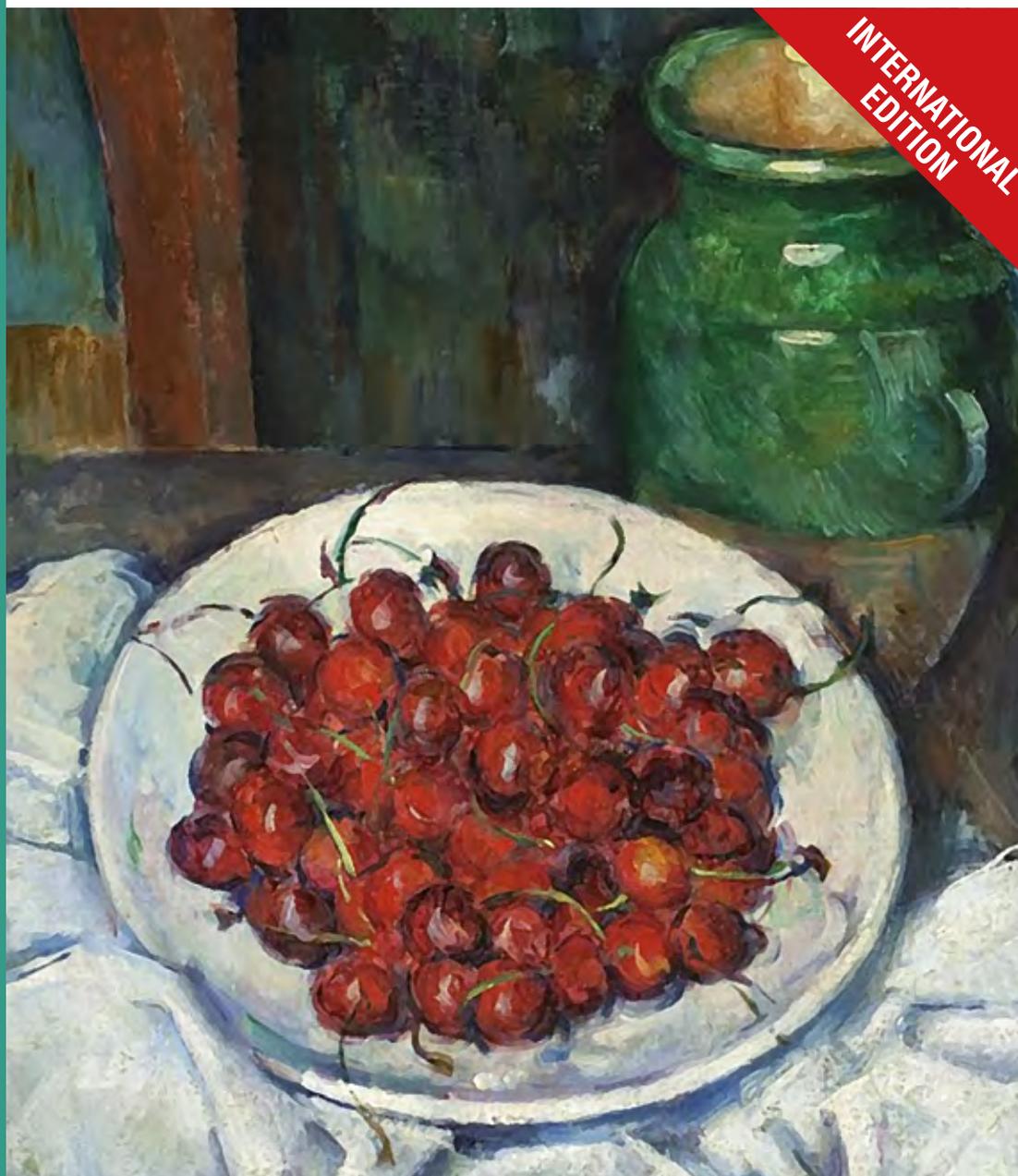


# CIVILTÀ DELLA TAVOLA

ACCADEMIA ITALIANA DELLA CUCINA



INTERNATIONAL  
EDITION

**ACCADEMIA ITALIANA DELLA CUCINA**

ISTITUZIONE CULTURALE DELLA REPUBBLICA ITALIANA  
FONDATA NEL 1953 DA ORIO VERGANI

[www.accademia1953.it](http://www.accademia1953.it)

