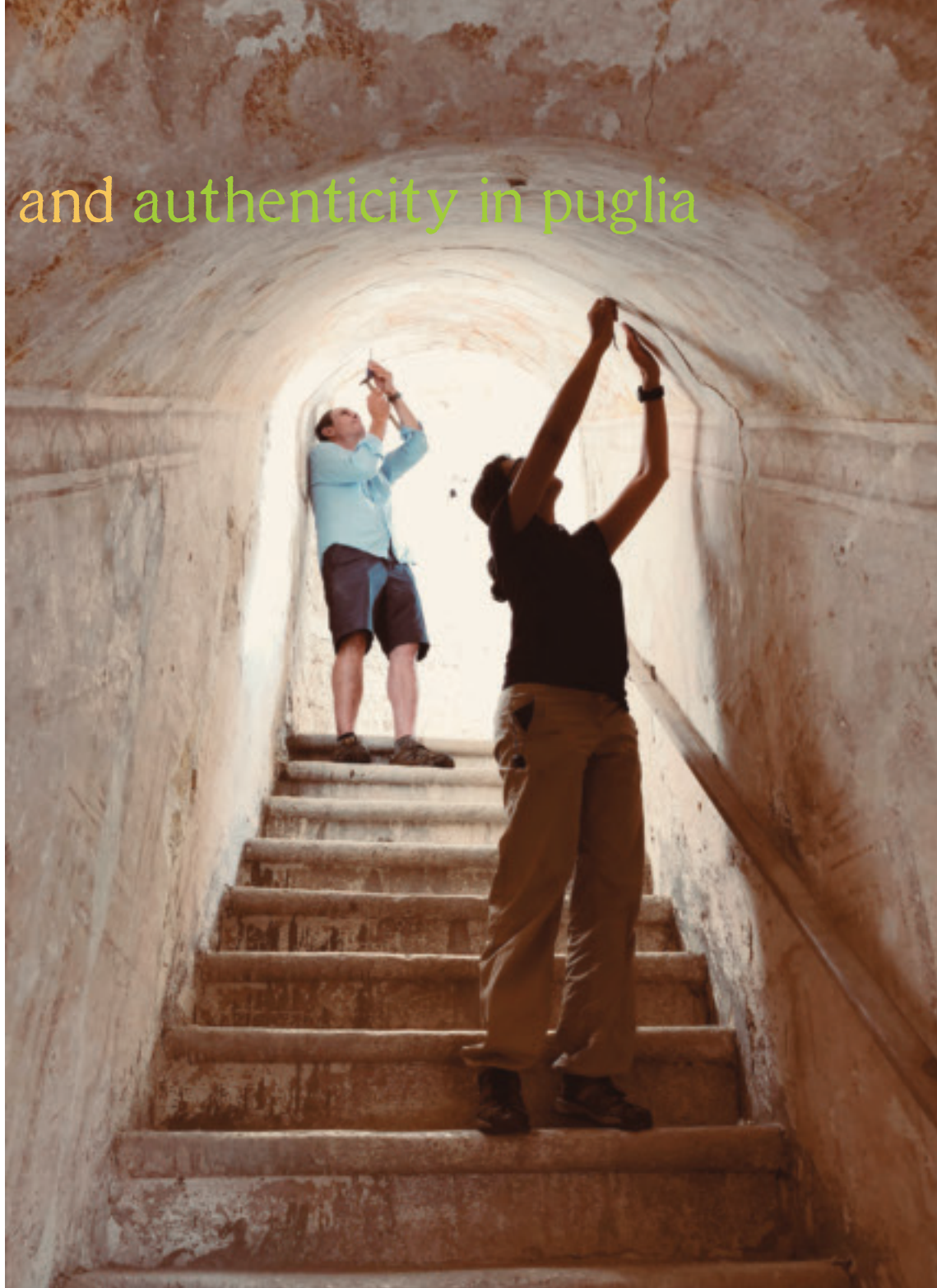


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restoration and authenticity in puglia

The Messors
Culturally Rich
Art Conservation
and Culinary
Workshops

By Susan Van Allen



“I am in Italy, working under a hot mid-day sun, in a subterranean world of Byzantine adorned frescoes. I am lovingly and painstakingly restoring them to their former glory.”

Photos by Jennifer Bell

View from the terrace of Messors workshop accommodations in Gravina in Puglia



Canadian artist Jennifer Bell tells me she imagines this would be the opening of her “*Eat, Pray, Love*” style memoir. In 2004, she heard about Messors, a volunteer project in the mountains of eastern Puglia, where she could take part in restoring centuries-old wall paintings in the caves that dot the landscape. It sounded like the perfect adventure for a solo traveler—a chance to immerse herself with the locals and learn a new skill, while doing some good by taking part in conserving the artistic heritage of the area.

Bell never imagined that the adventure would unfold into a romance. Years later, she’s married to the man who founded the project, Tonio Creanza. Together, they’ve grown the Messors organization, running a variety of programs that attract international travelers who come to learn art restoration, culinary and shepherding traditions, or participate in artist residen-

cies, all of which immerse them in the rich culture of this beautiful part of the Puglia region.

As a kid growing up in Altamura (Messors’ original base), Creanza was fascinated by the landscape that surrounded him. Puglia’s unique Alta Murgia is a plateau composed of limestone and tufa, thick forests, enchanting villages, and verdant fields where shepherds still move flocks of sheep along low to high paths in a tradition called transhumance. Especially intriguing were abandoned caves where Creanza discovered traces of Byzantine frescos.

Creanza’s family were farmers for five generations preceding him and they still produce olive oil from their grove of 700 trees. After extensive travels abroad in his 20s, Creanza returned to the family farm and, today, says, “I realized then, I could go home and create a project where the world would come to me.” ►

Tonio Creanza (standing) and Jennifer Bell (far left) onsite at Masseria crypt in Puglia





Tonio Creanza and Jennifer Bell on the palazzo terrace



Left: Detail of a Messors fresco studio

In 1995, he began the Eutropia Project, named in homage to an imaginary location in author Italo Calvino's "Invisible Cities." Creanza recognized that the cultural heritage of his homeland had long been "invisible." There were hidden treasures in the caves—paintings from the 12th-to-14th centuries, made when pilgrims from the Balkans came through and created spiritual sanctuaries; remains from the 3rd century when the land was a stop along the Appian Way; and the astounding 1993 discovery of Altamura Man, a

Neanderthal skeleton aged at around 150,000 years.

Important historical structures were crumbling. Caves were covered in grime, moss, layers of calcification, and at risk of water damage from soil erosion above them. With so much work to be done, he got the idea to open the project to travelers who wanted to have an authentic learning experience and become an important part of the culture.

From the start, and what remains unique about Messors, is what Creanza describes as "a sustainable conservation model." Every step of the way, he directs structural restorations so that the end result will not be a museum, but rather a place of living history that will enhance the local community. The initial Masseria Jesce project transformed a farmhouse and surrounding caves into a theatre and exhibition space for local and visiting artists. The ongoing Fornello Cave project will provide places for community congregation, cheese making and aging, as well as storage for shepherd's milk and wine cellars.

The Messors team, under the passionate leadership of art-restoration and conservation

expert Creanza, is a mix of archaeological and restoration scholars, local cooks, butchers, cheese makers and shepherds who interact with the participants for a fully integrated experience. Summer workshops offer one-to-two-week programs to focus on either food or art—though even art students naturally become immersed in the local culinary scene, enjoying meals made in traditional style from the bounty of their surroundings.

"It's really an educational program with adult summer camp elements in it, where participants from all over the world—the USA, Canada, Denmark, Singapore, Belgium, the Philippines, Australia, etc.—unite over their morning activities and at our evenings' dinners," says Bell. The program's home base is Gravina, a village of ancient roots composed of golden tufa stone. Its name came from the 12th-century Emperor Frederick II, inspired by the Latin "*Grana dat et Vina*," land of wheat and wine. Guests are housed in a 15th-century *palazzo* and enjoy mingling with the locals in the piazza or wandering over the Ponte Acquedotto (stone foot bridge) to the open countryside.

Messors philosophy is "Learn by Doing," and there are no artistic or culinary requirements to attend. "It's great to see the participants grow in confidence over a short period of time. It becomes life changing for them," says Bell.

Many are intimidated at first when they enter a cave and are handed a hammer and chisel; in the convent-turned-art-studio



Matera, about 16 miles south of Gravina



Messors painting restoration instructor Filip Petcu creating a fresco in Messors countryside studio



Dinner al fresco with Messors workshop participants

trying their hand at fresco painting; or in a kitchen beginning to knead flour made from the local durum wheat to make bread. But with encouragement, they go at it, and receive the great satisfaction of accomplishing something they've never tried before.

Over decades, the workshops have also had a positive impact on the locals. "The interest of outsiders coming in to honor and restore the land has given the people who live here a renewed pride for what they have," says Creanza. "Before these projects, they couldn't fathom the riches they were living amidst."

Unlike the UNESCO World Heritage Site "City of Caves," a major tourist attraction located about 30 miles away, this slice of Puglia remains free of crowds and souvenir shops, retaining its authentic character.

Authentic here means slowing down to enjoy the culture, moment by moment. Participants in the cooking program spend a day with a shepherd,

following along his meditative path, and stopping in the fields to make the traditional lunch of *ciallede* soup—a mix of potatoes, tomatoes, celery, olives, and eggs—and the famous Altamura thick-crust bread that has received Protected Designation of Origin status by the European Union. Another highlight is making dinner with the local butcher and pasta makers, and then heading into the village to invite a stranger from town to the table for a feast accompanied by Creanza playing his guitar, and all joining in for singing and dancing. Even the excursions from their base, to Matera, Pompeii and Naples, all include personal interactions with local archaeologists to give an immersive experience.

Michelle Jones, a past Messors participant, fondly remembers the wonderful Italian-style spontaneity of the Art Restoration workshop. "There was a day when we took off for the beach," she says. "On the way, we pulled off the



Panini picnic lunch



Art Restoration workshop with Tonio Creanza

road when we saw a tree full of ripe apricots that we picked to have with our lasagna picnic. We built a bonfire on the beach and Tonio got out his guitar and improvised verses of songs about each of us. That was a while back and I'm still in contact with the women who were with me on that beach."

Creanza is happy to tell me that, over the years, about 1,500 people have participated in Messors workshops. Many have been inspired by the experience to pursue careers in art conservation or museum work in their homelands.

"What's amazing is I'm

still in touch with most of them," Creanza says, "and many of them come back. The participants are the ones who have made such a positive impact, they have really brought a change to this place and brought what they've learned back to their own cultures. They are the heroes of Messors."

For more information, visit www.messors.com ▲

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

STILZ

Mediterraneo

ΤΣΑΧΗΓ ΤΗΣ
ΜΕΔΙΤΣΡΡΑΠΣΑΠ ΛΙΦΣΤΥΛΣ
ΙΠ ΡΥΓΛΙΑ

By Michelle Fabio



On a one-week vacation from her job as a Goldman Sachs investment banker, Puglia native Cinzia Rascazzo was sipping wine, munching *taralli* (a crunchy, baked Puglian treat) and enjoying a July sunset over the Ionian Sea in Gallipoli when her “Aha!” moment struck.

“I perfectly remember that sunset and thinking I had to move on,” Rascazzo said. “I thought I had enough courage to give up everything and follow my dream to promote our country and our lifestyle as a way to contribute to other people.”

As an Italian expat living abroad in London and New York City, Rascazzo had noticed that most of the publicity for Italy was centered on Tuscany and the northern Italian regions. She knew, though, that the southern Italian lifestyle she grew up with was something special and that many people could benefit from learning about it and incorporating it into their lives.

“I always loved good, healthy food, and coming from southern Italy. I always thought our delicious, simple food was as important as having a good lifestyle—meaning spending time with family and friends, spending time in nature and having an impact on our community through what we do,” said Rascazzo.

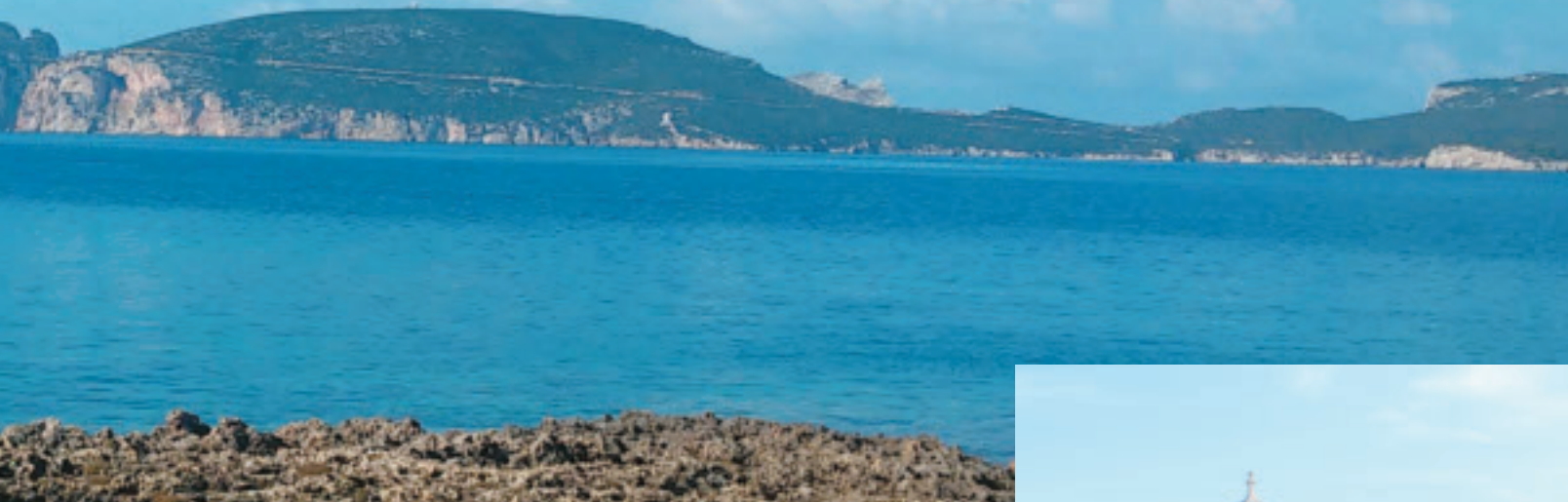
And so, not long after her sunset realization, she left the financial sector and headed back to the heel of the boot to begin preparations for what would become one of Puglia’s finest cooking and wine schools: the Stile Mediterraneo Academy.

FROM SUNSET TO SCHOOL

Upon her return to Puglia, Rascazzo began molding her Italian dream to promote the region’s ancient culinary heritage, including the Mediterranean diet, which was awarded Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity status by UNESCO in 2010.



Cinzia Rascazzo
in Tuscany



Sure, many people find themselves enjoying Italy so much that they dream about building a life there, but Rascazzo was equipped with excellent tools to make hers a reality—and she used each one perfectly to her advantage. For one, she is Italian. Rascazzo already knew the language, history and culture and even had a family *palazzo* nestled among olive trees and vineyards outside of Lecce that needed some love. She invested her savings into the restoration of her grandfather’s old place and had a postcard-perfect spot for her school.

