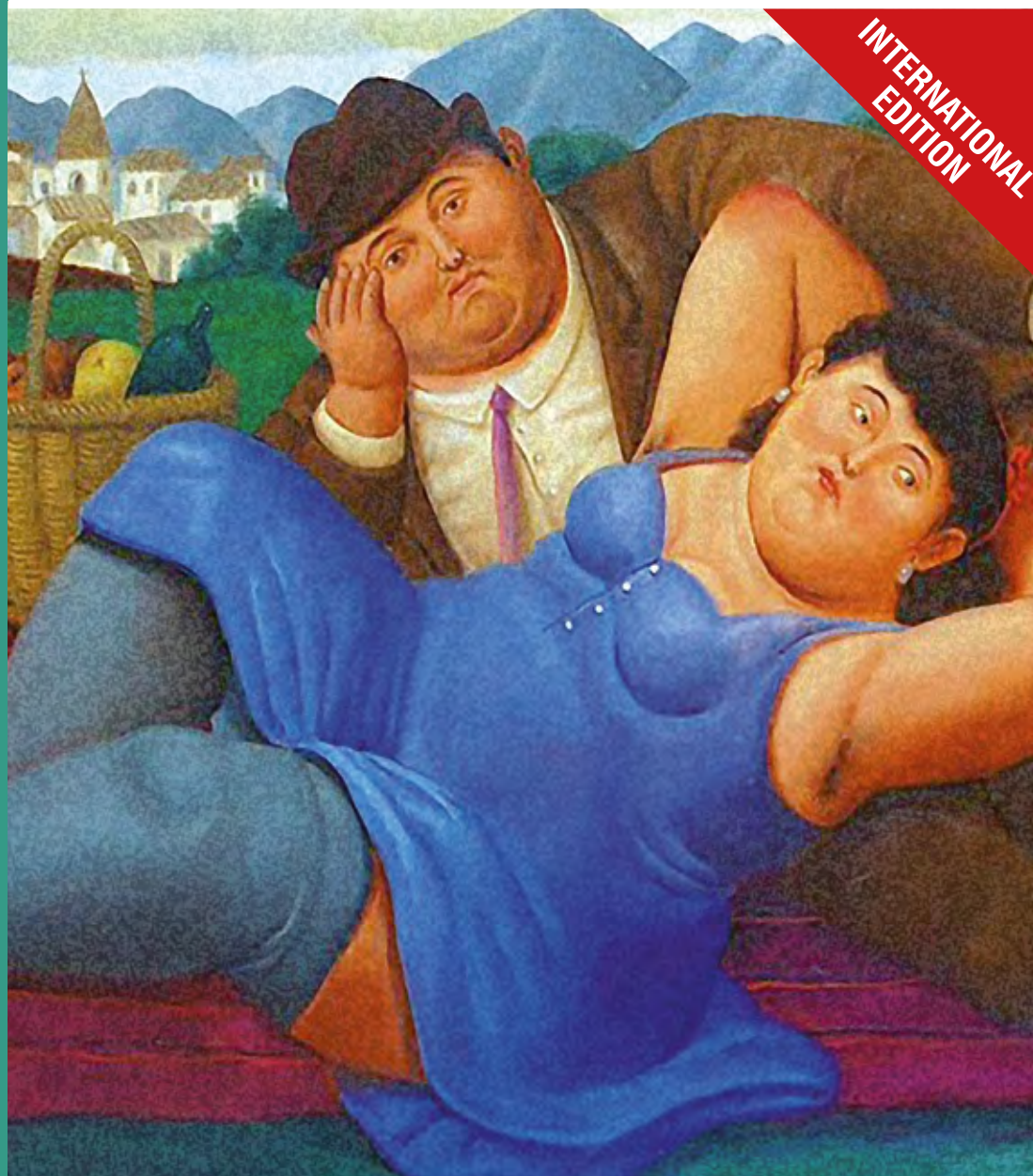


CIVILTÀ DELLA TAVOLA

ACCADEMIA ITALIANA DELLA CUCINA



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CIVILTÀ DELLA TAVOLA
ACCADEMIA ITALIANA DELLA CUCINA

INTERNATIONAL EDITION

MAY 2017 / N. 293

EDITOR IN CHIEF
PAOLO PETRONI

COPY EDITOR
SILVIA DE LORENZO

LAYOUT
SIMONA MONGIÙ

TRANSLATOR
ANTONIA FRASER FUJINAGA

THIS ISSUE INCLUDES ARTICLES BY
Silvia De Lorenzo,
Mauro Gaudino,
Paolo Petroni,
Gerlando Davide Schembri.



