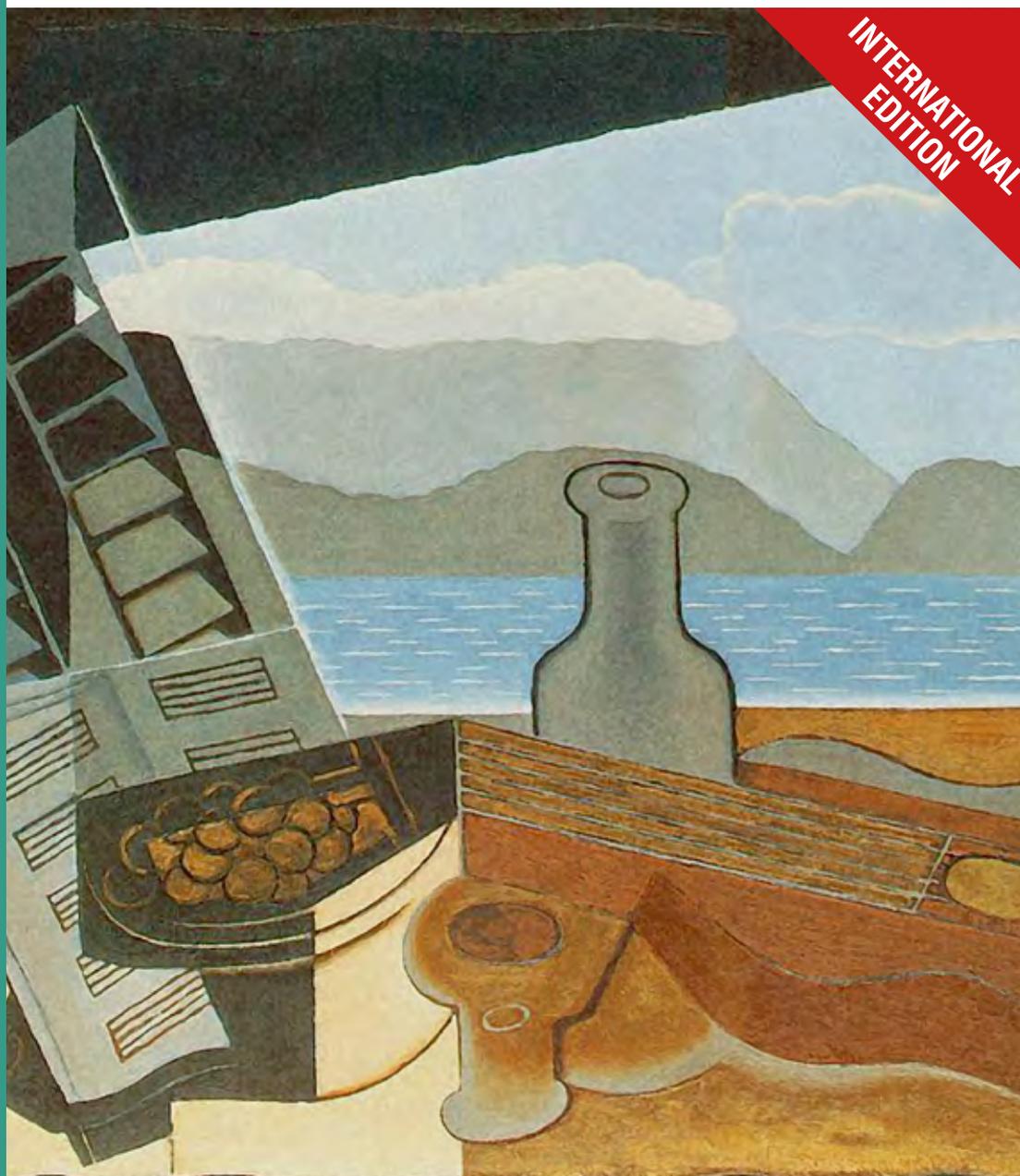


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ACCADEMIA ITALIANA DELLA CUCINA

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EDITOR IN CHIEF
PAOLO PETRONI

COPY EDITOR
SILVIA DE LORENZO

LAYOUT
SIMONA MONGIU

TRANSLATOR
ANTONIA FRASER FUJINAGA

THIS ISSUE INCLUDES ARTICLES BY
Nicola Barbera,
Silvia De Lorenzo,
Gianni Di Giacomo,
Paolo Petroni.



