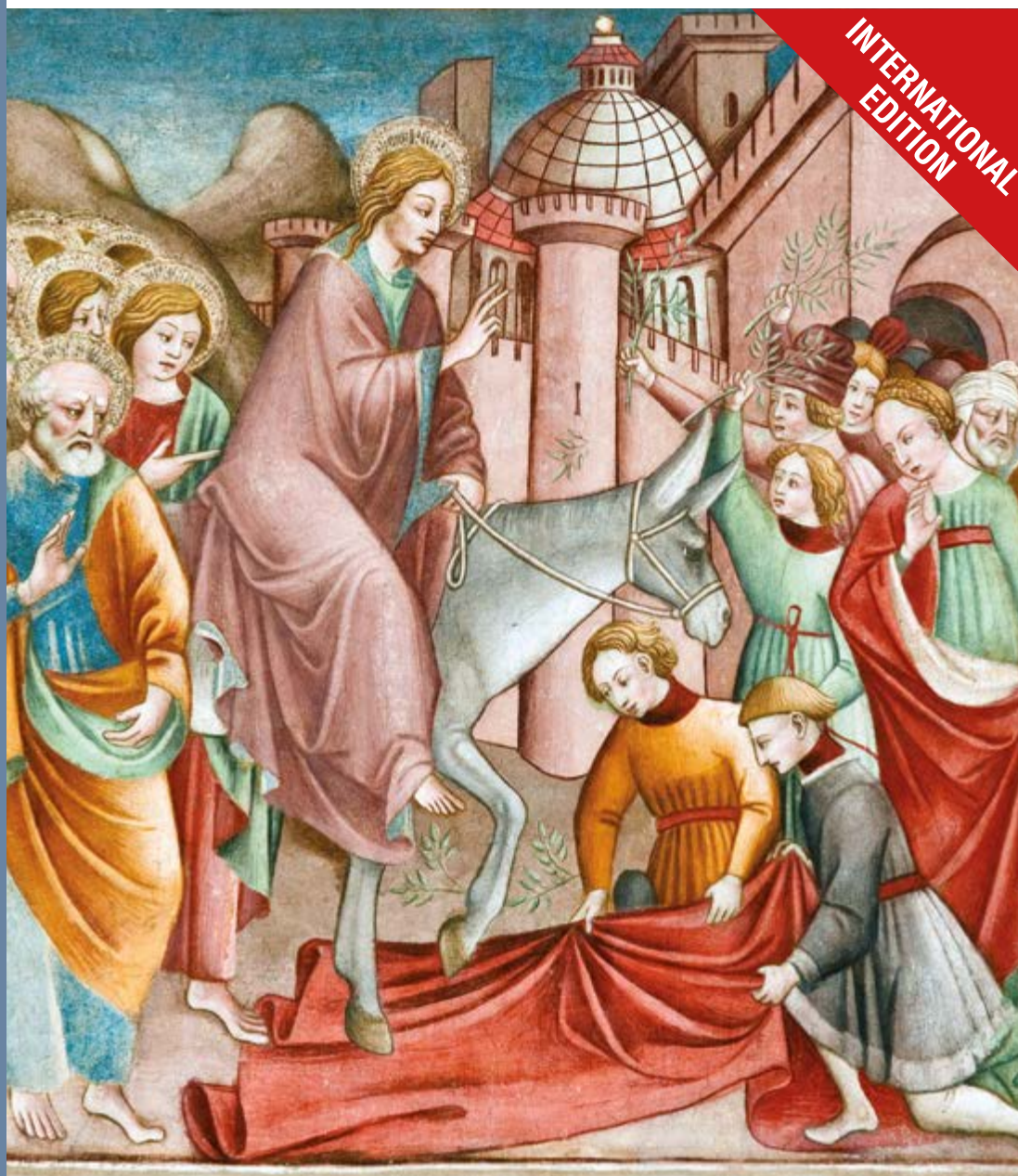


CIVILTÀ DELLA TAVOLA

ACCADEMIA ITALIANA DELLA CUCINA



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ARTURO ORVIETO, SEVERINO PAGANI, ALDO PASSANTE,
GIAN LUIGI PONTI, GIO PONTI, DINO VILLANI,
EDOARDO VISCONTI DI MODRONE,
CON MASSIMO ALBERINI E VINCENZO BUONASSISI.

