

We the Italians

May 2025

N.187

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Interview with John Calvelli

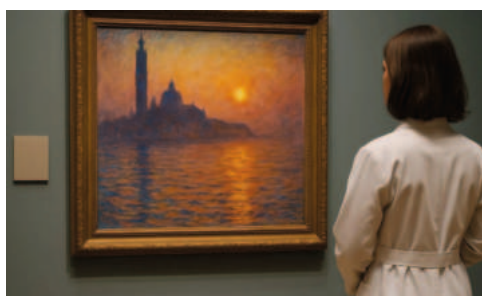
Happy 50th anniversary to the NIAF and welcome to John Calvelli, its new Chairman of the Board

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We the Italians US Ambassadors

2025 Chicago Reunion
September 19-21



Editorial

What's up with WTI #187

by Umberto Mucci

Dear friends,

Once again there are many things we at We the Italians are working on. Whether alone or in partnership with some friends, we are happy to continue promoting the friendship between Italy and the United States and the significant contribution of Italian Americans to the relationship between our countries.

We begin with an event that will take place from September 19 to 21 in Chicago: the first reunion of [We the Italians Ambassadors in the United States](#). Thanks to our Ambassador in Illinois, the tireless Ron Onesti, we are preparing an event that will allow our Ambassadors to get to know each other better, share projects and interests, and learn about the extra-





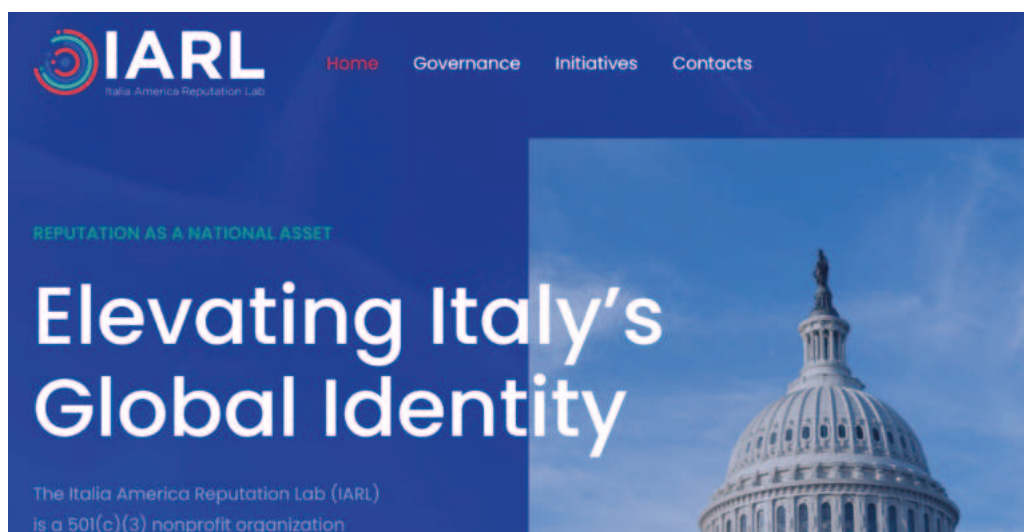
ordinary Italian American community in the Windy City.

The weekend before, we will be among the partners of another important event, which will take place in Italy, in Vicenza: the first [ITALIA-AMERICA Friendship Festival](#). The ITALIA-AMERICA Friendship Festival aims to celebrate and strengthen the bond between the two countries, highlighting their mutual influence on each other's cultures. Among the partners in the city of Vicenza are NIAF, the U.S. Consulate General in Milan, the Vicentini nel Mondo association, and of course, everything is also in collabora-

tion with the United States Army Garrison Italy, based in Vicenza, the Italian city with the highest number of American residents.

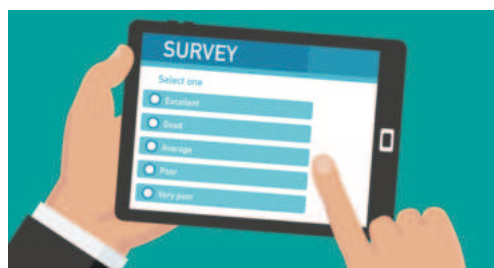
Speaking of Chicago, you all know that here in Rome, the American Robert Francis Prevost was elected the new Pope, taking the name Leo XIV. Prevost was born in Chicago and has Italian and Italian American roots from both his father's side (in Chicago) and his mother's side (in New Orleans). [Read here our article to learn more.](#)

From Illinois, we move to New York: it's here that, together with our



friends at Zwan, we have registered a new 501(c)(3) organization. It's called the Italia America Reputation Lab, and it will be the tool that allows us to develop projects thanks to the characteristics of American non-profits. From today, the IARL (Italia America Reputation Lab) is active, and [you can find more information here](#).

The new world of relations between Italy and the United States has led us to start a new activity: listening, exploring, and better understanding the interests, opinions, and needs of the Italian American community. The first topic we've asked for your opinion on is dual citizenship, specifically the changes affecting the process for applying for Italian citizenship. We will present the results of this activity, and others to follow, to the Italian authorities. Please share your opinion [by participating in](#)



[our survey here](#). We will randomly select 10 participants and give them a copy of the 2024 Yearbook of We the Italians.

We are proud of the numbers that are increasingly supporting us on our Facebook page, with significant growth. In the last month, we reached 5.5 million views. Thanks

Ieri Ultimi 7 giorni Ultimi 28 giorni

Visualizzazioni di Facebook

5,5 mln ↑ 233%



to all of you, and if you haven't yet, [please make sure to like our page here](#).

There is also a new column in our magazine. Starting this month, the Managing Director of We the Italians, Fabrizio Fasani, will discuss the Italian economy, covering developments and issues, opportunities, and the need for change.



Fabrizio Fasani

The We the Italians family continues to grow wonderfully, and today I am particularly delighted to welcome three new Ambassadors.



Dario Gagliano

Dario Gagliano is our new Ambassador in Springfield, Massachusetts. Dario was born in Catania, Italy but grew up in Connecticut. He was raised with a passion for the Italian language and culture. He graduated from Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) with a bachelor's degree in Political Science and a master's in International and Area Studies. He is a founding member and current Vice President of the St Padre Pio lodge #3013 of the Order Sons and Daughters of Italy in America in Springfield, MA and one of the leaders of the Future of the Order Forum which aims to engage young Italian Americans with their heritage.



Melissa Marinaro

Melissa Marinaro is our new Ambassador in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Melissa is the Director of the Italian American Program at the Senator John Heinz History Center where they oversee the institution's Italian American Collection and manage the Italian American Program's educational programming and community outreach. Melissa has cultivated significant artifact and archival collections related to post-war Italian immigration to Western Pennsylvania and Italian American folk traditions. They are the author of *Highlights from the Italian American Collection: Western Pennsylvania Stories*. Melissa co-directs the Italian Diaspora Archives Resource Map (IDARM) Project, an initiative involving archivists, academics and museum professional to identify and make visible the network of repositories documenting the Italian Diaspora in the Pennsylva-

nia-Ohio-West Virginia region.

Lorenzo Agnoloni is our new Ambassador in Tampa, Florida. Lorenzo is the owner and founder of the Studio Legale Notarile Agnoloni – International Law-Notary Firm. His practice concentrates upon international taxation and contracts, business transactions and arbitration, civil, commercial and administrative litigation and immigration law and related matters. Lorenzo is an accredited notary public for the State of Florida and has an office in Tampa.



Lorenzo Agnoloni

Let me remember you about “We the ItaliaNews: Italy in english,” and “We the ItaliaNews: L'Italia in America”. The former talks about what is happening in Italy, and is in English language, with a new episode out every Monday; the latter talks about what is happening in the Italian Italian American communities in the

We the Italians

two flags one heart

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United States, and it is in Italian language, with a new episode out every Thursday. [You can find them both here](#). Two podcasts, Two languages, Two flags, One heart.

If you like what we do, let me remember you [to please subscribe to We the Italians, here](#). Every month we give you 50 news exclusive for our subscribers, at the cost of one single espresso, one for month. You can subscribe on our Facebook page. Besides, as already announced, the eleventh book, the ninth annual yearbook, is available for you: twelve interviews from 2024 on twelve different topics that



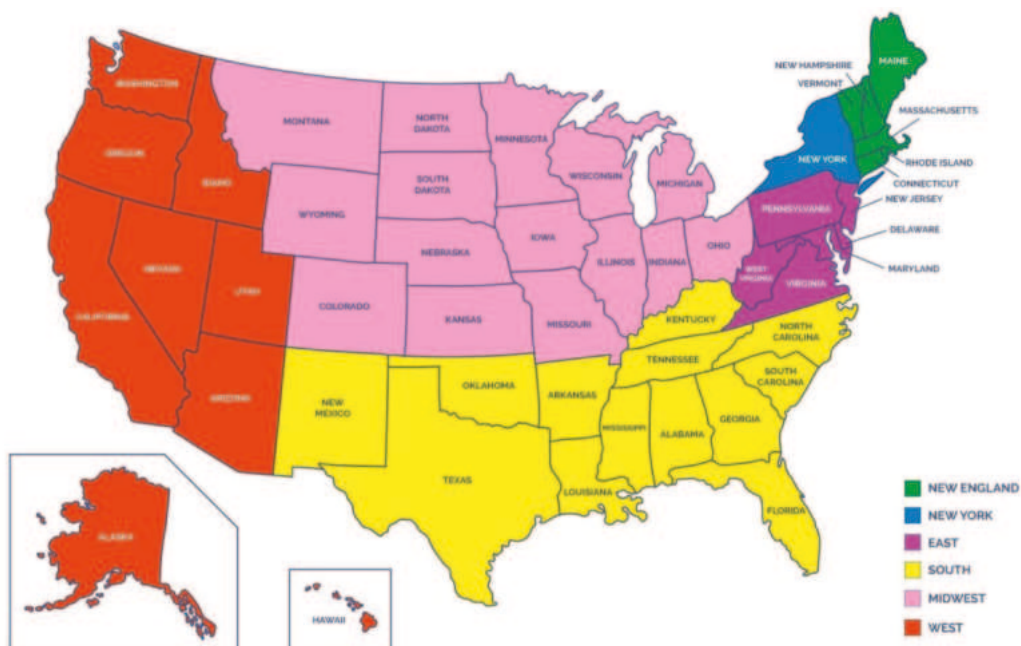


have in common Italy and the United States. On this page, [you will find a preview and the link to purchase it.](#)

Let me also remember you that soon we will have a new version of our new website, with a huge news: the areas we divided the US into will be reduced to six due to three consolidations. The areas New England, New York, and East will remain the same; South and South East will merge into one area called South; Great Lakes and Midwest will merge into one area called Midwest; West and California will merge into one area called West.

The new areas, along with their respective states, will therefore be as follows: 1) New England (Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island). 2) New York (New York State). 3) East (New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Washington DC, Virginia, West Virginia). 4) South (North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico). 5) Midwest (Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, Minnesota, South Dakota, North Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado). 6) West (Alaska, Hawaii, Washington State, Oregon, Idaho, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, California).

It's all for now. Please stay safe and take care, and enjoy our magazine and our contents on [our website](#). Stay safe and take care: the future's so bright, we gotta wear tricolor shades! A big Italian hug from Rome.





Italian art

The rebirth of Sammezzano

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Italy is an open-air museum, where art is everywhere, in many different forms. Some of the places where this art is found are not accessible, and that's a shame. Today, after a long and painful period of closure marked by bureaucracy and mismanagement, there is a

wonderful news about the path leading to the reopening of an extraordinary, unique, and almost unknown site to most: the Sammezzano Castle in Tuscany.

The Sammezzano Castle took on its current appearance







thanks to the work of Ferdinando Panciatichi Ximenes d'Aragona, who transformed and expanded the pre-existing building between 1843 and 1889. Most of his life was thus dedicated to the titanic task of creating the Castle and the Park of Sammezzano.

However, the history of the place is much older: it can be traced back to the Roman era and continued throughout the subsequent centuries. The great historian Davidson, in his "History of Florence," states that in 780, Charlemagne, on his way back from Rome where he had had his son baptized by the Pope, might have passed through the area.

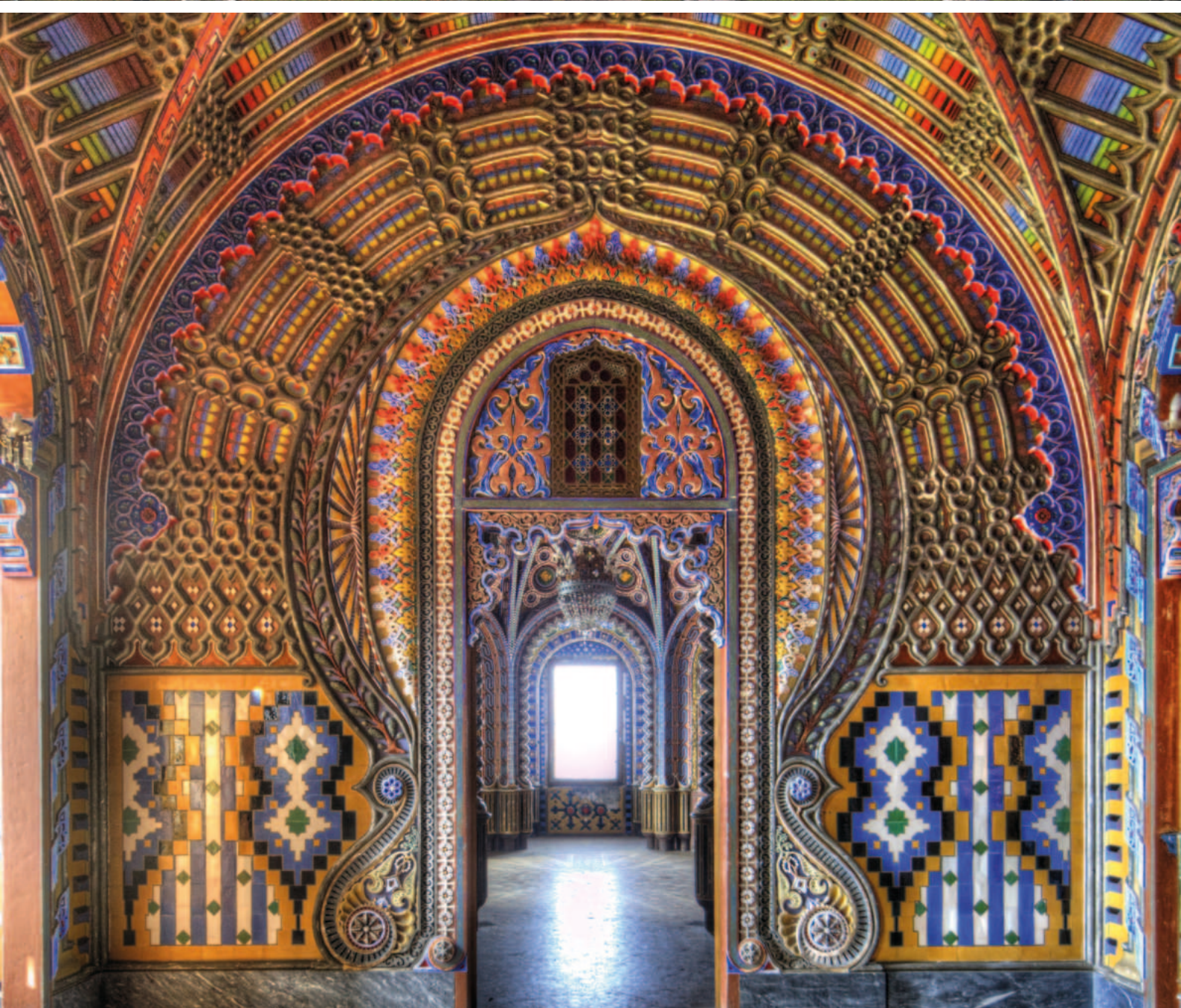
The estate that includes Sammezzano later belonged to very important families: in particular, the Altoviti family, and then, by the will of Duke Cosimo, it passed to Giovanni Jacopo de' Medici, who in turn sold it to Sebastiano Ximenes. These lands remained in the Ximenes d'Aragona family until the last heir, Ferdinando, who, influenced and fascinated by Orientalism (a cultural movement that spread throughout Europe from the early 19th century and found one of its main centers in Florence), began to modify the existing structure of the castle by adding perforated domes, intertwined arches, elaborate stucco, ceramic mosaics, and numerous exotic plant species.