**INTERNATIONAL EDITION**

JULY 2019 / N. 317

**EDITOR IN CHIEF**  
PAOLO PETRONI

**COPY EDITOR**  
SILVIA DE LORENZO

**LAYOUT**  
SIMONA MONGIÙ

**TRANSLATOR**  
ANTONIA FRASER FUJINAGA

**THIS ISSUE INCLUDES ARTICLES BY**  
GIGI PADOVANI,  
PAOLO PETRONI,  
SARA VENTURINO,  
ANDREA VITALE.

**PHOTO CREDITS**  
ADOBE STOCK, GLORIA NOVI.



**PUBLISHER**  
ACCADEMIA ITALIANA DELLA CUCINA  
Via NAPO TORRIANI 31 - 20124 MILANO  
TEL. 02 66987018 - FAX 02 66987008  
PRESIDENTE@ACCADEMIA1953.IT  
SEGRETERIA@ACCADEMIA1953.IT  
REDAZIONE@ACCADEMIA1953.IT  
WWW.ACCADEMIA1953.IT



MONTHLY MAGAZINE  
REG. N. 4049 - 29-5-1956  
TRIBUNALE DI MILANO

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**On the cover:** Graphic elaboration of a detail of Still Life with Cherries and Peaches (1885-1887), by Paul Cézanne. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, USA



**Clarification**  
The towel-drying function in the caption for the May cover image was derived from the book Leonardo's Kitchen Notebooks

by Shelagh and Jonathan Routh. However, this was an error by the authors. In fact, the drawing so described represents a 'Giant Repeating Crossbow', Codex Atlanticus, Folio 1070r, Veneranda Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan.

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# Dark clouds over Italian cuisine

by Paolo Petroni

President of the Accademia

*Misleading 'traffic light labels'; European goods threatened with hefty tariffs by the USA: just a few of the grave dangers menacing the 'Made in Italy' brand.*



**F**ood-related news in the past few days has not been rosy for Italian cuisine; amid a few merely intriguing items, there are others which sadly showcase the typical Italian penchant for self-harm, while still other developments, not brought about by us, appear to be bona fide punishments.

In the merely intriguing category: the acclaimed but somewhat unconvincing **World's 50 Best Restaurants 2019** ranking, sponsored by the San Pellegrino and acqua Panna drinking water companies (Nestlé group), having eliminated Massimo Bottura because he topped the chart last year, **has anointed as world's best restaurateur Mauro Colagreco** (from La Plata, Argentina) with his restaurant Mirazur in Menton, France, while **Italy has fallen heavily from last year's heights**, having to make do with 29<sup>th</sup> place for Piazza Duomo in Alba (from 16<sup>th</sup> place) and 31<sup>st</sup> for Le Calandre in Rubano (from 23<sup>rd</sup>). Niko Romito has plunged from 36<sup>th</sup> to 51<sup>st</sup> place.

*Italy's provenance labelling norms invalidated*

**Speaking of the Swiss multinational Nestlé**, we have also gathered that by the end of 2019, **every product sold in Europe must bear the infamous Nutriscore traffic light labels**, a system already addressed in an earlier Focus and solidly opposed in Italy "for misleading customers". In fact we are facing, just for a change, **a convoluted situation on which the European Commission should pronounce itself clearly** regarding simplified food labelling. Concerning labels, however, the bad news doesn't end here. Brussels and the legal authorities in Rome have also impugned the norms approved by the Italian parliament requiring

food labels to display place of production or packaging. Though it probably matters little to know whether a well-known frozen pizza was made in Germany or Naples, we believe that **in food, greater transparency is preferable**. However, food industry lobbies champion the opposite ethos.

