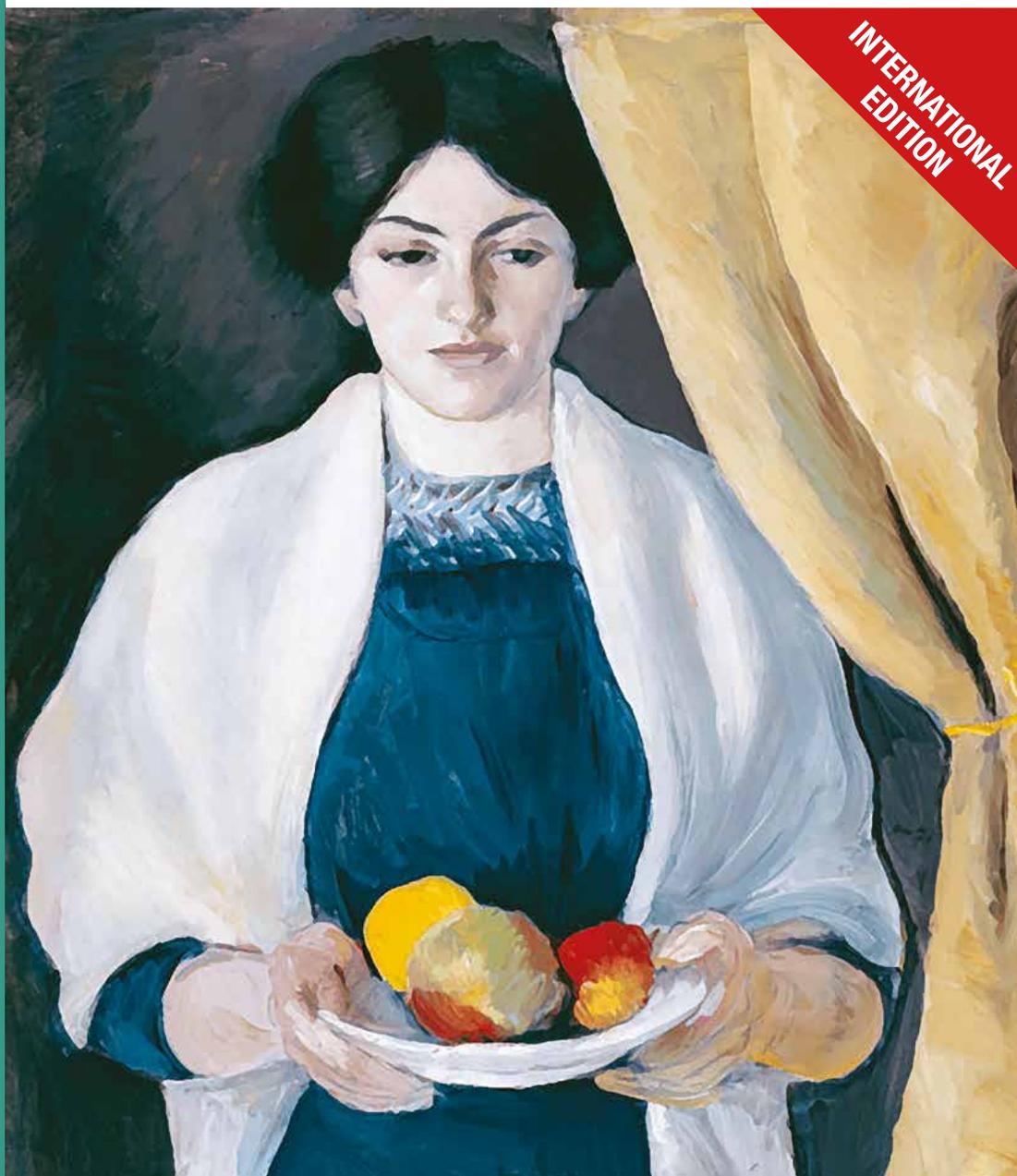


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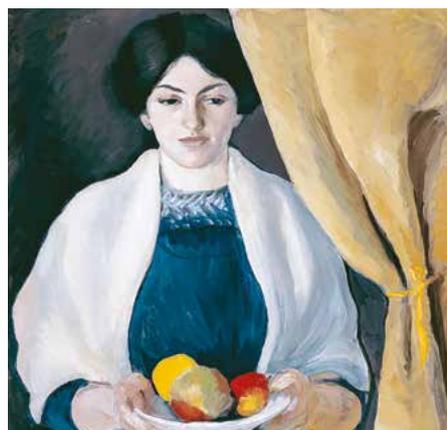
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L'ACCADEMIA ITALIANA DELLA CUCINA
È STATA FONDATA NEL 1953 DA ORIO VERGANI
E DA LUIGI BERTETT, DINO BUZZATI TRAVERSO,
CESARE CHIODI, GIANNINO CITTERIO, ERNESTO DONÀ
DALLE ROSE, MICHELE GUIDO FRANCI, GIANNI MAZZOCCHI
BASTONI, ARNOLDO MONDADORI, ATTILIO NAVA,
ARTURO ORVIETO, SEVERINO PAGANI, ALDO PASSANTE,
GIAN LUIGI PONTI, GIÒ PONTI, DINO VILLANI,
EDOARDO VISCONTI DI MODRONE,
CON MASSIMO ALBERINI E VINCENZO BUONASSISI.



On the cover: Graphic elaboration of *Portrait with Apples* (1909) by August Macke; Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus and Kunstbau München, Munich, Germany

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The Great Refusal

Uproar over Michelin star declined by cooks at "Il Giglio" in Lucca.

In the third canto of his *Divine Comedy*, **Dante** describes the *ignavi*, the indolent or apathetic (those who "lived without infamy or praise"), and says: "I saw and knew the shade of him who cravenly made the **Great Refusal**". He doesn't name names, but must have been referring to Pope **Celestino V**, the hermit who renounced the papacy. We haven't sunk to such levels, but the 'Great Refusal' of a Michelin star vociferously proclaimed by the cooks of the restaurant "**Il Giglio**" in Lucca has caused a sensation. This is not unprecedented: **Gualtiero Marchesi** startlingly rejected a star, and others in Italy and beyond have made this choice which at first glance is incomprehensible, since most chefs would go to hell and back to be exalted by the Red Guide.

This recognition is bound up in a specific philosophy which may often feel like a cage

