

CIVILTÀ DELLA TAVOLA

ACCADEMIA ITALIANA DELLA CUCINA

INTERNATIONAL
EDITION



ACCADEMIA ITALIANA DELLA CUCINA
A CULTURAL INSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ITALY
FOUNDED IN 1953 BY ORIO VERGANI

www.accademia1953.it





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,
GIANNI MAZZOCCHI BASTONI, ARNOLDO MONDADORI,
ATTILIO NAVA, ARTURO ORVIETO, SEVERINO PAGANI,
ALDO PASSANTE, GIANLUIGIPONTI, GIÒPONTI,
DINOVILLANI, EDOARDO VISCONTIDI MODRONE,
WHIT MASSIMO ALBERINI AND VINCENZO BUONASSISI.

CIVILTÀ DELLA TAVOLA

ACCADEMIA ITALIANA DELLA CUCINA

INTERNATIONAL EDITION

DECEMBER 2013 / N. 255

EDITOR IN CHIEF
GIOVANNI BALLARINI

COPY EDITOR
SILVIA DE LORENZO

EDITORIAL SECRETARY
TILDE MATTIELLO

LAYOUT
SIMONA MONGIU

TRASLATOR
NICOLA LEA FURLAN

THIS ISSUE INCLUDES ARTICLES BY
Giovanni Ballarini,
Elisa Gloria Contaldi Iodice,
Silvia De Lorenzo, Alfredo Pelle,
Paolo Petroni.



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



Rivista associata
all'Unione Stampa
Periodica Italiana



TABLE OF CONTENTS



DEAR ACADEMICIANS...

- 2 Tradition and the Young
(*Giovanni Ballarini*)

FOCUS

- 4 What a good Academician
should never forget
(*Paolo Petroni*)

ACADEMY COUNCIL

- 5 The culinary tower
of Babel
(*Silvia De Lorenzo*)

CULTURE AND RESEARCH

- 7 The Christmas sweets
of Naples
(*Elisa Gloria Contaldi Iodice*)

- 9 Truffles:
the scent of the earth
(*Alfredo Pelle*)

"FRANCO MARENGHI" STUDY CENTER

- 8 The theme of the year: rice
(*SDL*)



On the cover:
detail from
Madonna of the Pomegranate.
Sandro Botticelli (1487).
Uffizi Gallery, Florence.



Tradition and the Young

Today the alimentary tradition is not simply handed down, but it is the object of a choice by the individual.

BY GIOVANNI BALLARINI

President of the Academy

Dear Academicians, some sociologists remind us that from the olden times onward, every generation that succeeds another, once it reaches maturity, ends up by calling its predecessor the “lost generation”.

It is not surprising that such an image lives on, inside and outside our Academy, in terms of how the manner of eating, the cuisine and the role of tradition are concerned.

It is a way of thinking that indeed is not surprising, but exacts a cost.

Many people spoke of the “lost generation”, referring to the fact that it cannot be recovered from a material point of view. Yet we cannot forget and least of all underestimate all that is happening in the behavior and style of food, from the additional perspective of the new make up of the family.

In terms of nutrition, the idea prevails that the young are uprooted in the realm of culture and values, and even unhinged by the great restaurant industry (i.e. fast food and panini dispensers) that is increasingly dominating the field.

The prevailing image of the young is a pessimistic one, at least among many Academicians. However, if we do not look for its causes, any other interpretation is impossible. This is central if we search for the meaning and value of tradition, of which our Academy sets itself as a custodian while it also strives to promote and favor improvements. But what kind of improvements?

Within this context, we must look at the wider picture that encompasses not just the discomfort but the actual condition of today’s youth and the way that tradition is looked at and “used”. As the sociologists are pointing out, the last generation, and even the one before that, display an alimentary identity that is not simply “transmitted” as happened in previous times, but is the object of a choice by the individual, who makes use of whatever he inherits from the cultural traditions as a range of possibilities leading to self development and to the respect that he claims along with the right to choose.

This does not mean that the past is worthless. The past is like a musical instrument within which notes are established but one decides “what kind of music to play” even with new scores and couplings that may appear “dissonant” to the older genera-

tion. That is not harmony, they say, while they should recognize that new assonances are being created.

