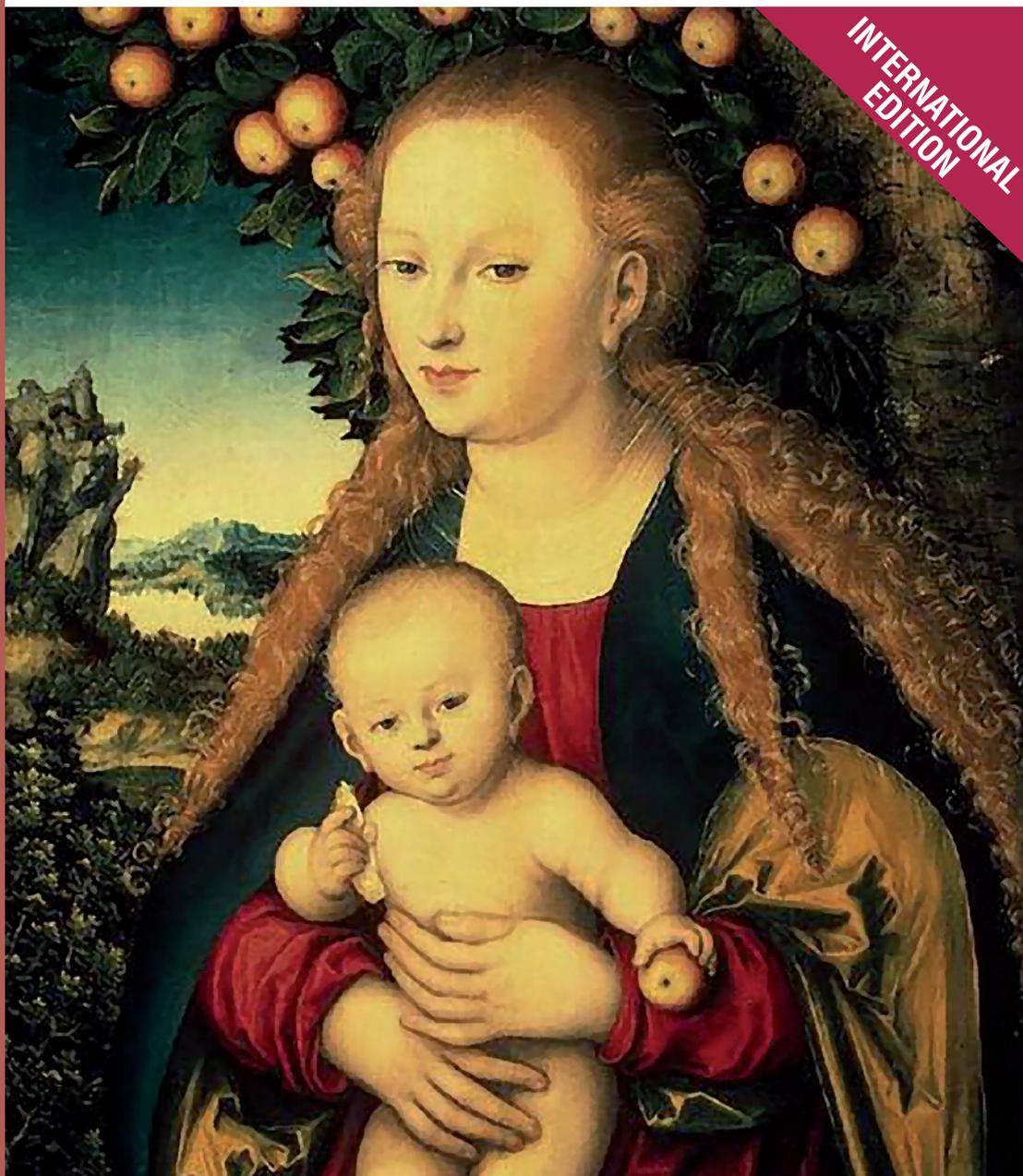


CIVILTÀ DELLA TAVOLA

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DINO VILLANI, EDOARDO VISCONTI DI MODRONE,
WHIT MASSIMO ALBERINI AND VINCENZO BUONASSISI.

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On the cover: Graphic reproduction of the painting "Madonna Under an Apple Tree" (1525) by Lucas Cranach, on exposition at the Pushkin Museum in Moscow.

A Great Year

The Academy's commitment to value our great cuisine.