The reasons behind such a rejection often lie **in the stress and costs** inherent in maintaining that recognition, which depends on certain standards regarding personnel, furnishings, equipment, a luxury wine cellar and kitchen arrangement. A kitchen must adhere to a well-articulated philosophy that may be perceived as an 'enclosure', even a 'cage': an affected, not chosen, style. Within this **fettered state**, it is hard to find a place for the simplicity, however interpretable, of traditional cuisine. The *macaron*, as the star is also known, brings visibi-



by **Paolo Petroni**
President of the Accademia



lity, newspaper and magazine articles, and an abundant, wealthy clientele eager to try starred restaurants, but sometimes, and possibly for the restaurant in Lucca, causes a long-term loss of local customers who seek an affordable cuisine rooted in their territory.

Refusing **three stars**, of course, would be more traumatic. The business involved is enormous (the **Cerea** family of "Da Vittorio" in Brusaporto, for example, rake in around 87 million euros a year). Besides operating a restaurant (or restaurants) where meals cost 350 euros or more, often much more, there are banquets, publicity, sponsors, television programmes, and luxury catering, even abroad: a veritable industry of high-end food.

Many people's extremely hard work hanging on one review

Losing a star would be catastrophic, possibly causing closure: a nightmare. It is ethically unjust for so many people's painstaking work to hang on one review. This is a **dangerous world of constant anxiety** which intensifies each year when the guide is released. The Michelin authorities hurriedly declared that stars cannot be returned or refused. Right: it's true. However, interestingly, the Guide issued this 5th of November, amid the customary pomp and circumstance, does not mention "Il Giglio" among the starred. The only moral of the story: reading professional, unpaid reviews is wise, but what really counts is wholesome, healthy, satisfying, delicious food.



Food and climate change

by **Maria Luisa Abate**

Pescara Aternum Academician

How climate upheaval is modifying our cuisine.