The old societies transmitted cuisine with fixed rules, defined by “good manners”. The societies of the present day, including the newest generations, while imparting precious little, transmit alimentary freedom. In turn, it is important to note, this brings to the fore the concept of “freedom in the kitchen”.

The alimentary tradition does not consist in a jumble of values, norms and obligatory rituals to be received like “keys in hand” without a job or a certificate to hang on the wall at home or in a restaurant as it was done during a not so remote past (for many Academicians) and accepted as a duty. Whether we like it or not, tradition is becoming a universe of meanings, practices and suggestions through which we must orient ourselves and find a way to make choices.

All of this means that in the contemporary food scene we cannot avoid being swept up in a process meant to identify our eating style, that can evolve in complex fashion. With time, this can break down to a situation where “everybody has his own cuisine” that no longer identifies with the “authentic” cuisine based on regional, local or family traditions and free of personal influences.

Cuisine thus becomes a space where one can proceed with his own explorations and inroads and create experiences that stem from the need to discover oneself and to develop new

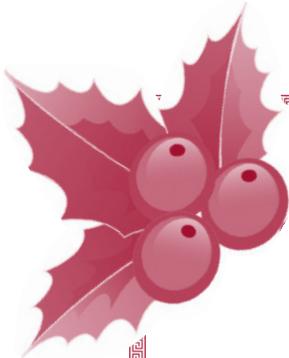


feelings. The cuisines of the young people are becoming new repositories of symbolic worlds, different from those of previous generations. If society, and most of all the social class, was once at the center of attraction, the key rule is now that decisions, even those concerning food, are not acceptable from other sources but are individual rights. Everybody builds his own sensorial system starting from the need to discover himself. The subject, that is the person, comes before tradition and the “good manners” of the table. The sensorial questions come ahead of the replies that traditions claimed to provide by decreeing what is good or

bad in our minds and therefore to eat. It is no longer the individual that puts himself at the service of tradition but it is tradition that must serve the individual and allow him to discover himself and satisfy his desire for happiness. Some will say: I don’t like it. Unfortunately for them, this is a fact and one can only register it. Once it has happened, the authority of traditions is no longer readily accepted. Traditions do not control the sources of legitimacy. They may be under the illusion that they can, but they must adapt in order to understand the new sensorial demands. In short, traditions themselves must change their way of

life and their very relationship with those agents that try to approach them. What is happening can be seen in part as an eclipse of cuisine, its culture, and of a Civilization of the Table. In large measure, this is the effect of the difficulties that many people of a generation in its twilight encounter as they try to understand the sensorial demands of the new generations, recalling the old and obsolete concept of the “lost generation”. If such a generation exists, it is not the generation of the young, but rather of the not-so-young or “age challenged” who are unable to get a life in the present time.

GIOVANNI BALLARINI



*On behalf of the President’s Council,
I extend warm wishes to all Academicians
for a Merry Christmas
and a Happy New Year.*

*In 2014 our Academy starts off another three score years
by showing great vitality in accommodating
the generational change.*

*I wish to thank all those who make academic life possible
and I extend a special wish to Tilde Mattiello who will be leaving
the Milan Secretariat after 42 years of valuable cooperation.*

PRESIDENT OF ACCADEMY
GIOVANNI BALLARINI

What a good Academician should never forget

Orio Vergani's wise counsel might have been written today. This goes to show that the founding principles of the Academy are still valid and constant in a changing world.

BY PAOLO PETRONI
Secretary General of the Academy

At the end of an Academic Year of great fervor and renewal of the editorial content and communications through the Internet we wish to take a good look at the situation, to talk about the many activities undertaken by our Delegations, about statistics that find us in good shape and about the new Delegations that sprung up around the world. In doing some research in our Library, located at Milan's Bicocca University, I came across a Decalogue written by Orio Vergani that was published in one of our early Bulletins distributed to the Delegations. We were struck by the up-to-date character of his suggestions and recommendations. Vergani was particularly attentive to the Restaurant Guide that was his creation and he exhorted every Academician to help make it complete and reliable. The first Restaurant Guide appeared in 1961. Unfortunately, our Founder did not live to see it as he passed just before its publication. The introduction states that the Guide was "conceived and pushed forward by Orio Vergani as a concrete example of the mission and objectives of our Academy". Let us read with great care his wise words and treasure them.

