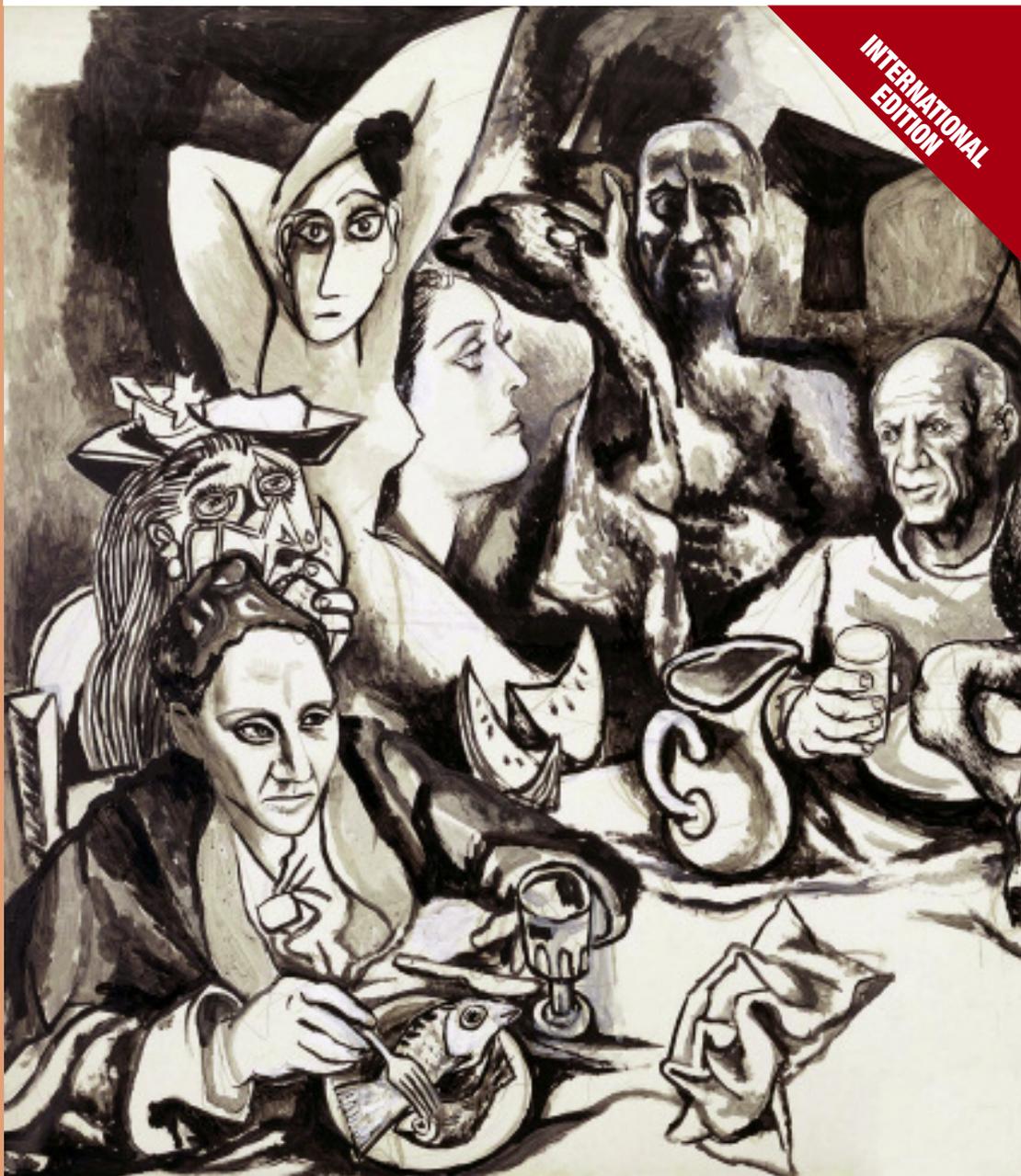


CIVILTÀ DELLA TAVOLA

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DINO VILLANI, EDOARDO VISCONTI DI MODRONE,
WHIT MASSIMO ALBERINI AND VINCENZO BUONASSISI.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS



DEAR ACADEMICIANS...