BY PAOLO PETRONI
President of the Academy

December is the month of cuisine for the holidays. All newspapers and television networks produce suggestions for preparing traditional or modern dishes to serve to family and friends on Christmas Eve, New Year's and the festivities connected with the holiday period. As happens every year, the Academy receives a great deal of requests and we do not fail to grant interviews and provide stories, traditions and typical recipes, keyed to many regions. December is a cold month, calling for a substantial and nourishing cuisine that many would keep us from enjoying, while we suggest that such cuisine should be tasted but in moderation. This year, our holiday dinners are clouded by the drumming of nefarious news: palm oil, red meats, barbecues, even *prosciutto* and other sausages, including *pizza* and *mozzarella*, the final blow the fraud perpetrated in the sale of extra virgin olive oil. All the while, there is rumbling about the presumed damages caused by wine, coffee, sweets and even cheese. Nothing is left out! Such news is often recycled and magnified to make a lot of noise, for sake of a scoop, with large headlines and partisan interests. A doubt lingers over such scoops: given that Italian cuisine is wildly popular and generates a great deal of money and kudos because of its products, recipes and restaurants, a sporadic aggression against the fundamentals that underlie our gastronomy does bring damage, directly or indirectly, to Italy, its economy and its image. The suspicion is that somebody may find it useful. The Italian Academy of Cuisine is committed to working effectively to increase the value of our great cuisine by promoting it. This year, following years of study, we have published an exceptional volume, *La Tradizione a Tavola* (Tradition at the Table), whose sales have done very well. It will be translated into various languages. Our guide about "The Good Tables" can be found in 700 restaurants where



it is often exhibited at the entrance. Over one hundred thousand copies of our magazine "Civiltà della Tavola" are now distributed all over the world. The monthly newsletter reaches all our Academicians with current news that emphasizes the great work done by our Delegations. Our new site has met with great success and now records 85,000 hits each month while the restaurants' App is downloaded by over 100,000 visitors. We have also increased the number of new Delegations, such as those of Vasto, Agrigento, Sassari Silki, Paris Montparnasse, plus the Legations of Cambridge and Perth in Australia. Our recent contacts with institutions confirm the prestige of our Academy that has the duty to launch concrete new activities to participate in the promotion of tourism and the knowledge of gastronomy among all kinds of consumers. A first step was taken with the establishment of a new Study Center that has been constituted by valid professional people, all of them leaders in specific sectors. In conclusion, a good panorama at the end of the year: the Delegations and their Academicians have worked well, with passion and professionalism. All this must set a good base for 2016, to make it worthy of a great Academy such as ours.



A meeting with cuisine in sight

The new "Franco Marengi" Study Center met for the first time in an unusual location: the Gualtiero Marchesi Foundation in Milan.

BY SILVIA DE LORENZO



First of all, let's talk about the location that was no accident. The Gualtiero Marchesi Foundation is devoted, by definition, to "teaching the good and caring for the beautiful". A place of culture then, gastronomic as well, where the lesson is that cuisine is an art; where those who have learned to cook "face the next step that is the hardest, stepping up to a creative vision". The idea behind it is to let creative chefs, just like artists, create something durable by making it a point of reference and comparison with others. We borrowed some of the objectives pursued by the Foundation to make the point that the meeting venue signifies the philosophy of the new Study Center of the Academy: creativity of thought and action, a point of reference for ideas, of comparison with the external world, and evolution of the Academy's mission within society. A cultural pole that in-

spires the guiding principles of the academic life. One should add that the host is an authoritative member. The President of the Academy introduced the new members of the "Franco Marengi" Study Center and emphasized the various tasks that they will be able to perform, without duplications, thus making a valid contribution within the scope of their competence. The goal here is to increase the visibility of the Academy in the media and with the institutions; to divulge in many ways and on various occasions the objectives and activities of the Academy; to counteract, from a scientific standpoint, the provocations that every day downgrade one kind of food or another. The items on the agenda are numerous and one of them concerns the role of the Academy in the complex scenario of the restaurant business in Italy and other countries. The President of the

Study Center Alfredo Pelle opened the discussion by pointing out that the restaurant business has been damaged by the economic depression but that new scenarios are emerging in the world of gastronomy: chefs do not act as lonely actors as in the past but are part of a team (an example that comes to mind is the latest *Forum* at the Expo). Italian cuisine has become a "beacon" in the world's gastronomic panorama stepping away from the image linked to pasta and pizza; attention to dishes is more and more evident even in restaurants that do not score medals. Journalist Mauro Rosati, an expert on agricultural and agro-alimentary policies, started his presentation by reminding participants that on the basis of the large number of visitors to the Expo, those who wish to learn more about food is definitely on the upswing. The Academy - he adds - must correctly play



the card of information by paying special attention to the young. The restaurant business must exploit quality raw materials while the guides, especially those online, have a bright future.

