

# CIVILTÀ DELLA TAVOLA

ACCADEMIA ITALIANA DELLA CUCINA



INTERNATIONAL  
EDITION

**ACCADEMIA ITALIANA DELLA CUCINA**

ISTITUZIONE CULTURALE DELLA REPUBBLICA ITALIANA  
FONDATA NEL 1953 DA ORIO VERGANI

[www.accademia1953.it](http://www.accademia1953.it)



**INTERNATIONAL EDITION**

MARCH 2019 / N. 313

**EDITOR IN CHIEF**  
PAOLO PETRONI

**COPY EDITOR**  
SILVIA DE LORENZO

**LAYOUT**  
SIMONA MONGIU

**THIS ISSUE INCLUDES ARTICLES BY**  
EMILIA COCCOLO, GRAZIA DORMIENTE,  
PAOLO PETRONI, ROBERTO ZOTTAR.

**PHOTO CREDITS**  
ADOBE STOCK.



**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

**REGULATIONS REGARDING PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION**

The Italian Academy of Cuisine, in its capacity as data controller, hereby informs its members that their personal data are handled with respect for the principles of integrity, lawfulness and transparency as well as protection of privacy and members' rights, to implement the management of the member-association relationship as delineated by the Association's Statute and By-laws, and for any related purposes where applicable. The processing is carried out by authorised parties, in paper and computerised form, in compliance with the provisions of the aforementioned EU regulations and current national legislation. To view all the information provided under EU regulations, and in particular to learn what members' rights are, please visit the Association's website.



Rivista associata  
all'Unione Stampa  
Periodica Italiana

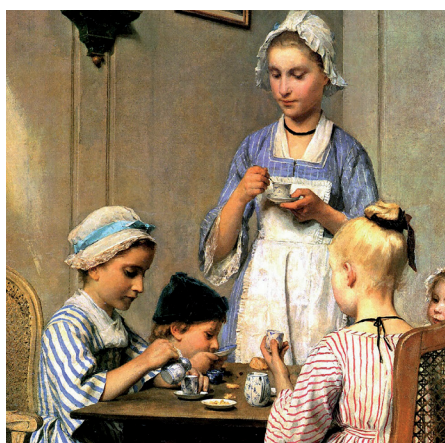


## Table of contents



**L'ACCADEMIA ITALIANA DELLA CUCINA**  
È STATA FONDATA NEL 1953 DA ORIO VERGANI

E DA LUIGI BERTETT, DINO BUZZATI TRAVERSO,  
CESARE CHIODI, GIANNINO CITTERIO, ERNESTO DONÀ  
DALLE ROSE, MICHELE GUIDO FRANCI, GIANNI MAZZOCCHI  
BASTONI, ARNOLDO MONDADORI, ATTILIO NAVA,  
ARTURO ORVIETO, SEVERINO PAGANI, ALDO PASSANTE,  
GIAN LUIGI PONTI, GIÒ PONTI, DINO VILLANI,  
EDOARDO VISCONTI DI MODRONE,  
CON MASSIMO ALBERINI E VINCENZO BUONASSISI.



**On the cover:** Graphic elaboration of Children's Breakfast (Kinderfrühstück; 1879) by Albert Anker, Kunstmuseum, Basel.

### Focus of the President

#### 2 The dictatorship of the chefs (Paolo Petroni)



### Current Events • Lifestyle • Society

#### 3 Italy ascends the podium again at the Coupe du Monde de la Pâtisserie (Emilia Coccolo)

### Cuisine • Products • Food Technology

#### 4 The PGI chocolate of Modica (Grazia Dormiente)



#### 6 Low-temperature cooking (Roberto Zottar)





# The dictatorship of the chefs

by Paolo Petroni

President of the Academy

*Mind-boggling inflexibility and imposed limits on the number of diners per dish.*

In the beginning was the *Chateaubriand*, representative dish of French and international cuisine, today, sadly, vanished from restaurant menus. According to legend, it was invented by the personal cook of the viscount François-René de Chateaubriand around the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. This is a cut of the finest-quality meat, namely the centre cut of the tenderest fillet of beef weighing approximately 500 grammes, seared and classically served with boiled vegetables and Béarnaise sauce (also vanished: which cook is able to make it nowadays?). It would therefore be sacrilege to cut it into halves or thirds to obtain one meagre portion: **hence the requirement that it be ordered for two people**, as required by menus of yore. A perfectly justified rule.