It was then that new magnificent polychrome rooms were created: the Entrance Hall in 1853, the Stalactite Corridor in 1862, the Ballroom in 1867, and the Central Tower, which bears the carved date of 1889.

Ferdinando died on October 18, 1897. The property passed to his daughter Marianna, who was married to Paolucci and who died at Sammezzano on December 7, 1919. Since then, the castle went through several phases; it was classified as “of public interest” and, after the war, was converted into a luxury hotel and the set for numerous film productions.

Later, it fell into a state of abandonment. For years, hundreds of thousands of citizens asked, in vain, for this extraordinary place to be recovered and made accessible to everyone. Yet, despite the existence of a specific law – the Italian Cultural Heritage Code – that mandates its protection, no concrete action has ever been taken to truly enhance it, and only today does it seem that its rebirth has begun. Even today, with its 65 incredibly decorated and colorful rooms, the Sammezzano Castle represents a unique example in the European architectural and landscape panorama.





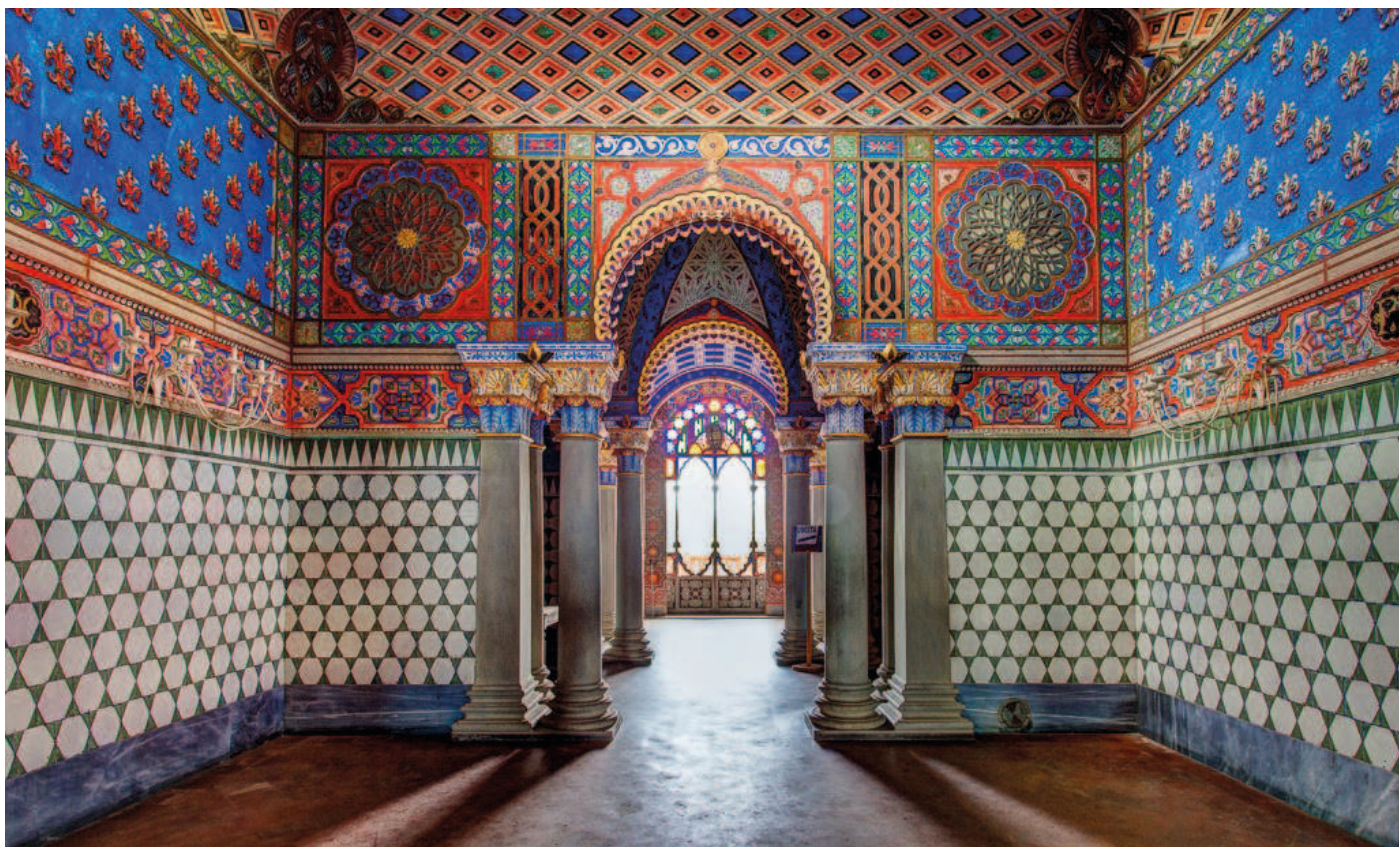


The castle, located about thirty kilometers east of Florence, near Leccio in the municipality of Reggello, has finally been purchased at auction. The acquisition of Sammezzano by the Moretti





family reportedly cost around 18 million euros. But this is just the beginning; it seems that the Moretti family from Florence – already active in the protection of cultural heritage – has plan-





ned to allocate at least 50 million euros (but probably many more) for the complete restoration of the architecture and the historic park. An ambitious project that, in addition to high-profile hospitality services, will also include the opening to the public of the monumental floor of the castle, with a format similar to that of a traditional

museum. The revitalization plan is not only conservative, but also cultural and economic. The establishment of the museum will ensure public access and enhancement of the history of the place, while accommodation and ceremonial activities will ensure its sustainability over time.





Italian entertainment

70th edition of the David di Donatello awards crowns Vermiglio

We the Italians Editorial Staff

The David di Donatello is the most prestigious Italian film award: it's our version of the Oscar. The 70th edition of the award was held yesterday and crowned Vermiglio by Maura Delpero, which won seven trophies, including Best Film



and Best Director (the first time

VERMIGLIO



a woman has won the David in this category). Vermiglio also won the David di Donatello for Best Original Screenplay, Sound, Best Cinematographer, and Best Producer: Francesca Andreoli, Leonardo Guerra Seragnoli, Santiago Fondavila Sancet, Maura Delpero for Cinedora, in collaboration with Rai Cinema, Charades (co-production with France), and Versus (co-production with Belgium).

The ceremony took place at the legendary Teatro 5 of Cinecittà, dear

to Federico Fellini: for one night, the “temple” of national and international cinema became the home of the David awards.

This edition was the most female-oriented David di Donatello ever: three out of five nominees for Best Director were women. Female directors, actresses, and key players in the audiovisual industry highlighted a new normal in the making, one focused on gender equality and talent recognition.



As for the main awards of this year, in addition to the two won by Vermiglio, the Best Actor award went to Elio Germano for *Berlinguer - La grande ambizione*; the Best Actress award went to Tecla Insolia for *L'arte della gioia*; Francesco Di Leva won Best Supporting Actor for *Famiglia*; Valeria Bruni Tedeschi won Best Supporting Actress for *L'arte della gioia*; the David for Best Set Design went to Tonino Zera, Maria Grazia Schirripa, and Carlotta Desmann for *Le deluge - Gli ultimi di Maria Antonietta*.

The David for Lifetime Achievement was awarded to Pupi Avati, while the Special Davids went to Ornella Muti and Timothée Chalamet, one of the most unpredictable and talented actors in contemporary cinema. Among the previously

announced awards, *Anora* by Sean Baker received the David for Best International Film, while *Diamanti* by Ferzan Özpetek was awarded the David del Pubblico (Audience Award). Additionally, for its 70th edition, the Italian Academy of Cinema, in collaboration with Cinecittà, awarded the Special Cinecittà David 70 to Giuseppe Tornatore.





Italian flavors

The sicilian olive oil between tradition, quality and sustainability

We the Italians Editorial Staff

In Italy, food is a reflection of our memories, traditions, and language. It is how we express who we are, and often, we do this through a simple drizzle of extra virgin olive oil. In our cuisine—the one we seek to preserve and pass on—olive oil is the

first, yet most essential, ingredient. Though rarely mentioned, it is what makes the difference between a dish that shines and one that's easily forgotten. It is found at the bottom of the pan, in the gleam of a vegetable, in the aroma of a bruschetta, and



in the tenderness of the crumb. Sicily has been producing olive oil for over three thousand years. The Greeks introduced it, the Arabs perfected its extraction, and local farmers

made it a key part of the agricultural landscape. For centuries, it was simply a daily necessity, without much narrative. It is only in recent years that it has started to be recognized

not only as an economic asset but also as an identity marker. In Sicily, olive oil is both nourishment and a part of the land. It carries the voice of ancient groves, the product of a farming culture that, despite enduring various challenges, continues to speak through the work of its people.

This is where certified Sicilian olive oil comes into play. Since 2018, a certification has been in place to protect its origin, production methods, and quality: IGP Sicilia. This certification brings together growers, millers, and bottlers under a set of shared guidelines. The rules are

simple but stringent: every step of production must take place on the island, and at least 90% of the olives must come from indigenous varieties. These include Biancolilla, Cerasuola, Nocellara del Belice, Nocellara Etnea, Tonda Iblea, Moresca, and Ogliarola Messinese. The rest ensures supply chain monitoring, sensory evaluations, unique QR codes, and complete traceability.

Over 2,800 companies are now involved in this effort. With its distinct climate and diverse soils, Sicily produces a unique olive oil. The IGP certification guarantees that Sicily is of-





fering a product of the highest quality to the world. More than two million liters are certified, and over three million bottles are sold annually. This success has allowed Sicilian olive oil to surpass even the historically dominant Tuscan brand.

The sensory profile is clear: a medium-to-strong fruitiness with grassy notes, hints of green tomato, artichoke, and almond. The acidity remains below 0.5%, while the polyphenol content stays above 100 mg/kg. This translates to an oil that is stable, aromatic, with a bold yet well-balanced flavor, and rich in antioxidants that extend its shelf life and enhance its character.

It is not just about technical specifications—style is important too. The visual identity is carefully crafted, and the product's market positioning is consistent. Bottles with the IGP label are now available in select retail chains, wine shops, foreign markets, and online platforms. They represent one of the strongest elements of the new Made in Sicily food sector.

The entire industry has made a commitment to sustainability, adopting low-impact practices, from early harvesting to crushing within 48 hours, as well as conscientious water resource management. It is an agricultural system that works, fosters widespread economic growth, and strives for lasting recognition over time.



Italian land and nature

Cala Goloritzé, the best beach in the world is in Sardinia

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Italy reclaims the title of having the most beautiful beach in the world. At least according to the website ‘The World’s 50 Best Beaches,’ which has been ranking the best spots around the globe for years. Cala Goloritzé, with its pebbles in front of an unparalle-

led stretch of crystal-clear water, has secured the top spot, making Sardinia one of the most sought-after destinations for next summer.

Another Sardinian representative also made the list of the top

50 beaches: La Pelosa in Stintino, another natural masterpiece in the province of Sassari. This ranking is the result “of countless days spent by our judges, Beach Ambassadors, and the World’s 50 Beaches team exploring beaches in every corner of the planet,” according to the website.

According to the judges, Cala Goloritzé is much more than just a beach: “Its wild beauty touches you deeply from the very first glance. Whether you view it from above, from the famous lookout point, or stand on the shore with your feet in the crystal-clear wa-





ter, the scene is truly breathtaking.”

The entire Baunei coast is a true spectacle, but Cala Goloritzé stands out above all, thanks to its iconic 143-meter-high limestone spire, which seems to have been carved by nature itself from a cathedral. Beach, sun, climate... but also location, context, and scenery. In short, a picture painted over the years, now available to all those who love beauty. And then there’s the water, the queen of summer. “It is incredibly clear, perfect for swimming.”

But what makes this beach “truly unique” is “the strong environ-

mental protection measures” in place, which the judges praise, applauding Sardinia’s efforts to safeguard its heritage. Declared a natural monument in the ‘90s, Cala Goloritzé has remained extraordinarily intact over the years.

Access is limited to those who hike the trail — with a limited number of daily entries — or those who arrive by sea, with boats only allowed to anchor 200 meters away, behind a protective barrier that keeps the beach free from maritime traffic. It’s the perfect blend of pristine natural beauty and an unparalleled beach experience.



Italian traditions

La Scamiciata

We the Italians Editorial Staff

The Scamiciata is a historical reenactment held in Fasano (Brindisi, Apulia) in memory of the victory over the Turks on June 2, 1678. On this day, after years or even centuries of enduring Turkish raids in patient resignation, the people of Fasano finally defeated the Turks in a major battle outside the city walls. In remembrance and celebration

of this victory, in past centuries, a “popular tournament” was organized during the feast of the town’s Patroness, the Madonna of Pozzo Faceto, following a precise ritual. A banner with the image of the Virgin was raised on the town hall’s loggia, under which many young people from the town were recruited like a Crusade. After a pilgrimage to the





sanctuary of Pozzo Faceto, almost like a vigil of arms, on the day of the Solemnity, in the evening, the battle between the Turks and the people of Fasano was reenacted in Largo Fogge. After winning the battle, the Fasanesi would drag their enemies in chains under the Virgin's banner, parading through the streets of Fasano in a procession known as "La Scamiciata."

