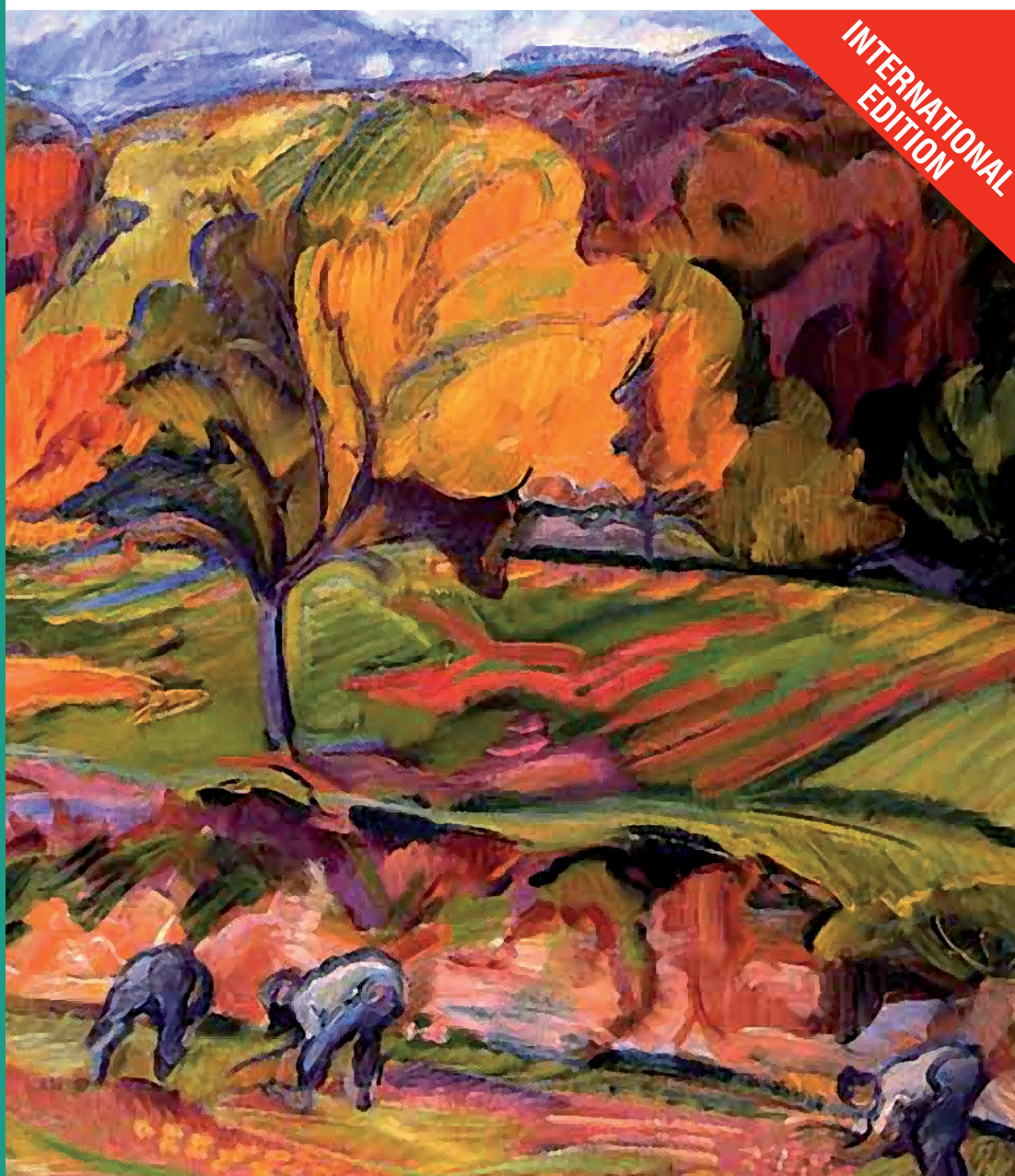


# CIVILTÀ TAVOLA

ACCADEMIA ITALIANA DELLA CUCINA



**ACCADEMIA ITALIANA DELLA CUCINA**

A CULTURAL INSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ITALY  
FOUNDED IN 1953 BY ORIO VERGANI

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## L'ACCADEMIA ITALIANA DELLA CUCINA

FOUNDED IN 1953 BY ORIO VERGANI  
AND LUIGI BERTETT, DINO BUZZATI TRAVERSO,  
CESARE CHIODI, GIANNINO CITTERIO,  
ERNESTO DONÀ DALLE ROSE, MICHELE GUIDO FRANCI,  
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DINO VILLANI, EDOARDO VISCONTI DI MODRONE,  
WHIT MASSIMO ALBERINI AND VINCENZO BUONASSISI.

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On the cover: graphic detail of the work *Paesaggio* (1907-1910) by Nicholas Tarkhof. On exhibition at the Museum of the Petit Palais in Geneva.