1. Publicize the seriousness of intent of our Academy and invite friends to participate.
2. Reject with indignation the commonplace definition of the Academician as someone gluttonous and intemperate. The gastronome is known for attention to quality and good taste not the quantity of food that he consumes.
3. Cooperate in the fight against the counterfeiting of foods and report suspected violations.
4. Contribute opinions and information frequently through the "Report Cards" about restaurants and trattorias visited, with a view to updating and better reflecting reality in the future issues of our publication: Guide to Restaurants and Trattorias of Italy.
5. Participate in the convivial meetings for a productive exchange of ideas and points of view on possible events to exalt the various regional cuisines.
6. Pay your yearly fees promptly to avoid creating problems for your Delegate and notify the Secretariat immediately of changes in your address.
7. Do not accept compromises over the cleanliness and decorum of all establishments, especially those located at the seashore or countryside and in resorts that are the most frequented by tourists. Be vigilant over the scrupulous fairness of prices for everyone, and particularly for outsiders.
8. Be good natured and tolerant toward others' opinions in matters of cuisine. The subject is a matter of opinion and is subjective. Nature did not dispense gustative pillae to all men in equal measure, quality or quantity.
9. Do not demand preferential treatment in an ostentatious fashion. If the owner of an establishment is intelligent, once he is made aware that you are a member of the Academy, he will know that it is in his interest to host you.
10. Find some respite in the thought that in a range of sensations, the pleasures of the table are the first that we experience and the last ones that take leave of us, provided that we use them with moderation.

THE ACADEMY SILVER PLATE



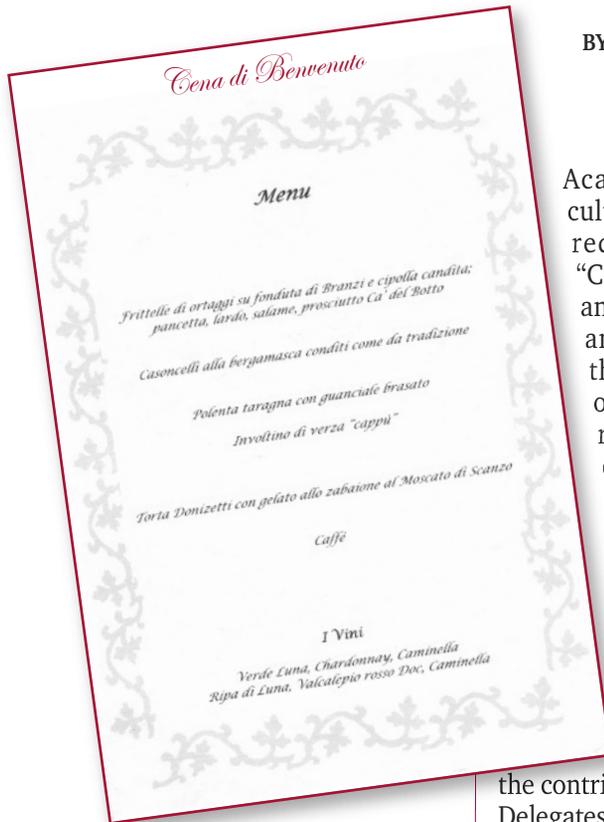
An elegant silver plated dish engraved with the Academy logo. This symbolic object may be presented to restaurants that display exceptional service, cuisine and hospitality. Delegates may contact the Milan Headquarters (segreteria@accademia1953.it) for more information and orders.



The culinary tower of Babel

The Fall meeting of the Academic Council took place in Bergamo. Many issues were discussed, and an interesting exchange of ideas ensued, characterized by an eye to the future.