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On the cover: Detail from *Jesus Entering Jerusalem* (1461) by Nicolò da Siena (Nicola di Ulisse), a fresco in the Church of St Anthony the Great in Cascia.

The Academy must be ready for the challenges of the third millennium

Born in the 'Short Twentieth Century', it must remain aware of today's and tomorrow's issues, using new tools and criteria.

BY PAOLO PETRONI

President of the Academy

The average age of today's Academicians corresponds approximately with that of the Academy itself, born in the fifties of the 'Short Twentieth Century', as the British historian Eric Hobsbawm dubbed it. An eventful, wonderful century, flown by in a flash, with its contradictions and its extraordinary developments. It began with an 'age of catastrophes', featuring something like a Thirty Years' War, with two successive world wars ending in 1945. Next came the 'golden age' between 1946 and 1973. This was our time - for most of us, most Academicians, that is. Exhilarating years filled with vast economic, technological and scientific advances, and especially with hope

for the youth of the time. The Italian Academy of Cuisine, like most of today's Academicians, was born in those magical, unrepeatable years. Our hearts and roots remain there. Today, however, after such earth-shaking events as the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of the Cold War, the Gulf Wars and other Middle-Eastern conflicts, with terrorism and a globalised economy, we find ourselves in the third millennium, dazed, with children and grandchildren deprived of their parents' prospects. For the first time, a generation faces a lower standard of living than its predecessor. In this historical context, our cuisine, its heart and roots also in the last

century, finds itself experiencing a marked contrast between a resurgent new cuisine, all technique and spectacle, and a modernised tradition. The current climate is represented by what happened at the MoMa in San Francisco, where the three-starred chef from Alba, Enrico Crippa of the Piazza Duomo restaurant, created recipes dedicated to contemporary painters and sculptors: visually stunning dishes, prepared with flair and competence. For many Americans, especially Californian millionaires, the image of Italian cuisine has changed radically - and for the better. Forgetting spaghetti with meat balls, they now fantasise about exorbitantly priced food and wine tours of the Langhe or Chianti regions. But the Academy is not hobbled by a past of granny's cooking, badly prepared and badly served. Generational change is in the air, lively, alert, ready. Culture doesn't only mean researching the past and studying dusty old themes, but must also mean attentiveness to current and future themes. Nobody can bring back the golden age, but the challenges of the third millennium, in which we're now ensconced, must find us capable of advancing, with undiminished enthusiasm, our founders' dreams with new tools and new criteria.

The 'panna cotta' dedicated by Enrico Crippa to Henri Matisse





Prizes awarded by the Académie Internationale de la Gastronomie

The prizes for 2018 were assigned during the AIG's General Assembly in Paris.



The General Assembly



The Chinese delegation

The AIG's General Assembly gathered on the 5th of February in the Hotel Prince de Galles in Paris, with 28 participants representing 15 countries. For the first time, a Chinese Academy was admitted: Chen Yuecheng of the Chinese Academy of Gastronomy (Shenzhen) was present and greeted with warm applause. The Italian Academy of Cuisine was represented by President Paolo Petroni, who was also confirmed as a member of the Administrative Council on the same occasion. Petroni then explained the reasons for selecting the winners. He continued that since our Academy won two Grand Prizes (Grand Prix) in the last two years (awarded to Giovanni Ballarini and Enrico Crip-

pa), he felt it appropriate not to nominate candidates this year, to give other countries a chance to win. The "Grand Prix de l'Art de la Cuisine" (Grand Prize for Culinary Art) went to Japan, in the person of chef Yoshihiro Narisawa of Tokyo.

The Assembly then unanimously approved the prizes suggested by our Academy.

