

CIVILTÀ DELLA TAVOLA

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

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On the cover: detail of Luncheon of the Boating Party (1880-1882) by Pierre-Auguste Renoir, on display at the Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C.

Gualtiero Marchesi and Paul Bocuse are gone

Yet their principles and many valiant pupils remain.

BY PAOLO PETRONI

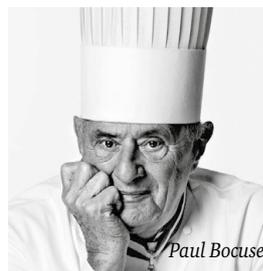
President of the Academy

Our friend Gualtiero Marchesi has left us, aged 87. The undisputed Master of high-end Italian restaurant cuisine, he had trained a multitude of top chefs including Carlo Cracco, Paolo Lopriore, Andrea Berton, Pietro Leemann, Enrico Crippa, Davide Oldani and Ernst Knam. He had



Gualtiero Marchesi

opened his first restaurant relatively late, in 1977, at the age of 47: occupying a basement in Milan's Via Bonvesin de la Riva, it garnered immediate success. I remember that Edoardo Raspelli invited me to try it and I was favourably impressed. The descent into a subterranean windowless environment didn't initially endear the place to me (as I experienced years later, going to eat at Carlo Cracco's restaurant). Nevertheless, it was immediately clear that this was a new mode of cuisine, brimming with inventiveness and ability, and a new type of establishment where, for the first time, one might spend 200,000 Lire. Sure enough, a Michelin star duly arrived, followed by another in 1978 and a third in 1985. Marchesi was the first three-starred Italian cook. Subsequently, for various reasons, he left this brain-child of his to relocate far from Milan, to the Albereta hotel in Franciacorta. The relocation wasn't advantageous: a scathing review in *The Espresso* and the loss of one star fuelled his unprecedented gesture of 'returning' the stars, declining to appear any longer in the 'red guide'. Other efforts to market his name - on McDonald's hamburgers and Surgela ready meals - did not produce the desired success. He then returned to Milan, opening his Marchesino restaurant and the Foundation headquartered in the very birthplace of his career, Via Bonvesin de la Riva, and became rector of the Alma International School of Italian Cuisine in Colorno, which he founded in 2004. A member of the "Franco Marengli" Study Centre for several years, he had always hosted, and invariably attended, its meetings: a charming raconteur, generous with his advice. Only for the last meeting did his illness force him to be absent, sending his Foundation's Vice-President Enrico Dandolo in his place. An observation of his remains valid and current: "Food is beloved by the stomach. But we must have eyes to admire it, a mind to discuss it, a heart to appreciate it..."



Paul Bocuse

Only days after we lost Gualtiero Marchesi, another eminent Master of haute cuisine passed away in France at the venerable age of 91: Paul Bocuse, Monsieur Paul, a superlative chef, inventor of *nouvelle cuisine* and *cuisine du marché*, who trained generations of chefs all over the world. In his (very kit-

sch) Auberge in Collonges-au-Mont-d'Or near Lyons, he was the only chef ever to retain three Michelin stars for 50 years, and the first chef to receive the Legion d'Honneur, personally delivered in 1975 by President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing for whom he invented the celebrated VGE Soup (a black truffle broth in a cup, covered by a thick layer of puff pastry). It remains on the menu at his restaurant. He leaves an empire of 700 employees, a prestigious cooking school at Ecully, and restaurants in Orlando, Tokyo, New York and London. As a young Florence Delegate I had the pleasure of meeting him many years ago at an Academy conference attended by the greats of *nouvelle cuisine*: Bocuse, Roger Verger and Jacques Maximin. I recall a simple, tall, smiling man, a genuine lover of good food, who preferred bread and salami with friends over large elaborate dishes. I remember him saying: "for me there's no new, or old, or classic cuisine - merely good cuisine". To avoid hypocrisy, I'll admit that the Academy has never been enthralled by the infinitesimal portions lurking under the *cloche*, the barely cooked green beans and the exorbitant prices of *nouvelle cuisine*, and in truth we don't know how enthusiastic Bocuse himself was about certain affected overinterpretations of his philosophy emphasised by the French journalists Henri Gault and Christian Millau; but most of his dishes were good and free from excess. As a consummate gourmet, he knew the strengths of Italian cuisine, observing: "When your cooks discover the value of your products, nobody else will stand a chance". Four years ago he was to deliver an award to Gualtiero Marchesi in Montecatini Terme, but was prevented by Parkinson's disease. He was the first media-savvy cook, but as a wise thinker he left behind an observation which is particularly valid nowadays: "I lured cooks out of the kitchen, but now they would do well to go back in". Well said, Monsieur Paul!