This tradition fell out of practice around the mid-19th century because the reasons that had originally given rise to it were no longer relevant.

In 1978, to mark the 300th anniversary of the victory over the

Turks, a group of citizens, mostly young people with experience from the local folklore group, revived the tradition by founding the "Comitato per il Giugno Fasanesi." They presented it in a way that aligned with modern tastes and sensibilities. This led to the creation of the Historical Parade, representing the triumph of the Fasanesi after the battle.

On Saturday, the Scamiciata is reenacted. The main feature is a procession with moments of itinerant spectacle, in which the battle of June 2, 1678, is portrayed by each group (flag bearers, drummers, etc.). About 400 participants take part, and this number

Giugno Fasane

arte folklore tradizioni musica teatro



CITTÀ DI
FASANO



Presidenza
REGIONE
PUGLIA



MINISTERO
DELLA
CULTURA

La Scamiciata

1678

300°

1978

1978

47°

2025

1 - 16
giugno 2025

Rievocazione storica del 2 giugno 1678

1 Domenica
GIUGNO

ore 19:00 - Piazza Ciaia
"Innalzare lo stendardo"

Esposizione solenne del vessillo della *Protettrice* sulla torre civica dell'orologio con la partecipazione dei figuranti in costume

ore 20:00 Centro storico **"Correva l'anno 1678"**

Teatro itinerante, giochi di fuoco, musica folkloristica, arti e mestieri tradizionali, fattoria didattica, giochi d'un tempo, stand enogastronomici, dj set

6 Venerdì
GIUGNO

ore 20:00 - Masseria Pettoleccchia
Conferenza a cura del **Comitato Feste Patronali - Fasano**

8 Domenica
GIUGNO

ore 20:00 - Pozzo Faceto
"Al Santuario"

Corteo Storico dei figuranti al Santuario di Maria SS. di Pozzo Faceto
Canto alla Vergine ed esibizioni
in collaborazione con il **Comitato Festa Patronale - Pozzo Faceto**

10 Martedì
GIUGNO

ore 19:00 - Sala di Rappresentanza - Comune di Fasano
XXIII giornata di Studio sul XVII secolo e l'Età Barocca
"Il Barocco Rurale"

in collaborazione con l'Associazione **"Valerio Gentile"**

12 Giovedì
GIUGNO

ore 20:00 - Piazza Ciaia
"Aspettando la Festa"

Spettacoli musicali
a cura del **Comitato Feste Patronali - Fasano**

13 Venerdì
GIUGNO

ore 19:00 - Fasano, Piazza Ciaia
Festa dei Cortei Storici d'Italia

ore 20:00 "Intronizzazione delle Sacre Immagini" dei SS. Patroni

ore 20:30 **"Consegna delle chiavi"** della Città ai figuranti

14 Sabato
GIUGNO

ore 18:30 - Fasano centro
Corteo Storico Rievocativo

"La Scamiciata"

ore 21:00 Piazza Ciaia - **Barca del Trionfo**

Arrivo del corteo storico
Offerta della spada e delle chiavi della Città ai SS. Patroni

ore 21:30 Piazza Ciaia - **"Ritmi e suoni dal Mediterraneo"**

Festival di musica folkloristica

15 e 16 Domenica e Lunedì
GIUGNO

**Festeggiamenti in onore dei
Patroni Maria SS. di Pozzo Faceto
e San Giovanni Battista**

a cura del **Comitato Feste Patronali - Fasano**

IL SINDACO
CITTÀ DI FASANO
Francesco Zaccaria

IL PRESIDENTE
COMITATO GIUGNO FASANESE
Lucio Legrottaglie

www.lascamiciata.it

📱 [la_scamiciata](https://www.instagram.com/la_scamiciata) 📺 La Scamiciata



doubles when the other historical parades join in, as they participate not only on Friday but also during this event. The parade is led by the flag-bearer group, accompanied by trumpets, drums, and flags. Following them are groups representing the noble families of the time, each preceded by a banner with the respective family crest. Some young people, also in costume, ride horses. Then, the civil, religious, and military authorities of the time follow, in their uniforms, riding in period carriages drawn by horses. Behind them come the soldiers, halberdiers, and the Turks, with the local population dressed in their traditional costumes, singing and dancing around the

triumph boat.

The parade moves through the main streets of the city, stopping in Piazza Ciaia, where the young man playing the General Sindaco offers the keys to the City to the Madonna in front of her sacred image displayed in the square. Among the participants are also the Knights of Malta and their Ladies, representatives of the noble families of Fasano, Captain Fra' Zurlo from Crema (who is said to have led the citizens to victory over the Turks), carriages, horse riders, coats of arms, and the common people. The Scamiciata ends with performances by various folklore groups.







Italian cuisine

Olive Oil and Gelato, a match made in heaven

Amy Riolo

Italian food lovers everywhere know that our coveted EVOO and Gelato are perfect culinary partners. When you add dark chocolate to the mix, however, you get a combination of sweet flavors and creamy, velvety textures that are truly divine.

This recipe hails from *Olive Oil For Dummies* which I co-wrote with Dr. Simon Poole, and relies on the rich, butter flavors of the Taggiasca olive to improve the taste, texture, and nutrient quotient of this warm-weather dessert. As we enter the summer season this

is the perfect decadent recipe to have on hand. Buon appetite a tutti!

Olive Oil Gelato with Homemade Chocolate Taggiasca Sauce

PREP TIME: 15 MIN,

PLUS CHURN TIME.

COOK TIME: 10 MIN.

YIELD: 8 SERVINGS

(MAKES 3½ QUARTS)

INGREDIENTS

- 3½ cups whole milk
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 cup granulated sugar, divided
- 10 large egg yolks
- 1 teaspoon unrefined sea salt
- 1½ teaspoons pure vanilla extract (optional)
- ¼ cup Taggiasca or other good-quality extra-virgin olive oil, plus extra for drizzling
- Ravida Sea Salt or other flaky sea salt

DIRECTIONS

1. Combine the milk and cream in a large heavy bottom saucepan and bring just to a simmer over medium heat. Remove from the heat. Add ¾ cup of the sugar to the milk and bring just to a simmer over medium heat, stirring to dissolve the sugar.
2. Meanwhile, whisk the egg yolks, the remaining ¼ cup sugar, and the salt together in a medium

heatproof bowl. Gradually whisk in about 1 cup of the hot milk mixture, then return the mixture to the saucepan and cook, stirring constantly with a heatproof spatula or a wooden spoon, until the custard registers 185 degrees on an instant-read thermometer.

3. Immediately strain the custard through a fine-mesh strainer into a heatproof bowl. Stir in the vanilla extract, if using, and chill over an ice bath, stirring occasionally, until cold. Cover and refrigerate for at least 6 hours, preferably, overnight.
4. Freeze the gelato in an ice cream maker according to the manufacturer's instructions, stopping to add the olive oil about halfway through the freezing process. Pack into a freezer container and freeze for at least 1 hour before serving. (The gelato is best served the day it is made.) Sprinkle a few flakes of sea salt and drizzle with EVOO.
5. Serve the Chocolate Taggiasca Sauce hot over the gelato.

Chocolate Taggiasca Sauce

- 1 (14 ounce) can sweetened condensed milk
- 1 cup dark chocolate chips
- 2 tablespoons Taggiasca, or other good-quality extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract



Place the sweetened condensed milk and chocolate chips in a saucepan over medium heat. Stir constantly until the chocolate chips are melted. Remove from the heat and stir in the olive oil and vanilla until the sauce is glossy.

NOTE: I chose Taggiasca olive oil from Liguria once again for this recipe because of its butteriness that enhances the cream flavor of the milk in the recipe. Serve with prosecco or espresso.



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Italian territories

Welcome to Valtellina with its nature, history, and outdoor adventures

We the Italians Editorial Staff

The Valtellina is an alpine area in Lombardy that stretches from the Swiss canton of Grisons to Lake Como, nestled between the Western Rhaetian Alps and the Bergamasque Alps. A welcoming land rich in ancient traditions, the Valtellina is the ideal destination for those who love

experiencing the mountains in every season.

However, this territory also offers a rich historical, artistic, and architectural heritage, with churches, palaces, and castles that testify to its illustrious past as a crossroads for Europe. To-

day, the Valtellina is a highly sought-after destination in winter due to its stunning ski resorts, but also in summer, when it becomes the perfect spot for outdoor activities.

This valley is considered a true “open-air gym,” as it offers a variety of activities that cater to all its visitors. The green of its pristine nature is accompanied by peaks that rise up to 4,000 meters and small villages with an ancient history. In winter, approximately 400 km of alpine ski slopes and over 200 km dedicated to cross-country skiing attract many winter sports enthusiasts, while in summer, it is an ideal destination for those

who enjoy historical and natural itineraries, as well as cycling and mountain biking.

More than half of the Valtellina territory is covered by parks and nature reserves. Specifically, it hosts the Lombardy section of the Stelvio National Park, the largest in the Alpine range, and the Orobie Valtellinesi Regional Park. In addition, there are seven natural reserves: the Val di Mello Nature Reserve, the Postalesio Pyramids, the Bosco dei Bordighi, the Paluaccio di Oga, the Pian di Gembro in Aprica, the Pian di Spagna, and the Park of the Marmitte dei Giganti in Valchiavenna. Along with its natural and cul-





tural heritage, the region is also rich in gastronomic offerings. This area is home to many local producers and breeders, allowing visitors to discover excellent local products such as bresaola, typical cheeses (Bitto, Casera), pizzoccheri, and apples.

Stretching over 200 km, the Valtellina encompasses a vast and diverse landscape. Valtellina is known for its prominent ski resorts, thermal centers, and numerous mountain villages that have preserved their traditional charm.





Stelvio National Park

With its 130,700 hectares, Stelvio National Park is the largest in the Alpine range, covering both Lombardy and Trentino Alto Adige regions, and also one of the oldest parks in Italy. Most of the park lies above 2,000 meters, reaching its highest point at the summit of Ortles, which stands at 3,905 meters. The park includes 23 municipalities, with 10 in Lombardy and 13 in the provinces of Trento and Bolzano. The park boasts 1,500 km of trails, allowing visitors to explore the area's flora and fauna.

In the Lombardy section, you can find vast coniferous forests at lower altitudes, while as you ascend, there are alpine meadows, rocky scree, snowfields, and glaciers. The park is also

home to numerous sites that were the backdrop for the battles of the Great War, and there are several routes dedicated to discovering the events of the so-called "White War." As for wildlife, the region is home to foxes, ermine, marmots, as well as deer, roe deer, chamois, and ibex.

Orobic Valtellinesi Park

The Orobic Valtellinesi Regional Park extends along the northern side of the Orobic Alps, straddling the provinces of Sondrio, Lecco, Bergamo, and Brescia. Covering about 50 square kilometers, the park includes fourteen valleys, with the main goal of preserving its remarkable biodiversity. At lower altitudes, you can find forests of conifers and





broadleaf trees, while higher up, alpine meadows, gravel fields, and snow hollows appear.

The symbol of the park is the capercaillie, which still finds suitable breeding sites here, while along the trails, you may also encounter roe deer, chamois, and ibex. Well-preserved coniferous forests serve as habitats for the black woodpecker, owls, and martens. The park is also known for producing typical products, such as Bitto cheese made from the milk of Alpine Brown cows, and ricotta, known as maschèrpa. Additionally, high-altitude honey is produced above 1,000 meters.

In the Valtellina, you will find numerous hiking trails to explo-

re on foot or by mountain bike, as well as gastronomic, historical, and religious itineraries. Some trails are simple and suitable for those with little experience or for families with children, while others are multi-day routes that pass through various refuges and some of the most scenic peaks in the Alps.

Those interested in an educational and naturalistic route can visit the Eco-Faunal Observatory in Aprica. The observatory covers an area of about 25 hectares, where you can admire the animals typical of the Orobie Valtellinesi Regional Park. This is certainly an excursion for everyone, but especially for children. The most famous hiking route in the Orobie Valtellinesi Park is the

Gran Via delle Orobie, which spans 130 km at an average altitude of 1,800 meters, connecting Delebio to Aprica. For the more experienced, the Alta Via della Valmalenco offers an eight-stage route totaling 110 km. This itinerary traverses the entire Valmalenco mountain chain, passing through the Disgrazia, Bernina, and Scalino groups.

Finally, the Valtellina is also crossed by the Sentiero Italia, one of the longest trekking routes in the

world, which runs through both the Apennines and the Alps. For a gastronomic itinerary, the Via dei Terrazzamenti is recommended, which passes through the terraced vineyards and villages of the Valtellina. If you wish to spend your days immersed in history and nature, there are numerous trails that retrace the areas of the First World War between the Stelvio Pass and the Ablès Pass in Valfurva.





Italian design

The artisan hand of Dante Mortet

Alberto Improda

Italian design, an extraordinary and distinctive tool of innovation, has deep roots in an ancient history of unique blending between Art and Craftsmanship. This prestigious tradition finds a significant and highly relevant expression today in the figure of Dante Mortet and his “Mano Artigiana” project.

Dante Mortet is the heir of a dynasty of artists and craftsmen with distant origins: the Mortet family moved to Italy from France in the mid-1800s. The Mortet workshop was founded in Florence by Aurelio Mortet, with some of his children taking up wood carving, while Armando and Dante specialized in the art of chiseling.



At the end of the century, the Mortets won a competition and moved to Rome: with the establishment of new ministries during the unification of Italy, the workshop was tasked with creating unique decorative objects for the Ministry of Finance. The 1929 crisis also hit the Mortet workshop, but the family persevered and continued their work from home.

After World War II, Aurelio and Virginio Mortet founded the current Mortet workshop, which has been located for nearly eighty years in the same magnificent place in Rome, on

Via dei Portoghesi, at Palazzo Scapucci, better known as Palazzo della Scimmia.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Dante and his brother Andrea took over the running of the business, with Dante's son, Lorenzo, already beginning to assist them.

Dante Mortet's work has international resonance and develops in many directions, but his most significant and emblematic project is probably the one called "Mano Artigiana" (The Artisan's Hand).

The project focuses on the reproduction and interpretation of the hands of famous people who have left or are leaving a mark on society.

The first hand reproduced by Dante was his father's, followed by works dedicated to great figures such as, among others, Robert De Niro, Martin Scorsese, Ennio Morricone, Quentin Tarantino, Andrea Bocelli, Frankie Valli, and Dustin Hoffman.

In Dante's vision, the craftsman transforms material with his own hand, turning it into a dream for others: thanks to his technical skills, both ancient and modern, the

craftsman creates the object and returns to the client their imagination, their thoughts, interpreting them and transforming them into emotion.