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### **SECOND VICE PRESIDENT**

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Secretary of the President's Council: Renzo Rizzi

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(members-elect appear in italics)

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# Paolo Petroni President

*The election of the Academic Council, the Board of Auditors and the Arbitration Board was won by the list presented by the outgoing President's Council.*

BY SILVIA DE LORENZO

**T**he Academy has rewarded the deep knowledge of the organization, the vast gastronomic culture, the dedication and passion poured into constant work for the betterment of our institution as a collegial body, for respecting the rules and strengthening its authority, through his action as Secretary General, President of the Marenghi Study Center and principal officer of the Academic Library. The Delegates' Assembly was opened by outgoing President Giovanni Ballarini, who thanked the large number of participants: "Testimony" - he said - "of the vitality and dedication of the Academy".

He stressed that following seven years as President, "it is necessary that others take over the leadership of the Academy in a society that is going through a phase of intense transformation of which cuisine is an important manifestation and reflection". Ballarini pointed out that in his editorials published in the Academy's magazine he tried to advance a set of principles to stimulate the evolution of the Academy, along "a path marked by two aspects that I wish to call to your attention". The first was brought up in September 2007 at the time that Ballarini took over the presidency, i.e. the *visibility of the Academy*,

*as a means and not an end*: "It is a very serious contemporary theme in a booming society offering a spectacle that is more and more empty and an end in itself, even in its cuisine and gastronomy". While a strong temptation exists, what is missing is the fact that "A true and lasting visibility can be built exclusively through solid research and cultural investigation". The second aspect, connected to the first, was emphasized in the last editorial in the magazine, by pointing out that any academy claiming such status must discuss and deepen the study of the "cultural objectives", as we are called upon to do in our institu-



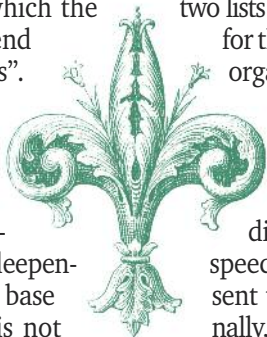


tion as was intended by its founding fathers. Cultural research does not equate with ephemeral and more or less theatrical manifestations in which the prevailing visibility as an end in itself can prove ruinous".

Giovanni Ballarini closed his remarks with a wish: "I am confident that our Academy will be able to face new and future problems with a culturally ever deepening effort that should be the base of any development that is not ephemeral but concrete and lasting".

A standing ovation brought to a close the farewell speech to the Academy by the outgoing President.

It was a long day indeed, with the election of the President the first order of business. The notary Stefano Faucci took over, assisted by the verifiers Basili, Diomede, Larco, Mattioni, Spezia and Tuccillo.



Twenty-four Delegates were entitled to speak and declare their preferences. For the first time in the history of the Academy two lists of candidates were presented for the renewal of the institutional organs: the first was suggested by the President's Council with Paolo Petroni as candidate to the presidency. The second one presented as its candidate Antonio Caprarica. Their speeches were intended to represent their respective positions. Finally, the two candidates addressed the assembly.

Antonio Caprarica began his remarks by thanking Giovanni Ballarini for his input as a "serious scholar" in the management of the Academy. He then justified his candidacy as called for at a time when the spirit of internal friendship seems to have been lost. Along these lines, he cited an aphorism attributed to Winston



Churchill: "Italians lose war like football matches, and football matches like wars". He went on to explain the significance of the term "visibility" in his program: unlike a talk show, the intent is to make it known outside what is intended



## ACCADEMIA ITALIANA DELLA CUCINA ISTITUZIONE CULTURALE DELLA REPUBBLICA ITALIANA

*Cena di Benvenuto  
Venerdì 29 Maggio 2015  
Ristorante Sabatini*

*Primo*

*Degustazione di Tarese Valdarno - Ditta Fabbrini  
Premio Dino Villani 2013*

*Crostini di fegatini, bruschetta con pomodoro,  
pecorino di fossa, finocchiona, salame toscano,  
salsiccia di cinta senese*

*Primo*

*Ribollita*

*Primo*

*Crespelle alla fiorentina*

*Primo*

*Arista intera al forno,  
fagioli all'uccelletto e verdure saltate*

*Primo*

*Tegamino di trippa gratinata*

*Primo*

*Zuppa inglese alla Sabatini*

*Primo*

*Vini:*

*Prosecco di benvenuto Valdobbiadene millesimato  
Chianti Classico riserva Sabatini 2012*



## ACCADEMIA ITALIANA DELLA CUCINA ISTITUZIONE CULTURALE DELLA REPUBBLICA ITALIANA

*Pranzo di Lavoro  
Sabato 30 Maggio 2015  
Grand Hotel Baglioni*

*Primo*

*Coppa di spumante di benvenuto*

*Primo*

*Ravioli ricotta e spinaci  
con salsa di asparagi e ricotta salata*

*Primo*

*Guancialino di vitello in peposo*

*Patate maché*

*Fagioli Sorana all'olio*

*Primo*

*Macedonia di frutta con gelato*

*Primo*

*Caffè*

*Primo*

*Vini:*

*Chianti classico Pietrafitta 2010*



by the role of the Academy as a cultural institution. He mentioned Gualtiero Marchesi, an authority in the gastronomic field, as someone who would not recognize the Academy for its cultural values. (What follows is an observation by the writer of this report: "Marchesi was sitting at the table of the speakers together with President Ballarini and the member of the National Council Gianni Fossati, as a participant in the meeting organized by the Braidense National Library on the occasion of the 2014 show *Cards on the Table*. In addition, Marchesi is the Dean of the ALMA International School of Cuisine that a month ago assigned awards to the Italian members of the Académie Internationale de la Gastronomie"). Finally, Antonio Caparica expressed his wish of new vitality for the Academy.

