

We the Italians

February 2026

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250  80
USA YEARS ITALY YEARS



We the Italians

two anniversaries one heart

Editorial

What's up with WTI #196

by Umberto Mucci

Dear friends,

The year of the two anniversaries has begun – the 250th anniversary of the United States and the 80th anniversary of the Italian Republic. To celebrate them, We the Italians has launched a project, divided into two parts, that will accompany us throughout 2026: Two Anniversaries, One Heart. You will find a detailed explanation at this link.

Happy Birthday USA

Happy Birthday USA, which includes stories about Italy's positive contribution to 250 years of the United States of America, is itself divided into two sub-projects.

The first is called Italy's role in America's greatness. We have selected eighteen great Italians who played a fundamental role in the 250-year hi-



250 ^{★ ★ ★} **80**
USA YEARS ITALY YEARS



We the Italians

The Stories

TWO ANNIVERSARIES ONE HEART

HAPPY BIRTHDAY
USA *from Italy*



250 ^{★ ★ ★} **80**
USA YEARS ITALY YEARS



We the Italians

The Stories

TWO ANNIVERSARIES ONE HEART

HAPPY BIRTHDAY
ITALY *from the US*

story of America. Eighteen prominent Italians of today will tell the stories of those eighteen very famous Italians of the past.

The second is called *Unsung Italian Heroes*. We also want to tell the story of the impact that many other Italians have had in individual American states. These are more local Italian and Italian American heroes who are not as widely known. And who better than our Ambassadors to know at least one such story connected to their own area? They will tell us about the unsung hero who did something important in the place where they live and where they represent us. At the end of February, we will share the stories of the *Unsung Heroes of New England*; at the end of April, those from the New York area; at the end of June, those from the East; at the end of August, those from the South; and at the end of December, those from the West.

Happy Birthday Italy

In this case, twelve stories written by prominent Italians of today will each be dedicated to America's positive contribution to Italy in a different thematic field. We will tell twelve reasons why Italy has been, is, and will always be grateful to the United States – reasons that have generated positive effects in Italy and that have strengthened the solidarity and the exceptional nature of the friendship and alliance between Italy and the United States.

A small step on the way to 100,000 followers [on our Facebook page](#): we have surpassed 90,000. The milestone is not far away – and then, the sky is the limit. Thank you to all our followers!

We the Italians has renewed its collaboration with the [Federazione Italiana Baseball e Softball](#)

We The Italians

We The Italians  
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(FIBS), which is preparing for the World Baseball Classic, the world baseball championship that will take place in the United States and will feature the historic game between Italy and the United States on March 6 in Houston. Follow the updates we will share with you, congratulations to our national team – which also includes several Italian American athletes – and to FIBS for the excellent achievement of qualifying for the World Classic.



We have also been working for several weeks on our Gala, which will return in 2026 after a break in 2025. It will take place in Rome on June 4, at the prestigious Grand Hotel Parco dei Principi, and once again it will be the most important celebration of Italy–United States relations dedicated to the Italian American community. We are preparing seve-

ral surprises – please stay tuned!

For this reason as well, I had the ple-



asure and honor of being received at Palazzo Chigi, the seat of the Italian Presidency of the Council of Ministers, to represent and explain the importance of the Italian American community, today more than ever. And I can tell you that there is great attention toward Italian Americans – you can be sure of that.

[The episode of the Italian American](#)





Podcast in which I participated together with friends Patrick O’Boyle, Marianna Gatto, and Marcella Martin is now online. We discussed the relationship between Italians who live in Italy – the “Italian Italians,” as I call them – and Italian Americans. It is a very important topic, especially in these times, and this podcast episode will not be the only occasion on which we at We the Italians address it.

rial effort has led us to ask for your support. You can subscribe here – please do so – at the cost of a single espresso per month. Is that too much to keep learning positive things about Italy?

But the news at We the Italians does

2026 for We the Italians began with a major novelty: we moved from three to twelve podcasts. In fact, with the two new ones, Happy Birthday USA and Happy Birthday Italy, they are now fourteen! This significant edito-



not end here. Starting this month, there is a change in the Italian cuisine column of our magazine. First of all, I want to thank my dear friend Amy Riolo, a wonderful person and extraordinary Italian American, who has curated the column in recent years: Amy will continue to be a great point of reference for us and for many others, and I am certain that we will collaborate again in the future. Thank you Amy!

Beginning in February, following the interview with Alice Gregori, the column will be curated by the friends of the North American section of the [APCI – Professional Association Italian Chefs](#). I thank my friend Stefano Prior, who facilitated this agreement, and President Riccardo Bressan for the trust placed in We the Italians. Buon appetito, enjoy your meal!

Our family of Ambassadors is



Frank Ferraro

growing, and starting this month it can count on four new members: one in the New England area, and three in the New York area. I'm very happy to welcome them, and I'm blessed for [this big, wonderful family of amazing friends!](#)

Frank Ferraro is our We the Italians Ambassador in New Hampshire. Frank grew up in a close-knit Italian American neighborhood in Connecticut, where family, tradition, and community shaped his values. A second-generation Italian American, he carried those traditions throughout a distinguished career in the energy industry, building an international reputation for leadership and collaboration. Deeply committed to public service, Frank also served in numerous civic and Italian American organizations, most recently as Director and President of the Friends of Italian Americans, in New Hampshire. His heritage shines through in his devotion to family -his wife, their two children, and four beloved granddaughters.

Frances Curcio is our We the Ita-



lians Ambassador in Staten Island (New York). Fran is mathematics education professor emerita at Queens College, CUNY. Immersing herself in her Italian roots since 2011, she has written about her immigrant grandfather, Mio Nonno Totore and the American Dream. Her articles about Southern Italy have appeared in The Staten Island Advance. Interest in the Garibaldi Meucci Museum on Staten Island motivated the publication of *The Case of Antonio Meucci and the Telephone: Just the Facts*. Her NYC Council proposal to rename streets adjacent to the Museum “Antonio Meucci Way” and “Giuseppe Garibaldi Way” was accepted and will occur in April.



Frances Curcio

Carla Gambescia is our We the Italians Ambassador in Westchester (New York). Carla is an Italian cultural “edu-tainer,” award-winning author, travel journalist,

lecturer and photographer. She has written about and toured all of Italy’s regions on foot or by bicycle and speaks on myriad topics of Italian cultural interest throughout the US at continuing education organizations, universities, museums, libraries, fine dining and retail establishments, private clubs and Italian-American cultural organizations. Carla’s book, *La Dolce Vita University: An Unconventional Guide to Italian Culture from A to Z* was awarded the Silver Prize for “Best Travel Book of the Year” in 2019.



Carla Gambescia

Anna Malafrente is our We the Italians Ambassador in The Bronx (New York). Anna was born in Westchester, NY, raised in The Bronx and lived in Italy where she attended High School and returned for a second master’s degree. Anna obtained a BA in Political Science and Italian Language and Literature and an MA in

International Political Economy and Development from Fordham University as well as a Certificate in International Marketing of Luxury Goods from Graduate Business School at Fordham University. In 1999 she was hired at the Consulate General of Italy. Anna



Anna Malafronte

currently holds leadership positions at NIAF, the Italian American Forum, the Italian Welfare League, the Fieri Scholarship Fund and Our Lady of Mount Carmel School.

And it doesn't stop here! [That's why we ask you to subscribe to We the Italians.](#)

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.

We the  Italians
two flags one heart

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Italian handcrafts

The enduring handcraft of Isernia bobbin lace

We the Italians Editorial Staff

For more than 600 years, the handcrafted tradition of bobbin lace known locally as merletto a tombolo has been an enduring symbol of Italian craft heritage, particularly in the province

of Isernia in Molise. This textile art, created entirely by hand, traces its roots back to the early 1400s when lacemaking began to evolve into one of Europe's most intricate and respected crafts.





Over the centuries, tombolo has continued as a living practice, carried forward by generations of lacemakers committed to preserving both technique and identity.

At its core, the craft involves weaving and twisting fine threads wound on pairs of wooden bobbins. These bobbins are worked over a padded cushion known as the tombolo, where a pattern is carefully pinned and used as a guide. With dozens of bobbins in motion, the lace grows through countless crossings, twists, and knots – each

gesture requiring immense concentration and manual control. A single panel of lace, depending on its complexity and size, can involve anywhere from 4 to 100 bobbins and may take weeks or even months to complete.

Unlike mass-produced textiles, every piece of merletto a tombolo is unique. The skill of the lacemaker determines the delicacy of the design, the precision of the interwoven threads, and the harmony of motifs ranging from floral swirls to geometric lattices. Historically, this lace was used to embellish clothing,

religious vestments, household linens, and ceremonial garments. In fairly recent times, it has also adorned artistic installations, public exhibitions, and festival attire, helping draw attention to the craft's cultural value. Throughout Molise, and especially in Isernia, the practice has long been a social as well as artisanal endeavor. In the mid-20th century, numerous artisanal workshops thrived, and women working outdoors or in communal spaces could be heard at their cushions, the gentle clacking of bobbins resonating through village streets. By the late 1900s, industrial manufacturing and

changing fashions had pushed traditional lacemaking to the margins, but local proponents of the craft continued their work, determined not to let this heritage vanish.

In recent years, there has been a remarkable revival. A local association dedicated to *il merletto di Isernia* now counts roughly 300 members, from young apprentices in their teens to seasoned lacemakers in their 80s and 90s. Efforts include public gatherings, open-air workshops, and educational events intended to pass skills on to new generations. These activities not





only protect the craft but also reinforce community identity and local pride.

Artisans here maintain that the real power of hand-made lace lies in its human origin. Each centimeter of lace embodies the patience, creativity, and fine motor skill that no machine can genuinely replicate. In an era when industrial production dominates textiles, merletto a tombolo stands as a testament to the enduring value of handicrafts – where cultural me-

mory, personal expression, and technical mastery intersect in every delicate knot.

For Americans and others interested in traditional artisan skills, the story of merletto a tombolo di Isernia offers more than historical curiosity. It illustrates how an art form can survive centuries, adapt through crisis, and flourish again through collective effort – a lesson as relevant to communities abroad as it is to those in Molise.



Italian art

Sacred art in Italy

We the Italians Editorial Staff

In Rome's Basilica of San Lorenzo in Lucina, a restored fresco angel briefly drew worldwide attention because its face appeared to resemble Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni. The chapel artwork, part of a restoration project after water da-

mage, was meant to show two angels but one was widely seen as bearing a striking likeness to Meloni, sparking political debate and crowds visiting the church out of curiosity rather than for worship.

Italian media reported that Italy's culture ministry and the Diocese of Rome opened inquiries into the incident, stressing that sacred art shouldn't be politicized. Amid the uproar and on instructions from church authorities, the controversial face was painted over and removed. Meloni herself joked on social media that she definitely doesn't resemble an angel. This gives us an excuse to talk a little bit about "arte sacra" (sacred art) in Italy, which is an extraordinary, incredible, unevaluable part of Italian art.

Sacred art in Italy represents one of the most important and reco-

gnizable cores of the nation's cultural heritage. The term "sacred art" refers to the body of artistic works – painting, sculpture, architecture, and the applied arts – created for religious purposes, particularly those connected with Christian worship. In Italy, more than anywhere else, this form of artistic production has continuously accompanied the country's history, becoming an essential instrument of spiritual, political, and cultural communication. Sacred art was not created to be admired in the modern aesthetic sense, but to speak to the faithful, convey values, recount biblical episodes, and make the



Ravenna

Giotto in Assisi



divine visible through forms accessible to all.

For centuries, sacred art therefore had a primarily didactic function. In a largely illiterate society, images and symbols replaced the written word: frescoes, altarpieces, and sculptures narrated the life of Christ, the Virgin, and the saints, illustrated good and evil, the reward of salvation and the punishment of sin. At the same time, these works helped create a strong sense of collective identity, linking the local community to its church, its patron saint, and its own history.

For a very long time, the main financier of sacred art in Italy was the Catholic Church. Popes, cardinals, bishops, monasteries, and

religious orders commissioned an enormous number of works, using economic resources derived from donations, tithes, and land revenues. Alongside the Church, the great aristocratic and bourgeois families played a central role,



Giotto in Padua



Michelangelo Chapel Sistine

using artistic patronage to assert their social and political prestige. Financing a chapel, an altar, or a cycle of frescoes meant leaving a lasting mark, often accompanied by coats of arms, portraits, or monumental tombs. Families such as the Medici in Florence, the Este in Ferrara, or the Gonzaga in Mantua turned sacred art into a powerful tool for representing their authority.

Civil institutions and professional guilds also participated in patronage. Medieval communes, lay confraternities, and craft corporations financed works destined for city churches, strengthening the bond between religious life and

civic life. In this sense, Italian sacred art is also the result of a continuous collaboration between faith, politics, and economics.

Sacred artworks are primarily displayed in the places for which they were conceived: churches, cathedrals, basilicas, abbeys, and sanctuaries. Italy is a widespread museum, where absolute masterpieces are still found in their original context, integrated with architecture and liturgy. However, from the modern era onward, and especially during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many works were transferred to museums for reasons of conservation or security. The Vatican Museums, the Uffizi Galleries, the Pinacote-



Michelangelo Chapel Sistine

ca di Brera, and the Capodimonte Museum today preserve important examples of sacred art, allowing for broader public access and more in-depth study.

From a historical and artistic point of view, the masterpieces of Italian sacred art span all periods. In the Middle Ages, Byzantine influence is evident in the mosaics of Ravenna and Venice, where the use of gold and the rigidity of the figures express divine transcendence. With the fourteenth century, artists such as Giotto introduced a decisive turning point: sacred figures acquired volume, emotion, and humanity, as seen in the frescoes of the Basilica of Saint Francis in Assisi, which mark the beginning of a new conception of space and religious narrative.

The Renaissance represents the moment of greatest splendor of Italian sacred art. During this period, the search for harmony, ideal beauty, and formal perfection merged with spiritual content. Michelangelo, with the ceiling and the Last Judgment of the Sistine Chapel, created one of the highest syntheses of art, faith, and expressive power ever achieved. At the same time, Leonardo da Vinci interpreted the sacred in a profoundly human key, as in the Last Supper, where spiritual drama is reflected in the gestures and expressions of the apostles.

In the seventeenth century, with the Counter-Reformation, sacred art once again changed its appearance. The Church called for cle-

arer, more engaging, and more emotional images, capable of directly affecting the faithful. In this context, Caravaggio emerged, bringing a raw and dramatic realism into sacred scenes, populated by saints and figures with popular features, immersed in strong contrasts of light and shadow. Baroque art transformed churches into theatrical spaces, where painting, sculpture, and architecture interacted to inspire wonder and devotion.

In conclusion, sacred art in Italy is not merely an artistic production linked to religion, but a continuous narrative of the country's history. Through faith, patronage, locations, and masterpieces, it bears witness to the evolution of taste, power, and Italian society. Even today, this heritage continues to define Italy's cultural landscape and represents one of the country's most important contributions to the history of world art.

Leonardo da Vinci







Italian entertainment

The rise of Italian stand-up comedy

We the Italians Editorial Staff

The Italian stand-up comedy scene is undergoing a clear transformation, marked by rapid growth and a tone that is far more direct and unfiltered than traditional cabaret. Instead of masks, characters, or scripted sketches, today's comedians step on stage as themselves, delivering first-per-

son monologues rooted in lived experience. Their material often revolves around everyday habits, generational quirks, relationships, work frustrations, and personal insecurities, with political and social satire woven naturally into the narrative.

Several recognizable names have helped define and popularize this movement. Their styles differ, but they share a willingness to embrace awkwardness, irony, and self-exposure, often pushing beyond the comfort zone traditionally associated with Italian comedy.

Live performance remains the backbone of the scene. Beyond major theaters, comedians regularly perform in clubs, cultural spaces, bookstores, and improvised venues, often doing 15–20 sets per month to refine material. These environments encourage experimentation and direct audience feedback, which is essential to the stand-up craft. Many shows sell out quickly, with attendance steadily rising year over year, especially among audiences under 40.



