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WHIT MASSIMO ALBERINI AND VINCENZO BUONASSISI.

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On the cover: Detail from the painting "Osteria La Gensola in Rome", (1837) by Ditlev Blunck. On display at the Copenhagen Museum.



1815-2015: the bicentennial of modern bourgeois cuisine

When the dominant vision that holds an era or a culture together begins to crumble, our minds resort to more ancient concepts in search of sources of survival that also offer rebirth (James Hilton - An Essay on Pan, 1972).

BY GIOVANNI BALLARINI
President of the Academy

Dear Academicians, where is Italian cuisine headed? The bicentennial of 1815-2015 and an historical perspective can help us attempt to answer this question. This anniversary encompasses the end of a two-century period during which western society has witnessed the birth, ascent and finally the current breakdown of the bourgeoisie, and along with it, its cuisine. The bourgeoisie identifies itself with and was built upon some pillars that are now crumbling or in crisis: today national languages prevail over dialects; high level literature is expressed through books or newspapers rather than bulletins issued by those in power; dramatic arts are no longer at the beck and call of the local royalty; and cuisine no longer finds its point of reference in the palaces of power but instead in middle class

homes and especially in restaurants. We can place the beginning of this new style of cuisine in 1815, when the Congress of Vienna attempted an impossible social restoration of Europe. In Italy, still divided into many city-states, the bourgeoisie began to construct new models, including gastronomic ones, along a slow but continuous path of transformation.

In Italy, the development of the new bourgeois cuisine accelerated with national unity in 1861, and found relevant expression in 1891 with the work of Pellegrino Artusi, and whose greatest development took place during the *Belle Epoque* era that lasted from 1870 to 1914.

Just a century after the Congress of Vienna came the First World War, and along with it social revolutions of which fascism was an important expression as well as the emergence of new social classes that marked the progressive decline of the bourgeoisie and its cuisine.

During the period between the two World Wars, in addition to the cuisine of the upper and middle bourgeoisie we have that of the petty bourgeoisie, which revolved around a rampantly growing middle tier. With that phenomenon, along with progressive and increasingly rapid urbanization we see the beginning of the dismantling of the traditional local cuisines.

The middle class has continued to expand during the last fifty years (1965-2015), and this has led to the almost total destruction of the bourgeoisie,

that goes part and parcel with an ever increasing and intense process of industrialization of food production and distribution accompanied by a modernization of customs, habits of consumption, and cuisine.

The decline of bourgeois “home cooking” has accompanied the development of a cuisine that went from artisanal to industrial, with which we associate the industrialization of the tools and processes of food preparation.

After the Second World War, even the most modest homes had a precise and adjustable cook stove and a refrigerator that was far more reliable than an ice box, while the postmodern era has seen the advance of induction stoves and ovens, microwaves and many other innovations such as flash freezers, vacuum cookers and so on, and even of robots that will open the way to a new future: a cuisine that has passed from physical-mechanical technology to information and computerized technologies.

In our current communication driven society, cuisine finds new points of reference in the new means of visual communication as well as through the advertising that sustains it. Modern communication, largely presided over and utilized by an agricultural and food producing and distribution industry and dominated by the “Big Ten” global agro-industries, is increasingly able to offer foods at different stages of preparation under a myriad of brand names for basically the same product. At the same time, restaurants have



been transformed from places of culture to stages and showrooms, where “actor-cooks”, often with one foot in a television studio, offer “experiences” that are nearly impossible to reproduce at home. This begs the question “Is a person on television because he is a great chef or is he a great chef because he is on television?”.

The result is an increased diffusion of a cuisine of industrial and theatrical character that is progressively replacing artisanal cuisine with modern “home made” bourgeois culture and the progressive abandonment of time tested and consolidated traditions.

Today it is both useless an anti-historic to refute the offerings and proposals of the new culinary methods and especially to deny the often decisive importance of current social conditions, modern lifestyles, availability and quality of food, techniques that characterize the modern agro-alimentary

market and the unstoppable globalization of information.

We must also keep in mind how the spaces and times of modern life have changed along with the equally important transformations in the dimension and structure of the family.

