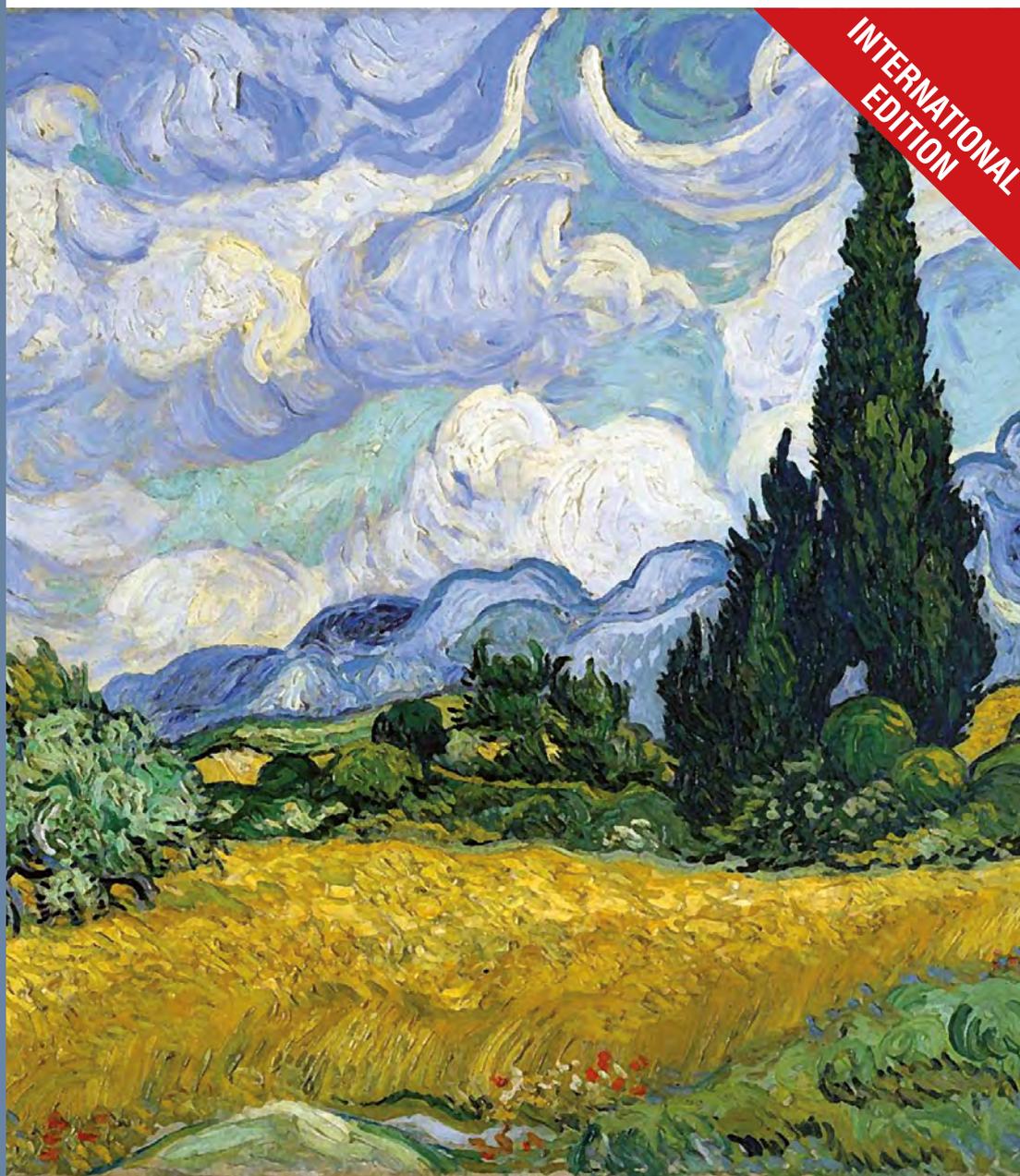


# CIVILTÀ DELLA TAVOLA

ACCADEMIA ITALIANA DELLA CUCINA



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CON MASSIMO ALBERINI E VINCENZO BUONASSISI.