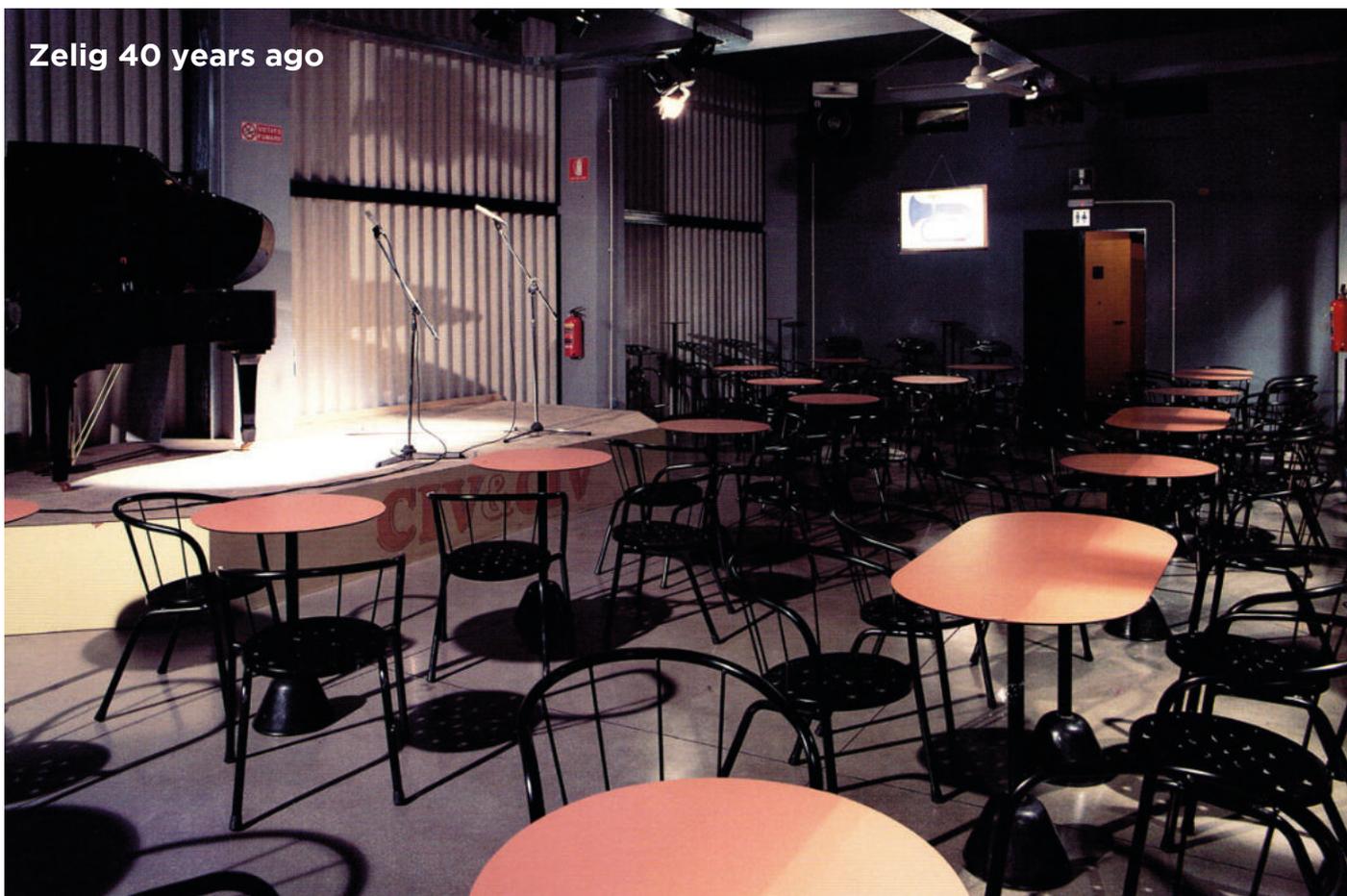
Recorded specials continue to be a crucial milestone. Platforms such as Netflix and channels like Comedy Central Italia remain key launchpads, giving comedians national exposure and access to audiences numbering in the hundreds of thousands. A single special can dramatical-

ly accelerate a career, turning a club performer into a recognizable public voice.



Another extraordinary breeding ground for talent that recently celebrated its 30th anniversary is Zelig. It began as a very small club in Milan and then grew into the most successful Italian stand-up comedy show. From Zelig came the launch of true icons of Italian comedy such as Paolo Migone, Federico Basso, Antonio Ornano, Ale and Franz, Aldo Giovanni e Giacomo, Teresa Mannino, Geppi Cucciari, Katia Follesa, Mr. Forrest, Maurizio Lastrico, Giuseppe Giacobazzi, Dario Vergassola, Paolo Cevoli, and Leonardo Manera.

Other comedians who are now extremely well known emerged from the Roman comedy scene, which would deserve an article just for itself. Among them are Paola Cortellesi, Enrico Brignano, Maurizio Battista, Carlo Verdone, Corrado Guzzanti, and Virginia Raffa-



ele, all of whom came after what can objectively be considered the genius, the greatest of them all, Romans and non-Romans alike: Gigi Proietti.

Nowadays, a particularly significant figure is Francesco De Carlo, whose career highlights the increasingly international dimension of Italian stand-up. De Carlo has worked extensively in the United States, performing in English and appearing on American television and la-



Zelig

Gigi Proietti



te-night stages. His experience abroad has influenced not only his writing style but also his approach to timing, structure, and audience interaction. Bringing those elements back to Italy, he helped demonstrate that Italian comedians could operate within a global stand-up language without losing cultural specificity.

Overall, Italian stand-up comedy reflects broader cultural

changes. Audiences are increasingly drawn to humor that confronts reality head-on, acknowledges social tension, and treats personal vulnerability as a strength rather than a weakness. With performers building careers both at home and abroad, the scene is no longer a niche experiment but a central and evolving part of contemporary Italian culture.

Francesco De Carlo





Italian curiosities

The village that brought the sun back with a mirror

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Hidden in the Piedmont Alps, there is a small Italian village where sunlight disappears for nearly a quarter of the year. The village is called Viganella, and from November 11 to February 2 the sun never reaches its main square. For 83 consecutive days, steep mountain ridges comple-

tely block direct sunlight, leaving the heart of the village in permanent shade. With fewer than 200 residents and a location deep in a narrow alpine valley, Viganella long accepted this condition as an unavoidable part of daily life.



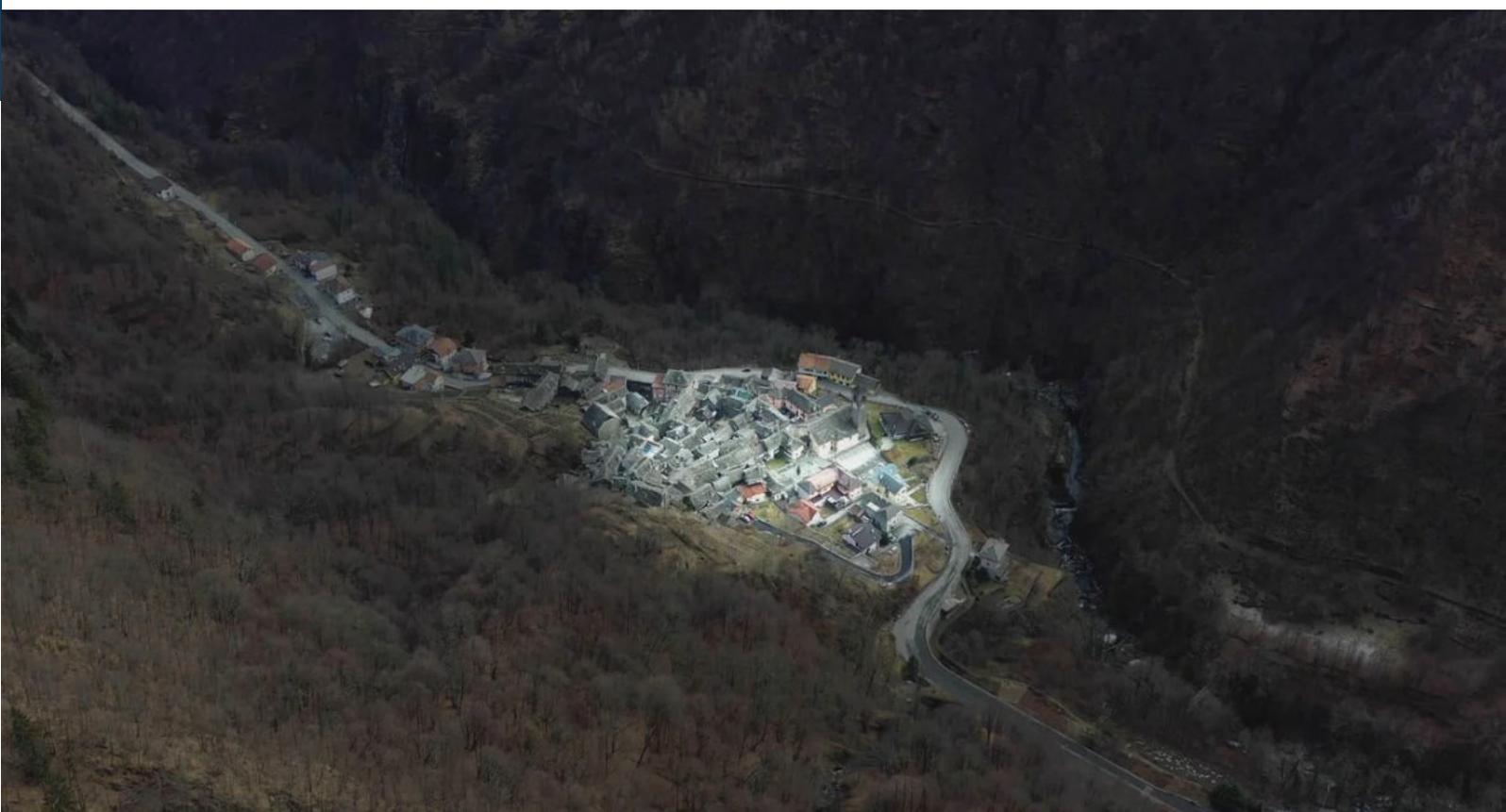
Living without direct sunlight for almost three months has real consequences. Temperatures feel colder, public spaces become less inviting, and social life tends to retreat indoors. For generations, villagers adjusted their routines, scheduling outdoor activities around the limited hours of indirect light. But in the early 2000s, instead of continuing to adapt, the community decided to challenge the geography itself using technology and imagination.

In 2006, Viganella launched an ambitious and unconventional project: the installation of a giant solar mirror designed to redirect sunlight into the village square. The mirror measures about 40 square meters and is positioned on a mountainside more than 1,000 meters above



sea level. It is not fixed in place. A computerized system continuously adjusts its angle, tracking the sun's movement throughout the day and reflecting its rays downward with precision.

The result is striking. During the darkest winter months, the mirror delivers direct sunlight to the village square for up to 6



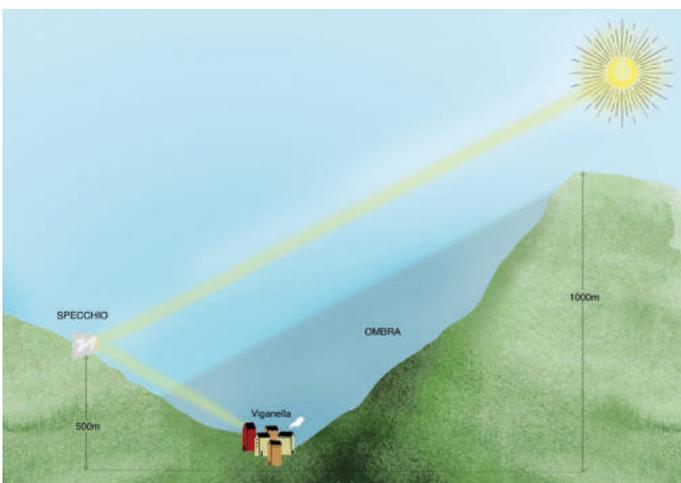
hours per day. While it does not completely eliminate the long winter shade affecting surrounding areas, it transforms the central public space into a bright and usable gathering point. Residents can sit outdoors, children can play, and the psychological effect of seeing sunlight again is immediate and powerful.

The project cost was relatively modest compared to large infrastructure works, estimated at under 100,000 euros. What made it successful was not scale, but accuracy. Engineers had to calculate angles, distances, and seasonal variations with extreme precision. Even a small misalignment would have sent the reflected light elsewhere. The system is fully automated and designed to operate safely, avoiding glare issues and ensuring consistent performance throughout the winter.

Beyond its technical success, the mirror became a symbol. Viganella gained international attention, with media outlets from Europe, Asia, and North America covering the story. The village became an example of how small communities can respond creatively to environmental challenges rather than simply enduring them. Tourism increased noticeably, particularly during winter months, bringing new economic activity to a place that had long struggled with population decline and limited visibility.

The mirror also sparked broader discussions about the use of renewable energy and passive solar technologies. While Viganella's system does not generate electricity, it demonstrates how solar solutions can be adapted to local needs beyond power production. The idea of redirecting natural resources, rather than consuming more of them, resonated strongly at a time when sustainability was becoming a central global concern.

Today, the mirror of Viganella remains in operation and continues to define the village's identity. It has not changed the mountains or the path of the sun, but it has changed how the community relates to its envi-





ronment. The project proves that innovation does not always require large cities or vast budgets. Sometimes it starts in a small alpine square, with a willingness to look at an old problem from a different angle.

Viganella's story is ultimately about resilience. Faced with a natural limitation that seemed absolute, the village found a way to bend light itself. It is a reminder that human ingenuity, when combined with cooperation and vision, can illuminate even the darkest corners.



Italian land and nature

The Cammino minerario di Santa Barbara is the world's best slow-travel trail

We the Italians Editorial Staff

In January 2026, the Cammino Minerario di Santa Barbara in southwestern Sardinia gained international recognition as the world's most outstanding hiking route. The acknowledgment placed the Sardinian trail alongside some of the most celebrated long-distance paths on the planet

and highlighted Italy's growing role in the global slow-travel movement.

The Cammino Minerario di Santa Barbara is a circular trail of roughly 500 kilometers that winds through the Sulcis-Iglesiente-Guspinese area, one of the

most historically rich and environmentally diverse parts of the island. The route is divided into 30 stages and is designed primarily for walking, though certain sections are also suitable for experienced cyclists. Its length allows hikers to complete the full journey in about four weeks, while others choose to explore shorter segments over several days.

What sets this trail apart is its deep connection to Sardinia's mining heritage. Much of the path runs within the Sardinia Geo-Mining Historical and Environmental Park, an area that preserves one of Europe's oldest and most extensive mining landscapes. For centuries, this region was shaped by the





extraction of metals such as lead, zinc, and silver. Today, abandoned shafts, tunnels, and industrial ruins remain visible along the trail, offering a powerful reminder of the labor and communities that once defined the area.

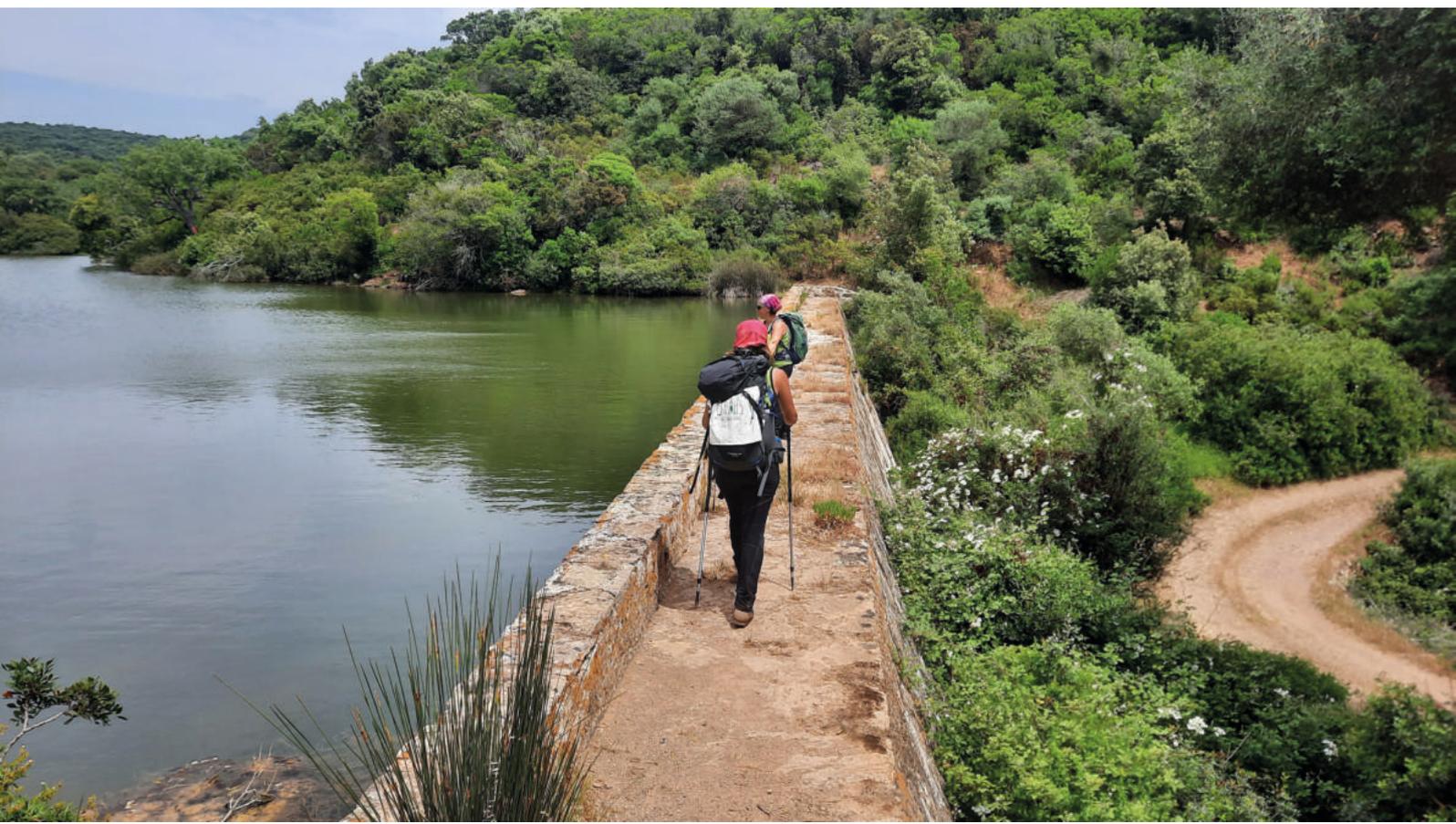
From a practical standpoint, about 75% of the route follows dirt roads, mule tracks, and natural footpaths, while the remaining 25% includes paved roads and urban crossings. Daily stages average around 15 to 18 kilometers, though elevation changes can be

demanding in certain stretches. Hikers should expect a mix of coastal walks with sea views, inland hills covered in Mediterranean scrub, forested sections, and open plateaus shaped by wind and time.