The Artisan's Hand is a powerful symbol, capable of conveying artistic, social, and cultural messages with force and immediacy. A significant example is the sculpture created by Dante Mortet for the city of Latina, which represents the abused hands of migrant workers, invisible and indispensable laborers in the Agro Pontino. Here, the hand serves to redeem the history of these neglected workers, whose dignity has been trampled, humili-



Dante Mortet and Quentin Tarantino



Dante Mortet and Frankie Valli

liated, and underpaid.

Dante shares an especially intense and deep connection with the United States and the Italian American community. One of his most beautiful and captivating projects is titled “We Come from There,” which involves the creation of a three-meter hand to be placed near the Brooklyn Bridge.

The sculpture will symbolize the hands of Italians who emigrated to the United States, hands that built, with sacrifice and passion, a better future for

their families and the American community, while remaining strongly connected to their homeland.

Dante Mortet says with emotion: “It will be a tribute to Italians around the world, to the hands that worked silently to build a new identity without forgetting their roots. A tribute to all the Italians who have been a precious seed in a generous land.”

Dante is also the creator of the new special award from the NIAF (National Italian Ame-



rican Foundation): the Dea Roma, in gilded bronze with a Carrara marble base, inspired by the classical figure of Athena and replicated from the original placed at the center of the Altare della Patria.



But why is the Artisan's Hand project so highly appreciated in America in general, and particularly in the United States? "Because it tells the story of the manual work of Italian-Americans, who are too often only associated with pizza, spaghetti, and the mafia. In reality, Italian-Americans are their hands; they represent a craftsmanship that brought artistic skills and

craftsmanship to America, a generous seed that developed concrete and sustainable economies. Italians in America redeemed with their hands and craftsmanship the dignity of many emigrant families," the artist proudly responds. Moreover, Dante adds: "The hand is Italy: it unites eyes, mind, and heart to create emotions."

The parallel between the hand and Italy is a particularly fitting metaphor, which lends itself to being interpreted on a large scale. In Dante's vision, the hand is not only the physical tool to perform one's work but also represents the deepest essence and the truest emblem of the Italian style.

Saint Francis of Assisi once said: "Whoever works with his hands is a laborer. Whoever works with his hands and his head is a craftsman. Whoever works with his hands, his head, and his heart is an artist."

Italian design, and Dante Mor-tet's work, find their most distinctive signature precisely in this unique blending of hands, head, and heart, that is, Craftsmanship, Technique, and Art.



Kimi Antonelli

Italian sport

Varenne, the Captain turns 30

Federico Pasquali

On May 19th, Varenne turned 30. Born in 1995 in the small town of Copparo, in the province of Ferrara (Emilia Romagna), to an American father, Waikiki Beach (a thoroughbred with a winning pedigree), and an Italian mother, Ialmaz, Varenne - named after a Paris Metro station - became the

symbol of world harness racing, the most successful horse in history, and the most famous trotter in the world. Varenne became a legend in the sport thanks to the numerous records he broke and his incredible career both as an athlete and as a stallion.



Varenne's debut on the track was far from glorious: on April 4, 1998, in Bologna, he started well but was disqualified for briefly trotting in a gallop, which is not allowed in harness racing. So, when Varenne was first presented at an auction in Sweden, no one wanted to buy him. He had a strange gait, appeared uncoordinated, and seemed unpromising, so his first owner sold him without much regret. He was bought by an Italian, Enzo Giordano, who, after seeing him, realized that the horse had something special. He paid 150 million Italian lira (about \$80,000), and it was a real bargain. He entrusted him to the Finnish team of trainer Jori Turja, who had moved to Tor San Lorenzo, a small town on the Roman

coast, and from there began a winning story worthy of a film.

Varenne relaxed by listening to Mozart's classical music every day, like a true aristocrat. He didn't like being woken up early and had his own rituals for meals, cleaning, and muscle massages. If anything went off schedule, he would become nervous. Fortunately, with the guidance of Roman driver Giampaolo Minnucci, Varenne quickly found the perfect balance. That synergy between horse and driver became legendary: no changes, no mistakes in races, and an impressive streak of victories that led experts to nickname him "The Captain."

Between 1998 and 2002, Varenne



Varenne and Enzo Giordano



raced 73 times, winning 62 of those (an impressive 85% success rate). These numbers would make any champion, human or equine, pale in comparison. And these weren't local races; he won in 7 different countries, dominating the world's major harness racing arenas. Some of his most iconic victories include two Prix d'Amérique (2001 and 2002), Europe's most prestigious race, two Elitloppet (2001 and 2002), the major Scandinavian event, a Breeders Crown (2001), the prestigious American event, and once the Gran Premio delle Nazioni, the

Gran Criterium, the European Championship, the Italian Derby, and the Gran Premio Lotteria—all of them highly significant international events. On October 14, 2001, in New York, Varenne set the world record for the mile, with 1'09"1 per kilometer: no one had ever trotted so fast on a track of that category. The total earnings from his career exceeded \$6 million, making him the richest trotter of all time.

After his extraordinary career on the track, on September 28, 2002, in Montreal, Cana-



da, before 20,000 spectators who cheered him like a rock star, Varenne ended his racing career with a triumphant display. From there, he began a new career as a stallion. First, at the “Il Grifone” breeding farm in Vigone, Turin, then at the Equicenter Monteleone in Rieti, and today at the LJ breeding farm in Eboli, Salerno. The numbers of his descendants are impressive: over 2,700 registered foals, many of whom have won on the track. Some of his most famous offspring include Lana del Rio, Lisa America, Nadir Kronos, Pascià Lest, Testimonial Ok, and Vernissage Grif—all winners of major harness racing events.

In addition to his titles on the track, Varenne was the first and only horse to win the “Horse of the Year” title in three different countries: Italy, France, and the United States. He entered the collective imagination, appearing on trading cards, gadgets, posters, and even in a TV series for kids. Today, at the age of 30, he is still sharp, in great shape, and beloved by all. Some compare him to Fausto Coppi, Diego Armando Maradona, and even Muhammad Ali. But Varenne will always remain Varenne, a unique and unmatched horse and athlete.



IT and US

Pope Leo XIV, the first Italian American pope

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Pope Leo XIV also has Italian ancestry, similar to Pope Francis, who came from across the world. Robert Francis Prevost's grandfather was born in Italy on June 24, 1876, the feast day of St. John, the patron saint of Turin. The individual listed as John R. Prevost in a death certifica-

te and a 1950 census could very well have been born in Italy as Giovanni Prevosto.

There are also similarities with a Giovanni Pietro Felice Prevosto from Settimo Rottaro, a small town in the province of Turin. In the early 20th century, many

individuals with the “Prevosto” surname left this area. Immigration archives, like those from Ellis Island, show a substantial number of people arriving from there, where the surname Prevosto is quite common, likely originating from the ecclesiastical title “prevosto,” which referred to the office of provost.

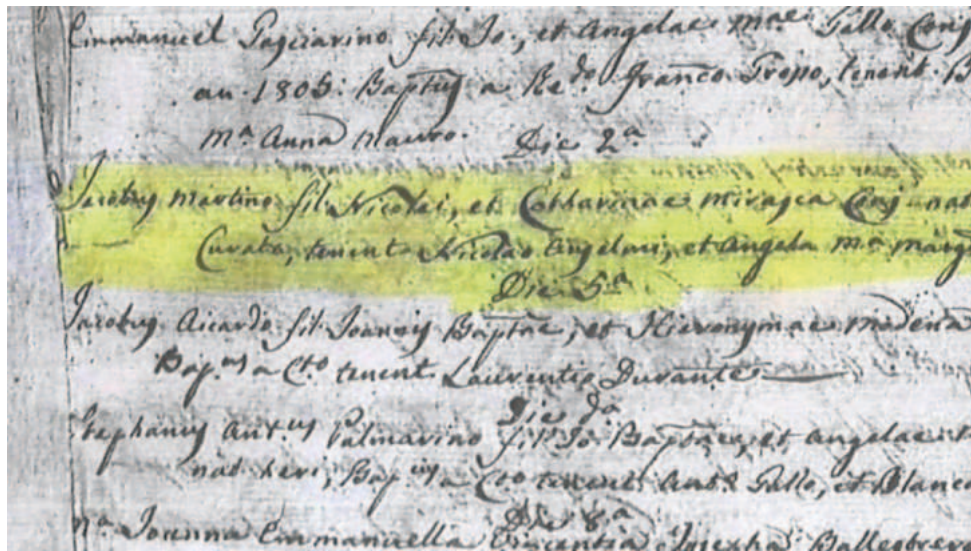
Eventually, Giovanni, a professor of languages, emigrated from Europe to the United States, where he passed away on May 22, 1960. He married Suzanne Louise Marie Fabre, and their son, Louis Marius Prevost, was born in Chi-

cago in 1920. Louis married Mildred Agnes Martinez in 1949, and from that union, the newly elected pope was born in Chicago in 1955. It’s another tale of migration, similar to Jorge Bergoglio’s.

This makes the new pope, Leo XIV, not only the first American pope but also the first Italian American pope.

But there’s even more. This is further explained by Charles Marsala, Ambassador of We the Italians in Louisiana. “Much is being written and on TV about Pope Leo’s connection to New Orleans. With





some research, I found that one of his maternal great-great-grandfathers, Giacomo Martino, was born in 1806 in San Remo Italy.” Charles says. “It appears Giacomo Martino’s name became Jac-

ques Martinez in the 1820s after he arrived in New Orleans. He married Marguerite Cadeneth and had a son, Jacques Jr. in 1823. Jacques Jr. married Marie Rosa



Ramos in 1840 and had a son named Joseph in 1864. Joseph was born in Haiti. Perhaps this had something to do with the War for Southern Independence. It appears the family left New Orleans during the war and returned back to New Orleans following the war. Jacques Martinez would have been 37-years old when the war started, which is an age that normally is considered eligible for being drafted or part of the European Brigade that became New Orleans auxiliary police force in 1862.

However, by 1861, Jacques and Marie Rosa had six children un-

der ten years old. For the safety of the children, they may have left America during the war. Joseph would marry Louise Baquie in 1887. They moved to Chicago where Pope Leo's mom was born and married another Italian American. Two of Pope Leo's aunts were nuns."

Pope Leo XIV has also been connected to a relative who lives in Italy: Carmen Cecilia Cristina Prevost Navea, born in 1961 in Peru, who has lived in San Severino Marche since 2015. She says that she shares a great-grandfather with the pope.



Carmen Cecilia Cristina Prevost Navea



Interview with John Calvelli

Happy 50th anniversary to the NIAF and welcome to John Calvelli, its new Chairman of the Board

Umberto Mucci

NIAF (National Italian American Foundation) is the most important organization representing the Italian American community, and this year it celebrates its 50th anniversary.



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50 YEARS OF
ITALIAN
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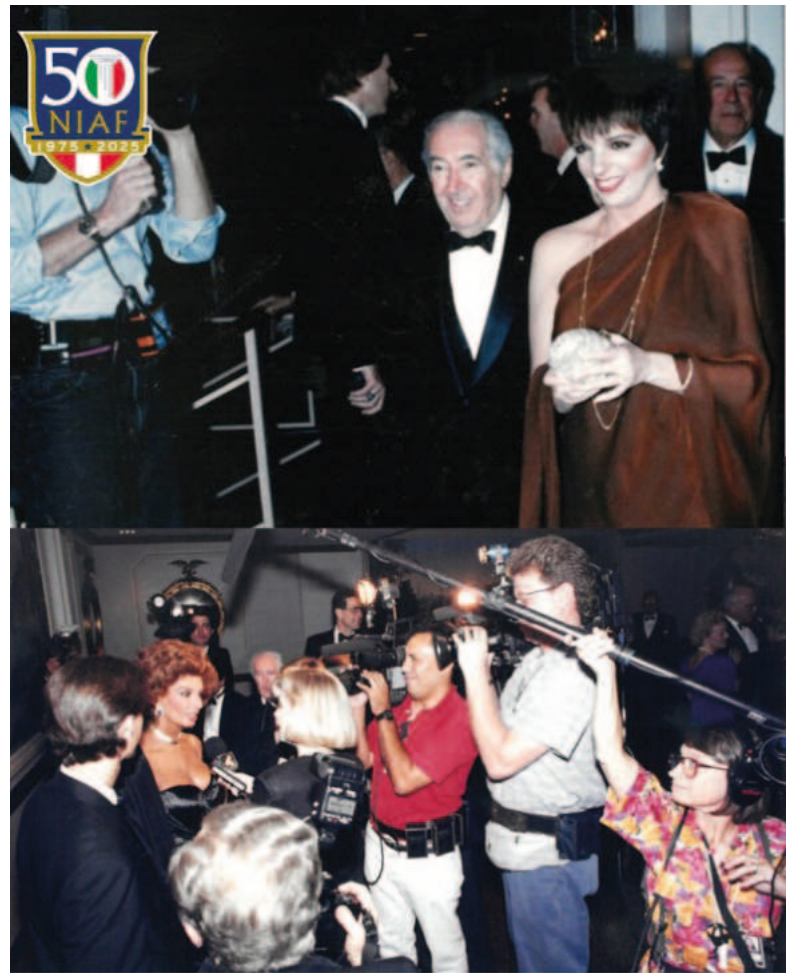


2025 is also a year of change for its Chairman of the Board, and since last April, this crucial role has been held by one of the best people I know: John Calvelli.

John is an extraordinary leader with many qualities, the perfect person to lead the NIAF board during this anniversary and in this period of revolution in the relationship between Italy and the US. Navigating these times is complicated; we all need leadership, competence, intelligence, and passion. Kudos to the NIAF friends for choosing a leader who embodies these qualities.

Good morning John, welcome back to We the Italians and congrats on your absolutely well-deserved appointment. I would like to start by asking you about your family's origins: which part of Italy are your roots from?

My parents are both from Calabria, from a small town called Vico di Aprigliano, right at the foothills of the Sila mountain. They emigrated to the United States at different times: they were referred to as “birds of passage”. On my father’s side, my great-grandfather and my great-great-grandfather came to America and then went back, then my great-grandfather came back here in the US and he passed away, so my grandfather in Italy was an only child. The idea of America was very traumatic for him.



On my mother’s side, the situation was very similar. My great-grandfather came here, my grandfather came here, but again back and forth, back and forth.

My mother was in Italy during World War II and then was able to come to America in the in 1947. I always share her story because I think it is very telling of the American experience, especially during that time. Her father, my grandfather, had a dairy farm in upstate New York and it was a small community that was made up of mostly Dutch-German farmers that had come over in the 17th century. In that community there were a few Italian immigrants like us, and then there were Jewish children



who had lived through the Holocaust, so I get very emotional thinking about it. My mother was in a one room schoolhouse with these children, she had been in America only three months and was taught the Pilgrim's Pride so that they could recite it at Thanksgiving. Being accepted into this community and living the tragedy of leaving Italy and the difficulties was hard for her, but then she was able to put all of this in context by seeing it within the eyes of these children, who by the grace of God were still alive and able to come to America, where they were given an opportunity to start a new life.

