We the Italians

July 2025

N.189

interview with

Camilla Calamandrei pag 63

N.189, July 2025 • Index

Interview with Camilla Calamandrei

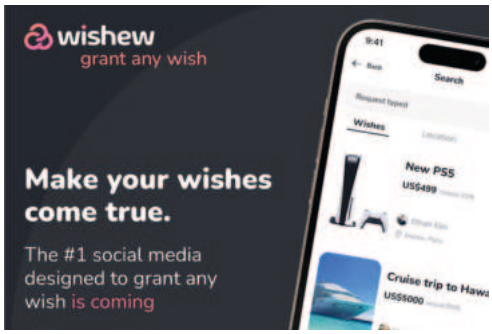
Italian POWs in the US "Prisoners in Paradise" during World War II

Italian wine

Campania, a land of ancient vines and modern wine excellence

Italian good news

Wishew, the Italian platform that blends social media and crowdfunding



Italian historical trademarks

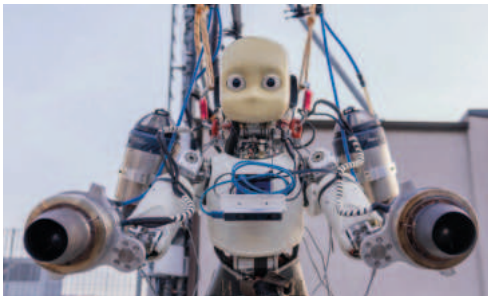
Balletto di Roma

Italian economy

Risk is human. Between Italy and the US, new leadership to govern artificial intelligence

Italian traditions

The Calabrian tarantella, a living folk tradition



Editorial

What's up with WTI #188

by Umberto Mucci

Dear friends,

Even in this July 2025 editorial, I'm thrilled to share lots of exciting news with you. First up, our cover story, something big is coming to Atlanta, Georgia, this September. We the Italians, through our 501(c)(3) nonprofit, the Italia America Reputation Lab (IARL), is proud to partner in the first-ever Made in Italy Expo in the "Big Peach." The event is being organized by the unstoppable Nicola Vidali, Managing Director of the Georgia Chapter of the Italy-America Chamber of Commerce Southeast, our partner at IARL and We the Italians Ambassador to Georgia.

Starting with this July, we'll feature three articles highlighting this important new event, which brings the

excellence of Made in Italy to one of the most vibrant, fast-growing regions of the United States. I'll be there on Monday, September 22, participating in one of the panels, flying in straight from Chicago.

So, what's happening in Chicago? From September 19 to 21, the Windy City will host the very first We the Italians U.S. Ambassadors Convention! Thanks to my friend and our Illinois Ambassador, Ron Onesti, we've finalized a great program. We'll explore the city, network, and share updates on We the Italians initiatives and the amazing work our Ambassadors are doing across the country. We're even planning a surprise for Sunday morning, September 21. It's going to be a lot of fun!

But before all that, We the Italians will kick off September back in Italy—specifically in Vicenza, Veneto. There, we are partners of the Italia America Friendship Festival, and on Saturday, September 13, I'll be honored to share stories of innovation, resilience, adaptability, and ingenuity from the Italian American experience: tales of people who climbed

WYNDHAM CHICAGO O'HARE HOTEL

1450 E TOUHY AVE,
DES PLAINES, IL

$149/NIGHT

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT THE JCCIA OFFICE AT:

708.450.9050

jcc@jccia.com

www.jccia.com

SCHEDULE:

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 19

- 3PM | NETWORKING RECEPTION
- 5PM | WELCOME DINNER
- BOURBON 'N BRASS SPEAKEASY
  - DES PLAINES THEATRE, DES PLAINES, IL
- SPONSORED BY JCCIA PRESIDENT, RON ONESTI

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 20

- DOWNTOWN CHICAGO TOUR
- LUNCH - CHICAGO DEEP DISH PIZZA
- WE THE ITALIANS MEETING AGENDA
- DINNER SPONSORED BY THE JCCIA

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 21

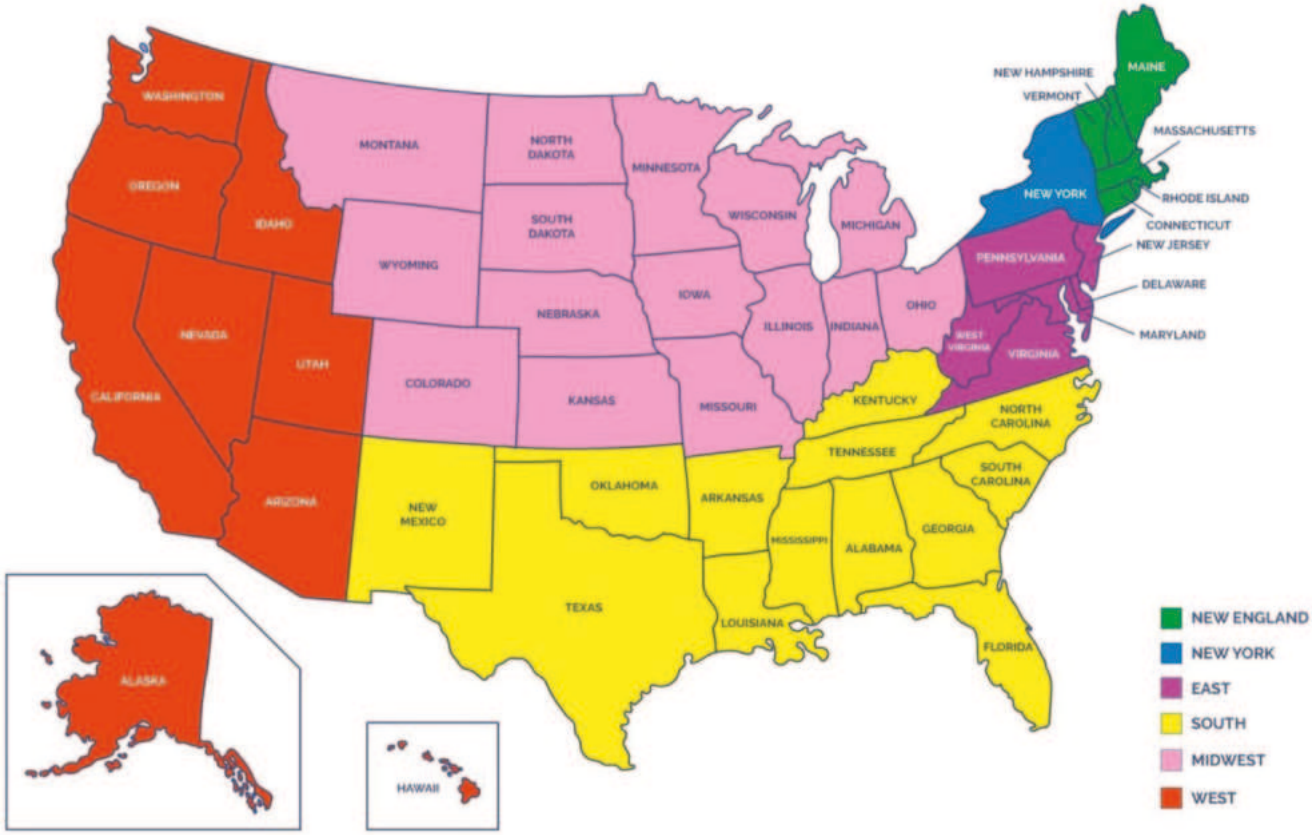
- MORNING CAPPUCCINO
- FINAL MEETING AGENDA
- PANEL DISCUSSION: "THE FUTURE OF THE BOND BETWEEN THE ITALIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY AND ITALY"

the ladder of success through the powerful blend of Italian DNA and the opportunity-rich, business-friendly environment of the United States. Truly a match made in heaven.

Looking back to late June, I had the pleasure of attending a screening of Larry Foley's compelling documentary, Cries from the Cotton Fields, at the University of Arkansas Rome Center. It's an extraordinary film that explores a lesser-known chapter of migration, one with both similarities and striking differences from the more familiar Northeast Italian American narrative. It's a powerful and insightful story that deserves to be widely seen.

As part of the new direction for We the Italians, we want to include our audience more than ever. We're launching a new video project aimed at giving a voice and face to Italian stories, emotions, and places across the United States. With your help, we're creating a series of short videos that tell the story of Italian America—through your eyes,

Cries from the Cotton Field



from your community. One great example has already been shared by our Columbus, Ohio Ambassador, Rich Leto. You can check it out here.

These videos will be featured on our Facebook page, which gets 5.5 million views each month, and the best ones will be selected for our exclusive Meta Subscription program. They'll also be posted on our Instagram and TikTok channels, helping us build a more authentic and engaging social media presence while giving visibility to you and your content.

Want to make a video? Here are a few quick tips:

• Use your phone in vertical (Reel) format
• Aim for 30 to 60 seconds
• Make sure your face is well-lit with natural light (no backlighting)
• Choose a quiet place and avoid loud background noise
• Be yourself, smile, and have fun!

Y
ou can focus on one (or more!) of the following topics:

1. Italian festivals or events
2. Local Italian landmarks or businesses
3. "Sauce or Gravy?"

This will be a playful look at the heart of Italian American culture. Once your video is ready, you can send it to us via email or Messenger.

Our magazine keeps growing—and starting this month, we're adding two new columns! The first, Italian

Sustainability, highlights how Italian excellence is contributing to a greener, more sustainable future. This month, we're covering Italy's roadmap to meet the 2030 Green Homes Directive targets.

The second, Italian Curiosities, launches with... a bang!. Did you know the combustion engine was invented in Lucca, Tuscany?

If all goes well, by the end of July we'll finally be launching our brand-new website: faster, better, and more dynamic. It's been a huge job (we've got almost 90,000 pieces of content!), but we're nearly there, and we're preparing lots of exciting new features.

Our incredible team of Ambassadors keeps growing, and this month we're welcoming three new members.

Maria Fosco is our new Ambassador in Manhattan, New York. Maria began working in the Italian American community as a teenager, earned a degree in International Affairs from Hunter College, and joined the Calandra Italian American Institute/ CUNY in 1986. She testified in the landmark Scelsa v. CUNY civil rights case, which officially recognized Italian Americans as a protected group. A founding member and current Vice President and Trustee of the Italian American Museum, Maria has received both the Cavaliere and Ufficiale honors from the Republic of Italy. She currently serves as Director of Administration and Special Programs at Queens College and sits on several Italian American boards.

Maria Fosco

Mike Daigle is our new Ambassador in New Hampshire. Mike is the President of Friends of Italian Americans, a nonprofit promoting Italian American heritage, history, and culture while advocating for all immigrant communities in the U.S. He holds a B.S. in Accounting and an M.B.A. in Entrepreneurship. Mike lives in Portsmouth, NH, with his wife of over 45 years. They have three daughters and six grandchildren.

Mike Daigle

We're also adding a new thematic Ambassador! Marco Gianni is now our Ambassador for Luxury. Marco is Managing Partner Italy at Équité Brands, a strategic consultancy for the luxury sector, and co-founder of The Italian Mind, a cultural and business platform dedicated to the evolution of Made in Italy. A specialist in symbolic positioning, post-identity economic models, and reputational capital, Marco works with top brands and institutions to create value through systems thinking and storytelling innovation. With a global and unconventional perspective, he's helping redefine how Italian luxury is communicated, developed, and experienced around the world.
And it doesn't stop there! That's why we ask you to subscribe to We the Italians.

Marco Gianni

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 flavors

Taranto and its black gold. The story of the cozza tarantina

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Taranto, often called the queen of Magna Graecia, is a city rich in history and art. Founded by the Spartans in the 8th century BCE, it was one of the most important city-states of the ancient world. Even today, its geography is unique, as it is surrounded by two bodies of water—the Mar Piccolo (Small Sea) and the Mar Grande (Big Sea)—precious treasures of the Mediterranean.

One of the most iconic local delicacies born on the shores of Taranto is the Taranto mus-

sel, known locally as cozza gnore, or "black mussel" in the Tarantino dialect. It's considered the safest and healthiest mussel in all of Italy. Taranto is, in fact, the Italian capital of mussel farming, and the mussel itself has become a cultural, economic, and identity symbol of the city. Annual production of Taranto mussels varies depending on environmental conditions, but can exceed 30,000 tons.

The secret that makes the Taranto mussel truly one-of-a-kind lies in the place where it is grown: the Mar Piccolo. Here, the water transitions from "wavy" to "smooth" near the citri, natural freshwater springs that flow from the Alta Murgia and eventually reach the Ionian coast. This extraordinary natural feature gives the mussels their distinctive flavor. The low salinity of the water provides an ideal hydrobiological environment for mussel metabolism and growth. Taranto mussels have unmistakable and unique characteristics: they're large, have a pinkish-white interior, a briny iodine aroma, and a full, slightly sweet flavor.

So far, 34 freshwater springs have been identified in the Mar Piccolo, resembling underground rivers that flow directly into the sea. Along with the low salinity, another cru-

cial factor contributes to the mussel's quality: the Mar Piccolo is a calm body of water, which allows mussels to grow stress-free and develop their unique taste. From the planting of the mussel seed to the time they are ready for market, around 18 months of work are required for full maturation.

Over time, local mussel farming practices have evolved toward a sustainable model. Today, mussels are commonly grown in compostable bioplastic nets, which degrade naturally within a few years. This innovation has helped prevent 20 tons of plastic from being dumped into the sea in just the past 24 months.

By May or June, the Taranto mussels reach maturity and are ready for distribution in both domestic and international markets.

A long series of laboratory tests, combined with carefully monitored purification processes and analyses, makes these mussels among the safest in the world. In fact, Taranto mussels are also used as bioindicators—their ability to absorb pollutants helps monitor water quality and pollution levels.

Italian handcrafts

The hidden legacy in Leonardo's masterpiece and the story of Perugian tablecloths

We the Italians Editorial Staff

How many times have you looked at Leonardo da Vinci's Last Supper? It's one of the most studied and admired works of art in history. But there's a detail that most people miss. Right at the center of the table, beneath the hands of Christ and his disciples, lies a white tablecloth adorned with delicate geometric patterns.