Publisher
Accademia Italiana della Cucina
Via Napo Torriani 31 - 20124 Milano
Tel. 02 66987018 - Fax 02 66987008
presidente@accademia1953.it
segreteria@accademia1953.it
redazione@accademia1953.it
www.accademia1953.it



Monthly Magazine
Reg. n. 4049 - 29-5-1956
Tribunale di Milano



Rivista associata
all'Unione Stampa
Periodica Italiana



TABLE OF CONTENTS



FOCUS

- 2 A Delegates' forum dedicated
to all Academicians
(Paolo Petroni)

DELEGATES' FORUM

- 3 An event with highly
timely themes
(Silvia De Lorenzo)

CULTURE & RESEARCH

- 6 When tradition safeguards
future health
(Gerlando Davide Schembri)
- 8 On the labelling
of extra-virgin olive oil
(Mauro Gaudino)



On the cover: Graphic elaboration of *Picnic* (2001)
by Fernando Botero, on display until 27 August in
the Complesso del Vittoriano (Altare della Patria),
Rome.

A Delegates' forum dedicated to all Academicians

BY PAOLO PETRONI
President of the Academy

Tn the pages that follow you will be able to read an effective and wide-ranging distillation of the events connected to the Delegates' Forum, held in Sardinia this past April. By definition, a forum aims to present participants with innovative, culturally significant topics relevant to the organisation itself. All sitting Delegates and Legates, or their representatives if they were unable to participate, were invited. Attendance was high: 181 Delegates (153 in Italy and 28 abroad). In total, with Academic Council Members, Coordinators, and spouses, 267 people attended the meeting in the Forte Village. The Delegate, as our Statute decrees, "represents the Academy in his/her jurisdiction and the other Academicians in his/her Delegation [and] is responsible for his/ her Delegation's activities". That is why the Forum gathered them together, but ideally it is directed at all Academicians. Indeed, the Delegates must bring word to all their associates of what they have seen and heard and of the Academic life's new ethos of participation and sharing. The Academy is not composed only of Delegates but also of Academicians who must be involved with every social activity. Since the Florence assembly in May 2015, 1,093 new members have joined the Academy (811 in Italy, 282 abroad); their average age is around 55 years (compared to the average member's age of 63), and 34% of them are female. These are not dry statistics: they are meaningful indicators of a living, thriving Academy, current and motivated, undergoing renewal and rejuvenation. Everyone, but especially the new arrivals (there are 10 new Delegations and 10 Legations), must feel that they are part of the Academy, not only of their own Delegation. The monthly Newsletter (now also available in En-

glish) was created expressly to keep everyone up to date, and for this reason too, Delegates must tell their members what they have learnt and experienced at the Forum: information rooted chiefly in highly timely topics. For the first time, speakers outside the Academy were invited. Alongside issues of internal relevance, such as administration, the Delegation's cultural role (meetings, prizes etc), and foreign Delegations' specific activities with their attendant problems, we also heard from "the other side", namely the world of cooks, restaurateurs, and industries creating machines for new cooking techniques (vacuum or low-temperature cooking etc). We also wanted the independent press to weigh in on food guides (and their credibility) and methods of evaluating restaurants. Overall, it was a lively and varied programme, within the time available, and above all, it focused on the present and the immediate future.

Participants were immersed in a highly inclusive, enterprising and progressive atmosphere as they exchanged opinions and experiences, transforming a list of names into a gallery of faces and personalities.

An important event for a superlative Academy.



An image of the Forum in the Conference Centre's plenary hall



An event with highly timely themes

The Forte Village in Santa Margherita di Pula, Sardinia, hosted the many Delegates gathered for a Forum held in a climate of unity, friendship and sharing.