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



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On the cover: graphic elaboration of *The Open Window* (1921) by Juan Gris, M. Meyer Collection, Zurich.

Arrigo Cipriani: a sensationally 'contrarian' interview

"Chefs are ruining excellent Italian cuisine". But is this true?

BY PAOLO PETRONI

President of the Academy

Arrigo Cipriani, the legendary owner of Harry's Bar in Venice, caused a stir with an interview given to the able journalist Aldo Cazzullo of the *Corriere della Sera*. What, in essence, did the 85-year-old Cipriani say? That authentic Italian cuisine is found in *trattorie* (informal taverns). And that he's always opposed the stars awarded by the 'tyre guide' (as he calls the Michelin guide) and narcissism in chefs, who should remain in the kitchen. In brief, the article's title thunders: "Chefs are ruining excellent Italian cuisine. Only cooks work for me". The Academy has never liked the word 'chef', which better suits the head of the kitchen staff, but here we are dealing with deeper issues. Let us for a moment set aside the glorious history of this iconic locale a stone's throw from St Mark's Square. It is common knowledge by now that it was founded in 1931 by Arrigo's father Giuseppe and that over the years its regulars have included such celebrities as Hemingway, Orson Welles, Liz Taylor with Richard Burton, Onassis, Agnelli and many others. Today its parent company Cipriani SA employs 400 cooks in 26 restaurants worldwide. And Arrigo, the consummate connoisseur, has the luxury of opposing Marchesi (initiator of this decline), Cracco (purveyor of unpleasant food), Cannavacciuolo (he's written more books than Proust), Bottura (somewhat heavy), and Visani (despite his likeability). He has previously inveighed against Master-Chef, rectangular, long or irregular plates, and large or oddly shaped forks. He also loathes tasting menus which force diners to eat what the chef decides. "Cipriani thought" also maintains that Italian cuisine has become a shoddy version of French cooking and that these starred chefs

are driving restaurants to soullessness. Their dishes aim only to display the skill of those preparing them. Overall, such sentiments often flicker in the minds of many aficionados of Italian cuisine. Finally someone speaks frankly! This, however, also represents a regression of over 50 years, when the owner presided over the till welcoming patrons while the cooks lurked silently in the kitchen plying their mysterious trade. Never mind Paul Bocuse's epoch-making revolution: undone! But how's the food these days at Harry's Bar's historic location at 1323 Calle Vallaresso? TripAdvisor mauls it: over a third of its 1,900-plus reviews pronounce it lacking or even awful a real rout! The *Espresso* guide mentions it, but without assigning a score, recounting: "Harry's Bar is more than a restaurant; it's a locus of the collective imagination. Its jovial atmosphere, swarms of waiters and historically seminal dishes are timeless and unchanged: carpaccio, tagliolini *au gratin*, Venetian liver - with two mains and a dessert costing over 150 Euros". The 'tyre guide' fails to mention it and our Academy's Guide assigns it three Temples. The atmosphere is priceless: one breathes legend; a Bellini at the bar is an essential respite. Venice's history is human history, a monument to the old Venetian aristocratic tradition. This unique locale, always thronged and almost magical, cannot be judged by the palate alone; one mustn't be taken aback by the high prices (Venice abounds in far higher ones). One adapts one's judgement and standards. Arrigo Cipriani's verdicts form an integral part of his personality and in any case, rightly or wrongly, spring from his boundless love of his work and his hometown.





A decidedly encouraging final balance

During the meeting, the Final Balance for 2016 was unanimously approved, and the Academicians' robust sense of belonging was palpable.