When I was a child, we moved back to Italy, because my mother and especially my father felt that it was important to try to return. But then, after nine months, he realized that that was not the appropriate thing to do. So we spent about a little under a year and a half in Italy. I went to kindergarten in Calabria and then we came back to America. And I, again, have this very, very vivid immigrant experience where I left by boat and came back by boat and my father was waiting for us at the pier in Manhattan. So I remember this sense of reconnecting to the United States after having lived overseas, I feel that I have lived in a very real way that immigrant experience.

2025 is an important year: NIAF, of which you have just been named Chairman of the Board, is celebrating its 50th anniversary. Through you, we extend our congratulations to everyone who is currently part of, or has been part of, this extraordinary organization. Could you share with our readers the story of these first 50 years?

We have to always put all of this in context and go back to 1975 and fully understand the

Italian American experience at that time; where were as a community, what was needed and what was required.

I think what NIAF did was to fill a need that is still very relevant 50 years later, which is to have a voice for the Italian American community in Washington, DC to serve as the secretariat for the Italian American congressional delegation, to be this bridge between the United States and Italy where we respected, promoted, and preserved the past but really look at the present and towards the future so that we would build stronger linkages between our two nations.

That vision of 1975 is the same vision of 2025, and through different moments in time, we can look at different things that we have accomplished. So, for example, we've been very active on Capitol Hill providing policy recommendations and briefings, bringing Italian and Italian Americans together with leaders in various fields.

We have been supportive of Italy in moments of crisis in terms of what was happening during natural tragedies that hit Italy in the last 50 years.



But I think one of the most important thing from that period was this idea that Italy was a bulwark for social democracy and that we wanted to make sure that those linkages between the United States and Italy were strong, especially during the period of the Cold War. Now we fast forward 50 years and Italy is now a leader in Europe as it was then, but even more so now, it is seen as a staunch ally of the United States on the front lines of many crises around the world. In every international scenario, Italy has a voice and a seat at the table. And I would rather,



as an American, see Italy in line with us and we in line with Italy because we are stronger together than apart.

If we think about all of these various components, we realize where are today, also thanks to 50 years of commitment of NIAF. I think I have been to every NIAF gala since 1985. So I have been going for 40 years. And the power of seeing the President of the United States, the Prime Ministers of Italy, leaders from Italy coming together and reinforcing and reaffirming that connection between our two nations, that alone

would be enough. I can clearly see the big importance of these moments where people come together to share what their vision and mission is. So if we just did that, that would be exemplary, but we do obviously much more than that.

In the last five years we have seen this real move towards leadership thanks to the relationship with The European House Ambrosetti, identifying issues that need a bit more definition, exploration, data. That has been an eye-opener for us because we learned so much about who we are and also how to strengthen those bonds. When we talk about these linkages between Italy and the United States, they come in different levels or different forms. We have historically talked about the cultural connections and historical connections, and that needs to be continued because as much as I admire other languages, Italian is the language of culture. So that is one very important pillar, and we have signed an agreement with the Dante Alighieri Society to help expand the opportunities to learn the Italian language in the US.

How and when will you celebrate this important anniversary here in Lazio, your region of honor this year?



What better region to have as our region of honor than the one where the capital of Italy is, the political center of Italy... and obviously we will also celebrate Rome in Washington, D.C. in October 2025. While we are in Rome, we will be meeting with regional and national business, civic and political leaders.

We are excited to continue to celebrate and to identify new ways of working together. In April we had our New York gala and together with it we had our business conference with the Lazio region. It was fascinating because we did a mini Shark Tank, which is an American program where people come and “pitch” their product

or their company in a compressed timeframe. We did that with a series of Italian companies from Lazio with these young, dynamic, passionate leaders, business leaders who are trying to make their mark. If we, as Italian Americans, can support that, we are all better off because the products that they are promoting will make life better, not just for Italians, but for Americans and the whole planet.

What are the goals you have set for the years you will be Chairman of the Board?

I think that the best answer I can

give you is to read you a part of my speech at the board meeting that elected me.

Our heritage is the glue that binds us. And we believe fervently that our shared heritage is of inestimable value. Our experiences in this great nation have shown what can be accomplished by an immigrant community. Our brothers and sisters in Italy have been a beacon for us, uniting our two nations under a shared set of values that makes us both nations, makes both nations stronger.

But being here is already a statement. Everywhere around this table is a leader. Leadership is an



honor and a duty. The honor to serve our community and the duty to serve the mission. Simple yet audacious goal for me is to build a pathway to the future. And to do that, I mentioned three goals.

Number one: how do we make sure that our nations and our community have the leadership they require to thrive? We need to continue to identify and nurture those future leaders. I shared a photo of me at NIAF at 21 years old, 40 years ago. And I said to myself, if my 21 year old self were here now, he would ask for one thing. Don't forget the youth. They are our future. Now that I have assumed this role, I hope not to let him down. So that is number one, this idea of looking to the future and engaging young professionals.

Number two: promoting our language, ensuring that our culture is not lost.

Number three: ensuring the financial stability and growth of the organization.

And then I asked a simple question, can I actually accomplish this? And the simple answer is no. I cannot do it alone. In the words of our colleague Giovanni Colavita, "alone you go fast, together we go farther". So I am incredibly optimistic that together we can go farther, building upon the incredible work that has already been accomplished.

NIAF has been on this journey for 50 years. What will the next 50 years bring? What we do together in the coming years will help answer





that question. I look forward to being on this journey with all of you.

That was part of my little speech when I accepted.

It seems that, even without any political judgment, we can say that this year, the relations between the United States and Italy, as well as with Europe, are rapidly evolving into something very different from what they have been in recent decades. What are your thoughts on this?

I think that the only constant in life is change. So I think relationships evolve, and change. But if the fundamental values and the bedrock of the relationship are there, then we will work through those changes. And my hope

is that we will come out stronger on the other end. But there is no doubt that we are in a moment of change. That is probably as far as I would want to go at this point. But I think that for the last 80 years there has been an understanding of the importance of this transatlantic relationship. And I think we can see that even more today. Moving forward, Italy is not the same Italy of 1948. So therefore, Italy has changed and evolved. The United States has changed and evolved. And I think that as long as there are people of goodwill, and I believe that there are on both sides of the Atlantic, and there are organizations like the National Italian American Foundation, I think we are in a much stronger position to help ensure that those bonds stay strong and that we stay united.

One of the latest issues that has greatly concerned the Italian American community is the recent decree on dual citizenship, which risks leaving millions of Italian Americans without the official recognition of something that is already real in their hearts: that they are Italians. What does NIAF think about this, and what are you doing about it?

Having spent my life in government and being counsel and chief of staff of a Congressman on the foreign affairs committee, I have been around international politics pretty much my whole life. And therefore, I come to this with a deeper appreciation of what Italy is going through.

What does that mean? Number one, the challenges in South America, especially with the huge number of people that have been applying. That is a reality. All I can speak to is what I have read, but the numbers are staggering. I think that Brazil alone has 100,000 applications in progress. And I have also learned that in the Veneto region, I believe 80% of all of the work being done at the local judicial level is literally on citizenship. So I appreciate the challenges and I appreciate the concern.

As an Italian American, we have a bit of a different reality here whereby I think there is over 10,000 people in the New York Italian Consulate alone that are waiting for their papers to be processed, so therefore there is a significant number here as well. Here in the United States, the idea of being Italian from the very beginning has been the idea that you are linked to Italy, and that link continues through the generations.

It is a situation that is untenable in many respects. My response to that is, let's figure out how to fix the system, how to make the system more efficient, ways and modalities that will make life easier for the people trying to apply and for the Italian Government. So that would be my first reaction to those issues.

The second, which I think is also a challenge, is going back so many generations, could you see going back, as opposed to five or more, three or four? I think there is a middle ground between what is being suggested now and where we were before. And I think like-minded people of goodwill can come together and find that middle ground.

Then you also look at these people that have spent a significant amount of money and shown their interest. I have one case of a friend, literally two years on the waiting list: two years! There is something fundamentally wrong. As an Italian and an Italian American, one of the things that we pride ourselves on is respect, but more importantly is fairness. And it just doesn't seem fair to these people that have really expressed that will of being Italians.

On top of that, there is a whole other group of people, my parents included, that had to renounce their citizenship in order to get American citizenship. These people were and are very connected to Italy, but had to give up their Italian citizenship because of the laws in the country where they were living, where they had to go to create a new life for themselves.

So what is NIAF doing? What we are doing is what we always do. We are bringing this issue to the attention of the Italian American Congressional Delegation to inform our elected officials that this has a significant impact on thousands, if not millions, of their constituents. Also, we are in dialogue with the Italian government and senior leaders in

the Italian Parliament to share our perspective on what's happening. We also very much understand this is an Italian issue that needs to be dealt with by Italians in the Italian government, but obviously we should have a voice and an opportunity to voice our concerns.

NIAF has been doing that literally from the moment in March that the decree was proposed by Foreign Minister Tajani. Our leaders are working on this matter and providing appropriate input. And then, of course, we have the connection with the Italian Embassy in Washington: we have been in constant dialogue with them as well. People are hearing us and understand the concern that good people are being negatively impacted.

Another delicate and important issue is the one concerning Christopher Columbus. You have always fought in his defense, achieving great results in his favor, both in New York City and beyond. Do you believe there is a future in which this campaign against the man that many Italian Americans have chosen as their hero will come to an end?

First of all, every community ne-



eds to be vigilant to make sure that they are telling their story in an authentic way and not having their story told by others. That is the most important thing. We need to be able to have a seat at the table to tell our story and share who we are and what we do.

I served on the New York Monuments Commission at a very difficult time, and I was able to bring along and help educate members of that commission that when they entered the room were not supportive and wanted to get rid of the Columbus statue in Columbus circle, and then

at the end voted to maintain it. I want to be very clear. That is an important statement about the need to have the ability to sit down and break bread and dialogue with people. It was not unanimous, but it was a victory for us and a victory for what I feel is common sense.

I think that Columbus Day is a day for Italian Americans to celebrate their pride and their heritage, a day that celebrates when the Columbian Exchange began, that this radical moment that changed world history. If we think about a few moments in time that chan-



ged world history, obviously people would say the birth of Jesus Christ, Muhammad, the Buddha. These are elements from a religious context that you could say were life-global changing. Who can argue that Columbus' arrival in America did not change the history of the world? It is a fact, and I would say, on balance it changed it for the better. With that arrival, there is good and there is bad. I am willing to articulate that good things and bad things happen, that we have a responsibility to tell the complete story.

What is also important as we are telling that story, is that this is a 15th-century explorer. This is not a 21st-century New Yorker. The arc of justice has curved toward greater respect for civil rights in these past five centuries. So understanding that there are 500 years between his reality and our reality, let's have a conversation. Let's talk. Let's understand where we are. Let's appreciate these various components.

What I said to the people on that commission, and I say it today, is



that eliminating that statue is eliminating my heritage as an Italian American and my heritage as a Catholic, because people seem to forget that the Ku Klux Klan and the more radical elements in our society were against Catholics and against Jews and immigrants and targeted Columbus as a symbol to be eliminated.

And then, who paid for many of those statues? It was our grandparents and great-grandparents that were looking for respect and to be accepted in this country. For them, celebrating Columbus Day meant to reaffirm their rightful place in this country.

NIAF is the most important, powerful, and structured association representing the community of millions of Italian Americans. What can Italy do to send a further signal of recognition and ap-



preciation to all of them?

I will tell you that I am incredibly blessed to see the relationship between the United States and Italy blossoming over the 35 years that I have been involved. During this time, I have seen the Italian government become even more engaged with local communities and looking for ways of increasing those ties. So, I would just say, thank you, on one level.

On another level, I would say, let's keep making that happen. I would also say that the responsibility the Italian government has is really to help promote the language and culture globally, and

Roots tourism





you look at that, and we need to be doing more of that, not less. If we look at what France, China, Germany and others do, Italy needs to find more ways to continue to expand access and interest in the language and culture.

Also, we need to keep building the business linkages between the United States and Italy, and we are doing it: it is happening, and again, the one constant is change. The business environment changes every day. The opportunities change every day, so we need to be agile and work together with

the Italian government and with the American business community, and that is one of the great skills and abilities that NIAF has. I'm very appreciative of what the Italian government and the Italian communities at large have done. I would love to find new and interesting ways to expand more: for example, I am thinking about the Roots Tourism. I find that to be an incredibly powerful way of building linkages. I have done that for a couple of my friends. I have assisted them as they returned to their ancestral home towns. It is life-changing.



It helps put all of this other work in perspective on why we care about Italy. One of our NIAF challenges over the next four years will be finding more ways to do that. But it is literally not just our challenge, it is really a community challenge, and I would be remiss if I didn't say that we have been fortunate to partner with incredible Italian American organizations, such as the Order of Sons and Daughters of Italy, UNICO, the National Organization of Italian American Women and the Columbus Citizens Foundation. We have really found common ground with these organizations. There is a unity of purpose and a shared vision to move forward.

I'll repeat the question, but on a much smaller scale: what can We

the Italians do to better promote here in Italy the importance of the Italian Americans?

I think the interesting question with media today is: are they just a megaphone? I would strongly suggest they have to be a megaphone, but also what you and I are doing here, this conversation, asking critical questions to help move the conversation forward. We need to have the ability as Italians and Italian Americans to reflect and have a period of self-assessment. What is working, and what is not? Why should we be doing this over that? It is important for us as a community, on both sides of the Atlantic, for our own growth and maturation.

Therefore, my answer to you is: keep doing what you are doing!

The 2024 yearbook of We the Italians

Two flags, One heart



THE 2024 YEARBOOK

BY UMBERTO MUCCI



We the  Italians

THE 2024 YEARBOOK

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Italian wine

The Abruzzo of wines, with king Montepulciano leading the way

We the Italians Editorial Staff

The total vineyard area in Abruzzo exceeds 32,000 hectares, with nearly 96% of it located on hills and 4% dedicated to mountain viticulture. The total wine production exceeds 2.6 million hectoliters, of which 38% are DOP wines, 15% IGP wines, 30% red and

rosé wines, and 70% white wines. The vineyard area of Abruzzo is made up of 32,000 hectares, with 4% in the mountains and 96% in the hills.

The history of viticulture in Abruzzo dates back to the Ro-

man era, and since then, Abruzzo wines have been mentioned in the writings of authors from every era, starting with Polybius, who referenced the wines while narrating Hannibal's actions during the Battle of Cannae (216 BC). In 1596, Andrea Bacci in his work *De naturali vinorum historia de vinis Italiae* spoke about the wines of Sulmona and the Peligni region, while in 1792, Michele Torcia described the presence of the Montepulciano grape in Abruzzo for the first time. From the 1800s onward, there have been numerous references to Montepulciano, which became the symbol of this region from the early 1900s.

