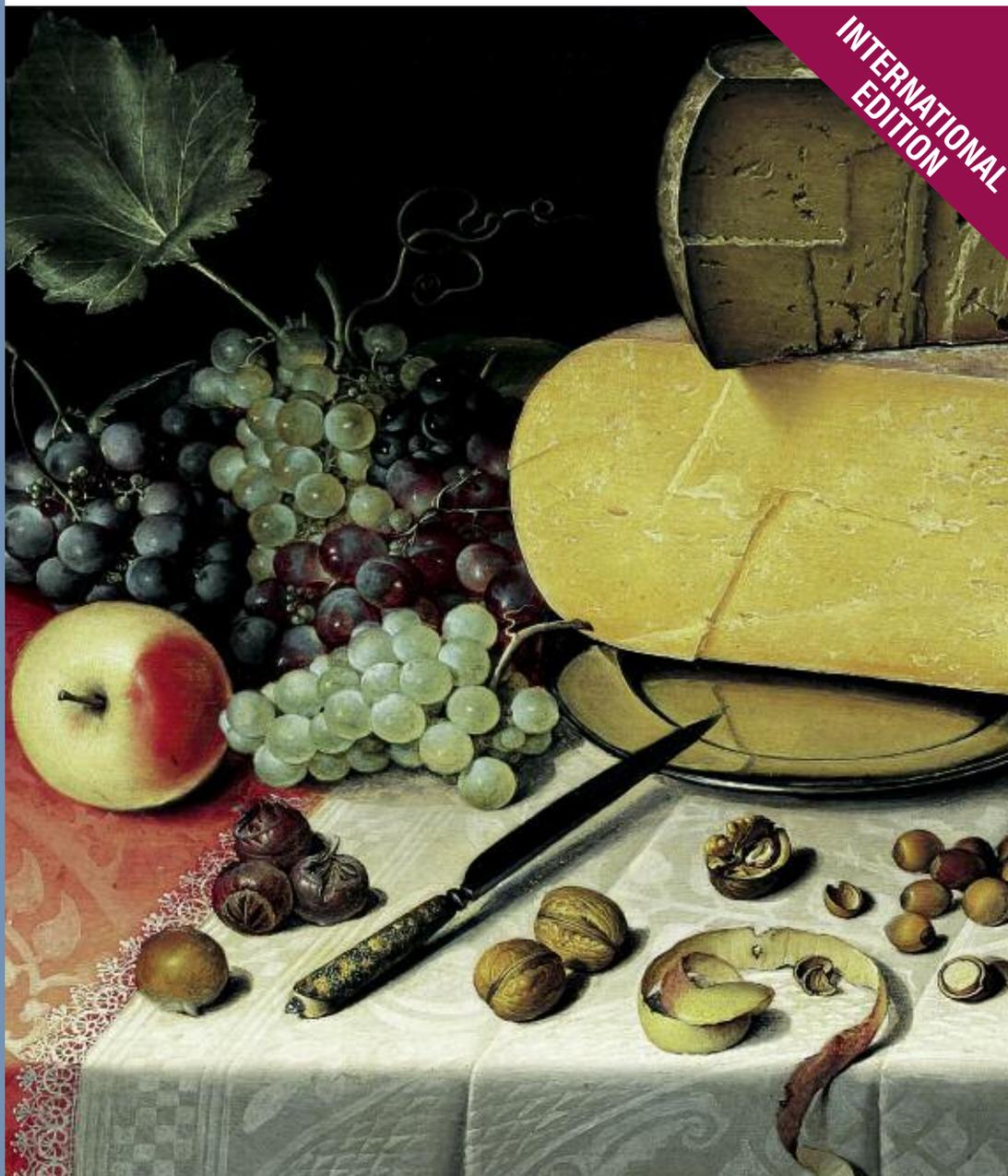


CIVILTÀ DELLA TAVOLA

ACCADEMIA ITALIANA DELLA CUCINA



INTERNATIONAL
EDITION

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L'ACCADEMIA ITALIANA DELLA CUCINA

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DINOVILLANI, EDOARDO VISCONTIDI MODRONE,
WHIT MASSIMO ALBERINI AND VINCENZO BUONASSISI.

CIVILTÀ DELLA TAVOLA

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On the cover: detail from *Still Life with Fruit,
Nuts and Cheese*
by *Floris Claesz van Dijck (1613)*
Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem, The Netherlands



Hurrah for real time cuisine

Real time cuisine in accordance with tradition is the best answer to our current crisis of cuisine.