**CIVILTÀ DELLA TAVOLA**  
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*On the cover: Graphic elaboration of Wheat Field with Cypresses (1889) by Vincent van Gogh, displayed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.*

# Italy's great chefs deserve praise

*Yet the Academy supports extraordinary but unsponsored culinary talents disregarded by the media.*

BY PAOLO PETRONI

*President of the Academy*

According to the 2018 edition of the World's 50 Best Restaurants, sponsored by Acqua Panna and San Pellegrino among others, the "Osteria Francescana" in Modena is once again, for the second time, the world's best restaurant.

Massimo Bottura, justifiably radiant alongside his wife Lara Gilmore, an essential part of the great chef's worldwide success, is a champion of change. Among the top 50, Italy boasts "Piazza Duomo" in Alba (16<sup>th</sup>), "Le Calandre" in Rubano (23<sup>th</sup>) and "Reale" in Castel di Sangro (36<sup>th</sup>). Italy has acquitted itself well.

It is not easy to secure a table at the Francescana, with few tables and bookings taken months in advance, despite the 400-Euro price tag (per head) for tasting menus with wine pairings. The man possesses considerable tact and ingenuity, and the valiant crew deserves every success and recognition. However, such definitions as 'best in the world' and 'best ever in Italy' make no more sense in the restaurant world than in other artistic fields: the best painter, sculptor or film director, the supreme actor and so forth.

Nevertheless, marketing has its ways: a campaign may hit the mark, and suddenly it's all over the news. Yet, when it comes down to it, the food is another issue entirely. To assess a restaurant, pretend you don't know how many stars or chef's hats it has, how famous it is. Order what takes your fancy and judge calmly and honestly. This is the only standard for Academicians to follow.

An important journalist recently declared it altogether incredible that after 65 years, the Italian Academy of Cuisine, Italy's oldest gastronomic association, still has a role and an essential function in today's cooking and restaurant scene. Flattering words which spur us to work ever harder and better. We must not be inveterate contrarians, but the dicta of today's exalted kitchens are unconvincing. Let's be frank: it's not easy to eat well in the eminent restaurants venerated by the food guides, with their abundant swagger, absurd gimmicks, farcical combinations, haughty service and exorbitant prices.

Many young talents are suffering because the food guides disregard them, they lack the right sponsors, their earnings flat-line, they don't get their big breaks, they have no PR staff, they're not innovative enough. The Academy must help these promising purveyors of delicious and authentic Italian cuisine. One can, indeed must, sample the creations of the greats, but ultimately what counts is the overall quality of a restaurant. Because there is a world of which nobody speaks, namely that of mediocre restaurants, which appear and swiftly vanish, with improvised cooks trying their luck plagiarising the recipes of the gurus. But can they make an omelette or a couple of fried eggs? In many cases, no.

After 65 years, the Academy faces a formidable challenge: to protect an Italian cuisine which is real, modern, even innovative - but also tasty!





# Italians receive AIG prizes

*Passion unites the young professionals rewarded by the Académie Internationale de la Gastronomie.*

BY SILVIA DE LORENZO



The Italians chosen for this year's national prizes by the Académie Internationale de la Gastronomie received their awards at a ceremony held at Carlo Cracco's new restaurant, located in the Galleria shopping centre, popularly known as 'Milan's living room'. President Paolo Petroni, in his capacity as Vice-President of the AIG, explained the rationale behind the selections to journalists and other guests, emphasising that following Enrico Crippa's receipt of the *Grand Prix de l'Art de la Cuisine* (Grand Prize for Culinary Art) last year, the Academy presented no candidate this year to give other nations a chance to compete for the international prize.