'Made in Italy' also faces overseas threats: the USA have added various products to the list of **European goods facing possible tariffs**. These include cheeses (mozzarella, ricotta, pecorino romano, parmigiano reggiano, grana padano, provolone), olives, cherries and jams, but especially, **coffee: a crucial product exported worldwide**. Of course, various cured meats figure too, such as raw and cooked ham, salami etc; and as a finishing touch, **pasta, whether fresh or dried**.

Speaking of ham, we have read woeful news about **Parma and San Daniele raw hams, apparently produced from Danish Duroc hogs**, which is absolutely forbidden by the relevant quality consortia. Consequently, by late 2018 alone, almost a million hams were confiscated and 'unbranded': approximately 20% of the annual Parma and San Daniele production, generating almost a million Euros in revenue from two products which are emblematic of our food culture.

*Antonino Cannavacciuolo's odd recipe for "linguine with Genoese pesto"*

We would like to conclude with a **bizarre nugget** about our capable, gruff, lovable chef-star **Antonino Cannavacciuolo**, boasting several Michelin stars for Villa Crespi (2 stars), Café & Bistrot (Novara, 1 star) and Bistrot Cannavacciuolo (Turin, 1 star). There are also Laqua Charme & Boutique in Meta, province of Naples, and finally (for now), the gourmet street food stand christened 'Antonino, il Banco di Cannavacciuolo' ('Antonino, Cannavacciuolo's Food Stand') in the Style Outlet, northern Italy's busiest outlet, located in Vicolungo.

Among our boy's many activities (such as television programmes and cooking courses) there is that of writing recipe books. His recipe for linguine with Genoese pesto is truly surprising. He starts by listing the ingredients, including 500 grammes of basil for four people! Half a kilogramme: a mountain of basil (recipes generally call for a cupful, about 100 grammes). Even overlooking the ten walnuts which tradition doesn't include but which some cooks use anyway, what follows leaves us nonplussed: "*Wash the basil; pick and dry the leaves. Blanch (parboil) them in salt water and chill them in water and ice. Drain and press them dry*". One wonders whether the otherwise competent Antonino has even read his own publication.

**Paolo Petroni**



# Atlantic bluefin tuna: *better when caught “on the run”*

by **Gigi Padovani**

Journalist, food writer

*Almadraba tuna fishing is the most sustainable and offers the best specimens of this king of the Mediterranean.*

In Carloforte, an island facing the south-western Sardinian coast where the Genoese dialect is still spoken, it has always been called **‘tonno di corsa’** (literally ‘running tuna’). It is *Thunnus thynnus*, the king of our seas, which for centuries has been fished with *tonnare fisse* (‘fixed tuna nets’ positioned along their migration routes, known in English by the Arabic-derived Spanish term *almadraba*, meaning ‘place for striking’), where bluefin tuna rich in fat and eggs transit from the Atlantic, passing by the coastline to spawn in the central Mediterranean. Bluefin tuna is highly prized, and **Carloforte has been dedicating a festival to this increasingly rare delicacy for seventeen years: the evocatively named Girotonno** (a pun on *girotondo*, ‘round dance’, and *tonno*, ‘tuna’). It includes a contest in which various nations’ chefs exchange barrages of gourmet recipes. In

the international competition, completed this year on the first of June, **the Italian team**, with **Stefano De Gregorio and Rocco Pace**, beat Japan, Tunisia and Ecuador, thanks to their creation **‘Parma, Modena, Carloforte’**: a complex preparation celebrating tuna’s ‘Italian spirit’ with a tuna ice cream, a ham broth and a breaded coating of Sardinian *carasau* flatbread and dried raw ham. Similarly excellent was the **‘Sea Carbonara’** prepared by Carloforte local **Luigi Pomata** during the ‘show cooking’ finale, external to the competition.