BY GIOVANNI BALLARINI
President of the Academy

Dear Academicians, many signs lead us to believe that modern bourgeois cuisine is in a deep crisis, if not dead, as it is proclaimed more often than not.

The crisis stems from the disintegration of the bourgeois family and the public restaurant business, when restaurants are thinning out and are being replaced by other undefined and un-definable eateries and by the apparently unstoppable invasion of industrial and processed food.

This phenomenon occurs not just in Italy but it concerns a country that, in forgetting the entire Italian Renaissance, proclaims itself as the cradle of gastronomy. Since the spring of 2013, France has brought to the fore a revolutionary cuisine or at least the French present it as such. It is no longer the now obsolete nouvelle cuisine or the technical-experimental cuisine,

nor the local cuisine or the zero-kilometer variety. The novelty is the “cuisine of cooking.” You heard it: you should know how to cook in a kitchen! The revolution consists of going back to cooking and not limiting oneself to assembling food or offering elegant productions of food and foodstuff that is pre-concocted and pre-processed by the industry or by artisans or even (listen to this one!) by the very restaurant or other premises open to the public with a variety of designations.

As a sign of such revolution, great French chefs such as Gérard Passédat, Alain Ducasse, Thierry Marx and Alain Ducourner in Paris have proposed the designation *Quality Restaurant* to be reserved for those restaurants where every dish is prepared and cooked on the premises in “real time” and expressly for the customer. Two quick thoughts follow. The first one is that at the end of the nineteenth century Giuseppe Verdi said that progress can be measured even by an intelligent return to the past. The second one is that at the end of the eighteenth century coffee was prepared in the morning in the “cuccuma”, the old style coffee maker, and served throughout the day and even later.

In Italy the habit took hold of preparing it specifically or “expressly” for the consumer... thus becoming the espresso that is the reason for the success of coffee (both the drink and the premise) Italian style.

The proposal to introduce the *Quality Restaurant* designation is the offspring of an investigation by the

French television network TV5 that discovered how 150,000 French restaurants serve refrigerated, frozen or processed courses. A similar situation was found to exist for dishes or menus that in various fashions boast the denomination of “house specialty” or the sponsorship of a famous chef (who is absent most of the time, on account of his continuous appearances on television and at symposia, meetings and so on).

Without going into too many details, a situation analogous to the coffee in the “cuccuma” rather than the espresso is institutionalized by the modern kitchen implements and techniques (choppers, freezing and chilling equipment, vacuum devices and combined technologies) that allow us to prepare courses and their components in advance, as well as complete dishes.

Another aspect that should not be underrated is that the advance preparation of food makes it possible to better streamline the work in the kitchen and save on help, quite an important factor in the food business. The French union Synhorcat has estimated that should all restaurants prepare dishes in real time this would ensure 27,000 new jobs. There is no mention, however, of the final cost of meals in these restaurants.

As one can easily imagine, this suggestion meets with a great deal of criticism and protest by those who utilize the system of pre-cooking of food for organizational or economic reasons. The most common criticism is that the



distinction between restaurant and quality restaurant creates a “gastrocracy”, generates confusion among the consumers and most of all among tourists, thus damaging the image of French cuisine around the world. It must also be added that expressly prepared food is automatically excellent and always better than a cuisine that uses preparations and courses made in advance.

Something similar happens in family cuisine where food, in part or totally prepared in advance and at different

levels, are becoming the norm in the new post-bourgeois family. We cannot hide the fact that quality apart, other issues come into play, including the correct information for the consumer. If the consumer goes to a restaurant that boasts the presence of a famous chef, relying on the denomination or its sign, advertising or other elements, he has the right to be informed if the chef in question is the idea man or the food designer, as we call him today, or the executing chef.

A recognition that is not new and ap-

plies to all arts (gastronomy itself is an art) is that the value of an artwork by a great painter is different from that of his school or one of his followers or imitators.

In the Italian situation, that is not that different from the one in France and other industrialized nations, a special task is entrusted to the Academicians when they render judgments about restaurants: that of making sure that the type of cuisine, in real time or express, is duly noted and stressed.

GIOVANNI BALLARINI



GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE MAGAZINE

Contributions to the magazine by Academicians are not only welcome, they are indispensable. However Academicians need to keep in mind some essential guidelines, so that their effort and passion are rewarded by rapid and thorough publication.