**Cristoforo Trapani** received the *Prix Chef de l'Avenir* (Chef of the Future Prize). With his distinctive accent from the Campania region (reminiscent of chef Antonino Cannavacciuolo), he recounted how his dream had led him from the kitchen of a seaside eatery in Sorrento (he comes from Piano di Sorrento) to an internship with Heinz Beck followed by several other important

experiences, and finally to the Michelin-starred restaurant La Magnolia at the Hotel Byron in Forte dei Marmi. His passion for his work was palpable when he spoke of his '600-km cuisine', blending the best ingredients of his native Campania and those of the territory in which he operates, Tuscany, 600 kilometres away. And when Paolo Petroni noted that nowadays restaurants are often soulless, Trapani animatedly described the 'vision' that he hopes to convey to his young apprentices: cooking from the heart. He ended by dedicating the prize to those who work alongside him, in hopes that they might understand how important it is to know how to prepare even the simplest of dishes, the traditional mainstays, because only then will they be able to innovate and inspire customers to say "this is a dish I'd love to eat again".

The *Prix au Sommelier* (Sommelier Prize) went to **Michela Berto** of the San Martino restaurant in Scorzè. Deeply moved by the unexpected prize, she pondered the saying 'never say never'. In her family's Michelin-starred

restaurant, in business for five generations, she used to say that she would never wish to work in the dining hall; yet the work of the sommelier became her passion (with her husband Raffaele in the kitchen). Paolo Petroni emphasised the importance of that profession: the selection of wines to accompany specific foods is a delicate operation, and a chance to advise even inexperienced customers without intimidating them.



Cristoforo Trapani



Michela Berto



Passion, the foremost sentiment embodied by the prize recipients' words, was evident once again when **Fabrizio Galla** (Pasticceria e Cioccolateria, San Sebastiano da Po) received the **Prix au Chef Pâtissier** (Pastry Chef Prize). He began working thirty years ago, striving to grasp the secrets of the trade from a chef who intentionally worked facing away from him in the restaurant where he was an apprentice. Later, his perspective on pastry was radically changed by the instruction of pastry masters Luigi Biasetto and Iginio Massari: uncompromising quality, first-rate ingredients, but most importantly, maximum focus on the customer and fiendishly meticulous care in preparing even a simple crème pâtissière. Dessert concludes a meal, and must be finely tuned for imparting joy to those who taste it. Through this philosophy, Fabrizio won the Pastry World Cup in Lyon with what became his famous Jessica cake, with

Fabrizio Galla



seven layers of distinct creams forming a light and harmonious masterpiece. **Prix de la Littérature Gastronomique** (Food Literature Prize) for the journalist and writer **Davide Paolini**, who coined for himself the term 'gastronaut' meaning someone who eats thoughtfully. In his book *Il crepuscolo degli chef* (*Twilight of the Chefs*), he documents the decline of dining out: the restaurant boom has fizzled; few restaurants survive without 'side hustles' (catering, books, or a second, more affordable sister restaurant). The food literature sections of bookshops also offer slimmer pickings than before. Many visit famous restaurants more to snap a selfie with a celebrity chef than to focus on the food: form over content. Suppliers may also influence culinary trends: why else would many restaurants suddenly and simultaneously begin offering tonka beans or saithe fish? Paolo Petroni chimed in, pointing out how vigilant the

Davide Paolini



Academy must be about such meddling, which can even reduce cooking to a mere assembly line of prefabricated modules. Finally, the **Prix Multimédia** (Multimedia Prize) was awarded to the journalist **Paolo Marchi**, creator and curator of the Identità Golose forum and its online international cookery magazine Identità Golose web. The changeover from printed paper to an online discourse on current food issues, including a guide to promising new chefs, is a winner, said Marchi. Expressing thanks for the prize received, he congratulated the Academy for its ability to evolve and grow in step with the times. President Petroni concluded the ceremony by noting the harmony between the Academy's principles and the interesting perspectives expressed by the prize recipients: clearly the Delegations had chosen carefully when nominating the candidates.