3 Good Cuisine
(Giovanni Ballarini)

FOCUS

4 Meats "To be Forgotten"
(Paolo Petroni)

CULTURE AND RESEARCH

5 Two Academies,
One Agreement
(Silvia De Lorenzo)

7 Sponge Cake
(Paolo Lingua)

8 The First Academician
(Edoardo Mori)

10 A Gastronomic Blasphemy
(Eugenio Menozzi)



On the cover: detail from *The Convivial: Picasso and His Characters* (1973, private collection) acrylic on stretched paper done by Renato Guttuso as part of a series of twenty large paintings and drawings in homage to Pablo Picasso the year of his death. In this painting, the Spanish painter is depicted at the center of the table surrounded by his friends (Gertrude Stein is on the left) and characters from his paintings (note the demoiselle of Avignon on the left and the Harlequin opposite). This first anthological exhibition was put on by the city of Rome on the hundredth anniversary of his birth (actually Guttuso was born in Bagheria in 1911 but owing to problems with the local administration associated with his parents' liberal notions, the year of his birth was registered as 1912), and will be open until February 10 at the Vittoriano museum complex in Rome.

Counterfeiting and Italian Cuisine

BY GIOVANNI BALLARINI
President of the Academy

Dear Academicians... “Italian sounding” refers to those food products, often of low quality, that bear an Italian name or the Italian flag, but in reality have nothing to do with Italy. These products create competition for the ones that Italy exports in an increasingly global market. In the face of a phenomenon that seems unstoppable, what is the role of a national cuisine? This is a complex problem that can only be briefly outlined in a short essay. We must start with the notion of “made by Italy” - not actually made in Italy, but abroad. Another possibility, on the other hand, that is already taking place, is that of a business located in Italy that produces Italian-style foods (pasta, salami, etc.) using raw ingredients that are not of Italian origin: American durham wheat, Dutch pork, etc. They also have factories in foreign countries where, using the same equipment and especially the same Italian-developed technologies, they produce the very same products and distribute them using their own brand name, that obviously sounds Italian. This is already true for pasta and salami, and other products will soon follow suit. This is what happened with Japanese automobiles built or assembled in Europe, with a Japanese brand name, ideas, and tech-

nology. Is it difficult to maintain that such instances are counterfeiting, much less industrial “piracy”.

The notion of “made by Italy” in foreign countries is also on the increase within the large organized restaurant industry (GRO) in which the Italian name and above all Italian style and quality are important. In North America, “eating Italian”, i.e., Italian cuisine, no longer refers only to pizzerias or upscale restaurants, but American tables are seeing ready-to-eat meals with Italian brand names, produced by Italian industries following Italian recipes that have been interpreted and adapted to local conditions. This “made by Italy” begs the question of how active the multinational GROs are in Italy, where they utilize DOP (*parmigiano reggiano*) and IGP (*speck* from Alto Adige) products to “Italianize” international recipes. The GRO category also includes convenience and ready-made foods, ingredients and complete meals, for example canned soups and sauces, frozen entrees and pizza and other foods that can be cooked in the microwave. These products satisfy the consumer’s need to speed up preparation time, and are created especially for singles, working people, those with little culinary experience or free time, and the elderly. In order to deal with the pressure of serving a large number of patrons, restaurants often resort to pre-cooked or prepared foods that can be brought to the table quickly. The evolution of food prep technology is moving toward foods that are easily served (convenience foods) and that are generically branded as “freshly picked or minimally processed”, also known in the French terminology as the “fourth product range”.