Among the various forms of 'chef pressure', one may recall the obsolete 'dish of the day', often prepared using surplus ingredients that must be sold off quickly, but sometimes, meritoriously, employing products that are seasonal or available at a fair price at that moment.

*Among the various forms of 'chef pressure', current habit of imposing a two-person minimum on risotto*

Very similar is the concept of 'daily menu', which, however, does not specify the number of diners who may order it. Truly irritating, instead, is the very widespread current habit of imposing a two-person minimum on risotto. This happens in a cross-section of restaurants from the middling to the luxurious. This absurd imposition prevents a lone guest from enjoying a good risotto. It is technically incomprehensible, caused merely by organisational issues in the kitchen and a **lukewarm desire to meet guests' needs**. But by now, freshly made food has almost vanished from restaurant kitchens, where everything is assembled in advance. Particularly embarrassing are the much-celebrated 'tasting

*Chateaubriand: a classic made for two*



menus', which, with the pretext of showcasing the chef's abilities and class, impose a dozen dishes or more, from starters to desserts, without the possibility of substituting or removing anything, forcing the entire table, mind you, not merely two people, to order that menu, which in high-ranking restaurants can cost 170-200 Euros, with added wine pairings, by the glass, often costing just as much.

*Particularly embarrassing are the much-celebrated 'tasting menus'*

Some chefs, perhaps understanding this unease, **are beginning to offer two or three tasting menus with increasing prices**. What is amazing is the complete lack of flexibility and the regulations regarding the number of diners. Yet today 'starred' restaurant kitchens boast an impressive number of cooks (all decked out in chef's hats, once the sole prerogative of the chef de cuisine, who today wears it no longer) almost equalling the number of diners. The real problem, however, is that **the custom of preparing fresh dishes on demand is being lost**, yielding to the tendency of advance preparation because of the sophisticated machinery now available in kitchens; and all too frequently, these many cooks form something resembling an assembly line. Recently, a noted Milanese restaurant, acclaimed for its Milanese cutlet, has qualified it with 'minimum two people'. How staggeringly original. Ordering it, one understands why: a monumental, delicious cutlet suitable not for two but four people. Woe to the ill-fated guest who arrives alone to enjoy this prized Milanese delicacy - whom it would be meet and proper to accommodate in some way.





# Italy ascends the podium again at the Coupe du Monde de la Pâtisserie

by Emilia Cocco

Honorary Academician for Pinerolo

*Celebrating  
the youngsters who  
won bronze at Lyon.*

Once more, Italian pastry chefs have mounted their discipline's most challenging podium: that of the Pastry World Cup, held in Lyon on the 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> of January.

This year, **the pastry world's foremost event celebrates thirty years since its first edition**, emerging in January 1989 from the passionate vision of MOF (Meilleur Ouvrier de France: Best Craftsman of France) **Gabriel Paillason** and immediately supported by Valrhona and the SIRHA food expo in Lyon. In these thirty years, 882 finalists from 48 countries have come forward; the latest edition featured 21 competing nations representing five continents.

Italian participation in the competition was initially hesitant and unremarkable; then in 1997 came the gold won by **Luigi Biasetto**, **Christian Beduschi** and **Luca Mannori**, with pastry master **Iginio Massari** as trainer and president. To avoid a one-hit wonder, in April 2000 the Club de la Coupe du Monde Selezione Italia (World Cup Club - Italian Selection) was founded, presided over by Luigi Biasetto, to perform the official national selections, oversee contestants' training as well as promotion, organisation and administration of the event, and forge links with sponsors. The training headquarters and office was established at the pastry department of the CAST cooking school in Brescia, directed by **Vittorio Santoro**.