While it might seem like a simple decorative touch, that cloth actually holds centuries of Italian heritage. It's a reflection of

a rich textile tradition from Umbria dating back to the 14th century—the famous tovaglie perugine, or "Perugian tablecloths," recognizable by their blue diamond motifs woven into a white linen background. Far from being a relic of the past, this unique craft still lives on today in Umbria. Master weavers continue to handcraft these textiles using the same medieval techniques, blending linen and cotton on traditional looms. Think about it—Leonardo chose to represent this very fabric in what is arguably the world's most iconic painting, offering a subtle tribute to the artistry of his homeland. And seven centuries later, that same craftsmanship is still practiced by skilled artisans.

Textile production in Umbria dates back to at least the 12th century. It was heavily influenced by French traditions, especially by the weavers of Lille and the teachings of Giacomo Bergierès. Over time, Perugia developed its own distinctive style, creating fabrics like the tovaglie perugine, typically woven in a "partridge-eye" pattern in white linen with indi-

go cotton bands. These fabrics were used both in churches and noble households, and you can still see them depicted in numerous medieval and Renaissance paintings housed in churches and museums throughout Umbria.

The patterns often feature stylized flora, fauna, and abstract geometric designs, sometimes even inscriptions or blessings. Their aesthetic owes much to Middle Eastern influence, which filtered into Italy through centuries of trade. By the 1800s and early 1900s, interest in traditional textile work was revived through the use of hand-powered Jacquard looms, leading to a rebirth of artisanal weaving in the region.

In different towns across Umbria, local styles flourished. Perugia produced a flame-patterned fabric known as fiamma di Perugia. In Assisi and Città di Castello, the Renaissance-style "double cross stitch" known as Punto Assisi came back into favor. On Isola Maggiore in Lake Trasimeno and at the Ars Panicalensis workshop, Irish crochet lace—known locally as pizzo d'Irlanda—made a comeback. Orvieto, meanwhile, gained international renown for its exquisite Ars Wetana lace, another intricate Irish-inspired tradition.

The 14th and 15th centuries marked the golden age of the tovaglie perugine. These table linens were made with a partridge-eye weave of white linen and decorated with indigo-dyed cotton, often sourced from the guado plant, also known as woad. The blue patterns, usually confined to horizontal bands at the ends of the cloth, were thought to resemble the movement of waves, and in Perugian dialect, the stylized design was affectionately called "belige," referencing the rocking motion of the loom pedals used during weaving.

Originally used as altar cloths in medieval churches, these textiles quickly gained popularity among the aristocracy. By the 15th century, they were considered luxury items and were found throughout central Italy, from Tuscany to the Marches, and even as far as northern Europe—Trentino, Friuli, Carnia, and Sicily. There, educated and elite buyers adopted them as a symbol of social status. The cloths became prized components of dowries and were later repurposed into curtains, cushion covers, shawls, or even headscarves. In more practical settings, they were rolled up to support

baskets carried on women's heads, or worn as belts, bags, banners, or tournament prizes.

Today, traditional Umbrian weaving is still part of the region's cultural and economic identity. Several family-run workshops continue to use 18th- and 19th-century foot-powered looms to create textiles in the same way they've been made for hundreds of years. The patterns—ranging from stylized humans and animals to good-luck phrases—are carefully woven with supplemental weft threads in cotton or linen blends. The blue bands alternating with ivory ones remain the signature of this historic fabric. Every piece is handmade, and crafting a single tablecloth can take up to 20 days.

Leonardo's Last Supper might be the most famous example, but these tablecloths appear in numerous works of art. Late medieval and Renaissance painters often included them in depictions of the Last Supper, alongside other fine textiles like silk from Lucca, Sicily, or the Far East—fabrics reserved for churches and royal garments. One example is a painting by the Maestro delle Palazze, dated to the late 13th century and now housed at the Worcester Art Museum in Massachusetts, which shows a long table draped with a classic Perugian cloth. Giotto immortalized them in his fresco The Dinner at the House of the Knight of Celano, part of the vast cycle of the Life of St. Francis in the Basilica of Assisi. Other noteworthy appearances include Pinturicchio's frescoes in the Baglioni Chapel in Spello, and the Last Supper by Perugino in Foligno.

Through all these examples, the tovaglie perugine have woven their way into art, history, and daily life—enduring symbols of Umbria's extraordinary textile legacy.

Italian land and nature

The quartz shores of Is Arutas in Sardinia

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Is Arutas Beach stretches for several kilometers, featuring crystal-clear waters that range in color from emerald green to deep blue. It's famously known as the "rice grain beach" because it's made up of tiny grains of quartz, which shimmer in shades of pink, green, and pure white.

Is Arutas - along with nearby beaches like Mari Ermi and Punta Maimoni -stands out from most other Sardinian coastlines because it's formed from porphyritic granite rather than the more common limestone. Over time, the slow erosion of this rock under weather conditions and spe-

cific cooling processes created seabeds rich with colorful quartz grains. This corner of Sardinia is truly one of a kind: largely unspoiled and sparsely developed. It offers basic services but is not a destination for mass tourism, which only adds to its charm.

The seabed becomes deep right from the shoreline, making it an ideal spot for surfers - even in winter. It's easily reachable by car from the main tourist areas of Sardinia, and the drive itself passes by other remarkable sites, first and foremost the ancient ruins of Tharros.

This stunning stretch of coastline is located in the province of Oristano, specifically within the Sinis Protected Area, a peninsula in central-western Sardinia near the town of Cabras. The immediate depth of the waters and the prevailing mistral wind along the western shore make this beach a favorite for windsurfers and kite surfers, even in the colder months—just like much of the Gulf of Oristano.

The name Is Arutas means “the caves,” likely a reference to nearby Roman-era sandstone quarries. The entire coastline is framed by soft sandstone rocks, creating a desert-like impression. Adding

to the stunning landscape is the nearby island of Mal di Ventre, a uniquely shaped natural oasis where sea turtles nest and ancient shipwrecks lie hidden beneath the waves—including one dating back to the 1st century AD.

It's a dazzling and truly unique setting: hundreds of meters of fine, round quartz grains in a spectrum of colors—pure white, soft pink, and every shade of green. The glittering shoreline blends into a crystal-clear sea that shifts in color from emerald to turquoise to bright blue.

Is Arutas is also known for a negative record: its sand is the most stolen in all of Italy. Airport security staff at Elmas Airport have confiscated 250 kg (about 550 pounds) of quartz from travelers' luggage. The good news, however, is that the seized sand is returned to where it was taken from.

Italian design

Arnaldo Pomodoro, between art, design, and architecture

Alberto Improda

On June 22, 2025, on the eve of his 99th birthday, Arnaldo Pomodoro passed away in Milan. The renowned sculptor, originally from Romagna, stood out as a figure of profound depth and distinctive originality in both the Italian and international contemporary cultural scenes.

Pomodoro's work resists easy classification within any specific artistic movement. Instead, it occupies a unique and ideal intersection between art, design, and architecture. From the early 1950s, he developed a highly personal and distinctive visual language, grounded in the

exploration of materials and their expressive potential.

His first works were high reliefs made from a range of materials—from gold and silver for jewelry, to iron, wood, and cement. He later chose bronze as his preferred medium, appreciating its flexibility and solidity, suitable for both small-scale pieces and large, monumental works.

From the outset, his art revealed a kind of unprecedented sculptural writing—a network of marks, etchings, scratches, and symbolic geometries that transformed surfaces into dynamic fields, into maps that incorporated the dimensions of Space and Time.

Starting in the early 1960s, Pomodoro moved away from the two-dimensional plane to fully embrace three-dimensional space, treating sculpture as a body within its environment. His works took on archetypal forms—spheres, discs, pyramids, columns, and cones—riven with gashes, slashes, and deep fissures.

In 1966, Pomodoro was commissioned to create a monumental sphere, three and a half meters in

Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs

Vatican

diameter, for the Expo in Montreal. This marked a pivotal moment in both his personal and artistic journey. Today, that work stands permanently in front of the Farnesina—the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs—in Rome. It signaled his entrance into the world of international public art and became the prototype for a long series of installations in public and institutional spaces across the globe.

Pomodoro's sculptures found prominent homes in public squares and civic spaces around the world. The most famous are the spheres outside the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome and the United Nations Headquarters in New York. Others are located in Milan,

UN in New York

Copenhagen, Brisbane, Paris, Los Angeles, and beyond. His works naturally and effectively integrate into their urban environments, establishing a reciprocal and organic relationship with their surroundings—achieving a real sense of integration and interaction.

In Pomodoro's own words: "A sculpture only has meaning when it transforms the place where it stands—when it bears witness to its time, when it manages to imprint itself on a setting and enrich it with further layers of memory." The relationship between Arnaldo Pomodoro and the United States was essential to his career.

He taught at both Stanford and Berkeley, maintaining an ongoing dialogue with American cultural figures and institutions for decades. In a 2023 interview with Fiorella Minervino for La Repubblica, he reflected: "America, where I first traveled in 1959, was crucial for the development of my work. On one hand, it offered a comple-

tely different sense of space. On the other, it gave me direct contact with the artistic and cultural movements of the time—a climate of non-academic, non-rhetorical openness to art, with strong attention to innovation and new expressive languages."

Pomodoro's unique position at the crossroads of art, design, and architecture also surfaces in a curious anecdote told by Giorgio Soavi in his book Adriano Olivetti – An Italian Surprise. The Lombard poet and novelist, a longtime collaborator of the engineer from Ivrea, recounted that at one point Adriano Olivetti asked him: "Who would you choose to design the casing for the first Italian electronic computer from Olivetti?" "I had no doubt," Soavi said. "I immediately thought of Sottsass." Sottsass worked tirelessly with designer Mario Tchou on the machine—"a collection of boxes and cabinets containing wonders I would never fully understand."

When the cabinet was ready, it was announced that President Giovanni Gronchi would visit the Olivetti building on Via Clerici in Milan—designed by Fiocchi, Bernasconi, and Nizzoli (and later sold by Carlo De Benedetti once he took over the company).

Olivetti asked Soavi what might serve as an appropriate gift for the President.

He selected a small sculpture by Arnaldo Pomodoro, then a little-known young artist, who created a bronze object titled The Mathematician's Stones.

Pomodoro's name was splashed across every major Italian newspaper.

From that moment, Italy had its first computer, Pomodoro became a known figure, and Olivetti was officially among the world's great innovators.

As Sebastiano Bagnara once wrote, "Design can be seen as that human activity which systematically distributes knowledge into the environment—where and when it will be needed—liberating us from the burden of having to remember it."

Arnaldo Pomodoro left behind works that will serve as critical landmarks for the archaeologists of the future—true maps of the wounds, aspirations, and anxieties of our time.

Italian territories

Marsica, a land of history, nature, and heritage in the heart of Abruzzo

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Nestled in the interior of the Abruzzo region, Marsica is a historically rich area named after the ancient Italic people known as the Marsi, who inhabited the region as far back as the first millennium BCE. This mountainous zone was once centered around Lake Fucino and its surrounding lands. The name "Marsica" comes from the Latin adjective Marsicus, meaning "of the Marsi."

Geographically, Marsica lies along the western edge of Abruzzo, bordering the Lazio region. It stretches across the Fucino Basin and extends into the Roveto Val-

ley, the Carsoli Plateau, and areas near the Abruzzo, Lazio, and Molise National Park. The region includes 37 municipalities within the province of L'Aquila, with Avezzano serving as the largest town and population center—home to over 126,000 residents in total.

Covering about 1,906 square kilometers, Marsica is a region of varied terrain. Its main flatlands include the expansive Fucino Basin (140 km²), the Palentini Plains (60 km²), and the smaller Cavaliere Plain. Towering above it all is Mount Velino, the highest peak in the area, which reaches 2,487 meters (8,159 feet) above sea level. The landscape of Marsica is framed by the Apennine mountain ranges. To the south lie the Marsicani Mountains; to the northeast, the Velino-Sirente range; to the northwest, the Carseolani Mountains; and to the west, the Simbruini-Ernici chain. The region's three broad valleys—the Fucino, the Palentini Plains, and the Cavaliere Plain—form its geographic backbone. The area is also traversed by the Giovenco River, which feeds into the Liri-Garigliano and Volturno river basins.

Marsica is home to an exceptional concentration of protected natural areas and reserves. The southern part includes the Abruzzo, Lazio, and Molise National Park, which contains centuries-old beech forests now recognized by UNESCO as World Heritage Sites. To the southwest lies the Zompo lo Schioppo Nature Reserve. The east hosts the Sirente-Velino Regional Park, while the Monte Velino Nature Reserve stretches across the northeast. In the west, the Monte Salviano Reserve offers breathtaking views, and on the northwest frontier, near the Simbruini Mountains, lie the Pietrasecca Caves and the Grotte di Luppa Nature Reserve. One of Europe's largest and most untouched beech forests is located in western Marsica, with primary access points in the mountainous areas around Cappadocia, Pereto, and Tagliacozzo. These ancient woods are home to iconic wildlife species like the Marsican brown bear—a rare bear subspecies found only in this region—and the Apennine wolf.

Beyond nature, Marsica boasts a remarkable architectural and cultural heritage. The region is dotted with stunning religious structures, including sanctuaries,

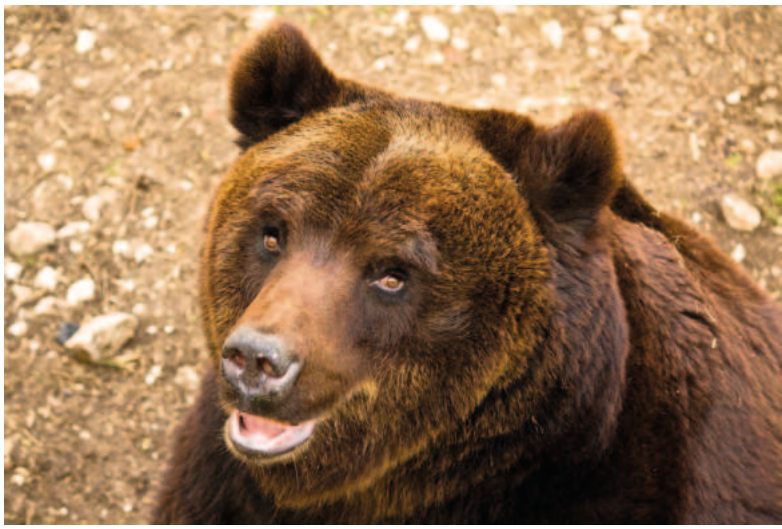
hermitages, convents, and chapels. It also preserves examples of medieval military architecture such as towers and castles, as well as elegant civic buildings, palaces, and villas. Scattered throughout the countryside are archaeological sites that tell the story of Marsica's long and complex history.