The host, Carlo Cracco, came in to welcome the guests to his new restaurant, opened four months previously and occupying four floors (wine cellar with tastings, bistro bar accessible to passers-by, full restaurant hall for dining, and event space on the top floor, where the award ceremony took place and which affords a pleasant view of the Galleria). He lingered to explain the menu: soft-boiled egg with beets, lettuce, yoghurt and caviare; creamy risotto with yellow tomato, homarus lobster and peas; roast steak of dentex fish, stuffed tomato petal, courgettes and mint; and a dessert of mascarpone, strawberries and almond biscuit.



Paolo Marchi



Carlo Cracco explains the menu



# Italy shoots for the Bocuse d'Or

*In Turin, chefs rally under the Italian flag and try to upend the French 'Food Olympics'.*

BY GIGI PADOVANI

*Journalist and food critic*

*Member of the "Franco Marengi" Study Centre*

*Martino Ruggieri*



*The team of Italian chefs at the Bocuse d'Or*



Do After months of practice, their fate was decided in five and a half hours. The setting was the Oval Lingotto sports stadium in Turin, where, in mid-June, they were spurred on by the cheers of their supporters who had travelled from twenty countries. The young cooks competing in the European semi-finals of the Bocuse d'Or - the eponymous prize created in 1987 by the eminent chef from Lyon - had only that brief time, aided by a *commis* and a 'coach' outside the cooking area, to prepare a vegetarian dish and several meat-based light bites artfully displayed on a French-style serving tray. The jury of 24 distinguished old-world chefs - led by Jérôme Bocuse, who took the baton from his father in January after the latter's passing, and by Carlo Cracco - declared that the best dishes were Scandinavian: Norway, Sweden and Denmark, in that order, ascended the podium. As a consolation prize, the

Italian team, though taking twelfth place, was admitted to the finals, as one of 22 white-coated crews from around the world who will compete on the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of January 2019 for the coveted prize: the statuette representing Monsieur Bocuse. The verdict left the Italians with a bad taste in their mouths after having toiled for so many weeks aiming at a far higher result: the Mediterranean dishes presented by the 31-year-old Martino Ruggieri, a native of Puglia, did not convince the jury, who instead rewarded the Nordic teams' Francophile creations with their perfect geometries, crystal and silver trays, glass or steel cloches to keep the food warm, pools of sauce and carved vegetable compositions. And for the first time in the history of these 'Food Olympics', dry pasta was included among the mandatory ingredients, as a 'surprise product' revealed at the last moment: spaghetti, sizes 3 and 7. The three Piedmontese specialities, *vitello*

*fassone* (Piedmontese veal), PDO-designated Sant'Andrea rice from Baraggia, and Castelmagno cheese, the cooks' intended main focus, had been chosen weeks before. Nevertheless, the ranking was unsurprising: victory in this competition, trapped in a stylistic time-warp from the 1980s, remains the preserve of Nordic nations and France. Italy's highest result was a fourth place gained by an apprentice of Gualtiero Marchesi, Paolo Lopriore, from the region of Lombardy.

Yet our cooks had painstakingly prepared for this edition, supported by the President of the Italian Bocuse Academy, another apprentice of Marchesi: Enrico Crippa, of the Piazza Duomo restaurant in Alba which boasts three Michelin stars, and the promotion manager Luciano Tona, former Director of the Alma cooking school in Colorno. On the initiative of its Councillor for Culture and Tourism, Antonella Parigi, the regional government of Piedmont



*Breakfast in Rural Puglia - Italian dish entry (Julien Bouvier Studio)*



invested in events leading up to this competition at the Oval - including debates, dinners and tastings - and many Michelin-starred Italian chefs answered the call to participate. So, as well as its French 'coach' François Poulain (Martino Ruggieri is a sous-chef at the Pavillon Ledoyen in Paris, a three-starred temple of new French cuisine under the guidance of Patrick Alléno), the team was aided by cooks flocking to Turin to support it: the Cerea brothers of the restaurant Da Vittorio; Davide Oldani of D'O; Alfio Ghezzi of Trentino; Marco Sacco of Lago di Mergozzo; Davide Palluda of the Enoteca in Canale; Giovanni Santini of the Pescatore in Canneto sull'Oglio; Antonella Ricci, a Michelin-starred chef from Puglia; JRE Italia President Luca Marchini; and many more. A who's who of the Italian restaurant world rallied around a shy youth from Puglia, who drew confidence from his international experience in a cutting-edge establishment.