*The captured tuna are kept alive to be taken to Malta for fattening*

‘Sea Carbonara’



For three days, as a member of the jury alongside other journalists and gourmets, I had the opportunity to taste authentic fresh ‘running tuna’, including in an exceptional, Spartan grilling event organised by the Greco brothers’ historic Isola Piana almadraba fishery. The island has one other, in Cala Vinagra, while another two are active along the Sardinian Portoscuso coast: those at Capo Altano and Porto Paglia. **This year too, the traditional Sardinian tuna fishermen, or *tonnaroti*, have maintained the old custom which has continued uninterruptedly since 1738**, when the town was founded, by herding these marine giants towards the chambers of the net known as ‘the island’, ending in the ‘chamber of death’. Despite its name, the ancient and bloody ritual of *mattanza* (‘slaughter’) led by the *rais* (chief) - in Isola Piana, for the past twenty

Belly cuts of bluefin tuna



years this has been **Luigi Biggio** from the mountainous Barbagia area - is hardly ever undertaken in Sardinia, and nowadays the captured bluefins are briefly reprieved and kept alive in cages to be slowly pulled by tugboats on a long journey to be fattened in Malta.

**Those four Sardinian fixed almadrabas are the only ones remaining active.**

From this year, as decreed in May by the **Italian Ministry of Agricultural Policies**, for the first time they **each received a quota**, as they had long been requesting: a total of 328 tonnes out of the 4,308 allotted to Italy in 2019 by ICCAT, the international body that oversees and fixes quotas for *Thunnus thynnus* fishing in the Atlantic and Mediterranean. That organisation, headquartered in Madrid, covers 53 countries and is highly criticised by environmentalists for never completely banning the fishing of this member of the Scombridae family.

It should be clarified that the current rigidity of quotas and stringent monitoring by Port Captancies are the consequence of relentless fishing in the 1990s, when Italy alone captured 60 thousand tonnes annually, still destined, at the time, for tins. Nowadays, after a brief stay in Carloforte in the midst of the fishing season, **one intuits that this venerable tradition and glory of Italian cuisine is, alas, being lost**, in favour of the sushi and sashimi beloved by the Japanese, prepared with small slices of bluefin tuna caught in the Mediterranean, considered the best. Furthermore, this year a 'paupers' fight' erupted against the Sicilians in Favignana, desirous of re-opening their almadraba after twelve years, but prevented by what they characterised as the Ministry's excessively low catch limitations.

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*Today, the French and Spanish monopolise tuna seine fishing with boats*

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In reality, the problem is another. Today, the Spanish and French monopolise mobile boat-based seine fishing, whose nets can be placed in the open seas and which

**indiscriminately capture even excessively young tuna** (whereas traditional almadraba nets allow the smallest specimens to escape) using modern detection systems: drones, radar, sonar. **Technology has replaced the struggle between the marine giants and the rais.** And absurdly, say the tuna fishermen of Carloforte, the national quotas allocate 84% of the national allowance to these fishing methods, leaving traditional fixed almadrabas with the crumbs: a mere 8%. Yet, asserts the marine biologist **Nadia Repetto**, author of an excellent book entitled *Le ragioni del tonno* (The Whys and Wherefores of Tuna; Sagep, 2013), **the fixed almadraba remains "the most sustainable method of harvesting bluefin tuna"**, which is finally repopulating the Mediterranean thanks to ICCAT quotas. Perhaps we need no longer feel guilty for eating some delicious tuna? On this note, let us recall the selection advice of **Maestro Martino** in his classic *Libro de arte coquinaria* (The Art of Cooking) from 1480, describing "a good *tarantello*" (meaning the abdominal muscle) to cook with vinegar, as long as it is "firm and hard and not flaccid".