Following Paolo Petroni's greeting to the Council members, almost all present, the meeting opened with a 'special event'. A splendid silver and bronze bell was donated to the President by Academy by Academic Council member and Crotona Delegate Adriana Liguori Proto, who had commissioned it some time ago by the celebrated Calabrian goldsmith Gerardo Sacco. Having noticed that the President of the Academy had no bell with which to signal the opening of important events, the Delegate chose to rectify this through a truly precious object, with an elegantly wrought silver handle and a bronze body to maintain the classic sonorous tone, which the President caused to echo round the hall, "officially" initiating the proceedings. A well-received gift, Petroni declared while thanking the Delegate, which will

remain with the Academy to mark official occasions. And such events are also important because of the Academy's substantial worldwide presence, with nearly 7,500 members and approximately 300 Delegations in Italy and abroad. And on this topic Paolo Petroni points out the noteworthy stability of the number of Academicians: in 2015-2017, 1,093 new members joined, and the average age fell from 63 to 57 years, with a notable female component. To consolidate the sense of belonging, Petroni recalls that alongside the Academy's insignia, members receive a personal certificate signed by the President, confirming each Academician's value within their Delegations. The President then presented the cover of the *Food Culture Library's* third volume, dedicated to cheese, out in September: the series' aim, he points out,

is precisely to increase readers' loyalty, and it has enjoyed flattering success. The volumes are issued every six months: in spring, one of the *Itineraries'* volumes is updated (*Sauces, Gravies and Condiments* and *Sea and Freshwater Fish* are already in bookshops), and in September, the volume dedicated to that year's ecumenical theme is released (*The Use of Cheese in Traditional Regional Cuisine* is forthcoming). The first are sent to Council members, Delegates, Regional Coordinators, members of the "Franco Marengi" Study Centre, and Regional Study Centre Directors (who can request copies for Regional Study Centre members); the ecumenical/annual theme volumes are sent to the Delegates, who distribute them to all Academicians.

The agenda continued with the report on the Final Balance for 2016 by Treasurer and Secretary General Roberto Ariani, who, commenting on the various entries, pointed out that all members were fully paid up for 2016; that the Ministry of Culture had reinstated its grant to the Academy in its capacity of an Institution of the Republic, in recognition of its important role in food culture; and that a stable population of taxpayers continues to destine 0.5% of their income tax, as allowed by Italian law, to the Academy, strongly indicating the affectionate bond between Academicians and our institution.

Ariani then read out the positive report on the Final Balance by the Independent Auditing Society, before yielding the floor to Gianni Limberti, President of the Board of Auditors, who read the report confirming the correctness of



the criteria used. The Final Balance was then put to a vote and the assembly unanimously approved it.

Finally, Paolo Petroni presented the proposed amendments to two articles of the Regulations, namely article 11, paragraphs 1 and 2 (the first approved without modification and the second with one change), and article 17, paragraph 6 (approved).

Before adjourning the meeting, President Petroni asked the Academic Advisory Council members to remember the quake-stricken populations of Central Italy, to whom the Academy alone gave concrete assistance by delivering

102,000 Euros' worth of cheques, gathered from Academicians worldwide, to the selected breeders and restaurateurs, and the Orio Vergani Prize, consisting of an ice cream machine worth 10,000 Euros, to the Hotel Institute in Amatrice, whose students moved to Rieti after their irreparably damaged building had to be demolished around the time of the meeting.

He closed by announcing the Council's next meeting in late October and the Delegates' Assembly meeting next May. And the lively peal of the President's Bell rang out!

(S.D.L.)

THE TEMPLE OF HERA LACINIA AND THE ACADEMIC BELL

*On a commission by Adriana Liguori Proto, Crotone Delegate and Academic Council member, Gerardo Sacco has created a **precious one-of-a-kind model** of the Temple of Hera Lacinia in Crotone. The temple was intentionally wrought in transparent plexiglas, allowing a view of the **Academic Bell** housed in its centre.*



*The bell's handle is of 925/000 sterling silver cast by the lost-wax process, bearing motifs recalling some of the earth's bountiful gifts to the noblest Italian cuisine: vines, fruits, vegetables, citrus fruits and sheaves of wheat. The corners have reproductions of apotropaic masks, talismans from the southern Italian Greek colonies to attract **health, fortune and happiness.***

CROTONE ACADEMICIAN GERARDO SACCO

*Born in Crotone in 1940, he knew early on that he had the goldsmith's vocation. In 1963 he began commercial work: in his 'workshop-laboratory', Sacco revived past goldsmithing techniques and specialised in a style with roots in the culture of Magna Grecia (the Greek colonies in Southern Italy) as well as Mediterranean peasant traditions. Numerous Italian and international prizes have made him **the best-known Calabrian goldsmith in Italy and abroad**, partially due to his association with important figures in culture and show business.*





Let's talk food

The meeting of the "Franco Marengi" Study Centre: experiences, new ideas and future prospects.