The trail traditionally begins and ends in Iglesias, a town long associated with mining history. Along the way, walkers pass through small villages, former mining settlements, and rural communities that have been gradually reinventing themselves through tourism. Many local businesses



now cater specifically to hikers, and logistical support such as luggage transfers, offering simple accommodations, meals based on regional cuisine,





The spiritual dimension of the route is also significant. The trail is dedicated to Santa Barbara, the patron saint of miners, and several stages pass by churches, chapels, and symbolic sites connected to her devotion. While the

walk does not require religious motivation, this element adds an additional layer of meaning for many travelers, blending physical effort with reflection and cultural discovery.

International recognition in early 2026 marked a turning point for the Cammino Minerario di Santa Barbara. Although the trail has existed as an organized route for little more than a decade, it has quickly gained attention for its authenticity, landscape variety, and strong ties to local identity. Unlike more crowded European hiking paths, it offers a quieter

experience where solitude and silence remain part of the journey.

For hikers seeking a long-distance trail that combines nature, history, and community life, the Cammino Minerario di Santa Barbara stands out as a destination where every step reveals a different chapter of Sardinia's past and present.







Italian cuisine

Caponata, Sicily's sweet-and-sour soul

Damiano Rosella

Among the dishes that best tell the story of its land is caponata, one of the absolute symbols of Sicilian cuisine. Traditionally made with fried eggplant, celery, onion, olives, and capers, caponata stands out for its sweet-and-sour balance, achieved

with sugar and vinegar. It is a humble dish, born as a way to use leftovers, but over time it has become a true gastronomic icon.

In the version proposed by Damiano, caponata is enriched

with swordfish, a noble ingredient of the Mediterranean that adds structure and depth to the dish without altering its identity.

The method remains simple: eggplant left to purge, a sauté of onion and lightly crisp celery, then green olives, rinsed capers, sugar, and white wine vinegar. The swordfish is added in generous cubes, while fresh mint finishes the dish with an herbal note that cleanses the palate.

The result is a caponata that is “very simple but full of flavor,” as the chef himself describes it: soft, aromatic, with bold yet harmonious contrasts. A versatile dish that can be served as an appetizer, a side dish, or turned into a sauce for pasta or toasted bread.

At a time when cooking often risks becoming spectacle for its own sake, Chef Damiano reminds us of an essential truth: innovating does not mean forgetting, but knowing how to tell the story of the past in the language of the present. And his swordfish caponata is concrete proof that tradition and modernity can coexist in the same dish, without compromise.

A clear example of how Italian cuisine, when made with skill and respect, continues to speak to the

world with a strong, unmistakable voice.

Ingredients

- 2 large eggplants
- 2 celery stalks
- 1 onion
- 1 cup pitted green olives
- 1/2 cup salt-packed capers
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 2 tablespoons white wine vinegar
- Salt and pepper
- Olive oil
- Fresh mint

Method

Cut the eggplants into cubes and place them in a colander with coarse salt to draw out excess moisture. Let rest for about 30 minutes.

In a large pan, heat some olive oil and sauté the onion until translucent.

Add the celery, cut into small pieces, and cook for about 5 minutes.

Add the drained and dried eggplant and cook until tender.

Add the swordfish, cut into large cubes.

Add the olives and the capers (rinsed and dried), then add the sugar,



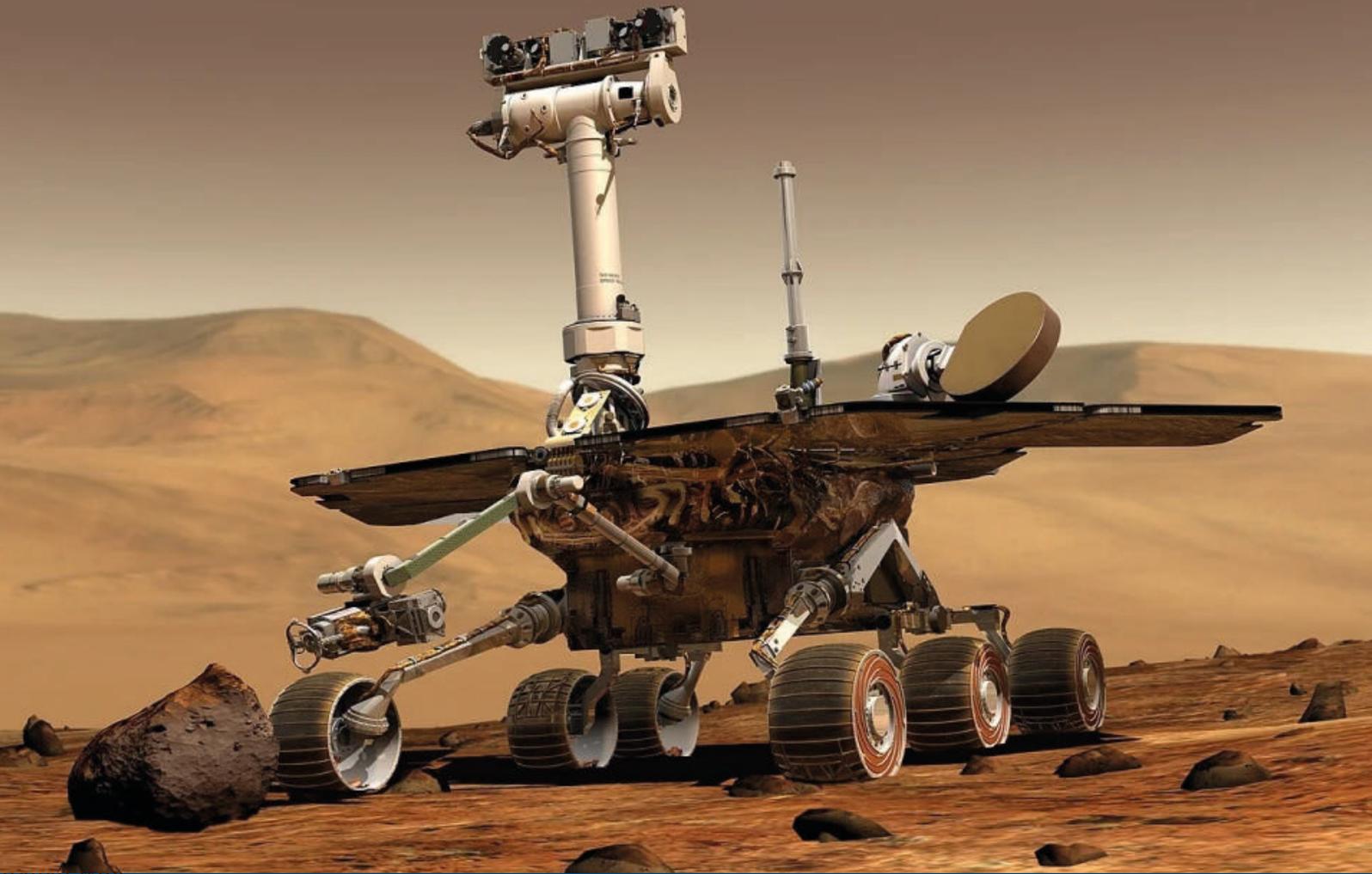
vinegar, and salt. Mix well.

Let cool before serving.

Cook over low heat for about 10–12 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the caponata is ready. Add the mint at the end of cooking.

Caponata can be served as an appetizer, a side dish, or as a sauce for pasta or bread.

Buon appetito!



Italian innovation

Italian technology helps simulate Mars exploration and the search for life

We the Italians Editorial Staff

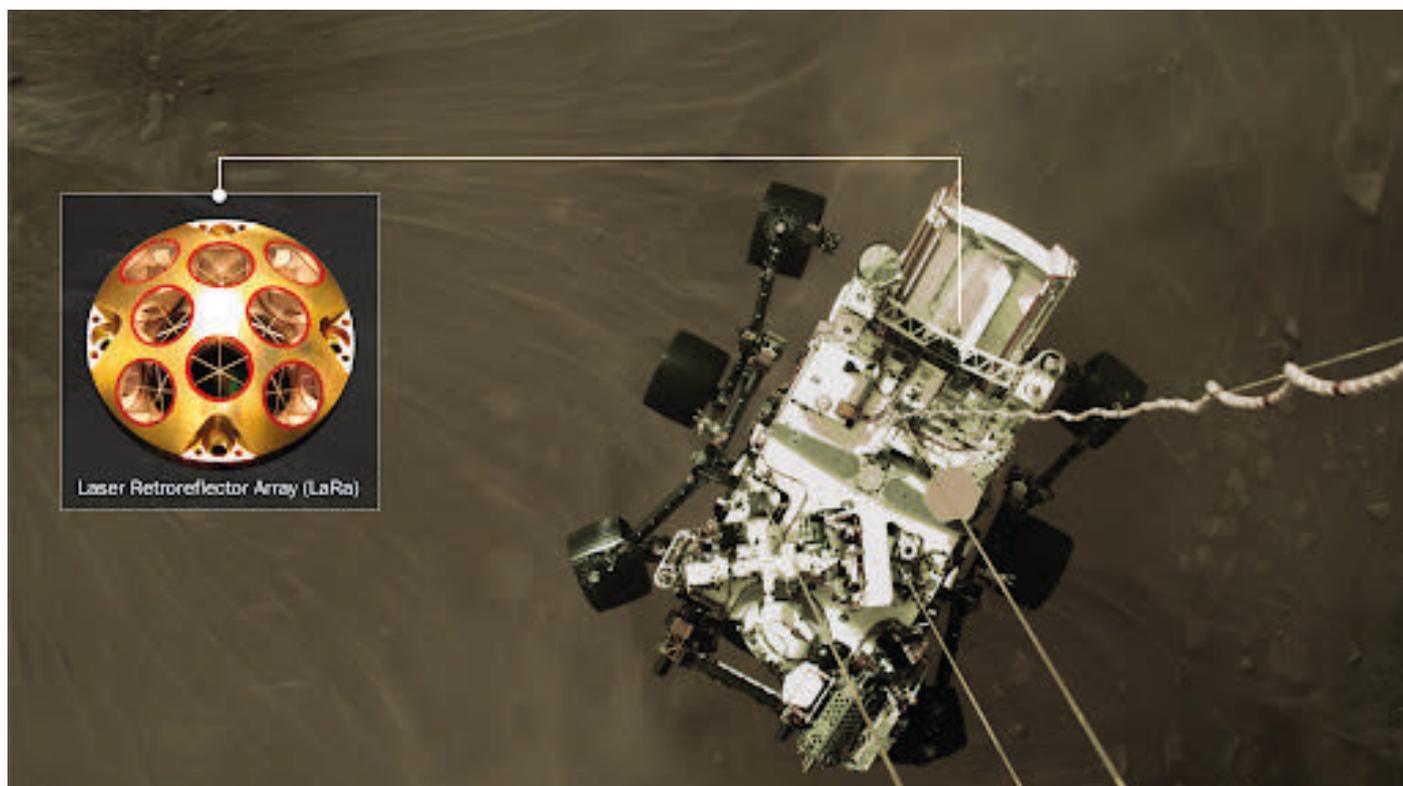
Italian technology is becoming a crucial asset in the preparation of future missions to Mars. Engineers and researchers in Italy have developed an advanced digital system that allows scientists to simulate rover movement and plan exploration activities on the Martian sur-

face with extreme precision. This platform combines artificial intelligence, immersive 3D environments, and real data collected by orbiting spacecraft to recreate Mars in a virtual setting that closely mirrors reality.

The system is designed to support upcoming European missions to Mars, scheduled for the end of this decade. One of its main goals is to help scientists search for possible traces of past life by improving how rovers navigate, drill, and collect samples. The virtual environment reproduces the Martian terrain with accuracy down to a few centimeters, including rocks, slopes, surface irregularities, and lighting conditions. This level of detail allows mission teams to test every planned movement before commands are sent to the rover.

Mars exploration presents unique challenges. The distance between Earth and Mars ranges

from about 56 million to over 400 million km, depending on their orbital positions. Communication delays can vary between 4 and 24 minutes one way, making real time control impossible. Because of this, even small navigation errors can lead to mission critical failures. Simulation technology helps reduce these risks by allowing teams to anticipate problems and evaluate multiple scenarios in advance. The Italian platform integrates mixed reality tools that allow operators to move inside a digital version of Mars and interact with the rover virtually. This approach improves situational awareness and decision making. According to internal testing,



mission planning accuracy improves by more than 35%, while training time for rover operators increases by over 50% compared to traditional methods based only on static images and maps. Another key aspect of the technology is its flexibility. The system is modular, meaning it can be updated as new instruments are added or mission objectives change. The same framework can also be adapted for other space exploration programs, including lunar missions planned for the late 2020s. As space agencies invest more heavily in long duration missions, simulation tools are expected to become standard across the sector.

The scientific payoff is equally significant. Future Mars rovers are expected to analyze underground samples for organic molecules and chemical signatures linked to biological activity. Drilling operations may reach depths of up to 2 meters, requiring precise positioning and stability. Virtual testing allows scientists to select the most promising sites while avoiding terrain that could compromise the rover's safety.

Beyond exploration, the project highlights Italy's growing role in high technology and space in-



novation. Space related investments in Europe have increased by roughly 20% over the past five years, with software and digital modeling representing one of the fastest growing segments. Italian expertise in simulation, artificial intelligence, and data visualization is increasingly being recognized as a strategic contribution to international space missions.

As humanity moves closer to answering fundamental questions about life beyond Earth, digital tools are proving just as important as rockets and instruments. By transforming Mars into a navigable virtual world, Italian technology is helping scientists prepare for discoveries that could reshape our understanding of the universe.

**BEING ITALIAN HAS ALWAYS MEANT
LOOKING AT THE WORLD
FROM MORE THAN ONE ANGLE**

ERA BETA - Mondo senza ritorno is an Italian-language book that reflects on the profound transformation reshaping both Europe and the United States — not a temporary crisis, but a change of phase.

*“L’Occidente non è in crisi: sta cambiando forma.
E non tornerà quella di prima.”*

amazon

**For readers who live across the Atlantic
and still choose to think in Italian.**

Read it. Reflect on it.

Join the conversation.

Giovanni Vagnone di Trofarello e di Celle

**ERA
BETA**
Mondo senza ritorno





Italian sustainability

Sustainability drives the temporary olympic village in Cortina

We the Italians Editorial Staff

As organizers prepare for the 2026 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games in Italy, one of the most unusual and forward-looking aspects of the planning is the housing strategy for athletes competing in the events held around Cortina d'Ampezzo. Unlike traditional

Olympic villages built as permanent complexes, the Cortina Athletes Village is being assembled almost entirely from modular, mobile made in Italy housing units designed to be efficient, environmentally responsible, and fully removable once the Games are over.

The village includes 377 mobile homes, each constructed in Italy and delivered to the site in a series of transports throughout the spring and early summer. These units provide shelter for up to 1,400 athletes, coaches, support staff, and officials during the Olympic competitions in February 2026, followed by the Paralympic events in March. The modular units were selected after careful discussion about how to balance comfort, sustainability, and impact on the local mountain landscape.

Each mobile home measures roughly 8.6 meters long by 4.5 meters wide, and is fitted with practical features tailored to the needs of the athletes. Interiors are ergonomically planned with sleeping areas, bathrooms, heating systems, and climate control to handle the alpine weather.

The design also aims to provide a quiet environment that enables athletes to rest and focus between training and competition. The units support accessibility, with a significant share designed to meet universal access standards so they can accommodate athletes with mobility needs.

One of the defining aspects of this approach is the focus on sustainability and adaptability. The homes are constructed with recyclable materials and follow environmentally sound manufacturing processes. They are intended to leave no permanent footprint on the valley once dismantled. After the Games conclude, the structures can be repurposed in campsites, community facilities, or other settings where modular housing adds value, ensuring that they contribute to a circular economy rather





than becoming unused relics. use.

The organization responsible for implementing the housing plan emphasizes that the ability to install the homes quickly was a major advantage. With a modular system in place, the units could be positioned, connected, and made ready well before athletes arrive, even in the challenging logistics of a mountainous location. The plan also includes elevated walkways and common infrastructure that link living quarters with dining halls, fitness areas, and administrative spaces.

The site has been designed for efficient use of space and minimal environmental disruption. Organizers have been careful to respect local regulations concerning protected land and scenic areas, blending the temporary village into the natural surroundings. By avoiding large, permanent buildings and instead using movable units, the host region retains flexibility about future land

This temporary housing concept reflects a broader trend in how major sporting events are approaching legacy planning. Traditional Olympic villages have sometimes become underused after the competitions end, leaving cities with expensive, oversized buildings and little long-term benefit. By contrast, Milan and Cortina's strategy prioritizes flexibility, minimizing waste and ensuring that resources invested for the Olympics continue to serve communities afterwards.

For athletes arriving in February 2026, life in the Cortina village will be defined by functionality and simplicity within a spectacular alpine setting. Close by are the competition venues for skiing, bobsled, curling and other winter sports, and the mobile homes will provide a central base from which participants can rest, prepare, and connect with fellow competitors from around the world.



Italian flavors

The Calabrian land that scents the world

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Between the hills and the sea of the Strait of Messina stretches a narrow strip of land in southern Italy that has no equal anywhere else in the world. It runs for just over 100 kilometers along the Ionian coast of Calabria, from Villa San Giovanni to Roccella

Jonica. This is where bergamot grows in its purest and most valuable form.

It is a citrus fruit that many people have never tasted fresh, yet almost everyone knows its scent. Bergamot is the signature aroma



of Earl Grey tea and a key ingredient in some of the world's most famous perfumes, including iconic French fragrances that have been on the market for decades.