● **Articles:** It is essential that **articles be sent electronically**, in Word format (not pdf) to the following email address: redazione@accademia1953.it

● **Article Length:** To avoid cuts that are irritating for both the writer and editor, articles should be between **4,000 and 6,000 characters** (including spaces). Your computer provides character counts.

● **“From the Delegations” Column:** For ease of reading, **maximum length is limited to 2,500 characters including spaces.**

● **Convivial Dinner forms:** it is equally important that the “notes and comments” section of the rating sheets **respect the 800 character limit** (Maximum 1,000 characters) include spaces, in order to avoid cuts and errors. Rating sheets that arrive at Headquarters more than 30 days after the event will be discarded.

● **Please do not send reports on convivial dinners held outside the territory of your Delegation, or on those held in the homes of Academicians or places other than restaurants and public settings, as they will not be published.**

● **By observing these simple guidelines Academicians can be reasonably assured of rapid and accurate publication, thereby avoiding painful cuts.**

● **Obviously, the Editors reserve the right to edit all articles and publish them according to available space.**



The new guides are out; the dream has disappeared

The restaurants are the usual well known venues; the reviewers are less and less reliable; the public's interest is fading. The great chefs are searching for new paths. What will happen to the paper guides?

BY PAOLO PETRONI
Secretary General of the Academy

It happens every year in October: the restaurant guides come out. The media play it up, the votes of celebrities are counted, comparisons are made with the patience of Job in a stagnant business state. Someone calls them “Xeroxed Guides” as each year they feature the same stories, with a slight change in ratings, more often than not unmotivated, just to do something different. It is obviously not the fault of the guides whose publishers would try anything to bring out some novelty or say something new. The problem lies with the trend toward involution rather than evolution. Possibly, that is the function itself of the printed guides; nowadays, all kinds of up to date information with addresses, telephone numbers and closing days can be found on the internet to the point that reviews are less and less utilized. In particular, the gastronomy reviewers can be discounted. To wit: the dream is disappearing. There was a time when the very talk about great restaurants created a myth and exciting expectations; reviews were compiled and read with eagerness and envy by those who had a direct experience and those who wrote about them. Unimaginable dishes, crazy novelties, ecstatic reviews. Today, the bubble has burst, interested has taken a nosedive and there is no longer anticipation for the new issues of the guides. The empirical world is mutating, the myth is being cut down to size: Matteo Baronetto, Marchesi's pupil and loyal supporter of Carlo Cracco in Milan for over 15 years (an iti-

nerant chef on television and the foreign scene) has migrated to Turin in order to reopen the restaurant the Cambio after a tormented shutdown. The King of Chefs and a true master, Gualtiero Marchesi, said goodbye to Franciacorta and his Albereta and at the merry age of 83 is about to open a resort with restaurant at Agrate Conturbia near Novara. The inauguration is set for 2014. In the meanwhile, the restaurants under the trademark of Il Marchesino will remain open. Hats off! Paolo Lopriore, another Marchesi's pupil, leaves the restaurant Il Canto in Maggiano's Certosa of Siena and appears destined to settle down near Lake Como. His far flung cuisine was not remunerative for the hotel.

Vissani has just opened l'Altro Vissani (namely Luca) in Capri, offering dishes and pairings that have little to do with Capri. We are waiting for the queen of guides, the red Michelin, whose few collaborators “pass judgment and establish scores that stick” thus creating dark dramas and jubilations among restaurateurs. In this context, the Guide of the Italian Academy of Cuisine - living exclusively on Internet - (the Guide to the Good Table is sent for free every two years only to the Academicians) is downloaded as an App by almost 100,000 people. It strives to be a credible source of information that is exact and up to date thanks to the capillary presence of the Academy's delegation in every territory. This should be the target toward which our best efforts should aim.

INTERNET, BLOGS, FACEBOOK AND THE ACCADEMIA WEBSITE

Some Delegations have expressed an interest in opening their own websites. In order to avoid content conflicts with the Accademia's official website, the Office of the President has expressly stated that this is not possible. The Office of the President would like to stipulate that online conversations among Academicians and/or Delegations in blogs and on platforms such as Facebook are permitted. However, in these cases the use of Accademia logo is not allowed, and content should not discuss or involve the Academy's organizational activities.



Looking at cuisine with two eyes: a new perspective

President Giovanni Ballarini's address to the Académie Internationale de la Gastronomie and the Italian Academy of Cuisine's joint conference on "Cuisine: Science and Culture" held at the University of Parma October 7, 2013.