Paolo Petroni opened his remarks recapping his long Academic life during which he worked actively for the evolution of the Academy. He dwelled on the procedures for electing the President in an increasingly democratic fashion, on the changes made to the Statute and By-laws in order to make them more responsive to the Academy and society as they evolve, and on the election of the Delegates that is made by the President's Advisory Board so that the Delegations run smoothly. He stated that he was in agreement with a competition for the presidency while at the same time giving due importance to experience and competence in the gastronomic field. He went on to scrutinize the program of Antonio Caparica and an exchange of e-mail messages that made him "disconcerted" because such e-mails debased the role played by President Ballarini over the course of years. On the contrary, Petroni felt that the President played a role as "engine" for the Academy and that for this reason he should be named Honorary President. Refer-

  
**ACCADEMIA ITALIANA DELLA CUCINA**  
Fondata Da Orio Vergani Nel 1953  
Istituzione Culturale Della Repubblica Italiana

## XVI ASSEMBLEA ORDINARIA DEI DELEGATI

FIRENZE CAPITALE

Banquet en l'honneur du Président



FLORENCE  
PALAZZO VECCHIO, SALONE DEI CINQUECENTO

ring to Caprarica's call for younger Academicians to enter the Academy, he advanced his idea that such youthful renewal cannot be based on introducing cheaper quotas but on the admission of young people who are truly interested in gastronomic culture.

Petroni concluded by describing his dream. It too revolves around higher visibility for the Academy, which does not call for appearing more often and at any cost on television, but for following the example of the path set forth by the Founding Fathers who led the Academy and preserved it from blandishments, personal obsessions and political and economic entanglements so that it could remain vital and constantly up to date. Once the speeches were completed, the Delegates were called to vote. Two hundred eleven votes were cast (the highest number in an Academy election). Besides the President, all members of the institutional organs were standing for

election, including the members of the President's Council, with the exception of those were appointed, of the Board of Auditors and the Arbitration Board. The counting of votes took more than an hour in a tense atmosphere of waiting until the notary announced the election of Paolo Petroni, who garnered 118 votes as opposed to 89 for Caprarica. A long warm applause dissipated the tension that had built up.

Showing his emotion and happiness, the President received the emblem from former President Ballarini in an ideal passage of the testimonial as a symbol of love, passion and dedication to the Academy. Paolo Petroni thanked his supporters and pledged that the votes that went to the other candidate will not be lost but will represent a valuable incentive to continue to work together. Petroni and Caprarica then shook hands on the podium to general applause.

While the notary and the vote counters continued their task relevant to the election of other institutional organs, a large number of Academicians walked to the restaurant of the Baglioni Hotel where they enjoyed a working luncheon that offered glorious view of the Brunelleschi dome and Giotto campanile. The previous evening they had taken part in a welcome dinner in the Florentine tradition at the *Sabatini* restaurant.

The session restarted with the announcement of the election of the members of the President's Advisory Board (Consulta) and of those of the Board of Auditors and the Arbitration Board. Right afterward, the President's Consulta was officially installed along with the seating of the President's Council. The election of the new President was celebrated that evening in the magnificent *Salone dei Cinquecento* in the Palazzo Vecchio. This extraordinary location for the celebration was granted





by the Florence City Hall to the Academy in recognition of its cultural role in the society. The Deputy Mayor and Council member for Education, University and Research Cristina Giachi congratulated

Paolo Petroni and expressed her appreciation of the institution for the activities of the Academy in safeguarding the traditions of Italian cuisine through a capillary presence in the national territory. The President of the Council of Ministers, Matteo Renzi, unable to participate to the event, sent a message of greeting and good wishes.

The guests took part in the singing of the Mameli Hymn, the Italian national anthem, which stirred the emotions of all Delegates. It was then up to the folkloric group Madonna Fiorentina to stage a refined elegant show of Renaissance dances. Paolo Petroni addressed the Delegates at the start of the banquet to thank them for their warm endorsement and to introduce the new President's Council. The dinner was served in the sumptuous hall, one of the largest and most beautiful in Italy, featuring art works by famous

artists including a Michelangelo statue and the ceiling frescoed by Vasari. The elegant menu reproduced, both in the graphics and in the courses served, that of a dinner given by King Victor Emanuel in 1865 when Florence was the capital of Italy. Taking a leaf from that occasion, President Petroni presented as a gift to the Delegates a valuable little volume, an reprint of the *Popular Practical Guide to Florence*, written for all the government personnel that had to relocate from Turin. The Guide featured the new capital, its customs, its lifestyle, prices, the local glossary of names, and a great deal more in use in Florence. Finally, the quartet "Firenze Classica" entertained the audience with a repertory of patriotic and Risorgimento music, wrapping up the performance with the celebrated *Va Pensiero* by Giuseppe Verdi.

