

# Ambassador



National Italian American Foundation

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# REPORT

**Andrea Bocelli**

**Easter Sunday 2020    Duomo in Milan, Italy**



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# Ambassador

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22

CONTENTS



## Features

**22 Hope + Prayer**  
Exclusive interview with Andrea Bocelli about life during the pandemic and his iconic Easter Sunday performance from the Duomo in Milan  
*Interview by John Salamone*

**26 Italian American Pandemic Leaders**  
When the Going Gets Tough...  
*By Susan Van Allen*



## Sections

Lettere	4
Foundation Focus	8
Bottega NIAF	16
Paesani	18
Cinema	64
Between the Pages	68
Room with a View	76
On Sports	79
Crossword	80

**30 Communiqués from the Trenches**  
Glimpses of Heroics from the Pandemic Front in Italy and America

**38 Forza in the Pantry**  
Two of America's Leading Italian Chefs on Making the Best of Hard Times  
*By Mary Ann Esposito and Lidia Bastianich*

**44 Locked Down in Amalfi**  
Still Life Reflections from Italy's Quarantine  
*By Laura Thayer*

**48 Quiet in Cremona**  
Italy's Hard Hit City of Violins  
*By Jan Angilella*

**52 Kissing the Joy**  
Italian Resilience in the Time of COVID-19  
*By Carla Gambescia*

**56 Dante and the Pandemic**  
A Guide for Our "Dark Wood"  
*By Joseph Luzzi*

**60 The Gaul of Tuscany**  
A Culturally Blended Wine  
*By Dick Rosano*

30



*On the Cover:*  
The cover image is of legendary Italian tenor Andrea Bocelli walking from the Duomo in Milan on Easter Sunday, 2020, to sing the finale of his 25-minute performance, Amazing Grace. Witnessed by nearly 3 million people worldwide in that moment, it is the singular iconic image of hope during the pandemic.

Photo credit: Luca Rossetti prima / Courtesy of "BOCELLI: MUSIC FOR HOPE"—YouTube, Sugar Srl, Decca Records

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## From the NIAF Chairman

Two months ago, on Easter Sunday, as pandemic fear, anxiety and isolation gripped the world, legendary tenor Andrea Bocelli stood alone inside the empty Duomo in Milano and, for 25 unforgettable minutes, sang five sacred songs that resonated worldwide with hope, solidarity and tears—no matter your religion, nationality, race or age. Only recently did we learn that he had just recovered from COVID-19 himself.

Bocelli's incredible *Music for Hope* performance reached nearly 3 million people around the world, making it one of the largest musical live-stream events in history. The next day, more than 28 million had watched the video.

"A prayer," as Bocelli calls the performance in an exclusive, touching interview in this issue of Ambassador magazine, has become the pandemic's signature event that, for a few minutes, simply stopped the world. This issue's cover image is of Andrea Bocelli walking out of the Duomo to sing the finale, the event's only English-language song, *Amazing Grace*. And amazing it is.

These last several months have seen the loss of hundreds of thousands to COVID-19. And, in so many cases, these deaths reflect the loss of loved ones connected to our National Italian American Foundation family here and in Italy. We have also been inspired and heartened by the selfless acts of emergency care workers, nurses, doctors and unsung citizens—doing everything possible to save lives.

We at NIAF hope and pray you and your families are well and staying safe.

We also pray for our country to rebound and, in that regard, we can take strength from our ancestors who, courageous in the face of their own perilous future, persevered on behalf of their families, and in the process shaped the future of new generations and contributed to the greatness of America.

Through NIAF's partnership with Italy helping to combat the spread of this deadly virus, we have strengthened an already strong relationship. We have also, through the use of technology, continued to provide educational, cultural, health and informational programs connecting NIAF to the greater Italian American community. And through our partnership with the prestigious Atlantic Council, we have focused on economic, health and opportunity issues of concern as Italy looks toward post-COVID-19 actions.

NIAF will continue to respond to increased needs on behalf of the Italian American community. To do this and to be able to continue to preserve, protect and affirm our Italian American heritage and culture, educate the next generation of Italian American leaders, serve as the unified voice for the Italian American community, and strengthen ties between the United States and Italy, we ask for your help.

To ensure the safety of others, NIAF is working virtually and effectively, but our usual in-person events are not possible just now. And, so, our fundraising has been disrupted. In this interim, which we hope will not last, we invite you to make a tax-deductible contribution. To donate, please connect to [www.niaf.org/donate/](http://www.niaf.org/donate/) and choose what amount is comfortable for you. For every donation over \$500, we will send you a NIAF apron in thanks for remembering the contributions that Italians and Italian Americans consistently give to our culture, our communities and our country. On behalf of the NIAF Board of Directors, I thank you for your continuing support.

With hope,

The Hon. Patricia de Stacy Harrison  
NIAF Chairman

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# Reader Feedback



Kenneth C. Zirkel (CC-BY-SA 3.0)

Gov. Mario Cuomo speaking in 1987

## Father & Son: One Voice

When I hear New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo speaking at his daily COVID-19 briefings, I hear his father's voice. His daily invocation of shared sacrifice and family are as eloquent and emotive as the electrifying speeches of Mario M. Cuomo.

Nowhere has Andrew Cuomo been more articulate in championing the shared responsibility of each of us to take care of the other, or in channeling his father, than on the defining issues of our time: immigration, human dignity and public health.

Gov. Cuomo has been especially impassioned on the subject of the "inhumane treatment of immigrant children" by the Trump Administration. Two years ago, when the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services stored away some 345 children in New York State without their parents, he demanded to know where they were: "They are in my State; they are my legal charge."

Cuomo punctuated his argument against the "complete disregard for parental rights" with a paragraph that could have been written by his father: "Our state has always served as a



lev radin / shutterstock

Gov. Andrew Cuomo speaking in 2018

beacon and opportunity for the world, and the Lady of the Harbor holds her torch high not only to light the way for immigrants, but to light the way forward when our country is lost." The powerful imagery of those words were familiar to me. I was with Mario Cuomo in June 1992, when he spoke at New York University's Urban Research Center on Immigration, explaining how his own father and mother — immigrants from Southern Italy — battled discrimination each day:

"I thank God the country didn't say to them, 'We can't afford you, you might take someone else's job, or cost us too much.' I'm glad they didn't ask my father if he could speak English, because he couldn't. I'm glad they didn't ask my mother if she could count, because she couldn't. I'm glad they didn't ask my father what special skills he brought to this great and dynamic nation, because there was no special expertise to the way he handled a shovel when he dug trenches for sewer pipe. I'm glad they let him in anyway."

Now, nearly 30 years later, when xenophobes and demagogues continue to tear apart families, Mario



Carla Gambeschia

## Biking in Italy

Who knew when the spring issue of your magazine arrived in March that its happy sunny cover photo of those bright yellow bicycles parked somewhere near an Italian seaside, with no riders, would become another image that speaks of a beautiful Italy then soon to be locked down by this pandemic? Loved the Biking in Italy stories inside. Maybe one day again soon.

— Anonymous reader

Cuomo's words, personal decency and humane actions are alive in his son.

"There's a line and it's called basic decency and basic humanity," Andrew Cuomo told the Cable Television Station NY 1. If Andrew Cuomo's Italian immigrant grandparents could not be locked out of America, he would not let that line be crossed against anyone.

— Steve Villano

Napa, Calif.

Author of the 2017 book

*Tightrope: Balancing a Life Between Mario Cuomo & My Brother* and former member of Mario M. Cuomo's Administration.

## Write to us! Tell us your thoughts!

Letters to the Editor may be e-mailed to [ambassador@niaf.org](mailto: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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**Past Issues** are available at NIAF's website: [www.niaf.org](http://www.niaf.org).

## SEND US YOUR PANDEMIC STORY

Please send us your uplifting and inspirational coronavirus pandemic stories with photos for consideration to include in future issues of Ambassador, in NIAF's social media or on our blog. Keep word count on your stories to 300 words or less. Send photos as high-resolution (300 dpi) jpeg attachments to your emailed story. Let's not forget the powerful and courageous stories that come out of these dark and troubling times.



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# Statement from the Ambassador of Italy to the U.S. Hon. Armando Varricchio

## ITALY AND AMERICA TOGETHER FIGHTING AGAINST THE VIRUS FOR OUR FUTURE

Italy was one of the first countries to be severely hit by the spread of the Coronavirus pandemic. The Italian government reacted swiftly to contain the contagion and the response has been a model for other countries. Italians showed unity and resilience in the face of this terrible adversity.

Because of the measures and the resolve shown by my fellow citizens, Italy began lifting some of the restrictions, allowing movement of people and businesses to reopen. We are still carefully monitoring developments in order to preserve the results achieved. Once again, Italy has been a trailblazer in leading the Phase 2 of the response to the COVID-19.

As the United States faced a similar scenario later on, President Donald Trump, Congress, the Governors and local leaders have ramped up efforts to respond to the emergency from a public health and economic perspective. As in Italy, Americans have made unprecedented sacrifices. Thanks to their courage and sense of duty, the United States has also gradually removed restrictions in order to allow a safe and steady recovery.

Throughout these challenging times, Italians were never alone. They knew they could count on the institutions, on the central and local governments, on the professionalism, courage and dedication of their health care workers but also on the solidarity of their neighbors and friends all across the country and abroad.

The U.S. government, American companies, and many Americans from every walk of life and all over the country, particularly our friends of Italian descent, have generously helped my country through official assistance, in kind contributions, donations and fundraisers. Many generous donations came from the Italian American community and from members of the National Italian American Foundation.

Italian companies and Italians living in the United States have embarked in a similar effort by converting productions to much needed equipment and supporting local communities and the many people in the United States that have been most affected by the impact of the virus.



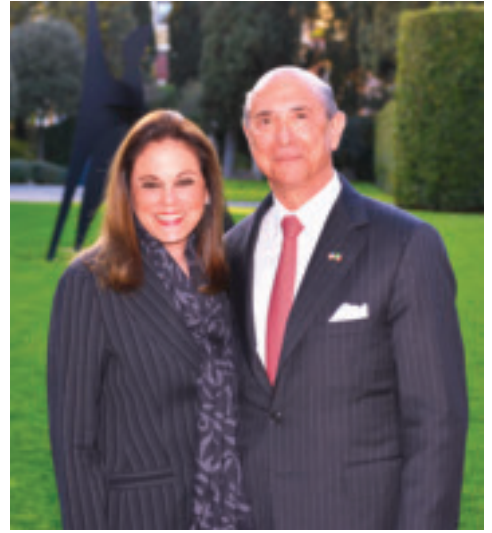
These actions speak volumes. They are a testament to the friendship and alliance uniting our two countries and people. In the midst of a global crisis with unprecedented ramifications on our social fabric, our public health and our economies, Italy and the United States have closed ranks and worked together.

And we will continue working together in Phase 2, leading the way to economic and social recovery, building on the values of democracy and freedom. Our governments will look at ways to further increase our cooperation, our scientific and research communities will build even stronger connections and work tirelessly to understand the behavior of the virus and ultimately find a treatment and vaccine. Our private sector and our people will forge even greater relationships to benefit our societies.

I am sure that the National Italian American Foundation and its members will lead the cause, as it has always been, in this process and contribute to an even stronger friendship between our two great nations and democracies. ▲

Armando Varricchio  
*Ambassador of Italy to the  
United States of America*

Ambassador  
Lewis M. Eisenberg  
and his wife Judy



## Statement from the U.S. Ambassador to Italy

# Hon. Ambassador Lewis M. Eisenberg

### FRONT LINES OF A CRISIS: UNITED STATES-ITALY COOPERATION TO DEFEAT THE PANDEMIC

COVID-19 has changed the world as we know it. The past few months have challenged individuals, communities, institutions and governments around the world. Italy, one of countries hardest hit by the pandemic, faced this crisis early. As the world watched, the bustling streets of cities throughout Italy grew quiet; the doors of offices, schools and businesses shuttered; and hospitals filled with the sick and dying. Through it all, the Italian people remained united, despite the uncertainty.

As U.S. Ambassador to Italy, my team and I stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the Italian people as we weathered this crisis together. Today, I am more convinced than ever of the importance of our transatlantic bond.

As the crisis worsened, the U.S. Mission to Italy followed the guidance from the government of Italy. With Italy's stay-at-home order, our offices emptied but our work continued. Nearly all our staff began working from home. Our mission to advance the interests of the American people, their safety and their economic prosperity remained the same, as did the tools we used to implement America's foreign policy—diplomacy, advocacy and assistance. However, our tactics to accomplish that mission shifted as we embraced new

forms of technology and new approaches. Our response became a model for other U.S. embassies as more countries began to feel the viral effects.

I spent days and nights on phone calls and in virtual meetings with officials in Washington, and with our team and untiring Italian officials here, to coordinate efforts. Our priority was to ensure the health and safety of the American citizens traveling, studying and living in Italy, and that of our staff and their families. We helped U.S. citizens return to the United States when flights became sparse and monitored, assisted Americans stranded on cruise ships, and helped coordinate the repatriation of Italians who were in the United States.

As the pandemic took hold of Italy, it heartened me to witness the long-standing friendship between our two countries—our people, our governments and our institutions—in action. The embassy and the American Battle Monuments Commission's Florence American Cemetery lit up their buildings in the colors of both of our flags; and the U.S.S. Mount Whitney from U.S. Naval Forces Africa-Europe played the Italian national anthem in port to express our support and solidarity with the Italian people. We witnessed Italians on their balconies clapping and singing

for the country's essential workers. This act of gratitude inspired other countries, including the United States where Americans now clap, honk car horns, and display signs of appreciation for our front-line workers.

Shortly after Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte issued the first national decree for dealing with the COVID-19 crisis (March 8), the U.S. military sent a convoy of trucks filled with medical equipment and supplies from one of its installations in Tuscany to the Lombardy Region—the epicenter of the COVID-19 outbreak in Italy—to help boost the capacity of the region's healthcare system during the precarious and uncertain early days of the crisis.

President Trump also announced a substantial assistance package on behalf of the American people to help the Italian people, institutions and businesses cope with COVID-19. As part of this effort, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) committed \$50 million to support health security, civil society and private Italian companies engaging in research and development in the fight against COVID-19. For example, through this package, Samaritan's Purse established a Respiratory Care Unit (RCU) in Cremona that ▶

treated 281 patients and the Croce Rossa Italia is supporting health care providers and local communities respond to economic and social impacts.

Private American companies also stepped up, operating in sectors from food and beverages to technology and entertainment, from pharmaceuticals and medical supplies to manufacturing, providing more than 35 million euros in donations in medical supplies for hospitals, support for Italian medical and research organizations, food for essential workers, and personnel to support Italian institutions.

Faith-based and other non-governmental organizations from the United States also donated much-needed medical supplies and operated field hospitals in the hardest-hit regions. I would also like to highlight the role of the

American Chamber of Commerce in Italy, which was instrumental in coordinating much of the assistance provided by U.S. companies. I applaud the U.S. companies for their generous contributions to Italian institutions and organizations. Their efforts represent the very best in the United States-Italy commercial and economic relationship.

More than 30,000 U.S. military personnel and their families stationed here share the same communities as their Italian neighbors. In response to the virus, U.S. base commanders closely coordinated with Italian counterparts to respect national decrees while maintaining mission readiness. Further, our military has donated truckloads of medical equipment, consulted with Italy's Civilian Protection Agency to procure urgent med-

ical supplies, and teamed with the Ronald McDonald House in Brescia to bring "hugs" to children. Additionally, U.S. military assets and personnel facilitated the transportation of critical supplies to those in need.

As the coronavirus arrived in the United States, we learned from Italy's experience. This sharing of information helps unite us and strengthens our partnership. We are both facing this invisible enemy, and I believe that the United States and Italy will together emerge stronger than ever, united and reaffirmed in our common values of democracy and individual freedom. I am proud to serve the people of the United States and represent our nation to the people and government of Italy. ▲



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New York City Emergency Medical Services workers showing gratitude for the EATs for EMTs campaign.

# NIAF's Pandemic Efforts

By Natalie Wulderk

The National Italian American Foundation (NIAF) has always answered the call to help our friends in Italy when in need, when a devastating flood or earthquake has struck. NIAF also answers the call when America is in need and in times of crisis, such as fundraising to support children who lost parents in the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

The COVID-19 pandemic attacked both countries we love simultaneously and even left the Foundation's future in peril. NIAF was left to face the daunting questions of which country to help first? How much worse will the crisis become? How can we best use our resources to help? How can we help ourselves?

We are the bridge that serves and connects the United States and Italy, and it's part of our mission to empower and strengthen those ties. We want to thank our community for remaining strong and united and for helping us find the answers. Over this past spring, the Foundation has helped to address the critical situation in Italy, provided medical and safety guidance for Americans, and helped to ensure that the day-to-day business of NIAF moved forward. NIAF is and always will be dedicated and committed. The NIAF Board of Directors and staff continue to work tirelessly every day to ensure we continue to connect and support the

Italian American community and maintain strong relationships with Italy.

In early March, NIAF Chairman Patricia de Stacy Harrison, along with NIAF Board Members Peter Arduini, Anita Bevacqua McBride and Chairman Emeritus Joseph V. Del Raso, worked with Italy's Ambassador to the United States Armando Varricchio, to focus on priority needs in Italy. As a member of the board of the Advanced Medical Technology Association (AdvaMed), Arduini coordinated with AdvaMed CEO Scott Whitaker and the Ambassador to identify and send available resources from U.S. suppliers to meet Italy's urgent needs.

NIAF announced on March 17 that it stands in solidarity with Italy, with the support of both Ambassador Varricchio and the United States Ambassador to Italy Lewis Eisenberg. Beyond coordinating virus response efforts with the Italian Embassy in Washington and the U.S. Embassy in Rome, NIAF's website launched a Coronavirus Relief page ([www.niaf.org/coronavirusrelief](http://www.niaf.org/coronavirusrelief)) that provides direct links to fundraising in support of campaigns that are funding urgent resources and research on the disease and have aided, at their most critical time, Italian hospitals in Bergamo, Caserta, Milan, Rome, as well as hospitals throughout southern regions of Campania, Calabria and Sicily. ➤



Courtesy of NYC Sews

A grassroots effort, NYC Sews organized volunteer tailors in making of more than 1,000 handsewn masks.



NIAF promoted the #ItalyStayStrong campaign raising funds for three Italian medical and research institutes.

Photo by Fusion Medical Animation

Most of these fundraisers have now concluded, thanks to the donations from our Italian American community and others that culminated in more than \$5 million dollars raised to combat COVID-19.

For our Italian American family, NIAF disseminated educational content, ways to support our Italian American community, and links to fundraisers supporting responses to the crisis here in America. The Foundation shared NIAF Board Member Dr. Antonio Giordano's published articles that explained COVID-19 and detailed how to contain the infection and what the next steps may entail. We also shared NIAF Board Member Dr. John Rosa's "Telephonic Town Hall Virtual Meeting" which provided useful tools and tips for getting through this crisis.

In addition, NIAF supported Italian American restaurants nationwide by creating a section on its website ([www.niaf.org/restaurants](http://www.niaf.org/restaurants)) linking our members and friends to more than 460 restaurants located in 28 states and the District of Columbia that were providing curbside, pick-up and delivery services during the stay-at-home quarantine. People all over the country contacted NIAF to add restaurants in their area for others to support.



NIAF's Coronavirus Relief website section ([www.niaf.org/coronavirusrelief](http://www.niaf.org/coronavirusrelief)) provides direct links to fundraising campaigns that help support critical pandemic needs and research.

To help fight the public health crisis in New York City, NIAF promoted the NYC Sews and the EATs for EMTs initiatives. NYC Sews is a grassroots effort that organized fabric donations, fabric manufacturers and 22 tailors who could sew to make masks. From

March to May, around 50 packages of mask materials were made and delivered to volunteer tailors, resulting in the creation of more than 1,000 hand-sewn masks. NYC Sews donated the masks to essential workers, including TLC drivers licensed to drive taxis and other public-transportation vehicles who helped, under dangerous conditions, to transport essential workers, deliver food, and keep the city going.

NIAF Board Member Capri Cafaro's sister, Renee Cafaro, organized the EATs for EMTs GoFundMe campaign to help support restaurants in New York City while giving free meals to EMTs who are the lowest-paid first responders in the city. Within one month, the campaign achieved its goal of delivering free meals to every NYC Fire Department Emergency Medical Services union office.

"We've been able to infuse a bit of much-needed revenue into NYC and a boost of moral and a hot meal to the men and women on the front lines responding to our 911 calls," said Renee Cafaro on the GoFundMe page. "It's been an honor to do this project."

The Foundation is also fostering a community online. Last month, NIAF launched virtual events that include discounted language and culture courses with the Italian Cultural Society of Washington, D.C.; conversations about the post-pandemic future of Italy and Europe with the Atlantic Council; and webinars covering genealogy, dual citizenship, history, and more.

As many of NIAF's in-person events have been cancelled or postponed, we hope you will continue to connect with NIAF and other Italian Americans through this new channel. Some of these events are free, but most will be monetized to support the Foundation during this difficult time. Thousands have tuned in to our virtual events so far and we hope you will join us, too. Details and registration for upcoming events are available at [www.niaf.org/virtualevents](http://www.niaf.org/virtualevents).

In addition to NIAF's main social media platforms, NIAF's Pensieri Blog is providing people in Italy and America a space to voice their reflections about the pandemic and their first-hand experiences. First-generation



NIAF linked members and friends to fundraisers fighting the pandemic, such as We the Italians Against Coronavirus that raised funds 50,000 euros in the Italian American community for the Lazzaro Spallanzani Hospital, an infectious disease medical center in Rome.



NIAF's pandemic relief efforts helped to fundraise in support of hospitals facing critical shortages in Italy, like at this one Coronavirus Covid-19 hospitalization ward in Puglia.

American Joan Lombardi poignantly described her grief for Italy when she wrote on NIAF's Blog, "When you are the child of an immigrant, you grow up with stories of the other country. No matter how proud you are of your own homeland, there is always the other. It is in your food, it is the way you feel when you hear the language too-often forgotten, it is in your traditions, it is in the faces of your cousins, it is in your heart." Her sentiment reached thousands when shared on social media and resonated with so many.

Throughout this unimaginably difficult time, NIAF has overcome the obstacles and continues to provide information, hope, and ways to donate and help to our hundreds of thousands of members, friends and followers—all while continuing to fulfill our mission of preserving, protecting and promoting our Italian American heritage. ▲

# Science Versus COVID-19

**An Interview with  
Peter J. Arduini**

As a NIAF Board Member and President and CEO Integra LifeSciences, a medical product manufacturing company headquartered in Plainsboro Township, N.J., that makes products used by most neurosurgeons and reconstructive surgeons, Peter J. Arduini has an insider's insight into the critical efforts of science, medical manufacturers and NIAF's role in battling against the pandemic. Ambassador magazine thanks him for taking time recently to share his thoughts with our readers.