Martino Ruggieri chose to deliver surprising dishes. His vegetarian entry was 'Breakfast in Rural Puglia', a creation of apparent simplicity with Mediterranean herbs and flavours presented before the jury under an audacious cloche fashioned from chicken feathers, hardly ideal for a vegetarian dish. His tray had a title reminiscent of chef Massimo Bottura: 'The Veal Who Would Be Tuna' - meat wrapped in a thin layer of rice imitating fish skin, flanked by veal

sweetbreads in an ovoid shape, all presented on a base hand-made by Ruggieri and his assistant, Curtis Malpas, using food scraps, to symbolise the sustainability of a cuisine which wastes nothing, surmounted by a blue octopus of Albisola ceramic. A rather unsettling structure, contrasting with the ethereal purity manifested by the other teams' trays.

We journalists, of course, were not given a chance to taste the food, but according to Carlo Cracco (perhaps biased in the Italians' favour), the Italian dishes were excellent. Indeed, they received high scores, but were penalised on appearance. The representatives of Italian cuisine tried to shake up the Bocuse d'Or, but paid for it. Should one give up? Were the Piedmontese authorities wrong to host the semi-final? Probably not: their vision was justified. And finally, the desire to form a team, more typical of French and Spanish cooks (at least if drawn together by a genius like Ferran Adrià), has infected Italy too. We should persevere, therefore. But we might also consider more 'home-grown' events, less burdened by transalpine standards.

For years, the Italian islands have hosted the Cous Cous Fest and the Girotonno tuna festi-

*The Veal Who Would Be Tuna - Italian tray entry (Julien Bouvier Studio)*



val, both celebrations of Mediterranean cuisine, while the pasta company Barilla organises an annual Pasta World Cup. It would be a dream to dedicate a serious competition to one of our culinary greats, such as Gualtiero Marchesi, creatively revisiting our Mediterranean cooking traditions while respecting their integrity.



*Norway's winning dish (Julien Bouvier Studio)*



*Norway's winning tray (Julien Bouvier Studio)*



# American or Italian Food?

*Italians continue mistakenly looking to America even when it comes to food.*

BY GIORGIA FIENI

*PhD in agricultural and food economics*

The most visible novelty to emerge in post-war Italy was a tendency to view America as the land of liberty, where everything was possible. Consequently, some physically emigrated overseas, while most adopted American habits without leaving home: wearing blue jeans, chewing gum, riding choppers, listening to rock'n'roll, surviving exclusively on hamburgers and fries (which are technically French in origin) and drinking cola became de rigueur. Paradoxically, in that very era, the 1950s, the American scholar Ancel Keys declared that the secret of longevity lay in what he called 'the Mediterranean Diet' found in Italy.

Over half a century later, Italians persist in erroneously deferring to America even in culinary matters: when we wish to slim down or purify ourselves, we dive headlong into the often outlandish diets of models and film stars and start subsisting on corn flakes and smoothies,

and our food exports across the ocean (leaving aside pizza) would benefit from an infusion of newness, freshness and the spirit of "made in Italy".

The invention of corn flakes is attributed to John Kellogg in 1894. The superintendent of a sanatorium, he decided to add cereals to his patients' vegetarian diet for added nutrition. He cooked some wheat and let it cool while he went out on errands; when he returned it had gone stale, but rather than wasting it he decided to flatten it with rollers, toast it to cover its altered flavour and serve it in milk. It was so well received that he soon commercialised it, and corn flakes became a familiar and beloved food around the world. It continues to be mostly eaten as first served by Dr Kellogg, because, as the nutritionist Margaret Visser has explained, according to North American culture no food which accompanies milk could possibly be bad or dangerous. Corn flakes have even been used on bi-