Our nutrition, and consequently our cuisine and gastronomy have developed in accordance with our biological and animal imperatives. It is also an outgrowth of a culture built on common sense and the codification of our habits, rituals and traditions.

With his experiments in physiology two centuries ago, Claude Bernard (1813-1878) learned that nutrition begins as a result of human beings living in communities, and through experimentation and the recording of facts, it becomes a science. That is how today we can speak of proteins, vitamins, mineral content, calories, balanced nutrition and so on. Today science can clarify and explain even the smallest mechanisms of transformation that cuisine can have on food, and it becomes one of the most important forces of modern innovation that

began ten, twenty and even more centuries before the Common Era, starting when man invented the cooking pot. And yet, the sciences of physiology, alimentation and nutrition not infrequently provide information that is contrary to our intuition and common sense, and they sometimes suggest ideas that can be disconcerting in terms of their application in our daily lives. Is butter good or bad for you? A nutritional angel or devil? Is olive oil or soy bean oil better for your health? Are all carnivores destined to die of cancer? Can a diet rich in meat lead to the destruction of animal biodiversity, and owing to its consequences in terms of global warming, lead to a catastrophe for humanity? Certainly science provides us with important information, and in many cases confirms the human instincts of the past, as is the case with nutritional science and "nutraceutic" products. Are science and common sense in conflict even in terms of nutrition and cuisine? Since the Enlightenment and the Age of Reason, we have believed that we can eliminate all non-rational and non-scientific ideas, but we were wrong. By the same token, during the last century we tried to eliminate myths, but the void was simply filled with new ones. We abandoned the myth of Grandma's minestrone and replaced it with the new myth of the McDonald's hamburger.

In the case of nutrition, a system that is merely rational is inadequate because man's desire for more lurks behind that cold rationality. In addition to calories, protein, nutrition, health and

well being, we seek sensory satisfaction, identity, symbols, traditions, dreams and many more things that rationality cannot provide. Modern man's dissatisfaction is in large part tied to a sense of alienation brought about by an increasingly rationalized sense of order. But does this mean rational nutrition according to scientists or irrational mythical nutrition according to the common sense of the vast majority of the population?

An analogy or metaphor may help us overcome this dilemma that has its roots in the contrast between rational and irrational that characterizes human behavior: Rational and irrational, science and common sense can be likened to two very different images that we perceive with our eyes and formulate in our brains. Two eyes are necessary - not simply because two are better than one - but in order to obtain a binocular vision with two different images that are formulated through a mental transformation process into a 3-D image that provides a new clarity and depth.

A complete knowledge, blessed with clarity and depth can only result from a combination of our irrational awareness that comes from our common sense and that originates from the human history with modern scientific knowledge. Clarity and depth are necessary, especially today, in order to have a truly human cuisine and gastronomy. To obtain this we must use two eyes and a well educated brain that is capable of governing our cuisine and gastronomy within the framework of nutritional anthropology.



The sommelier and contemporary cuisine

*A report by Dr. Andrea Grignaffini at the conferency
“Cuisine as Science and Culture” at Parma University - October 2013.*



The profession of sommelier is a ritualistic one, constructed out of a syntax of gestures and actions embroidered around the focus of an object - the comestible text - articulated in one or more dishes. Around this text, whose succession makes up the meal, the sommelier plays the role of a director who stages actions and narratives, while the performance renders his activities the indispensable support for the correct interpretation of the text. Just like a text, the meal can be looked upon as the sum of the intentions of the author, the chef. Thus, the sommelier's activities are complementary to those of the chef. Over the years, the sommelier's activities have dovetailed with the progressive institutionalization of the wine cellar. Within the scope of the restaurant, a place that starts out with the same rules of a mi-

litary-like institution, the wine cellar could acquire an institutional role only through the emergence of specialized personages whose job it was not only to deal with the inventory but to procure the wine by knowing each and every bottle kept in the cellar.

The term sommelier comes from the French language, specifically from the Provençal *saumalier*, that is to say “driver of pack animals.” With the passing of time, this occupation was extended to procuring food and finally to taking care of the wine cellar. Along various centuries, this occupation acquired dignity to the point that today's sommelier is a professional who is competent to analyze the organoleptic characteristics of the wine for the purpose of evaluating its typology, quality and conservation potential, most of all for the purpose of correct pairing with food.