The night before the meeting, there was the traditional Gala Dinner, prepared as usual by an invited chef, that is, not belonging to the restaurant. This year's dinner was organised by the Greek Academy and the chef was Andreas Mavrommatis, supervised by the Greek Academy's President, Ioannis Theodorou. Flavoursome dishes, but hardly Greek: they chiefly embodied international cuisine. Only the Greek wines served were truly noteworthy. Instead, the lunch following the Assembly's meeting was prepared, also within



NATIONAL PRIZES FOR 2018

Chef de l'Avenir (Chef of the Future)

Cristoforo Trapani

*La Magnolia restaurant, Hotel Byron, Forte dei Marmi (Lucca)
(nominated by the Versilia Storica Delegation)*

Chef Pâtissier (Pastry Chef)

Fabrizio Galla

*Tre Colombe bakery, San Sebastiano Po (Torino)
(nominated by the Asti Delegation)*

Sommelier

Michela Berto

*San Martino restaurant, Scorzé (Venezia)
(nominated by the Venezia Mestre Delegation)*

Littérature Gastronomique (Food Literature)

Davide Paolini "Il Gastronauta"

journalist, writer

Multimedia

Paolo Marchi

journalist, founder of Identità Golose

G

Académie Internationale de la
Gastronomie

Assemblée Générale du
5 février 2018

NOIX DE SAINT JACQUES
Tartare iodé / Sorbet céleri

CHOUX FARCI
Homard bleu / Jus corsé des têtes

BICHE DE CHASSE FRANCAISE
Noisette rôtie / Poire-poivre / « steak » de betterave confit

PRE DESSERT

VANILLE D'ORIGINE
En crème glacée / Esprit d'une omelette norvégienne

Les vins

Champagne Laurent Perrier « la Cuvée »
Pernand-Vergelesses – Domaine Chartron 2015
« Esprit d'autan » – Pierre Jean villa 2004

Stéphanie Le Quellec
Chef des Cuisines



The chef Stéphanie Le Quellec offered an excellent menu including Savoy cabbage stuffed with Homarus.



the Hotel, by Stéphanie Le Quellec (in the photo between Paolo Petroni and Jacques Mallard), winner of the "Chef de l'Avenir" (Chef of the Future) prize in 2014. The menu and the dishes were worthy of the award received.



Tobacco in the kitchen

*Ejected from restaurants in smoke form,
it returns to the table, flavouring new foods.*

BY GIOVANNI BALLARINI

Honorary President of the Academy



Italy is not a land of nightshades, but when they arrive, they all find a role in the kitchen. The first to appear from the Orient was the aubergine, and after many centuries, potatoes, tomatoes, peppers and tobacco came from the West. The first four enjoyed resounding success, but the fifth, tobacco, also found a place in the kitchen. It is not only smoked but also sniffed, chewed or eaten, leading to customs of varying durability. Internet searches yield a hundred thousand results for recipes combining tobacco with meat, fish or sweets, not least a refined fillet in a tobacco crust, presented years ago on *MasterChef* 4.

In the past, very fine tobacco powder was kept in sometimes precious snuff boxes, and users would place a pinch of snuff between their lower lip and gums. Sweden is home to Snus, compressed tobacco powder similar to a bonbon in appearance, which melts in the mouth and is similar to a Renaissance-era 'lam-

bative', an archaic form of medicine, taken by licking (from Latin *lambere*) with the tongue or intended to 'lick' the afflicted areas especially in cases of sore throat or chesty cough. Its recipes include that of the Abbot D. Benedetto Stella who, in 1669, published a slim volume in Rome entitled *Il Tabacco (Tobacco)*. Abbot Stella's tobacco lambative was unsuccessful, unlike tobacco chocolate bonbons. The chemist Pierre de Perlont, from Lyon, brought them to Turin, where they became popular with high-society ladies, their taste complementing their feminine perfume known as *Tabacco di dama all'acqua angelica* - 'ladies' tobacco angel water', expertly concocted with moss, amber, gum benjamin, rosewater and citron flowers.