Still, she knew that starting and running a successful business in southern Italy, where Italian bureaucracy can make things especially difficult, wouldn’t be easy. Even as a small child, though, Rascazzo was a hard worker, never afraid of pushing up her sleeves to help her grandmother make tomato sauce and marmalade—or her pants legs, squishing grapes by

foot alongside her grandfather in the winemaking process.

So, this was just another challenge for her. And, again, she was ready, having already paved the path to entrepreneurship through many years of education and training. Rascazzo holds a master’s in business administration (MBA) from Harvard and a master’s degree in social entrepreneurship from INSEAD, one of the world’s leading and largest graduate business schools.

And then came the all-important food aspect of the Academy. Rascazzo’s passion for healthy food began with her grandmother, who taught her and her sister Marika, a cardiologist, to cook using the freshest, local ingredients in Puglia’s *cucina povera*. She has continued her studies in the food sector by becoming a certified olive oil taster and wine sommelier.

Not surprisingly, the family connections at Stile Mediterraneo



Slow-Food Mediterranean lifestyle among olive trees in Puglia

run strong. Marika became a critical component to the burgeoning school, contributing her medical knowledge to the development of the school’s unique methods, which aim to enhance food flavors as well as nutrients. Her book, “The Cuisine of Southern Italian Women: Mediterranean Secrets for a Happy Life,” is available on Rascazzo’s website. ➤



White truffles for sale in Piemonte

The Academy's curriculum eventually came to include educational sessions about health benefits of foods, trips to open-air markets, food tastings with local experts, hands-on pasta-making lessons (especially the famous ear-shaped *orecchiette* often tossed with broccoli rabe), wine tours and visits to artisans in Lecce and all around Puglia.

Stile Mediterraneo, says Rascazzo, is for "people who want to improve their health, happiness and well-being through good food and lifestyle." Toward that, guests learn about—and in some cases, try their hand in preparing—Puglian specialties such as *burrata* from the Andria-Trani area, *zampina* sausage of Sammichele di Bari, the origin-protected (DOP) durum wheat and sourdough bread from Altamura, and *bombette pugliese* (sliced pork neck rolled around a chunk of Gargano's *caciocavallo podalico* cheese and roasted).

In its 11-year history, Stile Mediterraneo has attracted a varied and esteemed clientele, which has included renowned Napa Valley celebrity chef Michael Chiarello. In 2014, he told the New York Times that although he originally thought he was just going to tag along at Stile Mediterraneo while his daughter learned things he already knew, he "came out of the class with a handful of new techniques and knowledge of how to make the perfect tomato sauce."

Rascazzo calls her client base "loyal," and, many, like Kristine Mertz from Rhode Island, return again and again. Mertz has been to Puglia twice with Rascazzo and is now planning to celebrate a milestone birthday week



Educational session on the white truffle in Piemonte.

with Rascazzo in 2020.

"Cinzia's knowledge, passion and connections in the local communities shine a light on the best of the best in local, artisan and healthy lifestyle this region has to offer," Mertz said.

ARTISANS OF TASTE

Rascazzo recognizes the importance of passing on a "healthy and safe planet to the next generations," and so, building upon her ultimate goal of contributing positively to the world, she began "Artisans of Taste." Since 2014, Rascazzo has organized excursions to other Italian regions to connect guests with producers and farmers who operate in a sustainable, responsible way.

"We believe that people should not only take care of what they eat and their lifestyle, but also appreciate the impact they have on the planet through what they consume," said Rascazzo.

Artisans of Taste currently holds retreats and workshops in Puglia, Sardinia, Piemonte, Friuli Venezia Giulia and the Dolomites, with programs to other regions in the works.

On a personal level, Rascazzo has enjoyed expanding her knowledge through her latest venture as well. "It has been so fascinating to meet all these shepherds or small producers who are not driven by money and seem to be the happiest people in the world, living a very fulfilling life," she said.

Utilizing Rascazzo's background and experience in business, the en-



Chilly pepper tasting



Rascazzo at bread-making session in Sardinia

terprise also now holds programs for young entrepreneurs or those who would like to change careers and launch their own enterprises in the food, wine, health or travel sectors while also having a positive impact on the world.

ΣΧΕΣΙΣ ΠΙΣ ΠΟΥΛΙΑ WITH A LOCAL

Rascazzo's passion for good, healthy food is matched only by her love of her home region. There's little more inspiring than seeing a person's native land through their eyes, and that is what Rascazzo offers. It's her Puglia, and her excitement is contagious.

Yet, for as much as Rascazzo praises the region's great foods and beautiful landscape, including a breathtakingly seaside, when asked to choose the one thing that people should know about Puglia, she didn't hesitate. "Pugliese people are super hospitable, friendly, helpful and always smiling!" she said. "It's impossible not to feel at home here."

And maybe that's the biggest potential danger of visiting Puglia: its sunsets, especially when consumed alongside wine and *taralli*, just may inspire you to make some big life changes for yourself.

Visit Artisans of Taste website at artisansoftaste.com. ▲

Michelle Fabio is a freelance writer based in Calabria, Italy. She is a senior contributor at Forbes and has also written for Roads & Kingdoms, Fodor's, and Frommer's, among others.

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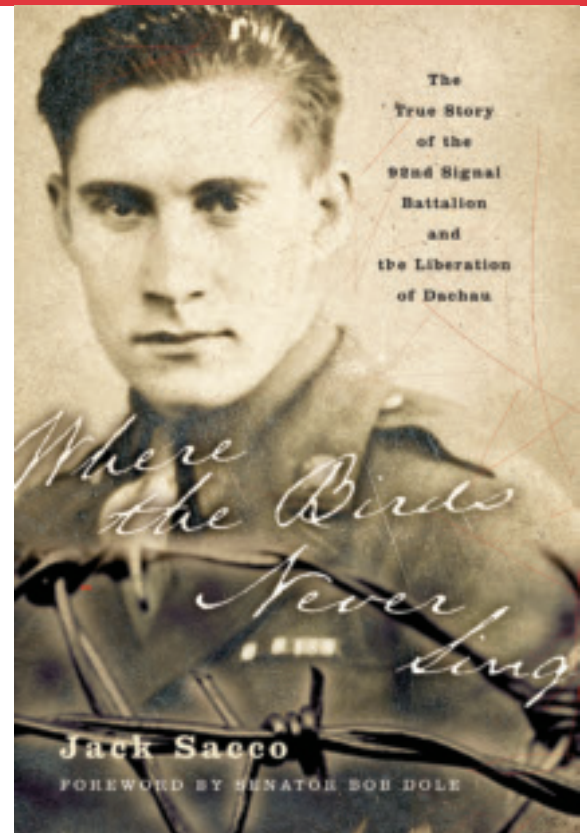
Joe Sacco in Germany, spring of 1945

EYEWITNESS TO ATROCITY

Joe Sacco Taught His Son Jack About What He Saw Liberating the Nazi Concentration Camp at Dachau... And Told Him Never Let It Happen Again

Contemporary photo from Jack Sacco's visit to Dachau

Jack Sacco



By JACK SACCO

When I was a boy, my father often told me stories about World War II. I would listen with wide-eyed fascination as he recounted tales of how he and his buddies fought their way across Europe under the leadership of General George S. Patton. He showed me Nazi swords, daggers and other artifacts he had collected as his battalion stormed through France and Germany en route to the ultimate victory. But there was more to the story than he could share with such a young boy.

One day, shortly after my 12th birthday, he said he wanted to show me something that had occurred during the war.

"This happened at a concentration camp," he told me, holding up a small photo album.

"What's a concentration camp?" I asked, having never heard the term.

"The Nazis were killing people there," he said, "but we made them stop."

Inside the album were the original photographs he and his buddies had taken on Sunday, April 29, 1945—the day they had liberated the notorious Nazi concentration camp at Dachau. The unspeakable horrors caught on film, he assured me, were only a glimpse of what he and his buddies had witnessed the morning they had entered the camp. ▶



Sgt. Joe Sacco looking into one of the railcars on the day of the Dachau liberation

“I want to show you these for two reasons,” he explained. “First, at some point in your life, someone will try to tell you that the Holocaust didn’t really happen. But it did happen. I was there and I saw it. Second, I want you to never let anything like this happen again.”

My father, Joe Sacco, was the only son of Italian immigrants. In 1942, he worked on the family farm in Birmingham, Ala., and, like many of the young soldiers of World War II, he had never been away from home before being drafted. He had never held a weapon more powerful than a BB gun. He had never encountered violence more intense than a schoolyard fight. And the first beach he ever saw was Omaha Beach.

But it was neither Normandy, nor the Battle of the Bulge, nor the months of combat through Germany that would bring tears to his eyes decades later. It was the memory of what he had discovered when he entered the gates of Dachau.

I looked at the pictures in disbelief as he told me the story of that day. I was shocked, confused, and horrified. How could this atrocity have happened? What type of people could have done such things to their fellow man?

Among the scenes he recounted was one of looking down into a railcar in which Jewish prisoners had been locked and starved. There, among the lifeless bodies, he spotted a young



Jack Sacco and Joe Sacco with Rabbi Abraham Cooper of the Simon Wiesenthal Center at the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles, standing in front of a flag made by prisoners at one of the Nazi concentration camps.

lady leaning against a corner nursing her infant son. Both mother and baby were dead—she struggling to give her very last drop of life to her newborn, and he struggling to live, to enter a world that would not have him.

To my father, this was the Madonna and Child, the supreme symbols of life and hope, now lying murdered below him. He told me that he prayed that God would forgive him for not getting there sooner so that he could have saved the lady and her baby.

Innocence was lost as I gazed at the album’s graphic images. They, along with my father’s description of the camp, would haunt me for months on end.

The fact of the Holocaust was undeniable. The pictures proved it. But what was I to make of my father’s mandate to never let this happen again? How could I ever prevent such cruelty, such inhumanity from happening in the future, especially when it had taken the full might of the United States Army to stop the atrocities at Dachau?

Though the years passed, the images of Dachau would not leave me. Through my father’s eyes—and through the lens of his camera—I had witnessed the worst of man, the systematic murder of millions of people for religious and political reasons. These were heinous crimes against humanity, and the cries of the innocents would echo through the ages.

In April of 1981, while traveling through Germany, I visited Dachau. The overcast sky seemed identical to the one in the photos my father had taken some thirty-six years earlier. The camp was shrouded in stillness and an eerie silence.

I took a pen and notebook from my pocket and wrote the following words:

They say that the birds never ➤

Joe Sacco with his Sicilian immigrant parents, Rosa and Gioacchino, on the family farm in Alabama a few weeks before he was drafted



CUNY RISING

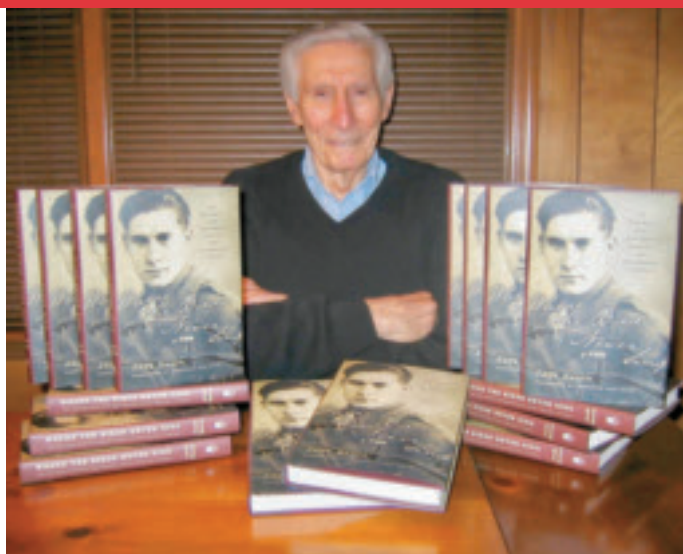


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Joe Sacco with his son's book

sing at Dachau. Perhaps they cannot produce their wondrous music in a place that has witnessed such tragedy, such cruelty, such horror. Perhaps God forbids it. Or perhaps, on their own, they are muted by the profound sense of sadness that permeates the very air around Dachau—air that once was filled with the cries of innocents and the lingering smoke of their ashes.

As I walked around the camp, I found the various landmarks I had seen as a 12-year-old in the pictures: the iron gate surmounted with the words “Arbeit Macht Frei”; the railroad tracks where the lady and her infant son had perished; and the crematorium inside where countless bodies had been stacked and burned.

From somewhere out of the sadness deep inside me came two unexpected feelings—pride and gratitude. Pride in my father and in my country, and gratitude for what they had accomplished here.

My father and his buddies left Dachau the morning after the liberation, having brought some semblance of humanity back to this place that had endured so much tragedy and sorrow.

“Now, after a year of combat,” he told me, “each of us finally and forever understood why destiny had called us to travel so far from the land of our birth and to fight for people we did not know. And so, it was here, in this place abandoned by God and accursed by men, that we came to discover the meaning of our mission.”

He had said that, for several years after World War II, he would not speak about it. He didn’t think anyone would be able to fully understand the magnitude and significance of what he and his buddies had experienced.

His eventual decision to tell me about the war and to show me the photographs of Dachau was not made lightly. He knew that the stories were heartbreaking and the images were frightening, but he thought it important for his son to understand what he had witnessed firsthand so many years before.

In 2001, I set about the task of interviewing my father and his fellow liberators in preparation for my book, “Where the Birds Never Sing.”

Just as my father had done, each told me stories about the war and each recounted their personal experiences as they entered Dachau. To a man, each welled up with tears as they described the emotions of that day. And each confirmed that it was at Dachau, as they looked into the grateful eyes of those they had saved, that they came to understand the purpose behind their many sacrifices.

The deeper I got into the manuscript, the more I felt as if I had been transported back in time and was walking beside my father and his buddies, experiencing their camaraderie, their hardships, and their victories during the Second World War.

As the book neared completion, I realized that I was going to miss the company of these great men. At the same time, I felt grateful for having been in their presence and for having been allowed to document their magnificent journey for future generations.

The story of the Nazis has been hashed and rehashed for decades, sometimes with obsessive detail. The stories of the Holocaust survivors have rightfully begun to take their place in history. But the story of the liberators—the young American soldiers who left their homes, traveled to a faraway land, and shed their blood to save the lives of others—had never been adequately told, and their true heroism had never been appreciated.

Bringing their story to life has been not simply a labor of love, but a tribute to what my father and his buddies achieved, for the Holocaust and its carnage ended the minute the Americans entered the camp.

As my father had enjoined me to do so many years before, “Where the Birds Never Sing” bears witness to the truth of the Holocaust. And by bearing witness to that truth, I seek to do my part to ensure that the atrocities of the past are never repeated. ▲

Jack Sacco is the author of “Where the Birds Never Sing,” “Above the Treetops,” and “The Resurrection Sequence.” He is the winner of the Alabama Library Association’s Author Award and was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. He is a graduate of the University of Notre Dame and lives in Los Angeles, Calif., and Birmingham, Ala.