SILVIA DE LORENZO





# Giovanni Ballarini Honorary President

*The newly nominated members of the Consulta, in addition to electing the President's Council, were called upon to deliberate some important proposals.*



**T**he new Academic Consulta met for the first time under the presidency of Paolo Petroni, who opened the meeting by conferring lapel emblems to the new members: Victor Pablo Dana, Salvino Leoni, Adriana Liguori Proto, Guido Mascioli, Franco Milli and Renzo Rizzi. The President expressed his pride in the mission entrusted to him, which represents a choice for continuity after his seven years in the role of Secretary General. He then reaffirmed the aspects that he intends to focus on during his presidency: among others, increasing the prestige and visibility of the Academy, following the pattern established by previous Presidents. A serious path that is not influenced by politics or parochial interests, but one that will lead the Academy to become a major reference point in Italian gastronomy. And in the pursuit of such objectives

he counts on the valuable assistance of the new Consulta.

Paolo Petroni once again thanked Giovanni Ballarini for honoring the Academy through his sense of culture and democracy over the course of his seven years as President, and he proposed that he be nominated as Honorary President. In this case the procedure requires that Ballarini resign from the Consulta. He did so with his characteristic tone of “the serious and the playful”. He pointed out that life membership in the “Academic Body”, as envisioned by Orio Vergani, was all well and good in the 1950s when life expectancy was considerably lower. Today it must be reconsidered, and the current Consulta is divided between appointed life members and elected members. In the spirit of Academic collaboration, Ballarini asked that they accept his resignation in order to make space for a new member.

Once seated, the new Consulta (see p. 2) expressed unanimity in favor of the nomination of Giovanni Ballarini as Honorary President. They also unanimously voted to make Sergio Corbino a life member of the Consulta. They then proceed to the selection of the team that will comprise the President's Council (see p. 2).

President Petroni then put before the Consulta two problems requiring an urgent solution, proposing changes in two articles of the current By-Laws. The first regards a term of Article 2 concerning the Regional Study Centers. The proposal is that the nomination of the Director and members of the RSC be within the purview of the President of the “Franco Marengi” Study Center, with previous

consultation with the Delegate in whose territory the Delegation lies, and with the Regional Coordinator, who is a automatically a member of the RSC, even though he is not eligible to carry out the role of Director of the RSC.

The change was unanimously approved by the Consulta.

The second issue submitted to the Consulta members concerned Article 17, requesting modification of paragraph 1, suggesting that the minimal number of members of a Delegation abroad be reduced from 12 to 9. Paragraph 5, instead, introduces a novelty: in a case where the members of a Delegation abroad is fewer than 9, rather than closing it, the Delegation may be transformed into a Legation. To that end a new Paragraph, 7 was inserted that outlines the duties of the Legate (nominated by the President and the President's Council). As a representative of the Academy abroad those duties may be shared with permanent (not honorary) Academicians. The Legate does not have all the rights or duties of a Delegate and his/her appointment can be revoked by the President at any time. Paolo Petroni also explained that a Legation will be formed only if there are no other Delegations in the territory. The modifications to Article 17 were approved by the Consulta, with the only abstention by Paolo Basili.

The President concluded the meeting expressing his plan to call for a Forum halfway through his term to assess the progress of the program's objectives and discuss the life of the Academy. (S.D.L.)





# The inventor of cuisine on television

*Uniting culinary talent and fascinating stories of the history of gastronomy, Raymond Oliver transformed slaving over a hot stove into entertainment.*

BY LEJLA MANCUSI SORRENTINO  
*Academician, Naples-Capri Delegation  
"F. Marengi" Study Center*

Enough! We can't take it any more... our cup overfloweth! Every time you turn on the TV, at any time of the day or night you see someone cooking, dispensing gastronomic advice or demonstrating recipes that are, to say the least, outlandish. Often dispensed with great pomposity, as if the fate of the human race rested in the chef's hands and his cooking is the most important thing in the world. Certainly eating is one of man's essential needs, but making the preparation of a dish into the dominant theme of a television show is surely an exaggeration. Almost to the extent of the obligatory glut of soccer games, scheduled in such a way as to have at least one game on every day of the week. The days are

long gone when festive or favorite dishes were reserved for special occasions or holidays, and when all the soccer teams played at the same time, and only on Sunday. There's no escaping it: cooks and soccer players have become the protagonists of our television time almost as much as, or maybe even more than, the useless and boring political debates - yet another focus, perhaps the most painful, of every television channel.