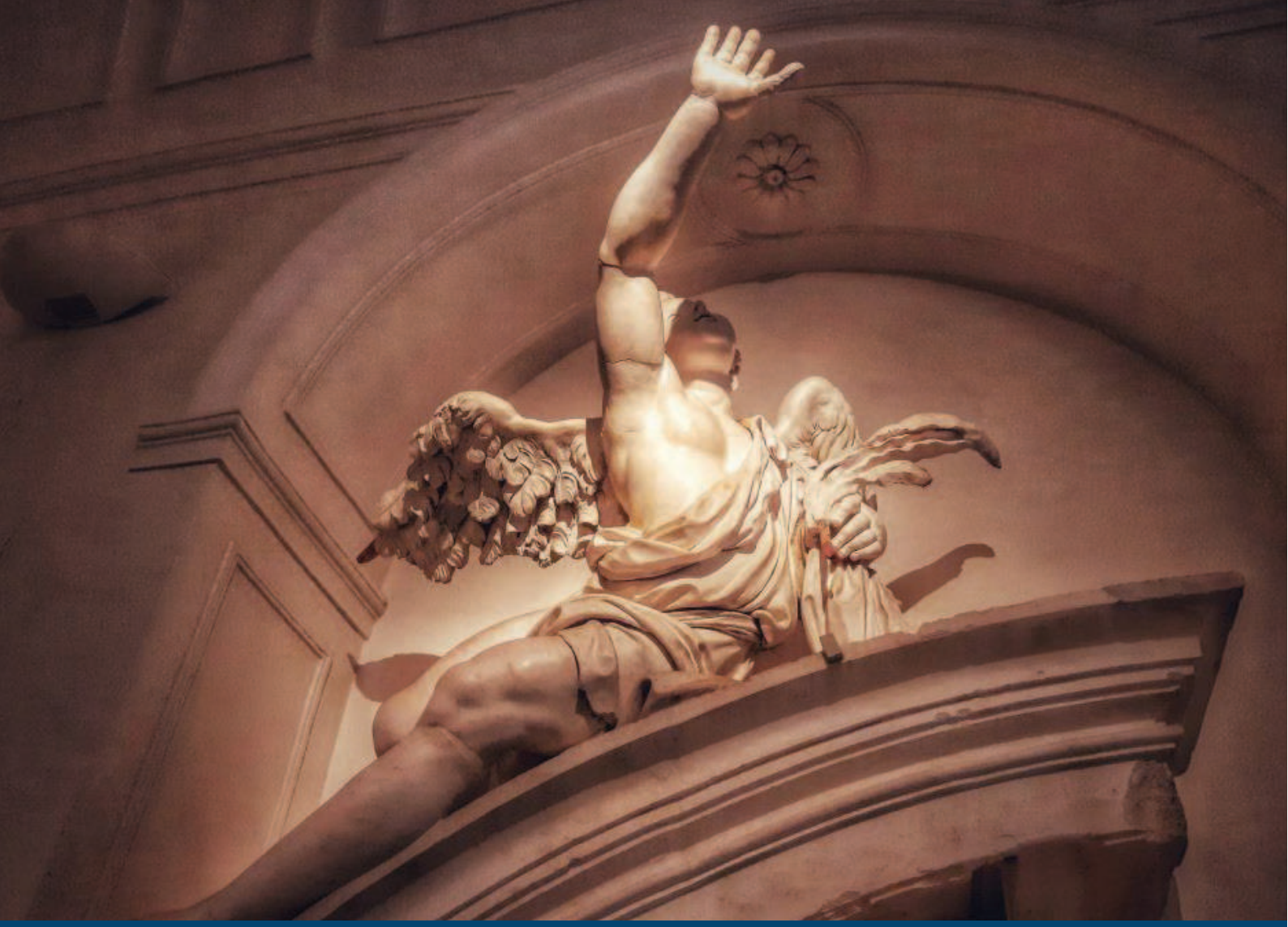
In 2017, five sections of ancient beech forest—spanning over 1,000 hectares across the municipalities of Lecce nei Marsi (Selva Moricento), Opi (Cacciagrande and Valle Jancino in Val Fondillo), Pescasseroli (Coppo del Principe and Coppo del Morto), and Villavallelonga (Val Cervara)—were declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Some of these forests are estimated to be over 560 years old. This marked Abruzzo's first UNESCO natural heritage designation and brought global attention to the region's environmental and ecological importance.

Marsica has also made its mark in the literary world. Nearly all of the stories and novels written by famed author Ignazio Silone are set in this region. Between

1946 and 1963, Silone received ten nominations for the Nobel Prize in Literature, and his deep connection to Marsica shaped much of his work, which explored themes of identity, poverty, and justice in the Italian countryside.

From its ancient tribal roots to its stunning alpine landscapes and rich cultural history, Marsica is a hidden gem in central Italy—an enduring blend of nature, tradition, and heritage that continues to inspire all who visit.





Italian art

Giacomo Serpotta's baroque

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Talking about the Italian Baroque often feels too broad—and sometimes oversimplified. While Baroque architecture can be found in every region of Italy, each area has its own distinct interpretation, with unique details that unmistakably reflect the local identity. Cities like Rome, Lecce, Naples, and Venice are the most iconic examples of this style, which has long been associated with the Italian aesthetic.

But it's in Sicily that the Baroque takes on a particularly deep-rooted and expressive form.

Here, it evolves across generations, producing a wide range of architectural and decorative styles—thanks in part to the island's abundant and diverse natural materials. In the coming months, we'll take a closer look at the Val di Noto, but today we focus on a more ornamental dimension of this artistic movement: the extraordinary work of Giacomo Serpotta, considered the greatest stucco artist in Italian art history.

Stucco is an intricate technique that relies on the quick drying of lime and plaster applied over a wood and metal framework. To shape expressive faces, flowing garments, and vivid narrative scenes from such a medium is already challenging—but Serpotta achieved something exceptional.

His first major innovation was introducing a polished finish to his sculptures—using a blend of marble dust and slaked lime to create a lustrous, marble-like surface. Stylistically, while influenced by Bernini - especially works like the Ecstasy of Saint Teresa and the Blessed Ludovica Albertoni -Serpotta carved out his own language. In his compositions, figures seem to

break free from the walls, winding around moldings and friezes, stretching outward, even soaring through space. His work captures motion and tension, much like in Bernini's Cornaro Chapel, where the viewer becomes part of the scene unfolding in theatrical, almost cinematic tableaux.

In Serpotta's oratories, everything seems alive - each figure animated, each gesture deliberate. The interplay of pure white tones, subtly varied by changing daylight, directs the viewer's eye with clarity and precision. These interiors are a masterclass in dramatic storytelling, emotion, and technical skill.

Nowhere is this more striking than in the Oratory of the Rosary in Santa Cita, Palermo - perhaps the crowning achievement of Serpotta's career. In 1685, he was commissioned to decorate the chapel of the Compagnia del Rosario. Here, he brings together the depiction of the fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary, the theme of Christian virtue, and the commemora-

tion of the Battle of Lepanto - a defining victory of Christianity over the Ottoman Empire.

Dozens of cherubs animate the space, gliding across decorative frames and borders, surrounding the bas-reliefs that tell the stories of the Mysteries and the battle itself. The allegorical Virtues, so lifelike and present, appear more like full-fledged statues than molded stucco. The entire composition is bathed in a radiant light that, especially in late morning, makes the space blaze with brilliance.

Through his decorations in ten oratories and ten churches in Palermo alone, Giacomo Serpotta became - perhaps without realizing it - a forerunner of the Rococo style. More importantly, he pioneered a kind of ornate decoration that would later find great success in Central Europe, often referred to as patisserie for its richness and intricacy.

MIT expo

Made in Italy Expo to spotlight Italian innovation and industry in the Southeast

Nicola Vidali

This September 2025, a piece of Italy is coming to Georgia—and not just the kind you eat, wear, or dream about during your next vacation. The Made in Italy Expo is planting its flag in Atlanta, and with it comes a renewed sense of pride, purpose, and presence for Italian creativity, craftsmanship, and industry in the heart of the Southeastern United States.

The event, set to run from September 15 to 22, is more than just a celebration of Italian lifestyle. It's a strategic move to shine a spotlight on the deep, and often undetected, Italian industrial fo-

otprint already thriving in Georgia and neighboring states. From advanced manufacturing to fashion, design, logistic and food tech, Italy is showing up in the Southeast in powerful new ways—and this Expo is designed to make sure everyone takes notice.

The initiative is organized by the Italia America Reputation Lab (IARL), in collaboration with the Italy-America Chamber of Commerce Southeast – Georgia Chapter. It's the first time a program of this scope has come together in Atlanta, specifically to elevate the "Made in Italy" brand as both a cultural treasure and a business powerhouse.

So what's on the agenda? Over the course of eight days, the city will host Italian film screenings, immersive engagements, panel discussions, and exclusive tasting experiences—all designed to get Atlantans and visiting guests to not only enjoy Italy but do business with it. But here's the twist: it's not just about what Italy can offer from abroad. It's also about celebrating the Italian companies that are already here, quietly building jobs, technologies, and partnerships across the Southeastern corridor, contributing for several Billions to the State GPD and employing thousands Georgia residents.

In the manufacturing sector, Italian companies like Pirelli, Essilorluxottica ad Aquafil bring advanced technologies and innovative practices, enhancing local production capabilities and creating high-quality jobs. In the realm of technology and fintech, companies like Crif Select, SCM Group,and Cassioli are at the forefront of developing cutting-edge solutions, driving innovation, and fostering a dynamic tech ecosystem in Georgia. Logistics companies like Jas Forwarding play a crucial role in optimizing supply chains and improving efficiency, thereby supporting Georgia's status as a major transportation hub. The design industry benefits from Italian companies' renowned expertise and creativity, influencing trends and elevating the quality of design services and products available in the state. Dolce & Gabbana at Phipps Plaza, the Ferrari car dealerships in Roswell, and the showroom of Natuzzi Divani, and Pedini are just a few iconic samples of such a high level business local retails landscape. Atlanta is also home to many distinguished Italian managers, researchers and academic professionals working in the private and public sectors.

Italy, after all, is also one of the world's top industrial nations. It ranks second in Europe in terms of manufacturing output, with a stronghold in precision mechanics, sustainable tech-

nologies, logistics, and automation. And a significant portion of that innovation is being exported directly—or replicated through partnerships—right here in the U.S., especially in states like Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee.
That's what makes Atlanta the perfect place to host this event. The city is already a crossroads of global trade, a hub for innovation, and a hotspot for cultural diversity. It also happens to be home to a growing network of Italian professionals, companies, and institutions. Bringing them together under the Made in Italy banner—while also inviting the public to experience it firsthand—is what makes this Expo so timely.

The 2025 edition is being called a "teaser" for what's coming in 2026 — the full program aimed to become an annual reference point for Italian visibility in the U.S. market. By building momentum now, the team behind the Expo hopes to create a sustainable, scalable format that can be repeated and expanded not just in Georgia, but in other parts of the country.

More than just a festival or trade show, the Expo wants to leave behind a cultural and economic footprint. That means bringing Italian brands face-to-face with U.S. retailers. It means creating space for students and professionals to engage with Italian innovation. It also means reinforcing the idea that Italian products aren't just luxurious—they're smart, sustainable, and made with a purpose.

Take the upcoming panel on Italian innovation and green manufacturing, for example. It won't just be a branding pitch. It'll be a conversation about supply chains, clean energy, circular economy principles—all areas where Italian companies are already leading globally. And the goal is to connect those leaders with American buyers, distributors, and policymakers.

But while the Expo is deeply business-minded, it never forgets the emotional pull of Italian culture. From a curated film festival exploring identity and migration, to a closing night event featuring food, music, and a Milan-style fashion show, the Made in Italy Expo taps into what Italy does best: creating experiences that feel unforgettable. It's that blend of heart and strategy that makes the program so compelling.

There's also a strong community focus. The Expo team has made it clear that they want this to also be a springboard for local entrepreneurs who are placing Italy in their core business processes like it is for J

Goldin Eyewear who are conceiving in Dunwoody their sunglasses collections rigorously manufactured in Italy to preserve the high-quality value imprinted in their design phase. One segment of the program will even highlight how Italian olive oil-based cosmetics are gaining traction among African-American consumers for their quality and heritage. That's a connection point rarely explored, and exactly the kind of story the Expo wants to elevate.

In the end, this is about reputation. Italy has long been admired for its beauty, its style, its sense of tradition. But it's time for a new chapter—one that also emphasizes innovation, industry, and long-term collaboration. The Made in Italy Expo is here to help write that story, and to make sure it starts right here in Atlanta.

Get engaged and win fantastic prizes including tickets to Italy, a 6-days housing in the Italian Riviera and vouchers from prime Italian restaurants in Atlanta, like Pricci, Sotto Sotto, Yeppa, Novo Cucina, and Kitty Dare.

Additional food and wine brands involved in the program include, Parmigiano Reggiano, Urbani Truffle, La Regina, Acqua Lauretana, and unique specialties from the Liguria Region.

For more information, visit www.madeinitalyexpo.com or follow @MadeInItalyAtlanta on social media. But don't just watch from afar. Come taste, see, and discover what "Made in Italy" really means in 2025—and why it matters more than ever for the future of Georgia, the Southeast, and beyond.

Italian street food

Gofri and Miasse, Piedmont's traditional waffles

We the Italians Editorial Staff

In the valleys and mountains of Piedmont, long before street food became a trend, locals were already preparing their own rustic, portable snacks. These came in the form of crispy, thin waffles made from simple ingredients like cornmeal, buckwheat, or wheat flour, depending on the area.

Known by different names - miasse in Biella and Canavese, miacce in Valsesia, and gofri in

the Val Chisone - these versatile waffles were once a substitute for bread and could be filled with both savory and sweet ingredients.

Gofri, in particular, are enjoying a revival in modern-day Piedmont. These are thin, round waffles with a honeycomb pattern, typically made with flour, water, yeast, and sometimes milk and eggs. Unlike Belgian waffles, their European cousins, gofri are lighter and crunchier, cooked in cast-iron plates that resemble traditional gaufre molds. Their origins date back to at least the 1700s, when waffle irons were first introduced from across the Alps.