scuits (e.g. resembling desert roses), as breading (a major frozen-foods company has introduced it in one of its fish batters, while *haute cuisine* offers squab drumsticks rolled in corn flakes and served with truffled custard, balsamic vinegar and mustard), as a base for cheesecake, tiramisù or puddings, or as a topping for muffins, cupcakes, crumbles and more, whether sweet or savoury - I like the idea of a creamy spinach ring with a corn flake centre, or, as Bruno Barbieri suggests, of corn flakes tossed with oil, salt and pepper, then served in a glass with prawns (cooked in seaweed-infused steam and seasoned with citronette) and garnished with sorrel and mayonnaise. The smoothie, instead, is a descendant of the milkshake, prepared with yoghurt or milks derived from oily seeds, which renders it, indeed, very smooth. The smoothie's innovation lies in its composition: 60% vegetables and 40% fruit. Examples include strawberry with Brussels sprouts, cucumber with mint and lemon sorbet, spinach-pineapple-banana, avocado with cocoa and coconut water, pear-kale-parsley, and vanilla-date-rocket. If, however, banana and avocado become the preferred substrate (perhaps mixed with berries), the result can be served in a bowl rather than a glass and is reclassified as a 'smoothie bowl'.

There's nothing unhealthy about this - quite the opposite. However, healthy eating relies on seasonal fruits and vegetables and light seasonings, all typical of Italian food - and this differs from the common view of Italian food abroad. Visitors to America may well have had the experience of choosing, say, a first

Smoothie





Cookies



Crumble



course of pasta and a second course of fish from a menu in a tourist destination, and be presented with macaroni cheese and fried fish fingers. In Italy this would be unthinkable: the same terminology even in a restaurant of the lowest order would have meant an approximation of *cacio e pepe* (pasta with sheep's cheese and pepper) and a seafood salad. The Americans are not to blame - at least, not all of them. Rather, the post-war food industry began mass-producing and marketing such foods thanks to brilliant advertising campaigns able to win over everyone including children. Pasta consequently became pre-cooked and mixed with orange cheese powder, and fish of abysmal quality was smothered in excessively flavoured or entirely bland poultices, all sold in microwavable boxes. I would call this junk food, but for them it is 'comfort food', and they render it more appetising by adding, in the first case, bacon and/or mustard,

and in the second, a crispy layer of seasoned batter.

Some have even striven to improve such foods. Starting with pasta, Hubert Keller adds seafood; Tessa Kiros, cooked ham or sautéed peas; Nigella Lawson, truffles and sweet potatoes; Jamie Oliver, broccoli or lobster and anchovy fillets; Gwyneth Paltrow, tomato sauce; and Martin Morales, aged cheddar and huancaína sauce (garlic, onion, chilli paste, fresh cheese, unsweetened condensed milk, lime juice and crackers). Sonia Peronaci adds cheese, aromatic herbs, dill, garlic and chillies to the stuffing or batter of fish.

The 'challenge' which I suggest, therefore, is to transform these two alleged "Italian specialities" into real food which we can proudly export without fear - and I already have some ideas. Macaroni cheese could be enriched with seasonal vegetables (e.g. mushroom and cauliflower in winter, peppers and fre-

sh tomato in summer) or dried fruit for crunchiness, and by using local traditional cheeses, an excellent opportunity to give more visibility to smaller producers; the pasta itself could be made of less usual flours, for example whole-wheat, rice, buckwheat or quinoa flour. Fish fingers could be baked, made using oily fish and served in a sandwich with vegetables and home-made pickles, and their batter could be flavoured with herbs and spices, olives or sun-dried tomatoes.

All these recipes could stand out at a cocktail party or a brunch, served as *amuse-bouches* or in themed settings (for example, the pasta in a mozzarella bar, or the fish fingers in the deli counter of a fishmonger). It's not about gimmicks, but rather, familiarity with the rich and varied Italian 'foodscape' and a reliance on simplicity and inventiveness. I'd be willing to bet that the Americans would love it.