I don't know anything about soccer or politics, nor am I interested in either. However my interest has been piqued by the overdose of cooking shows on television: when did this start? Who was the first person to come up with the idea of transforming slaving over a hot stove into entertainment? Who was





the happy but unintentional genius behind this vertiginous carousel of pots, pans and plates? Because he certainly could not have imagined such a frenetic - and lucrative - development would be born of his brilliant intuition just ten years later.

And so I did my research and am able to reveal that the true pioneer of television cooking shows broadcast live from the kitchens of his celebrated Paris restaurant *Grand Véfou* at the Palais-Royal was none other than Raymond Oliver, whom the world press of the time cited as the most famous chef in Europe. Starting in 1953 every Monday evening at 7:30 he appeared on French television screens to star in a program entitled "*Art and Magic in the Kitchen*", with the help of the first female newscaster of French TV, the blond Catherine Langeais (screen name of Marie-Louise Terrasse). The show met with immediate success. His culinary ability together with the verve of his monologue made him irresistible. And thus began the love story between television and cuisine, destined to survive the test of time. The show made Oliver more popular than an actor from the *Comédie Française* or stage or screen star. His secret lay in marrying procedure with culture because the execution of a recipe was always liberally seasoned with fascinating stories about gastronomic history. In an interview conducted with a chronicler of the time, the famous chef declared that cooking "face to face with the public" was anything but easy because it required a special technique. In

order to be able to appear at ease, he spent hours practicing before a mirror, studying the image of his hands in the reflection so that he could coordinate his words with his gestures in perfect synchrony. Finally after practicing for several months he became completely ambidextrous and was able to execute the necessary maneuvers - breaking an egg, for instance - without ever looking at his hands, although he would sometimes glance at the monitor while he entertained his audience with information about the dish he was preparing. His passion for his work, his innate curiosity and his desire to expand on any subject made him a truly refined expert in his field, also thanks to the rich collection of books on cooking and cuisine that he had collected over the years, covering every era and every place. His collection was one of the best in the world and the incunabula it contained rendered it priceless.

He was born in Langon in 1909 and following in the footsteps of his father he began his culinary training in the kitchens of the hotel owned by his family, where he learned all the secrets of the art of French cooking, and his dream was to achieve fame in the field. After having several important experiences both in France and abroad, in 1948 he became partners with Louis Vaudable, owner of *Maxim's*, in order to re-launch *Le Grand Véfou* which was having great difficulty in the post-war period. He gave back the luster to that ancient restaurant that had opened its doors in 1784. Under his management it soon achieved success

and was frequented by luminaries of the time including Colette and Jean Cocteau. Within a short time it became the meeting point for French society's finest. Oliver's fame went beyond the confines of his own country; He was sought after by the richest and most powerful men in the world, and invited to all the capitals of Europe, America, Africa and Australia to create memorable meals at the exclusive and prestigious banquets and extraordinary fairy-tale parties of high society, where he dispensed refined and original gastronomic delicacies with his unique and inimitable talent. He was defined as world ambassador of French cuisine, owing to his vast knowledge of the subject and lively sense of humor. He was often invited to hold conferences abroad, so much so that in the 1950s he was included in a list of the ten most famous men in France, according to a statistic cited in an American newspaper.

He wrote many books on food, including *Gastronomie à travers le monde* (1963), *Cuisine pour mes amis* (1976) *Les Amis de Véfou* (1983) and the truly comprehensive treatise *La Cuisine*, whose latest edition was updated in 1983. He died in 1990, but he left his television legacy in good hands, those of his son Michel, who continued the show using the same formula that worked so well for his father.

If today's TV chefs had even one-third of Oliver's culture and talent, we would all certainly be delighted to watch each and every program.

LEJLA MANCUSI SORRENTINO

## THE ACADEMY SILVER PLATE



*Large, elegant and silver-plated, with the Academy's logo embossed on the front. This symbolic object is the recommend gift to be presented to those restaurants visited by the Delegations whose atmosphere, service, and cuisine are deemed particularly worthy. For further information and orders, Delegates should contact the Secretariat in Milan ([segretaria@accademia1953.it](mailto:segretaria@accademia1953.it)).*



# From the written recipe to televised cuisine

*The process of executing a recipe can now be followed on the television screen. What is the relationship with traditional written recipes?*

BY GIOVANNI BALLARINI  
*Academician, Parma Delegation*

Recipes, recipes and more recipes! There is a veritable inundation of them in our cookbooks, newspapers, magazines and television shows of every kind imaginable, and they are increasingly prominent in novels and books of all genres. Everyone writes recipes these days, recalling mothers and grandmothers that sometimes exist only in their imaginations. Then there are those recipes offered by the most unlikely people, including politicians, singers and many others, which at best are hit or miss.

This orgy of recipes, including the most far-fetched ones seems to constitute an endless culinary fireworks show, even if it may foreshadow the end of increasingly fatuous culinary season in which the recipe is losing its original meaning, becoming the instrument of a new era of communications that is simultaneously vacuous and theatrical. In this context we have the written recipe, which often is accompanied or replaced by an audiovisual recording of the culinary process. As an indicator, one needs only look at the specialized programs on television, YouTube, or anywhere on the Internet. A huge number of people these days are cooking by following the instructions that they watch on a TV or computer. Whether we like it or not, we must recognize that we are moving from a cuisine based on written recipes to one prerecorded and on our TVs and computers.

