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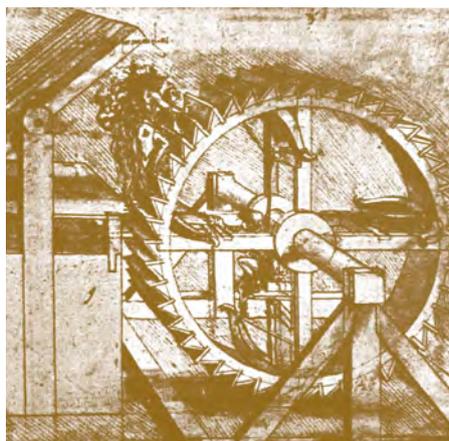
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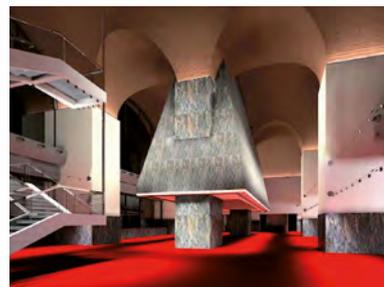
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**On the cover:** *Homage to Leonardo da Vinci.*  
*Graphic elaboration of the project "Foot-activated cloth dryer"; Codex Atlanticus, Ambrosian Library, Milan.*

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# Momentous transformations in the restaurant world

by **Paolo Petroni**

President of the Academy

*A silent revolution,  
surely detrimental to the  
traditional domains of food.*

**H**istory teaches that we know how revolutions begin, but not how they will end. Indeed they often have unpredictable consequences, frequently the opposite of those we expected. However, while they are under way they leave a trail of casualties, whether few or many. A silent revolution is now taking place in full public view in the multifaceted world of restaurants, and it will surely damage the traditional domains of food. Reliable estimates predict a loss of approximately 15% of restaurant jobs, as we know them today, in favour of other food service modalities.

*Classic fast food is veering towards  
the requirements of a more demanding clientele*

The classic 'fast food', once synonymous with 'junk food', is undergoing a metamorphosis, adapting itself to the requirements of a more mature, discerning clientele. The cast-iron creed of **Dick and Mac McDonald**, subsequently reinforced by McDonald's 're-founder' **Ray Kroc**, 'just burgers and fries', is now but a hazy memory. To prosper, today's fast food restaurants offer salads, fried fish or chicken, sandwiches with local ingredients to represent the host nation, and increasingly, family services or even table service. To have some idea of this phenomenon, consider that McDonald's alone has 600 franchised branches in Italy, with 23,000 employees. And they are by no means alone: beyond their eternal rival, Burger King, they contend with Autogrill, Chef Express, Roadhouse, Old Wild West and more recently ethnic fast food such as Kyosko Sushi. Alongside cafés with pre-made hot food, sandwich or *piadina* shops, and vastly trendy street food, a new food paradigm is taking shape, starting with **Oscar Farinetti's** brainchild **Eataly**. Its first branch opened in 2007 in Turin's Lingotto district, followed by branches in Genova, Roma Ostiense, Bari Fiera del Levante, Florence, Milan, Trieste and many others including those abroad, such as the celebrated New York location. This innovative formula provides customers with delicious foods made with excellent ingredients in autonomously managed restaurants. The



Cappa Mazzoniana, Termini railway station, Rome

venture's crown jewel is the monumental FICO food park in Bologna.

*The 'Central Market' format now surrounds  
the splendid Cappa Mazzoniana  
in Rome's central train station*

Another restaurateur-entrepreneur has made a similar splash: the Florentine **Umberto Montano**, whose **Mercato Centrale** ('Central Market') format is conquering markets and railway stations. Launched in 2014 from the central market in Florence, his winning idea took root in Rome's Termini train station in the area dominated by the imposing and splendid marble chimney known as the *Cappa Mazzoniana* (Mazzoni's chimney, from its architect's name), once the after-work haunt of railway employees; Montano also recently opened the Porta Palazzo market in Turin. He is now preparing to open another venue in Milan's central train station, occupying the via Sammartini area on the station's western side, with 20 artisanal food representatives offering tastings at their stands and at restaurant tables. The food world, then, is being transformed. In this climate of novelty and modernity, it is befuddling to learn that the World's Best Female Chef 2019 has anointed a winner: the Mexican **Daniela Soto-Innes**, chef at the **Cosme** restaurant in Manhattan. We are happy for her, but in a world so fervently advertised as 'gender-free', it is confusing to see gender differences emphasised in the kitchen. A chef's ability has nothing to do with gender.