**How can we recognise authentic almadraba tuna** if we are prepared to pay for it fairly (that is, dearly) at a fishmonger's? **Piero Addis**, a researcher in the University of Cagliari, suggests requesting to see the BCD (Bluefin Catch Document) indicating where and how any cut was obtained. If it's unavailable, the cut is probably from yellowfin tuna, or *Thunnus albacares*, which usually ends up tinned in supermarkets (in fish markets it costs ten times less) and is fished by large Spanish or French fleets in the Indian Ocean. And if we wish to eat that fish in the form of 'tartare' or barely pan-fried, Addis recommends blast-chilling it for at least a day to eliminate the fearsome *Anisakis*, the nematode worm which can lurk in any oily fish and in raw Scombridae.

A vast network of fixed almadrabas once existed in Italy, reaching from Camogli

(Genoa) to Tuscany to Campania, Sicily, Sardinia and even Puglia: a map from 1889 shows the Italian peninsula dotted with fifty-odd almadrabas. This 'tuna-fishing culture' is traceable to the Phoenicians, and is depicted in graffiti from 12 thousand years ago in the Genovese cave on Levanzo, one of the Aegadian Islands near Sicily, and on a Greek vase from 380 BC on display in Cefalù, bearing the image of a cook slicing a tuna. The brothers **Giuliano, Pierpaolo and Andrea Greco** maintain the Isola Piana structure and have created the consortium Compagnie delle Tonnare di Sardegna (Association of Sardinian Almadrabas), continuing to purvey bluefin tuna from Carloforte in expensive old-style rectangular 180-gramme tins. But batches are small. Nearly every tuna caught in Sardinia ends up in Maltese fattening pens, destined for Japan.

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*Restaurants in Carloforte still offer traditional dishes made with fresh tuna*

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One source of solace remains: between May and July, one can still enjoy traditional fresh tuna dishes in Carloforte's restaurants, for instance **trofie pasta with tuna ragù, Carloforte-style tuna** (cooked in oil, seasoned only with hot pepper, vinegar, bay leaves and garlic), **belù alla tabarchina** (a preparation of tuna stomach), **gurezi** (the oesophagus), and **fried lattume** (milt or seminal sacs). Mayor **Salvatore Puggioni** has been striving to salvage whatever possible, but the issue requires more national attention, more dedicated resources and **a policy of safeguarding authentic Italian almadrabas**. Professor Nadia Repetto affirms: "Hogs are land tuna, and not vice versa; bluefin tuna can still be protected, but we must hurry because we risk losing this precious part of our heritage".

**Gigi Padovani**



# How music may modify food perception

by Sara Venturino

Musicologist, food writer

*“For me, this is the basis of our food reactions: much more than the tongue (which detects at least five flavours), and even the sense of smell (which can perceive infinite aromas), it is the continuous dialogue between the brain and the stomach, mediated by the heart, which tells us whether we like a food or not. The brain is what governs our emotional response”.*

**T**hrough this declaration, drawn from the preface of the book *Gastrophysics: The New Science of Eating*, **Heston Blumenthal**, a founding father of modern molecular cuisine, immediately frames the kernel of the research undertaken by the book’s author, **Charles Spence**. With simple, clear language, Spence presents the results of **years of research on the complex interplay between food and psyche** in a manner accessible to anyone, demonstrating how the influence of external stimuli plays a fundamental, indispensable role in how we perceive taste. For many years, Charles Spence has been teaching experimental psychology at Oxford University, where he is also Director of the Crossmodal Research Laboratory, the research centre where he undertakes research alongside students, scientists and great chefs from all over the world, not least the aforementioned Hes-

ton Blumenthal and the award-studded Catalan chef **Ferran Adrià**.

*We eat using all the senses at our disposal, not only taste*

The premise of such research is the demonstration that in fact we eat using all our senses, not only taste: food’s first impact is visual (as flawless plating gurus know well), then we perceive its fragrance, we feel its texture (in the case of street food, often, literally using ‘touch’ through our hands), and only then does it reach our mouths, where **we perceive the sound** it produces (**for example, crunchiness**) as we chew. But there’s much more: each sense activates emotional responses relating to lived experiences, people, memories, whether positive or negative, which influence our perception of what



“The sound of the Sea”

we are eating. (Who doesn't remember 'la madeleine de Proust'? The concept was, indeed, already familiar). We might say, then, that **pleasure derived from food is due in large part** to our subjectivity, **to the emotional associations** we confer upon food.