In cooking, today tobacco is used as an aroma, especially in the foams or 'airs' popularised by molecular gastronomy. Tobacco aromas are commercially available, but some prefer to make their own from tobacco leaves or cigars, and

many restaurateurs use tobacco in their dessert, meat or fish recipes. Overcoming his initial doubt and befuddlement, the cook Marco Fadiga declares that whoever tries his cigar-infused light rum cream with dried fruit becomes an instant fan. Chef Filippo Chiappini uses a tobacco infusion in a sauce accompanying lightly smoked fish. Davide Scabin amazes with his 'smoking box', in which individual diners smoke molluscs or small slices of fish on their own plates using the smoke of their cigars. Aimo and Nadia Moroni choose pipe tobacco, softer, with a gentler mouthfeel, for a dessert with three types of chocolate mousse. Luciano Tona's finale for high-level diners or lunches is white chocolate with rum gel and tobacco foam. The gourmet Andrea Grignaffini enthuses about 'tobacco chefs', expressing gratitude to cooks who welcome tobacco into their kitchens, allowing us to discover its qualities as a contributor to superlative cuisine.

Tobacco, like wine, is hard to master, and one connoisseur has reported smoking three hundred-odd cigars before choosing the Winston Churchill, whose leaves have a robust and aromatic flavour.

Is tobacco cuisine dangerous because of nicotine? Besides tobacco (*Nicotiana tabacum*), nicotine exists in other, edible nightshades (*Solanaceae*) such as aubergines, potatoes, tomatoes and peppers. Low doses have stimulant effects: what better accompaniment for a potentially heavy lunch or dinner? Furthermore, the perils of tobacco smoke are caused by combustion rather than nicotine.



Falling stars

Chef Norbert Niederkofler's third Michelin star may signal a sea change: rewarding cooks who stay in the kitchen.

BY ARCADIO DAMIANI

Pescara Aternum Academician

I recently attended a conference organised by the Chieti Delegation entitled Food on the move: the vanguard of tradition (*La cucina che cammina: l'avanguardia della tradizione*): a few intense hours assessing what our cuisine represents today and above all how we can interpret, enhance and disseminate it. It was a pleasure to hear what President Paolo Petroni had to say, in great measure supported by the invited speaker Rocco Pozzulo, President of the Italian Federation of Cooks, regarding the bloated media presence of the artists of taste-bud titillation. Chefs' excessive media exposure could have been interpreted as a means of promo-

ting better knowledge of a complex world combining science, history, anthropology, chemistry, medicine and wellness. Many human actions, however, often begin with noble intentions yet bring abysmal results when one crosses the line between the simply useful and the irritating, detrimental verbosity which indicates a vastly different motive. It is fair for cooking, like any art form, to have a hierarchy of prestige, just as a painting may cost 450 million Euros, as with the latest work attributed to Leonardo, or 30, for something hanging on the upstairs neighbour's wall. But if a painting or any true work of art is private, only its owner can enjoy it;

in a museum, millions can benefit from it for the price of the ticket.

Cooking, they say, must amaze, like any art, and that is true; but this emotion cannot merely result from seeing the exorbitant bill. A work of art embodies an idea which may have preoccupied the artist's mind for years: changes wrought during the work's creation through the layering of lines and colours that seem right in that moment; the anguish and passion fusing into a form which conveys a message when the artist finally signs it. Now let us offer milder advice to the priesthood of the palate, because, though it is true that few of us paint, yet we all cook to feed ourselves as best we can, and just as an amateur snapshot might be chosen over painstaking professional oeuvres for the cover of *Life*, so a humble housewife could make us taste paradise itself whereas a chef's elegant preparations, however beautifully assembled, may fail to excite our sense of the supremely delicious.

Once, those who produced innovative ideas in their fields of specialisation spent most of their time at their desks, working on their 'project', whether they used a microscope, a PC or a block of marble, mostly eschewing the public, being immersed in their work, engrossed in transforming their idea into reality. Today, in the viscous age of what we might call post-Humanism, we have graduated from the construction of being to the construction of appearance. If you're not on television, you're nothing, you can't cook and your ratings are below zero, just as academics risk their careers if they don't go around