BY SILVIA DE LORENZO



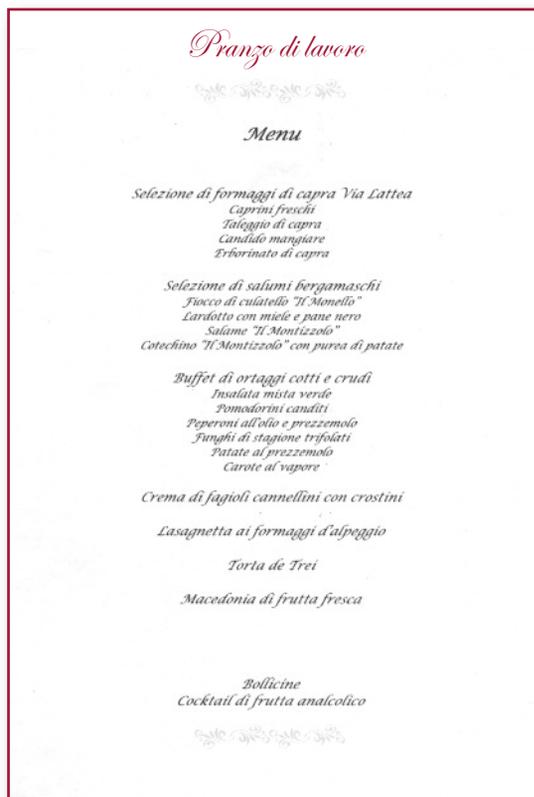
Does cuisine today still have a soul? This is the question that, after his opening remarks, president Giovanni Ballarini posed to members of the Consulta. We find ourselves before a difficult generational passage in which the way we eat is changing and where everyone is speaking a different language (molecular cuisine, local cuisine, zero kilometer, etc.). All these different languages are jumbled up together, creating a new sort of Tower of Babel that has nothing in common with the roots and traditions that are mentioned in Article 2 of the Academy's Statute. With this "culinary Tower of Babel" Italian cuisine is losing its soul and its identity. But that soul still exists within our

Academy because wherever culture is discussed and revered that spirit is nurtured. "Cultural sustenance" is alive and well in our organization and it is growing thanks to the contributions and ideas of its Presidents. Franco Marengi, for example, launched our editorial activities and created the Study Center. Giuseppe Dell'Osso helped us achieve official status as a Cultural Institution of the Italian Republic and established the Library. The Academy's cultural activities have also been enriched by

the contribution of Academicians and Delegates, many of whom, especially recent nominees, give life and vitality to the promotion of culture and conviviality. The many and complex issues surrounding Italian cuisine today and the blossoming of local and regional initiatives led President Ballarini to conclude his remarks by expressing his desire to institute a periodic Forum for a more in-depth exchange of ideas and suggestions. The modern academies that thrive today are those whose "soul is nurtured", and Secretary General Paolo Petroni raised the issue of this very cultural sustenance. He noted that the Academy seeks greater visibility through the employment of several instruments that it has at its disposal. First and foremost, the Delegations themselves are doing outstanding work, and this is important because

while the President's Council provides guidelines, the work on the ground is done through the many conferences, meetings and consciousness-raising conducted by the Delegations. Among the tools available to facilitate the Delegates' job of spreading Academic culture, the Secretary General continued, are several new initiatives. Our somewhat static and dated Internet Website is being retooled to be more dynamic (there will soon be a preview of some of the new pages) with real-time updates of restaurant rating cards and the inclusion of new Academicians in the carnet available in the section reserved for Delegates, who will have password access. (All of this of course is subject to approval by the President's Council.) The new design will also make information exchange with the Secretariat much faster.

Paolo Petroni then moved on the 2014 Guide to the Good Table, which will also be refurbished to make it more complete and easier to consult. First of all more and better information will be included such as telephone numbers and days closed, etc. This will also be the case with the online version, especially in light of the fact that over 100,000 people have downloaded the app. In addition, the printed version of the 2014 Guide to the Good Table will no longer carry photos of the restaurants, and will be printed only in two-color format as a cost saving measure. It will include a brief commentary on the restaurant and six dishes from its menu will be presented, as well as the specialty of



the house. The restaurants included in The Good Table will also appear in the online version (with the relevant number of temples awarded).