To ignore all of this, and especially to not accept the new, would be an unpardonable error. When seen in this light we must consider the new methods and instruments of cuisine from the prospective of an experimentation that today as in the past characterizes cuisine and from which spring up a limited series of innovations some of which in time themselves become part of traditions that constantly renew themselves. From its beginning in 1815 the model of the Italian bourgeoisie had a provincial and regional character, and its time frames were weekly or seasonal. Today, in 2015, the postmodern paradigm that is be-

ing created has characteristics that reflect the globalization of customs, foods and techniques; only a minimal part still have the seasonal or religious component they once possessed. Today we increasingly resort to using industrially produced foods in different stages of preparation or pre-cooking, especially if they are presented via the new means of communication, primarily visual ones, and a different system of restaurant management.

Are the traditions of a not so long ago past dead, or are they still salvageable and useful, such as in the past when ancient pagan temples were transformed into Christian churches, or Renaissance or 18th century dishes reinterpreted by bourgeois cuisine? It is essential that we realize that only from this perspective it is possible to protect the traditions that are still alive in Italian cuisine and to foster their improvement.

GIOVANNI BALLARINI



2015 ECUMENICAL DINNER

The convivial ecumenical meeting that brings together all the Academicians in Italy and around the world at the virtual table, will take place on October 15 at 8:30 pm. This year's theme will be Condiments: Sauces and Gravies that characterize regional cuisine. This topic, chosen by the “Franco Marenghi” Study Center and approved by the President's Council, is aimed at recapturing, through cuisine, traditions that are undergoing great changes today owing to our passage from home and family cooking to artisanal and finally industrial foods. And if at one time the use of condiments was determined by neighboring cultures, today the field is a global one and is in a state of constant and rapid change. Delegates are entrusted with ensuring that the ecumenical dinner is accompanied by an appropriate presentation of a cultural character that illustrates this important theme and that the dishes served are relevant to the topic.



The Mediterranean Diet is 40 years old

Unesco has declared it a Patrimony of Humanity but there is little Italian about it.

BY PAOLO PETRONI
Secretary General of the Academy

The Second World War had just ended when an American couple from Colorado, Ancel and Margaret Keys, fervent Italophiles, settled down in Pioppi, a small fishermen's village in the municipality of Pollica, in the Cilento region. The inhabitants of the village had never set eyes on them before, but Mr Keys was well known in the world as the inventor of the celebrated K Ration (K from the initial of his last name), that since 1942 had been distributed as survival rations to American troops. Keys lived in Pioppi for almost thirty years and the village became the main headquarters of his studies (that also involved Nicotera in Calabria) about the correlation of nutrition and cardiovascular diseases. Keys, who was probably the first biologist and nutritional physiologist in history, came to the conclusion that nutrition based on bread, pasta, fruit, vegetables, a lot of legumes, extra virgin olive oil, fish, very little meat and a little wine was responsible for the extraordinary beneficial effects upon the local populations. This kind of nutrition was called Mediterranean Diet. The results of his studies were translated and popularized in his famous book *Eat well and stay well, the Mediterranean way*, written in 1975 with his wife. However, Italy had other concerns. It emerged from the war hungry, malnourished and lacking in food, so much so that any discussion of diet was out of place. As we well know, there was no such thing as Italian nutrition, when the North ate in a completely different way (butter and animal fats) from the South (oil and

vegetables). In short, the focus was on everything except a diet with little meat and fats. Then came the years of economic boom, the Sixties and Seventies, when nobody worried about cholesterol or even knew of its existence. But then the music changed and starting with the Eighties, diets came to the fore: down with fats! Does anyone remember the incredible success of *Weight Watchers*? The Mediterranean Diet was the talk of America before it landed in Italy. In a 2010 meeting held in Nairobi, Kenya, the

Fifth Session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Unesco sanctioned the Mediterranean Diet as part of the list of Immaterial Cultural Patrimonies of Humanity, acknowledging that it belongs to Italy, Morocco, Greece and Spain. In November 2013 such acknowledgment was extended to Cyprus, Croatia, and Portugal. Keys, the father of the Mediterranean Diet, died in Minneapolis in 2004, a centenarian, unquestionably proof that correct nutrition lengthens human life. He did not live to see the recognition bestowed by Unesco. Unfortunately, Italy (the country where a precursor of Keys' studies, Lorenzo Piroddi of Turin, researched the food-disease connection) has suffered the mockery of seeing the validity of its nutrition shared by countries such as Croatia (?), Cyprus and Morocco. The American magazine *Time* dedicated the cover of its January 1961 issue to Keys. In Italy, a country that notoriously is "very generous" with deserving persons, a Hotel Institute in Castellnuovo Cilento was dedicated to Keys.