hobnobbing at conferences. But laboratories, and kitchens, need them! How can an eminent, justifiably acclaimed cook open four or five restaurants in prestigious locations under his or her name, deceiving the clientele, adding insult to injury when diners face a hefty bill for no more than a selfie with a famous dish? The chef becomes 'virtual', similarly to so many other human activities including interpersonal ones. In a world ruled by finance, itself also 'virtual', actual products are replaced by 'stellar bounty' bestowing worldly glory on those who crave the 'star', the mysterious heavenly body proclaiming confirmed excellence - but confirmed by whom? Everywhere, *pecunia non olet* - money does not stink - and even Michelin, which invented the star ratings, has often been accused of 'selling' prestige, as indeed we can evince from the plummeting sales of its 'red guides'. Our acclaimed Carlo Cracco made national news by losing a star for his excessive media presence in his role as a demolisher of dishes, showing off with that violent edge which the public, always up for surprises, finds by no means objectionable. But Cracco's, as many know, serves up heavenly grub and he celebrates his fall from the firmament with a revenue of 7.5 million Euros! Massimo Bottura was anointed the world's best cook; do you believe that you'll find him in the kitchen ready to delight you if you visit Modena to dine at his Osteria Francescana? Slim chance! As



our President jokingly asserts, if a cook has one star, the bill is 100 Euros a head, if two, 200, and if three, 300 or more. Are their ingredients really that pricey, or are they hiding behind smoke and mirrors such as the coffee or liquorice 'fine powders' added to a dish to make it innovative (but by no means original) and expensive?

And what of the rise of a 'local' cook like Norbert Niederkofler of the St. Hubertus restaurant in San Cassiano di Badia, recently awarded a third star? Now the usual gastro-snobs and rent-a-critics will have to explain why this chef isn't in the media spotlight, why he's not lionised, like other three-star chefs seldom seen on television but frequently found in the kitchen.

Leading the 'kitchen brigades' which distribute responsibilities by food preparation type, they differ from those who cook 'in full view', prancing around under chef's hats and television cameras

perfecting dishes by adding finishing touches just so, in pursuit of contrived aesthetic sublimity. Perhaps they are now recognised because the Guide's leadership recently passed to Sergio Lovrinovich, who favours quality regional cuisine and has little regard for fashion! That chef bases his cuisine on using local ingredients to the fullest, and on simplicity, going so far as to found something of an 'ethical gastronomy movement'. Many chefs should follow his example by

returning backstage in affectionate service to the customer, who should be pampered and not offended, heeded and not discouraged, taught but not subjugated. So at this point I find myself proud to belong to the Academy, which collaborates with governmental agencies, has always defended our cuisine's values internationally as demonstrated by its numerous branches worldwide, and makes the most of the multifarious ingredients available in our highly varied country. Its values permeate excellent rural taverns and star-rated restaurants alike, demonstrating, as our President reminds us, that tradition blends homage to the past with awareness of the present, much as the Church, though "*semper reformanda*" - always reformable, remains firmly rooted in its principles. A past no longer defined by time alone, and consequently fluid but not inscrutable. And still, alas, far too few of us live under the stars, especially in the South!

THE ACADEMY SILVER PLATE



An elegant silver plated dish engraved with the Academy logo.

This symbolic object may be presented to restaurants that display exceptional service, cuisine and hospitality.

Delegates may contact the Milan Headquarters

(segreteria@accademia1953.it) for more information and orders.



Chemistry in the kitchen

The 'science' underlying the secrets of taste in many a recipe.

BY ANGELO TAMBURINI

Syracuse Delegate

The kitchen is assuredly a chemical laboratory, with every cook a scientist intent on blending substances (the ingredients) which are then transformed into others (a dish of varying complexity). The chemical reactions which occur in cooking are extremely complex, because they simultaneously involve tens of substances. Let us therefore explore something of the 'science' underlying the secrets of some recipes' flavour, whether served in restaurants following avant-garde cooking techniques, or enjoyed on the family table. For instance, let us first understand how liquids (lemon juice) enclosed within 'gel

spheres' depend on the reaction of two chemical compounds: sodium alginate, a gummy seaweed extract, and calcium chloride, similar to common table salt (sodium chloride). Blend the desired liquid with alginate, place a few drops of the resulting fluid in a calcium chloride solution with a syringe, and hey presto, the two substances form a double chain of molecules which folds itself into pretty spheres trapping the liquid inside. For perfect results, however, we must quickly remove the spheres from the gelling agent lest they become solid to the core.