BY SILVIA DE LORENZO



The meeting opens with Paolo Petroni's emotional address remembering the Study Centre's President Alfredo Pelle, who recently passed away. He proceeds to present the FMCS's new President, Sergio Corbino, and Vice-President Giuseppe Benelli, already a member of the study group, which has also gained two new members. Gaetano Basile, Honorary Academician for Palermo, has collaborated with prestigious Italian and international news outlets during his lengthy career as a journalist, and has authored numerous articles and monographs on the cuisine of Palermo and Sicily. Recognised as "the best ambassador of Italian food and wine" by the Italian Foreign Press Association, in 2012 he received the Rosario La Duca Prize, "A Life for Palermo", from Inner Wheel Palermo. Danilo Gasparini tea-

ches Agriculture and Food History at the University of Padova. He teaches Master's courses on culinary culture and is on several important academic boards in libraries and research and study centres. He has numerous publications on the socioeconomic agricultural history of the Veneto region and the history of that region's cuisine. This cultural hub, whence radiate the spokes leading to the Academy's activities, has now been reconstituted through the nomination of eminent personages from various sectors of Italian food culture. These include universities: Andrea Vitale, a lecturer at the University of Milan, had already emphasised in the previous meeting how the collaboration between the Study Centre and the academic world could form a barrier to 'non-culture', suggesting that some students from his degree course

liaise with the Academy regarding internships through which to focus their thesis projects. From words to deeds: Vitale informs his colleagues that by virtue of an agreement between the University of Milan and the Academy, Tiziano Aldeghi of Lecco, a student in his degree course in Restaurant Science and Technology (in the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences), is enrolled in an educational internship at the Academy's offices in Via Torriani, in pursuit of his degree project "Italian Academy of Cuisine, cultural value and juristic relevance. An Association for protecting Italian cuisine". His thesis supervisors will include Milano Navigli Delegate Giovanni Spezia, who is also his tutor. Aldeghi will participate in several of the Academy's evening events to discuss his positive experiences, and Vitale expresses hope that



similar future educational initiatives will connect students to the Academy. The meeting proceeds with a roundtable discussion about the role of industry in the restaurant sector: a theme suggested by President Petroni, also because it was presented at the recent Delegates' Forum. Can industry influence cuisine? Regarding this issue, the many talks emphasise that cooks cannot be bound to their equipment providers, because the heart of cuisine is its raw materials, which must be local and of high quality. Everyone agrees that ingredients are the chief determinant of good cooking, but not industrial ingredients: rather, those originating from a cultural heritage which concomitantly stimulates the cook's intellectual curiosity. On this point, Gualtiero Marchesi notes, "cuisine is knowledge of raw materials and how to use them intelligently".

Many point out that lifestyles have changed, as have cooking methods, and industry takes advantage of new tendencies (diets, food sensitivities, avoidance of certain ingredients): the Academy must cultivate cuisine against both the 'food terrorism' of certain television programmes, and the media circus around cooking based on "fantastic" food (Baraldi), presenting the

preparation of dishes which the audience will never cook, being satisfied by mere viewing. Speaking of new lifestyles which allow increasingly less time for food preparation, Benelli observes that technology progresses regardless, and that in Genova, for example, a robot, relatively affordable at 5000 Euros, is being elaborated which can, inter alia, be programmed to cook. He also describes changes in food terminology: communication evolves and younger generations invent new terms or use foreign words to express terms they consider obsolete. And here the most debated issue emerges: the involvement of hotel schools, in which, Basile stresses, regrettably the very names of recipes are unknown or misrepresented, or the recipes are distorted through ignorance.