BY SILVIA DE LORENZO



An image of the Forum in the Conference Centre's plenary hall

President Paolo Petroni greets and thanks the 181 Delegates, many having travelled from abroad and from distant locations (Guangdong, Beijing, Dubai, Singapore, San Francisco, Atlanta etc), opening a Forum focusing above all on timeliness. If the Academy desires a main role in today's society, the President affirms, it must keep abreast of current reality as an active participant. This is why the programme includes authoritative external speakers, introducing novel information and exploring the evolution of Italian cuisine.

The Forum's first part is dedicated to several interesting themes regarding Delegation management. Roberto Ariani, the Secretary General and Treasurer, delves into the matter, emphasising,

inter alia, the subject's normative, juristic and fiscal aspects. Various Delegates' contributions display a willingness and commitment to administer Delegations in the best possible way.

The second speaker is London Delegate Maurizio Fazzari, who underlines foreign Delegations' function as ambassadors for the Academy and Italian cuisine worldwide, enumerating the strong points (their important role in Italian communities; comparisons with restaurants abroad) and critical aspects of that role. He hopes for more robust contact with Italian Delegations and constant monitoring of foreign territories wherein to found Legations to ensure an even more pervasive Academic presence. We recall that Fazzari himself recently founded the Legations

in Cambridge, Glasgow and Moscow. The first non-Academic speaker comes from an industry serving the culinary arts. Maurizio Marrocco, executive chef at the Electrolux Chef Academy, illustrates cooking techniques (low-temperature, steam, vacuum) and technologies which are now nearly indispensable, especially in restaurants, to prevent foodstuffs' degradation and preserve their flavour and moisture. Luigi Pomata, patron and chef of the eponymous restaurant in Cagliari, reinforces that point, maintaining the prime importance of ingredient quality while recognising technology's ability to protect its characteristics. More presentations follow a sunlit coffee break on the grass. The next contribution, more an extemporaneous presentation than a prepared



Forte Village immersed in greenery

speech, is from Toni Sarcina, a debonair and loquacious journalist, foodie and founder, with his wife Terry, of a food and wine culture centre in Altopalato near Milan. With his erudition and witty anecdotes, he offers his personal perspective on the role of restaurant guides. He immediately admits his opposition to rankings, whether by stars, chef's hats or forks, and inspectors' parameters for judging restaurants. Assessment should be motivated by curiosity, the desire to understand the message which the cook is trying to transmit: how and why the food was prepared as it was. Often, instead, a dish is rejected because it is unfamiliar and evokes no memories.

President's Council Member Mimmo D'Alessio tackles Delegations' cultural activities: a rich and important history, with the Academy's cultural role in the food world going from strength to strength with support from government bodies. Conferences (he suggests various timely topics), publications (Delegations' publications, and those issued nationwide by the Academy, are presented), and links with hotel schools (to which teaching and updated information may be offered) are means of spreading culture geographically. Not to mention the many other centrally organised initiatives: the Library at the

Bicocca University; the prizes for promoting traditional products, Italian food culture and high-quality ingredients; the Food Culture Library; and participation in cultural events.

And then, here he comes: a chef (and much more) of the 'old school' (though he is barely over fifty), who learned to cook standing 'at the stove' (especially that of eminent masters), whom we know as harsh and sometimes even arrogant (though he is unassuming and kind): Carlo Cracco.

Almost modestly, he recounts his experiences without denying his career's exhausting early stages, when it was not easy to be accepted into a restaurant kitchen and everything still had to be learnt, including the passion for the work itself - though in that department he has never been lacking.

Hanging on his words, the public becomes attentive, and even those who previously considered him conceited and abrasive revise their assessment, appreciating his honesty and his brand of modesty. The chef continues his tale, revealing passion and determination, exemplified for instance by his repeated attempts before succeeding in collaborating with Gualtiero Marchesi. He also describes his television experience and the 'part' that in a sense he had to 'play', permitting cuisine to become a specta-

President Petroni awards the Orio Vergani medal to executive chef Paolo Simioni



cle and an entertainment in a time of crisis for his restaurant and many others. Having left MasterChef, he proudly dedicates himself to his passion and his dream, now a reality: to be a cook who expresses himself through food, striving for constant improvement without ostentation.