Awareness is necessary to understand how and why human health is affected by climate change, which is **disrupting traditional agriculture** with persistent heat, intense humidity, sudden deluges and, on the other end of the spectrum, frequent droughts. How badly is the human body affected by temperatures above 37 degrees Celsius? Heat regulation mechanisms, such as sweating, lose efficiency, exposing people to serious health risks. Climate change is also facilitating the **spread of infectious diseases** once found only in tropical and subtropical regions (such as dengue fever), while younger generations suffer from **increasing climate**

anxiety against which training and education may be ineffective.

We should no longer take food for granted

A good relationship with food, refraining from waste and especially treating the planet better will be the only means of guaranteeing food, if possible healthy food, for everyone. The Earth's equilibrium is fundamental for maintaining biodiversity and thus the food chain which starts with agriculture and feeds humans and animals.





Traditionally, farmers expertly organised the sequence that went from ploughing fields, to sowing, harvesting and finally consumption, including storage of crops for family use. Everything was based on knowledge of the weather and seasonality, but things have changed: **rising temperatures have disrupted sowing and harvesting.** Blossoming and ripening are influenced by temperature, whose recent peaks have upended the previously established traditional system. Temperature is an important element for living things, and its increase can have devastating effects. In the Mediterranean it has risen more than the worldwide average, and in Abruzzo it is three degrees higher than in the 1990s. Like many in Italy, Abruzzo is a fragile region, especially in mountainous areas where the strongest effect is **the melting of glaciers**, with possibly dire consequences in the not too distant future. Carbon dioxide, crucial in many biochemical and physiological processes, is present in exponentially greater amounts than in previous years, wreaking regrettably irreparable damage alongside other anthropogenic pollutants harmful to health. When Covid halted many activities, we witnessed the return of crystal-clear water in Venice and the Po Valley, Europe's most polluted location, and salmon to the Thames.

How can we solve this problem? The answer is elusive, as nobody really wants to find the solution, and studies and projections are inadequate because reality develops faster than such projections can predict.

Agriculture is moving up the mountain

Agriculture is moving en masse towards higher ground, but this **changes the organoleptic properties** of oil and wine, for example, with knock-on effects for the economy and human health. **Temperature affects our tables enormously.** Even from last year, the water crisis has raised oil prices, forcing some people towards lower-quality options such as palm oil, increasing demand for which has caused deforestation and consequent atmospheric changes. All this alters how we eat, which is the real socioeconomic problem. Another huge problem is **food waste** and its compounded effects, from exuberant overproduction to dumping and consequently high carbon dioxide emissions. In Europe 45% of food is discarded and 20% of that wasted food could feed all the planet's poor. Decomposing organic refuse also produces large quantities of methane.

Altered food and cooking habits, such as buying ready-made food rather than cooking at home, produces additional waste by obscuring the underlying purchases and processing.

We humans are the only species which doesn't look after its environment

Local and seasonal produce is good for health while removing the need for artificially induced maturation and costly transport. We humans are the only species which doesn't look after its environment as other animals do to survive. The effects of climate change are aggravated by the system adopted by certain food entrepreneurs and industrialists who overlook tradition and human health, exclusively pursuing profit, which most often transforms and upends culinary traditions. Junk food has caused an **illusory simplification of consumption** which disregards both health and local traditions. This has created a monoculture, prioritising uniformity and crop yields and **sacrificing biodiversity** which underlies health and sustainable agriculture, exacting a heavy price from the entire population.

Maria Luisa Abate



The Doges' biscuits

by Roberto Mirandola
Padua Academician

Baicoli are small dry traditional Venetian biscuits.

Baicoli (pronounced *baicoli*, with emphasis on the first 'i') are small, dry traditional Venetian biscuits created around the late 18th century. **They involve the typically nautical technique of *biscottare*** ('twice baking', hence 'biscuit') whose results are suitable for long sea voyages because they **last a long time and are easy to eat.**

They remain crunchy and fragrant for a long time

These biscuits - measuring 8x4 centimetres and **only 3 millimetres thick** - are notable for their lightness and, especially, for staying fragrant and crunchy over time. Their name derives from their vague resemblance to baby grey mullet, which are called *baicoli* in Venetian dialect. Created for sailors, these sweet biscuits quickly **won over even the fussiest palates when Venetian aristocrats began serving them with tea.** **Their ingredients are easily available:** flour, milk, beer yeast, sugar, butter and egg whites. **Their apparent simplicity belies their painstaking, exhausting preparation which requires meticulous care.** There are four phases: two for the dough, two for baking. Milk and yeast are combined with some of the

flour; the mixture is left to rest. Then the remaining flour is added, and the butter, the lightly frothed egg whites, the sugar and a pinch of salt. A loaf is formed and baked; when it is golden, it is removed from the oven and cut into slices which are baked again until they too are golden.