It may be time, hopes Gasparini, for greater Academic involvement in education, perhaps through the organisation of specialised courses on tradition, in its contemporary sense of inheritance and critical transmission to avoid losing diversity in cuisine, products and language (Padovani). One could continue at length describing the various and multifarious insights emerging from the many talks, demonstrating the participants' passion and readiness

for action, expressed through a wealth of ideas and suggestion: this is the Study Centre's mission.

The next items on the agenda are addressed. First and foremost President Petroni announces the release in bookshops of the Food Culture Library's second volume: *Sea and freshwater fish in regional cuisine*, distributed and greatly appreciated. He adds that following the volume about cheese in cooking, forthcoming in September, we expect another in the spring, dedicated to the cuisine of the vegetable garden.

We're now on the subject of this year's theme, and suggestions for next year's theme are solicited by having FMSC members compile a form. The most popular suggestions will be evaluated by the President's Council.

In his additional capacity as Vice-President of the Académie Internationale de la Gastronomie, Paolo Petroni announces the impending ceremony for delivering its awards already assigned by the AIG to various Italians for 2017. The *Grand Prix de l'Art de la Cuisine* (Grand Prize for Culinary Art) goes to Enrico Crippa of the Piazza Duomo restaurant in Alba; the National Culinary Literature Prize will be bestowed upon Gigi Padovani. All adjourn to the Marchesi alla Scala restaurant, in the presence of Carlo Cracco, the pupil, and Crippa, the 'Master'.

President Sergio Corbino thanks the FMSC members for their interesting discussions, which responded fully to the goals of the Academy's cultural arm, emphasising the synergy between the activities of the "Franco Marengi" Study Centre, tasked with elaborating strategies for enhancing the Academy's image to a larger public, and the Regional Study Centres, responsible for activities within their local jurisdictions.

Given the location, the 'work lunch', prepared in full view, could not have been other than 'Masterly'. Beet juice risotto with parmesan fondue; salmon with a delicate rhubarb sauce; and cream and Grand Marnier mousse.

SILVIA DE LORENZO



The pleasure of being at table

Choosing raw materials and wines; preparing, presenting and interpreting recipes; the rules for a flawless table setting.

BY NICOLA BARBERA

Milano Duomo Academician

Pellegrino Artusi maintained that life has two main functions: nutrition and reproduction. Both must be ideally satisfied, on the one hand so as to render life more pleasant, and on the other, to benefit humanity. Indeed, if we did not eat (part of the primordial survival instinct) and feel carnal urges (the propagation instinct), our species would vanish.

Satisfying a need must always be associated with a pleasure: self-preservation relies principally on taste, while reproduction, on touch; consequently, these are the most important of our senses. Smell can be considered complementary to taste; the other two, sight and hear-

ing, connected to the arts, are deemed 'superior', while they only help us to live better. Why are those who delight in observing a beautiful painting or listening to good music perceived as superior to those who derive pleasure from excellent food? A recipe's preparation, presentation and interpretation can be compared, as is observed frequently, to those of a musical score, which can attain superlative peaks depending on its interpreter. And just as dance is a fleeting art, so is good food, since both are experienced and then vanish, leaving only pleasant, or even sublime, sensations and memories. Goethe maintained that, once guaranteed food and survival,

humans become creative. One can therefore affirm that people eat, but intelligent people know how to eat.

One must of course distinguish between hunger, the primary need for nutrients whose absence causes unpleasantness or even pain, and appetite, a prelude to the pleasure of eating, with its consequent delights in observing the colours and perceiving the fragrances and aromas of the various foodstuffs. Beyond gastronomic pleasure, a well-made meal must instil cheer and a good mood in diners, invigorated by courteous conversation (ambient noise permitting!).

Cooking is a science (with rules to fol-





low) and an art (genuine creativity, not banal improvisation); its general principles, irrespective of specific recipes, are respect for the geographical area and its traditions, and modern technology which must be used insofar as it is helpful but cannot replace traditional methods. Raw materials are paramount and account for at least half of the final result (60%, Marchesi maintains); the cook is not a physician or a pharmacist and the kitchen is not a beauty farm, so we must not fret excessively over calories, because each cooking tradition has its staple fats which at most can be 'lightened'. Ingredients in foods and their sauces (not many) must be readily recognisable; one must recall that even the simplest recipe requires time and effort; finally, it is important for crockery to be properly warmed: Montezuma gave each of his guests a brazier so their food wouldn't cool down.