Joe Sacco, 1944, reading a letter from home





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TREKKING THE *Via degli Dei*

FROM BOLOGNA TO FLORENCE

on
Foot

BY SILVIA DONATI

IT SOUNDS MORE EXHAUSTING THAN IT IS:

to walk 120 km (75 miles) from Bologna's main square, Piazza Maggiore, to Florence's world-famous Piazza della Signoria.

But fear not the long distance or traversing the Apennine mountains on La Via degli Dei. The great thing about this trek is that you can pace it according to your interests and abilities. So, if you are fit and used to hiking many hours a day, you can complete it in five days. If you are not an experienced hiker, you can just walk portions of it, making frequent rest stops to admire the numerous historic and natural points of interest, and taste the local food and wine.

I first learned about the Via degli Dei a couple of years ago, when I took on trekking regularly. For me, a native Bolognese, the idea of walking to what we consider our close neighbor, Florence, traversing our mountains, the Apennines, had a special lure. It represented a chance to explore, in a deeper way that only walking allows, the area near my home, which until then I had tended to overlook in favor of farther away destinations.

The story behind the Via degli Dei

intrigued me just as the trek itself did. It all goes back to a group of Bolognese friends who, in the 1990s, often got together to ramble the Apennines and savor the local cuisine at the traditional trattorias found along the way. We could say they were on to the slow food and slow travel movements way before these movements became cool.

During their walking escapades, they came up with the idea of finding a route that would take them all the way from Bologna to Florence. And, because part of the itinerary passed by mountains or towns named after gods—Monte Adone (Adonis), Monzuno (Mons Junonis), Monte Venere (Venus) and Monte Luario (Lua)—they picked Via degli Dei, “the Path of Gods,” as the name for the trail.

In trying to find the most direct route that would avoid as many trafficky roads as possible, the group of friends chose the same trajectory used by the Roman consul Caio Flaminio to build the Flaminia Militare in 187 B.C. Two

years earlier, the Romans had established the colony of Bononia (Bologna) where the Etruscan city of Felsina once stood. To guarantee a swift movement of the army across the Apennines, which today form the natural border between the regions of Emilia-Romagna and Tuscany, they built a road paved with local sandstone that crossed the Apennines at what is today the Futa

Monte Adone, located in the middle of Bologna Apennines near Contrafforte Pliocenico Nature Reserve



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Silvia Donati

The Mugello region and valley in northern Tuscany

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The Flaminia Militare, built by the Romans in 187 B.C.

Pass. In picking the route, Flaminio followed an even earlier trans-Appennine track that had been used by the Etruscans to connect Felsina with Fiesole, just above Florence.

In the Middle Ages, the road lost its strategic-military importance and was gradually abandoned, eventually covered by vegetation and disappearing. At the end of the 1970s, two local archeology and history buffs, convinced of the existence of the road, began digging. They kept doing so for 30 years, bringing to light sections of

the ancient Flaminia Militare. Especially around the Futa Pass, stretches of the Via degli Dei correspond exactly with the Flaminia Militare, meaning I have walked on actual Roman *basolato* (the type of road paving used by the ancient Romans).

The Roman road was just one of many historic attractions I would find along the Via degli Dei. Even without considering the history and art-rich cities of Bologna and Florence, the points of departure and arrival of the trek, the opportunities to learn about the local

history along the way are plentiful.

I was not yet out of Bologna and I was already walking under the longest portico in the world, the 3.8-km (2.4 miles) Portico di San Luca, which leads up to the Colle della Guardia hill. This is where the Sanctuary of the Madonna di San Luca, a most beloved Bolognese landmark, stands. Proceeding along the Reno River, mentioned by Dante in the “Inferno,” where he described the Bolognesi as those “living between the Savena and the Reno,” I entered deeper into ➤

WHAT TO KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- Plan ahead and prepare. Study the itinerary before departing using the official map which you can buy on the Via degli Dei website: www.viadegliidei.it/index.php?lang=en. And consult the following website: www.infosasso.it/it/eng-via-degli-dei.
- If you wish to go on a guided Via degli Dei trek, check out Appennino Slow at www.appenninoslow.it/trekitalyviadegliidei.
- Train so that you will be able to walk several hours per day.
- Late spring and early fall are the best times to go.
- Modest hotels and agriturismi are found along the route; they provide bed sheets and towels so you don't have to carry them in your backpack.
- Water is available along the route, but start the day with at least 1.5 liters (50 oz).
- Last but not least, be a responsible hiker. Dispose of waste properly, respect wildlife and ecosystems, prevent any risk of fire, stay on the trail, be considerate of other walkers.



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The abbey of Buonsollazzo, about 38 km by foot southwest of Pian di Balestra, with a Trebbio villa in the distance

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Portico San Luca leading up to the Sanctuary Madonna San Luca, located 300 meters above the city of Bologna, is the longest portico in the world.

Silvia Donati

the Appennino Emiliano, the hilly and mountainous area to the south of Bologna, dotted with small towns and villages, cultivated fields, tiny churches and historic homes.

Another absolute joy of this trek are the many natural wonders, provided by a varied landscape of chestnut and beech forests, panoramic ridges, rolling hills and riverside trails. I not only walked along a 2,000-year-old road, I also walked where the sea once stood when, in the Pliocene Epoch, between 5 and 2 million years ago, the Mediterranean Sea brushed the Apennines. Looking closely into the rocky sandstone cliffs that form the so-called “Contrafforte Pliocenico,” the bizarrely shaped pinnacles that emerged from the sea, I could see marine fossils.

A tragic kind of history also touched the Apennines. By the Futa Pass, once one of the most important passes of the Apennines connecting Bologna with Florence before the Autostrada del Sole was built (the highway that links the two cities in an hour), I visited the eerie German military cemetery, the largest in Italy, housing the tombs of 31,000 soldiers who died in

World War II. Located at the midpoint of the Gothic Line, the defensive line built by German troops, it is designed in the shape of spiraling terraces, and indeed seems to spiral into the memo-

rial monument, enveloping the grass where the tombstones emerge.

After the Futa Pass, I began the descent into the Mugello, the verdant valley less than an hour (by car!) north

VIA DEGLI DEI FOR FOODIES

From *tagliatelle* and *crescentine* on the Emilia side to *ribollita* and *fiorentina* on the Tuscan side, the Via degli Dei welcomes lovers of Italian food. Some worthy stops along the way:

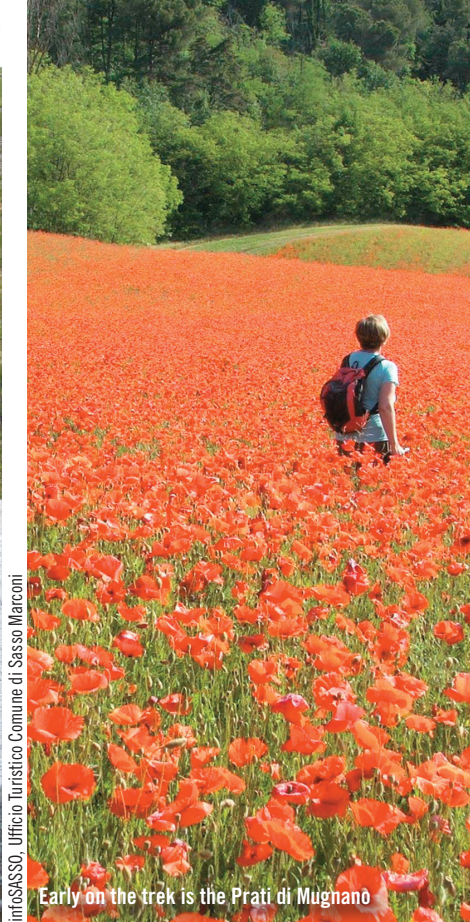
- **RoManzo, Macelleria Zivieri**—Before setting out on your hike from Bologna, stop by this *macelleria* (butcher shop) in the historic center of Bologna. Originally opened in the Apennine town of Monzuno, this is where you fill your sandwich with the excellent cured meats from locally reared pigs. *Mercato di Mezzo, via Clavature 12, Bologna*
- **Antica Hostaria della Rocca di Badolo**—Traditional cuisine of Emilia (fresh, handmade pasta, grilled meats) which makes use of the typical products of the Emilian Apennines, such as truffle, mushrooms and chestnuts. *Via Brento 4*

in Badolo, Sasso Marconi, Bologna

- **Antica Osteria di Montecarelli**—Rustic, classic Tuscan cuisine in a cozy ambiance, featuring platters of local cheeses and meats, *crostini*, *ribollita*, homemade pasta. *Via Montecarelli 13 in Montecarelli, Mugello, Florence*
- **Società Agraria Bacciotti**—Stop by for a slice (or two) of organic Tuscan pecorino cheese, skillfully made by a sister-and-brother team, who also raise their own sheep. *Via di Gabbiano 7, Scarperia, Mugello, Florence*
- **Vinandro**—On the central square in Fiesole, this tiny tavern with outdoor tables offers classic Tuscan cuisine, such as *pappa al pomodoro*, *pici* and *pappardelle* pasta, or *lampredotto*. *Piazza Mino Da Fiesole 33, Fiesole, Florence*

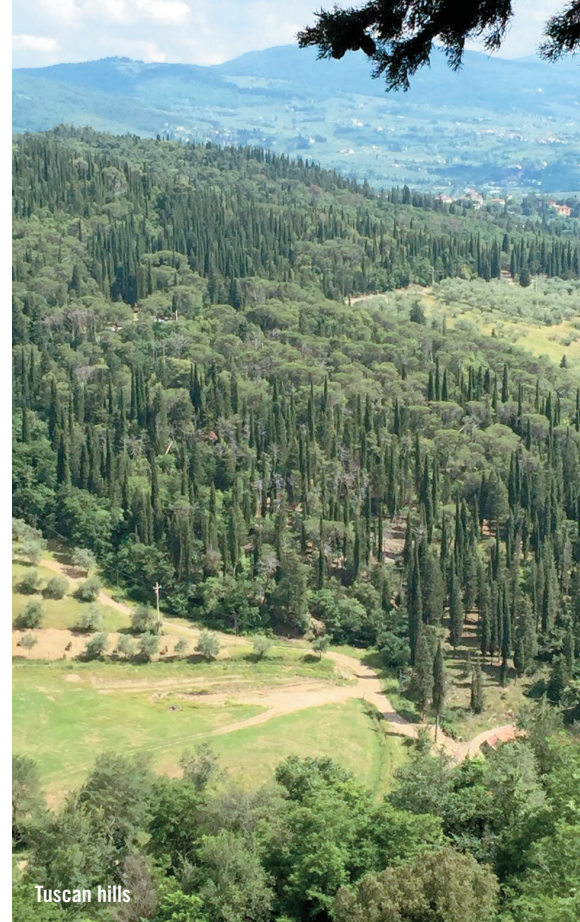


German military cemetery at Futa Pass



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Early on the trek is the Prati di Mugnano



Tuscan hills

Silvia Donati



Silvia Donati

Sheep farms on Via degli Dei make Tuscan Pecorino cheese

of Florence. Here was another change of landscape, which became classic Tuscan, with rolling hills, cypresses, olive trees, and Renaissance villas. One such villa is the UNESCO-inscribed Castello del Trebbio, built by Cosimo de' Medici, and a favorite hunting ground of his nephew, Lorenzo il Magnifico. This is also where I came across sheep farms that make the tasty Tuscan Pecorino cheese.

On a hill above the Arno valley, 6 km (3.7 miles) outside Florence,

stands Fiesole, founded by the Etruscans and later conquered by the Romans. It's worth a stop to visit the Archeological Area, which includes an Etruscan temple, Roman baths, an archaeological museum, and a 1st-century-B.C., classic Roman theater. For me, though, it was worth a stop to eat the delicious Tuscan dish, *pappa al pomodoro*, a thick bread soup prepared with fresh tomatoes, bread, olive oil, garlic, basil and other fresh ingredients.

Florence now looked so close, and

the view of it was simply breathtaking. But before I got there, I was able to experience one more historic highlight that the Via degli Dei offers: to walk on the hill where the first flying machine, devised by Leonardo da Vinci, was tested in 1506.

Entering Florence from the outskirts, I felt my excitement grow as I found myself among the crowds of tourists, signaling I was almost at my destination. I walked, elated, into Piazza della Signoria.

It had taken me six days to reach Florence on foot. On the way back, the high-speed train would take me to Bologna in 37 minutes. I could not help but think of all the times I traveled between Bologna and Florence by train or by car, without ever wondering about what lay between. Now I knew, and all those miles under my feet didn't feel exhausting, just enriching. ▲

Silvia Donati is a freelance journalist based in Italy. She writes about her hometown of Bologna and surrounding region of Emilia-Romagna on her blog, bolognauncovered.com, and is always up for a hike.

Must Read for Children

Visiting Author and
Illustrator Tomie dePaola
in His Studio



Story and Photos by Guiomar Barbi Ochoa

One day, when Tomie dePaola was four, he announced to his family that he was going to be an artist, that he was going to tap dance, write and draw pictures for books. Not waiting until when was grown up, he started doing it, drawing on any paper he could get his hands on.

His parents and relatives not only believed him, they encouraged him. So, visiting dePaola's remarkable art studio he built inside a remodeled 200-year-old New Hampshire barn, it shouldn't be surprising that one of today's best known authors and illustrators of children's books is still at it 80 years later. Drawing and writing. Maybe tap dancing now and then.

In his illustrious career, Tomie dePaola has created more than 260 children's books, from "Strega Nona" and "Tomie dePaola's Mother Goose" to "Oliver Button Is a Sissy" and "26 Fairmount Avenue." His latest book,

"Quiet," is scheduled to be published in October.

DePaola is the best known Italian American author of children's books. He has received, among too many honors to list, the Laura Ingalls Wilder Award, the James Smithson Medal from the Smithsonian Institution, the Jo Osborne Award for Humor in Children's Literature, the John Newbery Medal, and the Pirandello Lyceum's I Migliori Award. His work has garnered him honorary degrees from nine universities.

By any literary measure, dePaola has achieved recognition and admirable success. But, like his imaginative, colorful storybook characters, he has his own measure. "Children knowing who I am. A second grader telling me that her class loves my books," he says. "That, to me, is success."

Between earning his BFA from Pratt Institute in New York, and his

MFA from the California College of Arts in Oakland, he spent six months in a Benedictine monastery in Vermont—long enough to know he wasn't cut of that cloth, though, he says, it greatly strengthened his spiritual values. And, at the time, the revival of liturgical art, especially in the Catholic Church, fascinated him.

It also meshed with his heritage. DePaola was born in Meriden, Conn., in 1934. His father, Joseph, was of Italian descent, his mother, Florence, Irish. He had an older brother and two younger sisters. His father's family came from Calabria—his grandfather from the town of Paola, on the eastern shore of the Tyrrhenian Sea.

