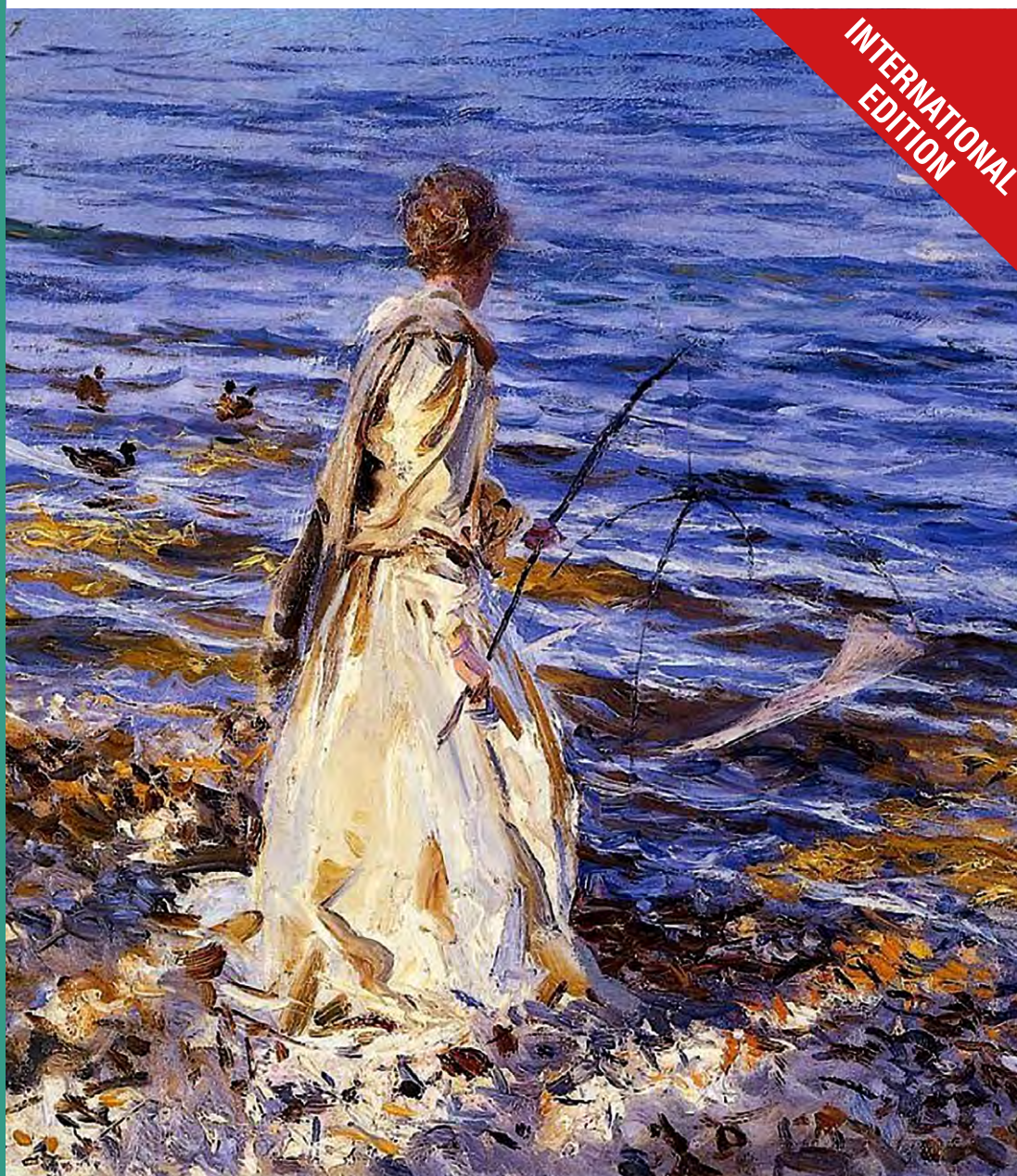


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On the cover: Graphic elaboration of *Girl Fishing*
(1913) by John Singer Sargent, Private collection.

We have lost a legend of world cuisine

Reflecting on the influence of Nouvelle Cuisine on Italian cooking - and on the dangers we face today.