— Don Oldenburg



Courtesy of Integra LifeSciences

## **How does Integra LifeSciences fit into the scientific fight against the coronavirus pandemic?**

**Arduini:** While we do not manufacture personal protective equipment (PPE), such as masks, gloves, face shields or respirators/ventilators, our products and technologies are essential in critical surgical procedures in the intensive care units or operating room settings, some of which are still happening in the middle of the pandemic. These products are used to treat traumatic brain injuries, acute and chronic wounds, tumor resections, burns and reconstructive surgery, to name a few.

We believe in sticking to our knitting and letting the companies that specialize in PPE focus on what they do best using their expertise and capacity to ramp up as needed. That being said, many essential cases have been delayed due to COVID-19, and we are focused on helping our customers take care of their many patients....

## **You are a member of the Board of AdvaMed. What is AdvaMed and how it has joined the fray in fighting the pandemic worldwide?**

**Arduini:** AdvaMed has more than 400 members, ranging from the largest to the smallest medical technology innovators and companies from around the world. The association provides a voice for the industry producing medical devices, diagnostic products and digital health technologies, as well as focusing on patient needs. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, AdvaMed member companies have responded to the increased demand by

ramping up production, wherever possible, coordinating closely with governments to ensure the delivery of supplies where they are most needed, and in some cases, creating new devices and diagnostic tests to help effectively diagnose and treat COVID-19 patients. Additionally, many member companies have donated millions of dollars in medical products and cash to hospitals, foundations and charities around the world to fight the pandemic.

## **When the pandemic became serious in Italy, on behalf of the Foundation, NIAF Chairman Patricia de Stacy Harrison and Chairman Emeritus Joseph V. Del Raso asked you to connect AdvaMed and Italy's Ambassador Armando Varricchio to work together in identifying urgent medical technology needed in Italy. Tell us about that effort.**

**Arduini:** The virus hit China first and then Europe, with Italy being one of the hardest hit countries. Chairman Harrison asked if some of us involved in the industry could speak with Ambassador Varricchio and help make the necessary connections with the MedTech companies that make PPE, such as masks, gowns, and life-saving equipment like ventilators, to deal with the virus.

As an executive committee member of both NIAF and AdvaMed, I reached out to the president of AdvaMed, Scott Whitaker, who joined us on a call with Ambassador Varricchio. We provided the Ambassador with a point of contact for all medical companies, in case he needed to reach someone on urgent equipment inquires. A week later, at the AdvaMed Board meeting, we ➤

Courtesy of Integra LifeSciences



Peter Arduini with AdvaMed President Scott Whitaker

asked all Board members to work with their local Italian teams and do what they could to assist the Italian government in securing critical products that the local hospitals needed. Overall, establishing dialogue, creating access and urgency helped facilitate the availability of much-needed products in the hardest hit areas of Italy.

### **With the rise of U.S. infections and deaths, how has AdvaMed's member companies worked to provide needed products and technology here?**

**Arduini:** AdvaMed member companies have responded to increased demand for essential medical products and technologies by ramping up production, coordinating closely with governments to ensure the delivery of supplies where they are most needed, and creating new devices and novel diagnostic tests to help effectively diagnose and treat COVID-19 patients. We have also worked with the National Institute of Health (NIH) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to help accelerate testing kits and new capabilities to reduce the effects of the virus.

One notable learning based on a series of white papers, published evidence and case studies from both China and Italy, U.S. medical professionals have used non-invasive ventilation therapy on less critically ill patients, which constitutes the majority of cases in the United States. This freed up the more invasive ventilation devices for use on the most critically ill patients and eased pressure on the U.S. critical-care system in hospitals for ventilators, initially the go-to machine.

The open relationship between the U.S. and Italian governments and sharing of data in real time was helpful in implementing the best practices from Italy and also helped the U.S. public agencies and private health systems to address the virus as it made its way into U.S. communities.

The other critical area is increasing our testing capacity. AdvaMed and its member companies are working around the clock to produce commercially available diagnostic tests as quickly as possible. To date, about 30 commercially available diagnostic tests have received Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) from the FDA and are now being used in hospitals and other testing

sites. Another type of testing in the works is serology testing, a blood-based test that determines if an individual has been exposed to COVID-19. While we are waiting on vaccines, these tests are critical in identifying those who have developed immunity and can safely return to work right now, especially for the frontline workers, first responders and food service personnel. One of last year's NIAF honorees, Vincent Forlenza, is the chairman of Becton Dickinson, a leading company producing testing and diagnostic tools.

### **The coronavirus pandemic isn't likely to disappear soon. Are Integra and other AdvaMed companies working in search of innovative technology that might help fight this pandemic and future pandemics?**

**Arduini:** There is certainly a lot of learning we can gather from the COVID-19 experience to help us deal with pandemics. Preparedness is vital and being able to mobilize quickly and anticipate potential hotspots earlier are essential.

It's also important that governments and the private sector (locally and globally) work closely to ensure the continuous supply of raw materials to develop medical devices such as PPE, respirator-ventilators and other essential products, and make sure that these products reach the hospital networks at the right place at the right time.

One other important area is having a clearly defined expedited regulatory approval process for critical diagnostic testing, vaccines, etc. In the early days, there were stories from companies where approval was stalled because government agencies were still following the traditional route of the regulatory review process and figuring out how to prioritize these critical tests and products. When you are a larger company with more established relationships with the FDA and other agencies, it is much easier, but for smaller organizations who may not have the established relationships with regulatory bodies, the process can be cumbersome. In times like these, speed is critical.

Finally, on the diagnostic testing front, we need to allocate funding for research, development, validation, manufacturing, procurement, administering and expanding capacity for tests, especially in smaller labs

which may have the innovative technologies and know-how to move these tests forward.

We should also dedicate funds to states and other local authorities for pandemic preparedness and testing, to scale-up laboratory capacity, develop contact tracing and support employer testing. Testing became a bottleneck for us in the earlier days of the pandemic, and we saw that in countries where testing was available for everyone earlier on, their ability to contain the outbreak quickly was far more effective.

### **How are you and your family and colleagues persevering during these hard times?**

**Arduini:** Since we have a majority of our workforce working from home, we have had to rely on technologies more than ever before to connect and to communicate with one another. For example, I delivered two video messages for all employees recorded from my home using my iPad, using none of the traditional professional video production.

We have been sharing weekly messages with our employees and developed a mobile app for employees who do not have daily access to laptops. This app allows them to stay connected to the company and keep up to date on COVID-related news and information.

I delivered our first-ever fully virtual global town hall meeting via Microsoft Teams, which was well-received. We are planning to do more of these electronic forums and online platforms to remain connected. Personally, my wife and I have been spending time at home with two of our three children. Our oldest daughter is in the Bronx with her fiancé, who is a doctor at Montefiore Medical taking care of COVID-19 patients for past two months.

We are all healthy and, although isolation has been challenging, we're using the time to build tighter bonds with family, lose those last few pounds, and read books I've been putting off. I've made progress on these goals! Also, I can't forget about the great meals we've been sharing, using my grandparents' and father's recipes from Roma and Frosinone.

These are most disconcerting times, but controlling the many things we can control has helped us manage the situation in the best way possible. ▲





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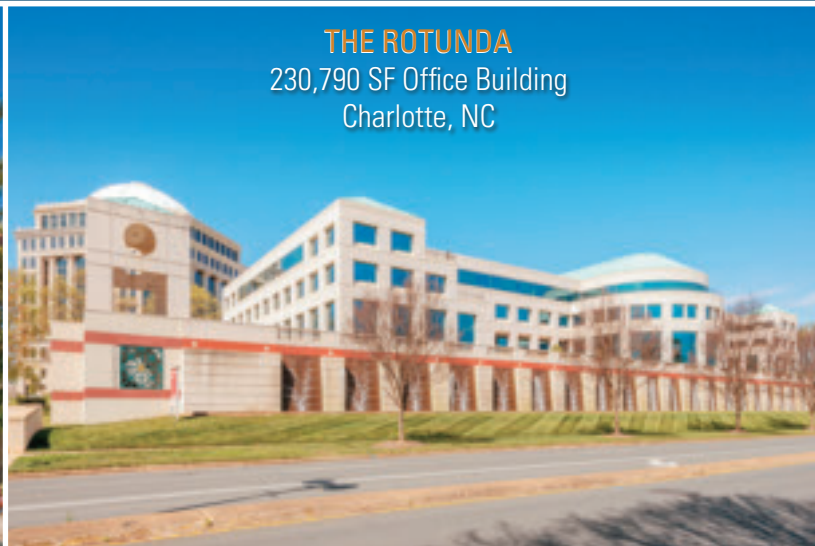
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# BOTTEGA NIAF

By Gabriella Mileti

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Courtesy of Vincent Perrone



Courtesy of Monsignor David Cassato

## Coming Home

“Oddly enough, throughout this crisis, our homeless veterans have actually stepped up to help us to secure, protect and sanitize our facilities,” says retired USAF Lt. Colonel Vincent J. Perrone, president and CEO of Veterans Inc., based in Worcester, Mass. “Their military training is showing through. They are helping the staff at Veterans Inc. fight the war against COVID-19.”

When Perrone was a joint staff member in the Operational Command Center for Desert Storm, he learned that 450,000 American veterans were homeless. He knew some of them wouldn’t make it home. But he never imagined any would end up homeless. So, he volunteered at an emergency shelter founded by Vietnam veterans.

Since 1993, he has serviced as CEO and president of Veterans Inc. He transformed it into an award-winning nonprofit offering health, housing, employment and training services to thousands of veterans. Despite the pandemic’s financial strain, Perrone remains committed to ending homelessness among veterans. “Everyone who honorably served our country should have a place to live,”

he insists.

Perrone grew up in a large family where he learned about Italian heritage, culture and food. “Being a second generation Italian and growing up in a beautiful extended family has given me a life filled with love, generosity and support,” says the father of four, “...the kind of life that many only dream of.” Visit: [www.veteransinc.org](http://www.veteransinc.org).

— *Christina Galeone*



Courtesy of Vincent Perrone

## The Pope of Bensonhurst

“I try to be there for them and help them and their families cope with the stress,” says Monsignor David Cassato. “I’ve been calling cops who have the coronavirus and I’m trying my best to counsel them.”

Called “The Pope of Bensonhurst,” Cassato has been a priest for 50 years. The grandson of Italian American immigrants and a native of Kenarski, Brooklyn, he is wildly popular among New Yorkers and well known all over the tri-state area.

Since age 5, Cassato felt a calling to be a priest. Over the years, he has touched the lives of thousands in the parishes of St. Rita, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, and St. Athanasius—and as a New York City Police chaplain.

“To be a police chaplain is a heavy responsibility, but it’s tremendously rewarding,” he says. “The cops are a great gift in my life. It’s an honor to serve.”

Cassato says two reasons played a role in his decision to become a priest: the nuns at his Holy Family Middle School and his Italian heritage. The nuns inspired him to live a life of faith and his Italian heritage helped grow his sense of family values and tradition.

“For me, it’s all about when the kids greet you coming into the school yard,” he says. When asked about his nickname, Cassato confesses, “I love it! I want to be the Pope of the Catholic Church.”

— *Anthony Sciaratta*

Courtesy of Monsignor David Cassato





Filippo Buttita

## Cannoli Do Your Best

Allison Scola says cannoli set her on the path to create *Experience Sicily*, a company that connects people with the joys of the island’s food, people, history and culture. “Growing up, I thought everyone ate cannoli during the holidays,” she says. “We’d always go to Brooklyn to visit my grandmother, who was born in Bagheria (near Palermo), and she’d take us to the *pasticceria*.”

Scola’s nonna also kept in touch with the family in Sicily, so when Scola pursued discovering her roots, connecting was easy. “I’ll never forget getting off the train in Palermo that first visit, looking around and immediately recognizing my cousins, who looked so much like my grandmother,” she says.



Due Still Wedding Photography

Scola’s Sicilian cousins, like her, were entrepreneurial types. Her ancestral family had run a company that processed tuna, anchovies, sardines, olive oil and almonds. So, it felt natural for her to begin designing and hosting tours in Sicily.

*Experience Sicily*’s trips get rave reviews from travelers who love Scola’s immersive experiences that connect them with locals, and include cooking classes, visits to mountain towns and seaside villages, and historical sites and festivals.

When Scola is back home in Englewood Cliffs, N.J., she conducts *tarantella* workshops in the tri-state area and tours that immerse travelers in Manhattan’s Italian American history and Sicily-inspired foods—including stops at Little Italy’s *pasticcerias* to taste cannoli.

Visit: [www.experiencesicily.com](http://www.experiencesicily.com)

— Susan Van Allen



courtesy of Mark Boccia

PAESANI

## Up on the Rooftop

Mark Boccia has made his Bourbon Street restaurant in Bayside, Queens, N.Y., the home of a variety of fundraisers over the years. Most recently, his son, Mark Jr., launched Food for the Fearless that has raised more than \$60,000 in donations to provide meals at cost for healthcare professional and first responders battling the COVID-19 pandemic in the New York City area.

Born and raised in Flushing, N.Y., Boccia opened Bourbon Street 25 years ago and helped lead the commercial revival of Bell Boulevard in Queens.

“I love being around people and to see joyous occasions take place in my restaurant,” Boccia says. “It’s amazing to see people make life-long memories.”

Boccia has been in the restaurant business for decades. When he opened Bourbon Street, he capitalized on the success of his southern-style restaurant. Bourbon Street went from being solely a Cajun eatery to a catering hall and, then, eventually a rooftop bar with scenery that gives it a Manhattan-like feeling.

The rooftop expansion brought in droves of customers. Then, other businesses opened alongside Bourbon Street. The ripple effect ignited the revitalization of a once dying strip of bar restaurants, creating hundreds of jobs and inspiring other successful businesses.

But, an Italian to his soul, Boccia reflects and says, “If I ever open another restaurant, I think I’m going to go the Italian way.” ▶

— Anthony Sciarratta



courtesy of Mark Boccia

# Persons of Interest



Michelle Van Viet



## Tangled Up in Blues

“Like everyone else, I’m out of work. I was almost leaving for a tour in Italy and France when the call was made to cancel [due to the pandemic],” says Johnny Sansone, who has made New Orleans home since 1989.

Sansone’s career as a musician, singer, and songwriter who has written more than 100 songs began in West Orange, N.J. He started playing saxophone at age 8 under the tutelage of his father, Al, who served in France in the U.S. Army during World War II where he played alto sax and clarinet in a band that included legendary jazz pianist Dave Brubeck.

“I ended up backstage with my father and Dave telling stories...their friendship was the kind that only comes from what they must have gone through together,” says

Sansone, 62. “I know that was the first spark to send me down this lifelong musical path.”

His career has included playing gigs in the United States and Europe with his blues-based American-roots

style of music, whether it’s guitar, accordion or harmonica. He has also played music for the Cinemax series *Banshee*, CBS’s *NCIS: New Orleans*, and the movie *Blaze*. He has jammed with some of the best—James Cotton, Gregg Allman, Levon Helm, Phil Lesh, and others.

Sansone hopes someday he’ll visit his ancestral home of Naples and maybe play a couple of tunes. Visit: [www.johnnysansone.com](http://www.johnnysansone.com).

— Robert Fanelli Bartus Jr.



Brad Elligood

## Dream Chapel

Shortly after Donato and Patricia Quintiliani opened A Shower of Roses religious gift shop, a mysterious stranger wearing a trench coat and cowboy hat told the couple that the store needed a chapel. The man never returned. But his suggestion planted a dream that remained for 15 years.

In 2019, after moving to a larger location in West Boylston, Mass., that dream came true. The couple hired Giorgio Frat’Antonio (right), a talented artist, to create a stunning sanctuary. Adorned with relics and portraits of saints and reminiscent of Old World Italy, the chapel also has a statue of the Infant Jesus of Prague that’s more than 100 years old and an Our Lady of Fatima statue that was crafted by the famous Fatima sculptor Jose Ferreira Thedim. A crucifix adorns the front and a Sacred Heart of Jesus portrait is on the opposite wall. Canopying everything is a shower of roses that honors St. Therese of Lisieux.

Patricia loves it when people pray in the chapel. “The prayers are just as good as the sales,” she says.

Donato, whose father immigrated from San Donato Val di Comino, Italy, cherishes the chapel’s sign that reads “La Chappella dei Santi” – something he suggested. He’s thrilled with the sanctuary. “It’s beautiful, and the artist is great!” he says. Visit [www.facebook.com/A-Shower-of-Roses-Gift-Shop-205837782775494/](https://www.facebook.com/A-Shower-of-Roses-Gift-Shop-205837782775494/) ▲

— Christina Galeone



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# HOPE



## ANDREA BOCELLI

Talks About Life During  
The Pandemic And  
His Inspirational Easter  
Sunday Broadcast  
From The Duomo In Milan



Interview by  
John Salamone

# PRAYER

Shortly before the COVID-19 pandemic changed everyone's life, I was working on a project in Italy with my friend, Andrea Bocelli, and his wife, Veronica. Andrea and I met about 25 years ago when I served as executive director of the National Italian American Foundation (NIAF), and he attended the Washington Gala as my guest. Since then, we organized many events to benefit the Andrea Bocelli Foundation (ABF), created to help those in greatest need in Italy and throughout the world. Our 2020 projects came to an abrupt halt, as did much of the world, earlier this year. Like millions of others, I watched with awe as Andrea performed his *Music of Hope* on Easter Sunday at the Duomo in Milan. I was pleased Andrea agreed to this interview following that inspiring performance:

*Thank you for taking time to participate in this interview during this most challenging time. As people in every country adjust to a new way of life, we want to know how you and your family are doing during the pandemic crisis. Is everyone staying at your home in Tuscany? Are there specific things you and your family do on a daily basis to cope as you and other Italians are in lockdown?*

**Bocelli:** Our family has thoroughly observed the Italian government's instructions. We have stayed at home since the lockdown was put in place. We have passed the quarantine in our home in Forte dei Marmi,

while my mother and brother have spent it in Lajatico.

My eldest son, Amos, who holds a degree in aerospace engineering, has taken advantage of this situation to take up his piano practice again. Furthermore, as he is a great reader, he has tackled the wonderful yet challenging Russian classic *War and Peace* by Tolstoy on my recommendation.

Matteo has continued to work on the musical projects that he has in the pipeline and delve deeper into his studies at the conservatory. In April, he took an exam, online of course, for which he got good results. Even Virginia,

the baby of the family, has been very busy with school, and piano and dance lessons.

However, the person who is most active is my wife, Veronica, as always: she took the opportunity to do what was unconceivable until a few weeks ago—a great spring clean, tidying up the attic, cleaning the veranda roof. The management office that she runs has required attention despite the enforced stop, and there have been exchanges of emails and conference calls. She has also been very busy on the philanthropic front, with the foundation that bears my name: this work, which we are very passionate about, takes up a lot of our time and energy. ➤



Photos: Luca Rossetti prima / Courtesy of "BOCELLI: MUSIC FOR HOPE"—YouTube, Sugar Srl, Decca Records

My quarantine experience has been an opportunity to immerse myself in the warmth of family, conversing with my children, studying, reading and listening to music. Thank God, we are all healthy, yet thinking about the suffering of all those many people who are less fortunate has saddened us greatly, which is not to speak of the pain experienced by those who have lost their loved ones or who were unable to be with them.

*Your 25-minute performance at the Duomo in Milan on Easter was viewed by millions of people throughout the world. It sent a message of solidarity and brought tears to the eyes of many. More important, it provided a sense of hope. When did you decide to do this concert, and how was the idea generated?*

**Bocelli:** The invitation came from the mayor and the Archdiocese of Milan. I accepted without hesitation, because I was convinced of the benevolence of the initiative's purpose and it was a pleasure to do what I believe was my duty, as a man of faith, as a Christian. Then, the idea was developed and the event grew exponentially. For that reason, I must thank everyone who worked in the shadows for weeks, from management to the record company, and especially the people, all around the world, who shared this moment with me so that we could remain truly united.

*What were the challenges in getting from your home in Tuscany to Milan, and what precautions needed to be taken? Did any family members travel with you? How were you transported?*

**Bocelli:** We reached Milan by car, traveling the approximately 250 kilometers that separate it from Forte dei Marmi, where I live. Part of my family stayed at home. For example, Virginia watched her father's singing prayer from the screen of a computer, in her bedroom.

*How did you decide which songs to perform during the Easter concert? Were there additional songs you wish you could have performed. Specifically, why did you select Amazing Grace as your concluding song?*

**Bocelli:** The history of music is full of masterpieces connected to devotional practice,

inspired songs that speak to us, through beauty, of the miracle of life and of He who created it. I have been singing the sacred repertoire since I was a boy. I have recorded it and I have performed it in theaters and also during many liturgical services.

There are many songs that I would have liked to perform. In the end, the choice came down to a few particularly famous songs that are loved the world over. As for *Amazing Grace*, I liked the idea of performing a hymn of thanks (inspired by its writer's conversion), a classic from World Music tradition, the power of which is still able to stir and move us.

*You have performed before audiences of tens of thousands of people throughout the world, but on Easter Sunday at the Duomo in Milan you sang to an empty Cathedral. How different was this concert compared to others? Did you prepare the same way you do with all your concerts? Did you realize this may be the most revered performance of your life?*

**Bocelli:** I should emphasize once again that my performance at the Duomo was not a concert: for me, right from the very start, it was a chance to pray together. This unprecedented global emergency that we are experiencing has caused great worry and suffering. I liked the idea of joining my hands in prayer, in Milan to be exact—one of the worst affected cities—in coincidence with a celebration that encapsulates the regenerating power of the Christian message: life wins out. Church is the house of God. That sacred place where we are always "alone" (in our relationship with the Lord) and, for the same reason, where we are never "alone," thanks to the comfort of His presence. The Duomo was empty, yet the solitude was deceptive. In actual fact, there were millions of us, and I merely lent my voice to our one same prayer.

*What were your most memorable parts of the Easter performance in Milan?*

**Bocelli:** I will cherish the memory of this experience, in its entirety, as one of my dearest. It was a tiring day, also due to the many hours of travel, there and back, yet extraordinary and profound: truly unforgettable.

*How has your religion played a part in your concert at the Duomo, and your ability to deal with the current pandemic.*

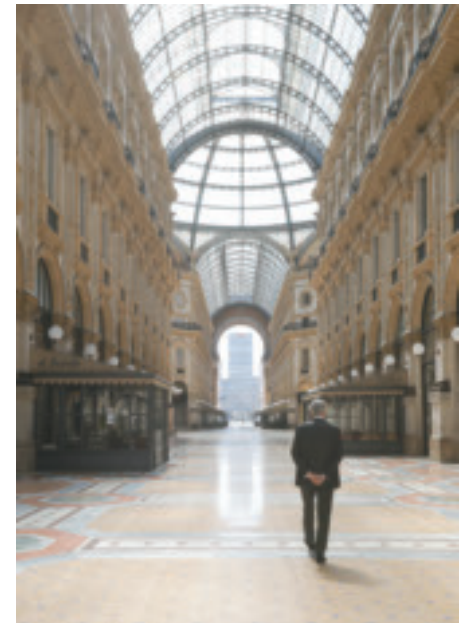
**Bocelli:** My religious beliefs are the main reason that encouraged me to sing. The Christian celebration of Easter, with its message of love and redemption, seemed to me to be a perfect time to stop and reflect on what we are experiencing and on the opportunity we have to start again in a different way, by learning anew and listening to our conscience and especially to the heavens.