**What if we could 'guide' this emotional aspect?** Might we voluntarily induce a certain reaction through specific external stimuli, thereby influencing emotional responses and food choices?

This very issue is the focus of Spence's research and his *Gastrophysics of Taste*, involving not only haute cuisine chefs but also entire Research and Development departments of large companies including Unilever.

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*The most famous experiments were conducted at Blumenthal's restaurant in Bray*

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Many of the most famous experiments were undertaken in Blumenthal's restaurant in Bray, **The Fat Duck**, often using the chef himself as the first guinea pig. One experiment eventually resulted in the restaurant's signature dish, **"The Sound of the Sea": a dish of seafood splendidly arranged** as a miniature undersea tableau, with each ingredient prepared to provide a particular texture; through earphones, **diners hear maritime sounds as they eat**, such as waves breaking on the beach and the cries of seagulls. Some diners have reported being moved to tears by the experience. The

new aim, therefore, is no longer "selling food" but "sharing an experience" (which the Futurists had already intuited in the 1930s, with their theatrical, 'multi-sensory' dinner-experiences). All factors capable of generating 'atmosphere' must be considered while creating a memorable experience, beginning with location, décor and lighting, and including the shape and colour of cutlery and crockery (or even deciding whether cutlery is necessary at all); but the element which demonstrably has the strongest influence on diners' perceptions is music.

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*The element most strongly affecting diners' experience is music*

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Studies suggest that **music can alter perception of foods and their flavours**, and **modify our eating rhythm**, prolonging or reducing the time dedicated to the experience (a useful effect for speeding up turnover in a fast food establishment, or to render the meal more relaxing in a Michelin-starred restaurant). The choice of music assuredly has cultural implications, with certain pieces immediately associated with specific traditions; but, in particular, genres can influence food perception: **jazz**, for instance, can **render such foods as desserts and chocolate more pleasurable**, while the distinction between **high and low frequencies** ap-



parently **fosters different perceptions of sweet and bitter**.

'White noise' frequencies (around 80 decibels, equivalent to the background noise from a washing machine), instead, make sweetness and saltiness less intense but crunchiness more perceptible.

Needless to say, this is **causing a stir among the food industry's marketing researchers**, who are already arranging musical tastings for selected cohorts of tasters to understand how musical associations can boost product sales.

A recent experiment offered chocolates with wrappers bearing a QR code which, scanned by a smart phone, would yield a playlist to accompany the chocolate tasting, thereby investigating **which musical accompaniment rendered the chocolate more delicious**. In Britain and the USA, companies are conducting experiments with ice cream and artisanal beer, choosing different music according to the target audience (age, social status etc) - **and think of the possibilities for advertising jingles**.

The next time you shop in a supermarket or enter a restaurant, pay attention to the background music. It was probably not chosen randomly: gastrophysics is already here.

**Sara Venturino**

## THE ACADEMY SILVER PLATE



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# Food waste

by **Andrea Vitale**  
*University of Milan*

*Causes, solutions  
and the future  
of sustainable food.*

**A**pproximately 4 billion tonnes of food are produced annually worldwide. Sadly, around 1.3 billion of these are never consumed: the latest estimates indicate that **a third of all food is thrown away each year.**

The figures already highlight the enormity of this waste, but if we consider that, according to studies conducted by FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) in 2018, this wasted food could feed four times the 821 million people suffering from hunger worldwide - including EU citizens who live in such poverty that they cannot count on a full daily meal - it becomes undoubt-

edly clear that **both consumers and food businesses must increasingly acknowledge this phenomenon and take steps to combat it** or at least minimise its effects.