They only get it right in Naples

Neapolitan pizza, the proper kind, has an inherent, insoluble problem: it cannot travel.

BY CLAUDIO NOVELLI
Napoli-Capri Academician

The term 'pizza' has long been internationally understood. From Peru to the Australian beaches, from the Alps to the Pyramids, from the Manzanares to the Rhine - no, too close; let's say from the North Cape to Cape Town, 'pizza' may be the only Italian word which is universally recognised and accepted without the need for translation, and correctly pronounced everywhere. Somewhat distant runners-up are spaghetti and mozzarella, their spelling unscathed, unlike their pronunciation. The world has been en-

riched and gladdened by pizza, or rather, by the strange, circular, vaguely edible object relentlessly spewed forth by the electric and microwave ovens of industry. The world - except Naples. Because Neapolitan pizza, and I do mean the proper kind, has an inherent, insoluble problem: it doesn't travel well. Even if we have it delivered from a nearby pizzeria which is perhaps only a few hundred metres away, its taste is irreversibly distorted: the soft and elastic dough transforms into a thin rubbery layer which frustrates even the fiercest mol-

lars; the mozzarella threatens to weld itself to the tonsils of the most ravenous eaters; the tomato glues the slice to the palate. This may have hindered the development of a 'true pizza culture', or better, 'culture of true pizza', meaning, for instance, that the most prestigious crockery sets, no matter how many hundreds of pieces they include, remain bereft of pizza plates, whether triangular for a slice or large and round for entire generously proportioned pizzas; and that we still do not have a definitive standard for self-heating plates, which once used coal, then electric resistance, and in our day, induction: these would solve the problem of conversation disintegrating when pizza arrives at the table through the banal pretext that 'it must be eaten hot'. Not to mention special cutlery such as pizza knives, with conveniently concave handles allowing the index finger to apply sufficient





pressure without becoming dislocated, and short razor-sharp blades like pocket scalpels, to avoid dragging all the mozzarella on to a single bite's worth of pizza with an inefficient serrated knife and fluttering one's elbows like demented moths, irritating fellow diners; or especially wide forks, with five short tines, more similar perhaps to octopus-fishing hooks than to their noodle-twirling cousins, enabling the entire slice to be adequately harpooned; or heat-resistant porcelain finger guards to prevent oily fingers when eating slices with one's hands, in the popular manner. Neither have we developed an infrastructure providing tenement landings with communal or single-family wood stoves, or the habit of keeping indoor chickens fed on leftover pizza crusts, thereby creating 'Napoletana' or 'Margherita' fowl.

I believe that Neapolitan pizza's transport difficulties have limited its development to a purely urban environment; furthermore, crucially, few cities share Naples' good fortune in benefiting from water as delicious as that of the Serino springs.

What has spread, creating many a fortune abroad and especially in America, is the name 'pizza'. And this after the Neapolitans had been perfecting it for two centuries and a half! But now it's their turn to profit from its name and, with Confucian fortitude, find the silver lining to its geographic limitation. Firstly, however, precooked or frozen pizzas, marketed with unconscionably purloined images of a caricatured Pucicella in a presumed Neapolitan alley, must be banished from the metropolitan area. We must begin by simply demon-

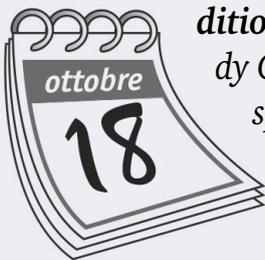
strating to the world that life in Naples is as normal as in any other big city, and that those eager to experience the essence of 'real pizza' must, if only for that reason alone, journey there and remain for a few days, in a spiritual pilgrimage of sorts, to savour the city and its pizza simultaneously. The Platonic archetype of pizza inhabits a cave, like all the others - but a cave made of Neapolitan tuff, the stuff of pizza ovens. The mother of all pizzas is inseparable from the rocks and people of its homeland.