Among the Abruzzo wine denominations, the most famous is the Montepulciano d'Abruzzo Colline Teramane DOCG, whose wine must undergo one year of maturation in wood before being released to the market, compared to the Montepulciano d'Abruzzo DOC. From Montepulciano, the Cerasuolo d'Abruzzo DOC rosé is also





produced, a fruity, fresh, soft, well-bodied wine that pairs well with all dishes.

Other DOCs in the region include Trebbiano d'Abruzzo DOC, Controguerra DOC (with its various types of products, ranging from passito to sparkling wine, using either indigenous or international grape varieties, focusing on the territorial nature of the product as it is confined to just five municipalities). Recently, an additional denomination, Abruzzo DOC, was introduced, encompassing all the indigenous grape varieties of the region, including in sparkling and passito styles.

Abruzzo has two DOCG designations: the already mentioned Montepulciano d'Abruzzo Coline Teramane DOCG and the Terre Tollesi or Tullum DOCG, created in 2019 from the existing DOC, along with seven DOCs and eight IGTs.

From a viticulture perspective, Abruzzo can be divided into two distinct zones: the first is the Teramano region, and the second includes the areas of Pescara and Chieti.

In the first zone, heading south from the north of the province of Teramo, lies the historic area of Montepulciano, represented



by the DOCG Montepulciano d'Abruzzo Colline Teramane, where Montepulciano can be blended with a maximum of 10% Sangiovese. The wine must be aged for a minimum of one year, and three years for the Riserva version. Montepulciano (minimum 70%) forms the basis for red, rosé, novello, and passito wines. The white wines, still, passito, and sparkling, are based on the Trebbiano grape, which is widely cultivated throughout the region. The varietal wines from this denomination use both indigenous varieties, such as Pe-

corino and Passerina, and international ones, such as Cabernet, Merlot, and Chardonnay.

The Montepulciano d'Abruzzo DOC and Trebbiano d'Abruzzo DOC designations cover almost the entire region, excluding the mountainous internal areas of the Gran Sasso, Velino, and Majella mountain ranges, which reach altitudes close to 3,000 meters. These two denominations are reserved for varietal wines made from the respective grape varieties, including in the superiore and riserva types. Monte-



pulciano is also the base for one of Italy's most famous rosé wines, Cerasuolo d'Abruzzo DOC, produced in the same DOC area as Montepul-

ciano and appreciated for its delicacy and structure.

Regarding the second zone, the province of Pescara produ-



ces Montepulciano, including in the Riserva type, in the two subzones of the DOC Montepulciano d'Abruzzo, Terre dei Vestini and Casauria. In the same areas, under the DOC Trebbiano d'Abruzzo, Trebbiano also reaches the highest levels of excellence, with base, superiore, and riserva types. The Terre dei Peligni and Alto Tirino subzones are located in the province of L'Aquila, with vineyards located in foothill areas at the foot of some of central Italy's highest mountain ranges. The Teate subzone is in the province of Chieti, which is also home to the region's second, very recent DOCG, Terre Tollesi or Tullum. The denomination surrounds Tollo, a small hilltop town 5 km from the Adriatic coast. It includes four types of wine: two whites, based on indi-

genous grape varieties Passerina and Pecorino, two reds, the base and riserva versions, both based on Montepulciano, and a white sparkling wine made from Chardonnay (minimum 60%).

The province of Chieti is the most important viticulturally, as it accounts for over 80% of the region's production. In addition to the already mentioned Terre Tollesi or Tullum DOCG, it is home to the DOC Ortona, on the Adriatic coast, with a red wine made from Montepulciano and a white from Trebbiano. Lastly, still in Chieti province, is the DOC Villamagna, located on the hills just south of the city, with a red wine made from Montepulciano, also available in a riserva version.





Italian good news

Beauty that heals. Art and medical care in Italian hospitals

We the Italians Editorial Staff

An artwork can help patients suffering from serious illnesses, such as cancer or degenerative diseases. It makes a patient feel better because it stimulates the same brain areas as seeing a loved one. Visiting exhibitions

and events, listening to concerts, watching a movie, or attending a theater performance can slow down aging and the onset of health problems. This principle is supported by scientific evidence produced by research and will





now be used by “Arte e Salute.” It is a new Italian project promoted by a committee of four scientific directors in Rome.

The goal of the project is to create a new and more conscious integration between art and medical care among various experts. It also aims to improve the quality of life and well-being of patients, caregivers, and healthcare workers through visual art in Italian hospital settings. Rome will be the first city involved in the project, with other areas of the country possibly following. A figurative work of art in a hospital or medical office environment makes the patient feel at ease. It can reduce anxiety, improve

communication between doctors and patients, and increase the satisfaction of medical and healthcare staff. All of this results in an improvement in therapeutic and pharmacological effectiveness, for example, in the treatment of various cancers.

The project aims to create more sustainable care environments and more humane contexts for those who need to frequent them for varying lengths of time. The same applies to healthcare workers in Italy, who often have to carry out their duties in difficult environments. By introducing works of art, it is possible to improve a hospital. Technology will also help in this effort to beau-

tify healthcare facilities. In the coming weeks, hospitals and museums in Rome will be selected. In the chosen healthcare facilities, video monitors will be installed in oncology departments, dialysis units, and day hospitals. Filming will also take place within museums and art galleries, and videos will be made featuring artwork, footage, documentaries, recordings of painting cycles, music, and cultural-historical-artistic documentaries.

The monitors will be transformed into “digital paintings” where everyone can view the beauty of Rome’s immense cultural heritage. Additionally, in suitable hospital areas, exhibitions and small art displays will be organized for patients, families, and healthcare workers to admire. Finally, visi-

ts to museums will be organized, and health awareness and prevention campaigns will be launched. The principles behind the project are the humanization of hospital environments and the care of the person, not just the illness.

“Beauty that heals” must become a reality in our country, which boasts an extraordinary and unparalleled artistic and cultural heritage. We have this immense privilege that we can use to benefit millions of people. It’s no coincidence that the project starts in Rome, the city of art and beauty par excellence. Throughout the project, participants in the selected hospital departments will be given a questionnaire. Data will be collected and analyzed in a medical-scientific study conducted by a multidisciplinary team.





Italian economy

Italy between recovery and uncertainty

Fabrizio Fasani

In recent weeks, Italy's economy has sent very important signals. For the Italian American community that looks at Italy not only with affection but also with cultural, economic, and entrepreneurial interest, now is the right time to understand what is

happening.

Some are investing, others are seeking opportunities, some dream of returning or creating a new bridge between the two shores of the Atlantic. And today, more than ever, it is crucial

to read clearly the signals coming from Rome, Milan, Turin, and Naples.

A recovering economy... but at two speeds

Over the past month, analysts have been focused on two main facts: the rise in PMI (Purchasing Managers' Index) for the services and manufacturing sectors - both surpassing expectations - and, in contrast, a decline in retail sales, suggesting some consumer fatigue.

The services PMI, which rose from 52.0 to 52.9, is a positive sign. It means that companies in this sector - representing nearly 70% of Italy's GDP - are receiving more

orders, especially in areas related to tourism, business services, and hospitality. Italy is once again attracting attention this spring, and with the Jubilee Year in play, it is preparing for a peak tourist season. This is especially relevant for many Italian Americans managing business relationships, cultural experiences, or academic exchanges between the United States and Italy.

Manufacturing, although still in negative territory (the PMI rose to 49.3 but remains below the 50 threshold), is showing signs of revival. After months of slowdown due to Germany's slowdown, the energy crisis, and reduced global demand, Italian companies are starting to





grow again.

Exports remain strong in key sectors such as agri-food, precision mechanics, and pharmaceuticals, sectors where many Italian American entrepreneurs already collaborate with Italian suppliers.

Domestic consumption: the real area for improvement

However, as always, not everything is as bright as it seems. Italian household spending, or domestic demand, is on the decline. Retail sales data from March, published just a few days ago, show a monthly drop of 0.5% and an annual decline of 2.8%. This means Italians are buying less. While inflation has slowed, its effects are still being felt. Real wages are not keeping up. Families are more cautious, saving more, and postponing purchases.

For those viewing Italy as a potential market or as a base for economic activity, this is a factor that should not be overlooked: the strength of the economy does not depend only on exports or tourism, but also on the confidence of local consumers. And today, this confidence does not seem very strong.

GDP growth, but with caution

The GDP data for the first quarter of 2025 (+0.3% compared to the previous quarter) exceeded expectations, but it remains modest. Italy is growing, yes, but at a slower pace compared to other European countries. The government has already revised its full-year estimate to +0.6%, down from the +0.7% forecast for 2024. The factors weighing on this growth include geopolitical uncertainties, international trade tensions, and the

slow pace at which investments under the PNRR (National Recovery and Resilience Plan) are turning into real growth.

The job market is holding up, but with many temporary contracts and youth unemployment still at 22%. Structural reforms are advancing slowly, and the high public debt continues to limit the government's ability to implement expansionary measures.

What does it mean for Italian Americans?

For those living in the United States and maintaining a connection to Italy -whether emotional, familial, entrepreneurial, or cultural - these signals should be read from two perspectives.

There are opportunities: tourism is growing again, along with all related services. Italy remains one of the strongest global brands in terms of lifestyle, fashion, food, and culture. There are regions, from Southern Italy to small towns in the Center, that are seeking investors, start-ups, and ideas, even from those living abroad who want to “re-enter” with a new spirit. Universities, innovation centers, and cultural foundations are working to open new transatlantic bridges.

On the other hand, structural difficulties must also be taken into account: a still complex bureaucracy, weak domestic demand, and a constantly evolving regulatory framework. Anyone wanting to do business with or in Italy today, more than ever, needs strong local partners, careful planning, and a real understanding of regional dynamics (which often vary more than expected between the North and South, between cities and provinces).

Looking ahead: the transition challenge

One final point must be emphasized: Italy is inevitably undergoing a transition. Digital, ecological, and productive. PNRR funds, although not yet fully operational, are beginning to transform infrastructure, schools, hospitals, and energy systems. Italian businesses are being called upon to innovate, become more sustainable, and truly internationalize. And they are doing so with the creativity and process innovation that has always set them apart, characteristics that are unique to our country.

This is a field where the Italian American community can play a decisive role. By sharing expertise, models, and capital. But also by acting as a “bridge” between two worlds that have much to learn

from each other.

In summary, it is necessary to stay connected, with realism and vision: Italy today is neither in crisis nor in full boom. It is in a fragile equilibrium, which can become an opportunity or a risk depending on the choices that will be made. For those looking at Italy with both heart and head, now is the time to stay connected. To un-

derstand, deepen, and choose. Without illusions, but with informed confidence.

The Italian American community has already made, and can continue to make, a significant contribution. As ambassadors, entrepreneurs, narrators, and human and professional bridges. Italy also needs you.





Italian historical trademarks

Ferrarini, a legacy of Italian excellence, from Emilia Romagna to the world

Associazione Marchi Storici d'Italia

Since 1956, Ferrarini has been at the heart of Italy's rich culinary tradition. Born in the historic villa of Rivalentella, nestled in the rolling hills of Reggio Emilia, Ferrarini has become one of Europe's most respected producers of Italian cured meats. With a deep-rooted commitment to

quality, authenticity, and innovation, Ferrarini positions itself as a global ambassador for the craftsmanship and passion that define Italy's gastronomic heritage.

Ferrarini is historically renowned for its Prosciutto Cotto di





Alta Qualità, which set a new industry standard when it became the first cooked ham in Italy to be produced without added polyphosphates. This groundbreaking decision, made in the 1960s, transformed Prosciutto Cotto from a lower-tier deli meat into a premium artisanal product, recognized for its purity, tenderness, and rich, delicate flavor.

Beyond Prosciutto Cotto, Ferrarini is also celebrated for its other productions, such as Prosciutto di Parma DOP, Mortadella Italiana, and a variety of artisanal salumi, crafted with time-hono-

red methods passed down through generations. The company's unwavering focus on high-quality ingredients, natural flavors, and slow, traditional processing continues to distinguish Ferrarini in the global market.

Ferrarini is part of Gruppo Pini, a major player in the European pork industry that ensures an integrated supply chain, guaranteeing traceability, quality control, and a direct connection between production and distribution. Under the leadership of Roberto Pini, the group strengthens Ferrarini's ability to maintain the highest standards in Italian char-





cuterie while expanding its global reach.

For generations, Italian food has been an essential part of American culture, a bridge between heritage and home. As Italian cuisine continues to captivate palates across the United States, Ferrarini has become a key player in bringing authentic, high-quality cured meats, cheeses, and dairy products to American consumers. Today, Ferrarini products are featured in specialty retailers,

restaurants, and Italian culinary institutions throughout the U.S., ensuring that Americans and food lovers alike can experience the true taste of Italy.

From gourmet sandwich counters to fine dining establishments, Ferrarini's premium productions are recognized for their uncompromising quality and authentic flavor. The company also partners with leading Italian food retailers, offering U.S. customers a direct connection to

Italy's culinary heritage.

While rooted in tradition, Ferrarini remains at the forefront of innovation in Italian food production. The company has been a pioneer in sustainability and ethical farming practices, carefully selecting responsible suppliers and implementing traceability systems that allow consumers to follow their products from farm to table. Ferrarini has also introduced blockchain technology to certify the authenticity of its sliced salumi imported to the U.S., ensuring complete transparency.

A testament to its enduring legacy, Ferrarini was recently recognized as a Historic Brand of National Interest (Marchio Storico di Interesse Nazionale) by the Italian Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy. This prestigious designation underscores Ferrarini's impact on Italian food culture and its dedication to maintaining the highest standards of excellence.

For Italians operating in the Americas, food is more than just sustenance; it is a celebration of heritage, a connection to family, and a way to honor the flavors of home. Ferrarini is proud to contribute to this rich

cultural tapestry by offering authentic Italian products that embody the passion and tradition of Emilia-Romagna.

Through events, tastings, and collaborations with chefs and food experts, Ferrarini continues to engage with local communities, strengthening ties between Italy and the U.S. Notably, Ferrarini was a sponsor at the 49th National Italian American Foundation (NIAF) event, a gathering that celebrates and promotes Italian heritage in the United States. Additionally, Ferrarini was part of Casa I Wonder's initiative at the latest Sundance Film Festival, further showcasing its dedication to Italian culture and excellence on an international stage.

As Ferrarini expands its presence in the U.S., its mission remains unchanged: to bring the finest Italian cured meats, cheeses, and dairy products to the world while preserving the integrity of traditional production methods. The company's dedication to environmental responsibility and sustainability ensures that future generations can continue to enjoy the richness of Italian gastronomy.