The most popular souvenir brought back from visits to Venice

Tied with *zàleti*, *baicoli* (singular: *baicolo*) are **the most famous Venetian biscuits**, linked since 1911 to a specific producer - **Angelo Colussi** - and the packaging which, for years, represented the most popular souvenir brought back

from visits to Venice. The iconic **image on the biscuit tin depicts a Venetian aristocrat** (some say it's **Giacomo Casanova**) giving a lady the celebrated biscuit with St Mark's bell tower and **other typical Venetian symbols** in the background, such as the *ferro* ornament of a gondola and two mooring poles. The biscuit tin also bears a verse praising the biscuits, and recounting their peculiarities, by the magistrate and jurist **Giuseppe Boerio**, author of the *Dictionary of the Venetian Dialect*: "No biscuit in this world is as good, as fine, as sweet, as light and as healthy to dip into a cup or glass than our Venetian *baicolo*". **Baicoli are served with hot chocolate, coffee or dessert wine**, but also admirably complement apple or apricot compôte. **Their perfect companion, however, is a cup of warm zabaione.**





Italian cuisine abroad: *authentic or counterfeit?*

by **Angelo Sinisi**

Bucarest Academician

*How to guard against
'Italian-Sounding' food
even in restaurants?*

Italian cuisine is praised worldwide for its variety, the quality of its ingredients and its rich flavours. However, its global diffusion has brought with it a **series of challenges and problems with adherence to original recipes and use of authentic ingredients.**

*Crucial questions arise
when speaking of Italian
restaurants abroad*

When speaking of Italian restaurants abroad, crucial questions arise: how truly

Italian is their management? Are their chefs really qualified or can they merely self-identify as such to open a restaurant? Are traditional recipes respected or interpreted 'freely' and thus denatured? **Managing Italian restaurants abroad** requires not only culinary competence but also **a profound comprehension of Italian food culture.** Selecting ingredients is fundamental: such products as *guanciale* for carbonara, *parmigiano reggiano*, water buffalo mozzarella and many more must strictly be Italian to maintain tradition. Yet often, due to cost or availability, **local ingredients are used** and may alter the





flavour and other qualities of a dish. **Italian cuisine abroad is often 'creatively reinterpreted' or 'improperly reproduced'**, leading to dishes whose Italian names belie their distance from original recipes. **Carbonara is emblematic of this:** many versions incorporate dairy cream (absent in the authentic version) or unthinkable ingredients. Outside Italy I once ordered a pizza Margherita and found a stuffed pepper perched on it. Though the pizza was excellent in terms of dough, cooking method and high-quality ingredients, and even the pepper was delicious, it was not a real Margherita.

Italian chefs: true, or self-proclaimed?

Another critical aspect is the education of **chefs working in Italian restaurants abroad**. According to a study, **only 47% of them are Italian**, and of these, a measly 9% have studied at legally recognised culinary schools accredited by the Italian government or completed internships in Italy. This means that in

many cases those cooking in Italian restaurants **are not adequately trained** in traditional Italian cuisine, **relying on informally acquired information** or being self-taught. It is not rare for people who have cooked for friends and relatives to self-proclaim themselves chefs and work in, or even open, Italian restaurants without professional qualifications. Such problems render **certification necessary for Italian restaurants worldwide**. This would help and support Italian restaurants abroad whose goal is to guarantee authentic food by using products that are indeed part of Italian culinary traditions, while also **resisting spurious 'Italian-sounding' dishes** which reap fat profits worldwide by imitating our culinary excellence, guaranteeing quality standards and the use of authentic 'Made in Italy' ingredients.