How and when was the written recipe - whose eclipse we are beginning to see - born? Even the recipe has an ancestor that dates back to the time when there was only an on-the-spot oral or visual

explanation, or at most a quick synthesized description, as in the Roman treatise attributed to Apicius.

The word recipe is of medieval pharmaceutical origin, and means “take” or “receive”. The word was used when the physician, or *magister*, indicated to the pharmacist which drugs to use, how to prepare according to his instructions, whether they were potions, salves, electuaries or other forms of medicine. [translator’s note: the Italian word for recipe and prescription are the same - *ricetta*]. Many prescriptions of the past ended with the abbreviation S.A. (Secondo Arte) because the pharmacist already know what he should do. Similarly, the majority of recipes from the distant past were merely lists of ingredients, but seldom included the quantity and procedure apart from vague references, for example “to make pie” or “as a dip”, leaving the execution up to the culinary ability of the preparer, leaving plenty of room for interpretation. Only rarely were cooking times specified, and they were often indicated in terms of the time it took to recite a prayer or paternoster. Thus it was extremely difficult, if not impossible, to determine the “original recipe”, because in most cases it was just a generic culinary model, open to interpretation in a great variety of ways, just like a myth that, like all myths, always has an infinite diversity of expression. But over time written recipes became more precise and as society became more technical and scientific, the importance of the “artistic” capability of the preparer diminished, not just in terms of quantities but in the way they were executed. At one time the inherent limits of just how





much could be communicated in a recipe were overcome by example, whereas today they are overcome by the image of the process that has been recorded and appears on a television, computer screen or tablet. Does this constitute progress or regression? In the opinion of this writer, both.

Having recipes that are increasingly precise, uniform and technically correct is undoubtedly progress. However the loss of the capacity to interpret the ingredients, which are always different, means going backward. Another regression is the loss of creativity or inventiveness, and worst of all, the disappearance of the great variety of ways of preparing a dish according to local or familial customs that developed from a single model.

There are no longer subtle differences in sauces from one place or family to another. There is simply the recorded version, which is the same everywhere. The impact on the evolution of taste is also negative, as the dominant flavor becomes increasingly uniform, globalized, and even in some cases "industrialized". Be it an advantage or a disadvantage, the use of visually recorded recipes should be considered in the general context of current and future means of communication. Are recorded recipes only one of the many expressions of the modern information society or are they merely a trend, or even an impulsive "great leap backward"? What will be their ultimate relationship with traditional written recipes? Rather than making

difficult predictions, it is important to pay attention to how often it takes place and with what results? In this case, the most reasonable approach is to closely follow the phenomenon, while hoping that no matter what, the memory of tradition is preserved and improved upon. In this orientation it may be useful to consider to what degree this is also happening in music, which after a long period of imitative tradition, followed by a phase in which co-written music dominated, in more recent times we have seen music performed and recorded live, which coexists very well with written music but unlike it its creative improvisations can be easily documented, transmitted and diffused.

GIOVANNI BALLARINI

## GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE MAGAZINE

*Academics' contributions to the magazine are not only welcome, but essential. However Academics should keep in mind some important guidelines so that their contributions, which are the fruit of their passion and dedication, are expeditiously published.*

● **Articles:** it is essential that the **text of articles be sent via email**, in MS Word format (not pdf) to the following address: [redazione@accademia1953.it](mailto:redazione@accademia1953.it)

● **Article length:** it is important that articles are **between 3,500 and 7,000 characters** (including spaces); this is the best way to avoid cuts that are bothersome for both the editors and those submitting the texts. All computers should be able to provide character counts..

● Each issue of the magazine is printed one month ahead of the cover date so that it can be delivered to the Academics by that date. Those submissions that are time sensitive should be sent in ample time.

● **"From the Delegations" Section:** In order to facilitate reading, please **limit articles to a maximum of 2,500 characters including spaces.**

● Please remember that in the "From the Delegations" section as well as elsewhere, **descriptions of meetings held outside the territory of the Delegation or in the homes of Academics, unless they are associated with an important event, will not be published.** Also, **please do not include a list of dishes and wines.** Such listing should appear on the appropriate rating form regarding convivial meetings.

● **Rating forms for convivial meetings:** should be sent to the Secretariat ([segreteria@accademia1953.it](mailto:segreteria@accademia1953.it)). It is also important to limit remarks in the "notes and comments" section of the form to **800 characters** (maximum 1,000) spaces included in order to avoid cuts. Rating forms that reach the Secretariat more than 30 days after the event will be discarded.

● We also request that you not submit reports on convivial meetings held **outside the territory of the Delegation**, or that take place in the **homes of Academics**, or are otherwise not held in restaurants or public venues, as they will not be published.