The Plain of Reggio Calabria produces more than 90% of the world's bergamot supply. Roughly 1,500 hectares are dedicated to its cultivation, a relatively small agricultural area that generates





extraordinary economic value. Despite repeated attempts, bergamot has never been successfully replicated elsewhere. Trials in Sicily, southern France, South America, and parts of Africa have failed to achieve the same aromatic intensity and chemical balance found in Calabrian fruit. The difference lies not in farming technique alone, but in geography.

The defining factor is a unique microclimate found only in this corner of Calabria. The area benefits from constant sea breezes coming off the Ionian Sea, which mix with cooler air descending from the Aspromonte mountains. This circulation moderates temperatures ye-



Bergamot Earl Grey

ar-round and reduces the risk of frost, one of bergamot's greatest threats. At the same time, sunlight reaches the orchards at a precise angle due to the orientation of the coastline, ensuring steady ripening without excessive heat stress. The soil adds another crucial layer, containing a specific balance of minerals and salts that influence the fruit's essential oil composition.

These environmental conditions explain why bergamot trees thrive here and struggle elsewhere. The fruit itself resembles a small orange with green-yellow skin, but its real value lies in its peel. Through cold pressing, producers extract

an essential oil prized for its complexity. Chemically, bergamot oil contains a rare balance of compounds that give it fresh, citrusy, floral, and slightly bitter notes all at once. This balance is what makes it irreplaceable in perfumery, where even small variations can change an entire fragrance profile.

Economically, bergamot represents a strategic resource for Calabria. While the region often struggles with underinvestment and limited industrial development, bergamot stands as an exception. The value of its essential oil far exceeds that of most agricultural products, with prices fluctuating based on global demand from the fragrance, co-





smetic, pharmaceutical, and food industries. In some years, bergamot oil has accounted for more than 60% of Italy's total citrus essential oil exports by value, despite its limited volume.

To protect this heritage, bergamot from Reggio Calabria has been granted Protected Designation of Origin status. This certification guarantees that cultivation, harvesting, and processing take place within the defined geographical area and follow strict standards. It also helps defend producers against imitation products that attempt to use the name without matching the quality. The PDO status has reinforced international recognition and supported long-term sustainability for growers, many of whom operate small family-run orchards passed down through generations.

Culturally, bergamot is deeply tied to local identity. For cen-

turies it has shaped agricultural rhythms, labor patterns, and even landscapes along the coast. The orchards form a continuous green belt between towns and the sea, a living boundary that reflects the close relationship between land and water. Harvest season remains a time of intense activity, bringing together farmers, processors, and exporters in a supply chain that connects Calabria directly to global markets.

Every time someone brews a cup of Earl Grey or opens a bottle of perfume in Paris, London, or New York, they are experiencing the essence of this land. Bergamot proves that even regions often seen as peripheral can play a central role in global culture and industry. From a narrow strip of Calabrian soil comes a fragrance that travels the world, quietly reminding us that true uniqueness is often rooted in very specific places.



Italian historical trademarks

Spinosi, Marche's Saper Fare exported around the world

Associazione Marchi Storici d'Italia

The history of Pastificio Vincenzo Spinosi dates back to the early twentieth century and is closely intertwined with one of the signature products of Marche's gastronomic tradition: Maccheroncini di Campofilone.

“Since 1933, we have been committed to preserving the traditions of our region,” said Vincenzo Spinosi, “in order to safeguard the authentic taste of homemade pasta. Bronze extrusion, carefully selected ingredients, fresh eggs still broken by hand, and slow drying are



the factors that allow us to create a product that holds sauces better and preserves all of its organoleptic characteristics.”

The opening of the first workshop in Campofilone dates back to 1960 and was dedicated to the artisanal production of maccheroncini. This marked the beginning of the commercialization and wider distribution of a product that until then had been limited to household consumption.

Starting in the early 1970s, several retail outlets with attached labo-

ratories were opened, allowing us to build a retail structure in which we control the entire supply chain, from production to commercialization.

The 2000s coincided with the creation of a new pasta shape, Spinosini, dedicated to my sons Marco and Riccardo. Thus, a true brand was born, one that would go on to gain recognition worldwide. Spinosini, for example, were served to Pope John Paul II during his visit to Loreto, prepared by Chef Roberto Cingolani.

In 2010, in Cannes, Spinosi received the international “Five Stars Diamond Award” for excellence in food and wine, bestowed by the American Academy of Hospitality and Sciences founded by Ronald Trump. In 2015, Spinosi was chosen as Ambassadors of Marche to the World at Expo Milan, as an outstanding example of the Marche Region’s production system.

The story was repeated in Dubai at Expo 2020 and more recently at Expo 2025 in Osaka, within the prestigious setting of the Italian Pavilion. The event took place as part of the exhibition “Ars: tradition and innovation,” a journey through culture, artisanal mastery, and technological innovation. The exhibition design, curated by Progetto Zenone and Elleemme Studio, featured a symbolic Japanese

house resting on Marche soil, representing the harmony between two cultures deeply connected by shared values: respect for tradition, balance with nature, and the art of saper fare.

In 2013, as president of the Campofilone pasta makers’ association, Spinosi had the honor of signing the European Union’s official recognition of the I.G.P. (Protected Geographical Indication) status for Maccheroncini di Campofilone.

The secret of this product lies in its simplicity. The women of Campofilone began making this type of pasta by challenging one another to see who could make it thinner. It cooks in one minute and absorbs almost three times its weight in sauce. It is so thin that a





modest amount (about 250 grams) is enough for four people. People are amazed because it never over-cooks.

The process is entirely manual. Here, eggs are strictly broken by hand, then the maccheroncini are placed on the back of a knife blade and later laid on a sheet of white paper, which becomes their traditional packaging. Before 2000, cuttlefish-ink maccheroncini were even served on board the Concorde.

Today, Spinosi exports to the United States; Asia, mainly China and Hong Kong; Switzerland, Belgium, Malta, France, Spain, Canada, Germany, England, and Dubai.

In 2019, the new Zero+ line was launched - the first egg pasta made with red lentil flour, designed for those who enjoy sports and are particularly attentive to their physique. It is an organic product with a high protein and fiber content.

ZERO+ is a new line of functional foods designed for athletes and for patients affected by metabolic diseases, and it is also ideal for regaining optimal physical condition after a long period of inactivity. Developed in collaboration with Professor Fabrizio Angelini, an endocrinologist and president of SINSEB, it is a gluten-free specialty with a high content of fiber and protein.



All products in the ZERO+ line are made following a dedicated supply chain and in full respect of the traditions that have always distinguished our pasta factory: eggs from hens fed with non-GMO feed, broken by hand; processing with flours from certified mills; slow pasta extrusion and 24-hour drying. Thanks to the complex carbohydrates in legume flours, combined with a significant amount of plant-based proteins, it ensures a lower impact on blood glucose levels and insulin secretion. A pasta like this, which does not cause glycemic fluctuations and, when consumed in moderation as part of a balanced diet, can help with weight loss. Eggs provide elasticity to the product, preserving both its flavor and performance.

Since 2022, the Spinosi brand has been included in the Special Register of Historic Trademarks of National Interest.

It was 1933 when Nello Spinosi, the first key figure in the long history of homemade pasta in Campofilone, would bring family-made maccheroncini as gifts during his work trips to Rome. At the time, there was no equipment—only skilled hands and great craftsmanship could give quality to a simple dough.

In 1960, Nello Spinosi opened the first workshop in Campofilone, dedicated to the artisanal production of maccheroncini, and created the first packaging for retail sales. This marked the beginning of the commercialization and wider distribution of a product that had previously been limited to household consumption.

Thus began a story that, through a steady succession of successes, has continued to this day—destined to introduce and celebrate this product around the world.



NATION BRANDS INDEX 2026



Italian good news

Italy ranks 4th globally and 1st for tourism and culture in nation brands index 2026

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Italy's global image continues to be one of its strongest competitive assets – especially in tourism, where reputation increasingly shapes travelers' choices. According to the 2026 edition of the Nation Brands Index, the country ranks 4th worldwide overall, con-

firming its position among the most admired nations on the planet. Even more significant, Italy holds the number 1 spot globally for tourism appeal and cultural heritage, reinforcing a leadership role built on history, creativity, and lifestyle.

The Nation Brands Index evaluates perceptions across 50 countries, surveying tens of thousands of respondents worldwide. Italy's performance reflects consistent strength in key pillars such as culture, historic sites, gastronomy, and quality of life. While the country stands 4th overall, it places 1st for tourism and culture – a combination that few nations can match. This dual primacy underscores how closely Italy's identity is tied to its artistic legacy, UNESCO sites, and globally recognized way of living.

Reputation is no longer an abstract concept. In the digital era, online reviews, social media visibility, and user-generated content influence travel decisions in measurable ways. Industry data show

that over 80% of travelers consult online reviews before booking, and destinations with higher digital ratings see measurable increases in demand. In this context, Italy benefits from a deeply rooted positive narrative that amplifies its attractiveness.

Regional performance within Italy also highlights how reputation translates into competitiveness. Tuscany continues to lead as the most appreciated Italian region online, followed by Trentino-Alto Adige and Sicily. These regions consistently record high satisfaction levels across hospitality, food experiences, and cultural offerings. Digital sentiment analysis shows that leading regions often exceed national averages in positive mentions by more



Tuscany



than 10%, strengthening their ability to attract both domestic and international visitors.

Italy's tourism industry represents a strategic economic sector, contributing approximately 13% to national GDP when considering both direct and indirect impact. The sector supports millions of jobs and remains one of the country's primary sources of foreign revenue. International arrivals have returned to – and in some areas surpassed – pre-pandemic levels, confirming the resilience of the Italian brand. In 2025, foreign visitor numbers grew by around 8% compared to the previous year, driven by strong demand from

North America, Germany, and emerging Asian markets.

The reputation advantage extends beyond leisure travel. Italy's image as a cultural powerhouse also supports trade, exports, and investment. The positive perception of "Brand Italy" enhances the value of sectors such as fashion, design, food, and manufacturing. Countries that rank highly in the Nation Brands Index typically benefit from stronger soft power – the ability to influence global audiences through attraction rather than coercion.

Events like BIT 2026 in Milan further emphasize how institutional

stakeholders are working to consolidate Italy's global standing. Public and private actors are increasingly focused on sustainability, innovation, and digital transformation to ensure that growth remains balanced and competitive. Sustainable tourism strategies are becoming central, especially in high-traffic destinations where visitor flows can exceed local population levels during peak seasons.

Italy's 4th place overall ranking

– combined with its 1st place in tourism and culture – sends a clear signal. The country's heritage is not just a legacy of the past but a strategic asset for the future. In an increasingly competitive global marketplace, perception matters as much as infrastructure or pricing. Italy's ability to maintain a strong, coherent narrative – supported by data, digital engagement, and institutional coordination – will determine whether it can transform reputation into long-term economic growth.

Sicily





Interview with Alice Gregori

Let's celebrate Italian cuisine in the United States

Umberto Mucci

Over these fifteen years of interviews, at We the Italians we have used hundreds of tags to label the content published on our website. By far the most frequently used tag is Food. Food and cuisine are always essential when describing Italy in the United States.

With this interview we are launching a new collaboration that we are very happy about: the one with the North America section of APCI – Associazione Professionale Cuochi Italiani. Representing all of them, we welcome Alice Gregori to We the Italians.



Dear Alice, tell us your story... where did you start out in Italy, and how, when, and where did you arrive in the United States?

I come from the area around Lake Idro, between Lombardy and Trentino, and I grew up surrounded by nature, between the mountains and rural life, where it was often the ingredients themselves that suggested what to cook. In my family, cooking was a daily act of care, and thanks to my parents, my grandmother, and my aunt, I spent a great deal of time in the kitchen. When I was eight years old, I wanted to prepare my first dinner for my mom and dad, and from that moment on I never stopped.

As a young woman, I worked for years in restaurants and trattorias, a job I was very passionate about, even though I later chose a different professional path. In 2020, in the middle of the pandemic, I moved to the United States following my husband – a major change that gave me the courage to finally dedicate myself to cooking as a profession, not just as a passion.

I started as a private chef, bringing Italian home cooking into American households. Today this journey has become [Noi Due Farm – The Kitchen](#), located in my home and on my family's small farm in Woodside, California. This dedicated,



NOI DUE FARM *The Kitchen*

fully licensed kitchen space is where I now host private farm-to-table dinners, Italian cooking experiences, and agriturismo-style lunches inspired by seasonal ingredients, Italian regional traditions, and the pleasure of gathering around the table. We invite your readers to [follow our Instagram account](#).

At the end of last year, Italian cuisine was recognized as intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO. What do you think about this? How would you describe this Italian excellence to the famous Martian who arrives on Earth?

I am very happy about this recognition, because it doesn't only concern Italian cuisine as a collection of recipes, but the entire culture behind it: the relationship with ingredients, seasonality, the act of

Noi Due Farm The Kitchen



La Cucina Italiana è Patrimonio dell'Umanità



cooking for someone, and the value of sharing a table. At the same time, living and cooking abroad, I also feel an even greater responsibility to represent this tradition with respect and authenticity.

If I had to explain Italian cuisine to a Martian, I wouldn't start with words but with a carefully set table. I would invite them to sit down, serve a simple appetizer and then a plate of fresh pasta with tomato and basil, topped with good Parmigiano Reggiano, and I would eat with them. At the end I would say, "There you go – now you understand."

What is your favorite Italian dish? Is it the same dish you most enjoy cooking and eating, or are they different recipes?

My absolute favorite dish is the wild field herb soup that my mother prepares every spring. For me, it is more than just a dish – it is seasonality, memory, the scent of home and nature, it is my origin.

When I cook for others, on the other hand, I feel most at home with fresh pasta: tagliatelle, ravioli, tortelloni. I also really love risottos. And I always enjoy welcoming guests with small, indul-

gent aperitivi inspired by our traditions, but presented in a convivial and modern way.

Italian American cuisine is an evolution of the recipes Italian immigrants brought from Italy, arriving in a country where the ingredients were not even comparable to those in Italy. Can you help describe Italian American cuisine to Italians living in Italy who know little about it?

Italian American cuisine was born out of adaptation. Italian immigrants brought their recipes and their culinary memory to a country where the available ingredients were often very different. From that came a new cuisine that retains an

Italian soul but evolved through local products, portions, and tastes.

I feel fortunate to live in California, where the quality of raw ingredients is extremely high. Within just a few miles I can find excellent local producers, in addition to the products from my small farm, and this allows me to recreate many traditional Italian recipes very effectively, using Californian ingredients in a sustainable way. However, there are important differences, especially with certain products. For example, ocean fish is very different from Mediterranean fish in terms of varieties, size, and flavor. This means that not all seafood dishes we know in





Italy can be reproduced in the same way – and I believe this too is part of the natural evolution of a cuisine when it changes territory.

The quality and flavor of Italian products are unbeatable. Which ingredients do you prefer to use in your cooking?

There are Italian ingredients that I consider truly essential, because they are the foundation of our cuisine and make a real difference in the final result. Among my favorites are definitely high-quality flours, both for breadmaking and for pastries and fresh pasta, because structure and flavor start right there. Olive oil and salt – yes, salt! Then the great Italian cheeses: Parmigiano Reggiano, Grana Padano, Pecorino Romano, fiordilatte mozzarella – ingredients that are not just “add-

ons” but true elements of a dish’s identity. That said, in my cooking I always try to combine Italian excellence with outstanding local, seasonal products from the place where I live. For me, quality is not only about geographic origin, but about respect for the ingredient, the season, and the people who produce it. Vegetables and cheeses are my favorite ingredients, and with them I can create varied, seasonal dishes.

Do you think original Italian products could offer a new arrangement for some Italian American dishes?

I think so, and in part it is already happening. When authentic Italian ingredients meet dishes that were born from Italian American evolution, a very interesting new balance can emerge. It’s not about “correcting” them, but about

dialogue between tradition and migratory history. Many Italian American dishes were born as generous and creative adaptations, tied to the ingredients available at the time. Today, with greater access to original, high-quality Italian products, some of these dishes can be reinterpreted with greater precision of flavor and respect for the ingredients.

This interview also marks the beginning of a wonderful collaboration between We the Italians and the North America section

Salt

of APCI – Associazione Professionale Cuochi Italiani. Please tell our readers about this remarkable association.



Olive oil

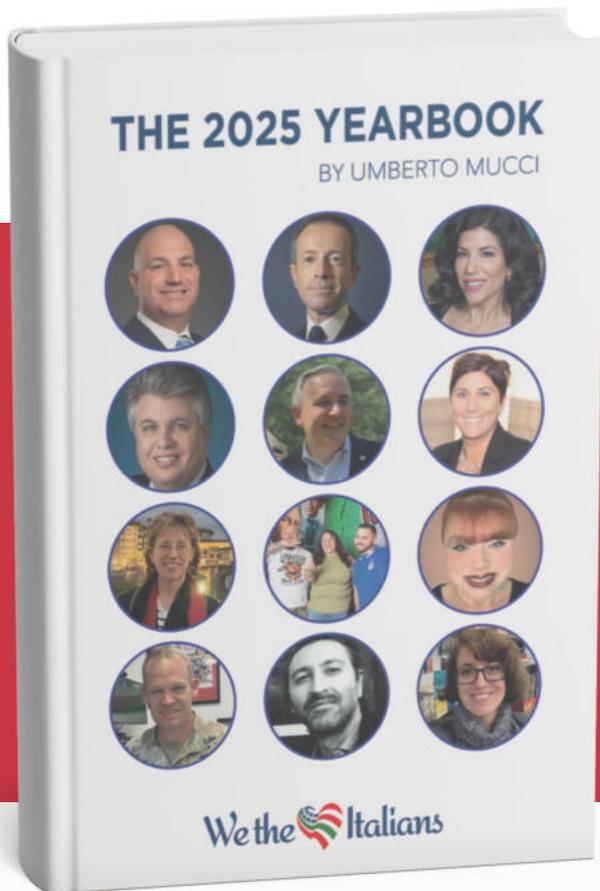


I am a relatively new member of the association, but from the very beginning I felt welcomed, supported, and part of a true professional community. APCI North America is growing rapidly and carries forward the work of Italian chefs abroad with seriousness, organization, and a strong spirit of collaboration. Events and initiatives are always organized with great professionalism and have a clear goal: to promote authentic Italian cuisine and those who represent it every day through their work. It is an asso-

ciation that protects not only cuisine as a gastronomic heritage, but also the dignity and competence of the professionals involved, creating networks, dialogue, and concrete opportunities for growth.