Journalist Paolo Pellegrini of *Quotidiano Nazionale*, well versed in oenogastronomy, warned against the trend in cuisine toward show business to the detriment of gastronomic culture. Four million Italians think of themselves as experts (these are the people who follow popular television programs) and look for a restaurant that is capable of amazing the guests rather than offering traditional cuisine. This vision is shared by Gigi Padovani, an historian of Italian food habits and a gastronomic critic, who believes that the Academy should refurbish its image particularly by reaching out through social media. Maria Giuseppina Muzzarelli, a professor at Bologna University, believes that the young constitute the target that the Academy must strive to reach, paying attention not just to the celebrated restaurants (obviously more expensive) but by spreading knowledge about places where one can eat well and spend less. This theme was picked up by Simonetta Agnello Hornby, a London Academician and an expert on Italian cuisine overseas, with the admonition that the Academy should teach the young to eat well by acquiring the culture of food.

The presentations were interesting, significant and to the point. Giuseppe Benelli, a professor at Genoa University and President of the Foundation *Città del Libro* for the *Bancarella Award*, addresses the importance of the institutional web site. His reminder is shared by Massimo Vincenzini, a professor at Florence University and a member of the Council of the *Accademia dei Geografili*, who stresses the importance of being represented in the word of information, with quality content at that. One could go on by reporting the ideas and the suggestions that crisscross among the members of the Study Center while the air exuded the aroma emanating from the kitchen where young



chefs are at work. The meeting continued and produced concrete starting points for the "Theme of the Year 2016". Paolo Petroni then introduced another subject on the agenda, an evaluation of the Expo after its closing. The judgments were ambivalent and can be summarized as follows: a Disneyland with some serious aspects, such as the Charter of Milan and the *Food Act*, a pact between institutions and the world of quality cuisine.

President Petroni brought the meeting to a conclusion expressing his personal satisfaction for the productive exchange of ideas in this first get together that allowed an exhaustive examination of the Academy's image vis à vis the consumers and the institutions. The meeting suggested several interesting initiatives that should be launched in the field of social media and communications in general. At the conclusion, the President thanked Gualtiero Marchesi and presented him with the gift of a watch of the Academy.

The convivial moment started in an evocative atmosphere. The guests were served a delicious salad with scallops in ginger and were entertained by the preparation of the famous "rice, gold and saffron" created by Gualtiero Mar-

chesi and served by the young students of the Foundation. During the working luncheon, the Maestro renewed his welcome to the guests and revealed the secret of his risotto (sour butter), a traditional dish with a touch of innovation. He also cited his aphorism "cuisine is a science *per se*, it is up to the chef to make it into an art", adding that he no longer thinks of himself as a cook but rather a composer. In sum, a complete meeting, a mix of work and conviviality, toward a Study Center meant to be different, stimulating and creative.

SILVIA DE LORENZO





Hands off the pleasures of the table

*Eating is the art that brings out the best in us: up with “mortadella”!
This is how the author reacts to the latest attacks on food.*

BY FRANCO CARDINI
“Franco Marengi” Study Center

This is getting boring. Here we go again. Following the aspersions on olive oil, supported by serious and well documented research, and the rehabilitation of the noble and healthful Mediterranean berry; after the anathemas against any kind of cheese and dairy retractions; the contumelies to the deadly chicken eggs with successive reductions, it is the turn of meats; meats of any kind, of course, red in particular, but more ruinous than methanol wine and even than strychnine, whether processed or conserved in any fashion, marinated or salted or dried or smoked, and even worse when treated with maleficent additives, from diabolical sulfites and so on. It is the usual autumn tormenting event. Offensive dieticians, health care workers and less known institutes of alimentary

sciences swear that conserved meats, from the somewhat noble *culatello* of Modena to the legendary Andalusia *patanegra* all the way to the humble but tasty *finocchiona* of Tuscany, the venetian *capocollo* and lastly the brigand hot sausage of Calabria are mortal realities: they are just a step below smoking (all cigarette packs warn that “smoking kills”) and alcohol (according to labels, must be used “with prudence”).