The interest generated by the many topics that were addressed by numerous presentations led the Secretary General to conclude: "It gives me great joy to see that the dedication of the Academy and its new initiatives has generated such enthusiasm." Before the attendees went back to work, the students of the ABF-CFP Bergamo cooking school were thanked for the efficiency, courtesy and promptness of their service during the coffee break.

The meeting of the Consulta resumed with the report by Treasurer Roberto Ariani. After having thanked his predecessor Giuseppe De Martino for having made his job an easy one by leaving impeccable records, Ariani presented the proposed 2014 budget, going over the items one by one. He also stated that the 2013 fiscal year will close with a positive balance. Gianni Limberti, President of the Board of Auditors, emphasized that the activities included in the 2014 proposal are in line with the Academy Statute and that the Board approves it. When put to a vote the Assembly unanimously approved the proposed budget.

Regional Coordinators also participated in the intensive

work of the Meeting. Alternating with members of the Consulta, they brought to bear their experience in field on several questions. First of all, everyone welcomed President Ballarini's suggestion (successively taken up by Paolo Petroni) for a Delegates' Forum: a new vehicle for the exchange of ideas. Such a forum could take place at a dedicated event, with a pre-established agenda. Several participants proposed extending the mandate to three years in order to assure a reasonable time to carry out new initiatives. There were many speeches in support of the renovation of the Website and the publication of the Guide to the Good Table. Attendees also expressed their appreciation for Academy publications and the Magazine, and supported the idea of the inclusion of the relative .pdf files on the site.

The Fall Meeting of the Consulta closed with the thanks of President Ballarini, who lauded the liveliness of the discussions, the plethora of new ideas and intelligent and valid contributions that "undoubtedly nourish the Academic soul".

At the conclusion of the meeting there was a luncheon at the Antico Ristorante del Moro, where the welcome dinner also took place the previous day. Chef Chicco Coria offered, among other things, a selection of goat cheese and salami from Bergamo, and he described their characteristics and production. In the afternoon there was a visit to the upper city of Bergamo with its splendid Piazza Vecchia and the little gem that is the Piazza Duomo. The outing was well organized by Delegate Lucio Piombi who had also accompanied the visitors that morning.

The evening concluded with an elegant gala dinner at the restaurant Taverna del Colleoni dell'Angelo, also in upper Bergamo, where chef Pierangelo Cornaro prepared a delicious and refined menu. At the end of dinner President Ballarini presented him with the Orio Vergani medal.



The Christmas sweets of Naples

An age-old tradition is alive and well in many homes, following time-tested recipes for such treats as sfogliatella.

BY ELISA GLORIA CONTALDI IODICE
Academician, Naples Delegation



Among all great traditional desserts of Naples, one stands above all: the “rococo”, made with almonds. They should be dense, almost hard, and can be eaten when dunked, making them spongy, in wine or champagne. The “struffoli”, a popular family sweet, can be prepared with honey, candied fruit and colored sprinkles. The “mostaccioli” are favored by children. And then there are the “susamielli”, sweets made out of sesame and honey, in the shape of a capital S, flavored with cinnamon, the product of the old monastery of Sapienza. The royal marzipan desserts are made with almond paste and delicately colored in pink, green or yellow. They too trace their origin to ancient Neapolitan convents. The “raffiuoli” can be simple or in the style of cassata, that is, soft and tasty. They are prepared

with cottage cheese, citron and drops of plain chocolate. The “divinamore” is also an almond based dessert that was produced in the Convent of Divine Love in Spaccanapoli, in honor of Charles II of Angiò, using almonds, sugar, candied bits and apricot confiture.

These are the sweets of a millennial tradition that are offered in a variety and must not be absent from the Christmas table during the holidays in Naples. And speaking of convents, we like to tell the story of our beloved “sfogliatella”, a sweet that in fact is eaten throughout the year. The Amalfi coastline is truly a magical spot in the world, and the birthplace of sfogliatella, the dessert that became famous in the pastry tradition of Naples.

The story goes way back to the Settecento, the eighteenth century, in the charming monastery of Santa Rosa that is located in Conca dei Marini in the fjord of Furore, where the cloistered nuns were living. The nuns produced in house, with great frugality, all that they consumed.