Such pairing is no longer arbitrary but codified by precise behavioral norms that revolve around the competence of the sommelier. In the dining hall, he is the person who advises the customers about the right wine to pair with the food, provides the service and does the pouring. Besides the wine, however, the sommelier has the responsibility of managing all the other alcoholic beverages. Consequently, he must know the principal wine producing regions of the world, the history of wine, the cultural and enological techniques, the varietals and the wines. At the same time, his knowledge should cover the distillates, liquors, beers and the most popular international cocktails; he must al-

so be familiar enough with the rules of gastronomy and cuisine. He must be sensitive to occurrences of our time; today, more than ever, he has to review the status of his knowledge.

The very field in which he operates, professional cuisine, is changing rapidly. While initially he could focus on well codified elements, following a handbook that embraced service temperatures, the customers' inclinations and the choice of the glass, today some of the elements that appeared to be durably set appear mistaken, or possibly obsolete. A phenomenon took place in Italy more than elsewhere that contributed to a progressive phase-out of the *maître*, combining two professions into just one. In addition, when pairings are considered, the relationship between what can be eaten and what can be drunk evolves into a science in and of itself. The tasting menus can bring to the table up to twenty dishes, creating a situation that strains the professional duty of the sommelier as it contains a substantial admission: while cuisine has undergone the violation of frontiers between what is admissible and what is not, by increasing the combination of ingredients and flavors, wine remains “only” wine. This is not a reductive statement because wine contains at its core all the elements of complexity of a professional cuisine. The relationship between dining hall and kitchen has been altered to the point that the sommelier is compelled to abstract from codified rules, searching for new frontiers in his profession.



Etna: world heritage site

A propitious decision by UNESCO that declared the site to be “one of the most emblematic and active in the world”

BY FRANCESCO CANCELLIERE
Academician, Etna Delegation



The 2010 “Governance Poll” conducted by IPR Marketing for the Italian newspaper Sole 24 Ore placed Mt. Etna at the top of the list of Europe’s most beloved volcanoes. In her book *Il catasto magico* (The Magic Registry) Maria Corti wrote: “Etna is a cosmic metaphor, in which the realm of the living and the realm of the dead come together.” Etna was the name of a Sicilian nymph who was reputed to be the daughter of Uranos and Gaea: she supposedly dwelt within the bowels of the volcano and was the source its destructive eruptions. It is said that she intervened as arbiter in the dispute between Demetrius and Hephaestus over the domination of Sicily (the island of grain and volcanoes). Greek colonies observing the eruptions believed the workshop of Hephaestus was housed inside the

volcano. From there with help from the residents of Cyclops and the dwarf Cedalius was said to mine constantly for metal. For Homer as well the Cyclops were a race of savage pastoral cannibals who lived on the Eastern slopes of Etna and disdained the gods. Polyphemus was one of them: after being blinded, he seized some boulders in his impotent rage and hurled them at Ulysses’ ship, which capsized with his men in the nearby stretch of sea from which the town of Acitrezza arose. The Muntagna or Mungibello (the “mountain” or beautiful “mountain”) as it is affectionately called by the local inhabitants, is beloved like a living creature. Its eruptions sometimes cause destruction but over time and thanks to the roots of the Spanish broom bushes, the lava is transformed into extremely fertile land that produces extraordinary fruits such as the famous Bronte pistachios that, in addition to being cultivated, grow wild in the sciara (accumulation of volcanic material that forms on the surface or sides of the lava hills). The strawberries of Maletto, the highest in the circler of towns around the volcano and gateway to Etna, are world renowned for their flavor.

Grapes are cultivated at different altitudes and thus have varying alcohol contents. Lately production has increased and become more refined resulting in excellent table wines. “Calicelli,” a vegetable that when boiled makes a fine accompaniment to roasted sausage, grows wild throughout the vineyards. Thanks to a young farmer from Zafferana in

1920, apiculture was developed: today the production of honey has reached significant levels.

In the early 19th century the caves that were formed in the lava flow were employed for one thing: the preservation of the snow used to produce ice cream and ices during the summer months. At the beginning of the last century Giuseppe Leotta built a large tub called *la nivera* in which snow was compacted and could be exported as far away as Malta.

Since 1500 manufacturing with lava has represented an instrument of socioeconomic development and has even become an art: when cut into blocks, lava can be used for paving streets and building sidewalk curbs. It has been used in construction as a decorative element, and more recently through a glazing process can be made into boards for garden furniture.