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Italian design

The 2026 Olympic torch. A manifesto of contemporary design

Alberto Improda

The Milan-Cortina 2026 Olympic Torch represents a refined design object – a complex and fascinating project, rich in meaning and content.

Commissioned by ENI, Premium Partner of the Games,

and developed in collaboration with Versalis, the project bears the prestigious signature of the studio CRA – Carlo Ratti Associati, with engineering and production by Cavagna Group.

The Olympic Torch can be read

as a kind of Manifesto of Contemporary Design, embodying a concentrated expression of Innovation, Sustainability, and Semantics.

Much is already conveyed by its iconic name, “Essential,” an explicit and meaningful reference to the well-known principle articulated by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe: “Less is more.”

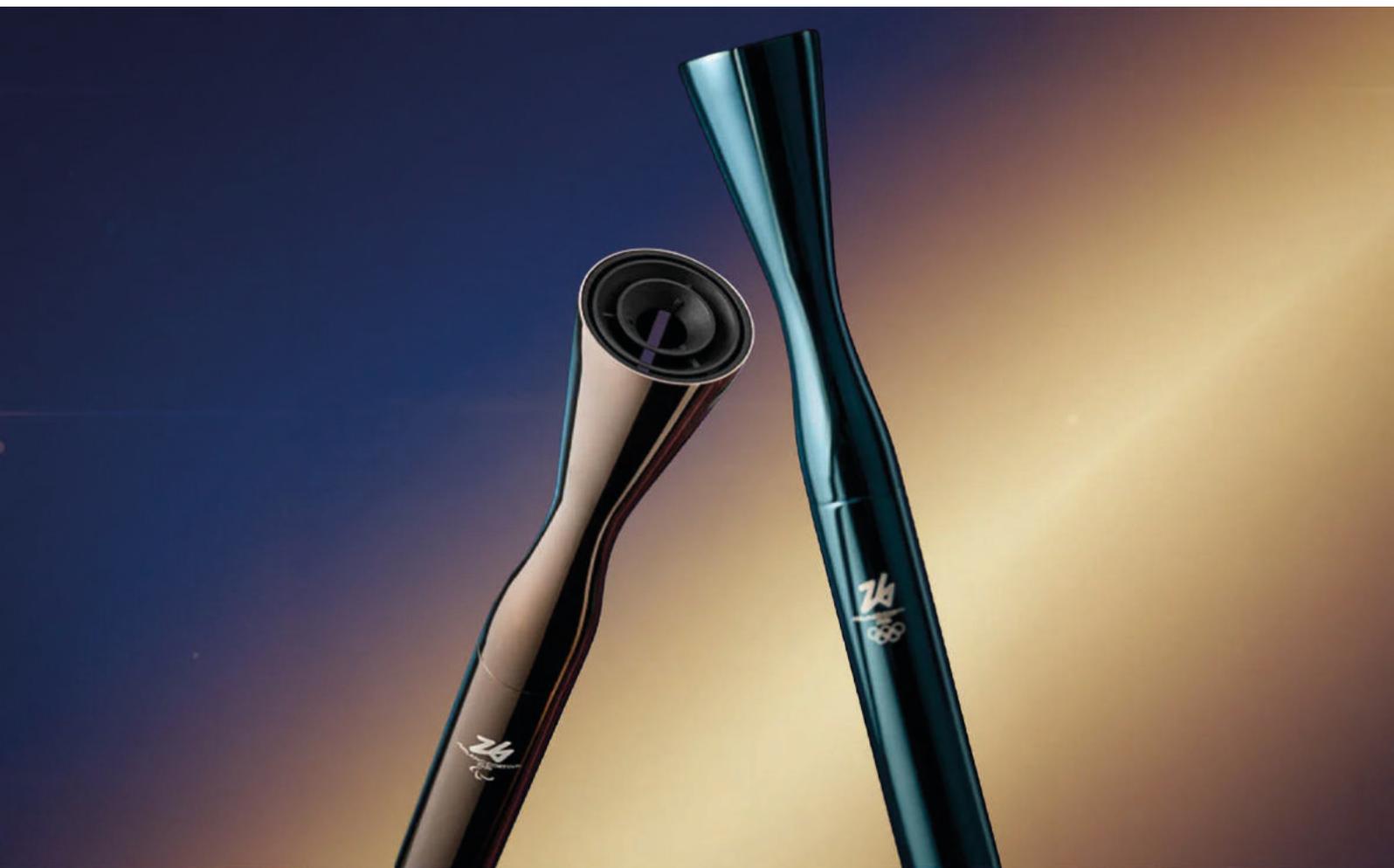
Essential fits within a tradition of essential and restrained Olympic design, recalling – in philosophy – the torch designed by Sori Yanagi for Tokyo 1964, inspired by principles of subtraction and clarity.

The torch is made primarily of recycled aluminum and brass, weighs approximately 1,060 grams when empty, and is designed to be reusable: each burner can be refilled up to ten times.

The body of the torch is coated with a PVD finish – a high-performance treatment resistant to heat and wear – engineered to withstand multiple ignition cycles and winter weather conditions.

The burner is powered by bio-LPG, a fuel produced at Eni’s Eni-live biorefinery in Sicily and derived from 100% renewable feedstocks, including used cooking





oils and agro-industrial residues. For the first time in Olympic history, the ignition mechanism is visible: a longitudinal slit along the body of the torch allows viewers to see the moment the flame comes to life, transforming ignition into a shared and legible gesture.

The flame has a warm yellow tone, designed to ensure maximum visibility both in natural light and in television broadcasts, symbolically recalling the fire lit in Olympia, Greece.

Two versions are planned: one for the Olympic Games, featuring blue-green tones, and one for the Paralympic Games, characterized by bronze shades.

Both versions feature a reflective and iridescent PVD finish that, in low-light conditions, makes the body nearly invisible, creating the impression that the flame is floating in space.

Alongside the torch, the project also includes a mini-cauldron designed as a traveling brazier for

celebrations along the relay route, to be used in approximately 80 public events.

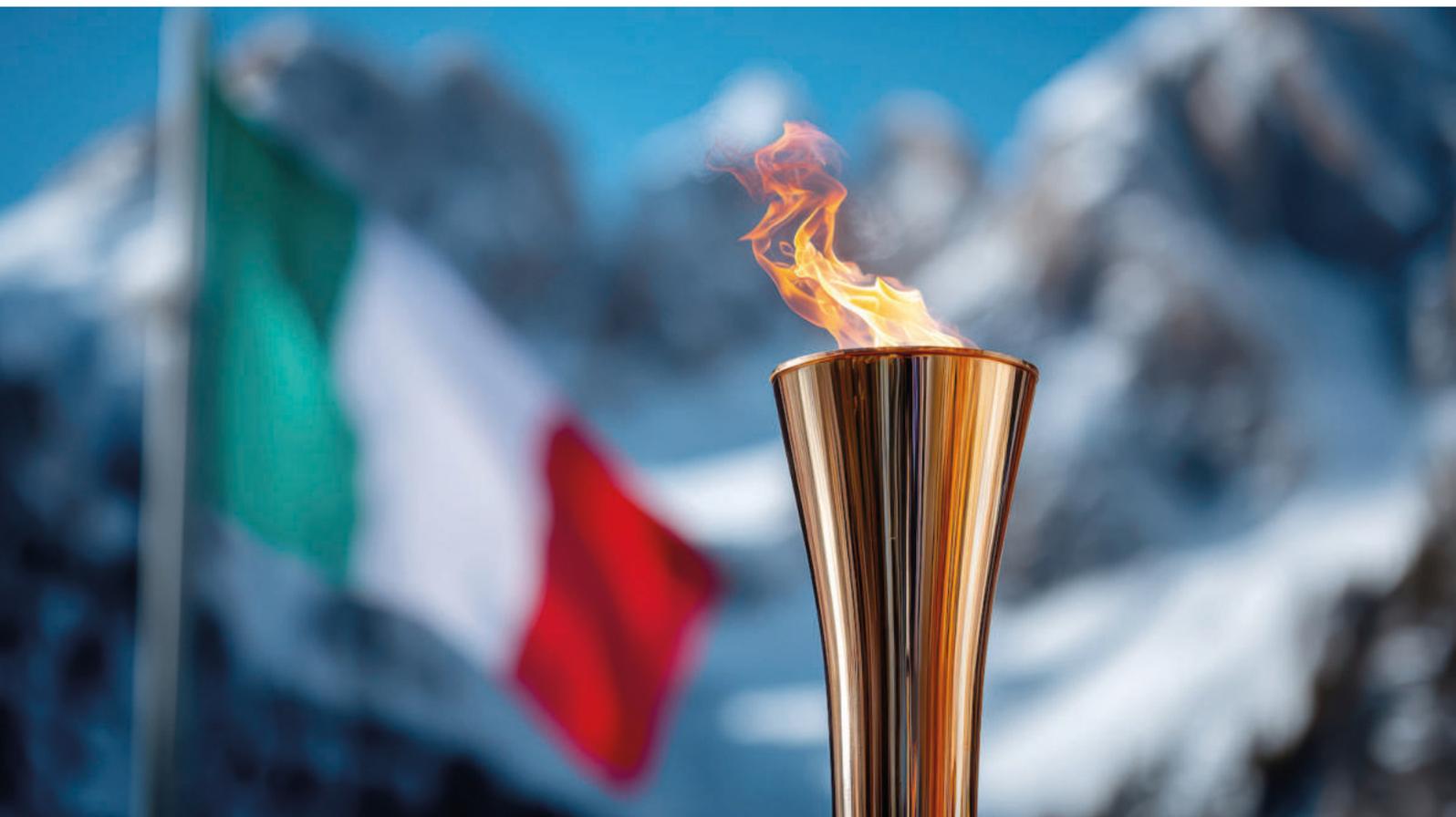
Its geometry, defined by sculpted blades, harnesses a Venturi effect that shapes the flame into a vertical vortex, making it longer and more stable without increasing gas consumption.

The system is engineered to operate even in extreme conditions, down to -20°C (-4°F).

The surfaces feature the same PVD finish as the torch, ensuring visual coherence and transferring the same combustion logic from an individual scale to a collective and ceremonial dimension.

Carlo Ratti, Founding Partner of CRA, summarizes the reasoning process that led to the torch's creation: "Designing a torch is often a bodywork exercise – you start from the burner and add a shell around it. In this case, we did exactly the opposite. We asked ourselves what the minimum torch would be to design around the burner, placing the flame at the center and reducing everything else to the essential. Sustainability means not using what is unnecessary. So what we did was put the flame at the center and minimize everything else."

Particularly moving are the words with which the designer, a professor at MIT – Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston



Carlo Ratti



– describes his approach to the project: “The challenge was not to design an object, but a phenomenon. Fire changes continuously depending on movement, wind, altitude, and temperature. We had to accept this instability and work backward, designing around something alive while ensuring flawless performance under all conditions.”

The project’s creator emphasizes the central role of Sustainability in Essential, which shaped the design in multiple ways: “Sustainability begins with using less, and in this case it takes many forms. For example, creating a minimal surface around the burner. Many of the torch’s materials are already recycled and recyclable at end of life, such as aluminum. This time, we designed the first refillable torch: the same torch can be reused by adding biofuel, reducing the total number of torches by tenfold.”

The Milan-Cortina 2026 Olympic Torch therefore represents a truly advanced and evolved design object, fully in tune with the spirit of our time.

Its design process constitutes a sophisticated and thoughtful rein-



terpretation of the “Less is more” philosophy, leading to a true architecture of fire, conceived to ensure that the flame remains the undisputed protagonist of the scene, free from unnecessary embellishments or superstructures.

Carlo Ratti’s final comment is direct and striking – more illuminating than a hundred design treatises: “The most powerful symbols are those that know how to step back.”



Italian culture and history

From imperial harbor to inland landscape, the story of Classis

We the Italians Editorial Staff

For centuries, Classis was one of the most important ports of the ancient Mediterranean. Founded in the 1st century CE near Ravenna, it served as the main naval base of the Roman Empire in the Adria-

tic. Today, however, the sea is no longer visible from Classis. The coastline has moved several kilometers eastward due to a combination of natural sedimentation from rivers, coastal currents, and centuries of

human intervention. Deposits carried by the Po and other rivers gradually filled the lagoon system that once connected Classis directly to the sea, transforming a maritime landscape into inland land over time. What was once a harbor open to ships is now an archaeological area surrounded by fields and urban development.

In Roman times, Classis was strategically positioned within a vast lagoon protected from storms but easily accessible from the Adriatic. This natural setting made it ideal for military and commercial purposes. At its peak between the 1st and 3rd centuries CE, the port ho-

sted the imperial fleet responsible for controlling the eastern Mediterranean. Historical estimates suggest that several hundred ships could be stationed there simultaneously, supported by docks, warehouses, arsenals, and residential quarters. The settlement that grew around the port, known as *Civitas Classis*, became home to tens of thousands of people, including sailors, merchants, craftsmen, and their families.

The port was not only military in function. Classis was also a major commercial hub linking northern Italy with the eastern provinces of the empire. Goods such as grain, olive oil, wine,





marble, spices, and textiles moved through its docks. Archaeological findings indicate that more than 50% of imported ceramics found in the area originated from the eastern Mediterranean, confirming the port's role in long-distance trade. Its connection to Ravenna, which later became the capital of the Western Roman Empire, further increased its importance.

The decline of Classis began between the 4th and 6th cen-

turies CE. Political instability, repeated invasions, and the gradual weakening of Roman naval power reduced the port's strategic relevance. At the same time, environmental changes accelerated its transformation. Rivers continued to deposit sediment into the lagoons, while maintenance of canals and docks became irregular. As water routes became shallower, larger ships could no longer reach the port. By the early Middle Ages, much of the harbor infrastructure was



unusable, and maritime activity shifted elsewhere.

Despite this decline, Classis did not disappear entirely. During the Byzantine period, Ravenna remained a key administrative and religious center, and Classis continued to function as a secondary port, though on a much smaller scale. Over time, however, the shoreline kept moving outward. Between Late Antiquity and the modern era, the coastline advanced by several

kilometers, fundamentally altering the geography of the area. What had once been a coastal settlement gradually became landlocked.

Today, Classis is primarily known for its archaeological and historical significance. Excavations have revealed sections of warehouses, roads, drainage systems, and burial areas, offering insight into daily life in a Roman port city. The modern archaeological





park and museum complex allow visitors to understand how closely the ancient settlement was tied to the sea, even though water is no longer present. Interactive reconstructions and maps show the original lagoon system and illustrate how environmental forces reshaped the landscape over nearly 2,000 years.

Classis represents a powerful example of how natural processes and human history intersect. The disappearance of the sea from its immediate surroundings was not the result of a single event, but of gradual change driven by sedimentation, shifting rivers, and long-term neglect of hydraulic infrastructure. From a bustling naval base that once controlled



maritime routes, Classis has become an inland testimony to Rome's ability to adapt to nature, and to the limits of that adaptation. Its story reminds us that ports, cities, and coastlines are never fixed, but evolve continuously with time, environment, and human choices.



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IN SANITÀ

Italian healthcare

The healthcare challenge. How Italy can lead a new culture of care

Alessandro Astorino

Healthcare today represents one of the principal testing grounds for advanced democracies. Population aging, the rise in chronic diseases, shortages of healthcare personnel, and escalating costs are placing Western welfare systems under growing pressure. In

this complex landscape, Italy has chosen to confront the challenge not merely through emergency measures, but by launching a path of structural reform that places the individual, the quality of care, and the humanization of medicine at the center.



A clear political signal came with the approval, at the beginning of 2026, of the enabling law for the reform of the National Health Service. The measure introduces national standards for community-based and home care, for the management of chronic conditions and frailty, strengthening social-health integration and reaffirming the principles of bioethics. The goal is to move beyond a fragmented vision of healthcare and build a system that is truly person-centered, also in view of the adoption of implementing decrees by the end of 2026. This direction fits within a coherent and comprehensive regulatory framework. Decree-Law No. 73 of 2024 addressed the issue of waiting lists in a structural way, introducing governance tools, monitoring systems, and technological innovation. Legislative Decree No. 29 of 2024 placed policies for frailty and active aging at the heart of public action. In continuity with this path stands the regulation of the Minister of Health, to be adopted pursuant to Article 1, paragraphs 360, 361, 362, and 363, of Law No. 207 of December 30, 2024, aimed at defining organizational and quality criteria for the humanization of care and for hospital organizational models. These are not isolated interventions, but pieces of an overall strategy.