Another discovery born of molecular

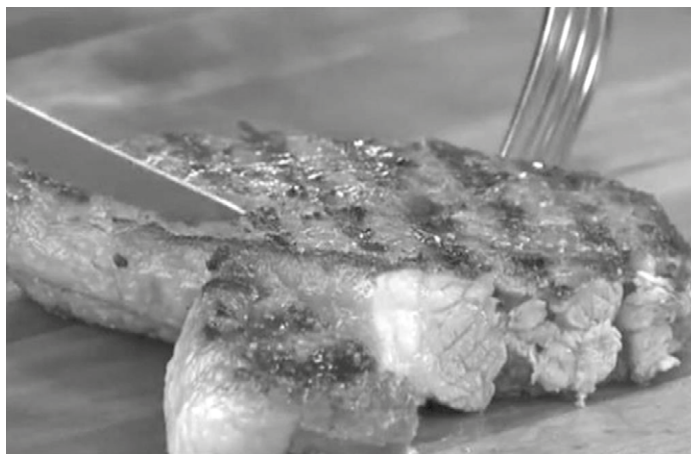




A 'fake' steak

gastronomy is the suturing of differing types of meat or fish into a unified 'piece', as in quilting. This impressive result is obtained through the animal enzyme transglutaminase, popularly termed 'meat glue': commercially available as a white powder, it creates a uniform surface by 'welding' different substances together. It works best on meat, fish and seafood, rich in proteins such as collagen, because it binds their amino acids together. Some chefs use it liberally, repurposing otherwise unusable meat leftovers into meatballs, rolls and tenders.

A popular method of cooking vegetables while retaining their nutritional value and bright colours is blanching, resulting in emerald-green broccoli and ruby-red radicchio on our plates. The secret lies in boiling the vegetables briefly and then plunging them into freezing water: the resulting thermal shock prevents the chemical transformation of the chlorophyll which gives vegetables their colour and would otherwise unappealingly darken due to the acids released as a result of heat. Another important chemical process in the kitchen is the Maillard reaction,



responsible for the delicious browning of roast chicken skin. This is a set of simultaneous phenomena occurring whenever food is cooked at high temperatures, between 140 and 180 °C, assuming an amber-brown colour (irrespective of cooking method - frying, baking, grilling etc: the crucial factor is heat). It requires the presence of reducing sugars and amino acids, combined by heat into new molecules which we generally find flavoursome. Obviously differing proportions of sugars and amino acids in different ingredients will cause variations in resulting flavour. So important is this reaction in creating flavour that some recipes contain tricks to facilitate it. This is the case, for example, with

game, which is poor in reducing sugars and is therefore marinated in lemon or wine, rich in such substances, before cooking.

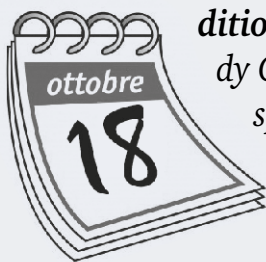
A well-made risotto requires constant stirring and gradual addition of broth until cooking is complete: mixing maximises the absorption by the broth of the starch released by the rice. Rice undoubtedly releases amylopectin (a component of starch) which gives ri-

sotto its typical creamy consistency, but opinions differ regarding the necessity of constant stirring. Some chefs observe that the real secret to perfect creaminess lies in adding broth in tiny increments; some believe that stirring is only necessary for a few minutes towards the end of cooking, with practically indistinguishable results in terms of consistency.

Finally, octopus and calamari, however tender originally, may harden to inedible rubberiness. If octopus is heated for a long time in a liquid, the collagen surrounding the muscle fibres in its tentacles dissolves into so-called 'fish glue', a gelatine which softens its texture. Problem solved, therefore - and not only for chefs!

ECUMENICAL DINNER 2018

*Our group dinner, uniting all Academicians worldwide around one virtual table, will take place on 18 October at 8:30 PM; its theme is “**Sweet and savoury cakes in tra-***



***ditional regional cuisine”.** The topic, chosen by the “Franco Marengi” Study Centre and approved by the President’s Council, honours regional baked specialities, whether stuffed or dry, abundant in Italian home cooking and also amenable to interesting innovations. The Delegates will arrange a suitable cultural presentation to illustrate this important theme, and a menu befitting the same.*