BY PAOLO PETRONI

President of the Academy

The French chef **Alain Senderens**, who famously invented *Nouvelle Cuisine* in the 1970s, passed away this June in Corrèze, France, at the age of 77. During the Seventies, a handful of young chefs, including Paul Bocuse, Alain Chapel, the Troisgrois brothers, Michel Guerard and Alain Senderens, rebelled against an archaic cuisine based on sauces, long and arduous preparation methods, sauce bases prepared in advance, and heavy fats, and inaugurated a light cooking style with fresh and simple ingredients, advocating a 'new cuisine'. They were ardently supported and encouraged in this by two French food critics and journalists, Henri Gault and Christian Millau (authors of an innovative restaurant guide later introduced to Italy by the newspaper *L'Espresso*), and in 1973 they even launched a manifesto for this 'new cuisine', a more modern, swift and seasonal style which would reinstate regional variety.

Though these concepts appear obvious today, at the time *Nouvelle Cuisine* was highly innovative and sensational: its cooks became famous, their names and fame independent of their recipes, in a culinary paradigm shift which continues to influence how we eat: the 'farm to fork' idea has its origins there. That new fashion, alongside many benefits, also brought several distortions including tiny portions, high prices, counterintuitive combinations and excessively elaborate plating. Senderens was among the first to combine contrasting flavours, such as sweet and salty: his signature dishes include vanilla lobster and roast duck in the manner of Apicius. He was also the first to pair each menu item with a wine. L'Archestrate, Senderens' restaurant in Rue de Varenne in Paris, earned three Michelin stars in 1978, a recognition shared at the time with only three other Parisian restaurants (Tour d'Argent, Taillevent and Joël Robuchon). In 1985, the chef assumed command of the Lucas Carton restaurant in Place de la Madeleine, where he maintained the three-star rating until 2005. He caused quite a stir at the time when he asked to be removed from the Michelin

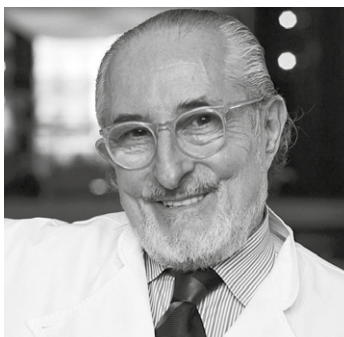
guide, having decided to transform his restaurant into a luxury bistro. It was demoted to two stars! But his new dishes, prepared with soya sauce and oriental spices, were greatly appreciated; prices were drastically reduced and earnings rose significantly. This monument to the refined cooking of France and beyond, signalling a rupture with the *haute cuisine* of the early twentieth century, subsequently influenced

legions of chefs including several in Italy, of whom the most famous was **Gualtiero Marchesi**. Other Italian chefs were very young apprentices of Senderens, notably **Carlo Cracco** and **Riccardo Monco**, who is now the chef at the Enoteca Pinchiorri.

Cracco worked at the Lucas Carton in 1991, having already had experience with Marchesi; he remembers the relentless pace: "We'd arrive at work at 7:30 and leave at 1:30 in the morning. A hundred lunch customers, 120 for dinner. Always fully booked. Seventy people worked in the kitchen

and the dining room, and three entire teams were dedicated to meats". "[Senderens] was a true gentleman. He had an impressive, charismatic bearing and appreciated Gualtiero Marchesi, knowing that I'd worked with him: he asked me to make saffron risotto. It was not classically creamy in texture, but more like a timbale".

It is with great pleasure that we have reminisced about this eminent chef who left an indelible mark on culinary history; but it has also been an opportunity to revisit a past which feels recent, but in fact is almost half a century old. This is a legacy which the Academy has always resisted forcefully, since the so-called *Nouvelle Cuisine* tainted our tables. Founded on correct and easily endorsed goals, it subsequently, often because of clumsy copycats, degenerated into an affected, vapid cuisine designed only for its effect on eyes and purse strings. We must be vigilant lest the damage wrought by our home-grown emulators in the Seventies and Eighties be perpetrated again by today's rising stars. Absurd combinations, minuscule portions, inflated prices: a dangerous return to a regrettable past which we would rather not relive.





Encouraging the young

The prizes awarded by the Académie Internationale de la Gastronomie highlighted the talent, commitment and creativity of the interpreters of excellent Italian food and wine.