The meeting draws to a close and Paolo Petroni delivers the final address, assessing the two years of his incumbency which, he says, have 'flown by', due to relentless activity.

The Academy is rapidly growing: its worldwide presence is expanding with the foundation of 10 new Delegations, of which three are abroad, and 10 Delegations. The Academy is getting younger: its average age has gone from 63 to 57 years, with a generational and gender reshuffling (34% of the 1093 new Academicians in these past two years are female). The Academy has an important role alongside government bodies: for instance, this year it will again collaborate with the Italian Foreign Ministry for the International Week of Italian Cuisine. The Academy uses publications to reach the public: its Food Culture Library, whose second volume dedicated to salt and freshwater fish recipes was previewed at the meeting and greatly appreciated by participants; its Cookbook, already translated



into English, French and German; the Good Traditional Table Guides, sent for the first time to restaurants abroad, in whose new edition they are included; the Newsletter, now also in English, intended for Academicians and beyond (mayors, Councillors for Culture and Tourism, hotel schools, embassies, consulates, Italian Cultural Institutes etc). Finally and touchingly, the President draws attention to the 102,000 Euros raised, thanks to the solidarity of Italian and foreign Delegations (which he warmly thanks), for 20 businesses in the quake-stricken provinces of Rieti, Macerata and Ascoli Piceno. He points out that the Academy's was the first, and to date the only, concrete gesture (the funds gathered by the Italian Red Cross, emergency services and municipalities are still frozen) to inspire courage, promoting the strength to rebuild.

Two years after the unforgettable dinner in the Salone dei Cinquecento in Florence, Paolo Petroni concludes, the Delegates and the President look forward to a third, intense and productive year of renewed and constant collaborative commitment.

Opportunities to meet, exchange experiences and reinforce friendships exist not only throughout the meeting itself but especially during its meals, starring typical Sardinian foods. The welcome



From Dubai: Academic Council member
Victor Pablo Dana.



Atlanta Delegate Mauro Manzini

dinner's sumptuous buffet includes *fregola* (toasted spherical semolina pasta), *malloreddus* (Sardinian gnocchi), *porceddu arrosto* (roast suckling pig) and *seadas* (cheese and honey fritters) accompanied by traditionally dressed folk musicians. For the splendid gala dinner, executive chef Paolo Simioni (to whom the President awards the Orio Vergani medal) innovatively interprets *lorighittas* (braided pasta) with artichokes and mullet roe, and *pardulas* (saffron and ricotta tarts) transformed into a mousse, with orange, saffron and citrus fruit sauce.

As the dinner ends, the President than-

ks Salvino Leoni, Academic Council Member and Director of the Regional Study Centre, for valuable support in organising the event, extending special salutations to Regional Coordinator Gabriella Guiso and the Sardinian Delegates present. He ends by emphasising how the Forum's success is due, beyond the interesting topics discussed, especially to the strong friendship uniting the participants and their pride in belonging to the Academy; and the event is brought to a close by a spontaneous, earnest and enthralling standing ovation.

SILVIA DE LORENZO



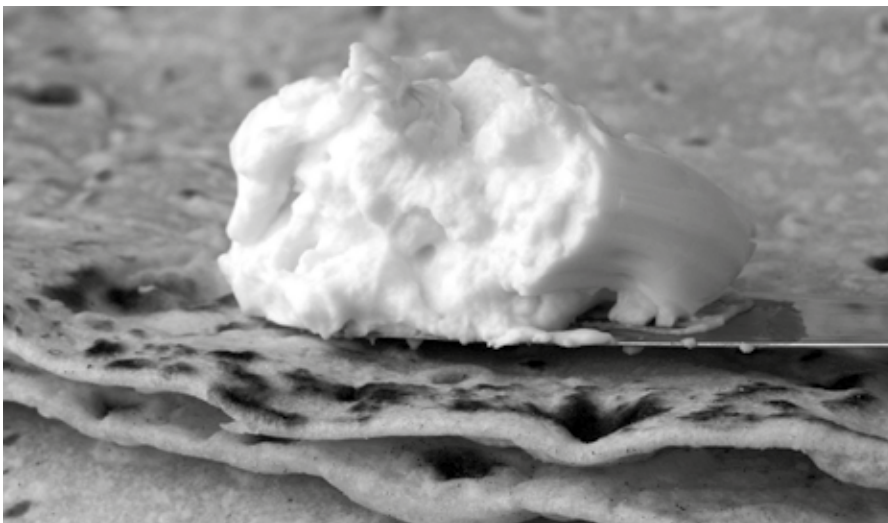
The gala dinner in the white room of the Oasis pool