I am extremely distressed, as is everyone, when faced with the many tragedies that are occurring, when faced with the suffering, even more so when it involves the most vulnerable. Yet, as a man of faith, I also think that the mind of mankind is too small to understand God's logic. And it is to that logic that I entrust myself, faithfully, as though held in the arms of a parent.

*Finally, your Easter performance gave hope to many who are suffering throughout the world. Can you please provide us with a message to everyone who is trying to cope with the challenges presented during this critical time in our history?*

**Bocelli:** History teaches us that much worse hurdles have been overcome quicker than expected. We will recover, of this I am sure. I think that the world has given us a warning with this virus. I hope that we will all learn the lesson, take it to heart, and seize this opportunity to change our attitude towards life, making ourselves anew with novel, yet ancient values—those that every one of us can find by opening the pages of the Gospel. ▲

*John Salamone is the founder and president of Salamone Associates, a company that helps non-profits with fundraising and Italian companies entering the U.S. market.*



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A close-up photograph of the Statue of Liberty's head and crown. She is wearing a white surgical-style face mask with blue and white stripes. The background is a soft, hazy sky. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

# ITALIAN AMERICAN PANDEMIC LEADERS

**When the Going Gets Tough...**

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck the United States, a spotlight was cast on several Italian American public servants who emerged as powerful and decisive leaders. Each brought a unique skill set and style to the challenges of the health crisis, giving aid and comfort in uncertain times.

These Italian American leaders are descendants of immigrants from all over the boot—Venice, Genoa, Molise, Abruzzo and, most of all, Campania and Sicily. Perhaps they were guided by their ancestors who over thousands of years lived through plagues, hardships and wars, bravely facing their struggles with strength and resilience. Most certainly, their wise and compassionate leadership will be long remembered.

*By Susan Van Allen*



Courtesy of governorandrewcuomo on flickr

## Andrew Cuomo

*Governor of New York*

As New York became the epicenter of the pandemic in the United States, Gov. Andrew Cuomo's daily press conferences became international must-see TV. Cuomo's straightforward delivery of the facts, along with sincere empathy, gave viewers the feeling that they were being led through this strange and frightening time by a wise big brother. In PowerPoint presentations, he often included inspirational quotes from Lincoln, Churchill and, most poignantly, his late father, Mario Cuomo, who also was once a beloved governor of New York. Clearly, Mario's fervor for public service and gift of charismatic communication live on in Andrew.

Cuomo's leadership style from the start was based on his belief that if he gave New Yorkers the facts, they would act intelligently and do what had to be done to mitigate the spread of the virus. Still, he was amazed that his PAUSE directive was so well followed, and continually praised New Yorkers for changing their behavior to diminish the number of virus cases in the state.

Simultaneously, he put into motion major actions to protect New Yorkers from the virus and support them through the many hardships that came with New York PAUSE. Among his boldest early moves were calling on FEMA to transform the Javitz Convention Center into a 2,500-bed hospital facility and closing down Manhattan's subways for four hours every night so they could be properly disinfected.

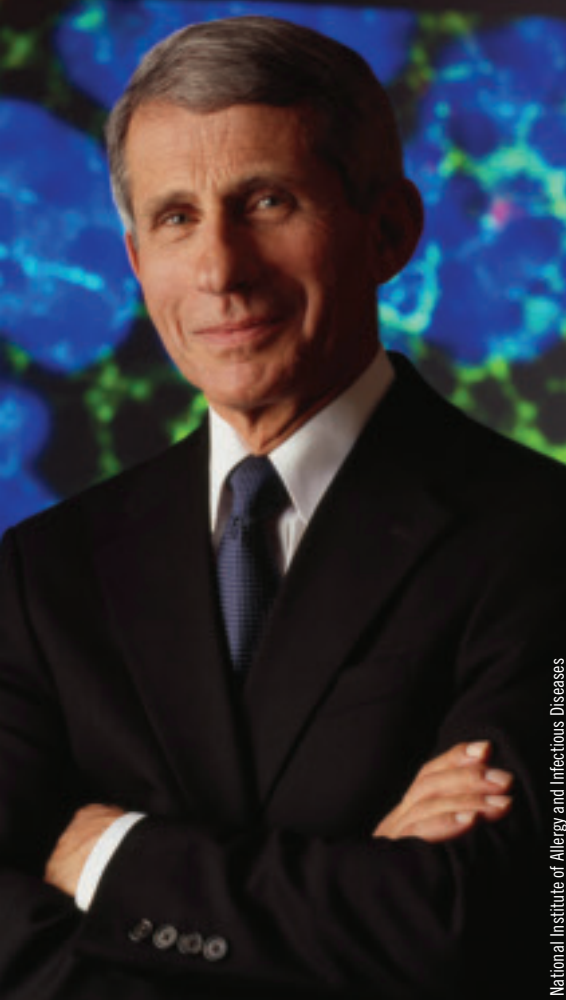
He also spearheaded a coalition of neighboring gover-

nors to share needed hospital equipment and coordinate reopening plans. Before the New York PAUSE end-date arrived, his team created a data-based plan for reopening, with clear, strict guidelines, that gave communities the assurance they needed to feel safe entering the new phase.

As a grandson of immigrants from Salerno and Sicily, *la famiglia* and Italian tradition held a strong place in Cuomo's personal experience of the pandemic. Over months of press conferences, viewers heard Cuomo fondly remember his hard-working grandparents and their grocery store in Queens, as he passionately fought for federal benefits for essential workers. He often spoke of how he worried about his 87-year-old mother, and even drafted an executive order, named "Matilda's Law" in her honor, that set protocols to protect vulnerable populations, including the elderly.

On the lighter side was entertaining sparring with his brother, Chris, during his guest appearances on CNN's Cuomo Primetime. The brothers' banter and obvious affection for each other brought some light to the dark times, charming viewers who responded with hashtags #cuomocrush and #cuomosexual.

Most enjoyable was Cuomo's honest talk of experiencing #stayhome with his three daughters, all in their early twenties, in the Albany Governor's mansion. He candidly spoke about cabin fever and household tensions. At times, when Sunday came, he'd give advice to "find some joy," which to Cuomo meant a Sunday dinner with spaghetti and meatballs, just as he'd enjoyed as a kid at his grandparents' house in Queens. ▶



National Institute of Allergies and Infectious Diseases

### **Dr. Anthony Fauci**

*Director of the National Institute of Allergies and Infectious Diseases*

Dr. Anthony Fauci's sharp and concise explanations of the complexities of COVID-19 and his methodical guidance through the pandemic threw Americans a life vest during periods of great uncertainty.

His popularity grew from his appearances at Coronavirus Task Force press conferences and in TV interviews, inspiring Fauci Fan Clubs, a Bobblehead doll, and even an impersonation on Saturday Night Live by actor Brad Pitt. Americans were attracted to Fauci's style—a mix of his signature stylish skinny ties, hoarse voice tinged with Brooklyn accent, and a solid, intelligent delivery. The latter he learned in high school following the philosophy of his Jesuit teachers: Precision of thought, economy of expression.

This style has served Fauci well throughout his long career. Since 1984, he has served as director of the National Institute of Allergies and Infectious

Diseases, deftly advising six presidents. He first made waves there in the 1980s when he boldly delved into researching HIV, rocking the establishment by inviting AIDS activists to join his research team. Working with men who actually had the disease led to developing a new system of clinical drug trials and, ultimately, the discovery of therapeutics that saved millions of lives.

Now, at 79 years old, he is regarded as the nation's foremost authority on infectious diseases, having worked for decades at the Institute during outbreaks of SARS, the 2009 swine pandemic, MERS, Ebola, and currently the novel coronavirus.

Fauci's medical calling came early on. The grandson of immigrants from Sciacca, in Sicily, and Naples, he grew up surrounded by Italian Americans in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, where his father was a pharmacist whom everyone called "Doc."

"Tony," as his colleagues call him, excelled in elementary school, and was accepted into Manhattan's prestigious Regis High School. There, he became intrigued with the humanities (Latin, Greek, Ancient History) and also the sciences. He saw medicine as a way for him to combine his two passions. In his words, "It was a way to be with people all the time, but in a scientific way."

It's Fauci's human touch that is most endearing. From the outset, he appeared as everyone's dream of a family doctor. He calmly spoke of a plan to deal with a COVID-19 outbreak that would begin with testing, then move on to developing therapeutics, and eventually developing a vaccine.

He simply explained how the virus could be spread, promoted a new regimen of hand washing, supported stay-at-home policies, and, as more was discovered about the virus transmission, advised wearing masks. When reopening began, Fauci offered precise guidelines.

He has often been asked: "When will it be over?" Fauci's, memorable response that may likely be quoted in history books, was: "You don't make the timeline, the virus makes the timeline."



Official photo of U.S. Rep. Nancy Pelosi

### **U.S. Rep. Nancy Pelosi**

*Speaker of the House of Representatives*

As Speaker of the House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi took the reins to coordinate swift creation and passage of bold legislation that supported Americans when the pandemic struck. Beginning with the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES), Pelosi was instrumental in shepherding bills that gave trillions of dollars to fund testing, aid small businesses, workers, immigrants and schools.

Even before the crisis began, Pelosi took compassionate action when the first U.S. COVID-19 cases were reported and Chinatown, in her home base of San Francisco, experienced a major drop in tourism. As a California Representative, she toured the press through the neighborhood, had a Dim Sum lunch, and made fortune cookies at a bakery. Her goal was to show confidence, not fear, in terms of the virus.

Pelosi's dedication to public service is firmly rooted in her Italian American background. She was named after her mother, Annunziata,



who was born in Campobasso, Molise. On her father's side, her grandparents immigrated from Genoa, Venice and Abruzzo. Her childhood in the tight-knit community of Baltimore's Little Italy, where her father was the city's mayor, gave her first-hand experience of grassroots organizing and the importance of helping those in need.

As the only daughter and the youngest of seven children, by age 11, Pelosi was put in charge of answering the household phone, and helping callers by directing them to welfare offices, job services and city hospitals.

Along with being Italian American, Pelosi was also raised devoutly Roman Catholic, and fluidly brings her faith into speeches and press conferences. She often advocates prayer and, at congressional meetings, she more than once quoted the words of Pope Francis regarding the pandemic: "May we enlighten those responsible for the common good so that they may know how to care for those entrusted to their responsibility."

An inspirational figure, proud mother of five, and nonna of nine, Pelosi presents a Glamorous Grannie image, with attention-getting scarves that transform to masks during her public appearances. When asked where she, at age 80, gets her energy, she responds: "Well, I'm Italian. We have great stamina."

## Eugene Scalia

*U.S. Secretary of Labor*

When Eugene Scalia was confirmed to take on the position of Secretary of Labor in September 2019, it was unfathomable that he would be leading his department through the wild swing that came with the COVID-19 crisis, taking unemployment from a 50-year low of 3.5 percent in February to a historical high of 14.7 percent in April. In addition, sudden major workplace safety concerns emerged, with regulations and equipment needed quickly to protect workers in businesses that remained open during the country's pause.

Scalia led with great confidence, reassuring Americans in press appearances that the economy would bounce back to its robust pre-pandemic numbers. His department rallied to work with the states, putting in place new systems to process record numbers of unemployment claims, guiding employers through the Families First Coronavirus Response Act that offered workers paid leave, and helping small businesses with loans to pay employees during the downtime so they could stay afloat. He also partnered with OSHA to make sure new health regulations in workplaces were being followed, and to develop guidelines for reopening.

A relative newcomer to the Trump Administration, Scalia is at first recognized as the son of the larger-than-life Justice Antonin Scalia, who served on the Supreme Court for almost 30 years, until his death in 2016. Antonin Scalia, the son of an immigrant from Scommatino, Sicily, was the first Italian American on the Supreme Court, and his barrier-breaking success was inspirational to many.

Eugene Scalia is carrying on his father's successful tradition as he becomes an integral part of President Trump's "Opening Up America" plan. The president added Scalia to the Coronavirus Task Force and included him on a trip to Arizona in early May to Honeywell's mask factory, sending a hopeful sign to the country that reopening was beginning and that efforts were being made to bring manufacturing back to the United States.

Scalia continues to lead with the vision of The American Dream held by his ancestors, fueled by his belief that the best thing that can be done for workers is to have a growing economy. ▲

*Susan Van Allen is the author of 100 Places in Italy Every Woman Should Go. She also designs and hosts the small group tours Golden Weeks in Italy: For Women Only.*



# Communiqués FROM THE Trenches

## Heroes ON THE Pandemic Front IN America AND Italy

Aren't we weary of hearing the words "uncertain times" and "the new normal"? How about "unprecedented" and "uncharted"?

But what never gets old in these uncertain times (oh, sorry) are the stories of self-sacrifice, courage, innovation and human kindness, tales of truth and compassion in dire times that require truth and compassion, positive episodes that have risen to the surface of all the bad news, clichés and terrible statistics that daily have so dominated our lives over the past four months.

While it's uplifting to read about the 102-year-old Italian woman who made a miraculous recovery from COVID-19 in a Genoa hospital, or that Donuts Delite in Rochester, N.Y., can hardly keep up with demand for its doughnuts featuring the likeness of renowned immunologist Dr. Anthony Fauci, or that Brooklyn landlord Mario Salerno cancelled hundreds of thousands of dollars in April payments for some 200-300 renters at 18 apartment buildings so they wouldn't stress out, what often is missed are the stories of ordinary people on the front lines, in the trenches, battling against the pandemic.

So, here a few of those stories of Italian American and Italian heroes fighting the good fight, often at great risk to themselves, simply because it's their job and it's the right thing to do. And because they care.

— Don Oldenburg

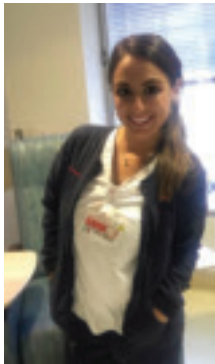






Lisa Chichelo

### Lisa Chichelo—Nurse



Nurse Lisa Chichelo feels her Nana Rosemarie’s support all through challenging days of work at New York Presbyterian Hospital in Manhattan. “I wear my Nana’s Nursing School ring on a gold chain, she’s always there,” Chichelo says.

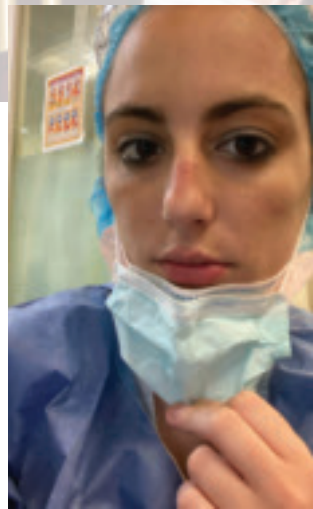
Originally from West Long Branch, N.J., Chichelo grew up with strong Italian American traditions, inspired by ancestors from Basilicata and Campania. “We had the big Sunday afternoon dinners, and all that special food on the holidays—fish and *zeppole* on Christmas Eve.”

It wasn’t easy for Chichelo to adjust her demonstrative Italian American

style while giving chemo according to COVID19 protocol. “I’m used to holding patients’ hands, smiling, comforting them,” she says. “With all that PPE, and social distancing precautions, it’s stressful on all sides, though we’re glad to know it’s working and we aren’t spreading the virus.

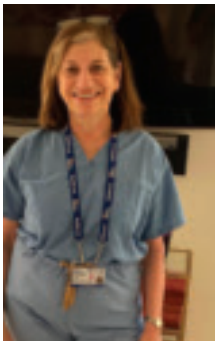
“To help each other, our team started a ritual of gathering in a circle and praying together, and it’s great to have so much outside support—former patients send us meals, and the evening applause on the city streets really lifts our spirits.”

— Susan Van Allen



Lisa Chichelo

### Dr. Judith Salerno



When Dr. Judith Salerno, president of the New York Academy of Medicine, heard Governor Andrew Cuomo’s call for extra hospital help, she didn’t hesitate to come out of clinical practice retirement at age 68 and volunteer to work full-time shifts in the Intensive Care Unit at New York City’s Bellevue Hospital, one of the oldest and largest (by bed count) public hospitals in the United States.

Salerno grew up in Newark, N.J. Her grandparents were immigrants from Enna (Sicily) and Treviso, a village in Campania’s province of Avellino.

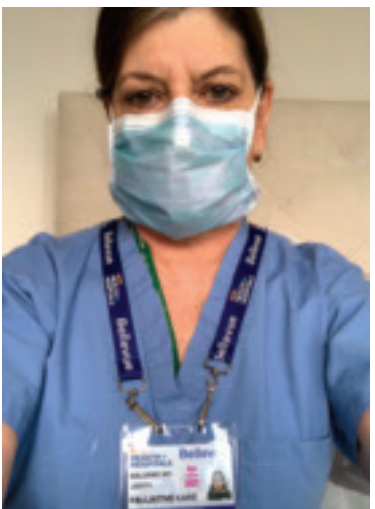
“We lived in a six-family house, and five of those families were Salernos,” she says. “In the middle of the city, we

had a fig tree in the backyard and wine was made in the basement. We all helped each other out, and my parents were very active with the neighborhood and the church, so early on I learned the strength of community.”

Salerno says her decision to become a doctor and inspiration to do the public health work she has done comes from the example her family gave her—that “it’s essential to use our individual skills to help everyone around us.”

In this pandemic, I see we are all heroes,” she says, “if each of us is doing whatever we can do.” ➤

— Susan Van Allen



Judith Salerno

Dr. Judith Salerno





## Raffaele Angilella, Emergency Room Nurse in Milan, Italy

For Raffaele Angilella, being a nurse in the emergency department at a hospital in Milan during the coronavirus pandemic has meant more than tending to patients' immediate health needs. He and his coworkers have become replacements for family members.

"It's not easy helping so many sick people with the physical suffering but also the psychological suffering from being detached from their loved ones," he says. "I've spent days and nights in the emergency room where there were large flows of patients waiting for urgent care. We've tried to reduce the distance between family members with the help of technology (tablet, smartphone) to show them each other, greet each other, phoning relatives daily, even if it's just for a few minutes to update them on their health.

"We offer care and bring them words of comfort, instill courage, offer psychological support and sometimes assist (patients) spiritually as far as we're permitted," he says.

Angilella has been a nurse for 14 years, a job that he said he's always dreamed of having. He likens it more as a vocation than a profession. He works in the ER and Intensive Care units. He said that while he and his colleagues were watching the pandemic unfold in China, they feared that it was a possibility but not that likely that it would reach them in Italy. So, no one was really ready to live in what he calls "purgatory,"

referring to the always busy ER.

When Angilella arrives for work, he goes through a daily routine, first to his locker where he leaves all things from the "outside world" as he calls it, puts on his uniform, then the surgical masks, a headset, gloves, a visor, protective glasses, a disposable coat and shoe covers.

"A day's work in the ER is always a day full of adrenaline and sometimes fear," he says. "Sometimes they're the same and other times completely different."

When he leaves, he goes back to that outside world where his life has also been upended by the pandemic. As a precaution, his wife and their twin four-year-old girls and six-month-old daughter went to Trieste to stay with her parents. "As you can imagine, this was a very difficult and painful decision," says Angilella, who hasn't seen them in almost two months. As long as he's treating patients with Covid-19, he knows they have to stay away.

"Certainly the fear of getting sick, the sense of helplessness in the face of this aggressive virus and the exhaustion and frustration at times have consumed me," he says, "but I don't give up because ours is not a 'simple' profession...it must be a vocation that we follow every day."

He acknowledges the nightly cheering from balconies by residents for the doctors and nurses and all the other medical workers, but he discounts the "hero"

when referring to himself and the hospital teams that have been on the frontlines since the pandemic hit Italy. "We don't have superpowers or special virtues," Angilella says. "We are men and women in flesh and blood and so often we feel all of the suffering and the fatigue that our sick and their loved ones feel. We always try to do our job with competence, dedication, sensitivity and awareness."

And through it all, there have been some happy occasions. "I've had some great joyous moments when after having done the first diagnostic tests and administering the prescribed treatments, we begin to see our patients improve and recover from COVID-19," he says. "It was nice to see some of our patients return to thank us and to tell us they seemed to have received the gift of a second life."

As Italy and the United States plan to reopen businesses, Angilella has a message, even though cases are waning: "It is a new and very aggressive virus, not just for the weak and the elderly but for everyone. Only with measures to contain the contagion (hygiene, social distancing, etc.) is it possible to reduce the serious consequences of this new pandemic that is in Italy, other European countries, in China and now all over the world, is bringing us all to our knees by making us experience all of our fragility and the need to work together for the common goal: our health, our neighbors and our planet."

— Jan Angilella

## Firefighter Domenico Prisco

Growing up in Belleville, N.J., Domenico Prisco was awestruck by firefighters—larger than life characters speeding by on giant noisy trucks.

"My parents, who came to America from Campania in the 1960s, weren't thrilled with my obsession," Prisco says laughing.

But they were proud of him establishing himself as an analyst for a global energy

company, and then, in 2012, making his childhood dream come true when he became a volunteer firefighter. Prisco serves as vice president of the Board of Fire Commissioners of Parsipanny—District 6.

"COVID-19 brought us together in unknown territory," he says. "We developed new strategies for our work, including ways to sanitize our equipment and the

trucks and to maintain social distancing, so everybody would be safe—meaning us firefighters, those we served, and the families we went back home to.

"I'm proud of how everybody pitched in and am grateful that right now we're all okay, and well prepared for whatever happens next."

— Susan Van Allen



Courtesy of Raffaele Angilella

Nurse Raffaele Angilella in the pandemic epicenter of Milan



Domenico Prisco

Domenico Prisco



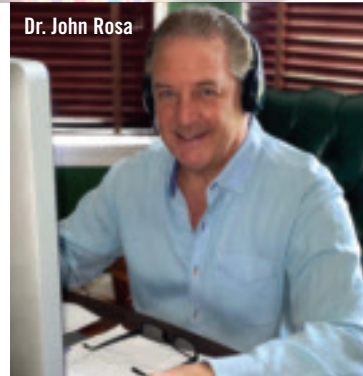
## Dr. John Rosa and Dr. Angelo Falcone

In March, Dr. John Rosa and Dr. Angelo Falcone, who have been thought leaders and experts in integrative medicine for more than 25 years, began hosting telephonic town hall meetings to quell fear and uncertainty concerning the COVID-19 pandemic. The meetings helped to educate the community as well as provide preventative measures to take to avoid infection.

"Fear is the emotion expressed when someone has no control over a perceived danger. Chronic fear leads to anxiety and releases the stress hormone cortisol which in turn weakens your immune system," said Dr. Rosa, a member of NIAF's Board of Directors and owner of Accessible Beltway Clinics, comprised of 17 integrative

medicine clinics in the Washington Metropolitan area seeing more than 60,000 patient visits per year, specializing in pain management and lifestyle health. Dr. Falcone is an emergency room physician and regional president of MEP Health, a large medical group serving more than 6 million patients in 22 states at 220 sites.