Production in the millions, publicised by televisions and hovering acrobats, twirling Chinese pizzas balanced on bamboo stems, or sold by the metre - such irrelevancies can never amount to more than simple-minded entertainment for children and fools. To be plausible, therefore, claims of having tasted 'pizza' depend on having visited its natural habitat, its cradle. One might as well make the most of one's visit by enjoying a coffee, a slice of pastiera cake and a plate of noodles, and why not, discover what mozzarella truly is, or how a tomato should taste, and so on. Odd as it may seem, insight into Naples might be more accessible through a pizza tasted in its streets and squares than through pedantic historians or heavily detailed city guides.

CLAUDIO NOVELLI

ECUMENICAL DINNER 2018

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



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



Chicory, a versatile vegetable

Once considered sacred and even a panacea against illness, it lends itself to many uses in the kitchen, whether cooked or raw.

BY PUBLIO VIOLA

Roma Appia Delegate

Chicory is a vegetable found all over the world, especially in Italy. Its name apparently derives from the Greek *kikhorion* and *entybon* (endive). The difficulty in identifying its precise name stems from the fact that since antiquity it was known in manifold ways; it was definitively designated as *Cichorium intybus* by the Swedish botanist Linnaeus in his *Species Plantarum* in 1753.

It is a perennial herbaceous plant belonging to the aster (*Asteraceae*) family, with brightly coloured flowers and a maximum height of a metre. The ancient Egyptians considered it sacred, and also a panacea against illnesses, and as such it is mentioned in the Ebers papyrus (1500 BC), in the works of Pliny, who wrote “*In Aegypto Cichoriam vocant*” (what they call chicory in Egypt), and in the treatises of the Greek physician Galen. In pharaonic Egypt it was combined with vinegar to combat headaches and with wine to alleviate urinary ail-

ments. Its curative properties were also appreciated more recently, such that in the Middle Ages it was even employed as an anti-aphrodisiac (to calm carnal urges), and we read that the Renaissance herbalist Castore Durante advised women to apply its juice to their bosom to make it firmer. Last but not least, its intensely blue composite flowers have long been symbolically associated with temperance and frugality.

Readily recognisable for its indigo flowers, chicory grows wild in uncultivated rural areas and on the edges of crop fields, but can also be planted in vegetable gardens. The species has many varieties, which, though differing in appearance, invariably have taproots and dentate, jagged leaves. More specifically, there are three categories of chicory according to leaf shape: bitter and crinkly-leafed varieties, cultivated as winter vegetables (e.g. the *catalogna* or *foliusum* variety); narrow-leafed cultivars (e.g. Belgian chicory), used





primarily in salad; and broad-leaved cultivars (e.g. Treviso red-leafed chicory), consumed both raw and cooked. Additionally there are root chicories (e.g. *sativum*), *grumolo verde* rosettes, white Chioggia chicory, and *puntarelle di Galatina*, grown in south-central Italy.

Leaves used for food are gathered between March and November, with a hiatus during the summer flowering season. They are cut at the base; then the best leaves are placed in a wicker basket wrapped in a damp cloth to preserve their aromas. Chicory is low-calorie (with a 20-25% caloric yield), but reasonably rich in vitamins and minerals as well as chicoric acid, which produces its characteristic bitterness. Foodwise, the preferred use of chicory is raw, in mixed salads, alongside radicchio, dandelion or lettuce, but it can also be cooked and eaten as a vegetable accompaniment to other salad greens, in soups or in other dishes. It is an interesting ingredient, and as such figures in many

recipes, including pan-fried chicory, fava bean and chicory puree, and rice and chicory flan. Noteworthy is sautéed Roman-style chicory (*cicoria ripassata*), a side dish easily and quickly prepared by pan-frying chicory leaves with garlic, oil and spicy peppers.

Chicory roots are also important: thanks to their chicoric acid, they can be toasted and processed into a coffee substitute, much used in certain historical periods such as the Napoleonic period in France and the aftermath of the Second World War in Italy.

If once considered a panacea for many ailments, it is still credited with detoxifying and protective properties, especially beneficial to the liver and bile ducts. It is additionally credited with aiding digestion by helping the gall bladder to empty itself. Finally, it contains inulin, a polysaccharide which favours intestinal activity and combats drowsiness and constipation.