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# The colors of fish

*There are many - more than 25,000 - edible species of fish, but only a few hundred are used in cuisine.*

BY ALFREDO PELLE

*Accademician, Apuana Delegation,  
"F. Marengi" Study Center*

These denizens of the sea are sometimes named for their color: there is a "white" fish, one of those prized breeds that are served at home or at a restaurant as if they were a great "treasure"; and there are "blue" fish, which in spite of every effort to make them more appreciated, remain among the least popular of fish. And while it is true that there are some who adore some nice grilled sardines or porgy, or some to-die-for fried anchovies, myself among them, as a rule these types of fish are classified as "food of the poor", as if we can differentiate between the social classes of fish consumption.

And it is true that since the most remote of ancient times these varieties have provided people, especially those living along the coasts, with one of the foods richest in nutrients. It is also true that

after the great successes of the Greeks and Romans, they continued to be prized up to the Middle Ages. Religious beliefs that encouraged "lean" eating incentivized the consumption of fish, especially during Lent and on fast days. We should also recall that the fish was adopted by Jesus's earliest followers as a symbol of Christ, thanks to the fact that his name in Greek, *ἰχθύς* corresponded with the initials of the expression "Jesus Christ the Son of God our Savior". It played an important role in the iconography of early Christianity, including its link with the miracle of the multiplication of bread and fishes. In those times in particular, fresh water fish was especially popular because fishing it required a relatively low investment and more basic technology. Several centuries later, the maritime Republics, especially Venice, held these





fish in great esteem because of their nutritional value. The government of *La Serenissima* exercised strict control over the fish market at Rialto, and vendors who sold fish that was not fresh faced severe penalties. Then its consumption slowly declined, leaving a vacuum that would be filled by meat, always considered to be a noble food destined for the tables of the rich and powerful. An important reason for this was the difficulty in controlling the amount of time between the fish



being caught and its cooking, as it is a product that quickly deteriorates. That problem no longer exists and modern widespread distribution of fresh and refrigerated fish allows consumers to have choices that once were not possible. What is our relationship with fish? The situation is definitely improving: every Italian eats about 23 kilos (51 lbs.) of fish each year (still very little when you consider the extent of the Italian coastline), and that amount is continually going up. And what kind of fish, exactly, do we eat? We must consider some facts. The amount of wild Mediterranean fish that we consume only constitutes 10 percent of the total. The rest is farmed or comes from the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. In fact, our own Mediterranean is miserly with the little fish it still contains: even 30 years ago, Fernand Braudel wrote that “the waters of the Mediterranean are poor and the total amount of fish it we get it represents only one-third that of Norway alone”. He called the Mediterranean a “thrifty nutritional source”! In reality, there are more than 25,000 edible species of fish, but only a few hundred are used in cuisine. And there are two fronts on the battlefield of fish: fish farmed in seawater (primarily gilthead bream) with the goal of reducing deep

dragline fishing that is destroying the sea bottoms. Today it is possible to fish at a depth of 600 meters (1,970 feet). Italy has also been successful in farming turbot, especially the spiked variety. Since this species doesn’t survive temperatures higher than 16 degrees C (61 F) it is almost impossible to farm it in the Mediterranean. Therefore they have resorted to the construction of basins, over 50 meters deep (164 feet) where the water temperature can be maintained at a constant appropriate level. Since the marketing of fish is based on values that are more or less constant (even though the complex world of the fish and fish products market has risen drastically, now reaching astronomic heights, close to 90 billion dollars a year) its consumption is also on the rise.

The increased use of fish in cuisine is also attributable to home cooks’ increased concern over nutritional value as opposed to just alimentation. Today food is increasingly classified in terms of its nutrition. And certainly its increased availability everywhere, from supermarkets to fish markets to seaside food trucks and vendors (which had all but disappeared due to the preponderance of frozen and pre-cooked foods) has made fish a food that is making ever more frequent appearances on our

tables. Even seafood restaurants, once limited to places near the seashore (we still have the erroneous impression that we can always find fresh fish near the coast) have discovered that fish is an essential item on their menus and the demand for it continues to rise. Fresh water fish, except for farm-raised trout, has all but disappeared from our tables. Carp, chub, pike and catfish are almost impossible to find today. There are still some lake fish to be found in some restaurants, but relatively few. What will the future hold?

A call of alarm is rising from our oceans and rivers: many fish are at risk of extinction. Our fish reserves are not infinite or renewable. Industrial fishing is not without fault, especially owing to its practice of indifferent deep dragline fishing.

Water, be it fresh or salt, will reflect humankind’s behavior on *terra firma*. None of the water quality problems that afflict our seas, rivers and lakes - their temperature, density, health and even survival of their fish, originate with the water itself but only as a consequence of what happens on land and the way in which humans behave. We can only hope that human beings will become more responsible in terms of the “well being” in the future, respecting this silent world that brings us good and healthy foods - a world that occupies almost 70 percent of our planet.

Mankind must understand the “regeneration of resources” also applies to the marine populations, and we must become responsible participants. It is essential that we return to “sustainability” by creating marine reserves, establishing and respecting catch quotas rather than turning a blind eye. And we had better do it soon, because “he who sleeps catches no fish”!