"During a pandemic related to a virus that has no known cure except for your own immune system, the last thing you want is to weaken it," says Dr. Rosa, whose mission with Dr. Falcone has been to ease the fear and let people know they have a lot of control over the protection of themselves and their loved ones.



Dr. John Rosa



Dr. Angelo Falcone

"The town halls have been giving people power over fear and anxiety and arming them with the tools they can use to control their situation," said Dr. Rosa. "The response has been overwhelming in expressed gratitude and we will continue to host more events in the near future." Visit [drjohnrosa.com](http://drjohnrosa.com).

— Natalie Wulderk

## Dr. Antonio Giordano



Dr. Antonio Giordano

Dr. Antonio Giordano, with his colleagues, reorganized the activities of his labs in Italy and America, slowing or halting most of their experiments to create a COVID-19 task force.

"Our brainstorming, days and nights, from one side of the ocean to the other, was very exciting and productive,"

says Dr. Giordano, who with his team identified through an observational study possible genetic biomarkers of susceptibility to COVID-19 which could have a high impact in future clinical strategies in assigning priorities in vaccination campaigns.

A NIAF Board Member, and president and

founder of the Sbarro Health Research Organization, Dr. Giordano is a geneticist and pathologist who is often interviewed by national and international journalists. "The correct dissemination of scientific results has been one of my primary goals," he says.

— Natalie Wulderk

## Dr. Mark Di Nubile



Dr. Mark Di Nubile

Courtesy of Dr. Mark Di Nubile

"The spread of COVID-19 underscores how fragile our balance with the environment actually is," says Dr. Mark Di Nubile, M.D., and Fellow of The Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA).

As Chief Medical Officer at BioAegis Therapeutics Inc., a privately held biotechnology company headquartered in Morristown, N.J., Dr. Di Nubile's focus is the therapeutic application of plasma gelsolin (pGSN), a crucial modulating component of our natural immune system which becomes depleted in

severe inflammatory conditions such as COVID-19 induced pneumonia.

The body's natural inflammatory response helps clear infections but can cause lung damage and death when over-stimulated in serious infections like COVID-19 (especially among older at-risk groups). Unlike anti-viral drugs that target a virus directly, plasma gelsolin works to fine-tune the body's natural immune reaction to the intruding virus and avert its potential lethal overreaction, safeguarding the body from turning against itself.

BioAegis is currently seeking FDA fast-track status for plasma gelsolin while concurrently initiating proof-of-concept trials in Spain and seeking additional partner organizations to further qualify its therapeutic potential in the worldwide fight against COVID-19.

"Who knows what the future holds?" he says. "Preparation must be preemptive, not reactive." ➤

— Carla Gambescia



A *contrada* distributing masks in Siena, Italy

## Siena Contrade

During the weeks of the Palio, Siena’s historic horse race that takes place twice a year in the Piazza del Campo, there is serious and historic competition among the *contrade*, or districts. The trash talk gets heated in the days leading up to the race.

But outside of those weeks, the barriers fall and members of each *contrada* often work together on activities that benefit the city. Within each of the 17 *contrade* is a group that focuses on assisting its members, whether it’s to help find a job, look for a home, or help a senior citizen living alone.

“When the lockdown happened, every commission looked for people’s needs, such as carrying home their groceries or going to the pharmacy for them, or calling on the elderly who are alone,” says

Stefano Marini, the vice-rettore for the Magistrato delle Contrade, a group that manages various activities for the *contrade*. “When [City Hall] had to distribute face masks to families, it naturally fell to the *contrade* to cover their territory.”

The *contrada* members, or *contradaioi*, distributed masks throughout the city, four per household. Every *contrada* was responsible for the distribution within its own neighborhood. They rang doorbells and left the masks in an envelope in the mail slot. Other volunteers and the civil-service workers distributed masks outside of Siena’s walls where there are no *contrada* boundaries. By the end, they handed out more than 50,000 face masks.

For now, the distribution is finished but the *contrade* members remain active,

working with La Caritas, a Catholic Voluntary Association, to bring food and other provisions to needy families. Some have donated equipment to the city’s hospital and others, and like Marini’s own Selva *contrada*, some are paying for pizzas for families in need. They are committed to helping people find work after the lockdown, Marini says.

—Jan Angilella

Courtesy of Magistrato delle Contrade



Stefano Marini, the vice-rettore for the Magistrato delle Contrade



Anthony Sciaratta

Former Lombardi’s partner John Brescia, overseeing the pizzeria’s pandemic pizza-donation response, with soldiers in New York City.

## Lombardi’s—America’s First Pizzeria

Since 1905, Lombardi’s has been serving American iconic coal-oven baked pizza on Spring Street in Manhattan’s Little Italy. So, Lombardi’s has fired its ovens through a lot of national crises—from the 1918 Spanish Flu Pandemic to both World Wars. And, now here’s the coronavirus pandemic.

John Brescia, the former partner of Lombardi’s, came out of retirement to supervise the famous pizzeria’s response to COVID-19 pandemic. Lombardi’s, co-owned by Michael Gianmarino and Gilbert Soto, began with feeding front-line workers across New York City, starting with New York University (NYU) Langone Medical Center and the

United States Naval Ship Comfort.

NYU Langone saved the life of Dominic Dionisio after he contracted COVID-19, a dear friend of Lombardi’s. In gratitude, Dionisio helped to donate pizzas to the Medical Center. “NYU Langone saved my friend’s life,” says Brescia. “I’ll be at the restaurant personally to supervise everything is done in a timely fashion and with all the correct safety precautions.”

Lombardi’s 50-pizza donation to the crew of the USNS Comfort, plus 35 pizzas sent to the Navy tent on 218<sup>th</sup> Street was inspired by a Navy Seal who is an avid patron of Lombardi’s.

Meanwhile, as America eases back into normalcy, Lombardi’s is making its great pizzas for carry-out and delivery. Visit: [www.firstpizza.com](http://www.firstpizza.com).

—Anthony Sciaratta



Anthony Sciaratta

Lombardi’s, America’s first pizzeria, in Little Italy in Manhattan



## Dr. Michael Iademarco, Center for Disease Control

"In this pandemic, there are so many front-line heroes saving lives every day and we at the Center for Disease Control (CDC) are proud to support their critical work and are dedicated to protecting the American people 24/7," says Dr. Michael Iademarco.

"Within CDC's Center for Surveillance, Epidemiology and Laboratory Services, we are working to support the response in a variety of ways. Examples include ensuring the public health community has timely access to the latest information CDC learns about the virus through the CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR), deploying CDC's elite team of disease detectives, the Epidemic Intelligence Service Officers, to assist in locations across the country, as well as in CDC's Emergency Operations Center, and working to help

CDC gather crucial data to help inform decision-making as we battle this threat as a nation."

Public Service defines the life of this Philadelphia native. "My public health work in service to our country has focused on tuberculosis, international health diplomacy, and surveillance," says Iademarco, a Rear Admiral and Assistant Surgeon General at the CDC in Atlanta. He is also director of the Center for Surveillance, Epidemiology and Laboratory Services. In his 35-year career, he says the four years as health attaché of the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi were the most rewarding.

"Growing up, all of the adults in my life added something positive to my thinking, character and skill," says Iademarco, whose father, Michael, and uncles Lou and Al, were World War II veterans.

With his aptitude for math and science in high school, teachers and family suggested he go into medicine. "I thought they were crazy and I think they thought I would be the neighborhood doctor—but that is not how it turned out," says the longtime NIAF member who received his medical degree from the University of Virginia School of Medicine.

With lineage from the small mountain village of Mirabello Sannitico in Molise, where he and his family have visited more than 25 times, Iademarco was named one of four ambassadors of Molise in the World in 2017. "The honor is certainly not mine, but a great one for Mirabello," he says. Visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/>

— Robert Fanelli Bartus Jr.



Courtesy of Michael Iademarco  
Dr. Michael Iademarco,  
Center for  
Disease Control



Peter Mingione

Physician Assistant Peter Mingione

## Peter Mingione--Physician's Assistant

Physician Assistant Peter Mingione took care of hundreds of patients who filled the emergency room of the North Shore University Hospital in Manhasset, on Long Island, N.Y.

"It happened so fast," he remembers. "One day in March, we got our first suspected COVID-19 case, and then, within weeks, everyone who came in had the virus. We look back on those peak weeks now and can see what an intense time it was. But while it was happening, we were just taking it one day at a time, dealing with so many people coming in with shortness of breath, getting them oxygen, adjusting each treatment according to the

individual. We were already a tightknit team in the emergency room, but this experience brought us even closer."

Mingione credits his Italian grandparents for giving him a strong work ethic. His grandfather immigrated from a village outside Palermo, and with much hard work opened up T&F Pork Store in Franklin Square on Long Island that's successful to this day, run by his cousin and uncle. "This work of helping people," Mingione says, "through food or medicine, runs in my blood." ➤

— Susan Van Allen



Courtesy of Ambrogio Iacono

Professor Ambrogio Iacono (center) with hospital staff

### Professor Ambrogio Iacono

Professor Ambrogio Iacono was hospitalized with pneumonia and COVID-19, but that was not going to keep him from teaching his students. He teaches integrated sciences at the Vincenzo Telese Hotel Professional Institute on the island of Ischia, just off shore from Naples, Italy.

He had already fought the flu in March and taught from his home for a few weeks. He recovered, but then symptoms returned at the end of the month. On April 7, he experienced chest pains and called his doctor for a COVID-19 test. It came back positive and he went to the hospital right away. He spent the first three days with a mask and then it was time to get back to teaching.

Iacono taught two hours a day from his hospital bed. He said by teaching from the hospital, he tried to emphasize the human side of the disease. When he could, he involved the doctors and nurses in his lessons. He also noted that despite everything, in the end, there was always interest in learning more. The classes were almost always full.

“Once a pupil held me for 20 minutes after the lesson, which would never happen in the classroom,” says Iacono, who was released from the hospital on May 4 and stayed in isolation for two weeks.

— Jan Angilella

### James Cavezza—Police Sergeant

James Cavezza, a Police Sergeant in Madison, N.J., says “a kind of miracle” happened when the pandemic struck.

“I saw those Executive Orders about no large gatherings and social distancing, and I couldn’t imagine how that was going to work. But the people did it. And if there was a problem, like a gathering in a park, it was just that they needed to hear more information, to be educated. So, education became our job, and it kept everybody safe.”

Cavezza and his co-workers added disinfecting to their tasks, so with that and PPE, thankfully none of them needed a single sick day. “It looks to me like this whole experience made all us workers and the community look out for each other more,” he says, “and, moving forward, I think we’ll all be more caring for each other.”

Cavezza’s calling to “Protect and Serve” runs deep. “I never wanted to be anything but a policeman, from when

I was in kindergarten,” he says, who was raised with Italian traditions by his grandparents and father who immigrated from Cicciano, a village outside Naples.

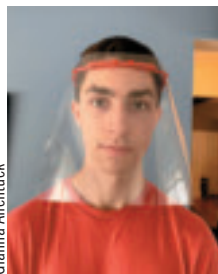
“There was always great food growing up,” he says, adding that when it’s finally safe for him to see his 80-year-old father, he looks forward to sitting down together and having his all-time favorite: macaroni and meatballs.

— Susan Van Allen



James Cavezza

### Sontino Allentuck, High School Entrepreneur



Gianna Allentuck

Sontino Allentuck

When Sontino Allentuck’s parents showed him a Forbes article about Italian engineers Christian Fracassi and Alessandro Romanioli and their startup company Isinnova, whose 3D-printing of emergency hospital supplies in Brescia got worldwide attention, the 17-year-old high-school junior in western Massachusetts took to his own 3D printer and began researching open-source material on ventilator valves and PPE.

Within days, fellow classmates from Longmeadow High School, in Longmeadow, Mass., including some fellow

robotics club members, joined him to create the Western Massachusetts 3D-Printing Collaborative (WMPC). After communicating with local healthcare specialists, volunteers focused on printing open-source face shield frames and ear protectors.

The Hampden County Sheriff’s Department helped assemble and distribute the open-source PPE to frontline heroes. Professionals and companies offered guidance and mentorship. Within days of launching, 60 volunteers from six states, including Alaska and Arkansas, joined in.

“Every piece that our collaborative produces will help somebody,” says Allentuck, who is collaborating with healthcare professionals and other makers to develop open-source personal protective equipment, including the Italian engineers who started the project. One caveat: These items have not been tested or approved for medical use and Western Mass 3D-Printer Collaborative makes no guarantees these masks will prevent transmission of COVID-19. A documentary is already in progress. Visit: [www.westernmass3d.org/](http://www.westernmass3d.org/) ▲

— Kirsten Keppel



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# Forza IN THE Pantry



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**TWO OF AMERICA'S LEADING ITALIAN CHEFS ON MAKING THE BEST OF HARD TIMES**



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## GETTING BY WITH MARY ANN ESPOSITO

By Mary Ann Esposito

When you grow up in a half Sicilian and half Neapolitan family, you learn the *l'arte di arrangiarsi*—or how to get by in any situation. That has never been more evident than now as the world comes to grips with a viral enemy.

My heart breaks for my many friends in Italy as well as here at home. But Italians have taught us how to cope because of what is in their DNA: resilience. From singing to their neighbors on open balconies, to banging pots and pans in unison at the appointed hour, to hanging encouraging signs from windows that offer words of comfort like *andrà tutto bene* (everything will be okay), Italians have *forza*.

Since we are all at home, one way all of us are coping is through cooking. Ingenuity in the kitchen has always been an innate Italian trait. My Neapolitan nonna could whip up a gorgeous looking frittata with a few eggs, dandelion greens that she often spotted and plucked at the side of the road, and some cheese. My Sicilian nonna could make what I called an “inside-out pizza” with nothing more than bread dough, tomatoes and bits of cheese and salami.

Right now, we all need to get by and be creative cooks without a fancy pantry to achieve this. Many supermarkets have experienced runs on popular items as panic buying becomes more prevalent. But you probably have the makings of many meals already on hand. Canned or dried beans are your friend and they are protein packed, so take advantage of using them in soups and salads. Tuna in olive oil

can result in a heavenly tuna and pasta dish flavored with just lemon juice and ground black pepper. Cornmeal can be made into polenta with just water or milk and then topped with a quick sauté of frozen mixed vegetables. Sprinkle on some cheese. Healthy grains like *farro* are great for making a “mock” risotto that I call *farrotto*; combine it with mushrooms or peas and nuts, such as pine nuts, or almonds or walnuts, for a nutritious meal. Lentils are close to the hearts of many Italians and work culinary magic in everything from soup to sides to salads.

Use those potatoes, a bit of flour, egg and salt to make gnocchi, and serve with a simple butter and cheese or tomato sauce.

Just open your cupboard, refrigerator and freezer and let the art of getting by capture your imagination. You may surprise yourself.



John Hession

Andy DeGiudice



Zuppa di Pane alla Nonna

### Grandma's Bread Soup *Zuppa di Pane alla Nonna*

This soup with tiny mosaic-size bread floating on top was a childhood favorite. It utilizes stale bread giving it new life.

*Serves 8 to 10*

#### Ingredients

2 large eggs  
1½ cups milk  
¼ cup extra virgin olive oil  
6 slices stale country bread, in ¼-inch cubes  
4 quarts chicken broth  
Grated Pecorino Romano cheese for sprinkling

#### Directions

- In a large bowl, beat the eggs with the milk.
- In a large sauté pan, warm the olive oil over medium heat.
- Toss the bread cubes in the egg-milk mixture, coating the pieces well. Drain the pieces with a slotted spoon and fry them in the olive oil in batches until browned on all sides.
- Transfer the pieces to a plate and set aside.
- Meanwhile, bring the broth to a boil and ladle it into soup bowls.
- Add some of the bread cubes to each bowl and sprinkle with grated Pecorino Romano cheese.

*Recipe from Ciao Italia (My Lifelong Food Adventures in Italy) >*



### Cannellini Bean Salad

*Serves 4*

#### Ingredients

- 2 cups canned cannellini beans, well rinsed
- ½ cup dried tomatoes in olive oil, diced
- 1 cup diced salami or *soppressata*
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoon red wine vinegar
- 1 clove garlic minced
- 1 shallot, minced
- 2 tablespoons minced mint
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Crusty bread slices

#### Directions

- In a bowl combine beans, tomatoes, salami or *soppressata*, and toss well. Set aside
- In a small bowl, whisk the oil, vinegar, garlic, shallot and mint together. Add to salad and toss well. Season with salt and pepper and toss again.
- Serve as is or over slices of crusty bread

*Recipe from Ciao Italia*  
(My Lifelong Food Adventures in Italy)

**Chef Mary Ann Esposito** is the creator and beloved host of the nationally televised PBS series *Ciao Italia*, the longest running cooking series in television history, celebrating its 31st season this year. A NIAF honoree and cherished *Ciao Italia* columnist for NIAF's Ambassador magazine, she is also the author of 13 cookbooks, and the recipient of Italy's prestigious Premio Artusi Award for her outstanding work in saving and spreading authentic Italian cuisine and recipes worldwide. Her latest cookbook *Ciao Italia (My Lifelong Food Adventures in Italy)* is available on Amazon.com and other bookstores. To preview the new season of *Ciao Italia* with Mary Ann Esposito, visit her website at [www.ciaoitalia.com](http://www.ciaoitalia.com) and check out her blog at [www.ciaoitalia.com/mary-anns-blog](http://www.ciaoitalia.com/mary-anns-blog).

### Nonna Galasso's Potato and Onion Frittata

I can conjure up a frittata with potatoes and onions with little effort because this was one dish that was a constant staple at home, especially for Saturday lunch or dinner, and it was the centerpiece of what to eat during the dank dark days of winter and during Lent. Nonna Galasso made the best in her cast iron pan but I prefer to use a non-stick pan that allows me to flip the frittata without fear of breaking it.

*Serves 6*

#### Ingredients

- 2 medium size potatoes
- 1 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 medium yellow onion, peeled and diced
- 5 large eggs
- 1 cup shredded fresh spinach
- ¼ cup minced parsley
- ½ cup grated Pecorino cheese
- Fine sea salt to taste
- Grinding black pepper

#### Directions

- Microwave or boil the potatoes until tender. Cool, peel and dice them.
- Heat olive oil over medium high heat in a large non-stick (12-inch) sauté pan.
- Stir in the onions and cook until they are soft. Add the potatoes and cook uncovered until the potatoes begin to brown slightly. Toss them now and then while they cook. If the pan seems dry, add more olive oil.
- In a separate bowl, beat the eggs with a fork until they are foamy.
- Add the spinach and parsley, cheese, salt and pepper.
- Pour the mixture evenly over the potato and onions and cook until the underside is browned and the frittata moves in one piece when the pan is shaken.
- With a wooden spoon or spatula, push any raw egg mixture on the surface to the edge of the pan and lift up the frittata to allow it to run underneath the frittata.
- When the frittata is firm on the bottom, place a dish larger than the diameter of the pan over the top and invert the frittata onto the dish.
- If the pan seems dry, add more oil then carefully push the frittata back into the pan to cook the other side. This should take about 3 minutes.
- Place a dish over the top of the pan again and invert it. Cut into wedges to serve either hot, room temperature or cold.

*Recipe from Ciao Italia Family Classics*



### Sicilian Pizza Bread Loaf

*Scaccia*

Scaccia is an unusual tasty rustic Sicilian pizza dough bread loaf that is quick to make from ready-made or homemade dough.

*Makes one*

#### Ingredients

- 1 pound ready-made pizza dough or home-made dough, at room temperature
- 1½ cups tomato sauce
- ½ pound provolone cheese, thinly sliced and slices cut in half

#### Directions

- Roll the dough out on a floured surface into roughly a 26-inch-by-18-inch rectangle.
- Spread half of the sauce over the middle ¾ of the dough with the long sides facing you.
- Lay half the cheese slices over the sauce.
- Fold the left and right sides over the sauce, overlapping the sides by 2 inches.
- Spread the remaining sauce over the right side of the dough and fold the left side over and pinch the ends closed.
- Fold the dough in half crosswise and place it in a greased and parchment paper lined 9-inch-by-5-inch bread pan.
- Cover with a towel and let rise for 30 minutes.
- Uncover and pierce the top of the dough with the tines of a fork.
- Bake in a pre-heated 450°F oven until the bread is dark brown.
- Invert the loaf onto a cooling rack, then turn it upright. Let cool for 5 minutes.
- Cut into crosswise thick slices and serve warm.

*Recipe from Ciao Italia*  
(My Lifelong Food Adventures in Italy)

## FRUGAL COOKING WITH LIDIA BASTIANICH

By Lidia Bastianich

Italians and Italian Americans have gotten through tough times before. They are known for their ingenuity, zest for life, commitment to duty, and love for family and neighbors. However, it is in the kitchen where Italians are exemplary—where their creativity excels and their frugality guides them, and where their culinary tips can guide and help us get through these particularly challenging times.



Pantry items such as pasta, polenta, rice and canned tomatoes are a natural part of the Italian and Italian American culture. Learning how to use them properly and cook with flexibility enables Italian home cooks to make nourishing, simple and economical dishes. A great pasta dish can be made from very few ingredients. A sauce of garlic and oil is one of the most basic. The home cook can learn to add a few seasonal vegetables, tomatoes and proteins for an endless myriad of delicious dishes.

Bread is a must on the Italian table, and we need to make sure to follow the Italian way—always respect it and never throw it away. Italians are particular about never throwing away any good food. My grandparents and parents raised me with this philosophy, and I recall thinking about it constantly when I arrived in the United States as a young immigrant. The respect for food has always remained deeply ingrained in me, and as I met more Italian American friends, they had similar values.

For example, there are so many uses for day-old bread in both sweet and savory recipes. It can be used in salads as croutons or in bread puddings. You can toss croutons with berries and a little honey for breakfast or a simple dessert.

Breadcrumbs are a truly essential ingredient in the Italian culinary culture. Italian or any kind of hearty white bread is best for making your own crumbs. Cut your leftover bread into cubes, spread them on a tray, and let them dry out either in an open

space in the kitchen or in an oven with the pilot light on for a day or two. Process those dry pieces in the food processor. Sift larger pieces that remain in the medium size sieve. Store bread crumbs in a tightly sealed container; they will keep for up to two weeks in the refrigerator and two months in the freezer.

I use breadcrumbs to coat foods before frying them or baking them. Toss them into pasta dishes as the “poor man’s cheese.” They are also good to thicken sauces and to add a crust to baked dishes.

Pasta, rice, and polenta are all staples of the Italian and Italian American kitchens, and during challenging times, they are a must.

Let’s start with pasta: It is the most extensive chapter in any respectable Italian cookbook, and in every region of Italy some kind of pasta is on the family table. You can make your own fresh pasta (if you can find flour in the supermarket), but dry pasta is what reigns in the southern part of Italy and what many Italian Americans are used to preparing.