In comparison with the scenario presented above and unlike Italian cuisine, which is primarily regional and closely tied to tradition, French cuisine has embarked on a strategy of choosing ingredients based solely on their quality, without requiring a specifically French pedigree. In other words, it does not matter if an extra-virgin olive oil was produced in France; only that it is of the highest quality. The same is true for other foods, for example Charolaise or Limousine beef, which can even derive from cattle raised by Argentine breeders. What counts, according to the French, is the style, the technique and the French taste that gives their cuisine its specificity, without leaving aside the importance of choosing the best product for dishes that can thus be spread to and reproduced in any part of the world, overcoming the obstacle of commercial barriers.

We must remember that a culinary culture that is independent of place of origin is not entirely foreign to Italian cuisine. One need only think of the Italian pastry industry, which obtains its chocolate, sugar and other raw materials without requiring that they be of Italian origin. An even better example is that of Italian coffee, which has taken the world by storm. Although the raw material is not produced in Italy, the coffee is Italian in its selection, blending, treatment, production, presentation and so on.

If we examine Italian cuisine without prejudice, it is easy to establish that there are dishes in which the origin of the raw ingredients is important, but others where the quality, not the provenance, is what matters. Here are some examples: What are the territorial requirements for the *tagliatelle*, *lasagne* or of Bolognese

cuisine? The flour? The eggs? The meat for the sauce or stuffing? Certainly not, because they are not codified by tradition and they have certainly changed over time. The cheese must rigorously be *grana*; preferably but not necessarily *parmigiano*, (or at least from the Po valley) because the city of Bologna is outside the territory (if only by a little) where *parmigiano reggiano* is produced. It goes without saying that the loose weave of DOP and especially IGP regulations allow for widely varying degrees of quality! In the same way we should recall that

these recipes are increasingly adjusted seasonally and can be perfectly reproduced outside their territory of origin. The uniqueness of Bolognese pasta dishes, as an example, depends in part of the quality of the primary ingredients (flours, eggs, etc.) but above all on the ability of the preparer to understand the production and handling of the sheets of pasta dough. The sheets do not necessarily have to be made by a Bolognese born and raised, and can perfectly well be produced outside of Bologna! The same is also true for many other re-

gional Italian recipes where the ability and hand of the chef must respect the traditional system.

Today more than ever before we must beware of the growing counterfeiting of Italian cuisine that exacerbates the existing falsification of our regional food products. At the same time we must keep the Academy's attention focused on research, and the identification and evaluation of good Italian restaurants, which constitutes an incomparable educational showcase of Italian cuisine at home and abroad.

GIOVANNI BALLARINI

FOCUS DI PAOLO PETRONI

TODAY'S CUISINE ON TV: FROM MARIO SOLDATI TO CARLO CRACCO

In the beginning, it was Mario Soldati. It was 1957 and the celebrated director had conceived of and filmed the mythical eno-gastronomic narrative *Traveling along the Po Valley in search of genuine food*. Television had just arrived on the scene. There was only one channel, the "national channel", and consequently one could not escape watching that program. It consisted of weekly twelve episodes of one hour each. It was slow and boring to watch the endless interviews with vineyard workers and farmers, yet it was a fundamental step forward in that it inaugurated the television eno-gastronomic journalist. One of the segments, devoted to the "*salama da sugo*", a kind of sausage, made history when it became the subject of a parody by the comedians Tognazzi and Vianello. Even then, believe it or not, Soldati complained of lost traditions and condemned the progress of agriculture and in the kitchen by shooting darts at the progressive forces, and saying: "There is nothing better than tradition!" In 1974, Luigi Veronelli launched the first true culinary program on Italian black and white television, featuring *At the Table at 7 o'clock*. Few people may remember it but the program started with Umberto Orsini and the flamboyant, but unlucky, Delia Scala. Everybody, however, remembers the delightful and gentle Ave Ninchi who had to fight the stubborn Veronelli. I recall an old episode in which the two protagonists spent half an hour explaining how to prepare anchovies in lemon on the grill having to listen impassively and in dead silence while the Molise native Fred Buongusto insisted on adding bread crumbs to the recipe. Those were slow segments, with no rhythm to speak of, and yet innovative and interesting for the times. We had to wait for 1979 to find color on a television broadcast from Montecarlo. It featured an appearance by Paolo Limiti and the singer Wilma de Angelis.