# Coffee, from Naples to... Seattle

by **Andrea Cesari de Maria**

*Honorary Delegate for Milano Duomo*

*An American coffee chain has opened a palatial branch in Milan, which, though successful, does not remotely embody the concept of relaxation.*

**Q**uotations from **Honoré de Balzac** and **Pietro Verri** are but the least examples of how important coffee has been, and remains, in the lives of people all over the world: an intimate moment, often solitary, almost **a ritual for starting the day**, assuming innumerable personalised variations. Not to mention the recent disputes between espresso and filter coffee. Two are the vastly differing cities which have indissolubly linked their names to coffee: Naples, and more recently, Seattle. Neapolitan coffee is short, hot and strong, while American coffee is more of a drink served in large quantities.

**Naples** and its coffee immediately bring to mind the theatre - specifically that of **Eduardo De Filippo**: "I, for instance, would give up anything except for that

small cup of coffee, calmly enjoyed right here, out on the balcony, after a post-prandial nap of an hour or so. And I must make it myself, with my own hands".

**Seattle**, on the other side of the globe, is a city which starts fashions, including those capable of radically upending our habits (Amazon being a case in point).

**Starbucks** is an American coffee chain founded in 1971. It is the largest of its kind worldwide, with 28,720 branches in 78 countries, of which 12,000 are in the USA. **Starbucks locations only sell their own brand of coffee** (beans or ground), tea, drinks, snacks, merchandise and coffee machines, aiming to "create a customer experience", that is, offer its clientele a unique service unavailable at other coffee shops.

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*The American company's aim is to "create a customer experience"*

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What these profoundly different environments, Naples and Seattle, have in common besides the obvious passion for coffee is the choice of Milan for their resolute market expansion, though using two very different approaches, however coherent with their disparate philosophies regarding the same beverage.

**On the one hand there is Naples, with tiny retail points** directly on the street, with no display case or entrance: "Caffè Napoli" suitable for a 'sip and go' approach typical of those who cannot give up the taste of coffee, with few or no frills, as coffee, thus perceived, represents a deep-seated passion and must be savoured in a devoted manner, almost as a



*"This coffee falls into your stomach, and straight away there is a general commotion. Ideas begin to move like the battalions of the Grand Army on the battlefield, and the battle takes place. Things remembered arrive at full gallop, ensign to the wind. The light cavalry of comparisons deliver a magnificent deploying charge, the artillery of logic hurry up with their train and ammunition, the shafts of wit start up like sharpshooters".*  
(Honoré de Balzac)

*"Real, truest coffee from the Levant, perfumed with aloeswood, such that whoever tries it, though the gravest, most lugubrious man on earth, must perform be roused and become, if only for half an hour, a reasonable man".* (Pietro Verri)

ritual, a moment of 'me time' for well-deserved pleasure. Nevertheless, Neapolitan generosity will out, maintains the true-blue Neapolitan Luciano De Crescenzo: "If Neapolitans are happy for some reason, rather than buying only their own coffee, they buy two: one for themselves and another for the next customer. It's like offering a coffee to the rest of the world...".

**Diametrically opposed is the path followed by Starbucks**, which arrived in Italy following a meticulous communication strategy. A year before its opening, it staged its initial, traumatic encounter with Milan by having **numerous palm trees planted in Piazza Duomo**, the iconic square containing the city's cathedral, "a gift for the city" according to the CEO of Starbucks. Yet the city had no idea what to do with them: palm trees are utterly foreign to the Milanese experience, and one night the locals even tried setting them alight - in vain. The crisis eventually blew over.