In truth, certain ingredients - colorants, preservatives, sweetener, aromas - fatally present in sliced salami and sausages, are harmful to health, particularly if ingested in massive doses and consumed regularly over a long time - we always knew that. In fact, everything can adversely affect us. Even air and water can be harmful under special circumstances. Even milk, sun and all that which according to Woody Allen “once upon a time was good for us”. Let’s be frank about it. Living is bad for you. In the long run, living kills you. There is nothing else to say, try it to believe it. And so, prudent vegetarians and pure vegans, what to do? Shall we fortify ourselves with tomatoes, radishes, chickpeas, wild rice, integral spelt and whole grains? These too could harm us, especially if cultivated in polluted or radioactive terrain.

All that one likes is either harmful or sinful, Oscar Wilde was saying. The late Piero Camporesi, who knew about food as well as alimentary and health conscious manias, wrote amusing pages fiercely denouncing health addiction and alimentary purity. According to his credo, the manias of the anti-sausage crusaders and of anti-salami suffragettes





should be ignored with Olympic tranquility.

It is obvious that our guard against lipids, cholesterol, triglycerides must be kept up; there is a whole educational school that is acceptably vigilant apart from a few mistakes and defects. It is clear that the use of certain foods should be controlled and avoided, if the physician says so. Let us not, however, ruin our lives more than necessary. Eating is a necessity, but also an art and a pleasure. Food should be approached with all five senses: undoubtedly, with taste and smell, but also with touch, sight and even sound, as one can appreciate when the pot is boiling and the wine gurgling down from the bottle to the glass.

Food - its presentation and consumption - has always brought out the best in human beings: to feed oneself is necessary; eating, however, is a science and an aspect of culture. Pork products are a treat worthy of Arcimboldo, a Rabelesian pleasure. Can we do without them? Never! Our honor is at stake; and also some of our simple, dear happiness. A slice of the joy of living.

I love you, *mortadella*. I love the pinkish, delicate and almost immodest taste of your meat, your perfume of country paradise, your softness, your pungence of peppercorns and the emerald-like pistachios that embellish you in quantity at your best. I love the elegant humility of being offered in a fragrant sandwich

to the high school students who taste you - God forbid! - between generous and disgusting gulps of CocaCola; to the old pensioners who accompany you - God bless! - with a glass of Lambrusco; to the girls who bite into you with chastity and gluttony as if they were engaging in an act of love; to the fat old gentlemen who consume you quickly and circumspectly to defeat the supervision of a sour wife or a over protective caretaker.

Some malicious people accuse you, my dear tasty friend, of being a murderer that kills little by little. But I think about you what the master Voltaire thought of coffee. You are a slow poison. So what? I am in no hurry whatsoever.

FRANCO CARDINI

GETTING SICK BY BEING WELL OFF

Food can frighten you. We are bombarded by continual and excessive information about what is good or bad for our health, "good" food, "bad" food and the risk involved in choosing one over the other. Our relationship with food has become more complex and problematic. The growing attention devoted to the importance of eating in a healthy way and of improving the quality of life can also lead to sickness.

In the last few years, in the more developed countries a new alimentary ailment has come to the fore, following anorexia and bulimia, pathologies that were fed by an excessive mania for health at all costs. It is called "orthorexia", a form of excessive attention to the alimentary rules, the choice of food and its characteristics.

Who is an orthorexic? He is someone who literally obsesses over the chemical-biological composition of food as well as over the caloric content, wasting hours at the supermarket by comparing the labels of products and searching for "pure" food. The orthorexic develops a set of rigid impositions that once they are violated cause a strong sense of guilt which in turn leads to a further tightening of the rules, precise and inexorable as they may be. While in the case of anorexia and bulimia the problem is centered upon the "quantity" of food that is consumed, orthorexia is based upon the "quality" and the characteristics of the product. As in any obsessive behavior, the relationship with food becomes compulsory and ritualistic, with the absence of any flexibility and spontaneity. At this point, food becomes a "duty", no longer a source of pleasure but of torment, and any exception causes discomfort. The orthorexic enters a vicious circle where he feels strong personal dissatisfaction and tries to recover his self-esteem by imposing upon himself disgust for foods that in reality would please his palate while he has convinced himself that such foods are harmful to his health.