The program was titled *Telemenu* and was a tremendous success. In fact, it went on for 18 years with daily episodes. Last summer, I met Wilma de Angelis who is very proud of having been the first television protagonist in the kitchen. Before coming to the present day, I wish to remember the success of *Pranzo is Served*, a quiz show created by Corrado and aired in 1982. Corrado was the presenter until 1990 when he was succeeded by Claudio Lippi and Davide Mengacci. The modern program that paved the way to the so-called "queens of the palimpsests" - that is to say recipes on TV - is unquestionably The Proof of the Chef that was anchored by Antonella Clerici starting in 2000. One can criticize it but the fact is that the culinary programs are wildly successful and are cheap to produce. Every channel has its program and its chef or its star. Each program has its audience with the result that there are 23 programs featuring recipes. Among the more popular are Cooked and Eaten with Benedetta Parodi who went to another channel with her new program Benedetta's Menu. The only failure recorded is that of The Night of the Chefs with Alfonso Signorini as presenter, assisted by Elisabetta Canalis and Belen Rodriguez. The real innovative program in this parade of clones, however, has to be Master Chef Italia based upon Master Chef USA. It does not feature an MC but has three judges (Bruno Barbieri, Carlo Cracco and Joe Bastianich) passing judgment on 18 chef contestants. The direction is free and easy, the editing masterful and the rhythm intense. It has a different style compared to similar programs. With such an abundance of information, Italians have become the greatest experts of cuisine in the world! We are happy about that. Recently, the Academy was asked to participate to a well known program of cuisine on television. You can probably guess what our answer was.

Two Academies, One Agreement

BY SILVIA DE LORENZO

*President Giovanni Ballarini
and Franco Scaramuzzi,
President of the Academy
of the Georgofili,
signed an protocol
of understanding to jointly
promote some cultural
activities.*

The Pulci Tower on the Logge degli Uffizi Corti in Florence. This is the address of the headquarters of the Academy of the Georgofili and it was here that an important protocol of understanding between that Academy and the Italian Academy of Cuisine was signed. It constitutes a statement of intent that lays the groundwork for joint cultural activities over the next three years aimed at carrying out initiatives that will enhance the traditions of the different regions in various aspects: the protection of the environment, the development of rural areas, nutritional safety and quality, and regional cuisine, which is the lifeblood of a great cuisine.

The reason for this accord and its importance was well expressed by President Giovanni Ballarini when in his remarks he emphasized the value of these Academies, which are centers of research that glow like fireflies in the dark, and must be nourished by joint efforts that look toward the future. These Academies pay attention to current non-specialized trends that have a broad vision of reality and a perspective that does not get lost in the details but that follows a united school of thought that looks to the future and intervenes to correct past and present mistakes made by Italy, Europe and the world in the nutritional field.

Nutrition, continued President Ballarini, must not be seen only in terms of grams and calories: nutrition and knowing how to eat well constitute culture and as cultural values they must be protected and safe-

guarded. And when these cultural values are imitated and counterfeited they falsify the very thing that makes them precious. We should develop a “long term thought process” and confront the critical issues we are facing with a wide-ranging response.