Gofri


Miasse

In the past, gofri served as a practical alternative to bread during harsh winters, when snow made it difficult to access bakeries. They were made on special irons and cooked directly over the fire. Today, they've evolved into a much-loved street food in cities like Turin, where they're served warm and filled on the spot with high-quality cured meats, local cheeses (such as the famed tome from Piedmont), or fresh vegetables. Sweet versions, with fillings like chocolate hazelnut cream or whipped cream, are equally popular.

The resurgence of gofri and other traditional Piedmontese waffles is part of a broader trend that celebrates local food heritage. While food trucks and fast food chains dominate the American-style street food scene, Italy is looking inward—rediscovering culinary gems from its own past. Local businesses in and around Turin are

using organic, locally sourced ingredients and traditional techniques, such as stone-ground flour milled on-site just before baking. This ensures the waffles are fresh, digestible, and nutritionally rich.

Miasse, similar in concept but different in composition, come from the Canavese area and are made with cornmeal instead of wheat. Historically, they were a staple among farming communities and served either as a bread substitute or a complete meal. Like gofri, they are thin and crispy, and today they are often stuffed with sweet or savory fillings. One popular option is miasse filled with hazelnut cream and topped with a dollop of whipped cream—a nod to Piedmont's rich dessert culture.

The tradition of making gofri and miasse has been passed down through generations, often by oral tradition. Elders recall how, on festive days, women would rise early, prepare the batter, light the fire, and heat the irons to begin making the beloved waffles—turning the kitchen into a celebration in itself.

There's even literary mention of miasse dating back to the early 1500s. In La Guerra di Andorno, a chronicle of Biella written in Latin by Giacomo Orsi, miasse are noted as a common food

item. Today, the tradition continues, supported by the use of ancient Piedmontese corn varieties, known for their flavor and aroma. These are still ground the old-fashioned way—with natural stone mills at slow speeds—preserving the whole grain and fiber.

Whether you try a savory gofri filled with cheese and cured meat, or a sweet miasse with chocolate cream, these traditional treats offer a taste of Piedmont's past—and a delicious alternative to imported street food trends.

Italian culture and history

The hidden genius of Genoa's alleyways, the caruggi

We the Italians Editorial Staff

The caruggi (the term likely derives from the Latin word quadrivium, meaning a crossroads of four streets, referring to the maze-like layout) are the narrow alleyways of Genoa's historic center—an intricate labyrinth where different cultures, languages, and aromas have coexisted for centuries. These stone corridors are so tight that you can touch both walls by stretching out your arms.

Spanning 113 hectares, they make Genoa, the capital of Liguria, one of the most fascinating medieval cities in Europe. This layout was developed between the 11th and 14th centuries, when families who had grown wealthy through maritime trade built up the city, fortifying it with tall walls and an internal arsenal. Today, the entire historic center overlaps with that medieval citadel.

The alleys twist and turn, often opening suddenly into small piazzas, from which even more narrow lanes branch out, offering breathtaking and unexpected views. These squares are home to ancient churches, once bustling centers of faith for pilgrims departing for the Holy Land.

In these same caruggi, alongside the powerful merchant families that brought wealth and influence to the city, lived the common people. They inhabited unsanitary spaces—tiny, cramped dwellings where sunlight barely reached due to the tightly packed buildings and narrow streets. Genoa is a layered city, both culturally and socially, and nowhere is its multicultural character more evident than in these alleyways.

One reason Genoa's old town features such tight spaces is simply a lack of room—the city is wedged between the sea and the hills. But there's another explanation, one rooted in cleverness and tradition. In the past, property taxes in Genoa were not based on height or number of floors, but on the width of a building's facade at street level. The wider the house, the higher the tax. Genoese citizens—long known in popular lore for their frugality—came up with a smart solution: they built homes with very narrow bases that expanded upward, stacking one floor on top of another. A brilliant way to maximize living space while dodging the tax bill.

The caruggi also represent a remarkable example of ancient eco-architecture, designed centuries ago to cope with Genoa's intense summer heat. Because of their narrowness and the towering buildings on either side, these alleys are almost constantly in shadow. This feature acts like a natural open-air air conditioner. The lack of direct sunlight prevents the streets and walls from overheating, resulting in a microclimate that can be up to 10 degrees cooler than sunlit squares just a few steps away.

There was also a safety function to the caruggi. Long before the era of surveillance cameras, Genoa had its own built-in alarm system—based on sound. The tall stone walls and enclosed spaces created a unique acoustic environment where residents could recognize strangers just by the sound of their footsteps. Everyone walks differently: pace, weight, rhythm. In the tight alleys, the stone amplified these sounds, making each person's footsteps as identifiable as a fingerprint. Locals could instantly sense when someone unfamiliar entered their neighborhood. It was neighborhood watch, Genoa-style—long before modern technology.

And speaking of sound, there's another wonder hidden in the caruggi: there's no echo. Instead, you hear the sea. These alleyways act like giant acoustic telesco-

pes, channeling the murmur of waves from the nearby port straight into the heart of the city. The high walls guide the sound, creating a natural wave-guide that transmits the voice of the sea through the stone maze. Irregular surfaces and openings quickly break up any echo, but the sound of the surf can travel for hundreds of feet, whispering stories of sailors and distant voyages to anyone wandering through. Genoa li-

terally brings the sea into its core—a perfect fusion of architecture and natural poetry.

Returning to the idea of security, there's one final reason why the caruggi are unlike anything else in the world. What may seem like poor urban planning—alleys so narrow you can't get a cart or bike through—may in fact have been one of the most ingenious medieval defense strategies ever conceived. According to urban legends, the blind alleys and twisting paths weren't random but were carefully designed traps for enemies. Invaders unfamiliar with the layout would find themselves drawn deeper into the labyrinth, only to be stopped by a stroke of genius: chains. Because the passages were so narrow, all it took was a heavy chain across the entryway to block it entirely—turning a street into a prison. The Genoese had effectively transformed their city into a giant strategic chessboard. Every dead-end was a potential snare; every blind corner, a hidden danger. A masterpiece of military engineering disguised as urban architecture.

IT and US

Angelica Moresco. My Story

Angelica Moresco

I've always loved golf, even when I didn't realize it. I grew up in Caldogno, Italy, a little town near Vicenza and started playing the game with my parents at age 7. From the moment I hit that first shot, which I still vividly remember, I've tried to get better. I always tried to hit the ball farther. I always tried to hit the ball straighter. I was obsessed.

In four short years I started playing national events, meaning that I had to upgrade from the nine-hole course in my hometown to an 18-hole course, which was an hour away. I had to find a way to get there and back home five days a week. Two years later, at

age 14, I won the Italian Amateur. It was my first big milestone and one that put me onto the Italian National Team. That allowed me to travel around Europe and the world to play on some of the biggest stages in women's amateur golf. My younger sister, Benedetta, later joined me on the National Team, which made it so much more fun. We go to do it all together.

As I played better and had more opportunities, there became pressure to turn professional. But my parents always wanted me to get an education first. It was an easy decision for me because I wasn't ready to turn pro. I had more I needed to experience.

I took an unofficial visit to the University of Alabama when I was 16 and I was blown away. I knew I needed to find a place where I could get better


with Benedetta

and the facilities there were amazing. The second I set foot on campus for that visit I knew that spending four years there would help get me where I wanted to go. Two years later, I moved to Tuscaloosa, where I spent five of the best years of my life.

The first year was rough though. It was a culture shock. Moving to a different country at such a young age created so many speedbumps. It made me empathetic to other Italians who find themselves in similar situations.

I was the only freshman and European on the team and four of us were all ranked inside the top 30 in the world. But it made me much better, even when I didn't think so. Competing alongside my teammates brought my game to a whole new level.

After the first semester I started to see better results, which was amazing. Our team lost in the championship matches of the NCAA Championship, but it was one of the highlights of my college career. I was just a freshman coming from Italy and, all of a sudden, we were getting media attention. It was so much fun, even though we did not win.

The next few years brought more changes. As a sophomore I was the only player who remained from the NCAA Championship team. Everyone else either turned pro or graduated so I started to work on myself individually, knowing that if I did the best I could, it would help the team.

There were more obstacles along the way. I caught a terrible case of COVID and had to sit out the entire spring semester of my senior year. I could hardly walk 18 holes because my breathing was so poor. I remember thinking my golf career was over and I started looking for jobs. I was offered a job in sales at a tech company in Miami and ... I accepted!

I still went back to school for a fifth year and my game started to get better. After the season I resigned from the sales job, which I never even started.

Shoulder surgery later that year was another setback, but I healed quickly and was cleared to play golf again after three months.

I'm now in my third year on the Epson Tour. I love it. I like traveling and make sure that I find a good balance between playing and having a life outside of the game. I don't want to make golf my whole identity. It's not always easy, but I try my best.

I have big goals, just like everyone in professional golf. I want to play on the LPGA, win majors and, like some of my teammates at Alabama, I want to play in a Solheim Cup. But I refuse to look so far ahead and risk enjoying the journey of getting there.

My immediate goals are to play my best each week, be in contention as often as I can and have a chance to win a tournament. I think about all of these things on a daily basis. I try not to ever look ahead any farther than a week at a time. I know that the hard work is going to pay off sooner or later. I know everybody has their own time. I don't want to compare myself to the other girls.

Recently I moved to Birmingham, Alabama and play out of Shoal Creek. It's a wonderful place with a terrific professional development program. I'm surrounded by people who are doing the same thing that I am who all have similar goals and aspirations. It's a big milestone for me in my career to practice there.

I feel like I've accomplished a lot in such a short time but feel like I have so many more great days, weeks and years ahead. I enjoy learning the lessons that this great game continues to teach me every day. But I cannot achieve all my goals without the help of family, friends and sponsors who believe in me and share my passion.

I have a lot to offer as part of a potential partnership and would love to find a way to share my story with others. Sponsoring a professional golfer with my experience can be advantageous and presents numerous opportunities like the following: brand exposure, visibility, corporate hospitality, media coverage, storytelling, targeted marketing, community engagement and philanthropy.

Thank you in advance for any consideration in supporting me. I'm excited about this year ahead. Now back to the grind.

Interview with Camilla Calamandrei

Italian POWs in the US "Prisoners in Paradise" during World War II

Umberto Mucci

During World War II more than 51,000 Italian soldiers were brought to the United States as Prisoners of War. The award-winning documentary film "Prisoners in Paradise," recounts the story of the young soldiers brought to the US as POWs, their romances and friendships with American women, their contribution to the Allied war effort, and — for some — their decision to return to live in the U.S.

We are happy to speak about this with the Italian American director and producer of this very important documentary, Camilla Calamandrei, Welcome to We the Italians!

To begin with, could you please tell us about yourself and your Italian heritage?

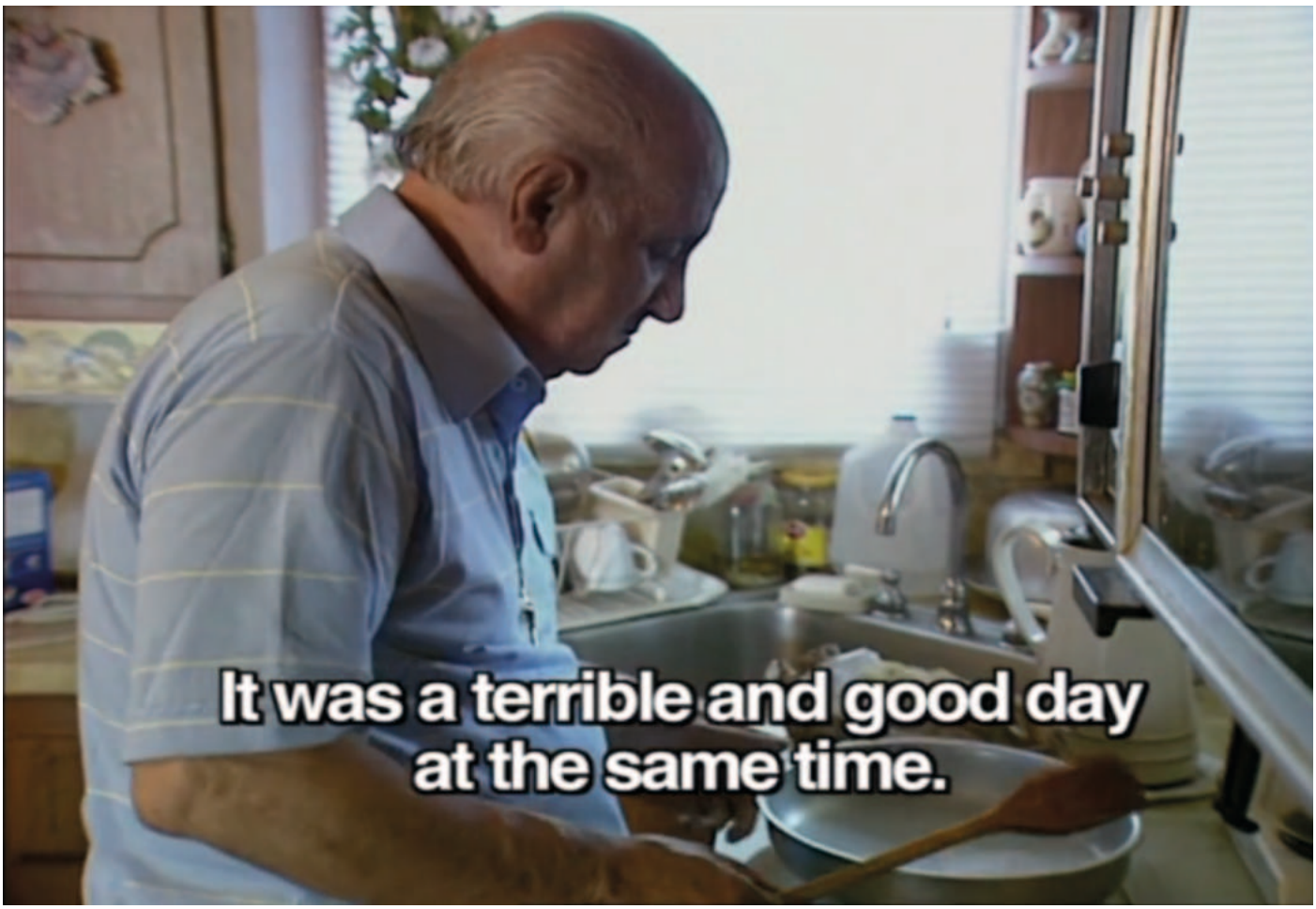
My father, Mauro Calamandrei, was a journalist who served for many years as the American Correspondent for L'Espresso, and later as the American Cultural Correspondent for Il Sole 24 Ore. He was born in 1925 in a small village just outside Florence. His father was a talented shoemaker, and his mother was a housewife with very little education or literacy - their home had one lightbulb which was used only by his father to be able to work at night. During World War II, Mauro joined the resistance as a partisan. After the war, he earned a PhD from the University of Florence and was later awarded a Fulbright scholarship to study at the University of Chicago. I was born in the United States, but I've always felt deeply connected to Italy and my family in Florence. I am a dual citizen.