Ancel Keys, MBL 1930 WHO, 193



The *fritto misto*

Five thousand years of history and tradition provide an abundance of recipes from the ancient Egyptians through today.

BY RUGGERO LARCO
Valdarno Fiorentino Delegate

When we speak of *il fritto*, or fried food, I don't think there is anyone who can truthfully say "I don't like it". And if it is said that even the sole of a shoe would taste good fried, both tradition and history teach us that this style of cooking has always been very popular. Even the pickiest of children rarely turn down fried food: from French fries to croquettes, from fish sticks to fried fish, kids rarely can resist such dishes. So it is no coincidence that this type of food "manipulation" has a very long history. In fact, frying food dates back 5,000 years: the ancient Egyptians fried many foods, especially vegetables, in goose, pork or beef fat. They rarely used oil for frying. According to Apicius, our own ancestors,

the Romans, whose cuisine often featured contrasting tastes and heavy spices, fried fish, vegetables and sweets. In his *De re coquinaria*, Apicius wrote: "How to preserve fried fish for extended periods: As soon as the food is fried remove it from the pan and bathe it with hot vinegar". This practice is still maintained today, for example with river bleak and blay as well as anchovies. The Romans also fried "sweets" that were sold by street vendors, especially during the festival of Bacchanalia, better known today as Carnival: *frittilia* were pieces of fried dough very similar to our modern *cenci*. They fried foods in oil as well as animal fats, and they even fried small morsels of bread. During the Middle Ages frying was primarily reserved for sweets, although





a document from 1148 cited by Pietro Verri includes a reference to “*lombos cum panitio*” - a forerunner of the modern veal cutlet *alla milanese*. There are also many recipes that describe fritters dipped in egg and fried in oil, as well as “ravioli” with an almond and walnut filling which are egg battered and fried.

In his 15th century *Libro de arte coquinaria*, Maestro Martino of Como explains how to fry thin slices of squash dredged in flour in “good oil” and also how to make all kinds of fritters, from those made with vegetables to those with rice, or sweet ones made with apples or figs, all fried in lard. Many recipes were devoted to fish, according to this Renaissance author: “Sole want to be fried....with some coarse salt as a condiment...” or “Sardines: frying is their natural preparation...” and finally “*usellie* (Mediterranean spearfish): They naturally must be fried”. He includes suggestions for other types of fish as well.

In his massive 1570 work *Opera dell'Arte del cucinare*, Bartolomeo Scappi, the “secret” (that is, private) chef of Pope Pius V set forth many recipes for fried vegetables, fish (from tench to trout to pike) as well as snails and mushrooms, also to be fried in olive oil. Let's take a look at his suggestions for frying shrimp meat: “remove the meat from boiled shrimp and cut it into pieces the thickness of a finger,

dip them in water and flour, then fry them in oil or clarified butter”. Scappi also provides a recipe for frying meat, an uncommon style of cooking at the time: he calls for veal chops and recommends the use of lard.

At the end of the 18th century, Alberto Alvisi, cook to Cardinal Barnaba Chiaramonti, who became Pope Pius VII, provided a series of recipes for fritters made with rice, apples and sweet pastry (similar to our modern “*chiacchiere*”, sweet Carnival fritters), but he does not refer to any sort of fried meat or fish. The “*fritto*” as we know it today would not appear until the second half of the 19th century, with the famous dispute over which came first, *costoletta alla milanese* or *Wiener Schnitzel*. On the other hand, this dispute was settled in favor of the “*milanese*” veal chop thanks to the original publication of the above-cited text. We must not leave out the grand Piedmontese tradition of frying: the *fricassà mescià* (mixed fry) and should add it to the other great traditions of our country, in which beef plays an important part. And of course we have a plethora of recipes that Pellegrino Ar-