The 'Italian-Sounding' phenomenon

The 'Italian Sounding' phenomenon is common abroad, where Italian names adorn products which have nothing

Italian about them. These are mostly made by businesses that buy foreign ingredients cheaply and then process them in Italy, or Italian businesses bought by foreign companies that exploit their name recognition to boost sales. These products' descriptions frequently include indications of geographical provenance qualified by '-type', '-style', 'following the typical recipe of', 'in the tradition of', and similar expressions. This **false 'Made in Italy'** is perpetrated on an international level, substantially damaging Italian exports: these products generate twice the profit of authentic Italian foods while misleading customers. It is crucial to promote real Italian cuisine abroad, not only as a matter of national pride but as **economic self-defence**.

The Italian food and wine industry is one of the jewels in our crown, deserving of protection and promotion around the world. Only through some form of certification can we rest assured that, upon entering an Italian restaurant abroad, we can enjoy an authentic experience reflecting the true traditions and quality of our *Bel Paese*.

Angelo Sinisi



A bounty of awards

by Silvia De Lorenzo

A unified event for AIG National Prizes and the Gianni Fossati and Orio Vergani Prizes.

The ceremony was held in Milan, at the Hotel Principe di Savoia, where President **Paolo Petroni** greeted award recipients and journalists to celebrate all those who work daily to promote Italian cuisine with integrity, dedication and passion.

AIG National Prizes

First were the national prizes (*Prix Nationaux*) awarded **each year by the Académie Internationale de la Gastronomie** (AIG), following the suggestions of the Italian Academy of Cuisine,

to emerging players in the fields of both food literature and multimedia communication. The most important of these, noted Petroni, may be the **Chef de l'Avenir** (Chef of the Future) Prize for young chefs with a "bright future". The 2024 prize went to **Arianna Gatti** of the **Forme Restaurant in Brescia**. Young, likable and smiling, Arianna is from Abruzzo, where the municipality of Massa d'Alba contains the small village which gives her restaurant its name - because, she explained, her cuisine is mostly rooted in recipes of both land and sea from her home region. **A simple cuisine which needs no explanation** but conveys its typical flavours directly to the palate.

The **Prix au Sommelier** (Sommelier Prize) went to **Rino Billia** of the Bellevue and Petit Bellevue restaurants in Cognac, suggested by the Aosta Delegate, **Andrea Nicola**.

After expressing his thanks for this recognition, Billia dwelt on the importance of the sommelier's work: sommeliers must very quickly understand a customer's requirements, suggesting the right wine to complement every dish. He also emphasised the problem of wine costs and markups: prices should be fair, 'dem-

ocratic'. Besides the classics, his wine list includes offerings from various parts of the world (e.g. Turkey, Uruguay, South Africa) which allow diners to enjoy wonderful new experiences.

The young pastry chef **Kevin Fejzullai**, from the restaurant Harry's Piccolo in Trieste, received the **Chef Pâtissier** (Pastry Chef) Prize. Despite his youth, Fejzullai has already garnered numerous accolades including the Michelin Guide's 'Passion Dessert' title. Dessert is of the utmost importance because, explains Kevin, "it's the last memory that guests take home"; and, at the end of a meal, what we need most of all is lightness, and indeed the restaurant's 'non-desserts' were an immediate hit.

The award winners' kit consisted of: a diploma signed by Paolo Petroni, as President of the Italian Academy of Cuisine, and by AIG President **Fabien Petitcolas**; a medal depicting **Orio Vergani**, created by the sculptor **Gianni Olivetti**; a postcard with a postmarked stamp issued by the Italian Postal Services to mark the Academy's seventieth anniversary; and the Academy's most recently published books, including the *History of Italian Cuisine in Comics*.



Arianna Gatti receives the Chef de l'Avenir Prize



From left: Andrea Nicola, Paolo Petroni and Rino Billia



Kevin Fejzullai, Prix au Chef Pâtissier



Luca Clerici, Prix de la Littérature Gastronomique



Carlo Spinelli, Prix Multimedia

A passion for food culture

The Prix de la Littérature Gastronomique (Food Literature Prize) was given to **Luca Clerici**, a professor at the University of Milan who has written, among others, the book *Guadagnarsi il pane – Scrittori italiani e civiltà della tavola* (*Earning our Bread: Italian writers and food culture*). Revealing a little about himself, he acknowledged his good fortune in managing to unite his two passions: literature and cuisine. Indeed, the book is about many Italian authors' relationship with food, or food-related situations involving them (for example, the abbot **Antonio Stoppani**, author of the best-selling *Bel Paese*, ended up depicted on the packaging of the cheese bearing his book's name).