His grandfather, Antonio, was a shoemaker and his grandmother, Concetta, was a provincial woman who worked for him. In 1906, he came to the United States and, once established, sent for Concetta and his



DePaola's alphabet blocks spell out his mantra.



DePaola kitchen with jars of different pastas on display



DePaola sketches



Puppets of dePaola's characters

children. Because Concetta was illiterate, the local priest put a tag on her and the children, so they wouldn't get lost—sort of storybook-like. At the time, Concetta was pregnant with Tomie's father. After weeks of traveling, they docked into Boston and made their way to her husband in Fall River, Mass.

Antonio died when his son, Joseph, Tomie's father, was 12. Concetta took the head of the table. Her strong personality and Italian identity impact-

ed Tomie, and in turn, his writing. "When I think about the courage of my grandmother from Paola in Calabria, it's incredible," he says. "It's not a unique story, but one that we all have in our background."

Throughout his life, dePaola's family fostered his development as an artist and influenced the themes of his works.

From a young age, dePaola's mother read aloud to him. He recalls there were few full-color books for

children in the 1930's. Olive Beaupre Miller's "The Book House for Children" became popular, and when he was in 5th and 6th grade, he became aware of authors and illustrators. His favorite childhood book? "Hitty: Her First Hundred Years" by Rachel Field, which he says greatly impacted him.

In 1956, when dePaola graduated from Pratt, his parents sent him on a trip to Europe. It changed his life. A nun, Mother Benedict, recommended a tour called "Religion and Culture." ➤

Some of DePaola's books from the Strega Nona series





Inspiration and creativity at DePaola's studio: his garden, images on the studio wall, a niche of Mary for meditation and a display of his paintings.



He and his tour group went, by boat, to France, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland. "I was able to lie down on the floor of the Sistine Chapel. And I saw so many beautiful things," he says. "I remember being in Santa Croce, in Florence, by myself."

DePaola experienced an artistic awakening on that trip that eventually led him to New York City. At the time, children's books were starting to change and becoming beautiful. He was 30 and got work in illustration, his first passion.

DePaola's Giotto-esque style of illustration encapsulates the saying that one picture is worth a thousand words. He recently said, "People see your soul in your drawings," which speaks volumes about his passion for painting and illustration.

When the time came to write his own books, dePaola drew on his close-knit family's Italian and Irish American background to create new folk tales, retell Christian legends, and tenderly teach truths about loving families.

After teaching art in San Francisco and Boston, dePaola spent a glorious year or so in New York City, where he hung out with Joan Rivers and other

celebrities, before deciding to leave the big city and return to his roots. "I loved my life in New York City," he says, "but I'm a country boy at heart."

He settled in New Hampshire, where he still lives. He has lots of land, and an old, refurbished barn converted into his studio.

When asked how his Italian American culture influenced him, dePaola says, "There's a moment when every writer has to hear....write about what you know."

Embracing the Italian American world he grew up in, DePaola made the grandmother figure the focus of his 1972 "Nana Upstairs & Nana Downstairs," and for many children in the United States, his books served as their introduction to Italian culture. In 1974, he wrote "Watch Out for the Chicken Feet in Your Soup," based on his childhood memories of his nonna, Concetta, cooking chicken feet in her soup and his aunts fighting over who would get them.

In the early 1970s, while teaching at Colby Sawyer College in New London, N.H., dePaola doodled the character that would become his renowned icon, Strega Nona. A kindly, old witch who helps villagers with

her remedies and keeps a magical pot of pasta on the stove, Strega Nona (translates as Grandma Witch) is based on dePaola's own Italian grandmother. The Strega Nona series of books are set in Calabria, and has become an enchanting element of Italian American identity and culture.

"Strega Nona," dePaola's best-known work, won a Caldecott Honor in 1976, and was one of the "Top 100 Picture Books" of all time in a 2012 poll by the School Library Journal. Today, dePaola says, "It was a lucky day when that little doodle appeared on my pad."

DePaola still resides in New Hampshire. His home is warm, bright and, well, magical. My family and I visited him in the late spring when 60 lilac bushes were blooming in various hues of purple. Behind the bushes is a swimming pool that, dePaola jokingly says, was paid for by Strega Nona.

The house itself evokes Latin America more so than New England. Giant, colorful paintings hang ubiquitously and more than 20 folk-art niches are scattered throughout. Like a good Italian American, his kitchen seems endless. Every variety of pasta is on display and he even has a nook

with a pizza oven. In the fall of 2017, he invited Mary Ann Esposito, host and creator of Ciao Italia on PBS, to his home to cook with him. The duo spent the day filming pizza and calzones they made.

But dePaola's favorite spot in the house is undoubtedly his studio in a barn that originally housed cows. Now made over into an airy studio, it soaks up natural light, and is any artist's dream, filled with what must be hundreds of small brushes, with paints and pencils in every color of the rainbow. Everything is bright and light.

My favorite cove was the space where he draws his daily "art mails" that he posts on his Facebook page. He draws them for everything from a particular saint's feast day to random national days. Beyond the studio is a floor-to-ceiling library that houses his extraordinary collection of art books. A small chair facing an altar is where he meditates every day.

So, you see, dePaola's storytelling is powerfully personal. In it, readers



DePaola signing books for Guiomar Barbi Ochoa and her children Luca and Anna Cecilia

can find the importance of art and religion, of food and family. His Italian American heritage paints and shapes his writings and illustrations. His stories spread his joy from one generation to the next.

And that's enough for dePaola. "I haven't made in my career what a movie star makes in one movie," he says. "But that's nobody's fault.

I've done very well and my life is beautiful." ▲

Guiomar Barbi Ochoa is a family travel writer. She has worked at the U.S. Embassy to the Holy See in Rome, and for Discovery Communications. She lives in Washington, D.C., with her husband and two young children. You can follow her adventures at www.cosmomommy.com.

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MANDRAROSSA WINES

How the Wines of Puglia Stack Up

At the
Tormaresca
Winery.

By Dick Rosano

ask anyone who loves Italian wine and they'll point to Tuscany, Piemonte and maybe Umbria as the source of the best in the country. And while that summary recommendation might not be wrong, it leaves out much of the wine that surprises as much as it impresses. >

Tormaresca Winery's
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Minervino Murge.

Consider the white wines of Venezia-Giulia, the ripe and robust wines of Sicily, or the bubbly of Franciacorta. How about the ancient vines in Campania, so old that wines like Falerno, Aglianico and Fiano slaked the thirst of the Roman legions. Or Sangiovese Chianti-like wines of Emilia-Romagna, or the Rosso Piceno of the Marches region, the ancestral home of the Mondavi family, both Robert and his brother Peter who know something about wine.

Does that about complete the list? Hardly. In fact, each of the 20 regions of Italy can lay claim to their own flagship wine. But the region that is blossoming into one to watch in the future is Puglia.

First, full disclosure: My mother grew up there, in a little hilltop town called Toritto, west of Bari. But my bias still doesn't detract from the progress in making stellar wines in the heel of the boot.

Historically, the vineyards planted there, and so also the wines made there, had a Greek accent. The seafaring Hellenists brought their culture, art and government to the southern tip of the Italian peninsula, but they also brought their viticulture and their thirst for fine wine. It was these same Greeks who bestowed on southern Italy its first sobriquet, "Oenotria," their phrase meaning the "land of grapes."



Empson USA Inc./Matané winery

Empson USA Inc./Matané winery

Li Veli winery

The Cantele Winery

counterclockwise from top left: Tormaresca winery's Bocca di Lupo Estate vineyards; Li Veli vineyards in the Salento region; Cantele winemaker Gianni Cantele and Brand Manager Paolo Cantele; The Matané vineyards in Salento; and Valentino Sciotti of the Matané winery

Terroir, or roughly the combination of climate, weather and landscape, always plays an important part in vineyard development and flavor. So much of the terrain of Italy rests in the foothills of the Apennines, a mountainous spine that runs nearly the entire course of the country giving local vineyards the proper exposure for fine wine. But Puglia is mostly flat land, the plains that stretch east from the Apennines to the Adriatic Sea. This is the primary reason why so much of the south's economy is farming, and why a visitor can drive for great distances in sight only of olive trees, grain fields, almond orchards and fig trees.

Despite the lack of steep slopes, the wine industry in Apulia is growing quickly and gaining credibility as a source of high quality, affordable wines. Although the expressive flavors and price points are of first interest, the flavors of these unique grapes will also add to the pleasure. Grapes such as Negroamaro, Malvasia Nera, Uva di Troia and Primitivo among the reds, and Verdeca, Bombino Bianco and Trebbiano among the whites, are not common to most wine lovers, but they deserve more attention. Here's a good place to start:

Tasting Notes

WHITE WINES

Bortomagno 2017 Gravina (\$19, Winebow)

Bright, zesty and smooth, white pear and hints of ripe apple. Score: 85

Cantele 2017 Chardonnay (\$17, Vias Imports)

True to the fruit, medium bodied and soft, forward fruit, no hint of oak, supple on finish. Score: 86

Giancarlo Ceci 2016 Panascio Bianco (\$18, Vias Imports)

Light fruit aromas featuring peach with a hint of lemon, tart entry and long, luxurious finish. Score: 86

Leone de Castris 2016 Messapia (\$16, Winebow)

Subtle aromas of white peach and pear, light acidity, medium body. Score: 85

Masseria Li Veli 2017 Verdeca (\$20, Jarvis Communications)

Brilliant fruit aromas and flavors, core of lemon-lime with a suggestion of herbaceousness on finish. Score: 88

ROSATO (ROSÉ) WINES

Giancarlo Ceci 2016 Parchitello (\$17, Vias Imports)

Made from bombino nero, this is fresh and fruity, with a tart cherry and strawberry nose and flavor profile. Deliciously forward and appealing. Great for backyard barbecues and shellfish. Score: 86

Tormaresca 2017 Calafuria Rosato (\$15, Ste. Michelle Wine Estates)

Salmon pink, brisk fruity notes, smooth delivery, soft finish. Score: 87

Primitivo is certainly Puglia's

most famous export, but it didn't leave the country with that name.

DNA research and anecdotal records suggest that this is the parent grape of America's famous Zinfandel. The story goes that the Primitivo left Italy by way of Hungary where it was known as the Crijenak Kaštelanski and through Austria where it was tagged the Zierfandler. Agoston Haraszthy, a Hungarian adventurer, brought this vine to California where it flourished and was rechristened Zinfandel.

Botromagno Winery in Gravina

The Winebow Group

RED WINES

Botromagno 2015 Nero di Troia (\$20, Winebow)

Deep, dark red with aromas of toasted oak and forest floor, smooth tannins, black cherries and ripe plums on palate. Score: 87

Botromagno 2016 Primitivo (\$19, Winebow)

Gutsy and dark, even on the nose; raspberries and black cherries, soft finish. Score: 86

Cantele 2016 Primitivo (\$17, Vias Imports)

Soft, forward fruit, soft acidity, very approachable. Score: 86

Cantele 2014 Salice Salentino (\$17, Vias Imports)

Red fruit and cranberry on nose, tart dried cherries and plums, soft tannins, moderate finish. Score: 86

Giancarlo Ceci 2015 Almagia (\$26, Vias Imports)

Scent of tar and toasted oak, toasty oak on palate, crush berries with pepper accents. Score: 85

Giancarlo Ceci 2015 Almagia (\$26, Vias Imports)

Scent of tar and toasted oak, toasty oak on palate, crush berries with pepper accents. Score: 85

Giancarlo Ceci 2014 Parco Marano (\$29, Vias Imports)

Gutsy and robust on nose and palate, dense, great mouthfeel, a superbly balanced and concentrated wine. Score: 89

Gianfranco Fino 2016 Jo Salento Negramaro (\$100, Winebow)

Dark, rich, compelling, a fabulously aromatic wine, firm tannins, deeply sensuous flavors of dark fruit and slight spice. Score: 92

**Gianfranco Fino 2016
Es Salento Primitivo
(\$100, Winebow)**

Deep, dark red with a purple rim, exciting and aromatic on the nose, rich textures, complex flavors of dark fruit, chocolate, anise, and tobacco leaf. Score: 92

**Leone de Castris 2016
Maiana Salice Salentino
Negroamaro Rosso
(\$17, Winebow)**

Deep and aromatic, with dark fruit and soft wood scents, nicely balanced, showing black cherry and raspberry fruit and a hint of toast. Score: 86

**Masseria Li Veli 2015 Primitivo
(\$20, Jarvis Communications)**

Deep, dark, brooding aromas of toasty oak and black fruit, soft yet evident tannins, nice structure. Score: 89

**Masseria Li Veli 2016
Passamante Salice Salentino
(\$13, Jarvis Communications)**

Coffee, leather, and toast on nose, crisp red fruit punctuated with hint of tobacco leaf and tar. Score: 85

**Matane 2016 Primitivo
(\$14, Empson)**

Raspberries and black cherries on nose and palate, playful and straightforward, a subtle earthiness on the back palate. Score: 85

**Matane 2015 Primitivo di Manduria
(\$26, Empson)**

Rich, smooth, velvety, rich ripe dark fruit. Score: 86

**Tormaresca 2013 Bocca di Lupo
(\$70, Aglianico, Ste. Michelle
Wine Estates)**

Smoke, leather, and dark fruit aromas, black cherry and raspberry on palate, notes of herb and toast on finish. Score: 90

**Tormaresca 2015 Neprica
(\$12, Ste. Michelle Wine Estates)**

Bright red hues, toast and cranberry on approach, with a hint of tobacco, smooth and long. Score: 86

**Tormaresca 2015
Torcicoda Primitivo
(\$20, Ste. Michelle Wine Estates)**

Smoky, toasty oak, supple textures, rich aromas and flavors. Score: 89

DESSERT

**Botromagno 2008
Gravisano Passito di Malvasia
(\$40, Winebow)**

Copper colored and scented with figs and caramel, honey, dried figs on palate, fine acidity that helps enliven the fruit. Score: 88

**Giancarlo Ceci 2015
Dolce Rosalia
(\$40, Vias Imports)**

Luscious textures, peach and honey on nose and palate, a long lingering finish. Score: 87

Dick Rosano's columns have appeared for many years in The Washington Post and other national publications. His novels set in Italy capture the beauty of the country, the flavors of the cuisine, and the history and traditions of the people. Rosano has traveled the world but Italy is his ancestral home and the insights he lends to his books bring the characters to life, the cities and countryside into focus, and the culture into high relief—whether it's "A Death in Tuscany," "A Love Lost in Positano," "Hunting Truffles," or "The Secret of Altamura."

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THE FALL

ITALIAN

AMERICAN

READER

If you're dreading the final days of summer, you're not alone. Scientists have collected reams of studies documenting the moody downswing that the onset of sweater weather, aka autumn, can have on us. Gone are the long warm days full of sun, surf and sand, replaced instead by suddenly chilly mornings and dewy grass, late sunrises and early sunsets, smelly mildew and no amazing thunderstorms. Fun summer vacations abruptly give way to the ho-hum routine of back to school and everyday life. Experts tell us it's not uncommon for autumn sufferers to feel unmotivated,

anxious, and drained emotionally and physically. (Does the "fall" of the Roman Empire ring a bell?)