Academy of the Georgofili President Franco Scaramuzzi emphasized that it is within this framework that we must regard the importance of the Italian Academy of Cuisine’s opportunity to sign this accord. In his address President Scaramuzzi noted that the historic Academy of the Georgofili was the first agricultural organization dating back to a time when 90 percent of the population and the world’s riches depended on agricultural work. Since its founding in 1753 the Academy of the Georgofili has sought to contribute to the



progress of the sciences and their application in agriculture in the broadest sense and today, as a result of radical changes in all sectors of society, we have many new problems to confront that affect the entire planet and not just a single country. Such problems are not resolvable without shared decisions. The new reality of advanced globalization that no longer allows us to operate in our own microcosm, also involves the role of Academies. For this reason, concluded Franco Scara-

muzzi, the collaboration initiated by the Italian Academy of Cuisine seeks to enhance the effort and commitment of both Academies to spread awareness and raise consciousness about the nutritional sector, including collecting our rich and precious traditions.

President Ballarini concluded his remarks by emphasizing that there are numerous common interests that unite our Academy, born during the waning days of peasant and agricultural culture that changed the value

of nutrition, and the Academy of the Georgofili, that also has national research centers and that has built a European union of academies dedicated to issues of nutrition (UEAA). For this reason our common effort, which the protocol of understanding sets forth, represents a vast, unified and broad based effort to study and interpret the current reality and to show new generations the way to affirm the cultural values of cuisine and nutrition.

SILVIA DE LORENZO

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.*

Sponge Cake

BY PAOLO LINGUA
Academician, Genoa East and
F. Marengi Research Center

The Genoese pastry chef Giobatta Cabona “invented” it to honor King Ferdinand IV.

During a recent interview (both televised and published in a monthly magazine that circulates in Liguria) Consul General of the Principality of Monaco in Genoa Prince Domenico Pallavicino, who belongs to one of the oldest Italian patrician families (with an almost millennial pedigree and branches in Genoa and central Italy) recalled with congenial irony a singular family story. His Genoese ancestor and namesake, the Marquis Domenico Pallavicino, was named by the Republic (by then on its last legs) as Ambassador to the Kingdom of Spain under King Ferdinand IV (known as “The Wise”). Domenico Pallavicino held the post from 1747 to 1749 and resided in Madrid. Sometime over the course of these two years, although we do not know the actual date, Ambassador Pallavicino held a banquet in honor of the King. Pallavicino brought with him to Spain a small entourage that included the master pastry chef Giobatta Cabona. We know little about him and even Prince Pallavicino, the current Consul in Monaco, has no precise documentation. We do know that Cabona was born in the Genoese hinterland and was trained at the practical school of patrician cooking, perhaps in the same building on Piazza Fontane Marose in the heart of the Ligurian capital, where the Prince resides and which houses the Consulate of Monaco.

Pastry chef Cabona wanted to “invent” (as was often the case at certain high level banquets of the time) something new in honor of the Spanish sovereign. During the days preceding the event he practiced and conducting various experiments. Thus by modifying existing models,

he “invented” a particularly spongy dessert made with eggs and flour, that could hold cream or other fillings. According to the lore, using his elbows, spoons and ladles, he created a rich egg dough in an earthenware pot set over a water bath: this technique allowed for a dessert of extreme lightness that was in fact a true novelty and his own invention. The meal ended on a successful note with the King’s lavish praise for the dessert.

In honor of King Ferdinand IV, Ambassador Pallavicino christened the dessert “pan di Spagna” (bread of Spain), but both the Spaniards and the French elegantly repaid the courtesy for over a century by referring to it as “pate génoise” (Genoese cake). Today it is made with modern techniques and is universally referred to as pan di Spagna. However, to be precise, the method used to make it, although the same ingredients are used, may differ: either cold or hot.

Giobatta Cabona, of whom we have lost track, returned home covered in glory. But the 18th century was a fortuitous period in history for the pasty chefs of Genoa, which was at center of the business and export-import crossroads. Brazilian sugar monopolists consolidated the creation of candied fruit and marrons glacés (perhaps “stolen” from the French) and the celebrated quaresimali (sweets made of almond paste) as well as coffee ice cream and pànera (black cream).

The wealthy economy and the import-export monopoly decidedly dominated the culinary choices of the wealthy Genoese, who were then able to export ideas that would dazzle even a monarch.