Italians do not over-sauce their pasta. In fact, the verb used to describe the final dressing of the pasta with sauce is *condire*, which means “to season, to flavor.” The phrase *condire la pasta* reminds us that the sauce should be considered a condiment—an enhancement to the pasta. Also, do not forget that leftover pasta is a good thing—reheated the next day, it can be delicious. The texture changes—it is not as resilient as when it was first cooked—but it takes on a new dimension since it has absorbed some of

the sauce. To heat leftover pasta, you can add any remaining sauce, chicken stock or just plain water. Heat the pasta over low heat in a nonstick pan, stirring regularly. I love it when reheated pasta begins to form a crust and becomes a bit crunchy. Leftover pasta is also great for making a frittata.

Since many of you are limiting your trips to the grocery store and trying to be frugal, don’t forget to focus on your pantry items. Garlic and onions have a long shelf life and can be used to make simple and flavorful sauces.

Canned tomatoes are actually the best way to go when cooking Italian tomato sauces. The San Marzano imports, or the San Marzano or plum tomatoes grown here in the States, are the best canned varieties to buy. They are meaty and sweet, with fewer seeds. Crush them with your hands or in a vegetable mill, and then make the sauce. I have been making large batches of marinara sauce since the pandemic started and freezing it. I use the sauce on pasta, polenta and even certain rice dishes. When we do decide to have a little protein, I can add it to that as well.

Soups are a big part of the Italian and Italian American tradition and are a great way to extend the life of vegetables in your refrigerator. You can use peels and tips and other parts of the vegetable that you would otherwise discard; simply toss them in a pot with chicken wings, bones or necks to make a good chicken soup.

Most hearty soups cook better in large quantities where they have a chance to perk and the flavors have time to mellow. When you make a big batch of *pasta e fagioli*—or any soup—it is nice to have some left over for another day, or for much later, if you decide to freeze it. Just remember, don’t add pasta or rice to a soup until you are ready to serve it. Most soups taste better when they have rested and are reheated or have been frozen. When freezing soups or any food, be sure to write the date and the name of the food on the container.

The Italian and Italian philosophy of cooking will help us to get through these difficult times. When presented with limits and challenges, creativity tends to rule. Italians and Italian Americans are also known for serving wine at the table to enjoy with the family. In our culture, wine complements the dishes and completes the meal! ►



**Tomato Soup**  
*Pappa al Pomodoro*

This soup will bring Tuscany to your table, and it is delicious warm, or served at room temperature on a hot summer day. It is a great soup to make in the summer when the tomatoes are meaty and ripe, but it is also excellent with canned tomatoes, and can be made at any time of the year. And what a great feeling it is to use the stale bread—wasting nothing.

*Makes about 2 quarts, serving 8*

**Ingredients**

- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for the finished zuppa
- ½ cup finely diced yellow onion
- 6 cloves garlic, crushed and peeled
- 3 cans (28-ounce) whole San Marzano tomatoes
- 2 cups water
- 5 ½-inch slices stale Italian bread, crusts removed, cut into 1-inch cubes
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- 10 fresh basil leaves, washed
- Freshly grated Grana Padano or Parmigiana-Reggiano cheese

**Directions**

- Heat the olive oil over medium heat in a deep, heavy 4- to 5-quart pot. Add the onion and cook until wilted, about 3 minutes. Add the garlic, and cook until golden, about 6 minutes.

- Meanwhile, crush the tomatoes with your hands or a vegetable mill.
- Add the tomatoes and their juice to the pot, add the water, and bring all to a boil, stirring occasionally.
- Once the tomatoes have boiled for 10 minutes, add the bread to the pot and bring back to a boil.
- Season lightly with salt and pepper. Add the basil leaves and adjust the level of heat to maintain a simmer. Cook, uncovered, whisking occasionally to break up the pieces of bread, until the mixture is dense and silky, about 40 minutes.
- If desired, remove garlic cloves and basil leaves.
- Season the soup to taste with additional salt and pepper if needed. Serve in warm bowls, drizzled with extra-virgin olive oil and shreds of fresh basil leaves, and sprinkled with the grated cheese.

Photos on this page: *Lidia's Commonsense Italian Cooking* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2013); photography by Marcus Nilsson



**Tomato and Bread Salad**  
*Panzanella*

Today, every chef has his or her own rendition of *panzanella*. The idea is to use leftover bread to soak up the delicious juices of seasonal summer tomatoes. We finish our summer *panzanella* salad with a traditional Italian cheese, such as thin slices of Grana Padano, fresh slices of ricotta salata or mozzarella, or even a spoonful of burrata. If you use a variety of different heirloom tomatoes, the salad becomes a colorful sight to behold. It is perfect as an appetizer or as a side with grilled fish or meat.

*Serves 6*



**Ingredients**

- 8 ounces of 2-day-old country-style bread, crusts removed, cut into ½-inch cubes (about 8 cups)
- 2 pounds ripe tomatoes, preferably a mix of heirloom, cored, seeded, and cut into chunks (about 4 cups)
- 1 cup chopped red onion
- 2 Persian cucumbers, sliced
- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- ¼ cup red-wine vinegar
- Kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- ½ cup fresh basil leaves, coarsely shredded, a few whole leaves reserved
- One 3-ounce piece *ricotta salata*, or 1 small ball fresh mozzarella, or burrata (optional)

**Directions**

- Toss the bread, tomatoes, onion and cucumbers in a large bowl until well mixed.
- Drizzle the olive oil and vinegar over the salad and toss to mix thoroughly.
- Season with ½ teaspoon salt and several grinds of black pepper.
- Let sit until the dressing moistens the bread, about 15 to 30 minutes, depending on how dry the bread was. If the bread isn't soaked after 30 minutes, you can drizzle it with a few tablespoons of water and toss again.
- When ready to serve, sprinkle with the basil, and, if using, shave the *ricotta salata* over the salad with a vegetable peeler.
- Season again with salt and pepper, toss gently, and serve. A sprig of basil placed in the center of the bowl makes for a great presentation.

*Recipe from Felidia: Recipes from My Flagship Restaurant*



**Pasta Salad with Tomato, Mozzarella, and Green Beans**

*Insalata di Cavatappi, Mozzarella, Pomodori e Fagiolini*

This dish is great for buffets, picnics and large family gatherings. The recipe is easy to multiply, it keeps well, and it's economical. This can be dressed several hours ahead, but hold about half of the dressing to toss in at the last minute, since the pasta absorb much of the first batch.

*Serves 6 to 8*

**Ingredients**

- 1 teaspoon kosher salt, plus more for boiling and to taste
- 1 pound green beans, trimmed
- 1 pound *cavatappi* or elbows
- 2 pints cherry tomatoes, halved lengthwise
- 1 pound small mozzarella balls (bocconcini), halved if larger
- 1 cup loosely packed fresh basil leaves
- 1 cup loosely packed fresh Italian parsley leaves
- 2 ripe plum tomatoes, seeded and cut into chunks
- ½ cup toasted skinned almonds
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed and peeled
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil

*Lidia's Commonsense Italian Cooking (Alfred A. Knopf, 2013); photography by Marcus Nilsson*

**Directions**

- Bring a large pot of salted water to boil. Add the green beans, and cook until tender, about 6 to 7 minutes.
- Remove with a spider spoon to a bowl of ice water to stop the cooking. Drain, pat dry, and cut into thirds.
- Add the pasta to the same water and cook until al dente.
- Drain, rinse, and pat dry. Put in a large bowl, and add the green beans, cherry tomatoes and mozzarella.
- For the dressing, in a mini-food processor (or a bowl, if you're working by hand), combine the basil, parsley, plum tomatoes, almonds, garlic, vinegar and salt.
- Process until smooth. With the machine running, add the olive oil in a steady stream to make a creamy dressing.
- Pour the dressing over the pasta and toss well.
- Season with salt if necessary and serve.

*Recipe from Lidia's Celebrate Like an Italian*



**Cannellini and Pancetta Bruschetta**  
*Bruschetta con Cannellini e Pancetta*

The beans can be made a day ahead; just warm them up before serving. This recipe might give more beans than you need, but they will keep for several days and also freeze well. Stir them into soup or serve as a side dish next to a big grilled steak. In a pinch, canned cannellini can be used. Drain and sauté them with the oil and parsley for a few minutes, until warm.

*Makes 16*

**Ingredients**

- 1 pound dried cannellini beans, soaked overnight
- 1 large carrot, finely chopped
- 1 large stalk celery, finely chopped
- 2 fresh bay leaves
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ¼ cup chopped fresh Italian parsley
- 16 thin slices pancetta
- 16 slices country bread, about 3 inches long each, grilled or toasted

**Directions**

- Drain the soaked cannellini and put in a pot with water to cover by 2 inches.
- Add the carrot, celery, bay leaves and 2 tablespoons of the olive oil.
- Cover, bring to a simmer, and cook until the beans are tender, about 1 hour.
- Uncover the beans, and simmer to reduce the cooking liquid down so it just covers the beans, about 5 minutes.
- Remove from the heat, season with the salt, and let cool until just warm.
- Drain the beans and toss with the remaining 2 tablespoons olive oil and the parsley.

- Meanwhile, lay the pancetta in a nonstick skillet (you may have to do this in batches), and cook over medium heat until crisp. Drain on paper towels.
- To serve, mound some of the warm beans on the bread slices on a platter. Drizzle with a little more olive oil. Break the pancetta into shards and set them on top of the beans.

*Recipe from*

*Lidia's Celebrate Like an Italian ▲*

**Chef Lidia Bastianich** has been advancing Italian cooking for decades. After publishing 13 acclaimed cookbooks, two years ago she released a bright, heart-warming and reflective memoir of her journey to success, having come to America as an immigrant child following World War II.

In *My American Dream: A Life of Love, Family, and Food*, the Emmy award-winning television host of PBS's *Lidia's Kitchen*, restaurateur, cookbook author and food-empire entrepreneur tells a touching, intriguing story of survival, determination, resilience, family, love and, as you might expect, food.

The owner of Felidia, Becco, Del Posto, Lidia's Pittsburgh and Lidia's Kansas City, and other restaurants, and partner in the famed Eataly franchises, Lidia, as she is known by friends and fans worldwide, shined as one of NIAF's distinguished honorees.

*Lidia's Commonsense Italian Cooking (Alfred A. Knopf, 2013); photography by Marcus Nilsson*



Laura Thayer

# locked down in amalfi

By Laura Thayer

still  
life  
reflections  
from  
Italy's  
quarantine

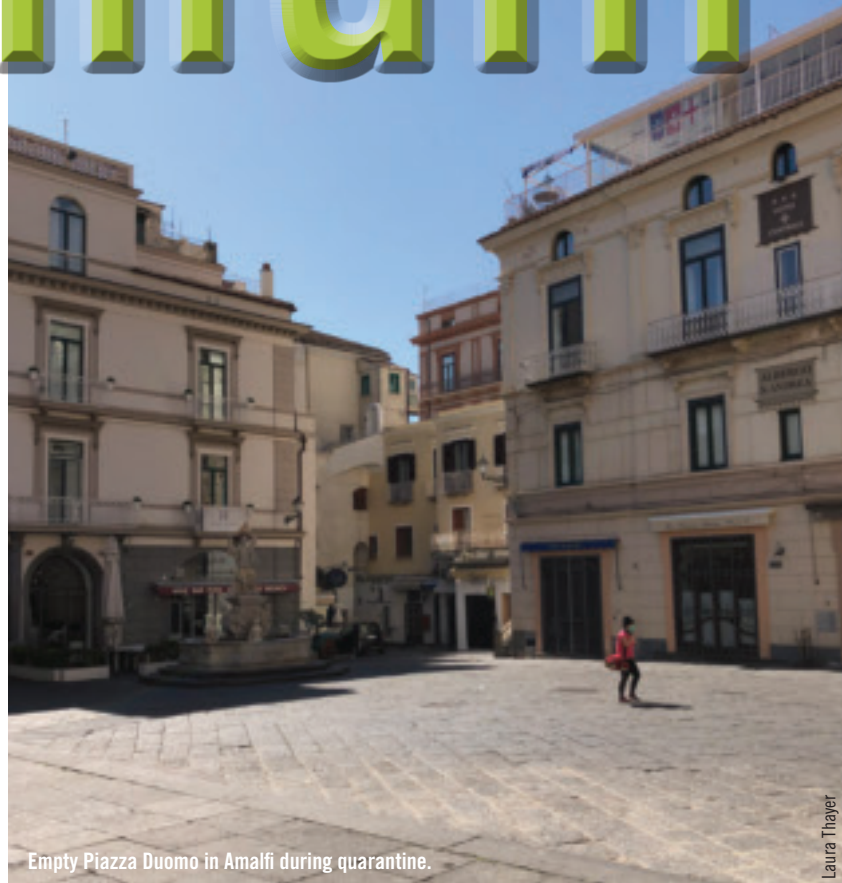
As the spread of the COVID-19 virus in northern Italy captured the attention of the world in February, I was in America visiting family. While I wasn't away from my home in Amalfi for long, it was the critical period when this novel coronavirus began to take its devastating toll on Italy. On March 9, just days before the World Health Organization defined COVID-19 as a pandemic, I flew back home to Amalfi.

The situation evolved rapidly and news changed daily. Certain areas of northern Italy had been quarantined and flights to Milan cancelled. Yet, since I was flying to Naples through Paris, I boarded the plane with sanitizing wipes, a few masks, and a small bottle of hand sanitizer tucked in my pocket. The overseas flight was relatively empty and easy, lending a sense of calm that wouldn't last long.

As the plane taxied to the gate in Paris, I turned on my phone. The first message to arrive was an emergency no-

tification from the comune (town hall) in Amalfi with the news that the entire country had been placed in quarantine overnight while I was flying. I rushed through passport control and security and was relieved to find my flight to Naples had not been cancelled. Unlike the international flight, this one was packed and tense. There was a palpable sense that the world was changing and we were somehow just on the cusp.

I arrived back in an already locked down Amalfi, the clattering of my suitcase wheels on the cobblestones over-



Empty Piazza Duomo in Amalfi during quarantine.

Laura Thayer



Michele Abbagnara

The colors of Italy's flag lit up in the arches over Amalfi's Marina Grande beach

whelmingly loud in the silent streets. Usually, the first thing I would do after returning to Amalfi would be to enjoy a walk along the harbor. It was a gorgeous spring day. Instead, I joined all of Italy in staying home. And we stayed home for nearly two months.

On the Amalfi Coast, we were incredibly fortunate to not experience the impact of COVID-19 like other parts of Italy. The region of Campania, like much of central and southern Italy, had a head start on the quarantine, which proved to be extremely beneficial. While Campania was hit in some places much more severely than others, the Amalfi Coast, Capri, and surrounding areas had limited cases. Many towns along the coastline had only one or two cases—or none at all. A small outbreak occurred in the town of Vietri sul Mare, with 13 cases and, unfortunately, one death, the only as of now in the Amalfi Coast area. Considering the horrific way

COVID-19 has impacted Italy, to say that we feel lucky here does not even begin to come close to how it feels.

Each day, we anxiously checked the local news. When a new case appeared, it was quickly controlled. During the critical periods of the quarantine, police and the military kept a close eye on the situation, including at times 24-hour patrolling of the entrance points to the Amalfi Coast. Thanks to the hard work of so many people, as well as efficient testing, this area was able to come through the most critical moments with limited impact.

### Quarantine on the Amalfi Coast

Life during the quarantine in Amalfi was like what so many now know or are still experiencing. We could go out for essential shopping or to the pharmacy, but unlike many European countries, we couldn't take walks or exercise outside. The news

reports we were hearing from America made us grateful that the shops were so well stocked. Even in a small town like Amalfi, there were no shortages of necessities. Standing in well-spaced lines outside in the street became the new norm as the town's tiny shops adapted to new safety measures.

The days came one after another—all the same. Like so many, we created a new normal that helped us feel like we could handle this unfamiliar reality. The sun was shining, birds singing, and the trees bursting into bloom. As time passed, the gravity of the situation would hit home more frequently. While the end was beginning to come into sight, the questions began. Just what will we find when we finally do go outside and look around?

Easter arrived and brought with it beautiful spring weather. These are the days when the Amalfi Coast normally kicks off its busy season. Locals would have been complaining ▶



Good Friday procession at the Cathedral of Amalfi

Michele Abbagnara

about the first traffic jam of the year on the Amalfi Coast Road. The beach or any sunny spot would have been full of people catching those first rays of spring sun. Instead, the streets were empty, and hotels, shops, and restaurants all closed. Police, and even drones, patrolled over the Easter holiday weekend to ensure that everyone stayed put.

Like many Italians, our Easter was very different this year. We have always spent Easter Sunday with my husband's family, which is usually quite the feast as both of his sisters are excellent cooks. This year his niece dropped off a homemade *pastiera*—one of the traditional Easter desserts—as we waved our thanks from our balcony high above. We made a scaled down for two version of the Easter lunch at home, choosing to make lasagna since it was something special we could do together. Lunch with just the two of us was quiet compared to the usual festive crowd, but keeping traditions even in a small way helped it feel like Easter.

Traditions are often what we turn to in hard times and these have been especially challenging

during quarantine. In Amalfi, the town's Easter celebrations and Good Friday procession were cancelled just as they were across the country. One of the largest events of the year, the dramatic procession takes place through the darkened streets of Amalfi lit only by thousands of candle lights. Hundreds of hooded figures carrying torches accompany a statue of Christ after being taken down from the cross. Haunting music transfixes Amalfi.

This year the procession was a sobering experience, but in a different way. We watched a live stream from home as members of P.A. Millenium Amalfi, the local volunteer group, dressed in their bright orange uniforms, carried the statue of Christ out from the cathedral's main portal for a prayer, only to turn around and return inside. Knowing the deep feeling this procession evokes, it was heart wrenching to watch—an intense mix of respect for the volunteers and sadness for the loss of Easter traditions for the town's faithful.

This poignant moment of the procession was captured beautifully by local photographer Michele Abba-

gnara, whose images have become a symbol of hope. Likewise, his photograph of the colors of the Italian flag shining brightly at night in Amalfi has reminded us to stay strong.



Piazza Duomo in Amalfi with the Cathedral of St. Andrew during Italy's lockdown.

Laura Thayer





The shopper-less Via Pietro Capuano stretch of Amalfi's main retail street during the early days of quarantine.



Pasticceria Pansa in Amalfi's Piazza Duomo on the first night they reopened.

## Re-opening: Phase Two Begins

On May 4, Italy moved into Phase 2 and the country took the first steps to reopen. We can now go out for exercise and visit family. Nearly two months after my return to Italy, that first walk along the sea in Amalfi felt like a dream. As life begins to resume some form of normalcy, new aspects to daily life emerge. For now, wearing masks is mandatory while out and social distancing is required at all times.

On my latest shopping trip, as I stood in line outside the grocery market, I realized the atmosphere felt less heavy now. The fresh air had done us all good. Yet, something was missing. The smiles. I adjusted my mask and looked around as the obvious hit me. I couldn't smile at anyone or see anyone else smile. When it was my turn to enter, I tried to smile at the employees, at least a small gesture to express my thanks for their dedicated work. Perhaps it showed with my eyes, but they paused and gave a kind greeting in return. It was a moment of that typical Amalfi warmth that no masks can hide.

While the future remains uncertain, moments of familiarity have begun returning to Amalfi thanks to local businesses reopening, often pivoting dramatically to adapt to the new safety regulations and restrictions. Pasticceria Pansa, founded in 1830 and still family run, brought a much-needed

dose of life, and of course sweetness, back to the Amalfi's central Piazza Duomo. Among the first to reopen, it offered a new home-delivery service and is selling its pastries and coffee directly from a gelato cart turned into a makeshift bar at the entrance. On the night it reopened, an Italian flag and Amalfi's flag with its blue background and eight-pointed white star graced the front window. By no means is it an easy task for Pasticceria Pansa—or any of the businesses here—to find a way to move forward. Yet, their willingness to forge ahead and adapt captures the essential spirit of this time in Amalfi.

As we begin to take these next tentative steps forward in Italy, we hope we can be a source of inspiration for the world in how a nation successfully recovers from COVID-19, just as our songs from the balconies rang through the world spreading unity and joy in the darkest moments.

Together, we are powerful. In Amalfi, we have worked together to move through this challenging time. First by staying home and next by supporting one another. I believe with the same dedication we can find the way forward to welcome travelers back to the beauty of the Amalfi Coast soon. Amalfi is waiting. The Italian expression *andrà tutto bene* (all will be well) has become a mantra for this time. As long as we stick together, all will be well once again. ▲

*Laura Thayer is a writer and photographer who lives in Amalfi, Italy. Author of Moon Amalfi Coast: With Capri, Naples & Pompeii (Moon Travel Guides), she loves a good story and the interplay of words and images. Visit her website [www.ciaoamalfi.com](http://www.ciaoamalfi.com) for more from the Amalfi Coast.*



The author during her first walk in Amalfi after the quarantine eased.



Jan Angiella

# quiet in **cremona**

italy's hard hit city of violins

By Jan Angiella

Normally when you walk through the streets of Cremona,  
a city in the Lombardy region of Italy,  
you hear violins playing everywhere.

This is the home of Andrea Amati, Giuseppe Guarneri and Antonio Stradivari, three of Italy's most renowned violin makers. Their wares, some of the most prestigious instruments in the world, are on display in the city's Museo del Violino, or Violin Museum. I visited Cremona and the museum with my Milanese cousins last fall when people were still meeting in the city's bars for an espresso or sitting at a table facing the Duomo, with its 13th-century façade, and the Torrazzo, the 370-foot-tall bell tower next to it.

The air was filled with the sounds of violin strings, mostly coming from myriad violin shops. That was the ambiance: tourists like us strolling around the main piazza, going in the Duomo, walking into a *pasticcERIA* and buying a chunk of the famous *torrone* candy, in the shape of a violin no less. We were treated to a mini concert when we walked into an instrument shop and a customer was trying a violin. I scanned all the other violins for sale. I have no expertise nor have I ever been in the market for a violin. But I thought they were so elegant. It was like looking at art.



Jan Angliella

Cremona violin detail

I can't imagine what Cremona has been like since early March, when the country went into a national lockdown to control the spread of COVID-19. Lombardy was Italy's hardest hit region. As of June 10, Lombardy had reported 90,680 COVID-19 cases and 16,349 deaths; and the Cremona province had 6,520 cases.

The silence must be deafening.

"There are few people in the street and you can hear their steps distinctly in the absence of other sounds," said Paolo Bodini, the deputy director of the Violin Museum. "From time

to time, the church bells ring from the different churches in the town center, adding a sense of serenity in the air."

Like in other cities throughout the country, residents will applaud at their windows for the medical personnel on the front lines fighting the virus. Sometimes there are just moments of silence. "Other times you can hear music or singing," Bodini said. "Just yesterday, you could hear the beautiful sound of a violin playing from a small piazza near my house. They were playing Bach, Vivaldi, Brahms and others. It was a real treat." >



Cremona's Torrazzo, Italy's tallest bell tower, lit in the tri-color

Director Paolo Bodini of The Violin Museum in Cremona



Courtesy of Paolo Bodini and The Violin Museum



Empty street in Cremona

As with the rest of Italy, only grocery stores and pharmacies are open in Cremona. The Wednesday and Saturday morning market has been absent. "Everyone misses it as do I," Bodini said. "It still amazes me when I wake up in the morning and I don't hear the usual sounds of the vans and trucks that unload the goods."