Their new location is as prestigious and Milanese as it gets, in keeping with the monumental, imposing - in other words, American - approach employed by such an important company: the historic



**Palazzo delle Poste Centrali (Central Post Office), in Piazza Cordusio, 100 metres from the cathedral.** A 'modest' space, so to speak, at only 2,300 square metres! Work on the café lasted a year, but evidently this was worthwhile, judging by the massive queues it has attracted ever since opening.

*What matters is togetherness, the fact of being surrounded by others*

The approach is influenced and modified by the requirements and characteristics of the host city, while obviously maintaining the American vibe which has garnered such international success. Marble, therefore, even for the counter; porphyry for the oven; bronze; *palladiana* (marble-flake) floors.

The offerings, of course, take Italian tastes and preferences into account: pastries and jam tarts alongside their more standard muffins, and also salads and sandwiches - all prepared to order, diverging from the protocol of the chain's other locations around the world.

However, what is most interesting, deserving more attention, is **the prevailing atmosphere**. What matters here is not the size of one's order, or its quality which must of course reach a certain level, but

togetherness: the fact of being surrounded by others. **A very youthful, cosmopolitan clientele**, who interprets coffee not so much as a substance but as a chance to sit, chat, socialise, perhaps with one's laptop available to continue whatever work was already under way elsewhere. It matters little if one must queue up for everything: this, too, is part of 'being there'.

The first impression upon entering is disconcerting enough to evoke **Charlie Chaplin's** memorable scene in *Modern Times* wherein the protagonist continues making mechanical movements even when the assembly line is finally stilled. Here, what looms large is the gargantuan roaster, surrounded by a sea of humanity roaming hither and thither, creating an impression of fevered activity - but most of all, the sensation of being in an environment bearing no relation to the concept of a 'break', of downtime, of relaxation, which the word 'coffee' implies, at least for Italians.

Heaven forbid that anyone dare uphold one approach as superior to another, since there are as many opinions as there are heads: *tot capita tot sententiae*, and none of us has access to the philosopher's stone. However, **Erri De Luca**, perhaps not coincidentally a Neapolitan writer, may have got it right when he wrote: "A coffee pot on the fire is enough to fill a room".

**Andrea Cesari de Maria**



# A scientific voyage in search of flavour in the kitchen

by Antonio Gaddoni  
Imola Delegate

*Implementing a recipe is  
a scientific experiment.*

**W**e can beat about the bush, widening or narrowing our circle of doubt, but there are no two ways about it: implementing a recipe is a scientific experiment. And this aids our understanding of **the difference between a home cook - *azdora*, in the dialect of Romagna - and a trained cook.** The first can produce a repertoire of delectable dishes thanks to techniques and experience transmitted over time, but without awareness of the scientific laws of cooking. The second embarks on a quest for flawless flavour, using the kitchen like a scientist in a laboratory, clearly envisaging the intended results.

*Pellegrino Artusi combined  
cooking with a scientific mindset*

If in the Middle Ages chemistry was used unwittingly, it was our very own **Pellegrino Artusi** who rendered this element explicit in 1891, opening new horizons by combining cooking with a scientific mindset. His *La scienza in cucina e l'arte di mangiare bene* (*Science in the Kitchen and the Art of Eating Well*) ended the era when the length of a prayer (or longer) determined boiling times, inaugurating the age of cooking with timers and thermometers to monitor temperatures and optimise flavour combinations.

Let us consider, for example, **the science of cooking meat.** Its three components



have different responses to heat: muscle fibres, connective tissue and fat. Balanced cooking is therefore elusive: at 50°, muscle fibres contract and harden; connective tissue begins to soften at 70°, so longer cooking increases tenderness, as in stews and boiled meats with lengthy cooking times; while fats release their aromas above 140°. At least thin slices come to the rescue, being ready in 5 or 6 minutes at a temperature around 55/60°.

**Let us turn to vegetables.** For a good *friggione* (tomato and onion sauce), a spoonful of bicarbonate of soda will accelerate cooking without altering flavour, creating, if we say so ourselves, an excellent condiment for spaghetti or tagliatelle.