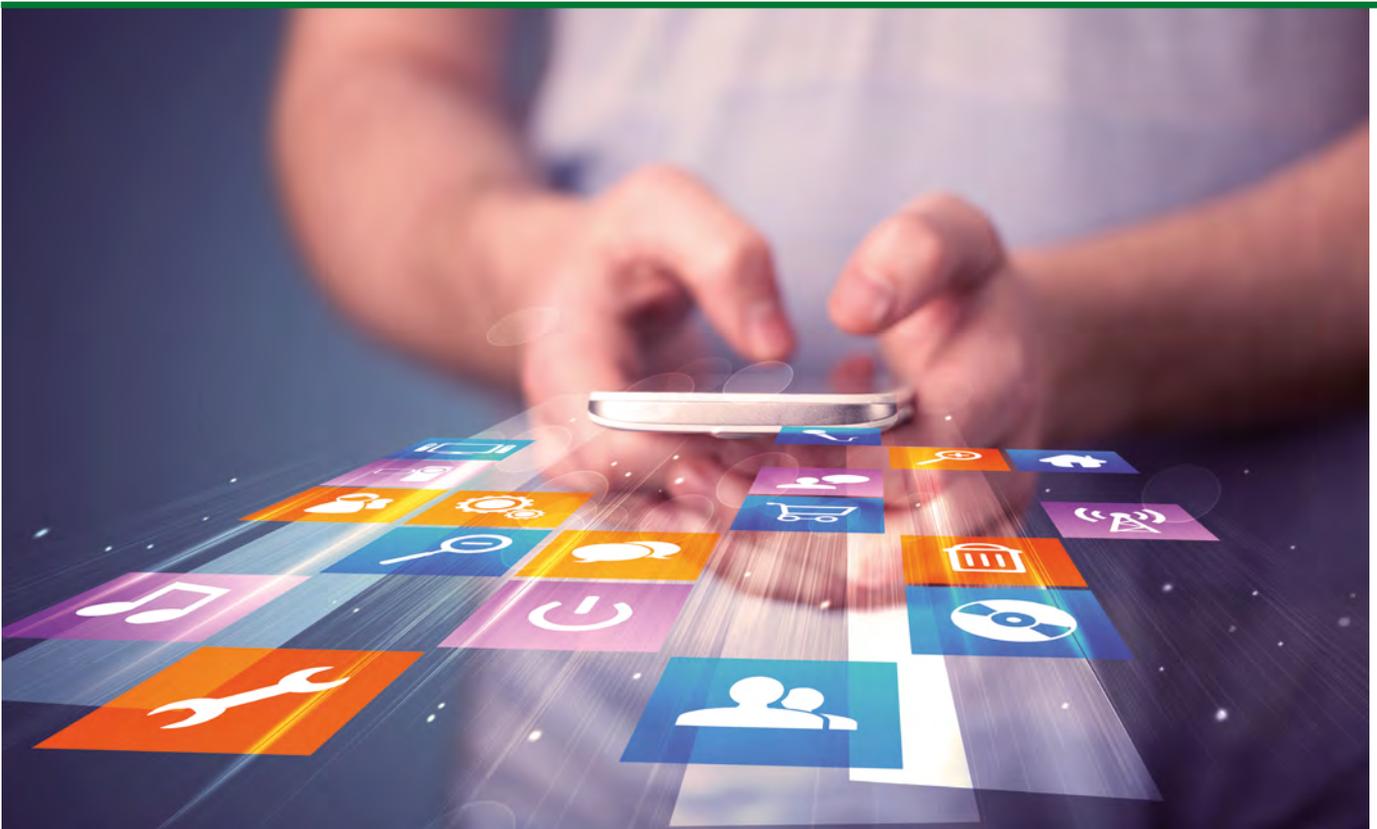
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*Consumers remain poorly  
informed about avoiding  
food waste*

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In truth, for at least a decade now, food businesses involved in mass distribution and large-scale food service have been systematically funnelling unsold goods





to the needy through collaboration with charities, non-profits and Italy's Fondazione Banco Alimentare (Food Bank Foundation, active since 1989). However, constantly evolving technology gives major food companies almost real-time control over shelf availability and stock and supply management, aiming for increasingly precise matching of supply to actual demand; in this context, consumers remain poorly informed about food waste, attributing it to food businesses, schools, hospitals and refectories.