BY SILVIA DE LORENZO



The Académie Internationale de la Gastronomie delivered prizes to six Italians nominated by the Italian Academy of Cuisine during an important event characterised by a relaxed, cordial and friendly atmosphere. Gualtiero Marchesi was the gracious host at his welcoming restaurant in front of the Scala Theatre in Milan. He conversed amiably with his former 'young apprentices', Carlo Cracco and Enrico Crippa (*Grand Prix de l'Art de la Cuisine* - Grand Prize for Culinary Art), and with his 'old' colleagues, such as Antonio and Nadia Santini of the Dal Pescatore restaurant in Canneto sull'Oglio, who were accompanying their son Alberto (*Prix au Sommelier* - Sommelier Prize), or Bruno Ceretto, owner of the Piazza Duomo restaurant in Alba, who elevated his family's tiny wine business into a brand recognised worldwide. He exchanged friendly words with the AIG's leaders,

declaring it a privilege to host them: Honorary President Jacques Mallard, the recently elected President, Jean Vitaux, the Academy's President and AIG Vice-President, Paolo Petroni, and Secretary General Roberto Ariani. Several journalists were present, including Toni Sarcina, a speaker at the recent Delegates' Forum, and the personable Gigi Padovani (*Prix de la Littérature Gastronomique* - Food Literature Prize) with his wife Clara, a food critic with whom he has co-authored several successful books. Unaccompanied but certainly not left alone was the young and beautiful Martina Tribioli (*Prix au Chef Pâtissier* - Pastry Chef Prize), who spoke of her vocation as a 'professional nomad' guided by her passion for pastry. And then - the sonorous peal of the precious bell created for the Academy by the Crotonese goldsmith Gerardo Sacco, used by President Paolo Petroni to open

the prestigious event. He explained the process of choosing AIG prize winners following nomination by national Academies, emphasising the particularly competitive nature of the *Grand Prix de l'Art de la Cuisine*, which instead is an international prize awarded to just one chef among those nominated by the various countries. That prize's importance was reiterated by Jean Vitaux, who discussed the AIG's mission of supporting elevated cuisine and food culture, and Jacques Mallard, who congratulated Enrico Crippa for his excellent cooking, thanking Marchesi for his excellent tutelage.

'Make way for the young' might have been the leitmotif of the award ceremony. It began with the *Prix au Chef de l'Avenir* (Chef of the Future Prize) bestowed upon Gianluca Gorini, who will imminently open his own restaurant in Romagna: "a dream come true", but



clearly not the end of the road, since he spoke of his constant new incentives. The *Prix au Chef Pâtissier* went to the determined and smiling Martina Tribioli, a 'wandering freelancer' for important restaurants who do not have their own dedicated pastry chef. Alberto Santini follows in his parents' footsteps (Nadia and Antonio Santini run the Dal Pescatore restaurant at Canne-to sull'Oglio) but looks to the future and declared it an honour to receive the *Prix au Sommelier*: part of the credit goes to the research and commitment that he pours into his work, with a wine list which must be dynamic (indeed he changes it every week) and a philosophy whereby high-quality wine and cuisine are the best ambassadors for the excellence of our country.

The *Prix de la Littérature Gastronomique* went to the journalist and author Gigi Padovani, member of the Academy's Franco Marengi Study Centre. He stressed the value of dedicating a prize to the culture of cuisine, and of holding the ceremony in the domain of an eminent chef who has always embedded history and culture in his recipes.

Paolo Massobrio, a journalist specialising in food, wine and agricultural enterprise, received the *Prix Multimedia* (Multimedia Prize). He pointed out how much food reporters owe to cooks, especially young ones, who view food part-

ly as a means of communicating culture, demanding innovative and engaging descriptions thereof.

The most important moment was the delivery of the sculpture representing the *Grand Prix de l'Art de la Cuisine* to the dynamic and multi-starred chef of the Piazza Duomo restaurant in Alba: Enrico Crippa. It was handed over by AIG President Jean Vitau, who recounts how he appreciated Crippa's cooking in all the restaurants where he worked, adding that the cuisine expressed at the Alba restaurant is the distillation of excellence. Crippa was enveloped by the embra-

ces of his wife, his mother Adriana Ghezzi, and Bruno Ceretto, whom the chef thanked for believing in him and his project of offering creative, rather than traditionally Piedmontese, cuisine in Alba. Paolo Petroni pointed out how the Academy dedicates itself to the protection and promotion of a cuisine infused with discernment and intelligence, where ingredients must not be brutalised and it is meet and proper for tradition (from the Latin verb *tradere*: 'to convey') to pass from one generation to the next. Crippa interprets this principle excellently. Crippa's words of gratitude to the Academy, the AIG, his family, and his restaurant's owner, Ceretto, culminate in his expression of thanks to Marchesi, as a shining example of a cook who "looks beyond mere pots and pans".