tusi, the father of Italian cuisine, assembled in his invaluable *La Scienza in cucina e l'Arte di mangiar bene* (*Science in the Kitchen and the Art of Eating Well*) in which he points out that in Tuscany they fry with oil, in Emilia with lard, and in Lombardy they use butter. In summary, as our ancestors might have said, *unicuique suum*: to each his own. Even today there is still some debate as to the best medium for frying. Indeed, modern cuisine has made great strides in terms of developing new oil based products: not just those mentioned above, but also other vegetable oils such as those made from peanuts, sunflower seeds, corn, soy, and other blends of seeds. Without delving into their chemical properties, I would like to emphasize one fact: if you take olives and press them, what comes out is pure oil. If you take seeds and press them, what emerges is a more or less oily paste. But to become oil this “paste” must undergo an industrial chemical process. So let everyone draw their own conclusions. Being a Tuscan, my vote goes to olive oil.

RUGGERO LARCO





Aromatic *mortadella*

Protagonist of Bolognese gastronomy, this salami is versatile and used in a variety of recipes.

BY **PIERGIULIO GIORDANI**
Academician, Bologna Delegation

When we hear the word *mortadella* we usually think of the city of Bologna which, at least according to historians, was the birthplace of this famous salami. In ancient times large herds of pigs grazed in the countryside around “Bononia” (known as “Felsina” to the Etruscans). These lands were subsequently conquered by the Celtic tribe Galli Boi, who were swine herders and probably the originators of the process of transforming pork into salami. As the great Roman historian Polibio recalled, these herds grazed on acorns that had fallen from the oak trees, and this type of alimentation made their meat particularly well suited to sausage and salami-making.

The Roman historian Strabone explains that both preserved and fresh pork meat originated in Emilia and

later spread to other regions of Italy. The above-mentioned Polibio also notes that in the precursors of Emilian restaurants of that time, the bill for a pork-based meal was based on a lump sum and not calculated based on consumption. This meant it was a reasonably economical way to fill one’s belly.

The Roman Plinio describes that when the Emperor Augustus traveled Bologna to visit a war veteran, he tasted the local Emilian salamis, including *mortadella* which was already being produced there.

In the Civic Archeological Museum of Bologna there is housed a Roman burial stele that depicts a mortar (from which the term “*mortadella*” derives) and pestle: this device was used to crush and blend pork meat, salt and spices, i.e., the classic ingredients of *mortadella*.





The production of salami was always important in the territory around Bologna, and therefore the city itself achieved great fame for it: in the early decades of the 15th century, the lords of Milan the Visconti family (who dominated Bologna for a brief period) often received gifts of “the big aromatic sausage” (most likely *mortadella*) from their Bolognese vassals. Around 1553 the writer and gourmet Ortensio Landi wrote: “In Bologna they make the

best sausage you can imagine. It can be eaten fresh or cooked at any hour of the day. It stimulates the appetite and makes even mediocre wine seem good. God bless whoever invented it, and I adore and kiss their virtuous hands. I always carry some in a sack with me to stimulate my desire to eat if, owing to some misfortune, I find myself disinclined”.

The Venetian writer Andrea Calmo, who was also an actor, described Bologna as “a sea of scholars, and a fruitful place full of big salamis and sausages”. Not to mention the plaudits that other foreigners who happened to find themselves in Bologna have bestowed upon that area’s salamis: the Flemish Andreas Schott wrote: “the Bolognese salami are without peer”. The French François Deseine, declared that “they are famous around the world”; the British Ellis Verrard further explained that *mortadella* was already exported all over Europe in the 17th century; passing through Bologna in 1706, the Dominican Friar Jean Baptist Labat declared that he had even eaten *mortadella* in America! (So we see that even back then the Americans were copying Italian products).

As happened periodically, in 1661 an announcement was made in Bologna by Girolamo Farnese, the Cardinal Legate of the city “regarding the production of *mortadella* and salami” that was aimed at guaranteeing the quality of these products. Even then, exported salamis required a certification that attested to their provenance and authen-



ticity - so it seems that the European Union, with its IGP hasn’t invented anything new!

It should be clarified that *mortadella*, especially that of the highest quality, was always a costly product: its price was three times higher than that of *prosciutto* (in contrast to today!) and therefore it was only purchased by the wealthy and those whom today we would classify as gourmets. The “Corporation” or Sausage makers guild was responsible for conferring the appropriate seal of quality.