Glory soon followed: bronze in 2001, 2007 and 2013; silver in 2009 and 2011. In 2015, **Emmanuele Forcone**, **Francesco Boccia** and **Fabrizio Donatone** won the second precious gold medal, with **Gino Fabbri** as president. As the rules require, Italy did not participate in the following edition, and here we are with the bronze for 2019, won by the youngest-ever team: **Lorenzo Puca**, aged 29, from Vasto (sugar), **Andrea Restuccia**, aged 26, from Rome (ice), and **Mattia Cortinovis**, aged only 23, from Ranica, in the province of Bergamo (chocolate); president **Alessandro Dalmasso** trained them in collaboration with Forcone, Boccia and Donatone under the supervision of master Massari. No trainer or club member was paid.

*Italy's trophy case contains  
two golds, two silvers  
and four bronzes*

The previous edition's winners bestowed their experience upon the new contestants: the techniques and skills acquired through the competition, and especially the development of team spirit, wherein individuals are subsumed into harmonious and alacritous group collaboration, in accordance with international regulations. In addition to this year's theme - nature, flora and fauna - there were additional requirements: contestants must present a creation made of sugar, including an element of blown sugar approximately 25 to 35 cm high; a chocolate *entremet* with honey-based sponge; a

"Between Sky and Sea"



chocolate sculpture; an entirely vegan plated dessert; an ice sculpture; and an ice cream cake. The table presented by the Italian team after 10 hours of work was entitled "Between Sky and Sea" and stood out for its high artistic level but even more so for the pleasant flavours and attention to detail noted by the tasters. Japan won silver, while the coveted gold went to Malaysia for the first time. A surprising result, with Asian teams triumphant and Italy as paladin of the West. Judging the 21 competing teams was a jury of pastry masters with a representative for each nation, the president of each team, who tasted the creations that were presented following a predetermined schedule and then assessed the tables' artistic value. Another five-member jury monitored the techniques and hygiene of preparation. An international jury of five food journalists, including **Livia Chiriotti** of *Pasticceria Internazionale* (Pastry International), evaluated the plated vegan dessert, assigning the *Press Prize* (*Prix de la Presse*) to Australia.



# The PGI chocolate of Modica

by **Grazia Dormiente**

*Modica Academician*

*Cultural Director of the Modica Chocolate Quality Consortium*

*Modica chocolate gains not only PGI recognition but the official seal of Italy's National Mint on every chocolate bar.*

Since 2010, the Modica Chocolate Quality Consortium has been undertaking an extraordinary journey leading to their product's *gold-certified* PGI (Protected Geographical Indication) recognition, as reflected in the 2018 ChocoModica chocolate festival. Because cocoa, the primary material, does not grow in Modica, the consortium strove to modify regulations, leading to the European Parliament's addition of chocolate to the list of products eligible for protection in 2012.

This chocolate's production protocol was then delineated based on archival materials and the lore inherited through many generations.

In Modica, a Spanish territory for centuries, *cicolateri* (chocolate makers) had

been producing bitter chocolate for the noble house of Grimaldi at least since 1746. The Spanish connexion probably inspired the local aristocracy's chocolate-loving habits, as blue-blooded interpreters of chocolate's noble and pleasantly convivial qualities.

In the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the local élite enjoyed hot chocolate, ideally twice a day: upon awaking, and in salons, using specially made cups and splendid silver chocolate pots. The names of the chocolate makers **Giuseppe Scivoletto**, **Antonino Lo Castro** and **his son Angelo**, **Giuseppe Melita** and **Giacinto Scapellato** have emerged from the records as guarantors of chocolate's *verifiable pedigree* in and for the city.

*The production protocol is drawn from archival sources and the lore of generations*

The manuscripts and their associated registers displayed in the Ranieri III of Monaco Hall of the Chocolate Museum in Modica attest to a mastery of technique, ingredients including *cacaos*, *zuccharo*, *cannella*, *vanigli* (cocoa, sugar, cinnamon, vanilla) but also ambergris and musk, as well as weights, dosages, tools and the voyages of the trusted *bordonari* (merchandise transporters) who brought cocoa from Palermo to Modica. Cocoa pods also arrived by sea, through Syracuse and Malta, reaching Pozzallo, the ancient commercial port for the County of Modica.