The biggest problem with fall is that we all know where this is heading. Winter is nearly here. No wonder some species just as soon go into hibernation. But consider this autumnal antidote: Italy in autunno.

Here's a few reasons why Italy might be a better cure for your autumn woes than battling seasonal affective disorder under the sunlamp:

- Cheap flights; hotel prices are lower.
- Vendemmia is the grape harvest to make wine, with wineries everywhere in Italy becoming inviting destinations. Also, it's the time to taste *vino novella*, the fruity, fresh, first wines from the harvest to reach stores.
- Sagra is an outdoor food festival. Many are tied to regional specialties and dishes, among them chestnuts, pasta sauce and figs. Look for sagre celebrating Porcini mushrooms in Piemonte; chocolate in Perugia; nougat in Cremona; aubergine (eggplant) in Savona; limoncello in Massa Lubrense; and *schacciata con l'uva* (grape focaccia) in Tuscany.
- Hot Springs outside of Rome, Tuscany and Turin, among other locales, are natural hot waters whose mineral or sulfuric content are known for their healing powers.
- White Truffle Festival in Alba in October is a bucket-list trip.
- Olive oil harvest occurs in late Autumn in Italy, just before Winter arrives.
- Temps are dropping but coastal waters are warm, so beaches are still in play.

That's just a few suggestions. If you have others, email us.

Meanwhile, getting comfy in your snuggle blanket and starting a good book is another means to endure autumn, wherever you are.

For our Fall Reading List, we have fiction and nonfiction, guidebooks to Italy, a love story, and sports books. Some of these are acclaimed, others are finds. They're all written by Italian American or Italian authors, or are of interest to Italian American readers.

Each review includes the book's cover and a line or two from the book. We hope these brief literary glimpses will help get you through the Fall. Buona lettura!

— Don Oldenburg



Tagliatelle with duck ragout



The Basilica della Salute seen from the sala della loggia of Palazzetto Alvisi Gaggia



Venice: The Art of Living

By Toto Bergamo Rossi
and Lydia Fasoli

Photographs by Marie Pierre Morel
Rizzoli; 240 pages; \$50 Hardcover

In the villas, the owners have shown us around and opened for us the gates of their magnificent gardens. They have also shared with us their old family recipes, moved by our same desire to promote and preserve Venetian art and culture, even while dining. If you've ever wandered along the canals, piazzas and streets of Venice, you have undoubtedly wondered what's inside some of the city's oldest palaces and villas. This gorgeous book explores just that, taking you, room by room, inside some of Venice's most sumptuous and secretly private residences, where Old World style is alive and rather grand.

These wonderfully photographed house tours display the remarkable interiors of 12 Venetian homes, including blue-blood mansions with histories mentioning names such as Goethe and Casanova; lagoon lodges whose rustic interiors reflect the Venetian islands' fishing and hunting traditions; and country villas with splendid gardens and simple decor. None are open to the public; some have never been shown.

The book begins with the elegant Palazzetto Alvisi Gaggia on Venice's Grand Canal. Its oldest part built in



The *sala dei dogi* (room of the doges) at the aristocratic Palazzo Gradenigo on Rio Marin

the early 17th century, this magnificent home not only has spectacular views across the canal, but the cupola of the Basilica della Salute is so close it seems touchable. Inside is just as magnificent, from the *sala della loggia* decorated in 18th-century style with green stucco-and-plaster walls displaying large 18th-century paintings and an 18th-century Murano-glass mirror, to the breathtaking formal dining room featuring 18th-century English chandeliers and Maissen porcelain.

The stunning beauty of the 14th-century Palazzo Zen extends from the *porta d'acqua* (water door) leading to the canal Rio di San Stin, to one of its enfilade rooms painted so deeply gold, with gold drapes, that you will stare. Artsier is the 15th-century Palazzetto Contarini Querini, since the early 1900s a residence for artists and, today, amidst its eclectic collectible décor, houses the atelier of painter Guglielmo Ciardi.

All three countryside residences are charmingly quaint. For instance, the kitchen inside the 16th-century Villa Bon Tessier, between Venice and Padua, on the bank of a branch of the Brenta River, is cordially inviting, even a dog sleeps under the antique farm

table. One of the two Venice lagoon places, the rustic Casa Baslini, dating to 1400, is on the island of San Giovanni that connects to the island of Torcello, where Ernest Hemingway hunted and wrote his novel "Across the River, Beyond the Trees."

In addition to the houses are local and family recipes and lovely photos of the dishes—from the Gaggia home's *Di Riso al Torreggiano* (rice timbale with squab) to the La Valle San Leonardo's lagoon entree *Tagliatelle al Ragù Di Anatra* (tagliatelle with duck ragout) and *Risotto Ai Frutti Di Mare* (seafood risotto).

In his forward, actor Jude Law, who accompanied the authors behind-the-scenes in the making of this book while in Italy shooting scenes for the HBO series "The Young Pope," talks about the need to protect not only Venetian art, but also the heritage of the Venetian lifestyle. "Notwithstanding the centuries gone by," he writes, "[it] continues to captivate visitors with its hospitality, elegance, and culinary tradition."

This book testifies to that in a most beautiful way. ►

—Don Oldenburg



**Starting with Goodbye:
A Daughter's Memoir of Love
after Loss**

By Lisa Romeo

University of Nevada Press; 240 pages
\$17.95 Paperback

What it [grief] does do for me (for the two of us maybe?) is to bring back into life (well into my life anyway), something that went by too quickly, unnoticed, unappreciated, the first time. It brings into my life something that didn't happen before: a particular kind of bittersweet father-daughter reunion. What's more American than a second opportunity to get it right?

Lisa Romeo recognizes her second chance to deepen her relationship with her father, Tony, who appears at random moments for “conversations” after his death. Romeo’s memoir chronicles a three-year period in which grief allowed her to slow down enough to see who her dad had been—and, consequently, who she

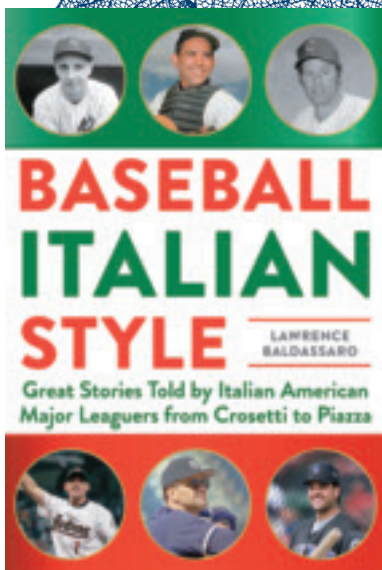
could be.

A powerful model for transforming a relationship with a late loved one, Romeo’s memoir is also a pioneering read in exploring the impact a father’s death has on his adult daughter’s emotional life.

The son of Italian immigrants to America, the self-made Tony turned a New Jersey textile factory into a polyester paradise. Though Lisa’s childhood included horses, fine clothes, and vacations, she chose in adulthood to stick to simple loves—freelance writing and living on a modest income.

Tony also found his greatest pleasures in newspapers, smoking and picking up a fresh loaf of Italian bread every day when visiting Lisa. Father and daughter meet in retrospect and see their similarities. From their conversations, Lisa realizes how the man who gave her life influenced all of her life choices.

— Kirsten Keppel



**Baseball Italian Style:
Great Stories Told by Italian
American Major Leaguers from
Crosetti to Piazza**

By Lawrence Baldassaro
Sports Publishing; 292 pages
\$24.99 Hardcover

The stories told here by those who made their living in the major leagues reveal the humanity behind the numbers.

If you want to read about the lore of baseball with an Italian flair, start with Lawrence Baldassaro’s “Baseball Italian Style.” Baldassaro, professor emeritus of Italian at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, presents a wonderful book about Italian Americans in the Major Leagues. You’ll get an “inside baseball” look into the game, not just with players’ stats but with moving and insightful first-person stories from those whose careers embodied America’s pastime.

Baldassaro’s decision to write his

book in chronological order from the 1930s to the present is right on the mark. It’s entertaining and engaging from page to page. You’ll learn what Rizzuto, Berra, Lasorda, Torre, Piazza and others thought about the game and their Italian heritage. Umpire Steve Palermo’s account of his life in baseball and recovery from being shot in 1991 is inspiring.

Managers, coaches, and executives, including Larry Lucchino, Ned Colletti and Jerry Colangelo, are also given well-deserved recognition for their roles beyond the playing field.

With 44 “voices” reflecting on baseball, life, and being Italian, you’ll enjoy and appreciate what it takes to make it to the big leagues. This is the ideal page-turner for all baseball fans.

Baldassaro also authored “Beyond DiMaggio: Italian Americans in Baseball” in 2011.

— Robert Fanelli Bartus Jr.

**Tightrope:
Balancing A Life Between Mario
Cuomo and My Brother**

By Steve Villano
Heliotrope Books; 270 pages
\$16.50 Paperback

Michael was my first glimpse of a Renaissance man, and for years I denied his drift away from the person I thought he was toward a darker, unrecognizable version of someone I once worshipped.

Steve Villano tells an emotional, politically insightful, and well-written story in his non-fiction book, “Tightrope: Balancing A Life Between Mario Cuomo and My Brother.” Balancing is the perfect verb for Villano’s relationship with his brother, Michael. Villano worked for Governor Mario Cuomo of New York while Michael’s life was intertwined with a powerful Italian American organized crime family.

How does Villano keep Wallenda-like footing between his career of

faithful service to the Governor and love for his brother, while despising his brother’s path in life? With stressful decisions, honor, loyalty, and behind-the-scenes drama of real-world politics, Villano chronicles his balancing act.

Villano writes about the peaks and valleys of his life’s journey to serve the greater good. He’s candid. Nothing is off limits about his feelings for family, his Italian heritage, political friends and foes, and walking the “tightrope.” He confesses: “My manic efforts to create some slack, some distance between Cuomo, my brother, the Mob and me, backfired.”

No matter what side of the political aisle you’re on, you will appreciate Villano’s skillful storytelling that follows his personal and professional struggles through the eyes of an Italian American. You’ll enjoy every page of this compelling book—and perhaps learn a lesson or two in American politics.

— Robert Fanelli Bartus Jr.



**La Dolce Vita University:
An Unconventional Guide to
Italian Culture from A to Z**

By Carla Gambescia with
Michael Stein
Travelers’ Tales; 328 pages
\$19.99 Paperback

Letting yourself go, flying free, as one beautifully arranges words, and art, and life.... We all love and need to travel to Italy, with or without a plane ticket.

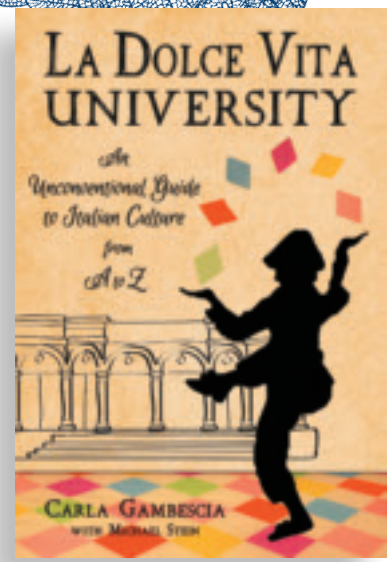
School and the sweet life swirl through “La Dolce Vita University” like the chocolate, hazelnuts and cocoa butter that accidentally made Nutella. One hot day in 1949, when pastry mesh called pasta *gianduija* melted into jars, Michele Ferrero’s workers found the new product softer, creamier and more delectable. You’ll

find this “immersive learning” most delicious if you apply it as you read.

Gambescia’s oeuvre began on laminated “fun fact” cards she gave to patrons in her restaurant, Via Vanti! in Mount Kisco, N.Y. Co-creator of the Giro del Gelato cycling tour, and winner of Outside magazine’s Best Trip in Western Europe, Gambescia fell in love with her ancestors’ land on her first Sicilian bike tour.

All travelers to Italy, armchair or actual, will become one of the cognoscenti of the Bel Paese’s secrets. Who knew that when Caterina di Medici brought *carciofi*, or artichokes, to France as part of her dowry, she also scandalized society by eating a food considered to be an aphrodisiac? What you learn from this book will titillate the intellect.

— Kirsten Keppel





**Sicilian Summer:
An Adventure in Cooking
with My Grandsons**

By Mary Taylor Simeti
Silverwood Books; 138 pages.
\$19.49 Paperback

My mother's journal, the leather-bound pages that I climbed into the attic to retrieve after her funeral, is in my bag. Its weight is a reminder of my promise to myself. Follow her memories. Rebuild her moments. Find me in Florence.

"Piazza Carousel" is a delightful jaunt through one of Italy's most beloved cities with protagonist Lyn Bennett, who travels there to learn more about her mother's experience as a volunteer "Mud Angel" saving artwork during the 1966 flood.

As Lyn uncovers secrets from her mother's past and begins to appreciate the depth of her mother's story, Lyn's own life

'This summer might be the last....' Last spring I decided that I should find a way—before it was too late—to involve my four grandsons in the cooking of these meals, to make these moments more significant for them and to render their memories more indelible.

If you've ever dreamed of spending the summer with a nonna and learning cherished recipes by her side, Mary Taylor Simeti's "Sicilian Summer" is an excellent substitute.

Simeti, New Yorker by birth and Sicilian by adoption, is author of "On Persephone's Island: A Sicilian Journal" and Sicilian resident for over 50 years. In

her latest book, she generously shares tales from an intense 10 days with her grandsons, ages 5 to nearly 14, in her farmhouse outside of Palermo. The book invites us along as the boys learn to mince garlic, fry eggplant and roll pork *involtini* filled with breadcrumbs, cheese and red onion.

A serious warning, though: Thanks to Simeti's charming, intimate storytelling and Guy Ambrosino's candid family photos, finishing this book is like having to say good-bye to loved ones—though at least you'll always have Simeti's 28 recipes, which you can recreate whenever you want to travel back to her warm, inviting, Sicilian *cucina*.

— Michelle Fabio

continues taking new turns through new acquaintances, forcing her to make tough decisions on the path to self-discovery in her new country and reevaluate everything she thought she knew.

Selbo's background as a playwright and screenwriter comes through every page of this compelling story full of drama, romance, complex characters and even humor. She paints Florence beautifully with her words, from its history and culture to its art and delectable food.

Overall, "Piazza Carousel" is a fun, satisfying read overflowing with Florence flavor. Pour a glass of prosecco and enjoy!

— Michelle Fabio



**Piazza Carousel: A
Florence Love Story**

By Jule Selbo
Dakota Publishing
324 pages; \$11.99
Paperback

Michael and Scottie stood out from the moment they strolled down the gangplank of the sleek ocean liner that carried them and their possessions to Italy. They seemed to have stepped right out of an advertisement for Betty Crocker, Wonder Bread or capitalism itself.