Italian Citizenship Assistance

Parliamentary Discussions and Potential Amendments of 36/2025 Decree on dual citizenship

Italian Citizenship Assistance

On March 28, 2025, the Italian Council of Ministers approved [an emergency decree](#) (decreto-legge) changing the eligibility criteria for Italian citizenship by descent. Now, the decree is being reviewed by the Italian

Parliament, and within 60 days from March 28, they can either adopt the decree into law as is, amend it, or reject it. There have been [ongoing discussions in Parliament](#) regarding the constitutional validity of the decree and

several amendments have already been proposed. This article will explore the specifics of the decree, the legal implications and changes that may arise as the decree is possibly converted into law.

Impact of Decree-law No. 36/2025

To recap the changes made by Decree-law no. 36/2025, prior to March 28, 2025, individuals seeking Italian citizenship by descent only needed to demonstrate an unbroken chain of Italian citizenship to an Italian-born ancestor. There were no generational limits, as long as the ancestor was alive in 1861, the year Italy became a unified nation.

The March 28th decree altered these criteria, limiting eligibility to individuals with an Italian-born parent or grandparent. Additionally, minor children of recognized Italian citizens may be eligible for citizenship only if their parent resided in Italy for at least two years before their birth or if the child was born in Italy.

The decree specifies that the previous rules will apply to applications submitted before 11:59 p.m. Rome time on March 27, 2025 at an Italian consulate, municipality, or court.

Emergency Decree Review Process

Decree-law no. 36/2025 is an emergency decree that was issued by the

Italian Council of Ministers. This is a type of legislation generally used in emergency situations where the provisions take immediate effect. The decree must then be approved by the Italian Parliament within 60 days, during which time Parliament can either adopt it as law, amend it, or reject it altogether.

During this 60-day time period, the Italian Parliament reviews the decree, particularly in relation to its constitutional validity, and can propose amendments to change the decree. If these amendments are voted on and approved by the majority of the Parliament, the decree will be revised accordingly.



Proposed Amendments to Modify the Decree

Throughout these ongoing discussions in Parliament, several amendments have already been proposed to modify the final text of Decree-law no. 36/2025. Particularly many members have recommended a transition period, or “grace period”, for people to submit their citizenship applications. This stems from the retroactive nature of the decree, which many argue violates the Italian Constitution. By creating a retroactive deadline, many people who were already in the process of preparing their citizenship application would now be ineligible to apply under the new criteria. While the government argues the decree is not retroactive because it is removing the ability to apply for Italian citizenship for those who never exercised their right during the previous years, it’s not taking into account those who have taken action to compile or submit their citizenship application. These individuals would be in a different category and should not be treated like the other category of people who never exercised their right to apply for Italian citizenship.

A proposed amendment is addressing this discourse, and may open a pathway for those who made attempts to book citizen-

ship appointments or file a citizenship case before the issuance of the decree, allowing them to use previous eligibility rules. In fact, there is also a strong legal argument to be made that people who took several actions towards filing a citizenship application should be subject to the old rules. These actions could include someone who has already collected their documents, as the documents would have exact date stamps showing they were collected in the recent years or months, or legalized their records with an apostille in the recent months or years. Also, someone could have been in the process of certifying their translations with a notary, which is a clear indication that they were about to file their case. Other significant actions include someone who signed a power of attorney before a notary to give an Italian attorney the right to represent them in their citizenship case at the Italian courts. Additionally, for those who were planning to apply at an Italian consulate, if they booked an appointment prior to the decree but the appointment was far out in the future, or the person was trying to create an account with the consulate or book an appointment but was unable, or the person was in the queue and waiting to be called, these all could be considered clear indications the person was in the process of



submitting their application but they were not able to file, through no fault of their own.

Other amendments have been proposed pertaining to the minor children of recognized Italian citizens that could allow them to be eligible for Italian citizenship. A possible amendment states that it would be sufficient for the parent to register their minor child through their local consulate before the child turns 2 years old or another amendment states before the child has turned 18 years old. In both cases it would be required that the recognized parent is registered with [AIRE \(Registry of Italian Citizens Residing Abroad\)](#).

Finally, some members of the parliament have proposed to allow individuals of Italian descent to apply for recognition of Italian citizenship only if they have an Italian parent or grandparent who was exclusively an Italian citizen throughout their life.

It's important to note that this article has simply highlighted some of the most significant amendments that have been proposed, but there are others being discussed that have not been covered in this article.

Next Steps

Discussions are ongoing in Parliament regarding the constitutional validity of the decree and proposed amendments. There will be a vote on these amendments before the end of this 60-day period. Also, if the decree is converted into law, it will no longer be effective and have a retroactive validity.

For current updates and information on the possible conversion of the decree into law, be sure to visit italiancitizenshipassistance.com, subscribe to our [Podcast](#), or contact us if you have further questions.



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TABLÌ



Italian innovation

The first coffee tablet without any plastic is Made in Italy

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Lavazza chose the 2025 Milan Design Week to celebrate its 130th anniversary with a revolutionary product that is completely Made in Italy. It's called Tablì, an innovative system that redefines the single-serve coffee experience with a tablet made 100% from coffee, com-

pletely eliminating plastic.

No wrapping, no additional materials; it will be paired with a specially developed machine for extraction. Tablì is the result of a five-year research and development journey, which includes over 15 patents.





This project began in 2020 when the Turin-based company acquired the Italian startup Caffemotive, marking the start of the research that led to the creation of the first true “capsule without a capsule.” Tabli combines, through sophisticated technology, compactness, durability, and coffee extraction quality, without resorting to plastic, aluminum, or protective films. The main challenge was to find a compromise between various aspects: the tablet had to be resistant to impacts, compact, and capable of preserving the coffee’s aroma.

In this first phase, Lavazza will target an audience that is attentive to sustainability and premium

quality, with the intention of gradually expanding the system’s reach. The official market launch is scheduled for September 2025 and will initially focus only on Italy.

This Made in Italy revolution was also accompanied by a themed installation at the 2025 Milan Design Week. Visitors were guided through a multisensory journey in three phases: an immersive tunnel, a sculptural fountain symbolizing the water element – essential both for life and for coffee preparation – and finally, the “Coffee Experience,” where visitors could have direct contact with Tabli.



Italian handcrafts

The Belluno eyewear district

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Worldwide, the total production of glasses and lenses is valued at about 10 billion euros. Among all countries, Italy is the largest producer in Europe and the second-largest in the world, but we are number one everywhere if we consider just the luxury segment. The

heart of all this is the Belluno region in Veneto. When you ask where high-quality eyewear is made, two out of three times, you'll find the answer is a company between Belluno and Treviso, where 70% of Italy's eyewear production is concentrated.



Angelo Frescura

The Belluno area has been a fertile ground for the birth of the eyewear industry. The abundance of waterways ensured a constant supply of hydraulic energy. This was combined with the availability of low-cost labor and the strength of the local workforce. Of course, there were also some logistical challenges: the Cadore area (where it all started) was isolated from the main trade routes. However, this turned out not to be an insurmountable obstacle, especially since we're talking about eyeglasses, a product that fits in your hand and weighs just a few dozen grams. Moreover, it's no coincidence that Belluno is in the same region as the Republic of Venice. In Murano, where glass was worked, lenses were also produced. In fact, Venice was Europe's leading producer of lenses in its time.

While it's true that the optical properties of certain materials were recognized as early as Roman times (Pliny the Elder records that Nero used an emerald to better watch gladiatorial games), the first examples of glass lenses appeared in Venice in the late 13th century. At that time, the frames were made from two leather or metal hoops, held in the hand or resting on the nose. Eyeglasses were for scholars and the wealthy, and they soon began to be seen as an ornament as well as



a tool, foreshadowing a trend that would return centuries later.

Between 1800 and 1870, in what would become Italy, there was not a single eyewear factory. It is said that the craftsmen of the island of Murano were the true inventors of corrective lenses, the only ones in the world who shaped glass in every form and size. Unfortuna-



tely, Napoleon's invasion in 1797 led to the fall of the Serenissima. The French blocked trade, and the shops of the master eyeglass makers closed after centuries of flourishing activity. The decline of Venetian craftsmanship created a void in the eyewear sector.

By the late 1800s, eyeglasses were mostly found in large towns, while in small villages, itinerant opticians would provide basic vision tests. It's worth noting that often, the same pair of glasses was used by the whole family. Among these itinerant opticians was also Angelo Frescura.

In 1878, Angelo Frescura founded the first workshop for crafting

eyeglass frames in Calalzo di Cadore, nestled in the Dolomites, a UNESCO World Heritage site. He was determined that Italy should stop importing eyeglasses from abroad. His dream was to restore Italy's identity in eyewear. With remarkable persistence, in one of the least industrialized areas of Italy at the time, he began assembling imported metal frames with lenses he made himself. Over time, the district expanded, and by the 1920s, companies producing eyeglass cases, accessories, and optical equipment began to emerge. By the 1930s, the Belluno eyewear district was already covering 88% of Italy's eyeglass frame production and 53% of eyeglass case production. However, the



true transformation into a district took place in the 1970s. From that point, growth was exponential. In the 1990s, eyewear became a fashion accessory before being a health product. It became a way to express





personality, just like clothing, and made its way onto fashion runways.

There was a boom in sunglasses and branded eyeglasses. Companies started signing contracts with major fashion houses, which changed the dynamics of the industry. Competition became international

and increasingly intense. Companies adapted accordingly. Employment rates rose, but the number of businesses declined, meaning the larger companies began absorbing the smaller ones.

The Belluno eyewear district is known worldwide for its four large,



world-class companies, but many small and medium-sized enterprises also thrive in the area, passing down their expertise and creating innovation. In fact, it is these smaller businesses that add greater value to Made in Italy, especially after the relocation of production processes by major multinational companies.

But a district isn't just about production. It's also a social environment. Soon, optical schools and industrial programs focused on

eyewear creation were established. Certottica, the Italian certification institute for optical products and eyewear research center, was also founded. In short, it's not just about frames, but everything that surrounds them. We've come a long way since Angelo Frescura's first workshop. Today, the Belluno eyewear district is a point of pride for Italy, and between large multinational corporations and artisanal shops, it remains a unique reality in the world.





Italian culture and history

National castle days, exploring Italy's fortified heritage

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Italy is home to structures that are not just relics of the past but also bridges to the future, showcasing human presence from the Paleolithic era to today. These sites tell stories that span across different periods of history. Castles, once symbols of conflict and defense,

are now open to the public, representing spaces of hospitality and knowledge. The country is rich with an astonishing number of fortified buildings, and this heritage often plays a significant role in shaping the tourism of the places where they are located.



Pettorano sul Gizio (Abruzzo)

Spread across protected marine areas, nature reserves, and parks, Italy's vast heritage of castles, fortresses, towers, and fortified villages stretches from sea level to altitudes of up to 800 meters. This month, this treasure trove has been unveiled during the 26th edition of the National Castle Days.

The event has been organized by the Istituto Italiano Castelli in collaboration with associations, municipalities, and various public institutions. The 2025 edition also marks the 60th anniversary of the institute. Over the course of the weekend, volunteers will open the doors to both public

and private fortifications, from the northernmost to southernmost corners of the country, including the islands. Visitors can take part in free guided tours, lectures, book presentations, specialized conferences, and cultural hikes that will lead them through historic sites and villages.

The 42 selected sites and associated events have been carefully chosen by each regional office of the Istituto Italiano Castelli, with a focus on in-depth analysis and the use of a scientific archive that includes thousands of fortified structures, all studied with a multidisciplinary approach.

In the region of Abruzzo, renowned for its watchtowers, a guided tour featured the Cantelmo Castle (9th century), restored in 1998. Overlooking Guardiola Hill, it stands in the fortified village of Pettorano sul Gizio, set within a national park.

In Basilicata the spotlight was on the 4th-century Bernalda Castle, perched above the Basento Valley, as well as the Torre di Mare. Calabria's Rocca Imperiale, with houses arranged in concentric circles on a hill, served as the focal point of activities. Visitors explored the 17th century residence and its underground chambers, the rooms inside the

eastern towers, and the corridor connecting them.

In Campania, the Irpinian castles were highlighted through a tour of the castles of the Sabato Valley, particularly San Barbato, Montefusco, Tufo, Summonte, Mercogliano, and Montefredane. Caracciolo Castle, set atop a rock overlooking the valley, has been restored and boasts a water cistern, offering panoramic views of the surrounding region. The volunteers of the Istituto Italiano Castelli in Campania also organized a "May of Castles," with weekend programs dedicated to the exploration of castles throughout the month.

Rocca Imperiale (Calabria)





Emilia Romagna's National Castle Days featured the Rocca di Meldola. Meldola serves as the ideal base for exploring the Bidente Valley, which is home to villages like Cusercoli, Civitella di Romagna, Santa Sofia, and Galeata, where visitors can see ruins of castles and monasteries, and enjoy breathtaking Apennine landscapes, reaching the Ridracoli Dam and Lake, as well as the Casentino Forests Park.

Friuli Venezia Giulia celebrated the European Capital of Cross-Border Culture, Gorizia-Nova Gorica, by offering tours of Gorizia Castle (11th century). Another stop on the tour was Kromberk Castle, just outside Nova Gorica (13th century),

located in Slovenia, marking the first time the event crossed the border outside of Italy.

In Liguria, visitors took part in walking tours in Finale Alta and Bassa, while Lombardy showcased the Breno Castle (11th - 16th century) and the Valcamonica region.

In Piedmont, the National Castle Days celebrated Mombasiglio (12th century), a small village in Cuneo province with remarkable views. The fortifications of Mombasiglio were part of the Marquisate of Ceva, and the castle now houses the Bonaparte General Museum.

The Fumone Castle in Lazio, be-



autifully preserved and located 800 meters above sea level, was open to the public. It stands as the highest castle open to visitors during the 2025 edition of National Castle Days.

The Marche region displayed some of the 16 forts in Ancona, including the Faro del Campo degli Ebrei, located in the largest Jewish cemetery in Europe, as well as the Altavilla and Pezzotti forts, and the Ancona Citadel.

In Molise, the San Martino in Pensilis Castle, a historic baronial palace, opened its doors to visitors, located in a place rich in natural beauty and deep ethnographic traditions.

In Puglia, the Sannicandro Castle was a key highlight. Located 15 kilometers from Bari, visitors were able to explore the Norman-Swabian castle built over a Byzantine foundation, which remains clearly visible. The castle has been fully restored after 25 years of preservation work, and this achievement was recognized with an award from the Istituto Italiano Castelli.

Sardinia featured both the Old Fortress (16th century) in the southern part of Villasimius and the Serpentara Tower. These structures are nestled among golden beaches and coastal towers in the Punta Carbonara protected marine area.