How did the idea for your wonderful documentary come about?

I had visited my family in Florence a number of times throughout my childhood, but I did not speak Italian so our conversations were limited. Then, once when I was visiting in my early twenties, my uncle (who didn't speak English and who had never been to the US during my lifetime) started to recount a story in Italian, "When I was a prisoner in America during the War..." I had no idea what he was talking about. I had never heard his story of being a POW, and I had no idea that there had been Italian prisoners of war in the U.S.

I started looking for information in books or films about Italian POWs in America but there was very little documented, just a handful of academic articles and one book by an energetic history buff, Louis Keefer.

Louis graciously shared his contacts with me so I could begin meeting with surviving POWs across the US. I worked on the



film for 10 years, conducting preliminary interviews, doing background research with consulting scholars, fundraising, filming on location across the US and in Italy, unearthing archival footage and crafting the story.

Who are the Italians featured in the documentary?

I interviewed 19 surviving Italian POWs while researching the film, and then selected four POWs and two of their wives to film in the US, and three surviving POWs to film in Italy. Four of the men featured in the film worked in Italian Service units supporting the US and two did not. Of the two who did not collaborate, one regretted his decision later. And wished he had supported the Allied war effort.

Italian prisoners were held in 26 different U.S. states. What differences were there between the various locations?

The POWs I interviewed had very, very similar descriptions of their experiences in the US. The first story every surviving POW told me about America was about the abundance of food.

One Italian officer in the film tells the story of when they were still captives in Africa but held by the US military - and a US soldier opened a can and pulled out an entire cooked chicken.
Another tells the story of his disbelief upon arriving in the US that so much food could be provided for enemy POWs. And yet another tells of POWs in Ogden, Utah hiding bread in the rafters of their barracks because they feared it would run out. The Americans couldn't figure out how the Italian POWs were eating so much bread but eventually they discovered what was happening.

Each of the POWs I spoke with were amazed by the wide open vistas as they were being transported across the country by train. And their stories continued to be very similar regardless of where they were held in the US. Most films might try to follow the separate details of each man's story but there was so much overlap that we were able to make a tapestry of moments and experiences that add up to the story of all of them.

We took the beginning of each man's story but then took the next piece from just one or two people, and the next piece from another. We didn't need to revisit every step

of each man's story and yet you feel you have lived the unfolding story of each man.

What kind of interaction did the prisoners have with the Italian American community?

After the Italian armistice in September 1943, 35,000 Italian POWs joined Italian Service Units in non-combat roles to support the US war effort, by doing laundry, farming, cooking etc. for US soldiers in the US. Those who agreed to serve in these military units had to pledge allegiance to the new Italian government, and were held in camps all across the US.

At many of these camps, Italian POWs were allowed Sunday visits from local Italian American families. On occasion, they were even permitted to attend community events outside the camps - always under supervision - or share meals with local families. Romances bloomed between POWs and local Italian American women and some were quite serious. Although, all POWs were repatriated to Italy after the war, a number of women later traveled to Italy to marry their POW sweethearts. Many chose to return to the US because conditions in Italy were quite challenging after the devastation of the war.

In contrast, Italian POWs who refused to cooperate with the U.S. war effort were sent to camps in Texas, where they endured stricter conditions and reduced food rations. I did find one American guard from Texas who became friendly with the POWs, but the non ISU POWs had no regular contact with Italian American communities.

Is there any particularly interesting story or anecdote you'd like to share with our readers?

I like all the stories but the story of Mario and Anna is particularly lovely, I think. Mario had been a POW in Ogden, just outside of Salt Lake City, Utah. Anna and her family would come to visit on Sundays in hopes of finding POWs who might know their relatives in Italy. While Anna's father was skeptical, the two would eventually marry. After the war, Mario was repatriated but Anna followed him there to get married, and together they returned to the U.S. They spent the rest of their lives in Ogden, the same town where he had once served in an Italian Service Unity. They bought one of the decommissioned POW barracks, and converted it into their first home.

One touching detail that didn't make it into the film is that Anna had always dreamed of moving to the West Coast as a young woman. But Mario grew deeply connected to her family, so they stayed in Ogden and raised three children. She never had the op-

portunity to live by the ocean, but she built a full, joyful life surrounded by family and grandchildren. Mario closes the film by saying, "Down deep, you love your country (Italy), but America gave to me everything."

What happened to the prisoners after the end of the war?

All Italian POWs held in the US were repatriated to Italy, no exceptions were granted as far as I could discern.

What has this story taught you?

I learned a great deal making the film but there are two things I would highlight.

War is life changing. For those of us who've grown up never having to be involved in a war, it is eye opening to understand that people are plucked from youth and put into these situations not of their own making that change their lives. In many cases it impacted the trajectory of their educations and their careers. They never got those years back.

There were powerful connections between Italians and Americans developing both before and after WWII. And the Italians had strong ideas about the US, either from movies or relatives in the US. My uncle tells the story in the film of being captured in Northern Africa by the British and immediately turning to his friend and saying, "Let's go with the Americans: things will be better with them!" So they actually "escaped" from the British POWs to join the American POWs. Somehow, even then, they had this idea of America and were curious to experience it

for themselves. Long before World War II, there had been a steady flow of Italians coming to the U.S. for work and then returning home, so the bond between Italy and the United States was already well established.

I am so happy I had the opportunity to make this film and provide a window into these stories - otherwise hidden in the margins of history.

You may read more about the film and the historical background at the film website: PrisonersInParadise.com.

Ogden Utah

The 2024 yearbook of
We the Italians
Two flags, One heart

ALSO AVAILABLE ON AMAZON

We the Italians. Two flags, One heart.
One hundred interviews about Italy and the US

YEARBOOKS
2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023

amazon

Italian wine

Campania, a land of ancient vines and modern wine excellence

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Campania, in Southern Italy, is a region with one of the oldest winemaking heritages in the world. Its wine tradition stretches back thousands of years, beginning even before the Romans, and is deeply rooted in the land and culture. Today, this region is gaining increasing recognition for producing high-quality wines from both red and white grape varieties, many of which are native and found nowhere else.

Campania's geography plays a key role in its success as a wi-

ne-producing region. Over 50% of the land is hilly and 35% mountainous, providing ideal terrain for cultivating grapes. Only 15% of the region is flat, which means most vineyards benefit from good drainage, optimal sun exposure, and cooler temperatures at higher elevations. These conditions, combined with volcanic soils in certain areas, produce wines with depth, character, and longevity.

The region is home to more than 25,000 hectares (over 60,000 acres) of vineyards, with a predominance of red grape cultivation. Historically, Campania's vineyards used traditional training systems such as the pergola and tree-trained "alberata" methods, especially in Caserta. In contrast, the bush vine (alberello) system is more common in mountainous areas like Avellino. In recent decades, however, there's been a gradual shift toward more modern systems like espalier and vertical trellising, allowing for mechanized farming and better disease control. This transition reflects a broader movement toward sustainable, quality-focused viticulture.

Campania currently produces about 1.7 million hectoliters of wine each year. Of that, 60% is red and rosé, while 40% is white. The region boasts 4 DOCG (Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita) wines, 15 DOC (Denominazione di Ori-

gine Controllata), and 10 IGT (Indicazione Geografica Tipica) designations, underscoring its enological diversity and excellence.

A Legacy Written in Vines

The history of Campanian wine begins with the ancient Greeks, who brought vitis vinifera—the common grapevine—to the region over 2,500 years ago. Several of today's key grape varieties, such as Aglianico, Greco, and Fiano, have Greek origins. The name "Aglianico" likely derives from "Ellenico," meaning "Hellenic." These grapes were later celebrated by the Romans, who exported Campanian wines like Falernum, Calenum, and Faustinianum throughout the empire. The port cities of Pozzuoli and Sinuessa shipped enormous quantities of wine across the Mediterranean and as far as Gaul. Pompeii was a thriving wine trade center before the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 AD, and archaeological evidence still reveals amphorae and vineyards preserved under ash. However, with the fall of Rome, viticulture in the region declined. It wasn't until the Middle Ages that winema-

Taurasi

king saw some revival—Asprinio, for example, was noted as early as the 1300s for its potential in sparkling wine production. In the 1700s, merchants traveled to Aversa to source grapes for making bubbly.

The phylloxera crisis reached Campania later than other parts of Europe but caused significant damage. It wasn't until the 1980s that Campania began its modern wine renaissance. Since then, local producers have focused on native varieties, sustainable practices, and terroir-driven wines, resulting in a dramatic rise in quality and international acclaim.

A Treasure Trove of Native Grapes

Campania is especially rich in indigenous grape varieties, many of which have been rescued from near extinction. Among white grapes, there's Asprinio, Falanghina, Fiano, Greco, Biancolella, Coda di Volpe, Pallagrello Bianco, and Forastera. On the red

side, Aglianico leads the charge, with support from Piedirosso (locally called Per'e Palummo or "dove's foot"), Sciascinoso, Pallagrello Nero, and the rediscovered Casavecchia—a grape known for producing deeply colored, structured wines with high levels of anthocyanins.

The most iconic wines include:

• Taurasi DOCG: Known as the "Barolo of the South," this powerful red from Avellino is made from Aglianico and known for its aging potential, complexity, and elegance.

• Greco di Tufo DOCG: A crisp, mineral-driven white with citrus and floral notes, grown in volcanic soils.

• Fiano di Avellino DOCG: Aromatic and textured, Fiano offers honeyed and nutty notes that deepen with age.

• Falanghina del Sannio DOC: A fresh, vibrant white now seeing a renaissance for its versatility and food-friendliness.

A Region of Wine Diversity

Beyond these famous names, Campania has many smaller zo-

Fiano di Avellino

nes producing distinct wines. In Caserta, Asprinio di Aversa—an acidic, dry white wine—is made from grapes traditionally grown on tall poplar trees. In the area surrounding Mount Vesuvius, the Lacryma Christi wines (red, white, and rosé) are made from native grapes like Verdeca, Greco, and Falanghina, grown in mineral-rich volcanic soils.

On the island of Ischia, white grapes like Biancolella and Forastera thrive, producing lively wines with a maritime freshness. The Sorrento Peninsula is known for Sciascinoso (also called Olivella for its olive-shaped berries), which adds acidity and color to blends. Along the Amalfi Coast, small terraced vineyards in Ravello and Furore produce perfumed, citrusy whites from rare varieties such as Fenile, Ripolo, Pepella, and Ginestra.

A Modern Renaissance

Today, Campania is not only a region of tradition but of innovation. Many producers have embraced organic farming, low-intervention winemaking, and native yeast fermentations. There's also a renewed focus on storytelling—connecting wine lovers with the history, geography, and people behind each bottle.

The province of Avellino remains the heart of quality wine production, home to Taurasi, Greco di Tufo, and Fiano di Avellino. Benevento is known for Sannio DOC wines, while Caserta hosts the prestigious Falerno del Massico DOC, once the wine of Roman emperors.

Campania's wines are more than a product—they are a reflection of the land, shaped by volcanoes, mountains, sea breezes, and centuries of human devotion. As consumers seek authenticity and character, Campania continues to shine as one of Italy's most intriguing and rewarding wine destinations.

Italian good news

Wishew, the Italian platform that blends social media and crowdfunding

We the Italians Editorial Staff

In today's world, social media has long been the place where most people—especially younger generations—form relationships and interact with others. At the same time, advances in technology have not only introduced new digital payment tools but also reshaped user behavior and business models. Within this landscape, crowdfunding has emerged as a powerful way to support projects and ideas that could grow into major success stories.

These two forces—social media and crowdfunding, together worth over $500 billion globally—are

the foundation behind Wishew, a fully Italian-born platform that merges both worlds. Wishew offers a new way to connect with others, build meaningful relationships, and bring dreams to life through community support. The focus isn't on likes or comments—it's on donations. After launching last year in the U.S., Canada, Australia, and the U.K. with strong results, the platform is now expanding into Europe, including Italy, starting this July.

Wishew is simple to use: users post short videos to share their wishes or ideas, receive suggestions, connect with others, and get micro-donations from people in the community who share a common goal. The platform's algorithm

boosts visibility for those who are generous and proactive, building a culture of reciprocity and support. Unlike traditional social networks, Wishew eliminates the "like" button and puts generosity at the heart of the experience. It's not about chasing approval or venting anger—it's about sharing aspirations and building a community based on kindness.

This fresh approach—rooted in the spirit of Italian generosity—aims to change how people interact online, shifting the focus from competition to collaboration.

Wishew taps into a growing trend: younger generations want more than just entertainment—they want to participate, to be part of something meaningful. Even influencers on Wishew are different. Content creators on the platform play a consistently positive role. Users can match with an influencer who aligns with their wish and invite them to help promote it, engaging a network of like-minded supporters. The platform also features a built-in security system that ensures those who make a wish follow through on it.

Italian historical trademarks

Balletto di Roma

Associazione Marchi Storici d'Italia

The Balletto di Roma company was founded in 1960 through the artistic partnership of two icons of Italian dance, Franca Bartolomei and Walter Zappolini. Since its inception, the company has been dedicated to producing and promoting original Italian dance across Europe and around the world. Its repertoire today is rooted in tradition yet open to innovation and experimentation, drawing on the rich legacy that established its reputation.
Over the past 65 years, Balletto di Roma has engaged in presti-

gious collaborations and embraced a wide range of creative influences. This has fueled the company's growth both in terms of quantity and quality of its productions, earning increasing acclaim from audiences. Over time, the Rome-based company has developed a unique production model in Italy, one that preserves its repertoire while constantly evolving it—supporting choreographic creativity and maintaining a high standard of technical and interpretive excellence among its dancers.