Set in 1950s Siena, "The Italian Party" tells the story of a young, newly married American couple with dreams of living out expat fantasies in the Old World. Instead, they are met with the harsh reality of a land still recovering from the poverty and destruction of World War II, and find themselves in the middle of Cold War ten-

sions. Secrets abound all around them—even within their budding marriage.

Lynch's clever and captivating writing keeps the pages turning via storylines laced with romance, glamour, history, politics and biting social commentary. Oh, and there are also spies and horses. It is Siena, after all!

Peppered with tantalizing descriptions of local food and enough chuckle-worthy moments to keep a smile on your face throughout, this book is a lovely escape to the Tuscan countryside of years past that is still somehow incredibly relevant to current events as well.

— Michelle Fabio ►



The Italian Party

By Christina Lynch
St. Martin's Press; 326 pages
\$11.49 Paperback

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I Heart Rome

By Maria Pasquale
Smith Street Books; 264 pages
\$35 Hardcover

The recipes I have chosen to share are the ones that are close to my heart. They are the dishes I eat in restaurants, at friends' houses, on the street or make myself. With an exception or two, they aren't the deconstructed versions or the modern takes, but the Roman classics.

Maria Pasquale's "I Heart Rome" is as much an ode to her Italian heritage as it is to the Eternal City. As the daughter of Italian immigrants, Pasquale grew up learning the Italian language from her mother, and first became interested in Italian food and food culture when visiting her family in Italy.

Like so many people before her, she fell in love with Rome and its culinary traditions, and felt an inexplicable pull to move there. Settling into the quaint neighborhood of Trastevere,

Pasquale became an award-winning blogger and journalist, writing about food and travel. Now, years later, "I Heart Rome" is her first-published collection of her experiences and favorite recipes in the world of Roman food.

Pasquale organizes her cookbook based on where and when you'd eat the meal—at your local trattoria, at the pasticceria, or maybe when out for aperitivi. Each chapter features personal stories and local characters, offering a charming look into Pasquale's life in Rome and her connection to her Italian heritage. The dishes are a collection of recipes shared from her Roman friends, her favorite restaurants, and her own dishes.

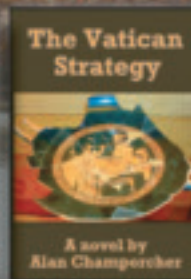
"I Heart Rome" includes stunning photography of both food and Rome, and Pasquale weaves the history behind classic Roman dishes such as carbonara or *carciofi alla giudia* into every chapter, so readers feel as if they have stepped off the page and into Pasquale's own Roman kitchen.

—Danielle DeSimon ▶

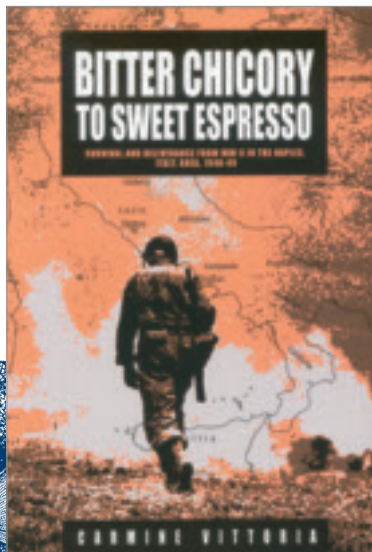


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Bitter Chicory to Sweet Espresso

By Carmine Vittoria
 Purpo Inc.; 309 pages
 \$25.25 Hardcover

“On one particular morning, when soldiers were marching near the intersection, there suddenly appeared out of nowhere two motorcycles with side-carriages that had stopped at the intersection in the midst of people, and one of the cyclists grabbed a teenager by the arms and legs. The screams were so loud that Francesca and I heard them and ran out to investigate...”

Although much has been written about World War II and the lasting effects the war had on the Italian people, little has been written specifically about the experiences of southern Italians. The world of literature chooses instead to focus on those in Rome and farther north, where outposts of Italian partisans fought against Nazi forces.

Carmine Vittoria’s recent book, “Bitter Chicory to Sweet Espresso:

Survival and Deliverance from WWII in the Naples, Italy Area 1940-1949” highlights the tribulations of the city of Naples and its surrounding agricultural communities during and immediately after the war.

Combining first-hand accounts, interviews and historic research, Vittoria weaves an engaging and heartbreaking tale of his childhood, as he and his family struggled to survive the occupation and invasion of Avella, a town northeast of Naples.

Most World War II memoirs are written from the point of view of an adult, however Vittoria’s recollections as a child in the war – and especially in Italy – offer a unique perspective for even the most seasoned of World War II scholars. Through the gritty details comes the true story of a young boy, his family and their neighbors who embraced their fiercely Neapolitan upbringing to survive a war that was shoved on their front doorstep, Vittoria reveals parts of history that have been overlooked for decades.

— Danielle DeSimone ▲



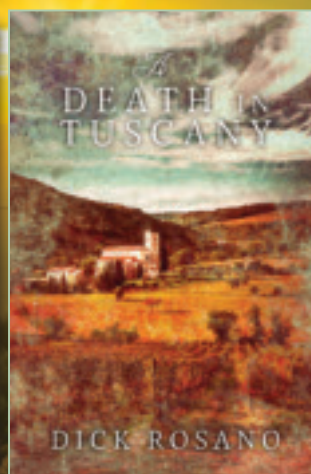
“Dick Rosano stages mysteries with the insider knowledge, finesse and flare of the accomplished wine, food and travel writer he is. And it all happens in Italy!”



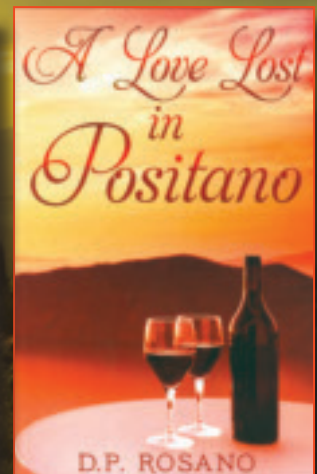
Bodies of slain truffle hunters are showing up. An investigation finds the multi-million dollar truffle harvest has been stolen.



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Italian Director Laura Bispuri's New Film "Figlia Mia"

CINEMA

By Maria Garcia



Alba Rohrwacher, Valeria Golino and Sara Casu



Italian filmmaker Laura Bispuri

By any measure, Italian filmmaker **Laura Bispuri's "Figlia Mia"** ("Daughter of Mine") is among the finest movies of 2018.

It made its U.S. premier at the Tribeca Film Festival in April, and will open in theaters later this year.

Bispuri's hero is 10-year-old Vittoria (Sara Casu), who suspects that she is adopted. A beloved only child of fishery workers in Sardinia, the petite redhead's quest for identity unveils longstanding village secrets, compelling those around her to reexamine themselves. Vittoria's journey sets in motion an archetypal conflict, the stuff of epic poetry, that in Bispuri's deft mise en scène expresses the core of feminine identity and also weaves a riveting yarn.

"Figlia Mia," an original screenplay, is Bispuri's second feature; her

first is the equally accomplished "Sworn Virgin" (2015). An adapted screenplay, based on a memoir by Elvira Dones, it centers on Hana, a woman who lives as a celibate man in a remote Albanian-Kanun village. It is also a quest film, and stars Alba Rohrwacher (sister of Italian filmmaker Alice Rohrwacher), who appears in "Figlia Mia." Both movies are sublimely photographed by Vladan Radovic, and skillfully edited by Carlotta Cristiani.

"Figlia Mia" opens with scenes of a bronco competition, Vittoria looking



Alba Rohrwacher and Sara Casu

on as a bucking horse throws one rider after another. The sequence portends the “breaking out” of the demure hero’s nascent womanhood, and it introduces the two women who will be profoundly affected by it, Tina (Valeria Galino), Vittoria’s mother, and Angelica (Rohrwacher), her erstwhile friend. Together, they provide a contemplation of motherhood itself, Tina representing the ostensible ideal, and Angelica the “bad mother.” Vittoria is drawn to Angelica when she perceives her physical resemblance

to this sexy, mysterious woman; and Angelica, on the verge of being evicted from her home, seizes upon the opportunity to be loved. A burgeoning rivalry between Tina and Angelica quickly assumes tragic dimensions.

Tina, overly protective of Vittoria, is fearful that Angelica’s self-destructive personality will endanger her daughter. When Angelica is not taking care of her horses, she is at the local bar, occasionally trading sex for drinks. Her wounds are profound. While Angelica is undoubtedly irresponsible,

she is also the equivocal figure who appears in the hero’s life to ease her journey to self-actualization. She teaches Vittoria to dance, and to swim, and not to fear the darkness of Sardinia’s sea caves or the fissures in the village’s necropolis. In the end, bruised and triumphant, it is Vittoria, rather than Angelica and Tina, who stands as Bisपुरi’s testament to female wisdom.



Valeria Golino and Alba Rohrwacher

Ambassador spoke with Bisपुरi at the Tribeca Film Festival:

Ambassador: Sardinia itself is a character in “Figlia Mia,” as a kind of motherland. What significance does it have for Italians?

Laura Bisपुरi: Yes, it is, but I was thinking of Sardinia in a broader sense. It is a very primordial place, like Ancient Greece.

Ambassador: Where is the necropolis in the film? Were all the other locations nearby?

Bisपुरi: I shot most of the film in Cabras, which is on the west coast of Sardinia. The necropolis is nearby, about 45 minutes away. I did a lot of work scouting locations because I wanted to find a necropolis that wasn’t touristy. What I liked about this one is that it looks like a spaceship. It brings together in some way the archaic and the old, and then this futuristic sense because of its shape.

Ambassador: As much as I thought of Greek tragedy while watching “Figlia Mia,” I was also reminded of the Biblical story of King Solomon, in which two women claim the same child.

Bisपुरi: Yes, but the difference is that the decision is made that only one can be the true mother. In my film, I am saying that both are mothers.

Ambassador: It is not a tragedy.

Bisपुरi: Yes, but within the film, there are elements of tragedy.

Ambassador: I wonder, were you reading something that made you think of

moving in the direction of tragedy?

Bisपुरi: No, but a friend of mine told me a story of when she was 20 years old and growing up in a perfectly normal family, and suddenly had this desire to be adopted. I was also inspired by A.M. Homes’s “The Mistress’s Daughter” (2007), a true story where her birth mother contacts her. That evolved into my story of three different characters, and the film being told from three different points of view.

Ambassador: Sardinian mythology is somewhat obscure, aside from La Accabadora, who euthanizes the sick and elderly. When you had Tina pick up the cudgel, La Accabadora’s weapon, I remembered the legend. Were you influenced by Sardinian mythology?

Bisपुरi: I read so many books these past two years while I was writing the script, and I did a lot of reading about La Accabadora, although rather than being influenced by that figure, I was thinking of another tradition, *i figli dell’anima*, (the children of the spirit or soul), which we find throughout the legends of Italy, but it is particularly strong in Sardinian myth. This is a child from a poor family who is given to a rich family to raise. The child is told that they have two families and two mothers. That myth resounds in my film. Vittoria is in that situation, a *figlia dell’anima*, although she is not aware of it.

Ambassador: I felt very close to Vittoria because in the end she was determined not to become either of her mothers. When she disappears into the earth, I

relieved that moment in my childhood when I decided that I had to become something other than my mother.

Bisपुरi: Thank you for telling me that story. I am glad you saw your childhood in the film. Certainly, I wanted to speak of motherhood and from a 360-degree angle whereby we see both the good side of motherhood and the dark side. By the same token, the characters are not all good or all bad. Vittoria entering the necropolis is a very important moment. She is physically attempting a rebirth. She is facing up to this danger, and she has the courage to do it, thanks to what she has learned from Angelica. Vittoria takes her truth in her own hands, and from that moment, she goes from being a little girl to being a superhero.

Ambassador: Please explain your use of “superhero.”

Bisपुरi: In the first scene of the movie, the little girl is in the middle of the two mothers. At the end of the movie, she walks ahead of them. In this moment, Vittoria for me is something like a superhero because she is the strongest girl I can imagine. ▲

Maria Garcia is a New York City-based author, writer and frequent contributor to Ambassador magazine. Her reviews and feature articles also appear regularly in Film Journal International and Cineaste. Her book, "Cinematic Quests for Identity: The Hero's Encounter with the Beast," was published in 2015. Visit her Facebook page, MariaGarciaNYC.

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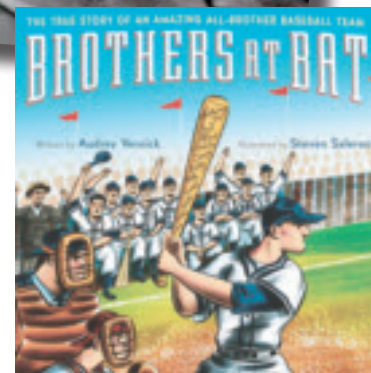


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Who's on First? Acerra. On Second? Acerra. Third? Acerra. Wait, What?



The Amazing Acerra Family's All-Brothers Baseball Team

By Wayne Randazzo

Baseball is a fun sport at any age. Think about the backyard or the sandlot or even Wrigley Field or Fenway Park. Those are good memories. The smells, the green grass, the summertime all stand out in enjoying those days with friends and family. Wouldn't it be nice to get out there and play ball with your neighborhood buddies? Or maybe, if you're really fortunate, you have enough players to field a team right inside your own house.

Louis "Pop" Acerra Sr. and his wife, Elizabeth, accomplished just that and more when fielding a team of 12 from their very own nest in Long Branch, N.J., in 1938. The Acerras had 17 children, but the 12 boys stuck together and eventually became a semi-professional team, managed by "Pop," and played ball 14 years throughout the East Coast, until 1952.

Alfred and Edward shared the catching duties. Even though Alfred lost an eye at one point, he just kept right on catching. James and Robert would pitch. Charles was the "who" at first base. Louis Jr. manned second base. Fred was the shortstop and the most talented of the broth-

ers. Fred's the guy who had to make the tough decisions.

Fred was so good that he was scouted heavily by Major League Baseball teams and even received an offer to join the dynastic New York Yankees. He declined to go to The Bigs and stayed with his brothers as they won 10 consecutive Long Branch City League championships.

Richard played "the hot corner"—third base. Paul, Joseph, William and Anthony swarmed the outfield. Altogether, the Acerra Brothers made the sort of history that, in 1997, landed them in baseball's ultimate cathedral, the National Baseball Hall of Fame & Museum in Cooperstown, N.Y.

Jim and Rick Acerra are among the Fabulous Acerra Brothers' children who are still passing on the legacy of the story. They were on hand in Chicago last November to accept induction of the brothers into the National Italian American Sports Hall of Fame.

"The brothers loved baseball and each other so much. We are so thankful that their story lives on in the NIASHF," Jim said tearfully at the induction ceremony.