The first written recipe for *mortadella* dates back to 1644 and is found in the treatise *L’economia del cittadino in villa* by the Bolognese Vincenzo Tanara: it called for using one-third fatty meat, including *guanciale* (cheek bacon) diced into large cubes and two-thirds lean pork from the shoulder or thigh, which was then made into a filling through “chopping with a sharp blade”; after stuffing the product was cooked. Midway through the 17th century the Corporation had already packaged almost 1,000 quintals of sausage meat and 724 of *mortadella*. The 19th century witnessed its export even across the ocean, in the typical round or half-moon shaped boxes or hermetically sealed packages that insured the products’ preservation.

The great composer Gioacchino Rossini, who lived in Bologna for quite some time and was known as “a good eater” was featured in 1864 the newspaper *Lo spirit folletto* in a vignette in which he stated from his residence in Paris:

“those crazy folks from Pesaro want to erect a statue in my honor, and yes, a statue is indeed a great thing as it insures one’s immortality, but I wish they had thought of sending me a couple of *mortadellas* instead!”.

Mortadella was even the protagonist of a 1971 film by Mario Monicelli appropriately entitled *La mortadella*. It starred Gigi Proietti and Sophia Loren. The latter portrayed a worker in a salami factory who, upon her arrival in

the United States is stopped by Customs because she refuses to part with the beloved *mortadella* that she brought with her, in violation of US laws. Even 40 years later, it is still difficult to bring Italian salamis into the United States... especially *mortadella*.

And that brings us to today: *Mortadella Bologna* is a product that is regulated by the European Union’s IGP denomination (1998) under the watchful eye of the respective Consortium. It can be produced in the regions of Emilia Romagna, Piemonte, Lombardia, Veneto, Toscana, Marche, Lazio and the Province of Trento. It is described as “a round or cylindrical cooked stuffed sausage, pinkish in color with an intense, slightly spicy aroma”. Once sliced its surface should be velvety and of a uniform pink color. It should emanate a particular aromatic scent and its taste should be typical and delicate. It is versatile and can be used in a variety of recipes. It is the protagonist of Bolognese gastronomy, and is a classic ingredient in the filling of *tortellini*, *mortadella* foam, and the great mixed fry Bolognese style (all recipes registered with the Chamber of Commerce) and fried *mortadella* skewers.

I conclude by encouraging all readers to enjoy a fragrant fresh bread rosetta roll with some sliced aromatic *mortadella*: a delicious, healthy and delightful (especially when accompanied by a good glass of wine) meal that is an essential part of our oeno-gastronomic tradition.

PIERGIULIO GIORDANI



Proxemics: non-verbal communication at restaurants

There are many studies that maintain that there is a precise relationship between the physical space in a restaurant, client satisfaction, and their spending behavior.

BY ANGELO TAMBURINI
Siracusa Delegate



Proxemics is a little known, but very intriguing term, especially when applied to restaurants. Thus it is also of great interest to Academicians.

To be precise, proxemics is the science that studies the space around and distance between people involved in communication, be it verbal or non-verbal. In other words, it is the study of how humans use the space around them, establish the appropriate distance between oneself and others, and decide to move closer or farther apart from them in daily relations. It is also a factor in how residential and commercial spaces are designed, and therefore the subject is also relevant to restaurant space. How many restaurants have had clients enjoy a meal, pay the bill without complaint and promise to come back only to never be seen again? Even when the chef has competently done his or her duty, and the dishes and wines highly praised. What went wrong? A detail to which the restaurateur has probably paid little attention is the disposition of the tables in the dining with too little space between them. What may seem perfectly normal to the server - for example seating two diners at a table elbow to elbow with total strangers - can put clients in a negative mood that may influence their "buying behavior" during the course of a lunch or dinner. Unless of course the restaurant is organized with wide tables to stimulate conviviality and conversation among dining companions. This situation, however, is the exception.