During his closing address, President Petroni also thanked Gualtiero Marchesi for his generous welcome and gave him the Orio Vergani gold medal, just before the group photo to commemorate the splendid event.

The celebratory meal gathered all participants around a large table to enjoy fruit and vegetable salad with sea bass carpaccio; golden saffron risotto; baked coalfish steak with beets and candied lemon; and cold Marsala-infused zabaglione with fried rice noodles.

SILVIA DE LORENZO

Happy holidays

President Paolo Petroni, the President's Council, the Secretariat in Milan and the Editorial Office in Rome warmly wish all Academicians, in Italy and abroad, a wonderful summer holiday.

The Secretariat in Milan will be closed from the 7th to the 25th of August, and the Editorial Office in Rome will be closed from the 1st to the 31st of August.



A literary fish

Squid: from Montale's 'Cuttlebone' poems to the kitchen.

BY ADRIANA LIGUORI PROTO

Crotone Delegate

A literary-historical-gastronomic investigation of the squid, with felicitous timing since this is the season when it comes close to the coast, seeking the warmest waters to reproduce and lay eggs.

Among molluscs, the common cuttlefish, or *Sepia officinalis*, of the family Sepiidae, is one of the most visually striking because of its livery, whose colour changes with the undulating motion of its flanks according to the surrounding habitat, adopting a wide range of stunningly beautiful camouflage colours for purposes of self-defence. Curiously enough, this extraordinary marine creature is whimsically deemed a 'cultural representative', not only because Montale versified about its bones, but also because of its dense black ink, used in drawing to create chiaroscuro in sketches

and etchings. These peculiarities have caused a German cultural magazine to be named after it.

A cultural fish, therefore, the squid is also celebrated for its idiosyncratic habits. Pliny writes: "Has the female been struck by a trident? Observe how the males rush to her aid, while if the male is the one stricken, the female flees". It seems that no classical author has neglected to praise it! Catullus, Ovid and Athenaeus especially lauded the flavour of the Mediterranean squid that graced the banquets of Greek and Roman epicures. And, remaining in the literary-gastronomic field, in a letter to her daughter, Madame de Sévigné composed fulsome accolades to the squid, which Léon Daudet defined as "the flower of Lenten foods", associating its flavour and snow-white flesh with the sentiments of piety and purity implied by meatless victuals.

From spring to late winter, our fish markets display a wide variety of these creatures, weighing anything from a few grammes to, occasionally, two or three kilogrammes. The coasts near Crotone have yielded magnificently large specimens, often caught only a stone's throw from the beach. The most widespread squid-fishing techniques among our fishermen are: trawling from the boats known as 'paranza'; gillnetting, sometimes from rather small boats; or the use of *nasse* (traps resembling large baskets, hand-made from rushes). The latter is most common during the breeding season, and is facilitated by a mechanism resembling a parallelepipedal cage containing intricately woven bay twigs or *scini* (evergreen twigs): the





squids enter to lay eggs, attaching them to the twigs in shiny black bunches also known as ‘sea eggs’; alas for them, they then remain trapped in the cage with no way out!

Most picturesque of all, undoubtedly, is night fishing with a harpoon or *lanzaturu*, using swift and agile boats bearing fishing lights. The crew consists of two experts: the rower and the *lanzatore* (‘spearman’), a frequent character in local maritime folklore, since he must possess uncommon abilities.

For the fishermen who have captured their elusive prey after gruelling effort,

cooking it is almost a ritual. Squid is particularly amenable to many cooking methods including: stewed with potatoes; brushed with olive oil, seasoned with *origano* and spicy red pepper, and chargrilled; or in a casserole, stuffed with breadcrumbs, grated parmesan cheese and wild chicory.

Crotonese seafood cuisine mainly features low-cost fish such as cuttlefish, which, as well as being transformed into delectable morsels by fishermen, combines three fundamental qualities sought in food: health, flavour and affordability.

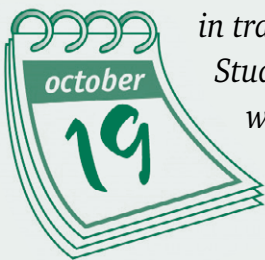
Due to their high salt content, the waters of Calabria host a varied abundance of fish, of which some allow themselves to be captured easily even by fishing amateurs.

Cooking fish caught with one’s own hands is of course especially satisfying, and also provides a more intimate and fascinating acquaintance with marine life, a ceaseless miracle of stunning beauty, which, in every season and phase of the moon, renews its creatures’ magical colours according to the secret patterns of nature.