One day, the nun that worked as cook, quite talented in making desserts, found a residue of bran that had been cooked in milk. In order to utilize it, she picked up other ingredients that had been left in the cupboard, namely dried fruit, lemon liqueur, eggs and sugar. She then enriched the bread mixture with a bit of lard and white wine, producing a delicate short paste. She then filled the

sheets of puff pastry with the paste that she had prepared and shaped like the hood of a monk, cooking them in the wood-burning oven. Her creation was so good that the Mother Superior, in her enthusiasm, decided to sell them with the idea of helping the farmers. The sweets were sold by putting them in the classical wheel, with the hope of getting a few coins in return. The name given to the sweets could be none other Santarosa. With the passing of time, the nuns added other ingredients such as cottage cheese, confectioners’ cream and sour cherry syrup.

The recipe was kept a secret for over a century and only at the dawn of the nineteenth century a Neapolitan innkeeper on Via Toledo succeeded in obtaining the original recipe for Santarosa. His name was Pasquale Pintauro. He became a pastry chef and his inn was transformed into a pastry shop. He even introduced a few variations on the Santarosa theme by eliminating the monk’s hood but keeping the original triangular shape. The pastry came to resemble a crunchy shell, with thin layers of puff pastry, set one over the other, thus creating the “curly sfogliatella.” Another variant exists, called “shortcrust”, with a round shape. The result is that even today one can taste the different varieties, the “curly”, the “shortcrust” and the Santarosa, which according to the original recipe features confectioners’ cream and seven sour cherries.

They must be eaten hot, but be careful not to burn yourself!



The theme of the year: rice

At the annual meeting of the Study Center, the projects for next year were presented: from the Recipe Book to the Guide to the Good Table, from the new Academy site to the theme of the 2014 Ecumenical Dinner: “The Cuisine of Rice.”



With the passing of time, the meetings that in the past were just pleasant occasions to get together have become operational meetings, stimulating new ideas thanks to the growing professional caliber of the participants. President Giovanni Ballarini opened the fall session of the Study Center by acknowledging this active and constructive participation. A new cultural and capillary network, quite unique in the universe of academies, is coming to life showing vitality and brilliance of ideas, if not the ambitions that underlie the collective work of the Study Center and the Regional Centers. A good start was made towards next year’s programs when the President of the Study Center, Paolo Petroni, announced the conclusion of the hard work required by the new Recipe Book. It was “hard” in a positive sense,

since the recipes sent by the Delegations were in great number and complexity, showing the depth of commitment in bearing witness to the traditional gastronomy of individual territories. In a country where, on many occasions, the food is not great, it is important for the Academy to spread its own gastronomic knowledge. The Recipe Book goes now into editing, to be published next year.

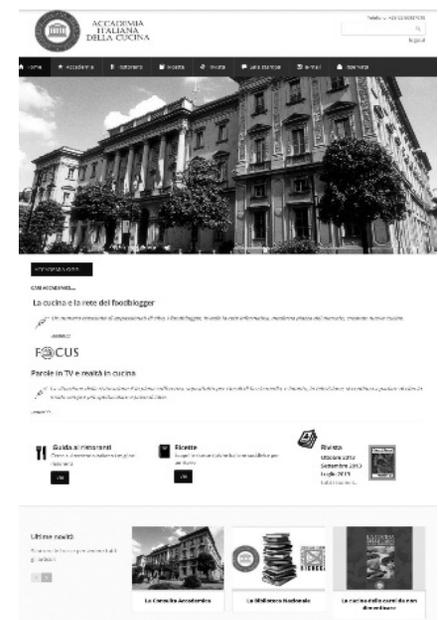
Another important task concerns the Restaurant Guide on line. The Guide has a positive feature, Petroni pointed out, namely the capillary character of the territories. On the other hand, it has some negative aspects that must be remedied. From a technical standpoint, the necessary improvements concern: the updating in real time of data about the restaurants and continuous monitoring. From a technical standpoint, an objective standard of evaluation is needed. To solve this problem, a solution (shared by the participants) would be to appoint a member of each Delegation to be responsible for evaluating a restaurant according to common criteria and objectives, not just on the basis of a visit for the purpose of a convivial meeting.