During Holy Week and on Easter Sunday, the museum produced two videos of violinists that were streamed online. One played on top of the Torrazzo and the other played in the museum's auditorium. Bodini said it was important to do that, "to make it known that the Violin Museum is active" and then to entice people to come back when the lockdown ends. "Music is important for people's moods, especially if they're shut in the house."

The local TV channel has also been broadcasting past concerts held in the auditorium, the Ponchielli opera house, and in various churches around the city.

My interest in Cremona stemmed from an article I read about a project to digitally save every possible tone combination on a Stradivari violin. I was fascinated. Streets were closed off around the museum so the rumble of traffic didn't disturb the process. My Milanese cousins had not been to



The Cathedral and the Baptistery of Cremona

Cremona either, so it was a new experience for all of us. “The city is young and full of music,” my cousin Elena said afterward.

Cremona may not be a big tourist draw like other well-known cities in Italy, but the musical tourism has been steadily increasing over the years, Bodini said. “The city is not a secret, but it’s not yet as known as other musical cities, such as Salzburg.”

Cremona hosts an international school of violin-making and an accompanying competition, with the winning instruments on permanent display in the museum. In the summer, a three-week International Music Academy and Festival (now postponed to 2021) draws almost 2,000 young musicians who play all over, in halls and on public squares. There are also 160 violin workshops in the city. “Visiting a violin shop has become a ‘must’ for curious tourists,” Bodini said.

He gave me a quick history lesson: Andrea Amati can be considered the true inventor of the violin, and of instruments like the viola and the cello. The methods he used to make the instruments, the technique and the knowledge were passed down in families, from generation to generation. When Antonio Stradivari (1644-1737) began his work, he had more than a century of tradition to call on. At one point, the three most famous houses—Amati, Stradivari and Guarneri—were side by side on the same block. The tradition continues to this day.

At the museum, the layout is



The Soul of Music sculpture at the Violin Museum of Cremona

perfect: you start with historical graphics and presentations about the history of the violin and how it spread across Europe and into northern Italy. A touch screen shows you all the different parts of a violin. Then you can see how a violin is made, step by step, with one area focused solely on the Cremonese makers. Some of the instruments on display are more than 300 years old. One room shows tools, drawings and molds from Stradivari’s workshop. His famous 1715 “Cremonese” violin was used in the Easter Sunday performance.

Then came the highlight of the visit: a 30-minute performance in the auditorium by a soloist playing one of those instruments. The 464-seat hall is an acoustically perfect, architectural marvel. Violinist Aurelia Macovei played several pieces on the 1727 Stradivari “Vesuvio” violin.

Bodini is also head of “Friends of Stradivari,” an enthusiast group



Inside a Cremona violin shop in better times

founded 10 years ago that started as a club for the owners of historical Cremonese instruments who lent them to the museum for display. Then it expanded to musicians, violin lovers, passionate fans and people who just wanted to support the museum.

“This has created a community, not just virtually, but of people who recognize Cremona and its museum as the center of the violin-making world, who come regularly for the special events and who support the museum with large and small donations,” Bodini said.

After the museum visit, we walked to the city center, to the piazza with the Duomo, which was lined with cafes, some kitschy souvenir stands (violin-shaped pencils anyone?) and pastry shops selling that famous torrone candy in the shape of violins.

I hope the city will be bustling again soon, the market back with its noisy vans and trucks, and the sounds of the violins on the streets and not just on a balcony at night. The museum is scheduled to re-open in early June.

But, for now, the violin makers continue to work in silence in their shops, many working alone, as usual. Others leave their collaborators at home to avoid infection, Bodini said. “The activity continues even if the commercial aspect is stopped. But everyone is confident that soon, a normal life will return.” ▲

# KISSING THE *Joy*



## ITALIAN RESILIENCE IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

By Carla Gambescia

*Although life is brutal and terrible one can always find  
a few wonderful moments of sensuality and sweetness.*

—FEDERICO FELLINI



The Pantheon in Rome

Carla Gambescia

In a world beset by the brutal scourge of a rogue strain of virus these last few months, the plight of Italy has been especially heartbreaking to witness and contemplate. Entire communities have been devastated and countless families have been riven by the swift and numbing loss, in record numbers, of their cherished elders and other loved ones. It seems almost too much to absorb.

So how, at such a cruel moment, could one even think of sensuality or sweetness, much less joy?

In recent years, I have devoted most of my productive time to the study of my ancestral homeland, her people and their culture. This led me first to produce a book of mini-essays based on unexpected fun facts that fascinated me, and then to develop a series of lectures through which I attempt to connect the dots and arrive at some deeper understanding. One of those lectures is titled “The Alchemy of Italy” and I believe its key insights bear directly on Italy’s prospects at this difficult time.

Let me state this upfront. My deep dive into Italian culture and history has given me more than mere hope: it gives me confidence that the country of my forebears will rebound from the present crisis, perhaps with a little help from her friends. (They are legion.) Italians have bounced back, repeatedly, in the past—and from far worse. They will do so again.

The Alchemy lecture begins by surveying Italy’s outsized influence on world civilization and culture across disciplines and millennia. Most countries would be proud to boast a single “golden age.” Unique among nations, Italy has produced three golden ages: those originating in classical Rome and Renaissance Florence, and a much more recent example—not yet widely recognized which I’ll delve into shortly. All of which raises an obvious question: why? Why has a rocky outcropping the size of Arizona proved to be such fertile ground for the cultivation of culture, the growth of civilization, and the flowering of human potential?



Roman column

Carla Gambesca



Sabrina Rubino

An *Andrà Tutto Bene* poster made during Italy's lockdown by a Sicilian school girl

So, here is my simple thesis. Italy's distinctive geography profoundly shaped the destiny of its early inhabitants; that destiny, in turn, helped to mold a distinctive and enduring Italian character—a hardwire that I've come to think of as "Italian cultural DNA." I believe that two particular strands of this cultural DNA have endowed Italians with an unrivalled ability to not just bear and overcome adversity but to repeatedly achieve preeminence on their own terms.

A long, mountainous peninsula, mainland Italy makes up for its modest allotment of arable soil with a generous coastline. More so than other peoples, Italians had to look outward for their basic survival. This meant not just fishing but also commercial and military ventures, activities that rewarded an ability to deal effectively with others, whether adversaries, imperial citizens, competitors or trading partners. What Italians lacked in natural resources they learned to make up for with their natural resourcefulness and wits. A critical element of that

resourcefulness is the characteristic Italian way of dealing with obstacles in the face of limited means or options—either through skillful improvisation, creative problem-solving, or simply pivoting. This talent comprises the first essential strand of Italian cultural DNA and it comes with its own home-grown term: the reflexive verb *arrangiarsi*, literally "arranging oneself" or, more colloquially, "making do."

The art of *arrangiarsi* has served Italians well over the course of history, not just in times of conflict or competition but also in times of privation or peril—whether posed by invaders or imposed by oppressors. During the first millennium, successive waves of barbarians forced Roman citizens on the northern Adriatic coast to flee for their lives to the marshy seabird habitats of the Venetian lagoon. From this malaria-infested refuge grew Italy's most powerful maritime state: a commercial juggernaut; a staunch defender of the faith; the birthplace of modern capitalism; a Xanadu

of wealth and luxury; and the longest-lasting republic in world history. It also fostered some amazing art. These people knew how to pivot.

Italy's swiftest and greatest-ever comeback may not be obvious to us, but it should be: it has happened within the recent past and right before our eyes. At the end of World War II, Italy had been leveled with massive destruction, abject poverty and humiliating defeat. Yet, in less than 20 years, the country achieved an image make-over and economic resurgence which was nothing short of miraculous: *il miracolo economico*. In the ensuing decades, to the present day, Italy has entered into what I consider its third golden age—not a golden age of "power and authority" as in classical Rome, but rather a post-modern golden age, one that celebrates the kinder glories of "beauty and pleasure." Put another way, Italy has once again attained a certain supremacy: not through the power of the state but through the power of a desired state of mind. ➤



Sculpture of Romulus and Remus at the Capitoline in Rome

Ancient bust of Roman philosopher at the Capitoline in Rome



Carla Gambescia

Carla Gambescia

Carla Gambescia



Sculpture at the Capitoline in Rome

Said in Italy

If that sounds like an overstatement, consider some independent data. U.S. News & World Report sponsors an annual “Best Countries” survey, with more than 20,000 respondents worldwide evaluating more than 70 nations. Italy leads all countries in the broad categories of “Cultural Influence” and “Heritage” while claiming the runner-up position for “Adventure.” Italy is the perennial first choice for the lifestyle qualities of “fashionable,” “trendy” and “has great food.” Additionally, Italy ranks near the top for the more personal qualities of “friendly,” “sexy” and “fun.”

Today’s Italy has achieved what Julius Caesar and Cosimo de’ Medici could never have imagined, much less pulled off: she has won the world’s heart.

How did this happen? Just two or three generations ago Italy was one of the Axis powers. Her face to the world was the pugnacious mug of Benito Mussolini. What changed? For starters, Il Duce was gone. But perhaps the better question is: what didn’t change? The answer is the Italian people. When world audiences came to see Italian neorealist films like Rossellini’s *Rome, Open City* (1945) and Vittorio De Sica’s *Bicycle Thieves* (1948), they also came to realize that most Italians were not the perpetrators but instead the victims of an evil, oppressive regime. These were ordinary people who often displayed extraordinary resilience and even heroism.

It only took a few more years for an altogether different set of films to convey an Italian lifestyle worthy of aspiration. Less than a decade after the last bombs dropped, Hollywood stars could be found on the big screen buzzing around the seven hills of Rome on a Vespa, savoring gelato on the Spanish Steps, and dancing in the moonlight beneath the Castel Sant’Angelo. Italy’s own cinematic stars shone just as bright: moviegoers beheld a cluster of dazzling actresses like Sophia Loren, Gina Lollobrigida and Claudia Cardinale, each in the gravitational pull of that ubiquitous leading man, Marcello Mastroianni. Decades before Italy eclipsed France in fashion and gastronomy, *la dolce vita* had begun to topple *joie de vivre*. More and more people the world over—especially Americans—concluded that Italians really knew best how to live. And, so, we finally come to the second essential strand of Italian cultural DNA: an embrace of *la dolce vita*.



Original poster of Vittorio De Sica’s *Bicycle Thieves* (1948)



We tend to associate *la dolce vita* (“the sweet life”) with an indulgent lifestyle or the pleasure principle, but that would miss its deeper meaning to Italians. The expression was popularized by Federico Fellini’s namesake 1960 film. But even a casual viewer would not mistake that film for a jet-set romp in the Eternal City; instead, it’s more of a slog (three hours), and often dark. Fellini’s reputed working statement for *La Dolce Vita*—the epigraph to this piece—captures the term’s fuller significance: “Although life is brutal and terrible one can always find a few wonderful moments of sensuality and sweetness.”

Throughout their history, Italians have leavened the often harsh realities of their lives with this dual sense of grateful attentiveness and playful distancing. The former is readily apparent in Italians’ love of sensory delight, especially through

art, music and food. The latter is manifest in the Italian language itself—for instance, in playful food names like *brutti ma buoni* (“ugly but good” cookies) and amusing idioms like *cane en chiesa* (“dog in a church” or an unwanted guest). It is also seen in Italy’s rich tradition of comedic performance, from the *commedia dell’Arte*, to *opera buffa*, to Sicilian puppet theater.

Perhaps this deeper sense of *la dolce vita* is just a sub-strand of *arrangiarsi*—“emotional” *arrangiarsi*.

In Italy’s recent dark hours, this life-affirming ethos has sparked glimmers of hope both within and outside her borders. We’ve all heard the reports or seen the videos: schoolchildren making *Andrà tutto bene* (“Everything will be fine”) rainbow-of-hope posters; Siennese serenading each other from their windows; Neapolitans playing folk music for neighbors

living above and below; Romans clinking wine glasses across alleyways using six-foot poles; locked-down singles in Verona falling in love from their balconies. Whenever “moments of sensuality and sweetness” seem in short supply, Italians can be counted on to discover or invent them. The rest of the world takes note...and takes heart.

Nearly 40 years after Fellini’s film appeared, this true spirit of *la dolce vita* re-emerged in Roberto Benigni’s poignant film *Life is Beautiful* (1997), the moving saga of love and hope in a time of brutality and terror. In his Oscar night acceptance speech, Benigni quoted a couplet from the poet William Blake. The unbreakable and resilient Italian spirit could find no better expression:

*He who kisses the joy as it flies  
Lives in eternity’s sunrise* ▲

Carla Gambescia is a writer, photographer and author of *La Dolce Vita University*. Visit her websites at [ladolcevita.com](http://ladolcevita.com) and [postcardsfromtheboot.com](http://postcardsfromtheboot.com).



America-Italy Society of Philadelphia

An *Andrà Tutto Bene* banner made by the America-Italy Society of Philadelphia



Poster from Roberto Benigni’s film *Life is Beautiful* (1997)



Carla Gambescia

The Lion of Venice, an ancient bronze-winged lion sculpture in the Piazza San Marco

# DANTE AND THE PANDEMIC

A Guide for Our “Dark Wood”

By Joseph Luzzi



Next year will mark the 700th anniversary of Dante’s death, and a once unthinkable question has become all too real: will we be able to gather physically to celebrate the legacy of the *Somma Poeta*, Supreme Poet? The images of deserted Italian piazzas, many of them filled with statues of Dante, are ghostly reminders of a quarantined world.

Some books seem to have their particular season. Spring makes me clamor for *The Great Gatsby*’s sparkling pages on the parties of West Egg and Jay Gatsby gazing across the sound at the green light at the end of Daisy Buchanan’s dock. Summer inspires the longing for a journey—not always completed—into some tome, a *War and Peace* or *Buddenbrooks*, their endless pages rhyming with the longer and less-structured days.

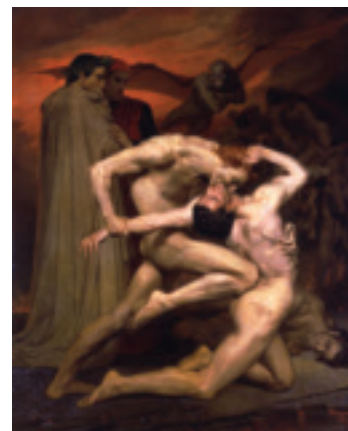
Statue of  
Dante Alighieri  
(1265-1321) in  
Verona, Italy,  
Alberto Masново /  
shutterstock



Unknown artist; Beatrice Guides Dante in Paradise, (14th century), Marciana Library in Venice [Wikimedia Commons]



Domenico di Michelino, *La commedia illumina Firenze* (1465), showing Dante holding *The Divine Comedy*, displayed at the Duomo of Florence [Wikimedia Commons]



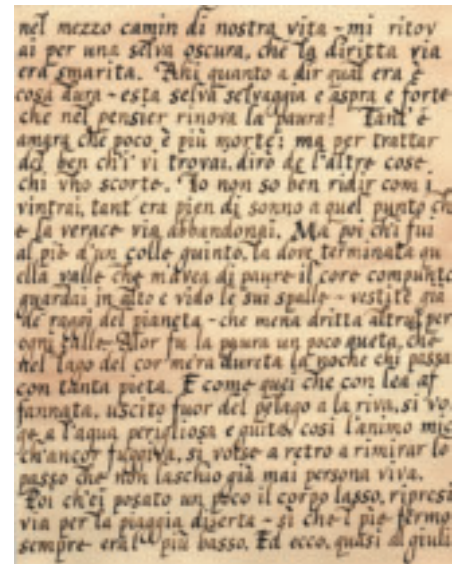
William-Adolphe Bouguereau, *Dante and Virgil* (1850), Musée d’Orsay, Paris [Wikimedia Commons]



An old copy of Dante's *La Divina Commedia*, Stefano Chiacchiarini / shutterstock



William Blake, Illustration to Dante's *The Divine Comedy, The Vestibule of Hell and the Souls Mustering to Cross the Acheron* (1824-27) [Wikimedia Commons]



Manuscript of Dante's *Inferno*, Robert Brown Stock / shutterstock

Then there are the writers whom crisis beckons. For me and for many, that's Dante.

When I wrote *In a Dark Wood*, my memoir of how *The Divine Comedy* helped me recover from the death of my late wife, Katherine, I spelled out its message in the epigraph: "Every grief story is a love story." My words alluded to the gorgeous memoir by Julian Barnes on the loss of his wife, *Levels of Life*, and its line, "Every love story is a grief story," an insight Dante helped me rewrite in more uplifting terms.

*The Divine Comedy* begins in hell, a symphony of all that is rotten, from violence and deception to fraud and tyranny. It ends with the character Dante gaining his vision of eternal blessedness, conveyed in arguably some of the most beautiful lines of poetry ever written:

*Ma già volgeva il mio disio e 'l velle,  
si come rota ch'igualmente è mossa,  
l'amor che move 'l sole e l'altre stelle.*  
(*Par.* 33.143-45)

But now my will and my desire were turned,  
like a wheel in perfect motion,  
by the love that moves the sun and the other stars.

My greatest lesson from Dante's journey was also my most hard won: it's not what lands you in the dark wood that defines you. It's what you do to make it out. Now, with COVID-19, we are enduring a global version of Dante's *selva oscura*—dark wood.

What might we take from Dante's poem to sustain us? Here are three answers in Dante's own words.

1. *Ond' io a lui: "Domandai tu ancora  
di quel che credi ch'a me satisfaccia;  
ch'io non potei, tanta pietà m'accora."  
(*Inf.* 13.82-84)*

And I: "Do you continue; ask of him  
whatever you believe I should request;  
I cannot, so much pity takes my heart."  
(trans. Mandelbaum)



Jean-Jacques Feuchère, *Dante Meditating on the "Divine Comedy"* (1843) [Wikimedia Commons]

In the above scene from *Inferno* 13, Dante says to Virgil that he is unable to speak because of the pity that floods his heart after a conversation with Pier delle Vigne in the Wood of the Suicides. Imprisoned for eternity in the form of a tree, Pier had been a senior advisor to Emperor Frederick II of Sicily and a celebrated poet of the Sicilian School, which wrote captivating lyrics in the troubadour style. A victim of court intrigue, Pier tells Dante that he lost his position—and eventually his life—because of that "harlot" envy who

*infiammò contra me li animi tutti;  
e li 'nfiammati infiammar sì Augusto,  
che 'lieti onor tornaro in tristi lutti.*  
(*Inf.* 13.67-69)

inflamed the minds of everyone against me;  
and those inflamed, then so inflamed Augustus  
that my delighted honors turned to sadness.  
(trans. Mandelbaum)

Pier's language, so elegant and gracious at the start of his conversation with Dante, descends into a vortex of curses and doublings—a chaotic verbal turn that mirrors his tortured conscience, culminating in his admission that he took his own life:

*L'animo mio, per disdegnoso gusto,  
credendo col morir fuggir disdegno,  
ingiusto fece me contra me giusto.  
(Inf. 13.70–72)*

My mind, because of its disdainful temper,  
believing it could flee disdain through death,  
made me unjust against my own just self.  
(trans. Mandelbaum)

Like Pier, Dante was a leading poet and politician before his exile in 1302. He was a practitioner of the Sweet New Style, a movement whose verses narrated the bittersweet pain of love, and he had served as one of Florence's priors, highest elected official in the city. Most viscerally of all, Dante like Pier felt he was the victim of intrigue, hit with a ban of exile while on a diplomatic mission in Rome, ensnared in a political trap by Pope Boniface VIII and rival Guelphs. Racked with grief over Pier's downfall, Dante likely read his own tragic trajectory into Pier's words. His reply when Virgil asks him to continue talking with the suddenly silent Pier is one of the most glorious in all of the *Comedy*:

*ch'ï non potrei, tanta pietà m'accora.*

I cannot [speak], so much pity takes my heart.

The infinitive of *accora* is *accorare*, “to break someone's heart.” The root of the verb is *cor*, a Latinate form often used by Dante and the basis for the modern Italian *cuore*, heart. Pier's words have stricken Dante to the core, wrenching his most sensitive organ.

We now live in a time of *accorare*, of broken hearts and shared suffering, as we experience the tension of isolated life amid global pain. For Dante, the dark wood was at once personal and public, a spiritual crisis that unfolded in a poem he hoped would serve others. In today's “dark wood,” an acute awareness of other people's suffering is part of our everyday. That shared pain is distilled in Pier's words and that haunting signifier *accorare*, emblematic of a world in the throes of overwhelming news.

*2. Lo duca mio di sùbito mi prese  
(Inf. 23.37)*

My guide snatched me up instantly  
(trans. Mandelbaum)

In *Inferno* 23, Virgil takes Dante in his arms and guides him down a slope of Malebolge, where the sin of fraud is punished in 10 concentric ditches. The image of the loving maestro carrying his protégé *come suo figlio* (“like a son,” *Inf.* 23.51) is one of many signaling the bond between Virgil and Dante, which culminates in the tear-jerking scene when Virgil announces his departure:

*Non aspettar mio dir più né mio cenno;  
libero, dritto e sano è tuo arbitrio,  
e fallo fora non fare a suo senno:  
per ch'io te sovra te corono e mitrio.  
(Purg. 27.139–42)*

Await no further word or sign from me:  
your will is free, erect, and whole—to act  
against that will would be to err: therefore  
I crown and miter you over yourself.  
(trans. Mandelbaum)

In these times of crisis, we yearn for strong and visionary leaders like Virgil. With so much riding on the decisions of those in power, literally life and death, we are reminded of the leader's vocation: to make people better than they would otherwise be, inspire them to heroic actions they might not otherwise take. Virgil knows when it's time to let Dante continue his journey without his guidance. He acknowledges the scope of Dante's achievement. And he challenges him to be his own guide moving forward. Dante will weep bitter tears three cantos later in *Purgatorio* 30 when he realizes that Virgil has left him for good. At that moment Beatrice, the only person who can help Dante reach heaven, enters the poem to take over from Virgil.

There's no formula in Dante or any thinker for what makes a great leader. Some are brash, others timid. Some are loud, others quiet. Some are all action, some entirely cerebral. What most leaders have in common is not just smarts, but emotional intelligence: the ability to read the hearts of their followers, speak to their feelings. Virgil is hardly infallible. In fact, the higher Dante's journey takes him, the less Virgil is capable of explaining the Christian mysteries that his pagan faith separates him from. Yet throughout the 61 cantos of his guidance, he displays the ultimate leadership quality: he transforms the uncertain and lost Dante whom he finds in *Inferno* 1 into someone of free will and integrity, worthy of wearing a crown of his own creation. May we find a similar *guida*, guide.

*3. Opera naturale è ch'uom favella;  
ma così o così, natura lascia  
poi fare a voi secondo che v'abbella.  
(Par. 26.130–32)*

That man should speak at all is nature's act,  
but how you speak—in this tongue or in that—  
she leaves to you and to your preference.  
(trans. Mandelbaum)



William Blake, *Dante Running from the Three Beasts* (1824–27), National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia; Stefano Chiacchiarini / shutterstock



Sandro Botticelli, *Map of Hell* (c. 1480–90) [Wikimedia Commons]

The *padre dell'umanità*, father of humanity, Old Testament Adam said these words to Dante in *Paradiso* 26, when Dante questioned him about the history of language and the words we use. Adam certainly had the experience to answer such a question: according to Dante, Adam lived to be 930, spent 4,302 years in Limbo, and 1,266 years in heaven—all after the mere six hours or so he and Eve enjoyed in the Garden of Eden before their expulsion.