To understand these itineraries, we must recall that the first cargo of cocoa, ori-





ginating from Veracruz, was unloaded in Seville by Spanish and Portuguese merchants. Then the Silva family of accomplished Portuguese merchants, one of whose members was the Spanish consul in Livorno, decreed that city as the port of cocoa disembarkation whence it was then distributed to all the territories connected to the Spanish monarchy (B. Campanile, 2016).

As reliably reported by **John Debono**, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century "Sicilians and Calabrians acquire sugar, coffee, cocoa, cinnamon and spices in Malta... and in Sicily the Maltese buy soda ash, sulphur, alum, legumes, barley, wheat, and carobs to sell in Spain, Italy or Marseilles" (*Melita Historica*, Malta Historical Society, 1988, vol. X, n. 1, p. 48). Details of the commercial role of Modica County and its delicacies can be gleaned from **Paolo Balsamo**, who observed in 1808: "The main merchandise [in the County] is grain, barley, wine, hemp, livestock, cheese, carobs etc, exported in large quantities from the Island, principally to Malta, with which all these populations engage in very rich commerce. It is worthy of consideration that the Maltese and the English rarely purchase the County's produce with coinage, instead almost always exchanging it with colonial goods, cloth, and other manufactured effects ... and from Malta ... is obtained as much as was requested of sugar, coffee, rum, liqueurs ... and all the other overseas merchandise which the people need and which are necessary for the comfort and luxury of the well-to-do and the wealthy". Remaining in the realm of sweets, it seems opportune to cite the comments of the scholars **S. Mercieca** and **M. Mangion** in *La via del dolce fra Malta e Sicilia. Il ricettario di Michele Marceca 1748* (*The voyage of sweets between Malta and Sicily: Michele Marceca's recipe book, 1748*) published in 2007: "...during the era of Grand Master Perellos, in the Order of Malta's records of Magisterial Receipt (*Ricetta Magistrale*) which detail the Grand Master's revenue, from July 1698 to October 1702, the notes indicate that most of the chocolate used by the Knights had arri-



ved from Livorno; it was described as chocolate of Caracas, or 'Caracca Cocoa'. And again: "**Gio. Francesco Buonamico** (1639-1680) compiled a treatise on chocolate processing and reported several recipes learnt on his travels in Europe. Between 1657 and 1666, Buonamico had visited France, Germany, Flanders, Lorraine, Switzerland, the Italian peninsula, Sicily and various Greek islands. Buonamico's treatise and recipes remain unpublished. The Maltese physician **Giuseppe Demarco** (1718-1793) wrote a more important work published in this period. Entitled *Dissertatio De Cocholata eiusque Usu et Abusu in Medicina*, (*Treatise on Chocolate and its Use and Abuse in Medicine*), it reveals his participation in the continental debate concerning the use and abuse of chocolate as a drink". Physicians' and naturalists' writings dominate the extraordinary bibliography on chocolate, initially perceived as medicinal. Particularly important among the scientific studies on chocolate's medicinal uses and consumption as a beverage is the tractate written by **Colmenero de Ledesma** in 1631. The author, a court physician in Madrid, was the first to tackle chocolate as a medicine. Therapeutic use increased Spanish familiarity with the 'food of the gods'. The Spaniards, however, did not enjoy the flavour of the cocoa beverage prepared in Mexico. Instead, they set about 'softening' it, substituting strong spices with more delicate aromas including vanilla, musk and ambergris. They also sweetened it with sugar, unknown in

America yet vastly fashionable at the time in Europe, especially in Spain and Sicily, where the Arabs had introduced sugarcane cultivation centuries before. Sugar profoundly changed the drink, while retaining the ancient Maya name *chacahoua*, whence derived the various European words including the Spanish and English 'chocolate', the French 'chocolat' and the Italian 'cioccolata' (**M. Montanari**, 1995).