Well-chosen wines (except for teetotalers) are indispensable to the success of a meal; one must be sure to procure sufficient bottles of the same wine: by and large, a third of a bottle per guest, prioritising wines which can 'survive' multiple courses.

Cutlery (in Italian, *coperto*, meaning 'covered' as in 'cover charge', since they were once brought to the table covered by a napkin): the first were surely spo-

ons, primordially a shell or other naturally concave object, which could convey liquids to the mouth better than a hand; later, they were made of carved wood, and subsequently of metal, sometimes precious. Next to develop was the knife, initially a sharp flint flake or bone point, and then, in the Bronze Age, a dagger with only one cutting edge. Thirdly, the fork appeared in the early eleventh century and was hotly resisted as unmanly, perhaps because it recalled the hairpins used in ladies' coiffures; but by the seventeenth century the prejudice had been overcome, such that an English gentleman decided to introduce it to England after encountering it in Italy. The fork, initially with two tines, was decisive in tackling food, removing the necessity to touch solid foods with hands. In the eighteenth century the fork acquired a third tine and the cutlery set was termed "Saint Mark"; at the end of that century, in Naples, Ferdinand IV's cook added a fourth tine as found in most current forks, further facilitating 'grace' in bringing solid foods to one's mouth and especially for eating *maccheroni* (macaroni) more elegantly.

Cutlery settings have greatly varied over time; for instance, in 13th-century Florence, the Guelphs placed all their cutlery on the right of their plates, while

the Ghibellines arranged it above, between the plate and the glasses. In contemporary Italy, as we know, the knife goes on the right, nearest the plate, with the blade pointing inwards, with the spoon to the right of that, bowl upwards. The fork is to the left of the plate with its tines pointing upwards, and the smaller fruit or dessert cutlery goes between plate and glasses: nearest the plate is the fork, with its handle to the left, then the spoon, and then the knife. A similar arrangement exists in France, but with the points of spoons and forks pointing towards the tablecloth. Glasses are positioned slightly to the right of the plate, and there must be two at least: one for water, closer to the plate, and one for wine (or even four, if required, for the aperitif and for white, red and dessert wines).

Bread goes on the left. The napkin, except for specific decorative purposes, goes on the right or the left alongside the cutlery. To signal that waiters may collect a plate, used cutlery goes vertically in the centre thereof (pointing to 6:30), preferably with tines and spoon bowls pointing towards the plate. One indicates that one has not yet finished eating by placing cutlery on the plate with handles pointing roughly to 4:00 and 8:00.

NICOLA BARBERA

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.





Orthorexia: a new type of eating disorder

It can cause malnutrition, emotional instability and social isolation.

BY GIANNI DI GIACOMO

Chieti Academician

Attention to proper diet and a healthy lifestyle has become an integral part of our society. Not a day passes without the media dispensing advice and suggestions regarding what and how to eat, how food affects our health, what risks we incur in choosing or avoiding various products, and whether any particular diet allows rapid weight loss or significant health improvements. The result is, perhaps, to transform eating pleasure into an anxious attitude concerning everything to do with food.

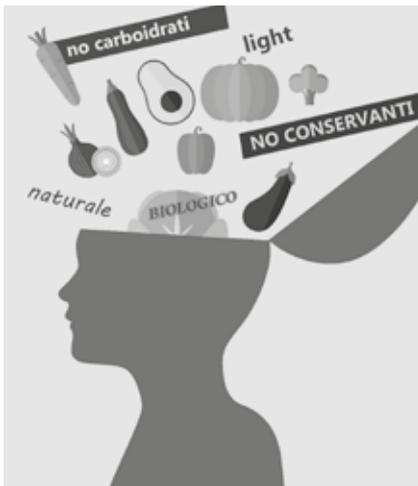
It seems paradoxical, but sometimes, eating too healthily can harm health. Excessive dietary limitations and an extremely stern dietary regime can morph into a veritable eating disorder, an obsessive-compulsive disease defined as 'orthorexia'.