Alongside its artistic production, Balletto di Roma is also deeply committed to comprehensive training—two foundational pillars that define the company. This dual focus merges into a single, distinguished brand in Italy's cultural landscape. Today, the company's main goal is to support the next generation of dancers and secure their educational and professional recognition at a European level.

This ambitious and sustainable vision is made possible through the support of public institutions (the Italian Ministry of Culture, the Lazio Region, the City of Rome, the European Union, and Italian Cultural Institutes abro-

ad) as well as the enthusiastic response from audiences who attend performances in Italy and beyond. Notably, during its 2023 China Tour, Balletto di Roma received the "Premio Eccellenza Italia" at the China Awards for its performance of Romeo and Juliet, choreographed by Fabrizio Monteverde. This recognition has paved the way for a follow-up tour in 2024 and 2025.

The company's current identity is the result of the managerial leadership of Luciano Carratoni, who, since the early 2000s, has steered Balletto di Roma toward artistic growth. In 2018, he oversaw a major generational shift by appointing Francesca Magnini as Artistic Director. Under her guidance, the company has strengthened its direction and expanded its vision, building partnerships with institutions, cultural organizations, and prestigious universities in Italy and abroad to foster dialogue and continuous renewal.

Today, Balletto di Roma continues to nurture emerging talent through education and production, representing a high-quality brand recognized both nationally and internationally—proudly promoting the rich cultural heritage of Italian creativity and excellence: Made in Italy.

Italian economy

Risk is human. Between Italy and the US, new leadership to govern artificial intelligence

Fabrizio Fasani

The encounter between Europe's humanistic tradition and the pragmatic mindset of the United States has, over time, given rise to leadership models that combine vision with practicality, innovation with responsibility. Today, in the age of artificial intelligence, this convergence is not just beneficial—it's essential.

That may sound like a bold claim, but it reflects a growing

reality: AI is no longer just a tool—it's a complex and non-neutral environment. It reshapes decisions, redefines priorities, and reframes relationships. As Norbert Wiener, the father of cybernetics, once warned: "We better be quite sure that the purpose put into the machine is the purpose which we really desire."

That's why I believe that as companies increasingly embrace AI-driven transformation, there is a need for a new executive role—someone who can detect subtle signals, assess consequences, and restore meaning. Enter the Chief Sense Officer.

Managing Risk Is Not About Containment - It's About Understanding

Risk has always been the raw material of decision-making—the point where the unknown meets responsibility. It's not just a threat to manage, but an opportunity to steer.

The Chief Sense Officer is not a compliance officer or a control technician. They are an interpreter of complexity—a leader who can fuse technology with ethics, culture, and artistic sensibility. In a world where algorithms can process but not imagine, the ability to perceive nuance, recognize patterns, and find harmony is critical.

Art, in this context, is not decoration or aesthetics—it's a form of critical analysis, a trigger for mental models that transcend mechanical thinking. The Chief Sense Officer must look beyond the code, intuit what is not yet

visible—like a conductor finding meaning in both notes and silence.

In the U.S., we've seen several attempts to build ethical frameworks around AI, such as Google's AI Principles Advisory Council. But without clear mandates or genuine leadership, these initiatives often dissolve—because ethics without soul doesn't hold.

In Italy, by contrast, some industrial players are taking a more reflective approach. The Generali Group, for instance, has begun rethinking its AI-driven decision-making processes, investing in internal education and values-based governance. This is a model that doesn't chase change—it shapes it.

A New Kind of Leadership: Where Meaning Meets Innovation

The Chief Sense Officer is not just an innovation manager with a moral compass, nor a compliance officer with a softer tone. They are meaning-makers—strategic thinkers tasked with restoring depth in a world that often confuses speed with direction.

Some pioneering organizations are already showing the way. Salesforce created an Office of Ethical and Humane Use of Technology. ENEL launched its "Open Power" approach, built on listening and co-creation with citizens. The message is clear: innovation needs a face and a voice—a conscience.

Italy's Role in Leading This Evolution

Italy has a centuries-old culture of calculated risk—from Venetian merchants to Renaissance diplomats to visionaries like Adriano Olivetti, who once said, "There is no progress without social justice." This mindset is more relevant than ever.

Among Italian American communities—where rigor meets imagination, and tradition meets openness—a new generation of Chief Sense Officers can emerge. These are hybrid leaders, fluent

in both cultures, capable of building bridges between Silicon Valley and Latin humanism.

A prime example is the New York Italian Business & Tech Network, which launched the event series "Tech & Ethics: The Human Code," exploring AI not just from a technical angle, but from a deeply human one.

The Chief Sense Officer as a Future Architect

Risk isn't something to eliminate—it's a horizon to understand. And those who've navigated business crises know that risk is alive. It's not just calculated—it's interpreted.

The Chief Sense Officer embodies that interpretation. They don't settle for efficiency—they seek meaning. They don't just protect the company—they position it within a broader world. This is a new role, but one with an old soul—akin to Renaissance architects who bridged science, art, and society.

Their rarest skill? Artistic sensitivity—the ability to perceive hidden beauty in complex systems, to give shape to what doesn't yet exist, to speak a language that blends emotion and analysis. As Italo Calvino wrote: "Lightness is not superficiality, but the ability to soar above things."

In the end, the Chief Sense Officer does not weigh innovation down with fear—but lifts it up with thought.

Italian traditions

The Calabrian tarantella, a living folk tradition

We the Italians Editorial Staff

The tarantella calabrese, sometimes called tirantella or in the past u sonu, is a term that encompasses various traditional dance and music styles found throughout the Calabria region of southern Italy.

While it shares a name with other southern Italian tarantellas, the Calabrian version is distinct—especially in its rhythm and performance style. Unlike the pizzica of Puglia, the Calabrian tarantella is not tied to the exorcism rituals of tarantism, but instead is a festive or spiritual community dance.

Although there's a certain unity

to the way the tarantella is danced and played across Calabria, each area has developed unique forms and local expressions. For example, there's the libera from the Catanzaro area, sonu a ballu from the Aspromonte mountains, the zumparieddu from the Sila plateau, and the viddanedda from the Reggio Calabria area. Styles also vary by gender and purpose—fimminina (feminine), masculina (masculine), or libera (free-form).

Ethnomusicologists trace the origins of the Calabrian tarantella to ancient Greek dances, rather than the Latin or medieval roots of the Neapolitan tarantella or the trance-like movements of the pizzica. The Greek influence is especially evident in the way the body moves—upright, centered at the waist, and unconstrained by formal choreography. This "dance of the earth" is deeply symbolic and rooted in freedom of expression.

Traditionally, the Calabrian tarantella is a partner dance—performed by men and women, or even two people of the same sex—inside a circle called the ròta (or "wheel"). Musicians also join this circle, and the rhythm they play defines the tempo and tone of the dance. Overseeing the rotation of dancers is the mastru i ballu (dance master), who manages the flow of participants and helps maintain the energy and spirit of the event. Movements are based on triplet steps, and the arm gestures

differ for men and women: men may display courting or dueling movements, while women hold symbolic poses referencing fertility.

Over the centuries, this dance has become a powerful social ritual, performed during important community events such as religious festivals, weddings, and local fairs. The tarantella became more than a dance—it was a way to affirm identity, share space, and celebrate life.

The instruments traditionally used include the zampogna (a type of bagpipe), later replaced by the organetto (a diatonic accordion), accompanied by tambourines. In some regions, flutes and whistles were

used, and in areas like Locride and Monte Poro, the Calabrian lyre still plays a role.

By the 20th century, the social function of the tarantella began to fade, surviving mostly in places like Aspromonte, Locride, and the Pollino area. But even today, in these strongholds, the dance is rich with

meaning—same-gender duets may symbolize challenge or camaraderie, while mixed-gender pairs often represent courtship.

One of the most popular variants is the viddaneddha, especially in the Reggio Calabria province. It's a courtship dance where the woman plays an active role, a rarity in older traditions. Today, the Calabrian tarantella remains a lively and energetic dance, marked by quick footwork, spirited movement, and often song. It continues to be a proud expression of Calabrian culture, frequently performed at town festivals, food fairs, weddings, and cultural showcases both in Italy and abroad.

Italian sustainability

Italy's roadmap to meet 2030 Green Homes Directive targets

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Italy is making significant headway toward meeting the European Green Homes Directive's 2030 energy-efficiency goals. According to the report "Italy's Path to the Green Homes Directive", the country has already cut residential energy consumption by 9.1%, leaving just 6.9% to reach the 16% reduction target set for 2030.

To close this gap, Italy must invest approximately €84.8 billion between 2025 and 2030—roughly €14.1 billion per year.

This investment would cover energy-efficient renovations for 3 million homes (around 505,000 annually), at an average cost of €28,000 per unit. The economic ripple effects are expected to be massive: a total economic boost of €280 billion, broken down into €133.8 billion in direct impact on the construction sector, €44.7 billion in indirect impacts (such as supply chains), and €101.7 billion in induced effects. The estimated added value to the economy is about €102.6 billion, or €17.1 billion per year.

This large-scale renovation push is also expected to create about 1.3 million jobs over six years—an average of 219,000 jobs per year. Around 800,000 of these would be in construction, while another 480,000 would benefit related industries and services.

Italy's residential housing stock includes 14.8 million buildings, and over 52% of its 18.5 million homes are still rated in the lowest energy classes, F and G. About 68% of homes still rely on fossil fuels for heating. Alarmingly, 9% of Italian households face energy poverty—the highest rate in a decade—and nearly 24 million homes (68.3%) were built before 1980.

The socio-economic analysis reveals further concerns: 17.9% of families spend a disproportionate share of their income on energy; 9.9% struggle to heat their homes adequately; 17% live in unhealthy housing conditions; and 20.1% are at risk of poverty. However, the planned renovations would yield major environmental

benefits, including cutting 4.68 million tons of CO_2 emissions annually—a 9% drop compared to 2020 residential emissions. Buildings currently account for 42% of Italy's final energy use and 18.8% of its total greenhouse gas emissions.

Looking beyond 2030, the roadmap outlines targets for 2035 and 2050. By 2035, an additional €61 billion would be needed to upgrade 2.18 million more homes, reducing CO_2 emissions by another 3.37 million tons annually. By 2050, full energy efficiency could be reached under two scenarios: a "total" plan requiring €371 billion for 13.3 million homes, or a "selective" plan needing €230 billion for 8.3 million primary residences.

The study stresses four key strategies: ensuring financial sustainability, tailoring incentives based on income, prioritizing upgrades to primary homes (excluding short-term rentals), and creating dedicated financial tools like guarantee funds. Simplifying legal procedures, especially for multi-unit buildings, resolving building code violations, and maintaining regulatory stability are also seen as essential.

Finally, the report promotes digital innovation—like smart home systems and digital building twins—and calls for enhanced training and certification for professionals to ensure the success of the transition.

Italian cuisine

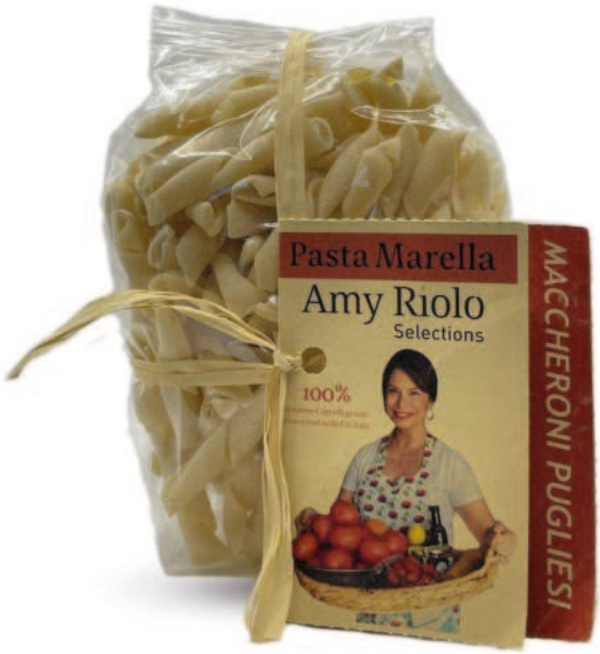
Maccheroni Pugliesi with Sundried Red Pesto and Burrata

Amy Riolo

JLet's face it, even the most avid cooks among us need some quick-fix recipes in the summertime. This artisan pasta dish which combines the flavors of Puglia and Liguria is one that I turn to all season long. In fact, we even put it on the menu at Divino Ristorante Enoteca in Washington, DC where I am currently acting as the brand ambassador. So what makes this dish so special, you might wonder?

Amy Riolo Selections Maccheroni Pugliesi Italian pasta is made from 100% Senatore Cappelli grains which are known as the "chosen breed" of wheat in Puglia Italy where it is grown. This type of wheat was cultivated in the 1930s and 1940s in Puglia by Senatore Raffaele Cappelli after whom it is named. Senatore Cappelli wheat contains trace elements such as magnesium, potassium, calcium, and zinc as well as B vitamins and E that are not found in industrially manufactured pasta.

Amy Riolo Selections Maccheroni Pugliesi are made from 100% organic wheat which is grown and milled in Italy by Pastificio Marella the province of Bari. Marella, an entirely family run company, is renowned throughout Italy as one the finest producers of traditional Apulian handmade pastas. Extruded through a bronze die, the pasta has a rough texture to better hold sauce. This pasta pairs well with meat sauces and simple tomato sauce, but my favorite way to enjoy it is with Amy Riolo Selections Sundried Red Pesto made from just five ingredients: peeled sun-dried tomatoes, Anfosso extra virgin olive oil, fresh DOP Genovese basil, Grana Padano cheese, and pine nuts. The award-winning sauce coats and complements the pasta perfectly for an authentic and nutritious meal in minutes.



INGREDIENTS

- 1 teaspoon unrefined sea salt
- 1 package Amy Riolo Selections Maccheroni Pugliesi Pasta
- 1 jar Amy Riolo Selections Sundried Red Pesto
- 8 ounces burrata cheese, drained and shredded
- ¼ cup freshly chopped basil
- ¼ cup Amy Riolo Selections extra-virgin olive oil
- Grana Padano or Parmigiano Reggiano cheese to serve

PREPARATION

Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Add salt and pasta, stir, and reduce heat to low. Cook for approximately 11-13 minutes or until al dente.