Again according to **FAO's 2018 data**, **over 50% of food waste occurs at home** and involves almost all foods; in particular, approximately 7 kg of fruits and veg-

etables, 3 kg of baked goods, and 5 kg of milk and milk products. Almost half the time, this happens - it is worth emphasising - because these foods have reached or passed their expiry dates. Every year, consumers in **'developed' countries throw away almost the same amount of food produced by sub-Saharan Africa**. Annual global food waste represents 30% of cereal produced, 40% of fruits, vegetables and root vegetables, and 35% of dairy products, meat and fish.

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*There are apps to monitor food expiry dates*

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It is clear, therefore, that **the struggle against waste** must be fought **in the field of food education** before that of technology. If technology concretely answers the need for simple and effective consumer tools to reduce waste (for instance, there are apps for monitoring food expiry dates, and software to identify supermarket deals on food nearing its expiry date but still perfectly safe to eat), education must create informed, aware, conscientious individuals who purchase, consume and live responsibly, and can therefore understand the prob-

lem and the possibilities of using the latest technology to combat it. If, as affirmed by the aforementioned figures, **average consumers shirk the blame for food waste and lay it elsewhere, they will use no app**, software or informational tool to combat or limit the problem.

Some have proposed initially encouraging consumers to resume daily shopping habits - which I consider both anachronistic and unfeasible for two major reasons. **Neighbourhood shops are all but extinct**, replaced by supermarkets and shopping centres whose vast selection at competitive prices indubitably benefits consumers while also luring them into **unnecessary or excessive purchases**. Furthermore, the figure of the 'housewife' who checks her pantry daily, elaborates a family menu and ventures in search of ingredients is just as extinct and not a viable solution to the problem.

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*Even doggy bags bear the psychological stigma of being leftovers*

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Another **hypothetical remedy** against waste in the restaurant sector, also strick-





en by this problem especially for larger-scale establishments, is encouraging diners to take leftovers home in doggy bags to finish later.

This too, though potentially helpful, merely tends to shift the problem from the restaurant (whose food waste will decrease) to the consumer who, in the vast majority of cases, **will forget the doggy bag in the fridge and eventually discard it**, having often lost interest

in that food outside its 'restaurant context' and further saddled with the stigma of being a leftover without the appeal of a fresh, specially prepared food.

Having established the problem afflicting the most advanced nations, **the route most likely to yield success is effective education of new generations** in well-informed and sustainable eating habits, to be instilled **starting from school**. Italian authorities have realised this and have recently been strongly promoting such a solution.

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*Local authorities in Italy have initiated various food education projects*

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Considering the public's and the scientific community's growing interest in this matter, both government bodies and large-scale catering organisations (e.g. school lunch caterers) have already undertaken several initiatives to increase food-related knowledge and conscientiousness among users (namely parents and children), increase the quality and health benefits of the foods offered, and reward organisations and businesses that have distinguished themselves in

such efforts. In particular, various local governments are collaborating with **school lunch services** in their jurisdictions through food education projects for young children, with **publications, games and events** using specially created characters and other methods to suggest **responsible consumption methods for minimal waste, healthy food habits and a more salutary lifestyle**.

The modern lifestyle, which includes increasing food consumption outside the home, often hinders parents' development of the knowledge and skills to produce adequate food. Seasonality and respect for food and its value are increasingly taught beginning in primary schools. One interesting relevant project by a local government in Liguria collaborating with school caterers has **leftover school food gathered and redistributed, within three hours, to homes for the needy**, thereby satisfying a social necessity while teaching solidarity and responsible consumption. The increasing, spontaneous appearance of such projects allows us to glimpse the prize of total food sustainability beckoning from the far end of a 'long and winding road'.

**Andrea Vitale**