The term *orthorexia nervosa*, initially coined by Bratman and Knight in 1997, describes a condition whereby dietary behaviour is marked by a pathological obsession with organically pure and healthy eating. This condition is often associated with a restrictive diet which, in pursuit of optimal health, can occasion serious ailments linked to malnutrition, as well as emotional instability and social isolation. The orthorexic becomes genuinely phobic of foods perceived as 'dangerous', such as GMOs (genetically modified organisms). It's as if 'healthy food' became a moral mission, outranking every other area of life. After bulimia and anorexia, ailments concerned with food quantity, this emerging new category of eating disorder therefore focuses on food quality, and this nutritional obsession, 'orthorexia'

(from the Greek *orthos*, 'correct', and *orexis*, 'appetite'), is a phenomenon which is reaching worrisome proportions.

Among the disorder's distinctive characteristics is excessive reflection about food. Affected individuals can spend over 3 or 4 hours daily considering which foods to select and how to prepare and eat them, demanding only health benefits which may not coincide with enjoyment, and prioritising healthiness over taste. They feel guilty whenever they lapse from their habitual diet, and enjoy self-mastery only when they eat in what they consider the correct manner. They generally engage in obsessive behaviour around food selection, research, preparation and consumption, in various phases: planning meals days in advance, to avoid ingredients perceived





as dangerous; dedicating vast amounts of time to research and food shopping to the detriment of other activities, and in some cases growing one's own vegetables; and preparing food according to specific procedures held to protect against health risks (e.g. using special cooking methods or cooking pots).

Orthorexics worry about the quality of their food, expending considerable time examining its origin (for instance, checking pesticide exposure); verifying its production methods (whether nutritional benefits could have been diminished by preparation procedures); and perusing commercial food packaging (for example, whether labels provide sufficient information to assess the quality of specific ingredients). Such worries could occasion complex food-related behaviour (for example, rules regarding which foods can be taken with which meal or at particular times of day), or beliefs regarding optimal digestion times for particular foods during which certain other ingredients must be avoided. Given their attention to pure and healthy foods, orthorexia nervosa patients tend to avoid foods potentially containing GMOs or significant amounts of salt, sugars, fats, or other undesirable substances (food colouring, preservatives, pesticides etc). Such food restrictions usually involve the omission of nutrients which are crucial to one's daily energetic needs, resulting in unbalanced or insufficient diets. Psychologically, orthorexics are intensely frustrated when

their food rituals are hindered or interrupted in any way, and feel disgust when food purity seems to have been violated, as well as guilt and self-loathing (sometimes virulently strong) according to their degree of adherence to the system of rules revolving around their subjective perception of right and wrong. And the very rigidity of those food-related rules and beliefs can have other negative psychological consequences: emotional dissatisfaction and social isolation. Any deviation, however minimal, from the rules produces a cascade of negative emotions, including anger, guilt and a depressed mood, potentially leading to psychosomatic physical symptoms (indigestion, vomiting, nausea). Guilt in turn triggers increased rigidity in these food rules, in a vicious cycle marked by constantly escalating anxiety. Instead, after complying with food rules, orthorexics generally feel satisfaction and increased self-esteem, associated with a sense of control over their lives. Shared meals constitute one of our cru-

cial means of socialising and forging interpersonal bonds, but for orthorexics those occasions can turn into veritable minefields. Consuming food perceived as impure, or prepared by someone else, generates considerable anxiety. The meal therefore is not an opportunity for joy and serene companionship, but fertile ground for an array of negative thoughts and emotions which prevent food enjoyment. Orthorexics firmly believe that they can maintain a healthy diet as long as they live alone and retain full control of all their surroundings. They feel right eating foods that they consider healthy, and this encourages them to assume an attitude of moral superiority, causing them to shun interactions with others with differing dietary habits. Food quality control overrides personal and moral values and social, work-related and emotional relations, potentially compromising these individuals' overall functionality and welfare.

GIANNI DI GIACOMO

E-MAIL ADDRESSES OF ITALIAN ACADEMY OF CUISINE



President:
presidente@accademia1953.it

Secretary General:
segretariogenerale@accademia1953.it

National Secretariat:
segreteria@accademia1953.it

Editorial office:
redazione@accademia1953.it

Administration:
amministrazione@accademia1953.it