In the meantime, reserve ½ cup of cooking water.

When pasta is done, drain it into a

colander and return it to the pot. With the heat off, quicky stir in the pasta water, ¾ of the pesto, the burrata cheese, and the basil. Stir well to allow the cheese to melt. Spoon into a serving bowl and drizzle with EVOO.

Top with Grana Padano or Parmigiano Reggiano cheese and serve immediately.

LEARNING MADE EASY

Olive Oil

for dummies®

A Wiley Brand

Choose the healthiest and best olive oil

Taste, pair, and cook with olive oil like a pro

Enjoy olive oil recipes for any time of day

Amy Riolo

Simon Poole, MD

Authors of *Diabetes For Dummies* and world-renowned olive oil experts

Italian entertainment

Farewell to Pierino, the Italian harmless rebel in a school smock

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Alvaro Vitali, one of the most recognizable faces of Italy's "commedia sexy all'italiana" in the 1970s and '80s, has died at the age of 75. Best known for his iconic portrayal of Pierino, the mischievous schoolboy character from a series of risqué comedies, Vitali appeared in over 150 films during his career.

It's incredibly hard to explain the Pierino phenomenon to anyone who didn't live in Italy during the 1980s. Like many film genres, trying to understand it decades later feels

nearly impossible. And yet, back then, an optimistic Italy—emerging from the dark, turbulent 1970s—was captivated by this man dressed as a schoolboy: ignorant but good-hearted, unmistakably Roman, just like the actor who played him. Alvaro Vitali was well past the age of the character that made him famous, but that didn't matter.

Pierino was also about the beautiful women who undressed on screen, at a time when Italian society was voting on divorce and abortion and discovering the allure of actresses like Edwige Fenech, Gloria Guida, Nadia Cassini, and Michela Miti. These were the innocent fantasies of Italian men of the era—tame by today's standards, especially compared to what young people now find online.

Still, Pierino is part of Italy's entertainment history. And Alvaro Vitali's passing marks the end of a little piece of youth for many of us—a youth that, in many ways, felt simpler and less burdened than the one young people face today.

Born in Rome in 1950 to a working-class family, Alvaro Vitali left school early and worked odd jobs, including as an electrician. His life changed when famed director Federico Fellini discovered him and cast him in Satyri-

with Nadia Cassini

con (1969). This led to further small roles in Fellini's The Clowns (1970), Roma (1972), and Amarcord (1973), giving Vitali a start in cinema that few comedians could match.

Despite his early work with Fellini, Vitali found true fame in lowbrow comedies. In 1981, director Marino Girolami cast him as Pierino, a crude but lovable schoolboy known from popular Italian jokes. The film Pierino contro tutti was a massive hit and made Vitali a household name. He reprised the role in several sequels, becoming forever linked with the character. Dressed in a blue school smock, high-pitched voice, and delivering vulgar jokes, Vitali's Pierino became a symbol of a certain era in Italian pop culture.

He often worked with beautiful women, true icons of the genre. His films were packed with sexual innuendo, slapstick humor, and absurd situations, reflecting a crude yet oddly innocent depiction of Italian masculinity during a more permissive time. There was no politically correctness back then.

Despite attempts to branch out with roles in films by Monicelli, Magni, and Steno, Vitali remained typecast as Pierino. As the

with Gloria Guida

with Edwige Fenech

genre faded, so did his mainstream career, though he continued to work and was fondly remembered by fans.

The story of Alvaro Vitali is also a snapshot of a cultural moment: post-economic boom Italy, craving lighthearted escapism, crude humor, and the fantasy of sexual liberation. Behind the jokes and the nudity, his films captured a version of Italy where taboos were mocked, not moralized, and audiences filled theaters for the fun of it. It was fun, simple, and harmless.

Though sometimes dismissed as lowbrow, Vitali's success reflects a raw kind of stardom, rooted in charisma, timing, and the ability to make people laugh—even when they weren't supposed to.

with Michela Miti

Italian curiosities

From Lucca to the world, the combustion engine

We the Italians Editorial Staff

The spark that helped ignite the modern world came not from Detroit or Berlin, but from Lucca—a charming Tuscan city better known for its medieval walls than for its revolutionary inventions. In 1853, two Italian visionaries, Eugenio Barsanti and Felice Matteucci, patented what is now recognized as the first internal combustion engine. Though their names are little known today, every time an engine roars to life, we owe a silent thanks to these two pioneers.

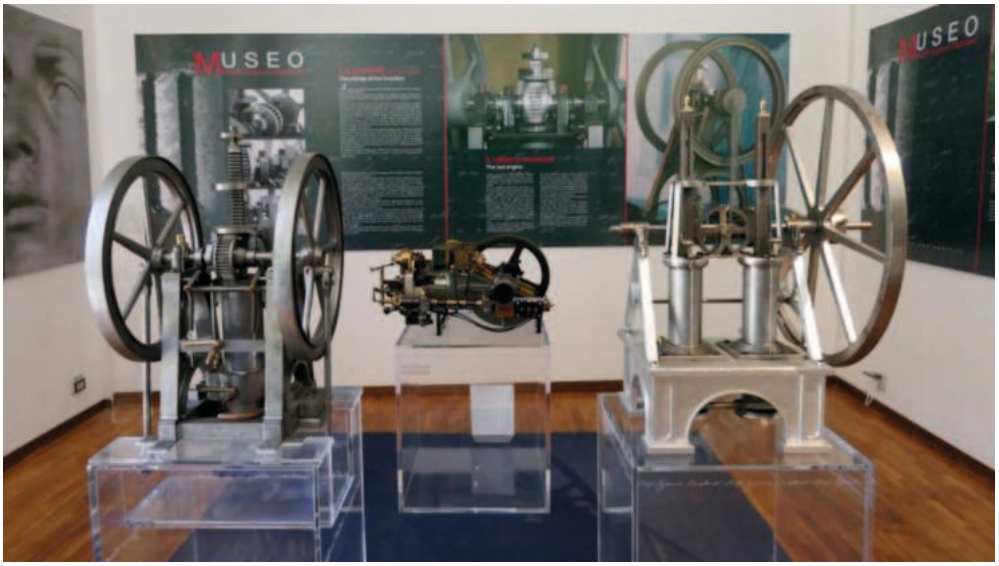
Felice Matteucci, born in Lucca in 1808, was an engineer passio-

nate about hydraulics and mechanics. Niccolò Barsanti, born in Pietrasanta in 1821, was a math and physics teacher who later became a Piarist priest, taking the name Eugenio. In 1851, the two began collaborating to develop a revolutionary machine—an engine powered not by steam, but by the explosion of a gas mixture.

Barsanti was inspired by Alessandro Volta's "Volta's pistol," an early scientific experiment in which a hydrogen-air mix exploded inside a chamber, forcing out a cork. Their idea was to use that explosive force to generate mechanical motion, giving rise to the first non-steam engine—lighter, more efficient, and more adaptable than anything available at the time.

Despite their groundbreaking invention, Barsanti and Matteucci were overshadowed internationally. Barsanti died young, and although Matteucci and Barsanti's father tried to defend their claim, other names gained global recognition. Étienne Lenoir's engine in 1860 was widely publicized, and the Otto and Langen engine, introduced at the 1867 Paris Exposition, was nearly identical in design to the Italian duo's model—but gained all the fame.

One reason for this lack of recognition may have been the political instability of Italy at the time. The country was in the



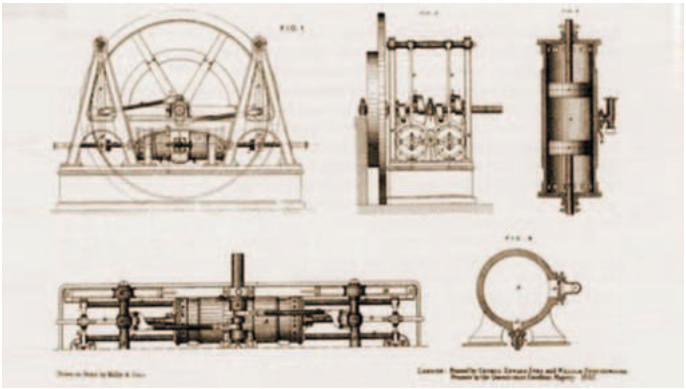
early stages of unification, while industrial giants like Germany and France had the resources and influence to dominate public attention.

Still, the facts are undeniable: in 1853, Barsanti and Matteucci detailed their invention through patents filed in the UK, France, Italy, and Germany. Initially, their engine found practical use in the maritime world—specifically in small boat propulsion—because, unlike steam engines, it couldn't start from a complete stop without help. Boat propellers, however, required less torque to begin moving. It wasn't until the late 1890s that clutch systems allowed internal combustion engines to power land vehicles from a standstill, paving the way for the automobile revolution.

One early version of the Barsanti-Matteucci engine was built in 1856 at the Benini Foundry in Florence and installed at the Maria Antonia railway station. There, it powered tools like shears and drills—marking the first use of an internal combustion engine to operate industrial machinery.
Throughout the following years, Barsanti and Matteucci refined their designs, filing new patents and building several prototype engines. In 1854, they submitted a detailed report to the Accademia dei Georgofili—an important scientific institution in Florence that preserved technical documents at a time when Italy lacked a national patent office. Despite their technical superiority and early success, they remained in the shadows of history.

Today, the global scientific community acknowledges their role in inventing the internal combustion engine. Lucca proudly honors its native sons at the Barsanti and Matteucci Internal Combustion Engine Museum, where visitors can explore working models of their five engine designs, view original patents, diagrams, and certificates, and learn about their lives and legacy. The museum also features a multimedia room and highlights the evidence proving the historical priority of their invention.

Their story is a reminder that great ideas often come from unexpected places—and that true innovation doesn't always make the loudest noise. But in Lucca, you can still hear the echo of the engine that changed the world.



Italian Citizenship Assistance

Acquiring citizenship by residency via an Italian parent or grandparent

Italian Citizenship Assistance

Following recent changes to the Italian Citizenship law that took effect on May 24, 2025, many individuals who now find themselves ineligible to apply for Italian citizenship by descent are looking for alternate routes of acquiring Italian citizenship. In fact, this new legislation allows those with Italian ancestry to the second degree (parent or grandparent) to apply for citizenship after just two years of legal residence in Italy. This article will

walk you through the process, from obtaining a visa to submitting your application.

Citizenship by Descent

On March 28, 2025, the Italian Council of Ministers issued the Tajani Decree, which significantly revised the requirements for acquiring Italian citizenship by descent (jure sanguinis). After a parliamentary review, the decree was enacted into law (Law No. 74/2025) on May 24, 2025.

Under this new law, individuals born abroad, either before or after May 24, 2025, may be recognized as an Italian citizen if they have an Italian-born parent or grandparent. Alternatively, eligibility can be established if the individual's parent or adoptive parent legally resided in Italy for at least two consecutive years after acquiring Italian citizenship and before the individual's birth or adoption.

Additionally, there is a provision for applications submitted to an Italian consulate, municipality, or filed in court before 11:59 PM Rome time on March 27, 2025, or those who had already received an appointment confirmation by that time, in which case their application will be assessed under the previous eligibility rules.

Citizenship by Residency

Due to the stricter requirements introduced by Law No. 74/2025, many people are no longer eligible to claim Italian citizenship by descent, but may have an expedited path to citizenship through residency because of their Italian ancestry. Individuals with an Italian parent or grandparent can apply for citizenship after only two years of legal residence in Italy, which is a reduction from the previous three-year requirement. Even more significantly, this is a reduction from the 10-year residence requirement for non-EU citizens who have no Italian ancestry. This path can be used even if you do not qualify for Italian citizenship by descent, for instance, there was a break in the lineage due to your ancestor's naturalization. You would need to establish and maintain uninterrupted legal residence in the Italian municipality where you choose to live for the entire two-year period.

Legal Residence

To legally reside in Italy for more than the 90-day period permitted for non-EU citizens, you'll need both a long-stay visa and a residence permit (permesso di soggiorno). Several types of long-stay visas are available depending on your situation, including the Elective Residence Visa, Digital Nomad Visa, Investor Visa, and Student Visa. The Elective Residence Visa (Retirement Visa) is designed for individuals with stable passive income who can support themselves without working in Italy. The Investor Visa (Golden Visa) is intended for those making a significant financial investment in the Italian economy. The Digital Nomad Visa, recently introduced in 2024, is targeted at highly skilled remote workers or self-employed professionals who meet specific eligibility criteria. Also, a Student Visa is available to individuals enrolled in educational programs in Italy, valid for the duration of their studies.

To begin the process, you'll apply for the appropriate visa at your nearest Italian consulate abroad. Upon arrival in Italy, you must convert your visa into a residence permit by submitting your application at the local post office. They will then schedule an appointment for you at the local police headquarters (questura) to finalize your permit. Most residence permits can be renewed, provided you continue to meet the necessary conditions.

Living in Italy

When moving to Italy, securing accommodation is an important step, whether you choose to rent or buy. It's important to remember that non-EU citizens are allowed to purchase property even before obtaining residency or citizenship. However, owning property does not grant automatic residency or extend your legal stay beyond the 90-day visa-free period.

Housing costs can vary widely based on location. Cities like Rome, Milan, and Florence tend to have higher prices, while smaller towns and rural areas are more affordable. To rent or purchase a home, you will need a codice fiscale, the Italian tax identification number. Similar to a US Social Security number, the codice fiscale is required for essential activities in Italy, such as opening a bank account, getting a mobile phone plan, and accessing the public healthcare.

You can obtain the codice fiscale

either at your local Italian consulate abroad or at an Agenzia delle Entrate (Italian Revenue Agency) once in Italy. Keep in mind that if you reside in Italy for more than 183 days in a calendar year, which is a requirement to maintain your residence permit, you will be considered a tax resident and be required to pay taxes in Italy.

Citizenship Application Process

To qualify for Italian citizenship through residency you must also demonstrate proficiency in the Italian language at the B1 level, as defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). This is considered an intermediate level, and you'll need to present an official certificate as part of your citizenship application. Language exams are administered by one of the following recognized institutions:

- University for Foreigners of Siena
- University for Foreigners of Perugia
- Roma Tre University
- Dante Alighieri Society

ICA offers Italian language courses specifically designed to help you prepare for the B1 exam. Contact us to learn more!