In addition to their honorary

homes in Chicago and Cooperstown, the brothers are immortalized in the book "Brothers At Bat," written by Audrey Vernick and illustrated by Steven Salerno. It's a children's book that details their times of playing hardball on dirt infields, gravelly outfields, and even "an old dog track." Anything for the love of the game, certainly for this remarkable Italian American family.

To put it simply, this is just a family that valued its Catholic faith. They followed their hearts. Six of them enlisted and served in World War II. Most of all, they honored each other and America's pastime.

Maybe it was a family that just loved being together, or maybe it was a family that just loved baseball. After all, the last of the 17 Acerra children passed away in 2015, and it was their daughter named Frances. Her nickname was "Babe." ▲

Wayne Randazzo is the New York Mets pregame and postgame show host and fill-in play-by-play announcer on WOR-AM. He's also a freelance television play-by-play announcer for ESPN and Big Ten Network, and the longtime sports columnist for Ambassador magazine.

NIAF'S 43RD ANNIVERSARY GALA PREVIEW



You are invited to join us to celebrate your family heritage October 12-13 for the National Italian American Foundation's annual weekend of Italian American pride!

Our 43rd Anniversary Gala takes place at the magnificent Washington Marriott Wardman Park Hotel, in Washington, D.C. If you've ever attended our Galas in recent years, you know these are life-changing, heartfelt events you will never forget.

This all started in 1975 when a visionary group of dedicated leaders came together to create a national organization designed to serve and represent the Italian American community. The first NIAF

Gala Dinner took place at The Washington Hilton and attracted more than 2,000 guests, including notables such as President Gerald Ford, presidential candidate Jimmy Carter, vice-presidential candidate Walter Mondale, and 150 Members of Congress. "Never before in history" has there been a meeting with more political power, wrote Washington Post columnist Mary McGrory who attended that benchmark event.

Since then, we have grown in so many ways! NIAF invites you to join us this October to salute 43 years of fulfilling our mission as the only national organization dedicated to preserving and protecting the Italian American heritage, educating tomorrow's leaders of the Italian American community, speaking for Italian Americans in the Nation's Capital, and facilitating positive cultural, commercial and governmental connections between the United States and Italy. That's what you support when you donate to NIAF and when you attend NIAF's Anniversary Gala!

More than that, you'll join in on all the excitement and festivities, and experience a cultural family camaraderie that will stay with you forever. This year's Gala promises to be a weekend filled with distinguished honorees and memorable moments! For two days,



Italian Americans take over the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel starting with a special Friday “Evening with Lidia Bastianich.” You can join one of America’s most heralded Italian chefs as she signs her new memoir and guides guests through an amazing, limited-seating, Puglia-inspired, wine-paired dinner.

Saturday morning begins with the hugely popular Expo Italiana, the largest annual Italian festival in the Nation’s Capital! It’s open to the public and last year attracted more than 3,000 guests (so get there early!).

The centerpiece of the Gala weekend is Saturday evening’s black-tie

receptions and the NIAF 43rd Anniversary Gala Awards Dinner, featuring Puglian-style dinner, live entertainment, and distinguished honorees. From there, head directly to the infamous After Hours Party that goes late into the night with Italian music, sing-alongs and dancing!

Don’t miss out this year’s Gala events! Buy your tickets today! Last-minute corporate sponsorships are still available. For more information, contact Jerry Jones at 202-387-0600 or jerry@niaf.org. For the Gala’s complete schedule of events and to register online, visit www.niaf.org/gala.



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

special guests and celebrities attending the Gala, and for more information on tickets and sponsorships. We’re looking forward to seeing you at

NIAF’s 43rd Anniversary Gala.



An Evening With Lidia Bastianich

Reserve your seat now to spend a memorable evening with the Emmy-award-winning chef, cookbook author and restaurateur as she guides you through the culinary traditions of Puglia, NIAF’s 2018 Region of Honor. This Pugliese dinner will be paired with exceptional Pugliese wine. We’re expecting a sold-out crowd, so don’t wait: Tickets are available now at www.niaf.org/gala. But not for long.



Expo Italiana—Free! Open to the Public!

Every year, the NIAF Expo Italiana is the largest Italian festival in the Nation’s Capital and among the largest on the entire East Coast! Last year’s Expo attracted more than 3,000 visitors! This year the focus is on beautiful Puglia, our 2018 Region of Honor, and one of this year’s hottest destinations in Italy!

We’re preparing for another record-breaking, fun-loving, Italo-phile crowd—you included! Gala guests staying at the Washington Marriott Wardman Park Hotel will find Expo Italiana an easy go-to place all day on Saturday, October 13. The general public is invited to join us in all the tastes, sights and sounds of Italian American life and everything Puglia! You can mingle among the Italian and Italian American exhibitors. Meet special guests! Sit in Italian luxury automobiles! Sample Pugliese foods and beverages and wines, Italian coffee and sweets provided by our premier partners, from Peroni Nastro Azzurro and Lavazza to DelGrosso Foods and Cibo meats and cheeses.. Talk shop with two dozen exhibitors who’ve come directly from Puglia! And don’t forget screenings from the 2018 Russo Brothers Italian American Film Grant finalists.

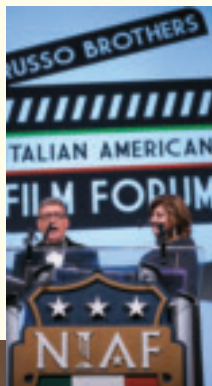
Also, throughout the day, learn from experts about Italian dual citizenship, language, and travel programs. Join World Gelato Champion Gianluigi Dellaccio of D.C.-based Dolci Gelati for an instructive talk and tasting. Learn basics of *la bella lingua* with the Italian Cultural Society of Washington, D.C. Hear about Italian American physicians and research scientists fighting against the opioid crisis in America. Stop by the mobile exhibit of the NIAF Italian American Museum’s new immigration exhibition. View the winning photographs from NIAF’s 2018 Photo Contest. And don’t miss the too-much-fun Expo Photo Booth for a photo of you and your friends and family!

Expo Italiana is the place to meet up with your friends, find new friends, and bring your children. Mingle and feel at home during the NIAF Gala Weekend! This event is free and open to the public. No registration, no tickets to buy, just show up and enjoy!



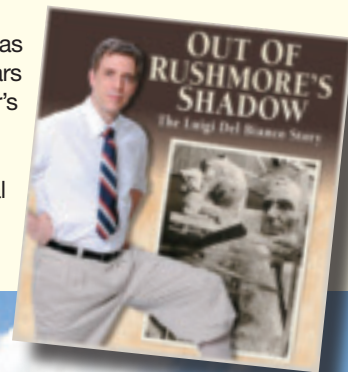
The 2018 Russo Brothers’ Italian American Film Forum Finalists

Don’t miss the free screenings of the 2018 the top grant finalists for The Russo Brothers Italian American Film Forum, an initiative to fund film makers depicting and exploring the Italian American experience for the benefit of future generations. And if you don’t know the Russo brothers, they’re the Hollywood directors of the box-office record-breaking Captain America and Avengers series. The winner will be announced during the Gala Awards Dinner.



Wait, Mount Rushmore

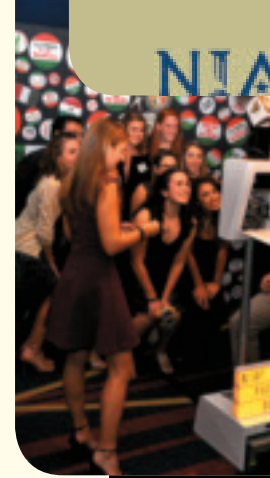
Italian immigrant Luigi Del Bianco was recently recognized as Mt. Rushmore’s chief *carver* thanks to the tireless efforts by his grandson Lou Del Bianco, author of “Out of Rushmore’s Shadow: The Luigi Del Bianco Story – An Italian Immigrant’s Unsung Role as Chief Carver.” Lou fought for years for recognition of his grandfather’s contribution to American history. Now you can hear his and his grandfather’s story at this special presentation.





Saturday Night Gala Dinner

Nothing like you have ever experienced before! NIAF's Gala Awards Dinner is legendary. Besides a line up of fantastic honorees who's stories will make you even prouder to be Italian American, expect entertainment that will make this an evening you will never forget.



There's More!

Throughout the Gala Weekend, other entertainment, events, workshops and seminars exploring topics of interest to the Italian American community are open to the public.



Calling All NIAF After Hours Partiers!

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

Sunday Morning Mass in Italian

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

Gala Questions?

For more information about the NIAF 43rd Anniversary Gala, contact us at 202-939-3107 or visit www.niaf.org/gala today!

Reserve Your Room Now!

NIAF will again be hosting its 43rd Anniversary Gala weekend at The Washington Marriott Wardman Park Hotel, one of the premier hotels in the nation's capital, located at 2660 Woodley Rd. NW. Come experience a weekend at these accommodations, the classy ballroom and spacious exhibition area!

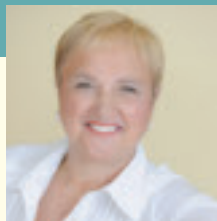
Join your friends and support our efforts by booking your room(s) within our room block at the Washington Marriott Wardman Park for some of the best rates in town. Book your reservation at www.niaf.org/gala or call the hotel at 1-800-328-2000 and ask for a "NIAF room block" reservation.

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

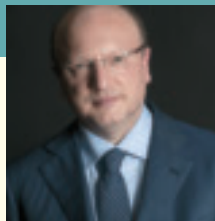
NIAF'S 2018 GALA HONOREES



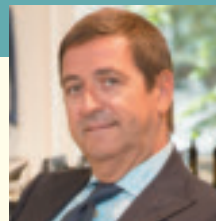
Giovanni Caforio, M.D.
Chairman & CEO of Bristol-Myers Squibb



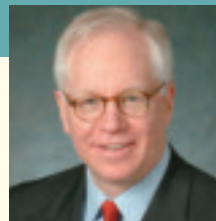
Lidia Bastianich
One of America's most renowned and beloved Italian chefs



Vincenzo Boccia
CEO of Arti Grafiche Boccia and President of Confindustria



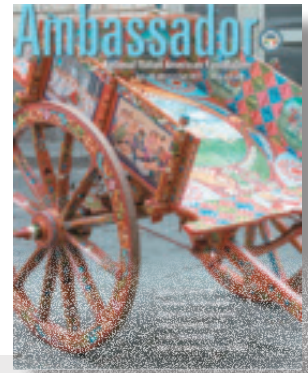
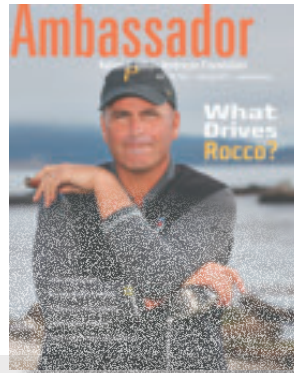
Antonio De Matteis
CEO of Kiton Group, the renowned luxury clothing company



Carl J. Schramm
Chairman of the Scientific Committee of the Apple Global Developer and Academy and member of the Scientific Advisory Board of Mars Inc.



Vito Pertosa
Founder of Angel, the Italian high-tech holding company of pioneering companies



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NEW YORK

The National Italian American Foundation returned to the elegant and historic Cipriani 42nd Street for its annual New York Gala on April 10, where guests mingled between sweeping archways and golden curtains in the heart of Manhattan.

More than 700 Italian and Italian Americans from New York and around the world attended the sold-out event making it a lively, high-energy, annual institution it has become over the past few years. During the cocktail reception, guests, VIPs and honorees mingled, enjoying Cipriani's light Bellini cocktails while bidding on NIAF's silent-auction collection of sports and film memorabilia, exclusive designer accessories, and one-of-a-kind travel experiences.

The evening was a family affair – all four honorees brought their immediate and extended families with them to the red carpet and spoke poignantly on the importance *la famiglia* has played in their success. This year's master of ceremonies, co-anchor of NBC 4's "Today In New York," Michael Gargiulo, welcomed the guests and introduced Monsignor Jamie Gigantiello of Mary Queen of Heaven Church in Brooklyn, who reminded everyone that the evening was a celebration of shared heritage: "We come together tonight to celebrate as one, big Italian family."

2018 NIAF Gala Celebrates in the City That Never Sleeps

The Emmy Award-nominated Australian-Italian performer Alfio kicked off the evening with incredible renditions of the national anthems of the United States and Italy. New York Gala Dinner Chairman Gerard S. LaRocca, a member of NIAF's Board of Directors, and chief administrative officer, Americas at Barclays Capital, thanked the Foundation's New York Committee and the evening's sponsors for making the NIAF New York Gala into the vibrant evening it is today.

Following an exquisite, three-course meal, Gargiulo introduced the evening's first honoree, Vincent C. Tizzio, president and CEO of Navigators Management Inc., who received The National Italian American Foundation Special Achievement Award in Business. Tizzio was pleasantly surprised by video messages from two of his children who could not attend the event, congratulating their father on his well-deserved award.

Photos by Jason Isolini



NIAF Co-Chairs Patricia de Stacy Harrison and Gabriel A. Battista



Honoree Vincent Tizzio and Family



Honoree Giovanni Colavita with wife Marisa Colavita and their children



Honoree Ronald Lo Russo addressing the audience



Master of Ceremonies Michael Gargiulo and honoree Joseph Fichera

Alfio performs the national anthems of Italy and the United States



Giovanni Colavita, CEO of Colavita USA, received The National Italian American Foundation Special Award in International Business for his work in his family's business of olive oil and Italian products. Colavita explained to the crowd that without his family's upbringing, and without the support of his wife and two children, he would not be where he is today – a sentiment that is so emblematic of Italian culture.

Joseph Sebastian Fichera, CEO of Saber Partners, received The National Italian American

Foundation Special Achievement Award in Finance for his considerable accomplishments in the world of corporate finance.

Between awards, Sal "The Voice" Valentinetti, the hit sensation of the NBC-TV's "America's Got Talent," dazzled the crowd with his classic Italian American crooner style, singing some of the greatest hits from the Sinatra songbook.

Ronald Lo Russo, president of Cushman & Wakefield's Agency Consulting Group, and the night's final honoree, received The National

Italian American Foundation Special Achievement Award in Real Estate.

The evening concluded with a selection of decadent desserts, and a message from NIAF's Co-Chairs Gabriel A. Battista and Patricia de Stacy Harrison, who thanked the crowd for their continued support of the National Italian American Foundation and the important work the organization does in preserving Italian American heritage and supporting the future of our community through grants and scholarships.