When tradition safeguards future health

Cheese, the Academy's current annual theme, is often demonised but can easily be included in a healthy diet.

BY GERLANDO DAVIDE SCHEMBRI
Cervia-Milano Marittima Academician



Romagna has a particularly ancient cheese tradition: there is evidence from the first century AD of sheep-rearing for producing pecorino (sheep's curd cheese), which today exists in manifold variants. Shining examples of the soft version include *squacquerone* (PDO: Protected Designation of Origin), *ravgiolo* and *casatella*; hard varieties include *formaggio di fossa* ('pit cheese', also PDO), made of sheep's or cow's milk or both, and *caciotta* (semi-aged - sweet and soft, or aged - more pungent and externally darker). What else should we know about these and other cheeses and what lies beneath and behind cheese-making traditions? Cheeses, often vilified for their saturated fat and salt content, yet exalted for their calcium and vitamin D for bone health, are worrisome or health-giving depending on one's perspective. Firstly, publicly available nutritional tables for cheese reveal truly limited cholesterol ranging from 60 to

100 mg per 100 grammes of edible cheese: substantial but not excessive, especially considering the roughly equivalent amount found in meat, with eggs containing the most (400 mg/100 g). Why are these foods, often erroneously, still mostly blamed for blocked arteries and the attendant ailments? Saturated fat's bad reputation began in the 1970s, when, in the famous Seven Countries Study, researchers found a correlation between blood cholesterol, saturated fat consumed and heart disease. However, these recommendations are no longer tenable nor scientifically defensible. For several years already, the study's updated versions have demonstrated that the cause of cardiovascular ailments is actually arterial wall inflammation. Simply expressed: without inflammation, cholesterol could not accumulate in the arteries, causing heart attacks and strokes. This explains why, independently of saturated fats consumed (as a lone datum) but with low

general and blood-vessel inflammation, many individuals have no cardiovascular risk. Overall diet, not one single substance, affects health. What causes chronic inflammation? Excessive sugars, refined carbohydrates and processed foods. Consuming too many omega-6s, present in processed foods, for instance, makes cell walls overproduce chemical mediators including proinflammatory cytokines, causing inflammation. The true culprits are therefore overly processed foodstuffs: it's no coincidence that hydrogenated fat, sugar and salt are typical ingredients of processed foods, necessary *inter alia* to render them more tempting and palatable. Sugars, particularly, are chiefly responsible for metabolic syndrome, comprising symptoms from obesity to high blood sugar, which elevates cardiac risk. Food for thought: in Italy, two thirds of acute heart attack patients have metabolic syndrome, once almost non-existent, but 75% of them have normal cholesterol. We shouldn't consequently ignore total, HDL (good), and LDL (bad) cholesterol levels, but become better informed about food choices without subscribing to pseudoscientific myths. The only way to reduce inflammation is to revert to consuming ingredients in their most natural state. Cheese, in that sense, represents precisely that. It is easily absorbed even by lactose-intolerant individuals, and readily included in healthy daily eating. We can determine consumption by choosing a portion of approximately 50 grammes per meal (dinner or lunch) or 20 grammes per snack; a portion of grated cheese is 10 grammes. We can thereby