The online Guide is an effective means to communicate with the world and to spread the knowledge of our Academy: it must be reliable, complete and constantly updated. Paolo Petroni turned his attention to the next issue of the Guide to the Good Table that has been spruced up and is more easily accessed. The Guide will include a larger number of restaurants for

2014 upping the total to 615. He then addressed the new website of the Academy that is the business card of the Academy around the world. He showed the new make up, the new graphic design, new content and appearance, more modern and better legible, stressing the possible outcome of increased interactivity among the Academicians and the Secretariat through a reserved area.

Finally the discussion focused on the theme of the year: “The Cuisine of Rice.” President Ballarini emphasized that such a theme is present in the gastronomy of each Italian region, from antipasti to desserts, and will be presented in the volume dedicated to the “Itineraries”, various stories, curiosities, some rituals and, naturally, the recipes.

(S.D.L.)





Truffles: the scent of the earth

The fruit of the heartbeat of plants that are about to fall asleep (street poet)

BY ALFREDO PELLE
*Apuano Academician
"F. Marengi" Study Center*



Every fall, the gastronomic press, and not only this press, is filled with articles devoted to the truffle, looking for something fascinating to extol the mysterious essence of this wonder of the earth. Here are some headlines: "Treasure Islands" referring to the Langhe and Acqualagna; "White Truffle, the Sleeping Treasure of the Forests"; "Truffle, Like Androsterone?"; "His Majesty the Truffle."

If one were to look for definitions of truffle, the range of names is infinite. Just to mention a few: black diamond, Mozart of mushrooms, love ruffian, son of the earth, gastronomy's poetic mystery, nature's miracle, the fruit of lightning, Afrodite's mushroom, vegetable meat, the king of the table.

It is indeed the master of the table. It is a jewel that enriches any plate that encounters it, an authentic "crowning glory" of the most refined cuisines, whose price is more or less a tenth of the price of gold. It proliferates in the silent and secret darkness of the earth. It holds a place of absolute privilege in comparison with any other commodity. There is no other product of nature with the same evocative strength, the same fascination, somewhat sinister. Since the most ancient times this tuber has appeared on the table of our ancestors, albeit not always with today's ritual. The name derives from late Latin *terrae tufer*, growth of the soil. Black truffle was once considered devil's food. In the gastronomic realm, it was looked upon for a long time a cyst of the earth, a dash of mud, a sickness, a dribble of witches. On the other hand, the search for truffle (so pre-

cious and mysterious that botanic science is still unable to cultivate it) follows a certain ritual, that is unchanged and never stops fascinating us.

Truffle can be found in various Italian regions, starting with Piedmont. Let us start here, when the "trifulau" get up in middle of the night and silent as shadows sneak off and begin their search. Nobody knows how long that search will last, ten minutes, half an hour, maybe longer. The trusted tabui, the little mongrel dog with the unbeatable nose, signals its find in the woods of oaks, linden and hazelnut. Its sure steps lead to a discovery that becomes a silent triumphal march. The "trifulau" know the land like nobody else, they are the jealous custodians of secrets that are handed down through generations; they are authentic artists in their job of discovery.

Truffles thrive beneath oaks and in limestone or clayey soil. Surprisingly however, they also grow in vineyards and on the banks of streams or ditches. Why is this diamond of the earth such an object of desire and so coveted? Is it because of its exclusivity? Or because it is a symbol of wealth? Or because of its fame as an unparalleled aphrodisiac? These are all attributes that have contributed to its fortune. The fact remains that the white truffle, beyond being fashionable, is a product that prods the consumers into doing crazy things. Yet, it is an unmistakable aromatic lump, radiating unparalleled fascination, hiding under an irregular humped shape.