— Danielle DeSimone

2018 NIAF Gala Celebrates in the City That Never Sleeps



Consul General of Italy to New York Francesco Genuardi



Giuseppe Di Fuccia, Alma Laias and NIAF Executive Vice President Gerald S. LaRocca, who served as the New York Gala chairman



Singer Sal Valentinetti entertains Gala guests

Photos by Jason Isolini



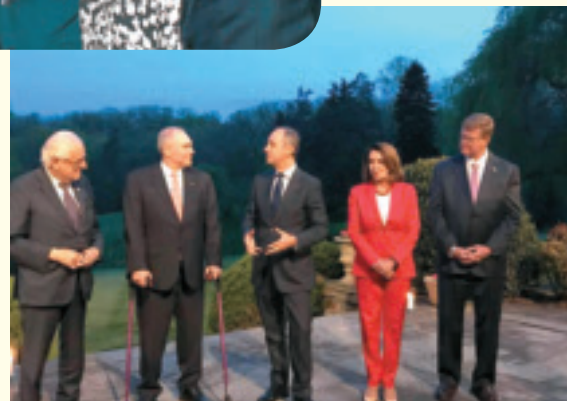
Sal Valentinetti and IALC member Anthony Julian Tamburri



NIAF Board Members at Villa Firenze

On April 26, Ambassador of Italy Armando Varricchio hosted the Italian American Congressional Delegation of the 115th United States Congress and NIAF Board members at Villa Firenze, the ambassador's residence Washington, D.C. Above: NIAF Vice Chair John F. Calvelli, Minority Leader U.S. Rep. Nancy Pelosi, NIAF Co-Chair Patricia de Stacy Harrison, House Majority Whip U.S. Rep. Steve Scalise, Ambassador Armando Varricchio, NIAF Vice Chair Anita Bevacqua McBride, and NIAF Co-Chair Gabriel A. Battista. Right: U.S. Rep. Bill Pascrell Jr., U.S. Rep. Scalise, Ambassador Varricchio, U.S. Rep. Pelosi, and U.S. Rep. Mark Amodei.

Photo: Embassy of Italy



Capitol Hill Film Screening

On March 7, NIAF, in conjunction with the Italian American Congressional Staff Association (IACSA), hosted a screening on Capitol Hill of the acclaimed PBS documentary "The Italian Americans." The screening was followed by a conversation with director John Maggio, moderated by IACSA president Geoff Browning. Members of NIAF's Board of Directors were joined by representatives from the White House, Congress and the Embassy of Italy. Special thanks to La Famiglia Del Grosso for providing jars of pasta sauce to all attendees.
— Gabriella Mileti

John Maggio, director of "The Italian Americans"



Paul Besozzi, NIAF Vice Chair Anita Bevacqua McBride, director John Maggio, NIAF General Counsel Joseph D. Lonardo, Counselor Paolo Toschi of the Embassy of Italy's Congressional Affairs and Domestic Political Office

Photos by Gabriella Mileti



NIAF Co-Chair Gabriel A. Battista and Embassy of Italy's First Counselor Catherine Flumiani

Annual NIAF St. Joseph's Table

On March 19, NIAF once again celebrated a traditional St. Joseph's Day by inviting members and friends to NIAF headquarters for a delectable table setting of Italian specialties, donated by Warriors Catering. The popular event featured a screening of Kirsten Keppel's "Ringraziamenti: The Saint Joseph's Day Table Tradition," a finalist in NIAF's 2017 Russo Brothers' Italian American Film Forum.



Filmmaker Kirsten Keppel with her Dad and Mom, John and Marcia Keppel

Photos by Don Oldenburg

Congressional Bocce Ball Tournament

On June 6, NIAF hosted the 6th Annual Mark Valente Memorial Congressional Bocce Ball Tournament in Washington, D.C. This wonderful tradition promotes bipartisanship and celebration of our shared Italian heritage.

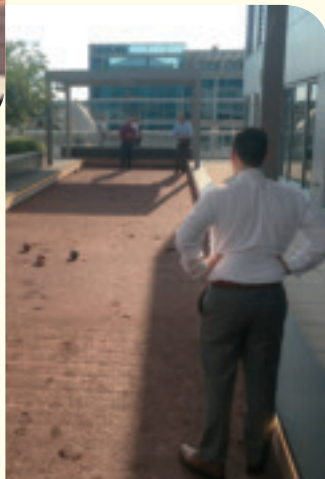
In attendance at Venable LLP's gorgeous rooftop bocce ball court were NIAF Board Members, members of the Italian American Leadership Council (IALC), representatives from the Embassy of Italy, and U.S Representatives Bill Pascrell, Mike Capuano, Mike Doyle, Jimmy Panetta and Virginia Foxx. Congratulations to Congressmen Pascrell and Doyle on winning this year's tournament.

Photos by Gabriella Mileti

NIAF Co-Chairs Patricia de Stacy Harrison and Gabriel A. Battista with U.S. Rep. Bill Pascrell, co-chairman of the Italian American Congressional Delegation



U.S. Rep. Bill Pascrell and NIAF General Counsel Joseph D. Lonardo



Warriors Catering owner Joe Castor



Mary Kinler, Don Kinler and Scott Carollo



Mary Theresa Barbuto and Gabriella Barbuto with their father IALC member Robert Barbuto

NIAF 2018 Mission to Italy: Puglia

From June 24-29, members of NIAF's Board of Directors traveled to Rome and Italy's Region of Puglia for the 2018 Mission to Italy, its annual official visit to strengthen the political, economic and cultural relationships between the United States and Italy.

While in Rome, NIAF Co-Chairs Gabriel A. Battista and Patricia de Stacy Harrison, along with other members of the Board, stayed at Hotel Splendide Royal, near Via Veneto. On June 25, the delegation visited the Vatican Museums and the Sistine Chapel. In the afternoon, NIAF Board members held their annual Board meeting in Palazzo Mattei di Giove, an exceptional Mattei house that headquarters of the Center of American Studies.

On June 26, NIAF leadership traveled to Puglia, the 2018 NIAF Region of Honor, where they met with President of the Region of Puglia Michele Emiliano; President of Confindustria Puglia Bartolomeo di Domenico; and local companies, including Casillo Group in Corato and Oropan S.p.A. in Altamura.

In the following days, the delegation visited the towns of Alberobello, Monopoli, Grotte di Castellana and Polignano a Mare. On June 27, in Ostuni, the NIAF delegation also met the participants of 2018 Ambassador Peter F. Secchia Voyage of Discovery students. Seventeen university students of Italian heritage participated in this year's program dedicated to strengthening their understanding of their rich cultural heritage and introducing them to their ancestral homeland.

— Carlo Piccolo



Putignano carnival preparations in Puglia



Polignano a Mare, Puglia



The President of the Region of Puglia Michele Emiliano meets with NIAF Co-Chairs Gabriel A. Battista and Patricia de Stacy Harrison.

Steve Munisteri (standing) welcomes the group. (L to R) NIAF Board Members Mike Zarrelli, Mike Ferguson, Chief Economic Advisor to the Vice President, Mark Calabria, Anita Bevacqua McBride and Assistant to the President for Presidential Personnel Johnny DeStefano.



NIAF Co-Chairs Gabriel A. Battista and Patricia de Stacy Harrison visit Casillo Group CEO Beniamino Casillo.





NIAF delegation members on Alberobello trulli tour

Monopoli, Puglia



NIAF delegation meets with members of Confindustria Puglia



Voyage of Discovery students Caroline Clancy, Emily Kleiman, Erica Carra, Jayson Schultz and Zack Brady with NIAF General Counsel Joseph D. Lonardo (middle), at the Cielo Restaurant at the Relais La Sommità hotel in Ostuni



NIAF delegation tours Casillo Group labs



NIAF Co-Chairs Gabriel A. Battista and Patricia de Stacy Harrison talk with President of Confindustria Puglia Bartolomeo di Domenico.

Voyage of Discovery students Jenna Ferreri, Alexa Conti, Tyler Portanova, Taylor Taglianetti and Ripley Lucas-Tagliani with NIAF Co-Chair Patricia de Stacy Harrison (middle) at the Cielo Restaurant dinner



NOIAW First Ladies Dinner

On March 8, the National Organization of Italian American Women (NOIAW) held a special dinner presentation “First Ladies Throughout History” at Via Umbria, in Georgetown, by NIAF Vice Chair Anita Bevacqua McBride, executive in residence at the School of Public Affairs at American University. McBride served as assistant to President George W. Bush, and as Chief of Staff to First Lady Laura Bush.



Above: Anita McBride with NOIAW Vice Chair and Regional Director Diana Femia. Left: Maria Francesca Nespoli Carlberg, Congressional Liaison of the Embassy of Italy; Pat Lonardo; Maria D'Andrea-Yothers, IALC member and Board member of The Abruzzo and Molise Heritage Society of the Washington, D.C.; and NIAF General Counsel Joseph D. Lonardo.

White House Festa della Repubblica

For the second consecutive year, the White House hosted a celebration in honor of Italy's “Festa della Repubblica,” the annual Italian national holiday that celebrates Italy's vote in 1946 to become a republic. On June 1, members of the NIAF Board of Directors, the Embassy of Italy and White House staff attended the event where remarks were given by U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Special Counselor to the President Kellyanne Conway, Attorney to the President Rudy Giuliani, and Ambassador Armando Varricchio. In an official presidential message, President Donald Trump highlighted that “many aspects of American life are influenced by more than 18 million Americans of Italian heritage.”



Carlo Piccolo

Left: NIAF General Counsel Joseph D. Lonardo, NIAF Co-Chair Gabriel A. Battista, Ambassador of Italy Armando Varricchio, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, NIAF Vice Chair Anita Bevacqua McBride, and NIAF Board member Dr. John P. Rosa. Right: Rudy Giuliani and Joe Piscopo



Carlo Piccolo

Italy's Prime Minister at White House

On July 30, President Trump and Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte held a joint news conference following a White House meeting. During his remarks, the prime minister singled out NIAF for its contributions to Italy-United States relations. Members of NIAF's leadership attended.

Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte arrives at the White House



Official White House Photo



NIAF Board member Dr. John P. Rosa, NIAF Chairman Emeritus Joseph V. Del Raso, NIAF Vice Chair Anita Bevacqua McBride, and NIAF Executive Vice President Frank Giordano

Gabriella Mileti

CALENDAR

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

OCTOBER 2018

NIAF Italian American Museum New Immigration Exhibition Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony

Open to the Public

Date: Friday, October 12

Time: TBD

Location: NIAF Headquarters, Washington, D.C.

Contact: Gabriella Mileti at gmileti@niaf.org

An Evening with Lidia Bastianich

Date: Friday, October 12

Time: 8 p.m.

Location: The Washington Marriott Wardman Park Hotel, Washington, D.C.

This is a ticketed event.

For more information, visit www.niaf.org/gala

Expo Italiana

Open to the public

Date: Saturday, October 13

Time: 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Location: The Washington Marriott Wardman Park Hotel, Washington, D.C.

NIAF 43rd Anniversary Gala Awards Dinner

Date: October 13

Location: The Washington Marriott Wardman Park Hotel, Washington, D.C.

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

DECEMBER 2018

NIAF Museum Holiday Reception

By Invitation Only

Date: TBD

Location: NIAF Headquarters, Washington, D.C.

APRIL 2019

NIAF New York Spring Gala

Date: Tuesday, April 9, 2019

Location: Cipriani 42nd Street 110 East 42nd Street, New York, N.Y.

Time: 6:30 p.m. Cocktail Reception, 7:30 p.m. Dinner

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



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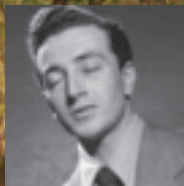


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All About Puglia Italian-American Style



by Leon J. Radomile
www.leonradomile.com



ACROSS

- 1 In "Italian Regional Cooking," Ada Boni says that Pulians are Italy's top consumers of this food.
- 4 They came to Italy in the 15th century and today around 800,000 live in Southern Italy, many in Puglia. They speak a dialect called Tosca.
- 12 Billionaire businessman born in Boston in 1958. His mother is from Canosa, Puglia. Founded Raptor Group; co-owns Italian soccer club A.S. Roma; co-owner and executive board member of the Boston Celtics.
- 13 Arrived in America at 17 from Palo del Colle near Bari, in 1953. In 1979, he won boxing's World Middleweight Championship in Monte Carlo.
- 14 English word for the region of Puglia.
- 19 Stage name of Carlo Broschi, an 18th century Italian castrato singer, one of the greatest singers in the history of opera.
- 21 The name in the U.S. of the international hit *Nel blu dipinto di blu*, sung and co-written by Domenico Modugno. It won two Grammys 1958.
- 22 The Appian Way, an early and strategically important road, connected Rome to what Pulian sea port?
- 23 Part of the Italian "boot" that is the the Italian region of Puglia.

- 24 The capital city of the Pulian region.
- 25 Agricultural treasure produced in the Pulian districts of Bitonto, Andria Barletta and Molfetta.

DOWN

- 2 American character actor, writer and filmmaker, born February 28, 1957. Known for his roles in "Do the Right Thing", "Quiz Show", and "The Big Lebowski." His father hails from Giovinazzo, Puglia.
- 3 Star of "The Sheik," born in Castellaneta, Puglia in 1895. Torrid love scenes and his good looks had a dramatic effect on American culture.
- 5 Born into an Italian-Albanian family in Lecce, Puglia, in 1888. Considered Italy's greatest *tenore di grazia* (graceful light tenor). Among the most popular tenors of the 20th century.
- 6 Body of water that borders Puglia's east coast.
- 7 New Hollywood Wave director and screenwriter, born in 1940. His credits include "Carrie," "Scareface," and "Mission: Impossible."
- 8 Landmark castle, the Crown of Puglia. Built by Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II in the 1240s. On the Italian version of the one cent Euro coin.
- 9 Pop and big band singer, inspired by Frank Sinatra and befriended by Perry Como. Born Vito Rocco Farinola in Brooklyn, N.Y., in 1928, of Pulian immigrants from Bari.
- 10 The Greeks who first colonized Puglia during the last phase of the Bronze Age, 1600–1100 B.C.
- 11 Italian for curled octopus, a favorite dish in the port city of Bari.
- 15 His father was from Gioia del Colle, Puglia. One of Hollywood's biggest stars since his 1976 movie, "Rocky."
- 16 The traditional whitewashed Pulian dry stone huts with conical roofs.
- 17 American actor, producer, writer and director, born in Chicago in 1947. His mother was from Acquaviva delle Fonti, Puglia. Won a Tony for his role in "Glengarry Glen Ross," and an Emmy for co-writing "Bleacher Bums," in which he starred.
- 18 Because of this natural ingredient, the wines of Puglia are used mainly for blending and improving other regional Italian wines.
- 20 Italian-American actor, comedian and writer. Won a Best Actor Golden Globe Award for "The Office." Starred in "The 40-Year-Old Virgin." His family's original surname was Caroselli.

SOLUTION

20 Steve Carell
18 Alchoh
Mantegna
17 Joseph
16 Trulli
Stallone
15 Sylvester
11 Polpi Arricciati
Greeks
10 Mycenaean
9 Vic Damone
8 Castel Del Monte
7 Brian De Palma
6 Adriatic Sea
5 Tito Schipa
Valentino
3 Rudolph
2 John Turturo
DOWN
25 Olive Oil
24 Bari
23 Heel
22 Brindisi
21 Volare
19 Farinelli
14 Apulia
13 Vito Antufermo
12 James Fialotta
4 Arberesh
1 Pasta
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