Today, herbalists use chicory extracts considered useful against flatulence,

constipation and irritable bowel. Though side effects are unlikely, these are probably best avoided by erosive gastritis patients, because they stimulate hydrochloric acid secretion. Finally, recent research suggests that chicory contains various antioxidant flavonoids which inhibit the formation of free radicals.

Besides the aforementioned nutritional properties, there are interesting myths regarding chicory: one tells how the Sun proposed marriage one day to a beautiful woman called Domna Floridor (Flower Lady), who haughtily refused. The indignant Sun transformed her into a chicory flower condemned to open at sunrise and gaze sunwards until it closed at sunset. Chicory is consequently called *sponsa solis* (bride of the sun), that is, a herb consecrated to the sun. Finally, since time immemorial chicory has been held capable, if used correctly, of allowing a maiden to win the man she loves.

PUBLIO VIOLA

THE ACADEMY SILVER PLATE



An elegant silver plated dish engraved with the Academy logo.

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

Delegates may contact the Milan Headquarters

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



Home-delivered food: pros and cons

Online food ordering, however 'convenient', robs us of many pleasures of the table.

BY ANDREA CESARI DE MARIA
Milano Duomo Delegate



In recent years a phenomenon has been taking shape which I believe we will have to take more and more into account in the near future. Already available in eleven Italian cities, home-delivered cuisine is rapidly gaining followers. The protocol is very simple: we order online and swiftly receive the food selected from the menu on offer. This is a flexible and convenient system because it liberates us from worrying about shopping, cooking and, since the dishes are disposable, washing up. However, this mechanism, adopted by such companies as Deliveroo and Foodora among others, risks jeopardising some of our best-loved food habits. Already home cooking keeps declining, as demonstrated by statistics regarding time spent in the kitchen gathered from the post-war period until now, due to changed lifestyles. If at noon we hurriedly select a sandwich and in the evening we choose the most convenient solution, what will become of our tradi-

tions? If they become increasingly vestigial in the family kitchen, the restaurant will remain the last bastion of swiftly vanishing customs. But if even the restaurant loses its appeal, further decreasing the element of dialogue and human contact and replacing it with an impersonal website for perusal, selection and ordering followed by delivery of pre-cooked victuals, we risk losing

the history and narration accompanying food, instead favouring trends and ephemeral fashions which have nothing whatsoever to do with what we once were and may never be again. The restaurant is a gathering place which is hard to replicate, where we often spruce ourselves up, meet people, form or deepen friendships, encounter new experiences, and learn something new, even just by seeing a dish on its way to another table or listening to the staff's descriptions and food suggestions. None of this happens in our own dining rooms: will we eventually inhabit a dark world, as prefigured years ago in *Blade Runner*? My generation has passed through vastly different worlds with lightning speed: for years we enjoyed the mythical 'boiled meat cart', which we still miss, with its lid which lifted to reveal piping-hot wonders, and the waiter serving us precisely the piece of tongue or head which we requested. And now must we resign ourselves to encountering food

cooked heaven knows where or how long ago, which has traversed the city streets on the shoulders of a strapping young pedal-pusher, undergoing many transformations en route which a chemist could explain far better than I can? To have some idea of the result, just think of the distinctive flavour which a carryout pizza acquires from its cardboard container. Great chefs have been feted, and commanded commensurate prices, for their 'express cuisine', made to order for each customer, treated as unique and irreplaceable; how to reconcile this concept with food which exits the kitchen and piggybacks towards the diner as quickly as possible? What will become of the veritable works of art created by decorative plating, so beautiful that we often felt sorry to eat them, if our cyclist encounters one of the many potholes infesting our streets? What will end up on the unfortunate customer's table? And will spaghetti al dente, on which we all cut our teeth, vanish from the menu, or must we request athletic delivery speeds to ensure that our food arrives before it overcooks? If Orio Vergani, in the now-distant year 1953, famously bewailed the imminent end of our cuisine, imagine what his reactions would be to current conditions. Progress must always be welcomed, or we would be stuck in the status quo at the time of Apicius; but it should be assessed and introduced judiciously, or we risk throwing out the baby with the bath water, as has often sadly occurred. Not for nothing did Ennio Flaiano write: "Even progress, becoming older and wiser, voted no".