The First Academician

BY EDOARDO MORI
Honorary Academician,
Bolzano Delegation

*Grimod de la Reynière
created the first culinary
critics' club and the first
guide devoted to restaurants.*

Gastronomic criticism can claim a founding father. If one excludes Archestato of Gela, the first writer who tackled gastronomic tourism, the other literary works are collections of cooks' recipes, from the Roman Clelius (230 AC) to the medieval *Le Vieandier de Taillevent* (early 1300), until the Renaissance authors Mastro Martino (circa 1460) and Bartolomeo Scappi (1570). We have to wait until Giacomo Castelvetro (1614) to find a good treatise about cuisine, written by a literary figure describing the use of Italian herbs and vegetables.

In France, where the French Revolution unleashed the energy of the bourgeoisie and the new political class, the figure emerges of a literary-jurist, theater critic, a cultured man who finds fame and fortune with his gastronomic journalism and the evaluation of foods and restaurants. He is Alexander Grimod de la Reynière, born in 1778 to a wealthy family of tributary collectors; he had deformed hands, a condition that compelled him to write and eat with prostheses and affected his personality. A biographer (G. Desnoiresterres, *Grimod de la Reynière et son group*, Paris, 1877) described him as an ultra viveur, an epicurean, a total eccentric, unrestrained and impudent, but charming for his vivacity and sharpness of

spirit. He showed his character during the Revolution when he proclaimed himself a monarchist although he was a friend of Danton and Robespierre, risking the guillotine.

The story went around that once at a farmhouse inn he ordered seven turkeys to be cooked only to eat the best part, namely the so called "priest's bite", in French "sot-l'y-laisse" that is to say "who puts it aside is a fool". His philosophy was:

"Life is so short that we should not look too far back or too far ahead...it is better to study how to find our happiness in our glass and on our plate".

He also coined the phrase: "There is too much wine in the world to say a mass

and there is not enough to make the mill wheels turn; there is nothing else to do but drink it".

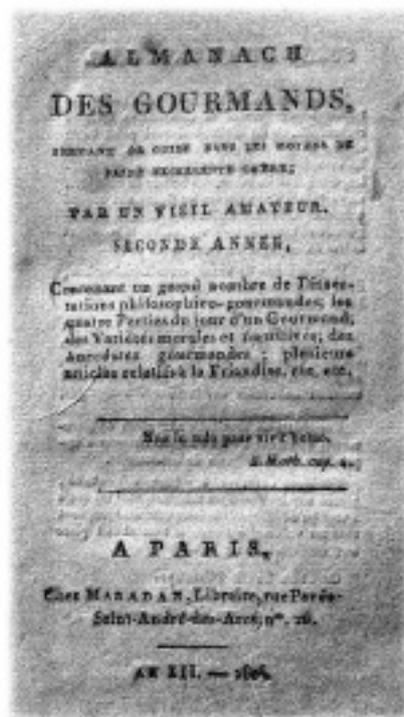
The conversion of Grimod to gluttony occurred after his "detention" in a convent where the abbot treated himself very well. In 1784 he wrote *Réflexions philosophiques sur le plaisir par un célibataire* in which he declared himself more favorable to food than to women: "I aim to publish one day a praise for gluttony (gourmandise) in which I will provide a topography of manducating in France because I have always considered the pleasure given by good meats as the first pleasure of



spirit and senses. One will agree that it is a savory enjoyment that should be repeated. Can one say the same about other ones? Is there a woman so beautiful of whom it can be said that she is worth as much as the wonderful partridges of Languedoc or Cevenne, or that paté of goose and duck from Toulouse or Strasbourg...or those Italian cheeses?"

