We the Italians

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We the Italians
two flags one Heart

Gala Dinner 2026

Two Flags One Heart

4th Edition

4 Giugno 2026

Grand Hotel Parco dei Principi · Roma

Institutional Partnership · Networking · Culture

Editorial

What's up with WTI #197

by Umberto Mucci

Dear friends,

The first of six special inserts dedicated to Two Anniversaries, One Heart is now online. Two Anniversaries, One Heart is We the Italians' celebration of the 250th anniversary of the United States and the 80th anniversary of the Italian Republic. These milestones will take center stage at our Gala Dinner this year. Even the date of our event reflects

this dual celebration: June 4 blends Italy's June 2 with America's July 4 – combining the month of the former with the day of the latter. Here you can find all the content from insert 1/6 of Two Anniversaries, One Heart: Happy Birthday USA and Happy Birthday Italy.

Here, instead, you can find all the details about our gala, which will be truly special this year. This video describes it – it's in Italian because, starting this year, the We the Italians Gala will be held in Italian, but simultaneous English translation will be available for those who need it.

As you may have noticed from this magazine's cover, we at We the Italians are thrilled about the Italian national baseball team, which amazed the world by reaching the semifinals of the World Baseball Classic held in the United States – even defeating the host nation. No one better than my friend Chris Vaccaro, Vice President of the Italian American Baseball Foundation and our Ambassador in Long Island (New York), has captured what this achievement meant. The Italian national team is made up largely of Italian American players. You can find Chris's article here, while here is the interview published in January with Marco Mazzieri, President of the Italian Baseball and Softball Federation – of which, we proudly note, We the Italians

is a media partner.

And it's remarkable that, at the very same time Italy – powered by Italian Americans – was defeating the United States in baseball, in women's basketball it was Italian American Caitlin Clark, playing for Team USA, who defeated Italy. In short, in sports, when Italy and the United States face each other, the team with the Italian Americans wins. They are the real winners: both Italy and the United States should be competing to have them on their side – not discriminating against them!

Speaking of partnerships, we're ple-

Caitlin Clark

ased to highlight two new collaborations involving We the Italians. The first is with Spirit Cultural Exchange, a U.S. State Department–designated sponsor of the J-1 visa, which allows American businesses to host international interns and trainees for 1 to 18 months. Interns may be university students or recent graduates, while trainees already have early-career experience. Spirit handles all compliance, visa sponsorship paperwork, ongoing program support, and required health insurance, allowing both the intern and the host organization to focus on the training program and cultural exchange. More information is available here or by contacting Spirit's Rome-based staff at abakke@spiritexchange.com.

SPIRIT
cultural exchange

The second partnership is with the Italian Parliamentary Intergroup on Health and Recovery, which will carry out an institutional mission in April between New York and Washington, DC – an initiative we will support and promote.

I am also pleased to share that I had the honor of participating in the MemoGen project, where I recounted memories related to my father's experience in World War II – including the moment when the U.S. Fifth Army saved him from certain death – and his friendship with the three Italian American soldiers in the battalion that rescued him: Sal Di Marco, Anthony Tiso, and Eddie Gastaldo. My personal heroes. MemoGen is a research project founded by Gianluca Cinelli and Patrizia Piredda, aimed at understanding how the legacy of World War II

MemoGen

L'eredità della Seconda guerra mondiale nella memoria della terza generazione (1965-1985)

Centro Studi Sereno Regis

Archivio Ligure della Scrittura Popolare

La Mola Azienda Agricola

RJF Foundation for the Humanities New York

has evolved in Italian culture over the past fifty years. The project is building a digital archive of approximately 200 video interviews recorded in Italy and abroad.

Our family of Ambassadors continues to grow is growing, and this month we are lucky and grateful to welcome four new members, three territorial and one thematic: this time we move west and we stop in Texas, Oregon and California. I'm very happy to welcome them, and I'm blessed for this big, wonderful family of amazing friends!

Isabella Carrino is our new Ambassador in Houston (Texas). Isabella is an Italian professional based in Houston, Texas, actively engaged in initiatives that support and connect the Italian community abroad. Over the years she has contributed to several projects aimed at promoting Italian culture and strengthening ties between Italy and Italians living overseas. She currently serves as an elected member of Com.It.Es. Houston, where she leads communi-

Isabella Carrino

cation and social media activities for the Italian community across Texas, Louisiana and Oklahoma. Passionate about food, culture and storytelling, she is also involved in entrepreneurial and community projects that highlight Italian traditions abroad.

Vytas Babusis

Vytas Babusis is our new Ambassador in Oregon. Vytas serves as the Honorary Consul of Italy in Portland, Oregon, supporting Italian citizens and promoting cultural, educational, and economic ties between Italy and the Pacific Northwest. An attorney, farmer, and community leader, he manages a farm using regenerative and permaculture-inspired practices. Vytas often refers to his story as the "American Dream in reverse": instead of an Italian immigrating to America to pursue opportunity, he went to Italy, where he discovered his professional and personal path, and today works to give back to the country that has given him so much.