---

*The drink changed radically with the addition of sugar*

---

In Modica, consumption of the dark nectar of the gods only spread to other social strata in the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century alongside the appearance of the first cafés, new venues to meet and interact. Nor was the 18<sup>th</sup> century processing technique abandoned, which confers upon the unadorned chocolate bar, produced without exceeding the melting point of sugar, that granular flakiness which remains its hallmark. PGI recognition protects and honours lore and flavours which provide a feast for the senses, and supports the registration of Modica chocolate's 18<sup>th</sup>-century production techniques in the UNESCO heritage list. The peerless chocolate of Modica, which has inspired art, literature, theatre and cinema, endures above all as a messenger of the beguiling alliance between food and nature.

**Grazia Dormiente**



# Low-temperature cooking

by **Roberto Zottar**  
*Gorizia Delegate*

*A widespread technique requiring lower and more stable temperatures than those traditionally used.*

A cooking method currently popular among chefs worldwide, and the object of cooking enthusiasts' fascination, is LTC, meaning 'Low-Temperature Cooking'. This technique requires lower and more stable temperatures than those traditionally employed, and the use of plastic bags within which foods are vacuum-packed and sealed: hence the French variant by which the technique is also known: *sous vide*, meaning 'in a vacuum'. To appreciate this process, one must understand the effects of temperature on food cooking. Let us, for example, consider meat and what happens to it through ro-

asting, grilling, braising, stewing and boiling. Its muscle fibres, often interspersed with fat, are held together by connective tissue, present in direct proportion to the strain endured by the muscles. This tissue consists of three proteins: collagen, reticulin and elastin. Collagen, the most common, is the only one among these three which is water-soluble at temperatures between 60°C and 65°C in mammals (around 45°C in fish). Heat denatures collagen, altering its interwoven fibre structure: its fibres are disentangled and shortened, and if heat is accompanied by water, they melt, forming gelatine. Connective





tissue is tough to chew and must therefore be softened. The more collagen is present, the tougher is the meat. Hence for every cut of meat, considering the percentages of muscle, fat and connective tissue, there is always the issue of identifying a compromise between liquefying collagen and preserving the softness of the muscle fibres. One must therefore maintain softness, without losing meat juices, by having meat reach an inner temperature below 65°C while simultaneously achieving sufficiently swift liquefaction of the connective tissue which holds the fibres together through temperatures above 75°C. At lower temperatures, the process is much slower.

---

*One must keep meat soft  
without losing its juices*

---

While a fillet steak should be cooked swiftly at a high temperature, a shank or a braising steak, rich in connective tissue, is more suitable for moist, slow cooking to dissolve collagen and form the gelatine which lubricates and softens muscle fibres. Consider, for instance, pork ribs in an oven: proteins already begin coagulating at 55°C; a mere 5°C above that, the meat's collagen starts transforming, melting and softening the meat. At 70°C the meat fibres contract further, and at 75°C, that contraction squeezes out the meat's juices. Fats begin to seep out at 80°C, and any further temperature increase would result in a particularly tough piece of meat. In other words, the connective tissue must melt, a process which begins at 60°C. With more heat, collagen dissolves more swiftly, but muscle proteins shorten, squeezing out water and meat juices, thereby drying and hardening the meat. Paradoxically, by boiling meat badly in a watery environment, one risks drying it out; hence **Massimo Bottura's** idea of the 'unstewed stew', cooked through LTC, which keeps it pink rather than grey.

LTC is not, in fact, a recent invention: it was first theorised by the American physicist **Sir Benjamin Thompson, Count Ru-**

## LTC IN PRACTICE

LTC methods, which can be used on meat but are also perfectly adaptable to fish, vegetables and fruit, first of all require that foods be packed in specialised plastic bags. After any desired marinades are applied, the food is vacuum-packed. The resulting very low pressure has various consequences, the first being that the food can be cooked at far lower temperatures than those required by normal atmospheric pressure. The bag is immersed in a roner, namely a water bath with a thermostatic heater, or a steam oven, with a stable temperature between 50°C and 85°C, depending on the ingredients. For instance, for rare or medium-rare meats (e.g. beef) temperatu-



res vary between 45°C and 65°C, while temperatures are higher for fowl or pork, partially for health reasons. The temperature in the cooking vessel must be the same as that desired for the core of the food. And here is the beauty of vacuum cooking: once that core temperature is reached, we could, in theory, leave the food to cook even for several days, without it burning or drying excessively, because the core temperature will remain constant. Let us consider an example. For a traditional roast, the oven temperature is set at