Within this process, the work of

the Parliamentary Intergroup on Healthcare and Recovery, chaired by Hon. Simona Loizzo, plays a significant role, helping to guide institutional dialogue toward more sustainable, accessible healthcare models aligned with the real needs of citizens. The challenge is not limited to the allocation of resources, but extends to the capacity to reorganize the system, enhance the value of healthcare professionals, and govern innovation without losing the human dimension of care.



Simona Loizzo

On this foundation rests the institutional mission to the United States promoted by the Intergroup on Healthcare and Recovery and the Parliamentary Intergroup “Progetto Italia,” chaired by Hon. Erica Mazzetti. This initiative goes beyond an exploratory or commercial dimension and takes shape as a true act of institutional and healthcare diplomacy, aimed at positioning Italy as a credible political interlocutor in the international dialogue on care models, healthcare innovation, and health infrastructure.

Engagement with the United States – where investment, digital health, research, and major technological

platforms are concentrated – represents a strategic step in enhancing the Italian experience of a public health service, community-based healthcare, and the comprehensive management of frailty. As Tino Ruta, CEO of Knights Care USA, observed, “Italy can play a leadership role in the international dialogue on healthcare precisely because it combines innovation with a culture of care. The humanization of care is not an accessory element, but a strategic choice that strengthens healthcare systems.”

Further strengthening this path is the attention of the Holy See, long committed to promoting a vision of

Erica Mazzetti



healthcare grounded in the dignity of the person, solidarity, and equitable access to care. In this context stands the role of Monsignor Hilary Franco, Counselor of the Permanent Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations, a leading figure in multilateral dialogue in the social and healthcare fields. His activity in the United States represents an authoritative reference point in promoting care models capable of combining innovation, institutional responsibility, and attention to

frailty, in coherence with the Church's social teaching.

The sensitivity demonstrated by Monsignor Franco on healthcare and humanitarian issues confirms that healthcare cannot be reduced to a merely technical or organizational matter, but must be considered a central dimension of the civic and ethical witness of institutions. Within this framework, Knights Care emerges as a reference model capable of integrating healthcare delivery, innovation, and a culture of care, placing humanization as a structural element of healthcare systems rather than a simple complement.

Healthcare, therefore, is not merely a sectoral policy, but a true institutional infrastructure of the country. If reforms, parliamentary work, international initiatives, and dialogue with global ethical actors such as the Holy See proceed in a coordinated manner, Italy will be able not only to strengthen its National Health Service, but also to present itself as a European leader of a new culture of care – one capable of combining sustainability, innovation, and the centrality of the person.

Tino Ruta





Italian economy

Italy, a laboratory of excellence

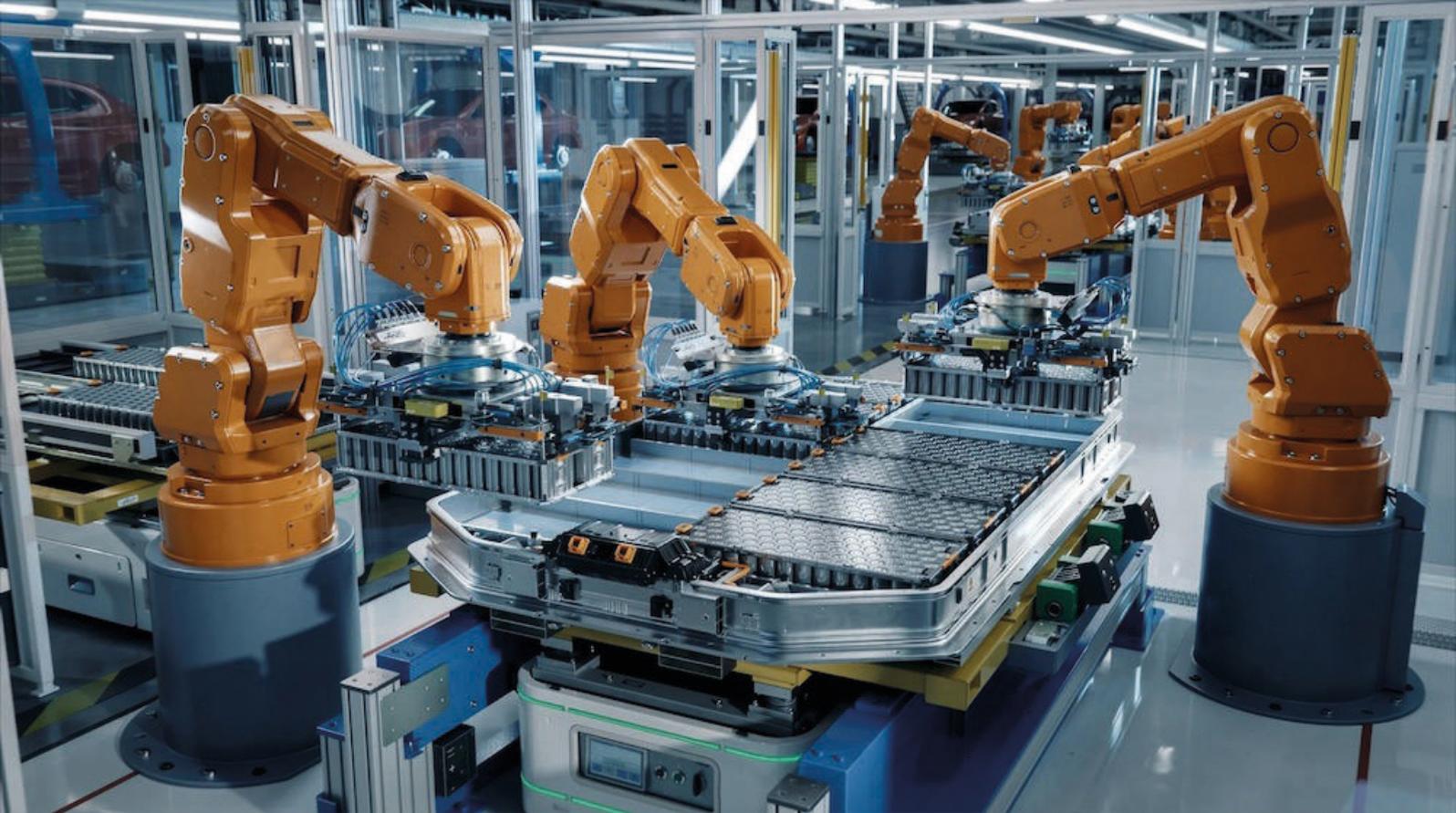
Fabrizio Fasani

For many Italian Americans, Italy continues to be, first and foremost, the place of their origins – an emotional geography made up of family stories, dialects, handed-down recipes, and return journeys.

Yet alongside this identity-driven dimension, there is a con-

temporary Italy that deserves to be better known, because it is deeply intertwined with the U.S. economy and with the future of transatlantic relations.

It is the Italy that produces, exports, innovates, and competes – often far from the spotlight, but with concrete and measurable results. Looking at



manufacture

this Italy through the numbers helps dismantle many clichés. Italy today is Europe's second-largest manufacturing power and one of the world's top seven. Manufacturing generates more than €320 billion in value added each year, equal to about 16% of national GDP. It is an economic model built on industrial labor, technical skills, and entrepreneurial continuity – elements that speak a very familiar language to much of the Italian American community.

This connection becomes even clearer when trade flows are considered. In 2024, Italian exports exceeded €625 billion,

and the United States confirmed itself as one of the top two destination markets. Roughly 10–11% of Italian exports cross the Atlantic. Put simply, a significant share of the products that fuel the American economy originates in Italian supply chains, often in the very territories from which millions of emigrants departed decades ago.



aerospace



aerospace

Italy's strength is particularly evident in industrial machinery and equipment. In this sector, the country holds about 7% of global market share and consistently ranks among the world's top three exporters. In some highly specialized niches – such as automated packaging machinery or equipment for the food and pharmaceutical industries – Italy's share even exceeds 30% of the global market. Many American plants operate every day thanks to technologies designed and built in Italy: a deep industrial

bond, rarely told but very real. In aerospace and defense, Leonardo represents one of the clearest examples of this integration. With revenues exceeding €15 billion and more than 75% of its turnover generated abroad, the group now ranks among the world's top ten players in the sector. The United States is a strategic market, not only for contracts but also for technological and industrial partnerships.

This is an area in which Italy does not present itself as a



marginal supplier, but as an industrial ally, contributing directly to Western security and innovation.

The energy sector also tells a story of transformation and global dialogue. ENI posts annual revenues between €90 and €100 billion and has progressively directed more than 60% of its investments toward the energy transition, renewables, bioenergy, and new technologies. This path intersects with many U.S. strategic priorities and opens up areas of collaboration in which the cultural and professional bridge played by Italian Americans can become particularly relevant.

Agri-food, often perceived only as an expression of tradition, is in reality one of the pillars of the Italian economy. The entire sector is worth more than €580 billion, and agri-food exports exceed €65 billion, with steady growth over the past decade. In the United States, Italy is the leading European supplier of high-end food products. For many Italian Americans, these numbers add new depth to brands and flavors that are part of family memory, revealing their industrial and global dimension.

Barilla, with more than €4 billion in revenue, and Ferre-



agrifood

ro, which exceeds €17 billion in global sales, are examples of companies that do not merely export products, but invest directly in the United States, create jobs, and integrate permanently into the local economic fabric. This form of presence makes the bond between Italy and the Italian American community even more tangible.

In luxury and high-end automotive, Ferrari remains an emblematic case. With revenues exceeding €6 billion and margins among the highest in the global automotive industry, it generates about 25–30% of its global sales in the United States. It is proof that an Italian company can compete at the highest levels of international capitalism, speaking a language made

of quality, technology, and long-term vision.

There is also a less visible but essential Italy: that of intermediate goods and industrial components. More than 45% of Italian exports consist of products that enter global supply chains. In many cases, behind a “made in USA” or “made in Germany” label lies a decisive contribution from Italian manufacturing. It is, in effect, a transatlantic co-production that strengthens economic interdependence between the two sides of the ocean.

Even in emerging sectors, the numbers are significant.

Italy’s pharmaceutical industry is



Ferrari

worth more than €50 billion and sends about 90% of its output abroad. Investments in Industry 4.0, robotics, and applied artificial intelligence exceed €15 billion per year, with growth rates above the European average. This is where a natural space opens up for new generations of Italian Americans, increasingly present in technology, finance, and innovation.

For Italian Americans, all of this is not just a collection of statistics. It is proof that today's Italy is a solid, modern, and credible economic partner. Understanding this reality means enriching identity with a forward-looking dimension, capable of turning roots into opportunities.

Contemporary industrial Italy does not ask for nostalgia or indulgence; it asks to be under-

stood for what it has become. And the Italian American community, by history and position, may be the most natural bridge for transforming these areas of excellence into new economic, entrepreneurial, and cultural alliances between Italy and the United States – giving continuity to a bond that, today more than ever, looks to the future.



pharma



Italian sport

The Italian who made Formula 1 history

Federico Pasquali

Racing in Formula 1 is every driver's dream, and managing to drive a car even for a single Grand Prix represents the pinnacle of a career. Winning a race, or even a world title, is an achievement attained by only a few drivers in the history of

the championship that began in 1950.

Senna, Stewart, Lauda, Mansell, Prost, Alonso, Vettel, Verstappen, Schumacher, and Hamilton are the most successful drivers in history, but over the



decades there have also been drivers who won less yet entered the history of the sport – or even legend – such as Fangio and Nuvolari.

Among the drivers who have made Formula 1 history are also Barrichello and Räikkönen, who after Alonso are the ones who competed in the most Grands Prix over their careers. And among them there is also an Italian: Riccardo Patrese, a driver born in Padua, Veneto, who until the last century held the record for races contested and for consecutive years behind the wheel of a Formula 1 car.

From 1977 to 1993, Patrese competed in 256 Grands Prix, driving for the Shadow, Arrows, Brabham, Alfa Romeo, Williams, and Benetton teams. He ended his career after 17 consecutive years, achieving 6 victories, 8 pole positions, and 37 podium finishes, as well as second place in the drivers' standings in 1992 with Williams.

He became one of the most iconic Italian drivers in the history of Formula 1, tied to an era in which the “Circus” was changing rapidly, amid evolving technologies and legendary rivals to compete against. Patrese's résumé deserves to be

told not only through numbers, but also through context: he faced and fought against some of the strongest names in Formula 1 history.

During his career he challenged champions such as Ayrton Senna, Alain Prost, Niki Lauda, Nigel Mansell, and in his final years Michael Schumacher, then a young driver destined to dominate F1. This closeness to such different generations of drivers is one of the most fascinating aspects of his story: he experienced Formula 1 of the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s, a period very different from the modern era from a technical, competi-

ve, and human standpoint. Patrese was not only a protagonist because of his victories and the longevity of his career, but also because of his on-track duels with great rivals.

With Senna they were never “enemies,” but often rivals on track and protagonists of direct confrontations, especially in the early 1990s. The two frequently found themselves in the decisive phases of races, with Patrese often pressuring the Brazilian on the straights and during overtaking attempts, particularly in 1992 at Hockenheim, where Patrese kept Senna under pressure in the final stages of



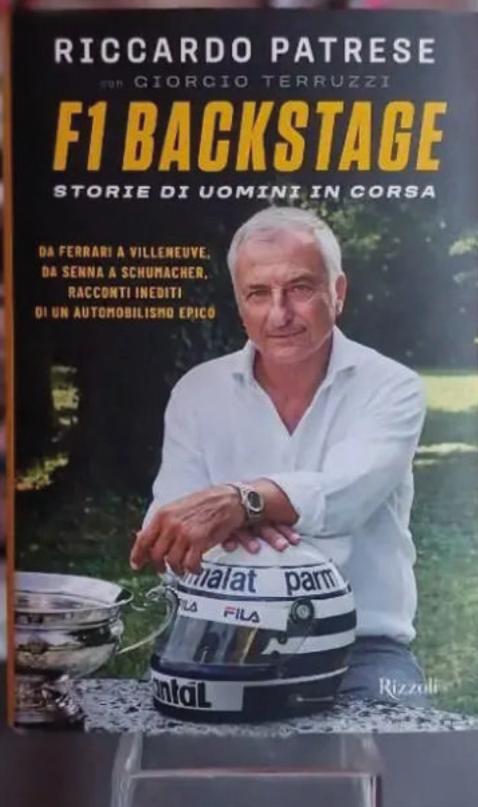


the race without managing to pass him.

With Mansell, on the other hand, he had one of his most technically intense relationships: teammates at Williams during the years of greatest glory (late 1980s–early 1990s), the Englishman was often the “number one,” but Patrese never backed down from the comparison. The 1992 season was the Italian’s best: with a dominant car Mansell won the world championship, but Patrese finished second overall, demonstrating consistency and competitive-

ness alongside his more famous teammate.

With Michael Schumacher he shared the garage in 1993, the final year of his career: he was in fact the teammate of the young German talent at Benetton, in what was a kind of generational passing of the torch. In addition to these three great champions, Patrese also competed against drivers such as Nelson Piquet and against Italian colleagues with whom he shared races, friendships, and intensely felt rivalries, such as Elio de Angelis, Alessandro



Nannini, and Andrea de Cesaris.

Turning to his successes, one of his most celebrated victories was at the 1982 Monaco Grand Prix with Brabham. In a race made uncertain by rain and accidents, Patrese had a bit of luck but above all showed great cool-headedness in managing difficult conditions, earning a victory that over the years has become a symbol of his ability to adapt to unpredictable situations. A spectacular episode, fortunately without serious consequences, occurred at the 1992 Portuguese Grand Prix: while trying to follow Gerhard

Berger, Patrese touched the McLaren and his Williams took off, literally flying before coming back down near the pit wall.

Patrese is remembered not only for the numbers and records, but for his tenacity, his ability to adapt to countless technical evolutions, and an authentic passion for driving, which led him to become a symbol of Formula 1's era of great challenges and great names. His career is the story of how a legend is built not only through victories, but also through the moments shared with the greatest drivers of his time.



My life in Italy

When Instagram sells you Italy. The rise of accidental “experts” and costly property myths

Matteo Cerri

In recent years, a not-so-curious trend has taken hold across social media. Well-produced YouTube channels. Polished Instagram reels. Facebook groups with tens of thousands of followers. Many are run by American visitors - sometimes

part-time residents - who have fallen in love with Italy and swiftly repositioned themselves as guides for others eager to buy a home here. Something that apparently sounds always too good to be true as lifestyle choice or rental investment.

The content is catchy. The tone is reassuring. The promise is seductive: “Buy your dream Italian home for €1.” “Move to Italy in 90 days.” “Escape the rat race.” The best one: “Italian villages that pay you to move in.”

The problem? Italy is not a lifestyle filter. It is a complex legal, fiscal and administrative system layered over centuries of bureaucracy and regional variation. And oversimplification can be financially fatal.

The Expert Illusion

Living in Italy for a few months - even a few years - does not automatically qualify anyone to provide advice on immigration law, property regulation, tax structuring or notarial obligations. Yet many of these social media personalities now sell courses, consultancy calls, relocation packages and “insider access” services that touch on areas strictly regulated by professionals.

Italian immigration rules are not intuitive. Italian property law is not American property law. Italian taxation is not something you improvise via a webinar.

And yet, I regularly meet aspiring American residents who have



purchased homes after watching a video or two, convinced they had found a bargain. What they discovered instead was something rather different.