The Prix Multimedia (Multimedia Prize) was gained by **Carlo Spinelli**, author and editorial coordinator of the magazine *ItaliaSquisita*. He declared himself deeply touched by the prize, as unexpected as it was welcome. The prize embodies his path of using fun to bring young people into the world of cookbooks, restaurant appreciation and the words associated with food (for example through comic strips). He also pointed out that **Italian cuisine is in excellent health**, even abroad, where it is already classified as 'gourmet' without the need for extravagant alterations.

The fourth edition of the Gianni Fossati Prize

Paolo Petroni paid homage to his friend, First Vice-President Gianni Fossati, a food

enthusiast and journalist at the *Corriere della Sera*. A prize now in its fourth edition was established in his memory, **awarded to print-medium journalists** who contribute to the promotion of Italian cuisine. In the presence of Gianni Fossati's wife **Magda**, the three tied winners received their prizes: food and wine journalist **Giovanni Angelucci**; journalist and author **Camilla Baresani**; and **Eleonora Cozzella**, Director of *Il Gusto*.

Angelucci, who has a degree from the University of Gastronomic Sciences in Pollenzo, defined himself as a 'nomad' because he is constantly travelling the world. He confirmed that Italian cuisine is well-loved abroad and high-level chefs draw inspiration from it.

Camilla Baresani has maintained her novel-writing career alongside her passion for food culture, to which end she

has recounted her experiences in her collaborations with daily newspapers (among others, *Il Sole 24 Ore* and the *Corriere della Sera*). Delving into the restaurant world, she chiefly lingered on descriptions of restaurant environments, customers and furnishings, before telling the tale of the food itself.

Eleonora Cozzella's enthusiasm is infectious when she discusses cuisine: a vehicle for exchanging ideas and concepts, talents and techniques, and of course evolving recipes. Indeed, **in order to be fully appreciated, a dish must become 'contemporary'**, according to current preferences and the new equipment available to chefs. If recipes remained static, she declared, we would eat in a museum: the beauty of cuisine is that it evolves, not in deference to fashion but to adapt it to new tastes.



The winners of the Gianni Fossati Prize. From left: Camilla Baresani, Paolo Petroni, Eleonora Cozzella and Giovanni Angelucci



Camilla Baresani and Eleonora Cozzella, two of the Fossati Prize winners



Laila Tentoni, President of the Casa Artusi Foundation

The Orio Vergani Prize awarded to the Casa Artusi Foundation

The prize named after the Academy's founder is conferred upon associations whose activities have honoured Italian food culture and the civility of its dining customs. This year it has been awarded to the Casa Artusi Foundation, which dedicatedly and passionately pursues its mission to disseminate Artusi's gastronomic legacy both nationally and internationally. The Foundation's President, **Laila Tentoni**, expressed her pride upon receiving the prestigious prize, both personally and on behalf of the Foundation and **Artusi's** home town, Forlimpopoli. She then focussed on the figure of the author of *La Scienza in cucina e l'arte di mangiare bene* (*Science in the*

Kitchen and the Art of Eating Well), emphasising **his capacity "to bring Italians to the table with wit and carefully chosen words"**, giving a voice to home cooking and considering experience to be the best teacher. He himself often went from kitchen to library, from pen to pots and pans. Tentoni finally recalled the almost prophetic statement of the anthropologist **Paolo Mantegazza**, who welcomed Artusi's book thus: "You have gifted us a book that will never die and will sow happiness among many".

Time for a convivial gathering

After the award ceremony, lunch was taken in the adjacent room, coordinated by the staff of the hotel's excellent restaurant. Mantova pumpkin *cappellacci*

with *bitto* cheese and pistachio fondue; breast of guinea fowl with potatoes, parsnip chips and Port wine sauce; coffee cream with puffed rice and *zabaione* sauce.

Silvia De Lorenzo