180°C. From the moment when that temperature is reached, calculating a half-hour per kilogramme, a one-kilogramme roast will be ready in an hour. Measuring the roast's core temperature we find that it is 70°C as desired. But what happens if we forget the oven on with the roast inside? First the roast will continue cooking until even its core reaches 180°C, and then it burns completely. With LTC, full cooking requires far longer times than those used in traditional cooking. To convey some idea of this, rare roast beef must be cooked at 56°-60°C for anything between 6 and 14 hours, depending on size; a moist and juicy chicken breast requires a temperature of 70°-75°C lasting between 1.5 and 3 hours. Once cooking is complete, the cooking bag must immediately be placed into iced water or a blast chiller: this is indispensable both for storage and for immediate consumption, because it enhances the result of the subsequent 'finishing' phase. At this point the food can be stored in a fridge or freezer. For serving, it must be brought back to consumption temperature, which can be accomplished with a roner; then, once the bag is opened, the food must be browned in a pan or oven at a very high temperature. This brings the food back to serving temperature while also initiating the Maillard reaction responsible for the classic outer crunch.

Those wishing to try this at home need only a roner (which costs a hundred-odd Euros), a vacuum-packing machine and the correct cooking bags. What matters is to follow the rules meticulously to avoid food poisoning. One must use flawless and fresh ingredients and never interrupt the cold chain, employing the temperatures and times indicated. These principles also apply to traditional cooking but are even more important for LTC.



**mford**, in a late 18<sup>th</sup>-century essay wherein he explained the manifold advantages of cooking meat at low temperatures.

*At low temperatures, heat only gradually reaches the core of the food*

Its rediscovery, however, is due to the French chef **Georges Pralus**, who in 1974 was working in the **Toisgros brothers'** restaurant in Roanne, in the Loire Valley. Pralus discovered that *sous vide* allowed far superior cooking of a *foie gras* terrine. Cooking fatty goose liver is a delicate operation, and performing this in a vacuum while controlling temperatures reliably preserves flavour and fragrance while minimising the shrinkage caused by cooking, a consideration of no small importance for a delicacy so prized. Subsequently, the late 20th-century Spanish 'molecular cooks' brought media attention to LTC.

It aims to cook food evenly, which traditional cooking methods don't always allow. A grilled steak inevitably displays differently cooked areas: it is burnt on the outside, well-done immediately under that, and rare, sometimes almost raw, in the centre.

At low temperatures, heat reaches the core of the food gradually, avoiding excessive cooking of its external regions. LTC is beloved by chefs both because it allows time efficiency (permitting foods to be cooked even several days before serving while maintaining their flavours intact in the



vacuum container) and because it reduces food costs (reducing liquid and weight loss: LTC foods lose a maximum of 10% of their weight, against the 30-40% lost through traditional cooking methods).

*Spanish 'molecular cooks' brought media attention to LTC*

LTC is advantageous in maintaining rich flavour, colour and organoleptic properties. Vitamins and proteins are not degraded, and in particular, water-soluble proteins are optimally preserved. From the organoleptic perspective, the most interesting aspect is texture, because temperature-controlled prolonged cooking makes fibres far more tender than traditional high-temperature brief cooking methods. The difference in texture is especially notable when cooking an egg at 62°C for 45 minutes: the white solidifies while the yolk remains creamy, with a unique flavour and consistency

which are difficult to replicate with other cooking methods.

**Roberto Zottar**

### DEFINITION OF LOW-TEMPERATURE COOKING

LTC may be described as temperature-controlled vacuum cooking, or more precisely, following Allan Bay's definition: it is a cooking technique but can also be viewed as a pre-cooking method, whereby food, usually but not invariably raw, is vacuum-packed, cooked in a *roner*, that is, in hot water, at a temperature under 90°C and controlled within one-degree increments, and then flame- or oven-finished or swiftly chilled for fridge or freezer storage, which may be relatively long, before being finished.

## 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](mailto:segreteria@accademia1953.it)) for more information and orders.*