*When frying, it is better to have  
a thermometer available*

When frying, we should have a thermometer close at hand, rather than merely following our grandmothers' custom of noting the 'smoke point', meaning the temperature at which fat begins to burn, exuding smoke and toxic substances. **The smoke point of olive oil is 180°**, while many seed oils can tolerate 200° but - we

suggest - should be kept at 160°. The reason is clear: higher temperatures do not change flavour, but increase toxicity. **Even water doesn't always boil at 100°**, losing a degree with every 300 metres of altitude, so that in an alpine hut it boils at 96°, and pasta will cook around 80°. Temperature and cooking time are not the only parameters to be used in the kitchen. Oven fans, for instance, distribute heat evenly and transfer it more swiftly through convection, but may also dry out food.

Let us now tackle **the natural-chemical dichotomy.** The term 'natural' is meaningless in cooking: today's vegetables mostly did not exist half a millennium ago, or at least not in their current forms, having been selectively bred by humans; 'natural', therefore, is recast as whatever is ordinary for us.

**We must not overlook training.** The empirical approach by itself requires many years of learning and growth for a cook to amass both physical and chemical expertise. In other, especially Anglophone countries, cooks are given basic scientific instruction, which substantially reduces their training time. And whenever cuisine is missing that scientific element, one can say that the cultural approach to gastronomy remains inadequate.



# Risi e bisi, the food of the doges

by **Morello Pecchioli**  
Journalist

*Strong symbolism  
and the appeal  
of fresh peas maintain  
the vitality of this recipe.*

**W**ith subtle bliss, beloved, pious pea, you bring to life the taste of days gone by: among the rice in glad pursuit we fly upon the ripples of that cherished sea. With apologies to Giosuè Carducci and his pious ox, we cannot help ourselves: before a dish redolent of such ancient flavour, taste assumes the mantle of poetry and we are tempted to imitate similarly venerable verses in a gastronomic light. The ducal *risi e bisi* (rice and peas) has this effect. Its mere fragrance fills our minds with memories: mother's cooking, the wood stove, the school-teacher and the works of great poets which, alas, are no longer taught.

**Bisi are Venetian peas.** Regional cuisine is generally not idiomatic, and besides, let us remember that when St Mark ruled

the waves, in the Mediterranean the language of the doges was, as English is today, employed for international agreements. "If you see the Sultan of the Turks", ran the advice to Venetian diplomats bound for the Sublime Porte, "speak to him in Venetian". In those days, *risi e bisi* symbolised Venetian wealth, celebration and opulence. It was the star of the doges' luxurious banquets.

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*Risi e bisi symbolised  
Venetian wealth, celebration  
and opulence*

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Every 25<sup>th</sup> of April, on the feast of St Mark, the doge offered a sumptuous banquet, its menu changing from year to year, to the representatives of recognised powers and the city's patricians. Only one dish appeared each year: *risi e bisi*, prepared *all'onda* ('rippling' - referring to its ideal consistency).

Tradition mandated that it be eaten throughout Venice, not only in the doge's palace. Having received the secular benediction of their sovereign, Venetians would call out "evviva San Marco" ("hail, St Mark"), wishing each other "Boni risi e bisi" ("good rice and peas") as they returned home to their dishes brimming with bright green spring gems, just as we, today, wish each other 'Happy Easter' or 'Merry Christmas'. The greeting rang out all over the town, from Schiavonia to the Eastern merchants' warehouse-inns (*fondachi*). To this day, dishes recalling *risi e bisi* are found on eastern Mediterranean menus: in Greece, Turkey, Lebanon... The exquisiteness of fresh peas and the



strong associated symbolism have maintained the vitality of this recipe. The roundness of *Pisum sativum* is evocative of springtime, rebirth and money, *is chei*, to which Venetians were far from indifferent.

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### The Veneto region boasts delicious pea varieties

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They learned from the Byzantines, superstitious spendthrifts who added pearls to rice to attract fortune. The reported pioneer in using gems and pearls to enhance rice was the dissolute early third-century Roman emperor **Elagabalus**. The Byzantines perfected the recipe, rendering it less hazardous: when mixing rice with pearls, they took care to dissolve them first. Venice improved and popularised the recipe, retaining the same auspicious elements but replacing pearls with peas.