Succulent and fragrant, it overwhelms the senses and enhances the confusing



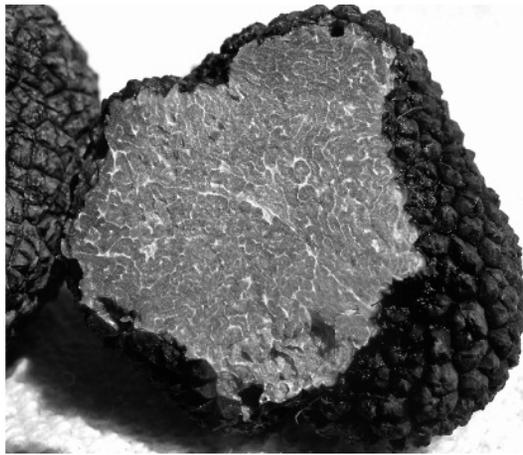
sentiment of an almost undeserved joy. In the last analysis, it is a gastronomic drug with an aromatic power rather than a gustatory impact, given that truffle is only perfume and not flavor.

Its history can be found especially in literature devoted to it. Historians will look askance, yet it is true that the success of this tuber developed over the centuries as it was idealized by poets, writers, literates, bon vivants and learned gourmets. There is a cascading wealth of citations and commentary about the truffle.

Its disappearance in the Middle Ages was probably due to the fact that truffle was regarded as an aphrodisiac and consequently banned by the convents as a dangerous instrument of temptation. Thus, it was completely abandoned and left for the dogs and pigs.

If we examine with care the trajectory of truffle, we find Brillat-Savarin's words: "It is not a positive aphrodisiac but on certain occasions it can make women more affectionate and men more amiable."

While it came to be recognized a diamond of gastronomy in the Romantic period, it came into its heyday during the Vienna Congress of 1815. The menus of the time featured several recipes that included truffle. There is a slate of love testimonies for truffle, from Rossini to Verdi, from Fogazzaro to De Amicis, and even modern literature has succumbed to the fascination of truffle. Among many writers who



turned their attention with passion to truffle were Cesare Marchi, Beppe Fenoglio, Cesare Pavese, Gina Lagorio and Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa. Celebrated chefs and gastronomes as Dumas, Chapusot, Artusi and Escoffier right up to our own Carlo Cracco (author of *The Utopia of the White Truffle*), laud it as a tasting of heavenly scents.

In his treatise, Artusi devoted the appendix "For Weak Stomachs" to a few recipes based on truffle: "chicken breasts sauté", "truffled roast beef filets". The latter recipe is indicated for "a dinner where the male gender is predominant, unsatisfied with the trifles preferred by women, but anxious to sink its teeth into something solid and nourishing." The differentiation of black and white truffles is far from settled if we are to believe Artusi when he writes: "The great issue of the white and black that replicated the Guelfi and Ghibellini; the cause of long misery to Italy threatens to rekindle again

over the truffle. However, there is nothing to fear, dear readers, on this issue there will be no bloodshed. The partisans of the white and black that are the subject of the dispute are far more benign than the ferocious partisans of past times."

Let us talk about the "taste" of truffle. In his book, Cracco judges truffle with precision and a bit of poetry: "Elusive, mysterious, unfathomable. You know it but you do not know how to define it. You feel it

but you cannot taste it. You approach it but cannot capture its soul. White truffle is the Phoenician goddess of international gastronomy, utopia of senses, essential perfume and later, much later, taste as well."

In reality, truffle is best with simple dishes without strong flavors, because it is not meant to contrast or to be a component: it must be the unique and total participant. Only then, it will be used with the famed tajarin and butter, with eggs, with white risotto. The use of truffle at the end of bagna cauda is indeed magical: once the vegetables are finished, while the pan is still sizzling with the residual bagna, add an egg and cover it with truffle. It is truly a delicacy.

Fascination, refined goodness, the child of legends: a great product of nature that Vissani has called "inimitable but not indispensable." It rings true, but I always think of the "inimitable" and any time I can, I eat it!

ALFREDO PELLE

INTERNET, BLOGS, FACEBOOK AND THE ACCADEMIA WEBSITE

Some Delegations have expressed an interest in opening their own websites. In order to avoid content conflicts with the Accademia's official website, the Office of the President has expressly stated that this is not possible. The Office of the President would like to stipulate that online conversations among Academicians and/or Delegations in blogs and on platforms such as Facebook are permitted. However, in these cases the use of Accademia logo is not allowed, and content should not discuss or involve the Academy's organizational activities.