**ALFREDO PELLE**





# An uniquely italian invention: the veal paillard

*A light-hearted mocking of a slice of meat, inevitably dry and stringy, that recalls little of the pleasures of life.*

BY CLAUDIO NOVELLI

*Academician, Naples-Capri Delegation*

Do you remember back in the day when you tried to impress a girl on an increasingly tight weekly budget you could manage to scrape together enough money to allow you, with prudence, to take your “Beatrice” to a good - not a 5 star but decent and popular - restaurant rather than the usual corner pizzeria? Unfortunately sometimes the first dark cloud appeared on the horizon just as soon as you were seated: the “I’ll just have mineral water” did not bode well. And when the waiter approached, those clouds became cumulous, a dark omen of the distressing delusion that would soon follow. He didn’t even both to ask “what would you like to order?” but went straight to the fateful “Fish or meat?” The girl blows him off with “prosciutto and cantaloupe and then a small *paillard* well done. Extremely uncomfortably we re-

sist the temptation of other more tantalizing dishes and find refuge in an economical dish of fried calamari followed by an equally low cost plate of *penne*. “So calamari and *penne* for the gentleman and prosciutto and melon and a nice *paillardina* for the young lady”. And so we began to hate that “nice *paillardina*”. Where did this gastronomic abomination come from?

In his *Cuoco gentiluomo*, Livio Cerini di Castegnate referred to the preparation of a “slice of veal on the grill” as follows: “We have arrived at that thing that Italians have called a “*paillard*” for fifty years. I cannot testify in court that this word does not exist in France, but it certainly is not part of common usage”. The *Larousse Gastronomique* says: “referring to a dish created by Paillard, the name ‘*paillard*’ came to be used to refer to a thin slice of veal that has been

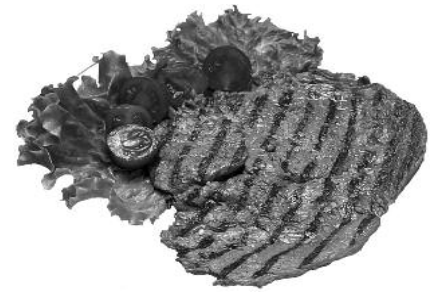




flattened and either roasted or sautéed in a pan. In France this term is obsolete but it is still used in Italy to refer to veal *scaloppine*. Similar to veal *piccata*, but it is not dredged in flour and requires some oil and a few drops of lemon.

At this point we should explain who Monsieur Paillard was. He was a famous 1800 Paris restaurateur. In 1880 the restaurant resurfaced at the corner of the Chaussée-d'Antin and Boulevard des Italiens as the new version of the 1850s restaurant opened by the Bignon brothers. In just a few years it was frequented by all of the European elite. Among the dishes that made it famous were "Archduke's chicken", "Georgette potatoes", veal sweetbreads with asparagus tips, "Cauchat fillet of sole", but above all a stuffed duck that rivaled the bloody rare one served at the *Tour d'Argent*. Eating all these rich foods with great frequency probably led several of the clients to experience some digestive problems. Consequently, our chef was forced to offer a dish that had little fat and a slight astringent effect. Paillard opened another of his luxury restaurants, the *Elisée Pavillon*, which everyone af-

fectionately referred to as the "*Little Paillard*". One small mystery: the edition of the *Larousse Gastronomique* that cites Paillard is the 2001 English version. The original French edition of 1938 refers to the "Georgette potatoes" stuffed with shrimp tails Nantua style and Chauchat fillet of sole and Archduke's chicken, but it makes absolutely no reference to Paillard or his *paillard*. In fact in all French dictionaries the word "*paillard*" is used exclusively as an adjective, synonymous with debauched, licentious and given to sexual excess. There is also such a thing as a "*paillard song*", which is nothing more than a bawdy song sung with friends, fraught with erotic and sexual allusions, frequently anti-clerical and almost always scatological. In Latin, "*gaudeamus igitur*" or "*in taberna quando sumus*". Not unlike the base origin of our word "*osteria*". Therefore the *paillard* is a light-hearted mocking of a slice of meat, inevitably dry and stringy, that recalls little of the pleasures of life. So tough and difficult to swallow that the Italian penchant for genius in turn gave birth to a dish worthy of a pediatric hospital: "meat



cooked on a plate". The undisputed protagonist, as always, is the usual slice of veal. It is made thus: heat a pot that is slightly smaller than the diameter of a plate and fill it halfway with water. Pound the meat until it resembles a slice of prosciutto, thin as a Host wafer. While waiting for the water to boil put the meat on a plate with a pinch of salt and the juice of a small lemon. Then place the plate with its contents over the pot, which has now begun to boil, and turn the meat a half dozen times during the 20 minutes required for cooking. To serve, drizzle with some olive oil and some more salt. The sickliest and weakest diner to whom you serve this soothing dish is guaranteed to hate you for the rest of his or her life.

CLAUDIO NOVELLI

## 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 Marengi" 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.