There are many studies today that show that there is a precise relationship between client satisfaction, the physical space around them in restaurants and their spending behavior. Such studies focus on three areas of analysis: the level of satisfaction determined by the size of a table for two diners; the distance between tables and the coincidence of these two variables on the diners' level of spending. In this case, proxemics studies how people create and manage their personal space within the public environment of a restaurant. In fact, where there are many unfamiliar faces present (certainly not the case with the Academy's convivial meetings) people tend to prefer to sit at a table in such a way as to have control over who is dining along with them, and it is preferable to have something that separates one set of diners from another. According to the theories developed through proxemics, we use the space around us in three different ways: as a point of equilibrium with others and self-protection; as a social regulator; and finally as a response to stress determined by our loss of privacy in a public place, which can diminish our level of satisfaction with the experience we are having. For example, in Western culture, too close a distance (45 cm or 18 inches or less) to a stranger can provoke stress. And yet, in certain situation (and dining in restaurants is one of them) maintaining privacy and reducing stress accompany the need for stimuli to render the experience pleasant and interesting or, in other words, induce an approach behavior that would lead a person to enter a given restaurant, and spend both time



and money there. There is thus a close positive correlation between stimuli, approach behavior and satisfaction that can be achieved through the creation of a psychologically comfortable environment that encourages interaction among diners. For example, proxemics tells us that many people prefer to sit at an angle from one another to facilitate conversation. This seating arrangement is preferred by couples but is considered too intimate for a business lunch. Sitting across from one's dining companion suggests a confrontational attitude. Starting with these premises, the research has led to some interesting conclusions. In particular, that the dimensions of the tables are not particularly relevant to customer satisfaction. Guests seated at tables that are larger than necessary (for example, two customers at a table for four) do not display spending behavior that is different from those seated at a table for two. Conversely, there are significant differences among many diners based on the varying degree of space between tables in three categories: from 40 cm (16 inches), from 50-100 cm (20-40 inches) and more than 1 meter (39 inches). A perfect example is the fact that diners at tables that are closer to other tables evaluated the apportion of space in more negative terms than those guests seated at tables placed farther apart. Even those seated at a

medium distance were less satisfied. With respect to those farther away, those patrons seated at tables that are close to one another reported a lower level of satisfaction with the food, quality of service and overall choice of restaurant in addition to a diminished desire to return to that establishment in the future. The distance between tables is also reflected in the spending on and duration of the meal. This is apparent when calculating the entire bill: customers seated at moderately distant tables spent up to 10 percent more than those seated with too little or too much distance between tables. The psychological advantage of being at a table that is larger than necessary does not seem to affect the perception of the overall experience at the restaurant. But the satisfaction of those guests seated at tables that are extremely close to one another should not be taken too lightly by restaurateurs, because a dissatisfied client is always a threat and never an opportunity. There have been many in-depth studies regarding the appropriate number of tables to be placed in a restaurant. For example, a restaurant destined for use as a pizzeria, with a traditional wood burning oven that can handle 8 pizzas, should not accommodate more than 50 place settings (also known in the trade as covers). The cycle of production

simply does not permit the serving of more people owing to the typology of the restaurant. Having more covers would only subject the clients to longer wait times, which directly negates the choice of pizzeria for those diners who wish to get in and out faster. The optimal standard in terms of the table layout of a restaurant dictates that the surface area devoted to the public should be 50 percent of the total; that is, equal to the total space dedicated to preparation and service. However the reality is usually very far from that ratio. Not to mention the fact that most restaurateurs unfailingly try to squeeze in as many tables as possible, as if just by existing these tables have the magic power to generate customers. In my opinion this is not only an illusion, but a fatal error. So just how many tables should a restaurant have then? It is generally recognized that a comfortable dining room will assign approximately 1.2 square meters per person (about 10 square feet). Therefore a 100 square meter (900 square foot) dining room should accommodate about 80 people. But the calculation is quite a bit more sophisticated because the type of establishment, service style, menu and naturally the expectation generated by a larger space involve psychological and sociological factors that go beyond functionality. Still, if we agree that running a restaurant is an entrepreneurial activity that should be productive, we must apply the universally accepted concept of fluidity, or the ability to function smoothly without interruptions to service or delays, and this requires flexibility. Using this model restaurateurs should work in a harmonious and coordinated way when setting up their kitchen (from whence it all begins), service style, and restaurant layout without neglecting storage space, clarity of pathways of those in charge of the wait staff right up to farsighted table service. Everything should be designed in terms of fluidity both in terms of kitchen and service in order to keep to a minimum unnecessary and irritating long wait times for clients.

ANGELO TAMBURINI