The encounter is one of many Dante has with historical, potentially remote figures who come across in intimate terms. Dante manages this feat by selecting characters, real and invented, who resonate with something he holds personally dear: in *Inferno* 26, Homer's Odysseus, the Latin Ulysses in Dante, serves as a stark example of the danger of pursuing knowledge without ethical limits. In *Purgatorio* 1, the Roman statesman Cato, Dante's gatekeeper to Purgatory, shows how the dead and blessed no longer care

for the things that once captivated them on earth—in Cato's case, not even the sweet eyes of his second wife, Marcia, which Virgil invokes in a futile gesture meant to endear him to Cato and win special treatment for Dante.

Adam's parting words to Dante suggest a term not often associated with Dante: pleasure. In *Inferno*, the pursuit of pleasure can land you in serious trouble. In the canto of the lustful, the doomed lovers Paolo and Francesca wind up in hell because a book they were reading together *per diletto*, for pleasure, led to their adulterous embraces. But here, in *Paradiso*, Adam is talking about a different kind of pleasure, through a beautiful word derived from Provençal, *abbellare*, "to suit or please." Speak as you wish, write as you will, Adam is saying: all language is time-bound and will eventually give way to new forms, just as the generations of people using it will come and go like autumn leaves. Nothing lasts forever, especially the words we choose,

so immerse yourself in the most beautiful expressions you can create.

In our COVID-19 world, life for many of us has shrunk to the size of our homes and the circle of our families. We must find pleasure in the smaller things: the meals we prepare, the walks we take, the tales we share with our children—even the stories we tell ourselves to help us confront the challenges of pandemic life.

Adam's exhortation to Dante, to find the beauty in something as overlooked as everyday words, is a reminder to notice and even celebrate that which is fleeting, subject to human time.

At a moment when routine feels immutable, I like to lose myself in the magic syllables of words like *abbellare* and *accorare*, and discover pleasure where it can most minutely be found. And the author I turn to in this time of ambient calamity is Dante, whose *Comedy*, like Virgil cradling Dante in *Inferno* 23, *sùbito mi prese*, took hold of me long ago and has held tight ever since. ▲



Priamo della Quercia, from Dante's *The Divine Comedy* (circa 1440-50), British Library [Wikimedia Commons]

Joseph Luzzi is Professor of Comparative Literature and Faculty Member in Italian Studies at Bard College. He is the author of *My Two Italies* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014), a *New York Times Book Review Editors' Choice*, and *In a Dark Wood: What Dante Taught Me About Grief, Healing, and the Mysteries of Love* (HarperCollins, 2015). His forthcoming book, *Botticelli's Secret: The Lost Drawings and the Rediscovery of Italian Art*, will be published by Norton in 2021. Learn more at [JosephLuzzi.com](http://JosephLuzzi.com), [facebook.com/Luzzi.Joseph](https://facebook.com/Luzzi.Joseph).



# the gaul of tuscanY

By Dick Rosano

Federico Garcia

**F**rance and Italy are perennial combatants for the title of top wine-producing country. With famous estates and classic vintages that set standards for excellence around the world, they square off in the scores of critics, the passions of their followers, and the prices inked on the shelf-talkers in your local wine store.



Sowing cover crop in the Caiarossa vineyards

WWW.NIAF.ORG

Federico Garcia

Whether it's the count of bottles produced or imported, the acres under vine, the write-ups in prominent publications—or even good-natured, glass-tipping disputes between Francophiles and Italophiles—who's "best" is a never-ending topic of contention.

Yet, despite the perpetual state of competition between these two heavy-hitters, we occasionally find some cross-fertilization. When that happens, a truce between the two countries is all the more fascinating.

It was while researching wineries from France and Italy that we stumbled

upon some distinguished estates with common roots. And the discovery was even more impressive considering the two regions represented in this particular marriage of cultures are Bordeaux and Tuscany, to many wine lovers the pre-eminent regions in each of the two countries.

An ancient estate now called Caiarossa occupies the rugged hills of western Tuscany, near the famed wine town of Bolgheri, west of Siena, and near enough to the Tyrrhenian Sea to smell the salt in the air. The vineyards are planted among the rugged hills of

Riparbella, with names like Nicolino, La Lame, and Serra all'Olio—this last a hint as to its origins in the olive oil business.

The name Caiarossa is taken from local jargon for the red gravel that makes up a sizable portion of the 80-plus hectares under vine, although certain of the parcels of vineyards also lay upon varying levels of clay, sand, silt and limestone. The selection of grapevine types—including Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Sangiovese, Syrah, Petit Verdot and Alicante for red wines, and Chardonnay, Petit



The Caiarossa team

Enrico Parrini

Manseng and Viognier for the whites—are superbly plotted for each soil type to maximize flavor and varietal consistency.

So it's no surprise that the owners refer to Caiarossa as a “mosaic of vines,” an apt visual considering the many acres, the 47 separately planted parcels, and the 10 different varieties of grapes. Together, they yield a remarkable basket of both red and white wines.

But what's the connection to France? And who is responsible for this idyllic property and its world-class wines?

The original Tuscan property belonged to the Gherardesca family, a prominent lineage that ruled vast areas of west-central Italy for centuries during the Medieval period. When they owned it, the estate was called Podere Serra all'Olio, a name that has survived through time and continues to refer to the vineyard men-

tioned above, even as the entire estate grew bigger.

What has become modern-day Caiarossa was founded in 1998 with the initial planting of vines chosen according to rigorous testing to identify the best varieties and clones for the microclimate. In 2004, it was acquired by the Albada Jelgersma family who also own Château Giscours and Château du Tertre in Bordeaux, each of them listed as Gran Crus Classés estates under the French wine classification system. And, although their new venture was in Tuscany, it should surprise no one that the Jelgersma family brought their French accent to the Caiarossa estate.

Cabernet Franc was the first grape variety planted, accounting for over 14 acres of land planted to vines, followed by Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah, Sangiovese, Petit Verdot and Alicante. ➤



Caiarossa tasting room



Federico Garcia

Clay soil in the Caiarossa vineyards

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The cross fertilization also happens in the winery. Alexander Van Beek is the general manager and Dominique Génot served as enologist from 2006 to 2017. He remains available as agronomy consultant but, in 2018, Lorenzo Pasquini took over as enologist while retaining similar duties at Châteaux Giscours and du Tertre—a hiring at Caiarossa that recognizes the tension between tradition and innovation.

“The regions [of Italy] with strong winemaking traditions are likely to be bound to very strict rules of production,” says Pasquini, “with

very little room for experimentation.” But experimentation on the Tuscan coast—with its very recent history, provides, he says, a “great opportunity of our area because you are creating today what will become tradition 10 years from now.”

While biodynamic principles govern the vineyard, Feng Shui reigns in the cellar, as architect Michael Bolle infused the design of the building with shapes, colors, lights, and materials, and an orientation that encourages the life force. Nevertheless, traditional principles govern the winemaking process, taking advan-

tage of the sloping land to build a gravity-fed, multi-stage process which allows grapes to proceed from crusher, to fermenter, to storage via the series of levels built into the facility.

Total production for the estate is between 35,000 and 45,000 bottles annually. As the essence of Caiarossa, a new bottling appropriately called *Essenzia*, is produced only in the best years and the blend varies to match the quality of the harvest. The estate makes a white wine, *Caiarossa Bianco* (not reviewed here), a late-harvest wine called *Oro di Caiarossa*, a Grappa, and an olive oil under the estate name.



Caiarossa vineyards panorama

## ETRUSCAN ROOTS

The Etruscans are recorded as having a vibrant wine business back in the day. Although their society emerged around 700 B.C. and mostly disappeared with the rise of the Roman empire in the late 1st millennium B.C., some stories of their wines suggest a French origin. A visit to Caiarossa will bring you within a short drive to Volterra, an ancient Etruscan city.

*“The wines of Caiarossa are not intended just for wine enthusiasts, but for all those who seek beauty in life.”*

— Caiarossa General Manager  
Alexander Van Beek

Federico Garcia

## Tasting Notes

### 2015 Aria di Caiarossa (\$40; from Cabernet France, Merlot, Syrah and Alicante)

Deeply hued, fragrant with black fruit, toast and tar; flavors focused on black cherry and plums, with accents of herb, mint, and sage. Score: 92

### 2016 Aria di Caiarossa (\$40; from same grapes as above).

Just like the 2015, a deep, dense, chewy wine with flavors of black fruit, tar, and wood ash. Focus is on black cherries and plums, with mint and sage accents, but with an additional, exotic note on the finish. Score: 93

### 2015 Pergolaia (\$30; mostly Sangiovese, with Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot blended in).

Bright cherry and black-currant aromas match the deep, dense flavors. Highlights of leather and smoke fill out the palate and offer a long, seductive profile from start to finish. Score: 91

### 2016 Pergolaia (\$30, from same grapes as above).

Bright cherry aromas followed by crushed dark fruit flavors. Focus remains the same as the 2015, with dense flavors accented by leather and smoke. Score: 91

### 2015 Caiarossa (\$50, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Sangiovese, Petit Verdot, and Alicante).

Elegant, redolent of red fruit and forest floor, silky smooth, first impressions of dark fruit and smoky oak, slight mint accent on finish. Score: 93

### 2016 Caiarossa (\$50, from same grapes as above).

Elegant and fragrant from first impression, silky smooth on a palate impression of dark fruit and lightly smoky oak, scents of herbs and anise on finish. Score: 93 ▲

*Dick Rosano's columns have appeared in The Washington Post and other national publications. His novels that often are set in Italy and capture the beauty of the country, the flavors of the cuisine, and the history and traditions of the people, include Vivaldi's Girls; A Death in Tuscany; The Secret of Altamura; A Love Lost in Positano; Hunting Truffles; To Rome, With Love; and The Vienna Connection. His critically acclaimed new novel, Islands of Fire: The Sicily Chronicles Part 1, is now available on Amazon.com and other book stores.*



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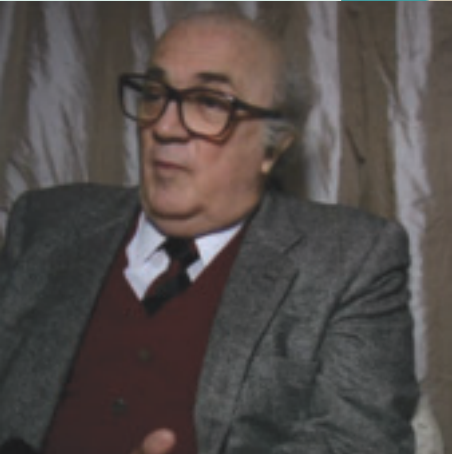
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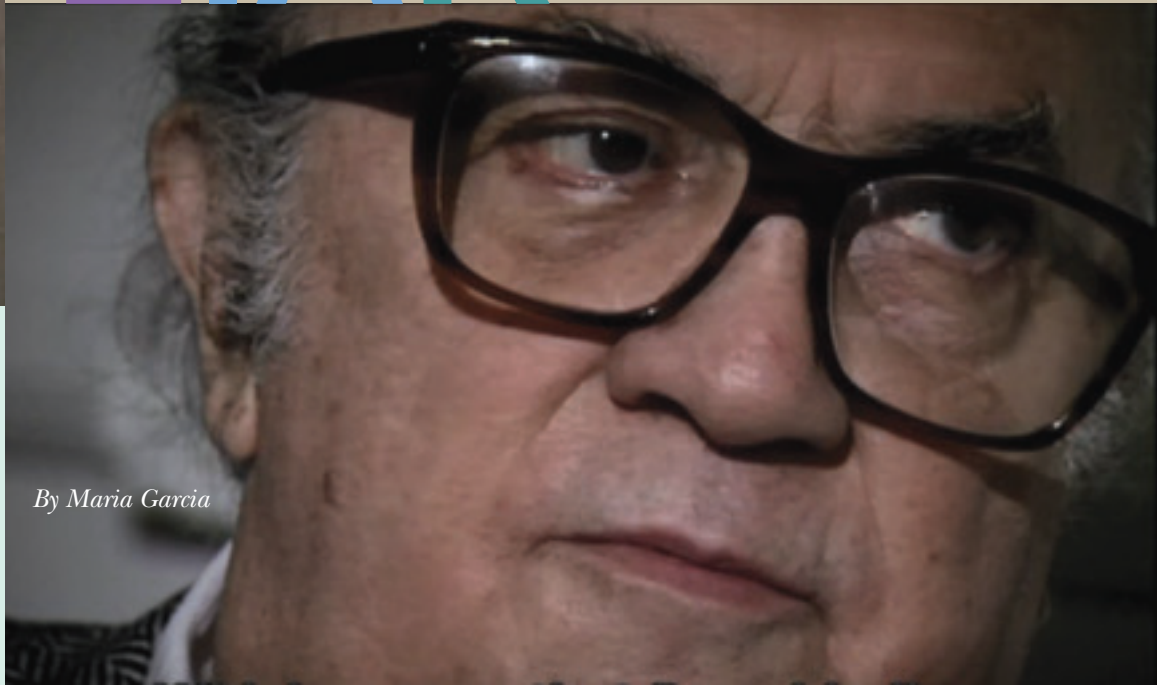
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# BORN LIAR



## A Perspective on Filmmaker Federico Fellini

By Maria Garcia



In Canadian filmmaker Damian Pettigrew's documentary *Fellini: I'm a Born Liar* (2002), his puckish Italian subject declares that the only standard for judging art, including his films, is whether or not they radiate "vitality." The documentary, a decade in the making, has been lauded by critics as the writer-director's master class in filmmaking—but the title, a direct quote, adds an equivocal note. The maestro would no doubt approve.



DVD cover of Damian Pettigrew's documentary *Fellini: I'm a Born Liar* (2002)

Photos Courtesy of *Fellini: I'm a Born Liar*



Anouk Aimée in *8½*—  
screenshot from *Fellini: I'm A Born Liar*



Giulietta Masina, Federico Fellini's wife, and star in  
*La Strada*—screenshot from *Fellini: I'm A Born Liar*



Marcello Mastroianni in *8½*—  
screenshot from *Fellini: I'm A Born Liar*

This year marks the 100th anniversary of Federico Fellini's birth in 1920, in the town of Rimini, on the Adriatic coast. Like all such jubilees, it invites an examination of the artist's legacy. Pettigrew's extended interview with Fellini is a good start, even if it assumes a knowledge of his oeuvre that contemporary audiences may not possess. Film clips, and archival footage of Fellini on-set receive some context, but the other interviewees, Fellini's friends and collaborators, are not named. The insider arrogance of not naming is compounded by Pettigrew's near exclusion of actor Giulietta Masina, Fellini's wife, with whom he made seven films.

While actors Terence Stamp (*Spirits of the Dead*, 1968), Donald Sutherland (*Casanova*, 1976) and Roberto Benigni (*The Voice of the Moon*, 1990) are well-known, viewers are not likely to recognize cinematographer Giuseppe Rotunno (in dark-rimmed glasses), screenwriter Tullio Pinelli (in a lawn chair), production designer Dante Ferretti (in his studio), and childhood friend Tito Benzino (recounts the loss of Fellini's only child), who inspired the main character in *Amarcord* (1973). Author Italo Calvino (quotes Friedrich Nietzsche) also makes several appearances. Masina speaks once, in French, for about 15 seconds, in an archival film clip, apparently an interview about her stunning performance in *La Strada* (1954).

Fellini had a recurring nightmare in which Masina pre-deceased him. An illustration of that dream appears in his recently re-released autobiographical dream diary, *I Sogni*, referred to briefly in the documentary. It was inspired, in part, by his years spent in Jungian therapy, which requires analysts to probe the meaning of their dreams. Fellini died a day after the couple's 50th wedding anniversary, and Masina passed away five months later. At one point in the documentary, Fellini says that he "married the right woman for someone like me." Pettigrew never asks the obvious follow-up question.

Fellini is admired for many reasons, not the least of which is his ability to articulate ideas and sensibilities, and sometimes characterization, with great visual economy. In *Giulietta Degli Spiriti* (*Juliet of the Spirits*, 1965), the eponymous character, a devoted wife (Masina), prepares for her husband's return from work on the evening of their wedding anniversary. She is seen only from behind in the first sequence of the film. The erasure of her face signals her lack of identity apart from the marriage.

Conversation is heard between Giulietta and her maids, but it is discrete from any source; the audience cannot be sure who is speaking. That confusion, compounded by the fact that Giulietta's face is not visible, is untenable if the film is to continue: something must change, Giulietta must

be allowed an identity. In less than five minutes of screen time, Fellini sketches his character and the narrative, and much more—Giulietta dons a wig. Is she engaged in deception? Actually, Giulietta is the victim of a lying, philandering husband, and it invites conjecture that Fellini projects onto the wife, his wife, an instance of deception.

Eliding Masina from the film allows Pettigrew to avoid Fellini's private life, but that means there are no real answers to the question of inspiration or a complete picture of Fellini's methods. Masina read Fellini's screenplays and she provided feedback in the form of letters; she argued with her husband over her costumes and even his conception of her characters. Absent that information, Fellini is free to entertain and to invent, which he does well in the documentary.

The largely white and male critical community appreciated Fellini's reveling in, and satirizing, the perpetually adolescent caprice of grown men. In his imagined worlds, they were forgiven for their adulterous affairs, as he was in his own marriage. Fellini's cinema centered on relationships, and it sometimes engaged in social commentary. The filmmaker did not like discussing the latter and was contemptuous of critics who asked him to elaborate on the significance of his images or the "meaning" of his films. Fellini once complained: "When someone asks: 'What did you mean in this picture,' it shows he ►



Screen shots from *Fellini: I'm A Born Liar*: Sandra Milo and Marcello Mastroianni in *8½*; Giulietta Masina, Fellini's wife, in *Juliet of the Spirits*; Roberto Benigni on Fellini's 1989 film *La voce della luna* (*The Voice of the Moon*); and Donald Sutherland on starring in Fellini's *Casanova*.

is a prisoner of intellectual, sentimental shackles.”

In the documentary, Fellini states that he loves actors, but he was notorious for dubbing their voices because they did not match the voices he imagined for them, an obvious effacement of their talents. He confesses to Pettigrew his view of actors as “puppets,” stand-ins for himself or the visions in his dreams. In the filmmaker’s storyboards (sketches of shots in a film), actors are depicted as puppets, and he as their puppeteer. Two puppets stand out as significant to his art—Masina and Marcello Mastroianni.

Masina inspired many of his narratives, most obviously “Juliet,” where she grapples with her Roman Catholic upbringing. Pettigrew shows a revealing clip from the movie in which Fellini substitutes himself in the role of an actor in an erotic scene. Masina disliked her character and once admitted in an interview that Fellini could hardly make a movie from a woman’s point of view. If through his wife Fellini explored his childhood memories of Catholic school (he was an avowed anti-cleric), and guilt over his dalliances, in *8½* (1963) he found his doppelgänger in Guido, an egotistical, misogynistic film director played by Mastroianni. Guido exposes Fellini’s insecurities as an artist—as well as his problems with women. In the documentary, he calls them “the unknown planet” and “a man’s dark side.”

Producer Daniel Toscan Du Plantier says that Mastroianni was Fellini’s best actor because he never asked about motivation. Mastroianni once remarked that he liked working with Fellini because he felt that he was playing himself. Interestingly, it was Masina who brought them together. In narrative film, as in drama, character is plot, but because the character is Fellini each time, movie after movie expresses one sensibility—and by *8½* that had grown tiresome. Fantasy, dreams, outlandish behavior and surreal story elements were Fellini’s answer to this conundrum, and in some films, the ones celebrated as “Felliniesque,” these techniques rescued static screenplays. In others, such as “Juliet,” Masina’s performance and Nino Rota’s score accomplished that.

One moment stands out in *I’m a Born Liar*, when Fellini says that he strives to live in a “perpetual state of expectation.” During my first screening of Pettigrew’s documentary nearly two decades ago, knowing Fellini’s love of the circus, I thought of that heightened sense of anticipation we feel there—not knowing if the next sound will be the roar of a lion, the thumping rush of horses into the ring, or the sudden whizzing of trapeze artists soaring above our heads.

In my research for this piece, so many years later, I read that Fellini often referred to Masina as “my soul.” The word for “soul” in Italian is *anima*. In Jungian theory, the *anima* is the part of a man’s psyche that allows him access to the unconscious, and to dreams. It is the font of his creativity. Pettigrew’s documentary is required viewing, but to understand Fellini, watch the films he made with Masina. Don’t expect to find meaning—just *vita*. ▲

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



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# An American Family in Italy



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“An American family spends a year in Italy—a dream, a disaster, laughter and tears, an unforgettable memory.”

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—Lizzie Harwood, author

# The Summer Italian American Reader

While this is, in fact, the Summer Italian American Reading list, never mind the actual season. As we write this introduction to our latest book reviews, this is only one singular season for all of us—the Coronavirus Pandemic Season.

Not to dismiss the warmer temperatures and sunnier days of Summer invigorating our lives and making us feel happier and freer than we have in months. But consider one of the few positive effects of this dreaded pandemic: Suddenly isolated more than we've ever been, many of us find solace

and comfort in reading good books even more than we have in the past.

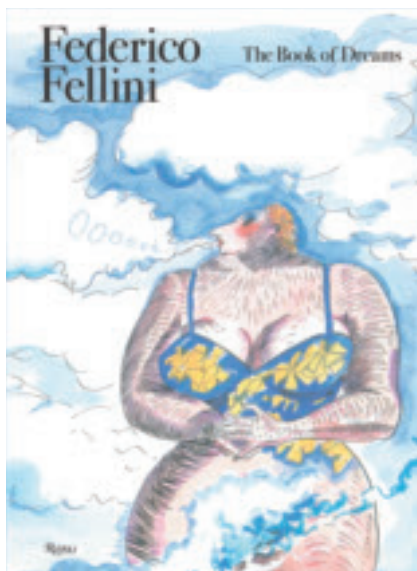
And, so, as always, here are some titles worthy of your consideration. Some are by renowned authors, others up and coming writers. All are by Italian or Italian American authors, or of interest to Italian American readers. We provide the book cover and a telling sentence or two for each, plus a brief review of what you'll find inside their pages.

*Buona lettura!*

*Don Oldenburg*



© Federico Fellini: *The Book of Dreams* edited by Sergio Toffetti in collaboration with Felice Laudadio and Gianluca Farinelli, Rizzoli New York, 2020.



### Federico Fellini: The Book of Dreams

Edited by Sergio Toffetti  
In collaboration with  
Felice Laudadio and  
Gianluca Farinelli  
Rizzoli New York  
560 pages; \$115 hardcover

How often are you invited to dwell in the imagination, dreams and nightmares of a genius? Celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Federico Fellini (1920–1993), this thick-as-a-brick diary of the great Italian filmmaker’s night-time visions and dreams are abundantly and colorfully illustrated by his own hand, nearly in the moment, dream by dream, and annotated with his scribbled notes.