He then founded the Wednesday Society, where seventeen friends met each week to talk about gastronomy. In time, it became a Jury of Tasters with the task of evaluating foodstuffs being sold in Paris: a dozen jurors (women among them) met every Tuesday in formal dinners with strict rules, with just one waitress who received communications through a phonic tube. The foods to be evaluated were prepared by chefs or sent in from restaurants while food was purchased from the market wholesalers of Paris. In the end, a verdict of praise or disapproval was issued. Grimod's pen was dipped in acid and did not forgive. His "decisions" could make or break the cook under exam.

In 1803 he began to publish the *Almanac des Gourmands*, with decisions applied to restaurants and purveyors all over France. It met with enormous immediate success (22,000 copies in four years). Eight volumes were published until 1812 when it stopped publication, as a



consequence, it appears, of many trials. In the course of nine years the *Almanac* was more and more filled with news: history, recipes, anecdotes, advice, readers' letters. It obtained its information from all over Europe and called for an international meeting of "gourmands" "in order to promote in France and Europe the best alimentary doctrine and push forward the culinary art by establishing its rules".

In 1808 he published the *Manual*

of the Hosts in which he delved into the art of cutting up various animals. He also describes the culinary qualities, the menus to be served on various occasions and seasons, the etiquette to be observed for the invitations, and the order of seating at the table. The *Manual* would remain the recognized textbook for a century. He criticized the errors of cuisine in his time: the useless multiplicity of dishes, their inevitable cooling down, and the prevalence of looks over tastes. It codified the order of servings that must get to the table piping hot and at the right moment.

He used the same style of theatrical criticism and endowed cuisine with a spectacular language. He invented new criteria to name plates, assigned to them the names of illustrious personages, searched for erotic assonance, and attributed the names of countries with symbolic value.

Brillat-Savarin borrowed a great deal from him, although he never cited him. It is said of him: He inherited all the glory that Grimod was entitled to.

One can certainly say that Grimod, the founder of the first club of critics of cuisine, promoter of culinary culture, creator of the first revue of cuisine and the first restaurants' guide, deserves the title of first Academician of Cuisine!

EDOARDO MORI

A Gastronomic Blasphemy

BY EUGENIO MENOZZI
Academician, Reggio Emilia
Delegation

*When cooks reduce
of balsamic vinegar
by heating it, this nectar
that is a result of years
of patient maturation loses
all its fragrance.*

Every so often we find in various restaurants, even those frequented by the Delegations, courses with a “reduction of balsamic vinegar”. I do not wish to start a polemic between Reggio and Modena over the merits or demerits of these products, since I find them equally delicious, as they derive their consistency and fragrance from a slow production that in the two provinces feature differences in small or large details. However, for the sake of a sharp synthesis, such production develops along a single simple line.

The must of white grapes, following its pressing with no fermentation treatment, is reduced by means of slow and uninterrupted boiling, then it is cooled and immersed in a container, and finally into the vinegar cycle. It is seasoned in barrels letting it reduce on account of the summer heat and deposit impurities taken on as a result of winter cold conditions. The “acetaia”, that is the vinegar production system, must be located under a roof so that it may be affected by the variations of temperature. It can never be placed in a basement where the *Mycoderma aceti* could make the wine acid while the humidity and relative stability of the temperature would compromise the maturing of the vinegar. Obviously the process calls for lofts with roofs composed by bent tiles and girders where air can circulate freely while basements have floors that are in part packed earth, with different attributes for the maturation of wine and sausages (salami, ham, pancetta, cured neck, culatello and all sorts of

God given pork derivatives), with the complicity of the right degree of humidity.

The process, or battery, is composed of a series of barrels (as a rule, five or six) of differing composition and decreasing capacity; inside them, the vinegar making process unfolds till maturation. Inside those barrels, year after year, the balsamic vinegar extracts and enhances the bouquet of the grapes and of the wood chosen for the barrels. Some people who enjoy a whiff of juniper in the bouquet may insert a branch of juniper into the barrel. Some others may utilize a barrel with a juniper bottom or a barrel made exclusively of juniper wood. The diverse tones of taste can be attributed to those features.