Over the centuries Etna has also been a source of great fascination among writers. From Goethe to Guy de Maupassant, to Verga and Pirandello, from the futurist Marinetti to the director Strehler, many have been enchanted by its majesty and fascinated by its nature. The volcano has elicited the interest of film directors: Bunuel with *The Golden Age*, Huston with *The Bible*, Aldrich and Sergio Leone with *Sodom and Gomorrah*, as well as Pasolini, all were struck by its cultural influence and the myths that surround it.

And so I will end with a quote from Giovanni Verga: “The Stars also shone down on the lava and the surrounding countryside was as black as the sciara itself.”



Sweet treats from an Italian in London

The success story of Italian pastry chef and confectioner Domenico Negri, who conquered the tastes of the Georgian nobility.

BY SILVIA MAZZOLA

Academician, London Delegation



It is a universally recognized fact that Italian culture, as expressed through its art, music and literature, greatly influenced the lifestyles of the elite members of British society during the Georgian era. Italian culture indicated an elevated social position and conferred an air of good taste and urbanity that was expected of people of high social rank. In addition to having paintings by Canaletto on their walls, the elite also adopted the “Italian lifestyle” in terms of food and dining. Stores selling olive oil, wine and other Italian products began to appear all over London.

One such establishment attracts our attention - making our mouths water in part because it sold sweets - for its frozen Italian ices that began to appear on the streets of London in the 18th century. The Italian-Swiss Italian ice cream producer Carlo Gatti’s

“penny ices”, sold from pushcarts by itinerant Italian vendors, became the rage of Victorian London.

The adage “location, location, location” was as true then as it is today. In 1757 pastry chef and confectioner Domenico Negri opened his delightful “confectionary” in Berkeley Square. The fashionable and prestigious Mayfair district was the ideal place to cater to a wealthy clientele. He called it At the Pineapple, and the logo depicted that exotic fruit. Even the choice of this name demonstrated Negri’s intention to establish himself within English high society. The pineapple was often used as a symbol by confectionary shops (it is still part of the logo of Fortnum and Mason). As an exotic fruit, sweet and difficult to obtain, it was easily recognizable as a symbol of luxury. King Charles II had a portrait of himself painted holding a pineapple.

Unfortunately we know nothing about Negri’s place of origin. However his store’s “trade card” (business card) bears his printed name, which also appears on letterhead and on a bill preserved in the British Museum’s Heal collection. These documents enable us to know about the products he produced and sold and thus to draw some conclusions about his store and his clientele.

His product list, written in calligraphy, includes such sweets as “Naples diavolini and also diavoloni”. We can easily imagine the diavolini, those tiny colored confetti that are used in Naples to decorate struffoli but also come in handsomely painted varie-

ties as decorations for ice cream and other sweets. And the diavoloni? Those intensely flavored round golf ball sized candies that Carlo Goldoni refers to in his comedy *One of the Last Nights of Carnival* when Bastian offers them to Alba.

He also mentions the “citrus ices” that, with their aroma and flavor reminded the British nobility of the happy days they spent in Naples and southern Italy during their Grand Tours. And for those who’d never left Italy, enjoying a lemon ice in central London became a way of vicariously living out their dreams of Italian voyages.

These same lemon ices are among the various products that were purchased for the sum of £4 between March 18 and May 13, 1760 by the “Honorable Mr. Claiton” (probably spelled with the English “y” but written by Negri with the Italian “i”). Mr. Clayton’s receipt is printed with an attractive letterhead that in addition to Domenico Negri’s name also contains an image of an obelisk and a pineapple. The store is listed as At the Pot and Pineapple in Berkeley Square. But on his “trade card” Negri emphasizes the production and sale of “all sorts of ices, fruits and creams in the best Italian manner”. This was how Negri referred to his fruit and cream based ice creams, all prepared according to Italian tradition. And it was the Italian tradition that attracted one illustrious client of Negri’s: Edward August, the Duke of York and younger brother of the reigning king George III. Proud of this connection with the English royal family



and aware that it was great honor and accomplishment for an Italian (Neapolitan?) who had landed in London, he modified the first line of his “trade card” to proclaim: “D. Negri, confectioner to His Royal Highness the Duke of York.”

The Duke of York happened to be a 20 year old who enjoyed the finer things in life and lived in high style. He was often seen strolling the gardens of Ranelagh, where he sampled ice creams and listened to music. The fact that he turned to Negri to satisfy his gustatory desires demonstrates how high our Italian confectioner and gelato maker ranked in terms of success as a purveyor of luxury food items. Unfortunately Edward died in 1767 at the tender age of 27 of a fever he contracted while traveling through Monaco on route to Genoa.