So, you always thought Fellini’s films are dream-like? Well, apparently, Fellini was dreaming up some of his films years before they were made, and a whole lot of other stuff you’d never imagine. One of the 20<sup>th</sup> century’s most revered film direc-

tors, Fellini’s most acclaimed movies include *La Dolce Vita*, *8½*, and *La Strada*. And no Fellini lover can forget the brilliance of the autobiographical comedy-drama *Amarcord*, or the surreal, voluptuous fantasies *Satyricon* and *Casanova*. And, so many others.

From the late 1960s, between the making of *La Dolce Vita* and *8½* when he was 40 years old, until 1990, Fellini devotedly kept a dream journal as prescribed by his Jungian analyst. He felt profoundly affected by his dreams, which he recorded with drawings and “scribbles, rushed and ungrammatical notes.” Originally published in 2008 (now out of print), this book now becomes the essential edition of Fellini’s dream journal with new and insightful commentary and updated graphic designs.

“What is *The Book of Dreams*?” asks Italian screenwriter and playwright Tullio Kezich, an award-winning Fellini biographer and one of this edition’s exceptional commentators who recalls Fellini telling him his “night work” was at least as significant as what we think and do when awake. “It is easier to say what it is not. It is not a diary, nor is it a novel, a comic book, the storyboard of a film, a collection of stories, or a pictorial summary: it is all these things together and more.”

The extensive writings of Fellini friends and colleagues make this book all the more vital to understanding Fellini and his works. Italian director Lina Wertmüller, who worked with Fellini and considers him the most brilliant person she ever knew, and loved that she appeared in one of his 1983 dreams, has a lot to say here. Gian Piero Brunetta, professor of the history and criticism of cinema, writes that Fellini recorded his dreams like a “medieval miniaturist monk”—just look at his sketches.

Beyond the commentaries are page after page of Fellini’s dream drawings, his notes scrawled in Italian, themselves an artform though often illegible even if you read Italian. He dreams of his childhood home of Rimini. He obsesses over his wife Giulietta Massina. He draws so much nudity (though dreamlike cartoonish)—naked Rubenesque women with huge breasts and enormous behinds—that there’s no doubt about his obsessions. Sexuality, perversity, violence and death are thematic throughout. Not surprisingly, his dreams resemble his films, or vice versa. Dream voyeurs will recognize images that became scenes in Fellini’s films, like the flying dark figure from *8½*.

Fellini’s dreams include numerous cameos. Picasso makes appearances. So does Orsen Welles, Marcello Mastroianni (Fellini’s favorite actor), Sophia Loren (beautifully submerged in a bathtub), Italian film director Roberto Rossellini, notorious Italian ‘70s mobster Renato Vallanzasca Costantini, Italian film producer Carlo Ponti, Henry Kissinger, Pope John XXIII, Ingmar Bergman, Salvador Dali, even Jimmy Carter. Fellini dreams of making love to beautiful actress Anita Ekberg.

The index of films and characters, and the English transcription of Fellini’s dream writings at the back of the book, help to unpuzzle this wildly crazed, confounding and complex book. Because, beyond the mind-blowing exploration of Fellini’s interior goings-on, trying to make sense of it all is the exquisite challenge.

Good luck with that. But, if you are a Fellini fan, or ascribe to the importance of dreams, this book is remarkable. ➤

—Don Oldenburg



### Italian American Country: Finding Italy in small-town America

By Paolo Battaglia  
Anniversary Books  
200 pages; \$35 paperback

The Italian American Country project was conceived to complete the picture and followed the lead of Ambassador Des Planches, who left Washington, D.C., in 1905 to meet small communities of Italians....

If a picture is worth a thousand words, then Paolo Battaglia's illustrated history book *Italian American Country: Finding Italy in Small-Town America* is picture-perfect. Archival photographs of yesteryear, interlaced with historical and nostalgic stories about the Italian American experience with all its adversity and achievements will evoke pride and impart an emotional and cultural connection to Italy. Battaglia has authored several other books, including *Explorers, Emigrants, Citizens: A Visual History of the Italian American Experience*, which he co-authored with Linda Barrett Osborne in 2013.

Battaglia traveled over 20,000 miles across America in 2014 and 2018 photographing and interviewing people about their Italian ancestry, mostly in

small towns. There are some large city destinations: New York, Boston, Philadelphia, New Orleans, Denver and San Francisco. But it's the footprints of Italians in lesser-known places that he traces with captivating research, stories and images, from the deadliest U.S. mine explosion site in Monongah, W.Va., that claimed the lives of 361 coal miners (171 of Italian heritage) in 1907, to capturing the bygone era of Piemonte cowboys in Paradise Valley, Nev.

He also journeyed to the granite quarries of Barre, Vt., and the ghost town of Dawson, N.M., and motored on legendary Route 66 through Rosati, Mo., recounting its vineyard history.

You'll find Italy on Battaglia's pictorial roadmap of America and discover small towns with big stories.  
— Robert Fanelli Bartus Jr.



### Parallax: True Crime Tales

By Lance J. LoRusso  
Lanier Press  
121 pages; \$12.95 paperback

He walked into the bank wearing the mask and ordered everyone to the ground. His voice was raw and cracking. He seemed out of control.

With five short stories expressed in a vivid and telling style, Lance J. LoRusso's *Parallax: True Crime Tales* will transport you into law enforcement officers' way of life. He's the author of several books with a law enforcement theme, but this is his first fictional police procedural. If you think this is another tiresome crime novel, you'll change your mind from the first page.

LoRusso's years of experience wearing the badge and as an attorney bring gravitas to his writing—authenticity and insights—and what it takes to hold the thin blue line.

Each of the five stories will usher you into the circle of police tactics and criminal acts. The story "Parallax" involves a bank robbery

with a SWAT sniper's daughter who happens to be in the bank. Blood will be spilled when a homicide detective confronts a murderer at a nightclub in "The Last Set," while "Running" conveys the thoughts of a cop killer on the run. "A Nasty Habit" describes an often edgy Q&A between a homicide detective and a murderer, and how DNA from the murderer's bad habit nails him. And in "Rose-Colored Glasses," a retired police officer reflects on his life—family, stress and memories of fallen officers.

LoRusso's writing in the genre of police procedurals is arresting. These are short stories that are not short on drama.

— Robert Fanelli Bartus Jr.





### The Seven or Eight Deaths of Stella Fortuna: A Novel

By Juliet Games

Ecco

464 pages; \$13.99 paperback

*If only Stella had been allowed to live her life on her own terms, how might things have been different?*

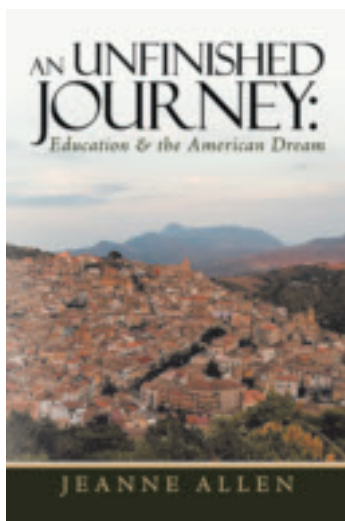
Even Mariastella Fortuna's name doesn't belong to her. It belongs to her namesake and sister Mariastella Fortuna the first, who succumbed at age three to the Spanish flu her father brought home after World War I to their mountain village of Ievoli, Calabria.

Mariastella Fortuna the second, or Stella, survives lifelong death scares, from cooking eggplants to being eviscerated by pigs to drowning in the Atlantic to exsanguination. Even though Stella's mother pronounces spells against the *malocchio*, or evil eye, Stella feels haunted throughout life.

When the Fortuna family emigrates to Connecticut, Stella finds herself even more trapped in the rigid rules of a patriarchal culture.

Told by Stella's granddaughter, who helps us understand the four generations that separate her from her family's southern Italian superstitions and gritty American lives, Games' debut novel demonstrates the alchemy that results from creative imagination firing up family legacy. You'll keep turning each of the 464 pages, as you choose a cast for the film and call your own relatives to dig for gold in your own family stories.

— *Kirsten Keppel*



### An Unfinished Journey: Education and The American Dream

By Jeanne Allen

Xlibris Corp

236 pages; \$19.99

*It was during a visit to the land of my ancestry that I was motivated to use history to carve some thoughts for the future.*

Only 35 percent of American children read at grade level. Only 35 percent of participants in a study passed a civics test used by aspiring American citizens. One-third of college graduates can neither read long English texts nor make complex references from what they read, according to a 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy.

How did American schools, once incubators for access to the American dream, end up with such dismal results—despite a per-pupil expenditure of \$11,300-\$25,000 per student in 2018?

Italian American Jeanne Allen, founder and CEO of the Center for Education Reform, headquartered in Washington, D.C., examines the chasm between the access to a full life that American education offered descendants of her Italian maternal grandparents from Ciminna, Sicily, and paternal family from Campania, and what American schools offer today.

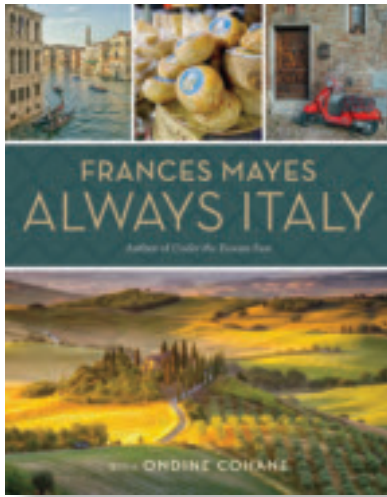
This collection includes Allen's previously published work from The Boston Globe and USA Today to The Wall Street Journal and National Review, plus journals, speeches and her own blog. Allen explores how college debt, charter schools, teachers' unions and interest groups all affect what she calls "The Blob," or the self-perceived owners of the traditional educational system.

Forthright in her belief that charter schools and school choice are crucial for positive outcomes and solving inequities, Allen is adamant that the fuzzy math and Whole Language curricula taught for decades have been disastrous.

A political conservative, Allen shares from her experience working with policymakers from both parties. Her writing will engage you in taking a hard look at what education means to you and your family.

[Disclosure: Jeanne Allen is a member of NIAF's da Vinci Council.]

— *Kirsten Keppel*



**Always Italy**

By Frances Mayes and Ondine Cohane  
National Geographic  
416 pages; \$35 hardcover

The journeys I took for this book were exhilarating because, finally, I could stop at Greek ruins in Calabria; order the rustic pastas of Sardinia; stand under waterfalls in Trentino-Alto Adige; watch water buffalo milk turn into mozzarella in Puglia; and hike the sublime trails of Valle d’Aosta.

International best-selling author Frances Mayes has been sharing Italy with readers for decades, but never quite with the same depth as she does in *Always Italy*, which deftly covers the sights, smells and tastes of all 20 regions.

For her part, Mayes contributes the introductions to each section, full of her impressions and observations, as well as wine recommendations. Co-author and New York Times travel writer Ondine Cohane fills in practical details such as insider’s tips, hot spots, and a collection of the

“best of” for each region. Together, they have created an impressive and comprehensive collection of insights and recommendations regarding the most and lesser-traveled destinations in Italy, including those for hotels, cuisine, hiking trails, spas, vineyards and more.

With more than 300 full-color photographs, the book is simply visually stunning and would make an excellent addition to the library of any Italy or travel lover.

— Michelle Kaminski

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**The Letter: A Novel**

By Anthony Sciaratta

PostHillPress

240 pages; \$16 paperback

She completely captured the essence of his being, inspiring him to be the best version of himself. These feelings were pent up deep inside Victor's heart, only surfacing periodically throughout his life's work. Not a single person knew who this woman was or if she was even real...

In Anthony Sciaratta's second novel *The Letter*, world-renowned bestselling author Victor Esposito goes into a life-threatening coma after taking a bullet to the chest while heroically saving the lives of a bystander woman and her child during a Manhattan bodega robbery gone wrong.

But the heart of this tale of lost-and-found-again love began beating 10 years earlier when Victor fell for his literary muse, Eva Abram, the mysterious woman he has dedicated his novels to ever since and who is now a longing Long Island housewife frantically glued to TV news updates about her dying one-time lover.

Sciaratta could almost be retelling the forbidden-love stories

of Dante Alighieri's poetic devotion to Beatrice, or Giovanni Boccaccio's dedication to his mystery muse Fiammetta, but this young novelist's straight-forward, conversational narrative is born-and-bred New Yorker, Italian American dialect—same as is his identity.

Nearly a Faustian tale that visits unearthly coma-induced realms and entities, in the lineage of *It's a Wonderful Life's* self-reflection and second chances, bottom line here is that *The Letter* is a good old-fashioned romance story reinvented for today... and that we should keep an eye out for Sciaratta's next novel.

— Don Oldenburg

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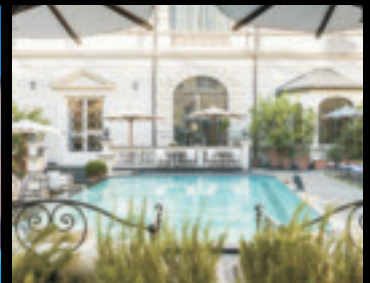
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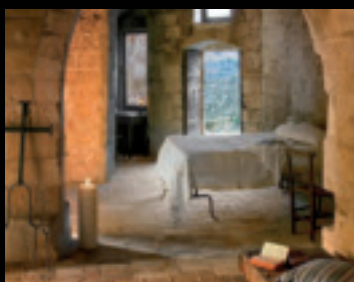
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A VIEW FROM

# 14<sup>th</sup> Century Fiesole

By Carla Gambescia



John William Waterhouse — The Decameron

Departing from *Room with a View*'s normal vantage, this issue we are exploring a psychological viewpoint. Giovanni Boccaccio's seminal work *The Decameron* was written in the wake of the plague of 1348 which ravaged Europe, and especially the city of Florence, wiping out nearly 60 percent of its population.

Back then, most retreated into their homes and prayed while others formed groups and staggered through the city on multi-day “*carpe diem*” benders. The epic follows 10 friends, seven women and three men, who leave Florence and take sanctuary in a deserted villa in Fiesole to wait out the plague. Once settled in their rural enclave, they pass their days amusing each other by telling stories, many of which were bawdy tales.

Surprisingly, *The Decameron* serves as an unusual source of guidance on maintaining wellbeing in times of epidemics and isolation.

According to Dr. Martin Marafiot, professor of modern languages and culture at Pace University, in New York City, Boccaccio's prescription for coping with the epidemic was a mega-dose of what is now termed “narrative prophylaxis”—protecting yourself with pleasant stories—and relying on the support of good friends.

Boccaccio's faith in the power of stories to foster a positive outlook went on to inspire a slew of medieval advice manuals. Tomasso del Garbo, a prominent Florentine physician, further suggested that people “gather in a garden” and concentrate on “delightful things that bring comfort.” Another plague advice book of the time by Italian theologian Nicholas de Burgo recommended that people “beware of fear, anger, sadness and heavy thoughts” while taking time to be “joyful, happy and to listen to lullabies, and melodies.”

The advice of Boccaccio and

others might seem Pollyannaish; they did not understand what we now know about how epidemics spread. Nonetheless, today's social epidemiologists know lockdowns take a significant toll on mental health and acknowledge the Florentines' advice was prescient—in its grasp of the mind-body connection, its recognition of an optimistic outlook in helping maintain physical health, and the role of social networks in providing encouragement.

Today's Italy seems to have internalized these lessons from the 14th-century, finding new ways of sharing stories, staying connected and staying hopeful...from actors live-streaming fairytales to school children, to neighbors in Verona finding amore from their balconies, and, everywhere *andrà tutto bene!* ▲

*Carla Gambescia is a writer, photographer and author of La Dolce Vita University. Visit her websites at [ladolcevita.com](http://ladolcevita.com) and [postcardsfromtheboot.com](http://postcardsfromtheboot.com).*

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# Baseball Come Back

*The Pandemic  
Throws Sports  
a Nasty Curve Ball*

By Wayne Randazzo



World in Hand / Shutterstock

March 8, 2020, turned out to be the last Spring Training radio broadcast for the New York Mets on their flagship station, WCBS-AM. Howie Rose, the team's longtime voice, and I had a fairly normal broadcast as we watched Noah Syndergaard and the Houston Astro's Justin Verlander locked in a tune-up.

Verlander left the game earlier than planned because of a groin injury that was supposed to keep him out for the first few weeks of the regular season. Syndergaard, we learned later, would not pitch again in 2020 because he needed Tommy John surgery.

Those weren't the only surprises ahead, however. As COVID-19 was making its way toward the United States, Howie and I barely mentioned it on the broadcast that day. We knew that some minor changes to locker room access may be on the horizon, but it was so far in the backs of our minds then that it certainly did not engulf the broadcast.

Just days later though, NBA player Rudy Gobert of the Utah Jazz tested positive for COVID-19 before a game in Oklahoma City and the sports world abruptly flipped upside down. MLB would soon follow the NBA and NHL by immediately suspending all operations, and more than two months later none of the leagues have picked back up in what has become an unprecedented sports stoppage.

While the initial league suspensions came swiftly, the drag of missing sports has been elongated as the leagues try to prepare for their returns safely and financially. While the NBA and NHL were near the ends of their seasons and are planning for playoff games to be held in isolated hub cities, MLB was just at the beginning of its season and is negotiating a partial season for all 30 teams and October playoffs.

MLB has proposed to its players association a health care plan that includes no spitting, no showering at the ballpark, and mask-wearing at all times except on the field of play. Along with all the new rules comes lots of testing

as the sport wants to make sure its players are safe around each other while also not obtaining more than a fair share of tests in their communities.

As baseball walks this delicate line, the league and its network of partners have found some ways to cope. Early on in the pandemic, MLB staged a tournament that some players participated in by playing the popular videogame *MLB: The Show 2020*. Italian American slugger Joey Gallo of the Texas Rangers had a strong showing in the tournament won by Tampa Bay Rays pitcher Blake Snell.

Also, a slew of classic games have been broadcast both nationally and locally. SNY, the Mets-owned network, recently aired both the 1969 and 1986 World Series in their entirety.

ESPN has taken it a step further striking a deal with the Korean Baseball Organization (KBO) to air its games with broadcasts using American announcers, including Jon "Boog" Sciambi and Jason Benetti in their homes watching the games being played overnight Eastern time.

As Americans try to cope through the horrible losses of life, employment and even fulfillment, the thirst for the return of sports is evident. ESPN's airing of *The Last Dance* documentary about the Michael Jordan Chicago Bulls of the 1990s drew record ratings, as did the NFL Draft. So, while the country may still be suffering from the lingering pandemic, there will be some solace, at least, and some normalcy once an umpire shouts "play ball" again.

It may look and sound different in an empty stadium, but the familiarity of seeing games where the outcomes have not already been determined will be a welcome sign to a weary nation with sore eyes. ▲

*Wayne Randazzo is a play-by-play announcer for New York Mets broadcasts on WCBS Newsradio 880. He's also a television play-by-play announcer for FS1, ESPN and Big Ten Network, and the longtime sports columnist for Ambassador magazine.*

# CAPITAL CITIES OF ITALY'S 20 REGIONS

## ITALIAN AMERICAN STYLE

by Leon J. Radomile  
www.leonradomile.com



**ACROSS**

- 1 Emilia-Romagna's capital city is also the home of its university. Founded in 1088, it is the oldest continuous university in the world.
- 4 Leaving Abruzzo in 1970, Molise became the youngest region in Italy. Its capital is located in the high basin of the Biferno River.
- 7 Capital of the Basilicata region, the city is the highest regional capital in Italy.
- 9 Campania is home of the third largest city in Italy and one of the oldest continuously inhabited urban areas in the world. Also the birthplace of Enrico Caruso, one of the most prominent opera tenors of all time. Name the capital city.
- 12 Trentino-Alto Adige is a northern Italian region in Italy. Its capital is on the Adige River. This capital city was the site of a momentous religious council held between 1545 and 1563. It has been described as the embodiment of the Counter Reformation.
- 14 Toscana is known for its landscapes, history, artistic legacy, and its influence on high culture. The capital city has one of the world's top museums, the Uffizi. Some of the seminal works of the Renaissance include: Botticelli's Birth of Venus, Leonardo da Vinci's Annunciation, and Michelangelo's only panel painting Holy Family.
- 15 The flag of this capital city is exactly the same as that of England. Flag of St. George. Description: white triangle with a red cross. Liguria is the region and pesto is their sugo.
- 17 The Valle D'Aosta Region is the smallest and least populated region of Italy. Identify its capital.
- 18 Identify the capital city of Piemonte that was the first capital of Italy from 1861 to 1865.
- 20 Sardinia is the second largest island in the Mediterranean Sea. The capital's name in the Sardinian dialect is Casteddu, meaning castle.

**DOWN**

- 2 The region of Marche is well known for its fine shoemaking tradition. The capital city is located 174 miles northeast of Rome, on the Adriatic Sea.
- 3 Ten million people live in Lombardia, forming one-sixth of Italy's population and a fifth of Italy's GDP. This makes the region one of the richest in Europe. Name the capital that is the second-largest city and the largest metropolitan area in Italy.
- 5 The capital of Puglia is one of southern Italy's most prominent cities, combining seaside charm with historical appeal.
- 6 Sicilia is the largest island in the Mediterranean Sea. The city is noted for its history, culture, architecture and gastronomy. It's more than 2,700 years old.
- 8 Friuli Venezia Giulia is a region in northeast Italy. The regional seaport capital city was one of the oldest parts of the Habsburg Monarchy, belonging to it from 1382 until 1918.
- 10 The Abruzzo capital city is surrounded by the Apennine Mountains, with the Gran Sasso d'Italia to the north-east. The Italian monarchy formally ended on June 12, 1946, when King Umberto II went into exile from the Abruzzo port of Ortona on the Adriatic Sea.
- 11 The capital city of Calabria was founded by the Byzantines during the 10th century. Identify the capital city that overlooks the Gulf of Squillace.
- 13 Umbria is a region of central Italy. One of its candy companies produces Baci, an international favorite consisting of fine cocoa and fragrant hazelnuts. Its capital?
- 16 Veneto is the 8th largest region in Italy. During the 18th century, the capital city became perhaps the most elegant and refined city in Europe, greatly influencing art, architecture, and literature.
- 19 Lazio's capital city has an immensely rich historical heritage and cosmopolitan atmosphere, making it one of the worlds most visited capitals. The city's top tourist attractions are the Arch of Constantine and the Colosseum.

**SOLUTION**

- ACROSS:**  
1 Bologna  
2 Ancona  
3 Milano  
4 Campobasso  
5 Bari  
6 Palermo  
7 Potenza  
8 Trieste  
9 Napoli  
10 L'Aquila  
11 Catanzaro  
12 Asta  
13 Perugia  
14 Firenze  
15 Genova  
16 Torino  
17 Aosta  
18 Venezia  
19 Roma  
20 Cagliari

Photos: Clockwise from top left

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