The Veneto region is particularly fortunate with *Pisum sativum*, of which it boasts delicious varieties, including the peas of Borso del Grappa, in the province of Treviso, those of Lumignano in the territory of Vicenza, and the *verdone nano* ('dwarf green') of Colognola ai Colli, Verona. The latter admirably complements the *Vialone Nano* ('dwarf vialone') rice from Isola della Scala: two 'dwarf' cultivars create a monumental pea risotto. The rest of Italy is also blessed with peas as tender and sweet as young love. In Liguria there are the peas of Lavagna; in Piedmont, those of Casalborgone; in Lombardy, the green pearls of Miradolo Terme; in Tuscany, the *tardivo mugellano*; the Marche and Umbria have *roveja*; in Campania there are *cornetti* and *cento-giorni vesuviani*; in Puglia there is *riccio leccese*.

**Peas are delicious prepared in manifold ways:** with lasagne, in purées, cream soups, broths or minestrone, in omelettes, with squid or ham-rolled boneless rabbit... fabulous.

Speaking of fables, there is a pea in Fairland which is the world's most famous



and celebrated. Its fame is due to keeping a spoiled princess awake all night by bothering her through twenty mattresses and quilts. This test, narrates **Hans Christian Andersen**, proved that the rain-soaked maiden who had sought lodging the previous night was truly a king's daughter, worthy of bagging the fairytale prince. Perhaps... though in our opinion, her failure to move to another part of the bed only demonstrated her dullness. Furthermore, had that pea been a tender Italian legume rather than a woody Danish pulse, the tale would have ended without a 'happy ever after', for the princess would have slept soundly and been universally mistaken for a leathery-skinned clodhopper.

Fortunately, factual history relates that *Pisum sativum*, originating in Asia Minor, was known and appreciated by the ancient Greeks and Romans. Its many seeds in one pod made it a symbol of luck, prosperity and fertility: in antiquity **brides received garlands of pea flowers**. Could the Italian expression *pisello* ('peapod') for the male organ be due to this custom?

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### Eating peas in May was a joy reserved for the nobility

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We must wait until 17<sup>th</sup>-century France to find peas on aristocratic, and espe-

cially royal, tables. Eating peas in May was a joy reserved for nobles, who alone could afford them. **Madame de Maintenon**, mistress and then morganatic wife of Louis XIV, the Sun King, wrote in May 1696 to a friend: "The eagerness to eat peas, the pleasure of having eaten them and the joy of eating more are the three topics which our princes have been discussing for days. There are ladies who, after dining with the king - and these were 15-course dinners at least - would return home and enjoy some peas before bedtime".

When did this French pea madness begin? A century and a half before La Maintenon, when a 14-year-old Italian princess arrived in Paris, and on 20 October 1533 married the future king Henry II. She was **Catherine de' Medici**, bringing as her dowry not only jewels and sumptuous cloth, but also the splendour of the Italian Renaissance. A rather gluttonous adolescent prone to the *honest voluptas*, the 'honest indulgence', praised by the humanist gastronome Platina (Bartolomeo Sacchi), Catherine brought from Florence a retinue of cooks, butchers and roasters alongside pottery from Urbino and ceramics from Faenza. Among the ingredients she brought were peas bred selectively by her Medici forebears who were conscientious about their prosperous finances but equally wise in administering their lands.

**Morello Pecchioli**



# Raw fish or cooked?

by Massimo Percotto  
Udine Delegate

*Globalisation has increased the popularity of raw fish, which, however, can conceal grave dangers.*

Until thirty-odd years ago, only in certain regions of Italy was raw fish customarily eaten. Such a culture was primarily proper to the inhabitants of the world's colder fishing coasts: the Inuit and Yupik, being the two principal groups of the people who were known as 'Eskimo' (a term widely thought to mean 'eaters of raw flesh'), the Norwegians with their traditional *rakfisk* (trout or arctic char fermented for 3 months and eaten raw), the Peruvians with *tiradito*, the Siberians with *stroganina* (frozen fish served with oil and spices), and the Japanese with the older *narezushi* (fish stored

for a year under rice) whence *sushi* and *sashimi* originated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is a different matter to eat raw shellfish (for instance, as the French do with oysters) or raw fish marinated in salt and lemon, or lime, vinegar, wine or cider, sometimes with added onion and aromatic herbs to induce a sort of 'chemical cooking'.