Vicky Carabini

Vicky Carabini is our new Ambassador in Orange County (California). Since 2007, Vicky has served as Ambassador to San Juan Capistrano's Sister City, Capestrano, Italy. She is actively involved in promoting Italian culture in Orange County through many kind of events. Vicky is Chair of the Italian Studies Council and a Board Member of the Ferrucci Institute at Chapman University. She also serves as Regional Vice President for the National Italian American Foundation. She is the former President of the Italian Arts Council. In 2020 Vicky was knighted Cavaliere dell'Ordine della Stella d'Italia (Knight of the Order of the Star of Italy).

Andrea Giuricin is our new thematic Ambassador: he is one of the most prestigious Italian experts about mobility. Andrea is CEO of TRA consulting. He is consultant for international companies, Governments and Transport Authorities, the EU, the World Bank

and the UN. He is also a global recognized economist focused on the infrastructure and railway industry in the US. Andrea is adj. professor in Transport Economics and Logistic at University Milano Bicocca, where he also is responsible for the development of transport studies. He also teaches Made in Italy for the Annenberg - School for communication at University Southern California. He published several books and is analyst at several Italian and international newspapers.

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.

Andrea Giuricin

Italian handcrafts

The Calabrian briar pipe tradition of Vibo Valentia

We the Italians Editorial Staff

In the mountains of Calabria, a small and little-known production tradition has developed around a very specific object – the smoking pipe. In the province of Vibo Valentia, particularly in towns such as Brognaturo and Serra San Bruno, generations of craftsmen have specialized in creating pipes from a material that grows naturally in the surrounding forests. This activity,

though limited in scale, has become one of the most distinctive manufacturing traditions of the region.

The key material used in these pipes is briar, the dense root of the Erica arborea plant. This shrub grows widely in Mediterranean landscapes and is especially abundant in parts of southern Italy. Briar is highly valued for pipe making because it is heat-resistant, lightweight, and durable. Its natural structure also absorbs moisture during smoking, helping create a smoother experience compared with other types of wood.

In Calabria, the harvesting of briar roots typically takes place in mountain areas between 600 and 1,200 meters above sea level. Workers carefully extract the roots from the soil, often selecting plants that are 30–50 years old to ensure the wood has developed the right density. Once removed, the roots are cut into blocks and undergo a long curing process. In many cases the wood is boiled and then dried for several months – sometimes up to 12–24 months – to stabilize its internal structure and pre-

vent cracking during carving.

After the curing stage, pipe production begins. Each block of briar is examined for grain quality, density, and imperfections. Skilled craftsmen then cut and shape the wood using lathes and specialized tools. Although machinery assists in the initial stages, much of the finishing work is still done by hand. Artisans sand, polish, and assemble the different parts of the pipe, including the stem and mouthpiece.

The town of Brognaturo has become particularly associated with this activity. Despite having a population of fewer than 2,000 residents, it has hosted several workshops dedicated to briar processing and pipe manufacturing. Over time, these small producers have built a reputation among pipe collectors and enthusiasts who appreciate the durability and distinctive grain patterns of Calabrian briar.

Historically, a significant portion of the briar harvested in Calabria was exported as raw material rather than transformed locally. France and other European countries developed large pipe-making industries that relied on Mediterranean briar. Estimates suggest that

Italy has supplied a notable share of the global briar market for decades, with Calabria playing an important role due to the quality of its wood.

Today the Calabrian pipe sector remains relatively small but continues to attract interest from collectors and specialized markets. Some workshops focus on handcrafted pipes produced in limited numbers, while others concentrate on preparing briar blocks for international manufacturers. The combination of natural resources and technical expertise has allowed this tradition to survive despite the decline in tobacco consumption in many parts of the world.

Although production volumes are modest compared with large manufacturing industries, the Calabrian pipe represents a distinctive example of regional specialization. From the forests where the Erica arborea grows to the workshops where the wood is shaped and polished, the process reflects a close relationship between landscape, material, and craftsmanship. In a mountainous area far from major industrial centers, this small sector continues to transform a simple plant root into an object appreciated by enthusiasts around the globe.