accurately control balanced consumption of proteins, vitamins and minerals, as well as fatty acids, which our bodies require. Our daily meals influence health. In this case, cheese is an important source of fat-soluble vitamins, which we also absorb through fats, and boasts an abundance of minerals. Fat-soluble vitamins exert a nutrigenomic function, entering cells and affecting DNA through nuclear receptors, determining gene expression in those cells. Vitamin D is particularly crucial. 90% of this vitamin depends on sunlight acting on cholesterol in our skin; the remaining 10% comes from diet, so cheese constitutes a significant source thereof. Vitamin D acts on calcium metabolism and bones, guarding against osteoporosis and osteopenia; it synergistically interacts with the calcium present in cheese. Generally, 100g of cheese (varying by type) contains roughly 1 gramme of calcium, a useful mineral at any age, whether for growing children, adolescents experiencing a growth spurt, or pregnant, lactating or menopausal individuals. Men can also benefit from cheese: its vitamin A collaborates with vitamin D by acting on adipocytes (fat cells), helping to reduce body fat, facilitating a healthy weight. It is also an important source of protein (as mentioned earlier), phosphorus (complementing the role of



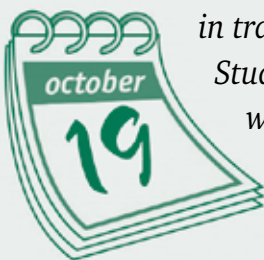
calcium for bone health), potassium (crucial for muscle performance), zinc (indispensable for the function of over 70 enzymes), and vitamin B. Such an abundant source of nutrients can clearly do wonders for health, but this applies to quality-controlled, authentically produced local cheese derived from pro-

perly managed animals, constituting an ingredient as precious as it is ancient. The Academy's promotion of cheese is also a promotion of health against the degradation of European cuisine: in the ancient cheese-making tradition, this becomes a form of wealth.

GERLANDO DAVIDE SCHEMBRI

ECUMENICAL DINNER 2017

The ecumenical dinner, which gathers all Academicians in Italy and abroad around the same virtual table, will occur on the 19th of October at 8:30 PM, and its theme will be "Cheese in traditional regional cuisine". This theme was chosen by the "Franco Marengi" Study Centre and approved by the President's Council to celebrate an ingredient which is abundant and varied in Italy, and which stars or has a supporting role in numerous traditional regional recipes as well as innovative dishes. The Delegates will make sure that the menu pays homage to the starring ingredient and that the dinner is accompanied by an appropriate cultural presentation to illustrate this important subject.





On the labelling of extra-virgin olive oil

In particular cases, EU regulations allow nutraceutical data to be included on labels.

BY MAURO GAUDINO

Roma Nomentana Academician



The new frontier of extra-virgin olive oil is nutraceuticals (or better, nutriceutics), a neologistic portmanteau of ‘nutrition’ and ‘pharmaceuticals’ coined by Dr Stephen De Felice in 1989, intending to blend certain particularly health-giving ingredients’ nutritional and pharmaceutical properties. Some nutraceuticals can also be classified as dietary supplements. In the particular case of extra-virgin olive oil, several scientific studies have ascertained its benefits for cardiovascular and neurovegetative (relevant to e.g. Alzheimer’s disease) health and in preventing free-radical damage to cellular DNA.

How, and within what limits, may these properties be used and claimed in commercially promoting the quality of extra-virgin olive oil? The European Union has a blanket prohibition on food labels claiming or even alluding to any ability to prevent or cure human diseases.

In the European Parliament and Council’s EU regulation number 1169/2011, dated 25 October 2011, on the provision of food information to consumers, point 3 of article 7, regarding ‘fair information practices’, reads: “Subject to derogations provided for by Union law applicable to natural mineral waters and foods for particular nutritional uses, food information shall not attribute to any food the property of preventing, treating or curing a human disease, nor refer to such properties”. This prohibition also extends to food advertisements and packaging. However, EU regulation number 432/2012, establishing permitted health claims made on foods, allows extra-virgin olive oil packaging to declare the following: “Olive oil polyphenols contribute to the protection of blood lipids from oxidative stress”, specifying that “[t]he claim may be used only for olive oil which contains at least 5 mg of hydroxytyrosol and its derivatives (e.g.

oleuropein complex and tyrosol) per 20 g of olive oil. In order to bear the claim information shall be given to the consumer that the beneficial effect is obtained with a daily intake of 20g of olive oil”. Importantly, out of all claims made regarding polyphenols to date, only those linked with extra-virgin olive oil, with its hydroxytyrosol and other derivatives, have been accepted by the EFSA (European Food Safety Authority), entrusted with scientifically evaluating food-related claims.