The €1 Fantasy

The famous “€1 house” schemes, for example, have been widely publicized. Some are legitimate municipal initiatives aimed at regeneration. But the reality behind the headline is often brutal. Properties that are structurally compromised. Mandatory renovation deadlines. Extensive compliance costs. Locations far removed from the romantic imagery shown online. Heavy building works requiring permits, technical reports and local contractors.

Also €10,000 or €20,000 house may look like a steal on paper. In practice, it can become a six-fi-



gure restoration in a village that empties out nine months of the year.

Worse still, many buyers only realize after completion that they cannot simply “move in” and stay indefinitely.

The Visa Reality Check

Owning property in Italy does not grant residency rights. Period. American citizens, unless they hold an EU passport or an appropriate visa, are subject to the 90/180-day Schengen rule. That

means they cannot reside full-time without a proper immigration pathway. There are elective residence visas, investor visas, work routes — each with specific requirements, income thresholds and documentation standards.

Buying a house without first resolving migration status is not strategy. It is speculation.

The Hidden Iceberg

Estate agents are not immigration lawyers. Relocation influencers are not tax advisers. YouTube cre-



ators are not notaries. Property agencies play an important role, but they are the final step in a much larger process. Too often, buyers treat them as the starting point. The house becomes the dream. The paperwork becomes an afterthought.

What many fail to appreciate is that property ownership intersects with income tax residency rules, double taxation treaties, wealth reporting obligations, inheritance law (which in Italy operates under forced heirship principles), rental licensing and zoning constraints, renovation compliance and seismic standards.

Even certain financial instruments promoted online as “smart

ways” to structure a purchase can have unintended tax consequences or restrict how the property may later be used.

A More Rational Approach

Italy is extraordinary. It has depth, culture, beauty and - in many areas - real opportunity. But it demands patience.

My consistent advice, especially to families or long-term movers, is simple. Spend time in the location outside the tourist season. Test daily life rather than holiday fantasy. Consult migration specialists before you purchase. Take independent tax advice — in both countries.



Only then consider buying.

Do not outsource your immigration planning to a property agent. And do not confuse social media storytelling with regulated professional guidance.

If your entire decision was triggered by an Instagram reel, expect disappointment - or worse. If it is grounded in lived experience, research and proper advisory sup-

port, the outcome can be transformative.

The Long-Term Perspective

As someone who has worked for years with individuals and families relocating through structured regeneration projects - and who has lived the long-term expatriate reality - I can say this: there is no “La Dolce Vita” shortcut.

There is, however, a sustainable path. It involves time, due diligence, uncomfortable questions, and occasionally walking away from what looked like a bargain.

Italy rewards those who engage with it seriously. It punishes those who treat it as a backdrop. Experience and presence will not disappoint you. But they are the price of entry. Everything else is marketing.





Italian street food

Street food traditions of Trentino Alto Adige

We the Italians Editorial Staff

In northern Italy's Trentino Alto Adige, a region defined by Alpine landscapes and a long history of cultural exchange with Central Europe, street food tells a story that is very different from the rest of the country. Here, everyday eating

habits are shaped less by pizza slices and more by sausages, fermented cabbage, and bread baked for cold climates. Wurstel, sauerkraut, and brewtzel form the backbone of the region's street food culture, offering filling, practical, and deeply roo-

ted flavors that reflect centuries of life in the mountains.

Street food in Trentino Alto Adige is closely tied to outdoor life. In cities like Bolzano, Merano, and Trento, small kiosks and mobile stands serve quick meals to office workers, students, and tourists. These stands are especially common near markets, train stations, and historic squares. Among all offerings, wurstel dominate. The word covers several types of sausage, most commonly made from pork or a pork–beef mix, lightly smoked and seasoned to withstand long preservation times. A typical sausage weighs around 80–100 grams and is either boiled or grilled before being ser-

ved with mustard or horseradish. Some varieties, such as the Meraner wurstel, are specific to South Tyrol and have been produced locally for more than 150 years.

Wurstel are popular because they are fast, inexpensive, and satisfying. In many towns, a sausage with bread costs between 4 and 6 euros, making it an accessible meal for all ages. According to local food associations, sausages account for more than 60% of street food sales in winter months, when hearty, warm foods are preferred. During festivals and seasonal markets, consumption rises even further, with thousands of portions sold over a single weekend.

brewtzel





Sauerkraut is the natural companion to wurstel and plays a central role in the region's street food identity. Made from fermented white cabbage, it was historically essential for mountain communities because it could be stored for months while retaining nutritional value. Rich in vitamin C and fiber, sauerkraut helped prevent deficiencies during long winters. In street food settings, it is usually served warm, gently cooked to soften its acidity while keeping its distinctive tang. Portions are generous, often 150–200 grams per serving, and are either placed directly on top of the sausage or served on the side. The contrast between the fatty wurstel and the sharpness of the cabbage is one of the defining flavor combinations of Trentino Alto Adige cuisine.

Brewtzel, also known locally as brezel, completes this trio of street food staples. This twisted bread, with its glossy crust and soft interior, is widely associated with German-speaking regions, but in Trentino Alto Adige it has become fully integrated into daily eating habits. Brewtzels are baked using a lye or baking soda solution that gives them their characteristic color and flavor. A standard brewtzel weighs around 90 grams and is often sprinkled with coarse salt or seeds. On the street, it is eaten on its own, dipped in mustard, or used as a base for sausage sandwiches. In beer-focused events, brewtzels are especially popular, with sales increasing by nearly 40% during Oktoberfest-style celebrations held in the region.

What makes these foods so enduring is their connection to local history. Wurstel and sauerkraut were once practical solutions for preserving meat and vegetables in a harsh Alpine environment. Brewtzels were compact, portable breads that could be carried by farmers and shepherds throughout the day. Over time, these necessities evolved into comfort foods and social staples. Eating them outdoors, standing at a counter or sharing a wooden table, reinforces a sense of community that remains central to life in the region.

Today, wurstel, sauerkraut, and brewtzel are more than simple street foods. They represent Trentino Alto Adige's unique position between Italian and Central European cultures. Visitors quickly notice that this is a place where

food reflects geography, climate, and history as much as taste. In a culinary landscape constantly chasing new trends, these dishes have remained unchanged for generations, proving that simplicity, when rooted in tradition, never goes out of style.



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Italian Citizenship Assistance

Work visa allowances for those with Italian ancestry

Italian Citizenship Assistance

Good news has come in the wake of the Tajani Decree that restricted eligibility requirements for citizenship *jure sanguinis* back in March 2025. Those who have Italian ancestors and come from a certain country can now apply for an Italian work visa outside of

the usual quota system. This could be especially beneficial for those who desire to live and work in the country but do not fit the new citizenship parameters. Read on to learn more about eligibility for this exception to find out if you qualify.

How to legally work in Italy as a foreigner

There are a few different pathways to legally qualify to work in Italy, as a non-EU citizen. (EU citizens have only to declare residency in the country, then can live, work, and study freely). There are standard work visas for subordinate work and self-employment, which will be discussed in greater detail below. This can include seasonal work, contracted work for an Italian company, and freelance work.

Current residents of Italy also have the possibility of converting their residence permits for another type of visa (e.g. study) to a work permit. However, this process is also subject to the decreto flussi, the annual quotas for work visas.

Finally, the digital nomad visa, introduced in 2024, is an appealing option outside of the decreto flussi. This is discussed more below.

The Italian Work Visa

As mentioned above, the standard Italian work visa is subject to the annual decreto flussi, a quota on the maximum number of non-EU citizens allowed in Italy for work-related purposes. There are different types of these visas available, including for self-employment, seasonal work, and start-ups.

In some cases, work visas might fit outside the quota system, such as those coming for religious missions or research. The digital nomad visa (below) falls into this category as well, as does the EU Blue Card. The latter case is primarily for highly specialized or upper management workers with an Italian company.

To apply for a work visa, you will first need an offer of employment from an Italian-based company. The potential employer will need to obtain a nulla osta, a declaration of non-impediment, before the visa application can be started.





ITALIAN WORK VISA SYSTEM

Once you have the *nulla osta*, you can submit it, along with the work contract, visa application, passport photo, a copy of and the original passport, and a driver's license or utility bill, proving residence in the consular jurisdiction, to your local consulate. Further documentation might be required.

Within 8 days of arrival in Italy, you will also need to apply for a *permesso di soggiorno*, or permit of stay. This can be done by filling out a "kit" at the post office, where you will receive an appointment at the *Questura* to present your documents and be fingerprinted.

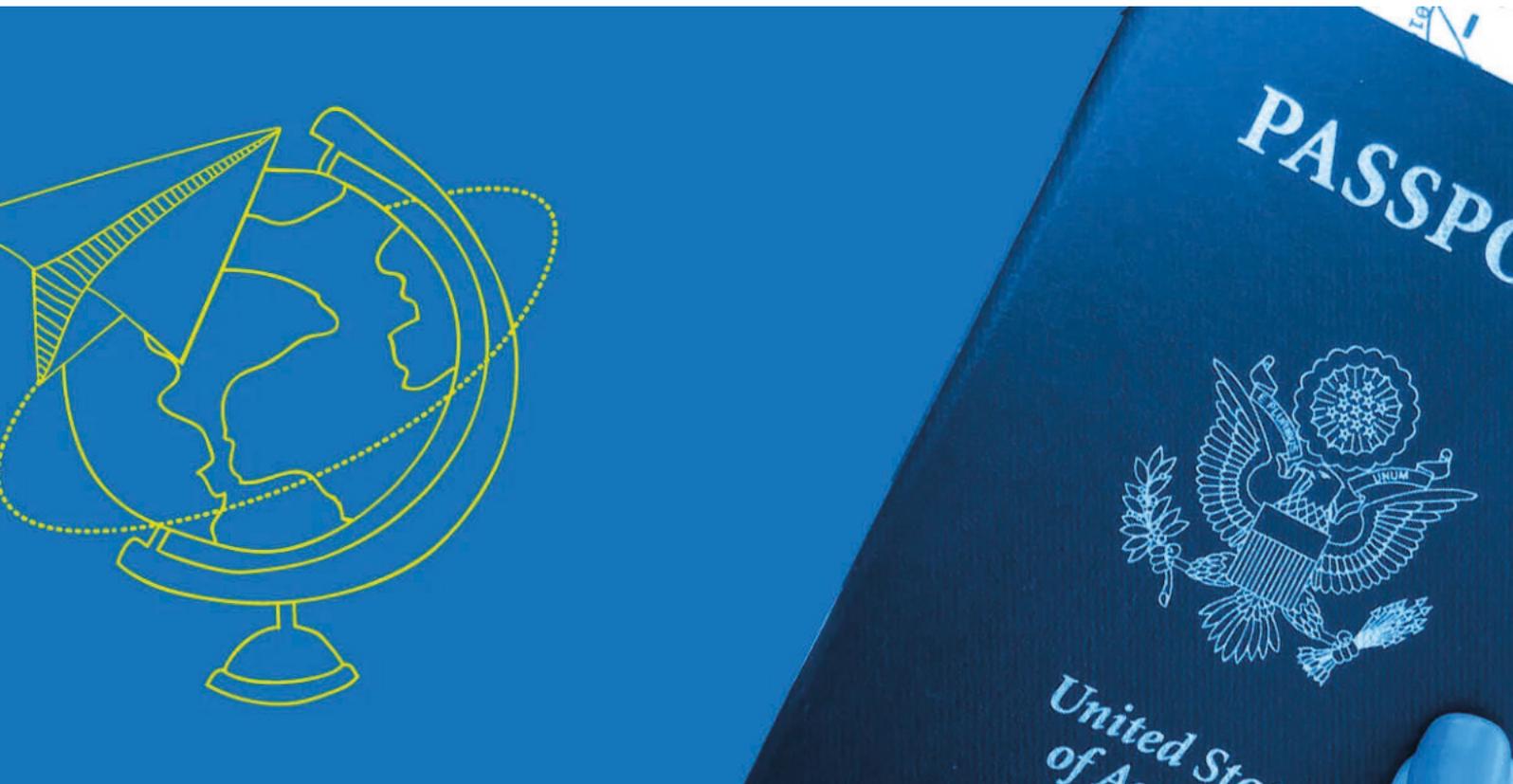
The Digital Nomad Visa

As mentioned, the digital nomad visa is one option that permits non-EU citizens to enter Italy for work purposes outside of the *decreto flussi*. This visa

is specifically for highly specialized remote workers, either for a foreign company, or on a freelance basis. A *nulla osta* is not required either. There is also an income requirement, along with at least six months of experience in the field the applicant will be working in.

No *decreto flussi* restriction for those of Italian ancestry (limited countries)

Those with an Italian ancestor in their direct line can now apply for an Italian work visa outside of the quota system. Such applicants also need to come from one of the following countries: the United States, Canada, Australia, Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela, or Uruguay. This also applies to subordinate work in Italy, as in contracted work with an Italian company, with a *nulla osta* provided by the employer.



Permanent residency and citizenship by naturalization

Permanent residency is available to those who legally reside in Italy for at least five consecutive years. While the card will need occasional updating, it is essentially considered as allowing the person to live in Italy “indefinitely.” After ten years of living in Italy, you can also qualify for citizenship by residency. If you are an EU citizen, the time limit drops down to four years, and if you have an Italian-born parent or grandparent, it is after two years.

How Italian Citizenship Assistance can help

If you come from one of the qualifying countries, have Italian ancestry, and would like to apply for the Italian work visa, Italian Citizenship Assistance is here to help. They provide up-to-date articles on their blog at <https://www.italian-citizenshipassistance.com/> on subjects ranging from visas to citizenship and other immigration laws. Get in touch with an expert today at info@italian-citizenshipassistance.com !





Italian territories

The Metapontino between history, agriculture, and the Ionian sea

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Stretching across the southeastern coast of Italy, the Metapontino is a lowland territory in the region of Basilicata, defined by long sandy beaches, fertile plains, and

a history that stretches back more than 2,500 years. Positioned between the Bradano and Basento rivers and bordering the Ionian Sea, this area is known for its agricul-

tural abundance, rich archaeological heritage, and small towns that preserve layers of Greek, Roman, and medieval influence.

The plains of the Metapontino are among the most productive in southern Italy. Fed by alluvial soil deposited over millennia, local fields yield large harvests of wheat, tomatoes, artichokes, and especially olives. Olive oil from here is often noted for its fruity character and balanced acidity, with many producers harvesting up to 4,000 tons of olives annually. Citrus groves and vineyards also shape the landscape, supporting a community where farming

isn't just an occupation but a way of life. During peak seasons, local cooperatives process crops for national distribution and export, reinforcing the Metapontino's reputation as a key contributor to Italy's food economy.

Beaches along the Ionian coast define much of the region's modern appeal. Over 30 kilometers of shoreline offer opportunities for swimming, sunbathing, and seaside relaxation. Towns like Metaponto and Bernalda serve as gateways to both beach life and cultural discovery. In summer months, especially July and August, daily temperatures often





Bernalda

rise to the high 80s and low 90s (°F), attracting Italian and international visitors seeking sun, sea, and fresh seafood. The shallowness of the coastal waters and the mild breezes make the beaches family-friendly and accessible for water sports.

Archaeology is central to the Metapontino's identity. The Greek city of Metapontum was founded around the 7th century BCE and became a thriving center of Magna Graecia. Today, excavation sites reveal remnants of temples, agora marketplaces, and defensive walls. Visitors can explore the foundations of Doric temples and stroll among columns that once supported civic life more than 2,500 years ago. Museums in the

area display pottery, coins, and tools that paint a vivid picture of life in the ancient city.

Small towns and hilltop villages add another dimension to the region's charm. Bernalda, with a population near 12,000 residents, combines medieval architecture with lively piazzas and local eateries. Narrow streets lead to ancient churches and local artisan shops where ceramics, olive oil, and woven goods reflect generations of craft. Seasonal festivals celebrate patron saints and agricultural cycles, drawing crowds from neighboring provinces and reinforcing community bonds. This is the town where Francis Ford Coppola has his family roots. The Metapontino also serves as an



educational destination. Schools and universities bring students to study classical history, Mediterranean ecology, and sustainable agriculture. Fieldwork in ancient ruins and contemporary farms allows learners to connect past and present in a single experience. Archaeological digs sometimes involve volunteers and scholars from overseas, adding an international dimension to research efforts.

Wine production in the surrounding hills contributes to the region's agricultural output, with

native grape varieties adapted to the warm climate and calcareous soils. Local vineyards, though smaller in scale than in northern Italy, produce red and white wines that pair well with the area's olive oil and seafood traditions. Annual grape harvests typically occur in September, when temperatures begin to cool slightly yet remain warm enough to ensure full ripening.

In both its ancient roots and contemporary rhythms, the Meta-pontino embodies a blend of history, culture, and natural beauty.



Whether exploring archaeological parks, lounging on wide sandy beaches, or tasting produce straight from the fields, visitors encounter a part of Italy that highlights continuity across centuries. For those

drawn to places where the past remains visible and the land continues to nourish communities, the Metapontino stands as a vibrant and rewarding destination.