From the discovery of another receipt dated 1765 we know that Negri took advantage of this period of royal favor: Indeed, he attracted another royal customer, the Duke of Gordon, who purchased an entire “garden dessert” from Negri. The Duke paid Negri the staggering sum of £25 to dazzle his guests. The confection included sugarplums, bonbons and other sweet treats. The fashion of the time called for serving dessert by laying the table to resemble a garden with flower beds, pathways and trees all made of sugar confections and colored candies arranged on a mirrored background interspersed with porcelain statues, fountains made of Murano glass, swans, and Chinese style parasols. The concept was reproduced on Negri’s “trade card”: a pastoral assemblage of pagodas, fountains, trees and lakes.

After the Duke of York’s death Negri altered his “trade card” and his name appeared alongside that of another. One card reads “At the Pineapple, Negri and Wetten”. Wetten was a confectioner who also enjoyed royal patronage at his store in nearby Bruton Street. Another card, probably from 1784 reads: At the Pot and Pineapple,



Negri and Gunter”. It was the latter who stole the show from Negri; in fact the Berkeley Square establishment would go down in history right up to the 20th century as owned by “Gunter” and “Gunter and Son”. Indeed, Negri himself took on his brother-in-law, a Welshman by the names of James Gunter as partner in 1777, and the latter became the sole proprietor in 1779. The Oxford Biography Dictionary lists a certain Welshman named James Gunter who changed the name of the store from “Pot and Pineapple” to “Gunter”. However, we know that even though Negri’s name no longer was included, Gunter was his brother-in-law and therefore the store always retained its Italian character. And even the way people ate their ice cream was Italian: outdoors in the gardens of Berkeley Square. They say that the waiters took orders from the windows on the piazza and then dodged the carriage traffic to deliver the treats. Negri’s sweet treats not only appeared at evening banquets but also on breakfast tables, where members of the upper classes enjoyed, along with their morning coffee or tea, his tortulong, a knotted doughy confection somewhere between a bagel and a pretzel, that was boiled before being baked.

The recipe for tortulong appeared in

the cookbook *The Complete Confectioner* written in 1789 by a certain Frederick Nutt, an apprentice of Negri’s. In it he describes how to combine flour, sugar, and eggs to make a dough that is rolled into a four-inch long cylinder about the width of a pinkie finger. It is then formed into two interlocking rings by tying it into a knot.

Nutt’s recipe collection is the best source of information about the typography and variety of recipes from Negri’s store. In addition to recipes for cookies, candies and various essential oils, the book contains the recipe for the famous tortulong as well as at least 32 recipes for fruit based ice creams and 24 for sorbets, including one made with bergamot.

Italian ice cream of every conceivable flavor has flourished in the city squares of England since the Georgian era right up to today, but Negri’s delicacies have disappeared. Today in Berkeley Square where his establishment once stood there is a carry-out restaurants for local business people, and a Starbuck’s, where the coffee has precious little to do with Naples. All that remains is the square itself, some of Negri’s business cards, and the immortal know how of traditional Italian cuisine.

SILVIA MAZZOLA



Gourmet mineral water

An unimaginable selection of mineral waters from around the globe to satisfy the most demanding consumers.

BY GIAN PAOLO PINTON

Academician, Eugania - Lower Padania Delegation



How many and which mineral waters cost as much or more as a bottle of fine wine? I had the opportunity to reflect upon this question during a recent vacation in a lovely hotel in Alto Adige. Thanks to my profession, I have traveled the world and discovered all kinds of creative menus and wine lists, but I never would have expected to find before my eyes such an exhaustive and well researched list of mineral waters.

Italy is the world's leading producer of mineral water. We boast 189 springs and 304 brands of mineral water and annual sales of 2.2 billion euro and a production of 12 billion liters of water each year. In terms of per capita consumption Italy is in third place, preceded only by the United Arab Emirates and Mexico (source: l'Occidentale). Every Italian family spends on average 320 euro a year on mineral water (with a median price of 40 cents per liter). One liter of mineral water costs the consumer as much as about 1,000 liters of potable tap water.