## THE ACADEMY SILVER PLATE



*An elegant silver plated dish engraved with the Academy logo.*

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

*Delegates may contact the Milan Headquarters*

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



# In Situ: the only restaurant of its kind

*Located inside the MoMa in San Francisco, it allows diners to combine cultural pursuits and the pleasure of tasting the finest cuisine from around the world.*

BY CLAUDIO TARCHI  
*San Francisco Delegate*

Museum directors often wonder whether their cafes and cafeterias, which serve quick and simple fare, should also somehow embody the mission of the institutions they inhabit.

Frequent visitors or museum employees, who repeatedly dine there, often demand a positive culinary experience to complement the cultural aspects of their museum visit.

As early as 2004, the MoMa in New York opened a decorous, elegant restaurant, offering diners excellent food immersed in an artistic ambiance for the duration of their meal.

The San Francisco MoMa went in a similar direction, but with a highly original concept.

After three years of work at a cost sur-

passing 600 million dollars, the museum tripled its gallery space and now has one of the world's greatest modern art collections. During the design phase of the project, the young cook Corey Lee, recipient of three Michelin stars, was entrusted with managing the culinary side of the new building. Lee, owner and head chef of the Benu restaurant near the museum, had to come up with something innovative. The result was In Situ (from the Latin phrase used when a work of art occupies its original place), a restaurant which does not invent its own 'signature dishes' or fit into any specific 'genre', but represents another meaning of 'In Situ': synergy, collaboration.

The basic idea was to contact about a hundred world-famous chefs, convince them to reveal "the recipe that made them famous", and recreate it using primarily the same ingredients and even, in some cases, the same crockery as the original dish.

There was an immediate positive response from ninety culinary artists, who believed in Lee's idea and were acquainted with his professional integrity and precision, which for these recipes means accuracy even in minute measurements. Some sent recipe books, while others provided painstaking instructions or even videos.

Corey Lee also undertook several visits to participating restaurants, to learn at the source and understand how to blend flavours; other chefs travelled to San Francisco to ensure the correct replication of their recipes.

Corey succeeded in creating a menu for a demanding clientele eager to try dishes previously seen only on television or in

*The restaurant In Situ*





*“Oops, I dropped the lemon tart”,  
by Massimo Bottura*



cookbooks. The exhibits at the MoMa change frequently, and so does the menu at In Situ: every day, three savoury dishes and three desserts are available, each with expertly suggested wine pairings.

Every two months or so, almost all the dishes change, requiring considerable efforts in the kitchen to use new cooking techniques and equipment and different presentation styles from one day to the next. The paper menus, which customers may keep, are also very inventive: they fold out like origami and contain a map displaying the recipes’ places of origin.

Which masters were chosen to represent Italy in this ‘Pantheon’? Massimo Bottura of the Osteria Francescana in Modena, with his dish “Oops, I dropped the lemon tart” (2012): the restaurant’s most popular dessert, as delicious as it is artistic. Massimiliano Alajmo of Le Calandre, in Rubano, with his “Cuttle-

*The MoMa (Museum of Modern Art), San Francisco*



fish Cappuccino” (1996), served in a glass and with a consistency reminiscent of tiramisù. Riccardo Camanini of Lido 84 in Gardone Riviera, with “Spaghetti with butter and yeast” (2014). Gennaro Esposito, representing the Torre del Saracino restaurant in Vico Equense, with “Spaghetti al pomodoro” (2011): a recipe obviously requiring perfect tomatoes, which Esposito has delivered to California when his dish is on the menu. Niko Romito, of the Reale restaurant in Castel di Sangro, with “Riso, parmigiano e limone” (‘Rice,

parmigian and lemon’; 2011). This gastronomic experience comes at a price: four diners ordering one each of the 13 dishes to share (and some include prized ingredients such as truffle or foie gras), with two glasses of wine per person plus the 20% gratuity added automatically to the bill, would spend approximately \$100 each.

Not cheap, but combining the museum’s cultural delights with a chance to sample the best cuisine from around the world, all in one visit, is an experience worth trying.

## 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 Marengli” 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.*