Once your 2-year residency is complete, compile the required documentation along with the fee of

€250.00, and submit the application for Italian citizenship to the Italian Ministry of the Interior. Required documents typically include identification (valid passport), your birth certificate and vital records of your Italian ancestors (birth, marriage, death certificates), all legalized with an apostille and translated into Italian. Additionally, criminal background check certificates from each US state where you've lived and a federal (FBI) background check will be required. Processing time varies but generally ranges from 24 to 36 months.

For more information on relocating to Italy or Italian citizenship, be sure to visit italiancitizenshipassistance.com, subscribe to our Podcast, or contact us directly.

Sponsored by:

ICA
ITALIAN CITIZENSHIP ASSISTANCE

AMERICANS IN ITALY
ASSOCIATION

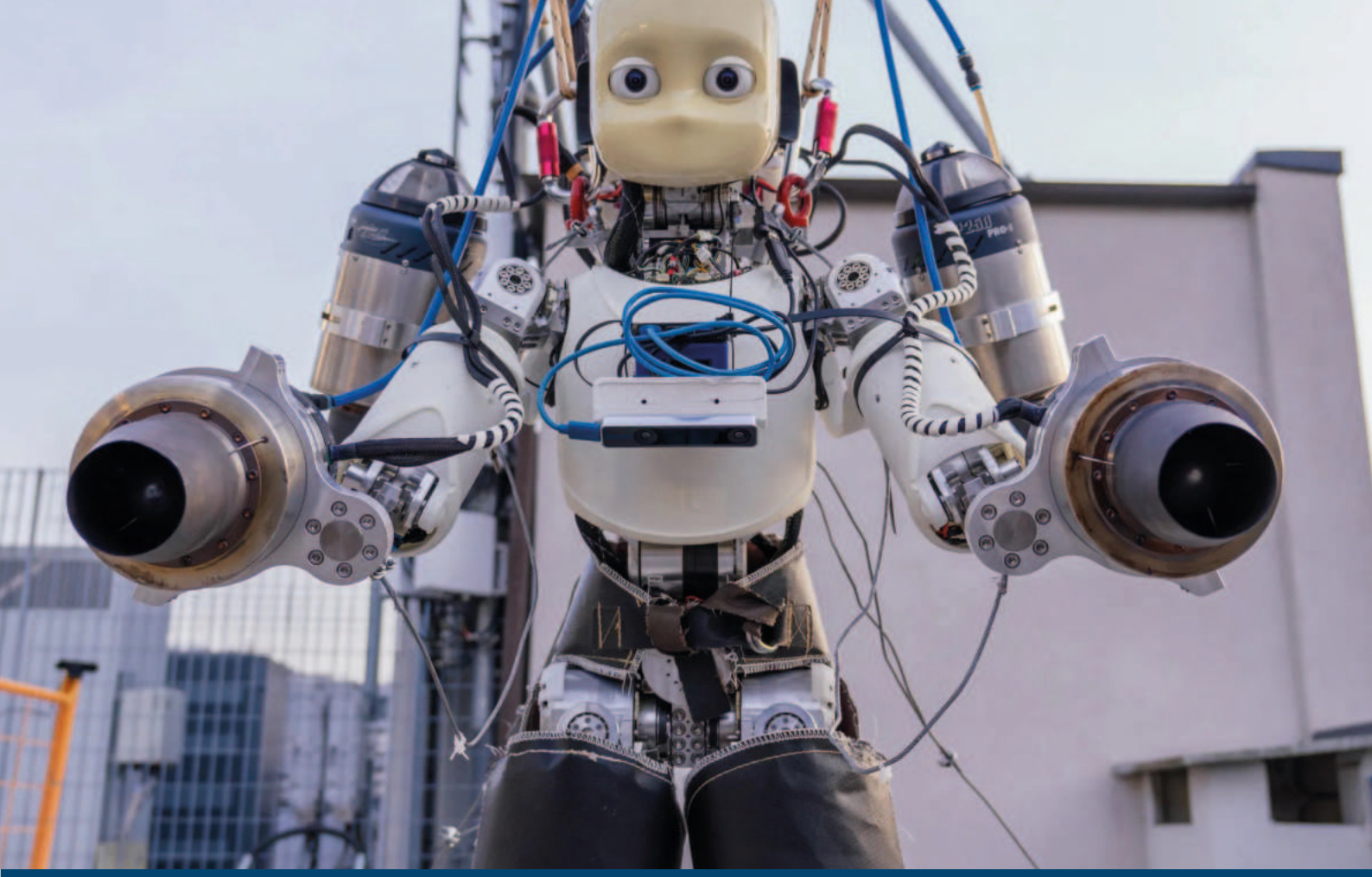
ITALIAN REAL ESTATE
LAWYERS

Villa Cagnoni Boniotti

Celebrate your events in an elegant and historic Italian location in the Veneto region

Via XXV Aprile, 2, 45030 Villamarzana, RO

For more information, please visit: https://villacagnoni-boniotti.com/



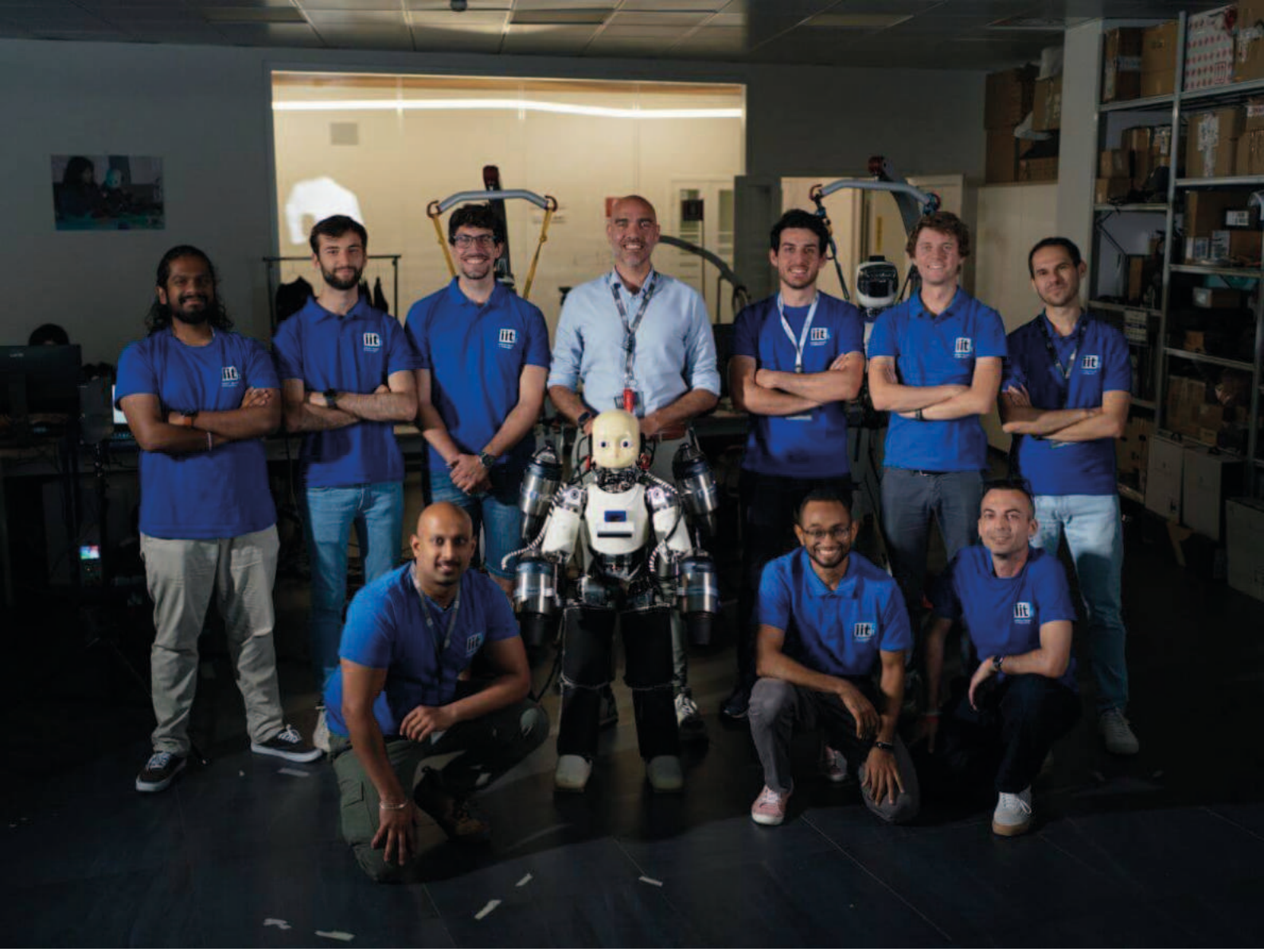
Italian innovation

Even robots will fly, actually they're already doing it, in Italy

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Robots flying through the air might sound like science fiction, but it's becoming reality, only in Italy for now.. Researchers at the Italian Institute of Technology in Genoa have achieved a world first: a humanoid robot equipped with jet propulsion has taken flight.

The robot, named iRonCub3, managed to lift itself about 20 inches off the ground while maintaining stability. With two arms, two legs, and a rocket-powered propulsion system, it's designed not just for show, but to operate in real-world environments. And it's an entirely Made-in-Italy success story.



This marks a major milestone in robotics, made possible by advanced studies in thermodynamics, aerodynamics, and AI-powered control software. While we're not quite seeing cyborgs zooming through the skies like in movies, that's the long-term vision. The flight of iRonCub3 represents an early but crucial step toward robots that can assist humans in emergencies, extreme environments, and search-and-rescue missions.

The team at the Italian Institute of Technology spent over two years developing iRonCub3, not just running tests, but also tackling one of the most difficult engineering challenges: how to get a humanoid body—originally never meant to fly—to take off and remain stable in the air. Their lab, Artificial and Mechanical Intelligence, had to develop a sophisticated control system that could manage the robot's many moving parts during flight.

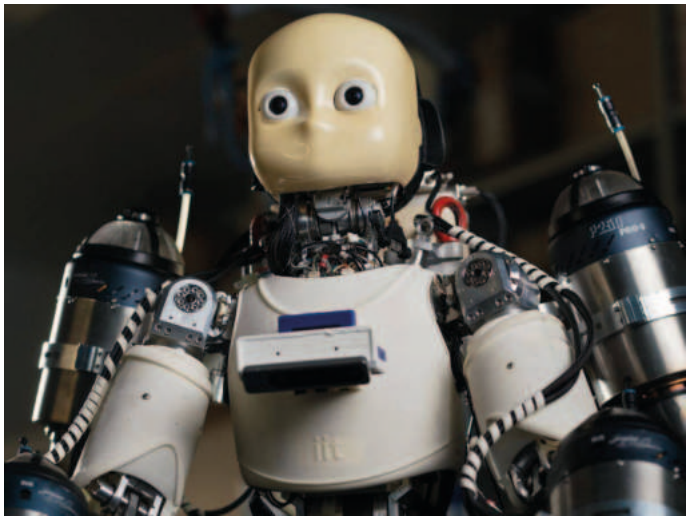
iRonCub3 is the high-tech successor to earlier models like iCub3, which was designed to be teleoperated remotely as a kind of robotic avatar. So, what's inside the flying robot? iRonCub3 is powered by four jet engines—two mounted on its arms and two housed in a backpack-like structure on its back. A titanium "spine" was added to support its new flight capabilities, and its outer shell has been upgraded with heat-resistant materials. That's essential, because its exhaust gases can reach temperatures of up to 1,500°F (about 800°C).

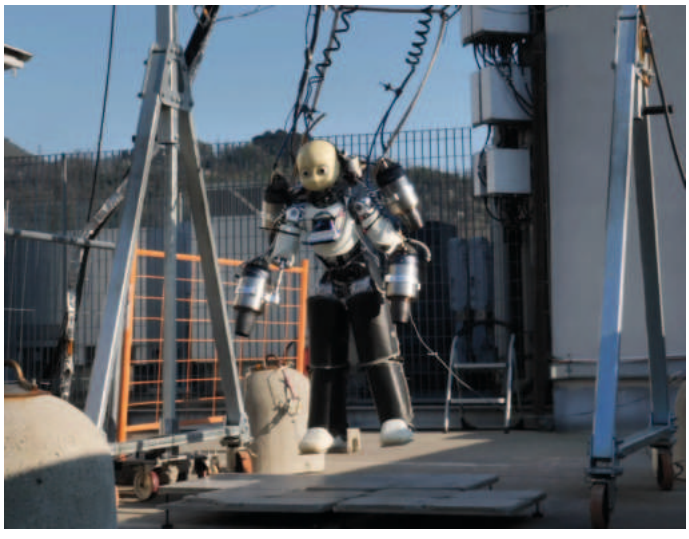
Weighing in at around 154 pounds (70 kg), iRonCub3 can generate more than 1,000 newtons of thrust—enough to lift itself off the ground and stay airborne even in windy or less-than-ideal conditions. Its new configuration allows it to execute controlled flight maneuvers with surprising stability.

Artificial intelligence plays a critical role in the system. A custom AI was developed to estimate aerodynamic forces in real time, based on extensive wind tunnel experiments and computational fluid dynamics (CFD) simulations. These insights allow the robot to adjust its position and power levels on the fly, reacting to turbulent airflows and extreme temperatures.

The aerodynamic studies also provided valuable data for designing future robots that might not look or move like conventional machines. iRonCub3's ability to remain stable during complex flight operations opens up new possibilities in the world of mobile robotics.

Thanks to the groundbreaking work done at the Italian Institute of Technology, the dream of humanoid robots flying and assisting humans in real-world challenges is no longer just a fantasy—it's beginning to take flight.





Italian proverbs

Dagli amici mi guardi Iddio, che dai nemici mi guardo io

We the Italians Editorial Staff

The saying is simple—painfully so, in its sad and cruel truth. It's a loose translation of the old Latin proverb "Ab inimicis possum mihi ipsi cavere, ab amicis vero non", which means: I can protect myself from my enemies, but not from my friends.

Enemies are predictable. You know they're against you, so you stay alert to their every move and word. Friends, on the other hand, earn your trust—so you let your guard down. And that's exactly what allows them to get close... and stab you in the back. That's why we turn to God, asking Him to shield us from these kinds of betrayals.

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.

N.189 • July 2025

We the Italians

Donate