ADRIANA LIGUORI PROTO

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.





Sea fennel

A pleasantly aromatic wild herb to enjoy boiled, fried or in a salad.

BY GIANCARLO BURRI

Padova Academician

*A Victorian illustration
by W. Murray,
depicting a sea fennel harvester*



Among the spontaneously growing herbs named and appreciated since antiquity, incorporated into folk tradition for their nutritional, medicinal and cosmetic properties and the specificity of their habitat, sea fennel surely deserves special attention.

A wild plant of the family *Apiaceae* (*Umbelliferae*), similarly to celery and parsley, sea fennel (*Crithmum maritimum* L.) grows along the southern and we-

stern European and Mediterranean coasts, in North America, and in central and western Asia, on beaches or pebbly shores, in dry and salty environments, on coastal rocks and sea cliffs: hence it is one of those plants typical of the so-called 'splash zone'. An irregular domed bush with characteristic umbrella-shaped flowers, it has glabrous, fleshy, almost triangular leaves ranging from green to greyish, very similar to those of succulents in that they are covered with a protective waxy coating.

To withstand its extreme and intensely brackish environment, this graceful plant, in an extraordinary feat of adaptability, manages to avoid becoming dehydrated through osmosis, because its sap has a salt content comparable to that of seawater. Its waxy coating also prevents excessive evaporation.

Its Italian dialectal names include: *burcio* (Liguria), *baciglia* (Tuscany), *paccassassi* (Marche), *salissia* (Puglia), *granfa de quaglia* (Campania), *erba di lupitittu* (Sicily), and *erba de Santu Perdu* (Sardinia).

The use of *Crithmum maritimum* dates at least to ancient Greek and Roman times: Pedanius Dioscorides, in his *De materia medica*, describes its therapeutic use against urine retention when stewed in wine, while in his poem *Hecale*, Callimachus describes how the old woman, Hecale, fed the hero Theseus a meal consisting principally of sea fennel and milk thistle when he sought refuge from a storm in her humble hut. Pliny, like his fellow citizens, called it *batis*, declaring himself certain of its laxative properties and, as a raw paste, its effectiveness against gout.



Renaissance herbalists called it *Petrus crescentius* (named after St Peter, the patron saint of fishermen), enumerating its protective abilities against 'sailor's disease'; indeed, in the heyday of Italy's Maritime Republics it was kept on ships and consumed on voyages as protection against scurvy.

This plant's value as a prized food in the 17th century is attested by Shakespeare: in Act IV of *King Lear*, he warns of the mortal peril faced by 'samphire' gatherers who scaled the sheer white cliffs of Dover, where the plant grew in abundance.

In the same era, the English botanist William Turner describes it in *A new herball* as *creta marina*, a name by which it was known to the naturalists of his time such as John Gerard, who described it as "pleasantly fragrant and subtle on the palate, though some deem it overly salty", suggesting it inter alia as an excellent ingredient which, combined with oil and vinegar, could be used as a sauce for meats. An interesting confirmation of its use as food in England is provided by W. A. Bromfield (first half of the 19th century), who reports that the owner of Freshwater Castle, on whose walls *Crithmum maritimum* grew abundantly, exacted a heavy tribute from those seeking to gather it.

Sea fennel may be considered an 'emerging foodstuff' and is already available abroad in washed and packaged form. Its pleasantly aromatic and salty leaves are used in cooking: they are slightly pungent, with a flavour representing a midpoint between fennel, dill and celery. Its shoots and young leaves can be eaten

raw, in a salad (combined, however, with less intensely flavoured plants). Leaves gathered between May and September are excellent, whether boiled and seasoned with oil and lemon, as a garnish for cold cuts or fish, or sautéed with oil and spicy chillies and added to pasta. They are also delicious breaded and fried, being reminiscent of fried artichoke stems. They can also be preserved in vinegar or oil, with delicious results lending themselves to manifold uses. Because of its essential oils (with significant Omega 3 and Omega 6 fatty acid content), organic acids, proteins, mine-

rals, beta-carotene and vitamin C, sea fennel has important medicinal properties: it facilitates the function of the stomach, aids digestion, and is a choleretic (stimulating bile secretion, attenuating fermentation and gastro-intestinal spasms) and a diuretic. It is also effective against rickets and parasites, as well as protecting against coronary artery diseases.

Because it is threatened by uncontrolled exploitation, in many coastal regions (for example, the Conero area in Italy) its harvesting is legally restricted.

GIANCARLO BURRI

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