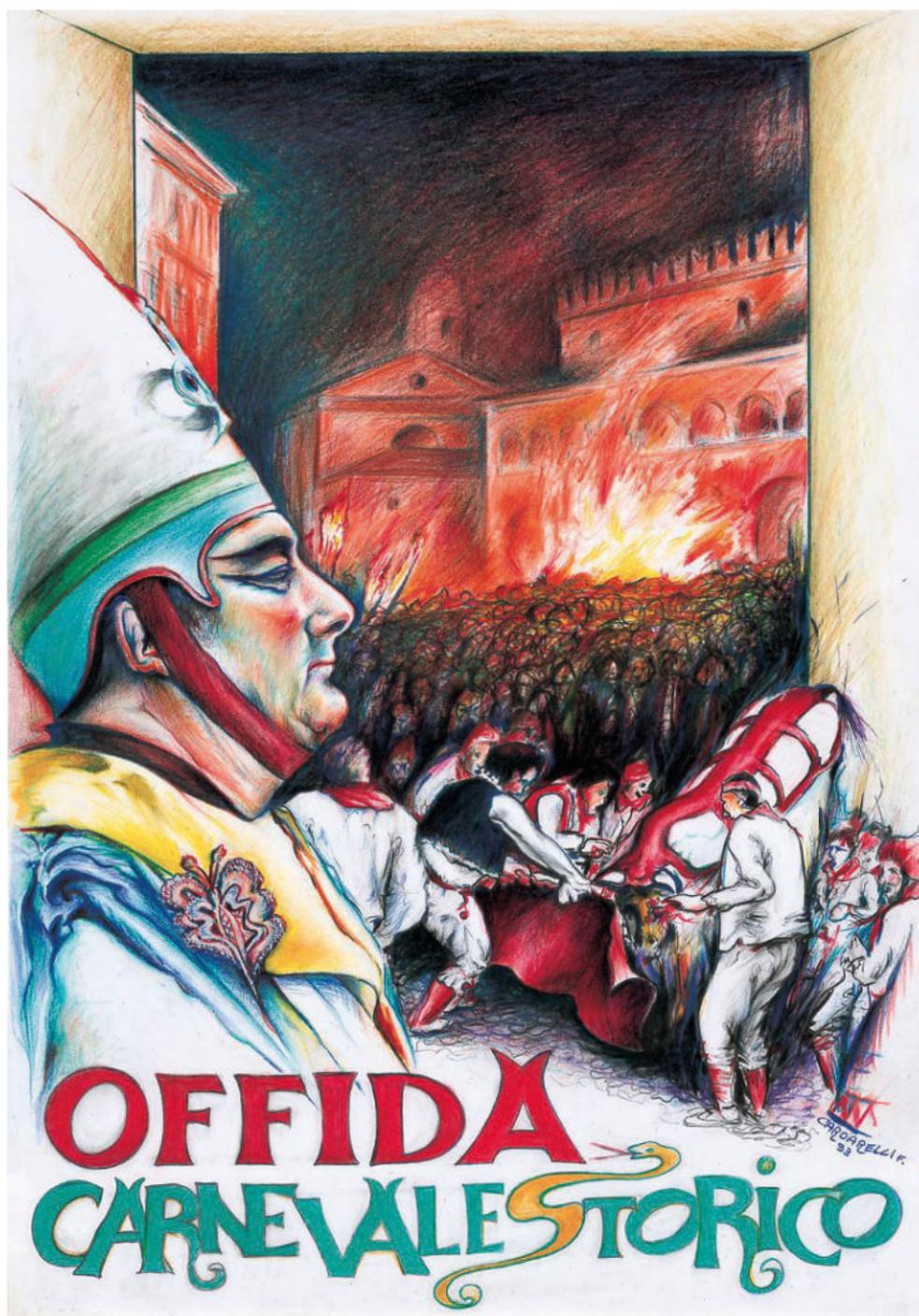
Italian traditions

The Carnival of Offida

We the Italians Editorial Staff

The Carnival of Offida is one of the most distinctive and deeply rooted folk celebrations in central Italy, taking place every year in the town of Offida, in the Marche region. Unlike the more polished and tourist-oriented carnivals of Venice or

Viareggio, Offida's carnival preserves a raw, communal character that has changed very little over centuries. Its origins can be traced back at least to the 16th century, making it one of Italy's oldest continuous carnival traditions.



The event unfolds over several days leading up to Lent, but its most iconic moments are concentrated between Friday and Tuesday of Carnival week. At the center of the celebration is the Bove Finto, or “fake ox,” a large wooden structure covered in

white fabric and carried through the streets by dozens of participants. The ox is symbolic rather than literal, recalling ancient rural rites linked to fertility, agricultural cycles, and collective identity. The procession follows a precise route through the hi-

storic center, drawing thousands of spectators each year – estimates often range between 10,000 and 15,000 people, far exceeding the town's resident population of about 5,000.

Participants wear traditional white outfits called *guazzarò*, consisting of a long tunic, a red scarf, and a pointed cap. This uniformity erases social distinctions and reinforces the idea of equality during carnival days. Music plays a central role, especially brass bands and drums that accompany the procession with repetitive, hypnotic rhythms.

The atmosphere is intense, loud, and physical, with narrow streets packed wall to wall as people sing, shout, and move together in a collective ritual that feels closer to a rite than a spectacle.

Another defining element of the Carnival of Offida is the *Vlurd*, celebrated on the final night. This ritual involves long bundles of reeds tied together and set on fire, carried through the streets by groups of masked participants. The flames illuminate the town in a striking visual display that symbolizes the end of carnival excess and the transition into





the austerity of Lent. Historically, fire represented purification and renewal, and even today the Vlurd retains a powerful emotional and symbolic impact. Safety measures are now strictly enforced, but the ritual remains visually and culturally dramatic.

Food and wine are also essential to the experience. Local red wine flows freely during the celebrations, often shared directly from bottles or jugs among friends and strangers alike. Typical local dishes appear in homes and taverns, reinforcing the link between carnival and conviviali-

ty. During peak days, local wine consumption is estimated to rise by more than 30%, underscoring how deeply food and drink are woven into the celebration's social fabric.

What makes the Carnival of Of-fida especially significant is its resistance to commercialization. There are no large floats, no corporate sponsorships, and very limited staging. The town itself is the stage, and the residents are the performers. This authenticity has helped the carnival maintain its identity even as tourism has grown. Visitors are welcome, but



they are expected to adapt to the rhythm and rules of the celebration rather than the other way around.

Today, the Carnival of Offida stands as a living example of how historical traditions can survive in the modern world without losing meaning. It is not a perfor-

mance designed for an audience, but a shared experience rooted in memory, ritual, and community. In an era where many festivals are reshaped for visibility and profit, Offida continues to celebrate carnival as it always has – loudly, collectively, and on its own terms.





Italian wine

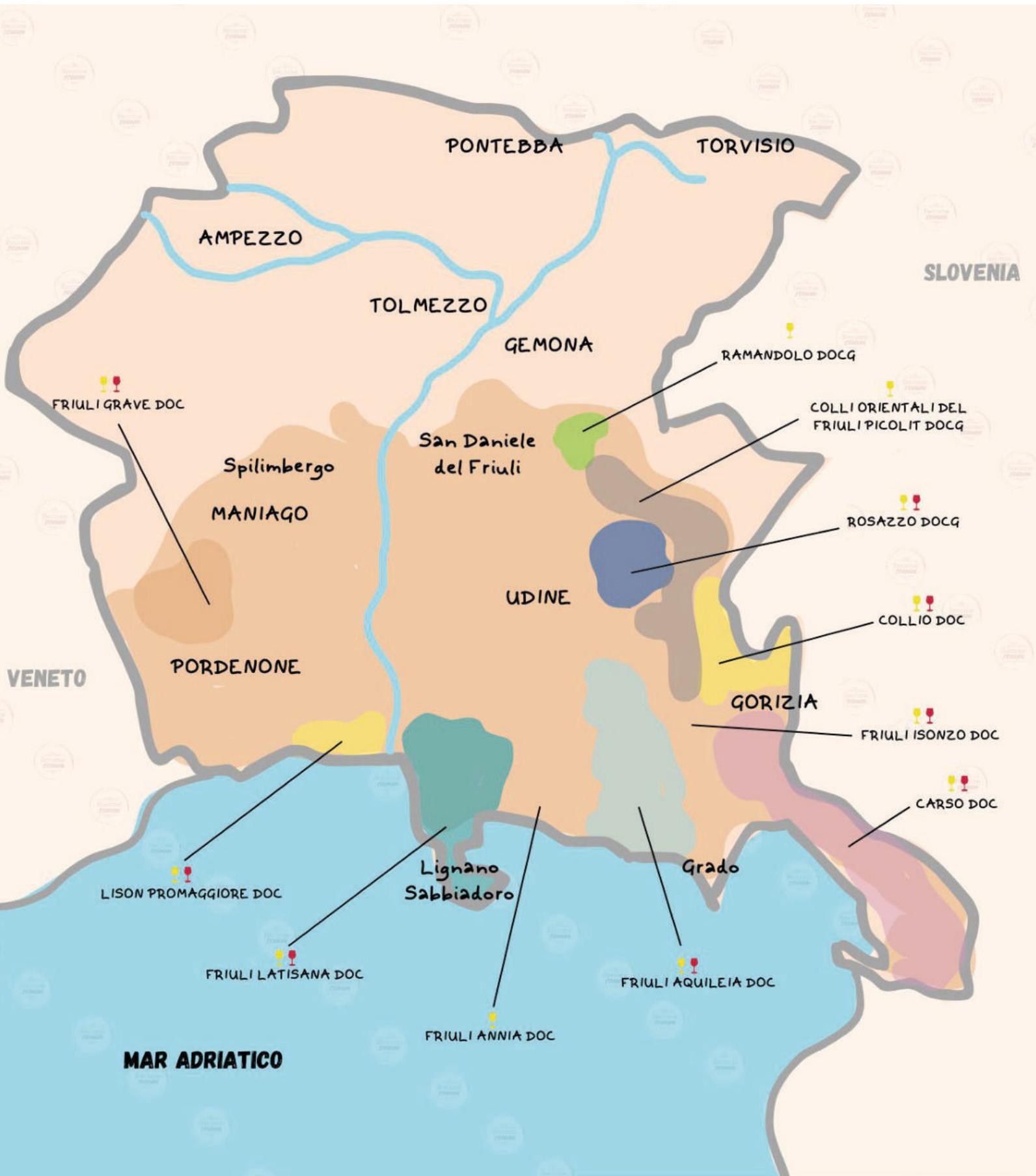
Friuli Venezia Giulia and its distinctive wine culture

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Located in northeastern Italy, Friuli Venezia Giulia stretches from the Alps to the Adriatic Sea, a region shaped by mountains, plains, and coastal breezes. Covering roughly 7,800 square kilome-

ters and bordered by Austria and Slovenia, its varied landscapes create ideal conditions for a wide range of agricultural products. Among these, wine stands out as one of the region's most distinctive and





VITIGNI DELLA REGIONE

-  Ribolla, Friulano, Sauvignon, Picolit, Vitovska..
-  Refosco, Schioppettino, Terrano, Tazzelenghe..

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celebrated outputs, drawing attention from producers and wine lovers around the world.

The wine culture of Friuli Venezia Giulia is built on diversity. Small family estates and larger wineries work with over 30 native grape varieties and a host of international ones. This region produces white, red, rosé, and sparkling wines, and is especially renowned for its white wine

heritage – with around 60% of production dedicated to white grapes. Vineyards cling to hillsides in zones like Collio and Colli Orientali, where the soil is rich in marl and sandstone and the microclimates temper summer heat with cool nighttime breezes.

One of the most emblematic white wines from Friuli is Friulano. Once known locally as Tocai Friulano, it





yields dry, medium-bodied wines with fresh acidity and flavors of herbs, almonds, and citrus. Pairings for Friulano range from shellfish and white fish to prosciutto and local cheeses, making it a versatile table wine. Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Grigio also flourish here, offering lively aromas and crisp finishes that reflect the cool yet sun-rich growing seasons.

Friuli's dedication to white wine does not mean reds are overlooked. Refosco dal Penduncolo Rosso, an ancient local variety, produces deep-colored, structured wines

with dark fruit and earthy notes. Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon are also widely grown, often blended to add complexity and balance. Rosé lovers will find local expressions made from grapes like Schioppettino, producing vibrant wines with red berry character and peppery spice.

Sparkling wine production has grown steadily, with both classic method and Charmat process wines gaining traction. Glera, the primary grape in Prosecco production, is present in the region, but viticulturists also experiment with native varieties to pro-

duce unique sparkling styles. In total, the region's vineyards cover roughly 15,000 hectares, with several DOC and DOCG classifications recognizing quality and geographic specificity.

Viticultural and winemaking traditions here are influenced by a blend of cultural currents. Germanic precision meets Slovenian intuition and Italian passion, resulting in a philosophy that values both scientific innovation and terroir expression. Many producers practice sustainable and organic farming, reducing chemical inputs and encouraging biodiversity among the vines. At harvest, careful sorting and gentle pressing help preserve the delicate aromatics that define Friuli's whites.

The wine world has taken notice: sommeliers and importers rate Friuli Venezia Giulia as one of Italy's premier white wine regions, a reputation built over decades of consistent quality. Exports have increased steadily, opening markets in the United States, Canada, and northern Europe. While specific figures vary year to

year, a growing percentage – often cited around 40% of total production – reaches international buyers.

Wine tourism has also become a significant element of the regional economy. Visitors can stroll vineyard paths, meet winemakers in family cellars, and attend seasonal festivals celebrating harvest and local gastronomy. These experiences highlight not only the wines but also the deep connection between land, culture, and community that defines Friuli Venezia Giulia.

In a world where many wine regions chase fame, Friuli Venezia Giulia remains anchored in tradition while embracing innovation. Its wines – crisp whites, textured reds, lively rosés, and sparkling bottles – reflect a place where geography, history, and craftsmanship converge in every glass. For anyone interested in Italian wines with both character and subtlety, this northeastern corner offers some of the most rewarding and memorable bottles Italy has to offer.



Italian industrial districts

La Spezia and the global luxury yachting industry

We the Italians Editorial Staff

The industrial district of La Spezia in Liguria has firmly established itself as one of the world's leading centers for luxury yachting, evolving from a traditional naval port into a global reference point

for high-end marine manufacturing. Today, approximately 26% of global yacht and megayacht production takes place in the La Spezia area, a striking figure that highlights the city's strategic



importance within the international nautical industry. This concentration of production is the result of a highly specialized industrial district that blends design excellence, advanced manufacturing, and a growing commitment to sustainability.

The backbone of this success is a dense and diversified network of shipyards operating along the Gulf of La Spezia and the Miglio Blu, a coastal zone dedicated entirely to nautical activities. Major players include Fincantieri Yachts, a global leader in the construction of large custom yachts, as well as historic and internationally recognized brands such as Baglietto, Cantieri Navali del Golfo, Sanlorenzo, and Riva. These companies specialize in luxury

vessels typically ranging from 30 to over 100 meters in length, with production processes that are highly customized and can take more than 24 months from design to delivery. Each yacht is effectively a one-off project, involving hundreds of skilled workers and a long chain of specialized suppliers.

Alongside new builds, refit and maintenance activities represent a fast-growing segment of the local economy. Lusben, part of the Azimut-Benetti Group, has made La Spezia one of the Mediterranean's most important refit hubs, capable of handling large yachts and megayachts year-round. Refit operations are estimated to generate close to 35% of the district's total nautical revenue, driven by

the aging of global fleets and the increasing technical complexity of modern vessels. Owners are investing more in upgrades, efficiency improvements, and interior refits, often returning to La Spezia for its expertise and infrastructure.

Supporting the shipyards is an ecosystem of more than 400 small and medium-sized companies specializing in marine systems, interiors, propulsion, electronics, coatings, and advanced materials. This supply chain is one of the district's greatest strengths, allowing shipyards to source high-quality components locally and reduce production times. Employment in the nautical sector now represents a significant share of

the local workforce, with thousands of jobs tied directly or indirectly to yacht construction and services.

Looking ahead to 2025 and beyond, growth is expected to continue, supported by major infrastructure investments. One of the most important projects is the development of the new nautical hub at Pagliari. This complex will include a dry marina, large industrial sheds, and upgraded logistics areas designed to support both construction and refit activities. Once fully operational in 2026, the Pagliari hub is expected to accommodate more than 100 yachts at the same time and generate hundreds of additional skilled jobs, reinforcing La Spe-





zia's role as a long-term industrial center.

Business development and international networking are also key elements of the district's expansion. Events such as B2B Mare La Spezia have become central meeting points for the nautical supply chain. The most recent edition involved 280 companies and resulted in over 800 scheduled B2B meetings, a clear sign of the sector's vitality. Due to rising participation and demand, organizers are planning to extend the event starting in 2025, further enhancing La Spezia's visibility on the global stage.

Sustainability is increasingly shaping the future of the district. Shipyards are investing in hybrid and low-emission propulsion systems, energy-efficient hull designs, and sustainable materials, responding to both market expectations and regulatory pressure. Port authorities and local institutions are supporting this transition with shore power infrastructure and initiatives aimed at reducing emissions and environmental impact.

La Spezia's position as a global yachting hub is the result of coordinated industrial vision



rather than isolated success stories. By combining world-class shipyards, a robust supplier network, skilled labor, and strategic planning, the city has become a benchmark for luxury

nautical production. As global demand for custom yachts continues to grow, La Spezia appears well positioned to remain at the forefront of the industry for years to come.



Italian proverbs

Non c'è due senza tre

We the Italians Editorial Staff

The Italian proverb “Non c'è due senza tre” (literally “There is no two without a three”) expresses the idea that when something happens twice, it is very likely to happen a third time. It can be interpreted in different ways depending on context. In an optimistic sense, it conveys hope that a positive event will continue, such as repeated success or good luck. In a pessimistic sense, it reflects the fear that a negative event will recur again. The saying also applies to human behavior: an action repeated twice is more likely to be repeated a third time, potentially turning into a habit, whether good or bad. Culturally, the proverb is linked to the symbolic power of the number three, often seen as a complete or perfect cycle in many traditions and religions.



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