Thus balsamic vinegar must have the right ratio between sweet and sour that balances out without overwhelming one another so that the palate can smoothly taste it over cooked or raw vegetables, a slice of parmigiano reggiano, on cream of pumpkin and so on. Recently vinegar has been transformed into ice cream. It is also used to flavor wild strawberries and many other inventive preparations that I will not go into.

Let me get back to production. From time to time, the owner of the “acetaia” collects from the last barrel, the smaller one, a dose of mature vinegar (the level of vinegar in the barrels should never go below one third) and stores it for consumption. The barrel is then reinforced with the content of the next to last barrel, and this one with the content of the barrel before it, and so forth until the first and larger barrel is filled, but not

to the brim - and never emptied - with the boiled and concentrated must. Great care must be used in not breaking the reticulum on the surface. In order to avoid this, the most careful experts use a glass pipe and rather than pouring the vinegar they cause it to slide delicately along an inclined lath that is partially submerged.

I will refrain from belaboring the “mother” of vinegar, but I will point out that it is a residue of the vinegar making process. In other words, it is a dead body that occupies space uselessly and should be present only in the first barrel to maintain the vine stock. In my judgment, the “mother” should be eliminated before pouring the vinegar out.

It is certain, however, that the quality of the original “mother”, just like wine yeast, affects the taste of the product. For this reason, both the container of the must and the outlet of the barrels should be covered with gauze to allow the circulation of air, at the same time impeding the access of the *Drosophila melanogaster*, the fruit fly, that is the principal vehicle of micoderma bacteria. In this fashion, one can avoid the contamination with undesirable vine stock, thus preserving the typical features of the vinegar making system.

As a rule, after a number of years, 150 liters of must will produce four or five liters of vinegar. Since the barrels are never completely emptied, the age of the vinegar that is collected in the last precious little barrel is much higher than that calculated on the basis of the number of barrels.

This is where blasphemy comes in.

The cook will take the balsamic vinegar that was formed and reduced through a long presence in the barrels where in a span of many years it patiently absorbed the bouquet of the essence introduced by the owner, a true nectar that was reduced naturally thanks to the multi-year alternation of heat and cold, a delicacy that expresses a precious blend of fragrance, sweetness and tartness that only time can create. Some cooks will take this nectar and warm it up with the pretense of reducing it. He ignores that that the bouquet will evaporate at 30 degrees Celsius (86 degrees F.) and by exposing to the flame he destroys years of patient maturing.

This is the dilemma. Either the cook has no idea of what balsamic vinegar is, or he uses a product that is not balsamic vinegar. The taste that will emerge in the food will be sour and will impact violently the customer who tries inadvertently to lower his nose to the plate in the attempt to enjoy the fragrance.

There was a time when rabbit was prepared with balsamic vinegar. The vinegar was poured on a spoon far from the flame, mixed around the meat swiftly before covering the pot. When the cover came off at the table, a savory sweet fragrance - soft as a silk scarf - would rise from the rabbit meat. Talk about “reduction”!

EUGENIO MENOZZI

2013 ECUMENICAL DINNER



The 2012 ecumenical dinner based on the cuisine of herbs and spices once again brought Academicians in Italy and around the world together at the virtual table. Next year the convivial ecumenical dinner will take place October 17 at 8:30 pm, and its theme will be The Cuisine of Unforgettable Meat. The theme, chosen by the Franco Marengi Research Center and approved by the President's Council, includes the cuisine of the “fifth quarter”, but also other meats and animal products that have always had a place in popular cuisine but that are seldom used today because we are no longer subject to a “cuisine of poverty”. The objective for 2013 therefore will be to rediscover traditional dishes that use offal - giblets, organ meats and tripe - that can still have a place in frugal modern Italian cuisine. Delegates will be charged with ensuring that the ecumenical dinner is accompanied by an appropriate cultural presentation that discusses the proposed theme and that the dishes chosen reflect the foods that have been selected by the Council.