**Among the most celebrated marinated fish dishes** are the famous Peruvian *ceviche*, *esqueixada de bacalao* and *xató* in Catalonia, *maatjes* in the Netherlands (cider-marinated raw herrings), *gravlax* in Sweden (salmon marinated in aqua-





vit), *lakerda* (pickled mackerel or bonito) in Greece and the Balkans, *ota* and *poke* in Polynesia, *gohu ikan* and *hinava* in Indonesia and Malaysia, and the Thai *koi pla*. Closer to home are marinated anchovies, eaten in many areas of Italy.

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*In some Italian regions, eating raw fish is traditional*

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Our own peninsula contains regions, particularly Puglia, where culinary tradition includes eating raw fish: anchovies, mullets, small cuttlefish and molluscs are kept alive in a container of sea water and then eaten, sometimes with lemon juice. In Campania too, food traditions include the consumption of raw molluscs, especially mussels, and similarly in Liguria. Globalisation and its consequent cultural cross-pollination, with Japanese culture among others, has occasioned an increased appreciation of raw fish throughout Italy in recent decades: it may simply be very thinly sliced (carpaccio) or finely minced and reconstituted in various forms (tartare); and raw molluscs (including oysters, Venus clams, smooth clams and wedge clams) and crustaceans (scampi, tiger prawns, Baltic prawns and other types of shrimp or prawn) are likewise enjoyed. However, perhaps not all raw fish eaters are fully aware of the risks inherent in refraining from cooking, which would

have eliminated parasites and bacteria through heat.

The most frequent danger is food poisoning through intoxication or infection. The pathogenic microorganisms present in seafood, such as ***Salmonella*, *Escherichia coli*, *Campylobacter*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Vibrio cholerae*** and others, can cause **acute food-borne infection**, sometimes with serious consequences.

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*The most frequent danger is food poisoning through intoxication or infection*

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If the food also contains biotoxins produced by microorganisms present before consumption, **the food poisoning can be even more dangerous**, as toxicity is caused by both toxins already present and those secreted by living cells inside the host animal and ingested with it. Histamines can also develop in badly stored fish.

**The most serious danger of all**, however, is caused by a type of parasitic nematode (cylindrical worm) called ***Anisakis simplex***, which in its adult stage inhabits the stomachs of marine mammals. When fish die, these parasites migrate into their flesh and may be ingested by humans, who then become their involuntary hosts. Their larvae, developing in the human digestive system, can cause parasitosis and sometimes even perforate the intes-

tine or stomach. These parasites can be removed by gutting freshly caught fish, or by refrigerating it for 96 hours at -15°C, 60 hours at -20°C, 12 hours at -30°C, or 9 hours at -40°C. *Anisakis* can also be neutralised through high temperatures: more specifically, 15 minutes at 60°C are sufficient.

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*The blast chiller plays a fundamental role*

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The role of the blast chiller can be fundamental in permitting raw fish consumption without the attendant health risks to humans. It is a type of potent freezer, capable both of bringing food to 3°C in a few minutes, allowing its refrigeration without the formation of ice crystals within it (as would happen when foods are frozen by ordinary means), and of chilling it to -20°C in less than half an hour, such that it may be stored without compromising its flavour or organoleptic properties. In 1992, the Italian Ministry of Health mandated that restaurants and any purveyors of raw fish freeze it at -20° for at least 24 hours, or at -35° for 15 hours, before serving it, while if ordinary household freezers are used, raw fish must be chilled to at least -18° and left frozen for a minimum of 96 hours before it may be consumed without cooking it.

**Massimo Percotto**