In the meanwhile, here is a piece of technical information that is helpful in understanding why there is only one statistic indicated on the label for all kinds of bottled water: Residual mineral content, or total dissolved solids (TDS). This factor indicates the quantity of completely dry solid substances that remains af-

ter evaporating a given quantity of filtered water in a previously calibrated platinum capsule. By comparison, we'll take a look at the price of a bottle of mineral water sold in my hotel. Let's start with the excellent Italian l'acqua delle Dolomiti: the brand is Plose from the South Tyrol. The residual mineral content is 21 mg per liter; the consumer cost is €4.90 (sparkling, medium, or natural) for a one liter bottle. On the hotel list we also have the French water Fashion made by Perrier. It comes from the spring at Vergèze and has been known since Roman times for its natural carbon dioxide. Residual mineral content: 479 mg per liter; cost: €8 for a 750 ml bottle of sparkling.

At €12 per one liter bottle of sparkling we find Iskilde (Danish for ice water spring) from Denmark. The underground spring is located in Mossø National Park in Jutland 55 meters below the ground. Residual mineral content: 426 mg per liter.

In terms of cost, there is an Italian brand that I'd like to point out before preceding with the other foreign brands: l'Assolata: Solé Arte. Solé water, which comes from a basin at the foothills of the Alps in Nuvolento in Lombardy, takes its name from a legend. Roman soldiers were said to have seen an apparition of the "sun goddess" directly at the spring. Residual mineral content: 400 mg per liter;





cost: €13 for a 750 ml bottle of sparkling. From New Zealand we have The Antipodes Prize Winner, It won the gold medal at the Berkeley Springs Winter Festival of Water for the best sparkling water. It is bottled right at the source - the Otakiri (Whakatane) spring nestled in the Rotoma hills. This is one of the least populated areas in New Zealand. Residual mineral content: 120 mg per liter; Cost: €15 for a 1 liter bottle of sparkling water.

From Finland comes The Mother of Water by Veen. The designer bottle contains 660 ml of water. They say it brings good luck to sailors - perhaps that is why it costs €16. Its residual mineral content is 17 mg per liter.

Next on the list is Noble Water from Elsenham, England. This product from an artesian spring in Hertfordshire is also known as “the millionaire’s water”. The bottle won the prestigious “Bottled Water Design Award” in 2009. Residual mineral content: 400 mg per liter. A 750 ml bottle costs €17.

Then there is the “Ice Age Water” 10 Thousand BC from Canada. This prehistoric beverage consists of 100% melted glacier water from formations dating back to the Ice Age. It is bottled directly at the foot of the glacier, which among other things is accessible only by boat. This is the purest bottled water on Earth. Residual mi-



neral content: 4 mg per liter. A 660 ml bottle of natural water costs €19.

It is called is Graceful and it comes from Finé, Japan. This water has flowed from beneath Mt. Fuji for a thousand years. Its source is rainwater that filters through layers of rock, becoming enriched with minerals on its way to the surface at the Shuzenji spring. In the United States it has been called “caviar water” because its pH level (and luxurious designer bottle) pairs well with this sophisticated and expensive food. Residual mineral content: 120 mg per liter. Cost for a 720 ml bottle of natural water: €24.

Ogo, from the place of the same name in Holland is “a shot of oxygen” and has been nicknamed “the breathing water”. It contains 35 times more oxygen than conventional water. The bottle, a transparent ampule in the shape of an oxygen bubble, was created by “celebrity designer” Ora-Ito. Ogo is the trendy water from Tokyo to Paris, from London to Mo-

scow, and from Miami to Barcelona, but it is virtually unknown in Italy. It is the most “in vogue” mineral water in the elite clubs and lounges around the world. A 1 liter bottle of sparkling water has a residual mineral content of 143 mg per liter and costs €27.

Also coming from Canada we have Art-Decò. The “art of water” is one of our planet’s finest waters. The bottling company’s founder, Arnold Gumowitz designed the first bottle even before he found the appropriate spring. This spring was discovered in 2004 with the help of scientific experts. The company’s efforts were rewarded with two gold medals at the 2007 Berkeley Springs International Water Tasting Festival. Residual mineral content: 190 mg per liter, and a 750 ml bottle of natural water carries a €60 price tag! But the most expensive mineral water in the world at €79 a bottle comes from the United States: High Society - Bling H2O gushes from the Dandridge spring in Tennessee and has begun its triumphant march toward Hollywood. It uses a very expensive nine-stage filtration process, and is sold in a Swarovski crystal bottle. Its residual mineral content is 140 mg per liter. The best selling Italian mineral water abroad is San Pellegrino. Its price varies from country to country but seldom exceeds €10 for a 750 ml bottle of sparkling water with a residual mineral content of 200 mg per liter.

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