This recognition has catalysed the European project ‘Aristoil’, for keeping the Mediterranean olive oil sector competitive, thereby facilitating production of a nutraceutically enhanced olive oil through the development of innovative applications, production methods and quality controls. This 36-month project has attracted a cluster of Mediterranean extra-virgin olive oil producers from Italy, Croatia, Greece, Cyprus and Spain, forming a total of 17 partners. Its EU funding of over 2 million Euros will indubitably increase the nutraceutical qualities of oil from the Mediterranean countries involved in the experiment. In the USA, instead, already several years ago the Food and Drug Administration, a national body monitoring the quality and properties of American foods and pharmaceuticals, began permitting extra-virgin olive oil packaging to make scientifically verified health claims. The acknowledgement of extra virgin olive oil’s beneficial properties in Europe and the USA indicates increased worldwide awareness of the link between food and health, occasioning the replacement



of certain ingredients with others perceived as healthier, such as those involved in the 'Mediterranean Diet', including olive oil. Thanks to this growing awareness, global olive oil consumption has increased by 73% in only 25 years: a sign of changing food habits in Japan, Brazil, Russia, the USA, Britain and Germany, where olive oil exports have risen the most.

Turning our attention to the most recent past, we find that in the first eight months of 2016, Italian olive oil exports worldwide increased by 8%. The greatest growth occurred in China, where, though quantity remains low relative to population, imports of Italian olive oil rose by 18%. In Japan, imports increased by 7%, and in the USA, solely responsible for a third of our exports, the figure rose by 11%. We hope that this positive trend continues in the co-



ming years, thanks to Aristoi's expected improvement of extra-virgin olive oil's nutraceutical properties. This, indeed, should facilitate the inclusion of health claims on extra-virgin olive oil packaging both domestically and abroad. This will constitute an additional impetus to global consumption of what Dante's *Divine Comedy* calls our "olive liquor"

(Paradiso XXI, 115), already especially prized by international consumers for the multiplicity of aromas and flavours which the dizzying variety of olive cultivars growing in Italy bestow upon this highly valued ingredient of ours, which I might dare to define as 'polyphenolically' functional.

MAURO GAUDINO

GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE MAGAZINE

Academicians' contributions to the magazine are not only welcome, but essential. However Academicians should keep in mind some important guidelines so that their contributions, which are the fruit of their passion and dedication, are expeditiously published.

● **Articles:** it is essential that the **text of articles be sent via email**, in MS Word format (not pdf) to the following address: redazione@accademia1953.it

● **Article length:** it is important that articles are between 3,500 and 7,000 characters (including spaces); this is the best way to avoid cuts that are bothersome for both the editors and those submitting the texts. All computers should be able to provide character counts..

● Each issue of the magazine is printed one month ahead of the cover date so that it can be delivered to the Academicians by that date. Those submissions that are time sensitive should be sent in ample time.

● **"From the Delegations" Section:** In order to facilitate reading, please **limit articles to a maximum of 2,500 characters including spaces.**

● Please remember that in the "From the Delegations" section as well as elsewhere, **descriptions of meetings held outside the territory of the Delegation or in the homes of Academicians, unless they are associated with an important event, will not be published.** Also, **please do not include a list of dishes and wines.** Such listing should appear on the appropriate rating form regarding convivial meetings.

● **Rating forms for convivial meetings:** should be sent to the Secretariat (segreteria@accademia1953.it). It is also important to limit remarks in the "notes and comments" section of the form to **800 characters** (maximum 1,000) spaces included in order to avoid cuts. Rating forms that reach the Secretariat more than 30 days after the event will be discarded.

● We also request that you not submit reports on convivial meetings held **outside the territory of the Delegation**, or that take place in the **homes of Academicians**, or are otherwise not held in restaurants or public venues, as they will not be published.