The search for "eating healthy" is thus pushed to exasperation (where does the food come from? Does it contain additives? Is it biological? Is it Docg? Is it contaminated?). The discomfort starts with a strong preoccupation in choosing what to eat, avoiding harmful food, in order to find foodstuffs that are deemed "pure" and that must be prepared according to precise rules so that any risk to health may be eliminated. The taste and pleasure of food are relegated to a lower priority when deciding what one should eat. Only that which does not compromise your health is to be considered "good". The alimentary range of choices becomes more and more restricted with the passing of time leading to the decision to give up occasions of conviviality with friends for fear of not abiding to the self imposed rules. Any transgression is tantamount to failure as compared with the sense of well being linked to the satisfaction of total control over one's health. Having a healthy life style surely helps to maintain good health, keeping in mind that a balanced management corresponds to a positive behavior in daily life without giving up the pleasures of life.

The old Latin phrase "in medio stat virtus" (virtue is in the middle) is very much up to date because the well laid table has always been an occasion to be together, to interact and exchange experiences. (Susanna Sangiovanni)



Language matures but it never dies

“Bona Auspicia” in honor of the holidays.

BY FRANCO SANTELLOCCO GARGANO
Avezzano Delegate

It is traditional to exchange greetings during the holidays, wishing friends and family health, peace, harmony and serenity. The holiday augury represents a desire for something good to happen to the recipient: it is a formula of hope that is expressed on special occasions.

Let us stop for a moment and reflect upon the modern expression *auguri*, “augury” or “best wishes” and the origin of this magic formula that soothes the soul. Is it possible that the word was left to us, along with the most ancient of buildings, by people like ourselves but with different beliefs? Indeed, the Italian verb *augurare* originally meant to work as an *augure* or soothsayer; that is, to anticipate and preannounce news in the hope that they may be positive ones. Therefore when we express

wishes or “*auguries*” in a certain sense we are predicting good things to come. Who were the *augures*? Many sources say that they were prophets of the early Italian population who, using thunder and lightening, the wind and the flight and behavior of birds interpreted the disposition of the gods in regard to a particular human action. These figures were well known in Etruscan culture, as the Tomb of the *augure* in Tarquinia clearly demonstrates. They date back to 530 B.C. and also to the Greek era, wherein much importance was given to divination by the *augures* who interpreted special signs known as “*presages*”.

Even among the most ancient Romans, at time when it was believed that an assembly of the gods could cause good or bad weather, *augures* existed. They were priests skilled in the interpretation of *auspicia*, or the wishes of the gods, which often manifested themselves through the birds - creatures of the sky that flew close to the gods. Cicero, himself an *augure*, defined them as *interpretes Iovis optumi maximi* - the interpreters of the will of the great and most powerful Jupiter. According to legend, it appears that Romulus established the first college of the three *augures* (one for each tribe) and that Numa Pompilio institutionalized this position that increased with the passing of time and was available not only to the patricians but starting in 300 B.C., to the common people as well. What was their function, in addition to divinatory activities? The public *augures* were consulted by the *magistrati*, who were required to listen to and under-





stand the will of the gods before an important public act. Thus they played a role in public life: they were able to suspend a public assembly that was in process, decree the annulment of an election or the approval of a law. The team of *augure* wielded special powers and carried out such important functions that they were comparable to a modern Constitutional Court, according to authoritative sources. Titus Livio, Herodotus, Sophocles and others spoke with great respect of this divinatory activity, even though they themselves may have had opposing views. History continues its course, and in time the pagan population was taken over by the “Christian revolution” and

the art of the *augures* disappeared. The Edict of Thessalonika in 380 A.D. declaring Christianity the state religion abolished the board of *augures* along with other priestly groups. Christians did not believe in chance or destiny, but they attributed everything to “the source of everything good” - God. He was the only *augure* to whom one should address a prayer or express a desire for something good to happen to another person. Although it has been centuries since anyone has tried to find anything auspicious in the flight of birds, the holiday wish, or the *auguri*, is still a way to express a desire or a hope that something good will happen.

Words grow old, but they do not die. And today saying Merry Christmas, or Happy New Year renews the deep root of the Italian word *auguri*: it comes down to us from people of different faiths who have left us ideas and expressions that attest to their passage through time, just like ancient buildings and necropolis.

So now there is nothing left to do but enjoy the modern day meaning of the word *auguri* for all that it represents; let us speak and hear it with pleasure and minimize its more ancient derivation. As Oscar Wilde put it, “It is better to enjoy a rose than to examine its roots with a microscope.

FRANCO SANTELLOCCO GARGANO



*President Paolo Petroni, the President’s Council,
the Headquarters in Milan and the Editors of the magazine extend
to all Academicians in Italy and abroad their warmest wishes for a*

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

The Headquarters and the Editorial offices will be closed
from December 24 to January 6.