Breno (Lombardy)



Sannicandro (Apulia)

Meanwhile, in Sicily, the Norman-Swabian Castle of Salemi and the medieval Grifeo Castle of Partanna (14th century) in the Belice Valley were central to the event.

In Tuscany, the medieval district of Florence offered a walking tour through the historic towers of families and villages. Castel Sajori in Ala di Trento was a prominent site for National Castle Days in Trentino Alto Adige.

In Umbria, the Istituto Italiano Castelli invited visitors to redi-

scover Castiglione del Lago, an exceptional fortified village located on the western shore of Lake Trasimeno, originally settled by the Etruscans. The Italian Castle Institute of Veneto also featured the Rivoli-Wohlgemuth Fort in the town of Rivoli, Verona, built in the mid-1800s.



Castiglione del Lago (Umbria)



Italian street food

How can one resist the street food of Naples?

We the Italians Editorial Staff

I'm not sure if street food was invented in Naples, but sometimes I feel like everything was invented in this extraordinary city. One thing is certain: it's here where some incredible flavors have always been enjoyed in the streets of the Neapolitan neighborhoods, where life is still vibrant, wonderful, and

delicious.

Exploring Campania means diving into a region rich in history and culture, where the culinary experience is as significant as the scenic beauty, with food trucks and shops on every corner. How can one resist the street food of Naples?

The Cuoppo

History tells us that the poorer Neapolitans would buy small fish from fishermen, frying them to intensify their flavor. Known as “oggi a otto” (eight days), it was sold on credit, to be paid back within 8 days. The cuoppo, with its cone-shaped packaging, contains a variety of fried foods, meant to be eaten dry to maintain their crispiness. The “di terra” cuoppo contains fried pasta, mozzarella balls, and potato croquettes, while the seafood version is filled with fried squid, cuttlefish, cod, and anchovies.

Pizza: a portafoglio, frita and montanara

The pizza a portafoglio, a symbol of Neapolitan culinary tradition, dates

back to the Greco-Roman period. It is a more compact version, folded in four for eating while standing. The pizza frita is usually stuffed with tomato, mozzarella, ricotta, and pork cracklings. The montanara, on the other hand, is inspired by mountain farmers. It is a softer fried pizza, topped with tomato sauce, parmesan, and DOP mozzarella.



Pizza frita



Pizza a portafoglio

Zeppulelle di pasta cresciuta



ney. Over time, sweet zeppole gave way to savory ones, gaining a special place in the cuoppo. The preparation is simple: dissolve a block of brewer's yeast in warm water, add salt and flour. The soft dough rises for about 90 minutes, then is fried in spoonfuls in hot oil.

The Panuozzo

The panuozzo originated in Gragnano, a town in Naples known as the "City of Pasta." It represents a tasty middle ground for those undecided between pizza and a sandwich. Made with pizza dough, it is cooked in a wood-fired oven,

then topped and cooked a second time. In the 1980s, Gragnano had fewer than ten pizzerias, but the advent of panuozzo brought a significant influx of customers.

O Pere e 'O Musso

The name "O Pere e 'O Musso" means "the foot and the muzzle" and refers to two cuts of meat from the carnacottaro, an ancient offal seller. The Neapolitan term "zendraglie" has French origins, referring to the scraps once considered inedible by the nobility and often carrying a derogatory tone towards the lower classes. Today, this specialty is available



O Pere e 'O Musso

in butcher shops or from street vendors. You can choose from various cuts, including pig's foot (or veal), veal's muzzle, tripe, centopelle (one of the veal's stomachs), pig's tongue, veal and pig matrices, o'mbruglitiello (veal intestines), and 'a zizza (cow's udder). It has long represented the symbol of poor cuisine, prepared in the courtyards of the Campanian cities. It is consumed year-round but is especially appreciated in summer as a cold dish.

The Tarallo

The etymology of the word "tarallo," the quintessential snack, is debated. Some suggest it comes from the Latin "torrere" (to roast) or the French "toral" (dryer). The more credible origin seems to be Latin, defining the tarallo as a dough mixed with pepper, enriched with shelled almonds and baked. Another simpler theory suggests the name comes from "danal" (pain rond, round bread) from across the Alps. The tarallo sugna e pepe,

Panuzzo





typical of the Neapolitan tradition, dates back to the late 18th century. This delicacy arose from the need to recover leftover leavened dough, enriched with lard, pepper, and

creativity. Bakers used the leftover dough sparingly to create this savory snack. “Tarallari” street vendors, with baskets on their shoulders, sold them on the streets.



Italian healthcare

Stem Cells in Orthopedics, the Excellence of Dr. Zanasi

Medical Tourism Italy

As we have seen in the previous numbers of “We the Italians”, Italy offers top-notch quality healthcare. As we have also seen, this level can’t be achieved only with strong investments and the most advanced technologies: it takes years to build it, and the best investment is always in the

people. The catch is that this type of effort takes years.

Very rarely does a doctor become great out of nothing, simply with their own energy. Indeed, it takes generations: a great doctor needs a great teacher. In the last number of “We the Italians”,

we looked into the importance of advancements in stem cells and their use. In particular, through the eyes of one of these great doctors, Professor Zanasi.

In this article, we will focus on another great doctor: Professor Sandro Bordin. In addition to being a great doctor, Sandro Bordin is a visionary. He was pivotal in the creation of the first medical tourism company in Italy. Good friends of the CEO, Claudio Pacanaro, after years of experience

accumulated in the management of hospitals, gave his suggestions on the process of creating the company. However, this was simply something he did in his “free time”. Dr. Bordin is a groundbreaking otolaryngologist, specializing in operating on minors and kids, a very delicate task that not everyone would take.

Although he is very reserved, he has made the news a few times. Like we have seen with Dr. Zanasi and his techniques combining

Dr. Bordin





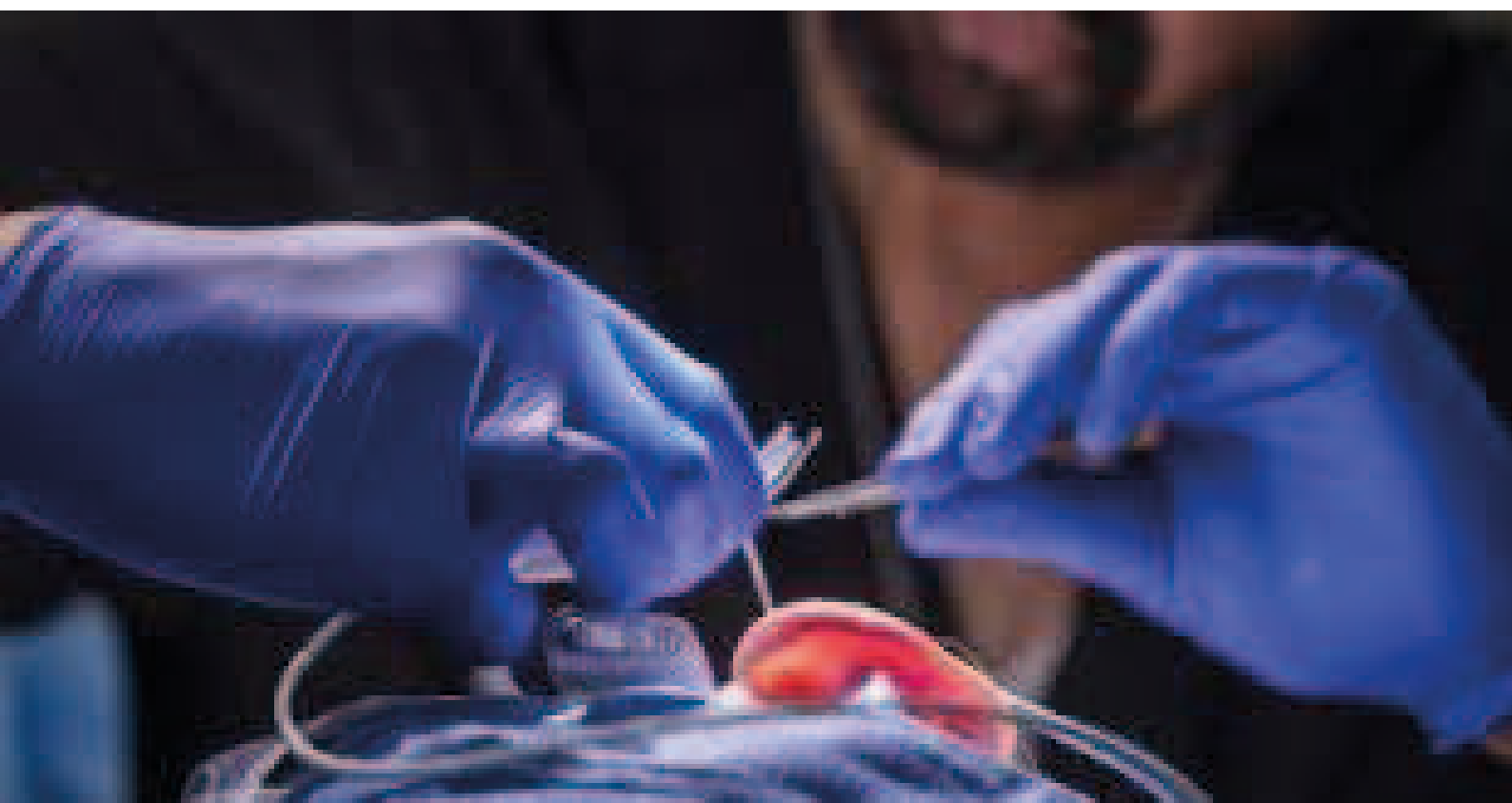
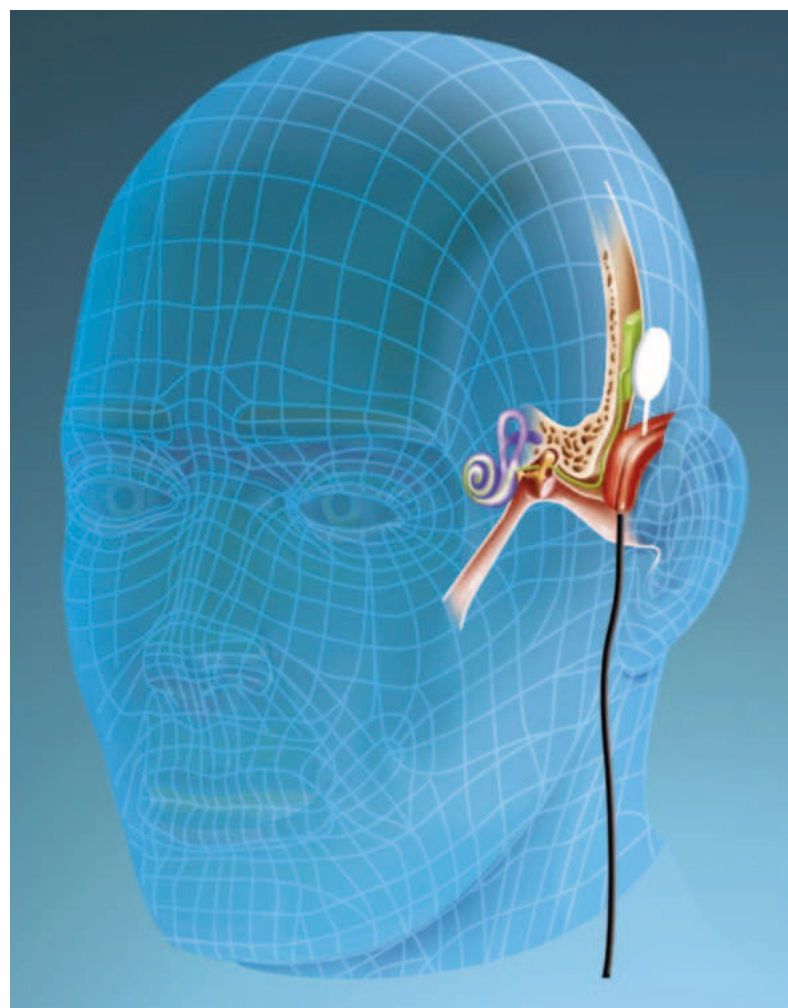
stem cells and prosthesis, doctors of this level usually take the hardest cases. When this happens, they make the news. During his period as the MD of otolaryngology in the hospital of Venice, for example, he caught the public's attention by performing a life-saving surgery on a Brazilian tourist. The young man swallowed a spring from his braces and, to "get rid of it", he decided to eat a piece of bread to push it down. This decision could have cost his life because the spring got stuck in his esophagus, and an emergency surgery had to be performed. What is interesting is that, to perform the surgery most effectively and

speedily, a poison was used to anesthetize the patient. Shortly after the surgery, the patient was able to continue with his vacation.

A further interesting case was with another young tourist who had a perforated eardrum. Unaware of the problem, he dived into the sea, causing a severe infection. Things turned for the worse when he went into a deep coma. Lucky for him, Dr. Bordin was at the hospital and was able to perform an emergency surgery on the mastoid bone, which was affected as well. The patient almost immediately got out of the coma and, after some more time

at the ICU, he was able to fully recover. These events, however, gave Dr Bordin the opportunity of warning tourists. «Many people underestimate infections or minor problems – he said – but these could lead to much bigger issues that could put patients' lives in danger.»

Of course, Dr. Bordin is not only known for these cases. He is a pioneer in Italy, the first to insert a cochlear implant directly into the brain, through the skull. This happened on the 15th of July 2014, when Dr. Bordin performed the surgery on a patient suffering from severe mixed deafness. These are but some examples of his career and cases he accepted. Dr. Bordin now works with Medical Tourism Italy as a consultant and is available to treat foreign patients. This is also an example of the level of professionals the company can provide, which is its main mission.



Italian proverbs

Bisogna fare buon viso a cattivo gioco

We the Italians Editorial Staff

“Bisogna fare buon viso a cattivo gioco” (You need to keep a stiff upper lip) (You have to grin and bear it) is an Italian proverb that means “one must accept the situation, even if it’s unpleasant, and behave accordingly.” It’s used in situations where it’s impossible to change a negative circumstance, and so one must adapt and face the situation as best as possible, maintaining a calm and positive attitude, even if one disagrees with what is happening.

The origin of the proverb is traced back to ancient Italian card games, where, in order to bluff without revealing what you had in hand, you sometimes had to put on a “good face” (buon viso) even if you had a “bad hand” (cattivo gioco), meaning weak or poor cards.



We the Italians is a media company to promote Italy in the US and represent the Italian Americans in Italy. We have a website, a video and audio podcast, a newsletter, daily news, an Italian American websites archive and accounts in the main social media. This is our magazine.

Editorial staff: Umberto Mucci, Associazione Marchi Storici d'Italia, Fabrizio Fasani, Alberto Improda, Medical Tourism Italy, Federico Pasquali, Amy Riolo, Giovanni Vagnone... and many more.



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