Italian art

A flooded crypt beneath Ravenna reveals mosaics under water

We the Italians Editorial Staff

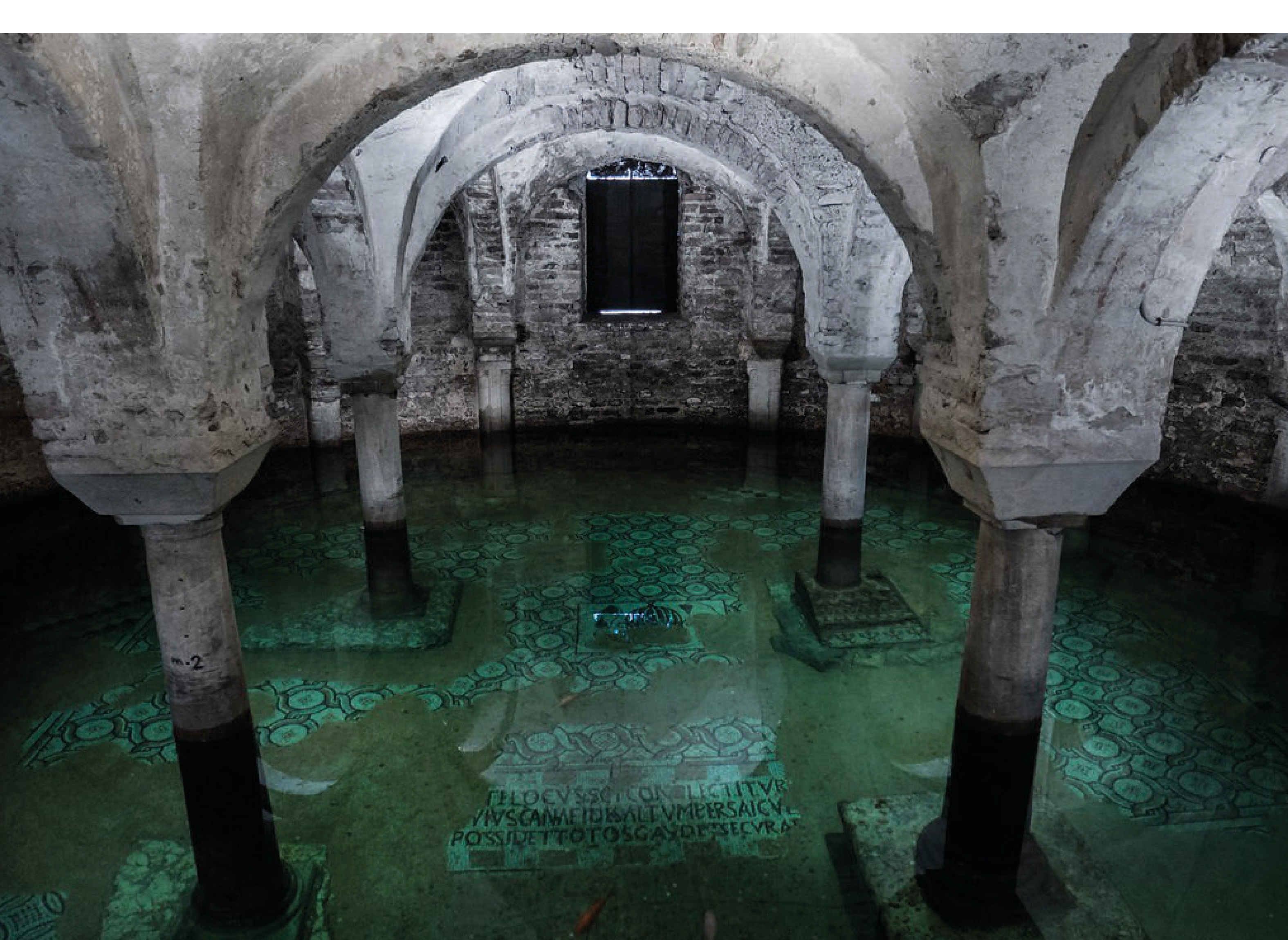
Inside a dim corner of a 5th-century church in Ravenna, a simple gesture reveals an unexpected scene. When a visitor drops a 1-euro coin into a small slot, a soft light switches on for a few minutes. The glow does not illuminate the nave or the altar. Instead, it reveals what lies beneath the Basilica of San Francesco.

Just below the main altar, a narrow opening allows visitors to look down into an underground chamber about two meters below ground level. At first glance

it resembles a shallow pool. In reality, it is an ancient crypt that has gradually filled with freshwater over time.

The floor of this crypt is entirely covered with Byzantine mosaics. These intricate designs, created more than 1,500 years ago, were originally meant to remain dry and serve as the decorated surface of a sacred space. Artisans arranged thousands of small tiles into geometric patterns and ornamental motifs typical of early Christian architecture in Ravenna, a city that later became famous for its extraordinary mosaic heritage.

Today those same mosaics lie beneath a thin layer of clear water. The water is not from the nearby Adriatic Sea, even though Ravenna is located only a few kilometers from the coast. Instead, it comes from the underground water table. Seasonal rainfall and subtle variations in sea level cause the water to rise and fall slightly



throughout the year. As a result, the crypt never looks exactly the same from one season to the next.

The scene becomes even more unusual because small goldfish swim slowly above the ancient floor. The bright orange fish move quietly across the geometric designs, creating the impression that the mosaic itself is alive. Their movement adds a modern layer to a composition created more than fifteen centuries ago.

For a long time, this underground chamber remained largely unnoticed. Generations of visitors walked across the basilica floor without realizing that a submerged crypt existed just beneath them. The small viewing window below the altar had always been there, but it took the curiosity of modern visitors to transform it into a focal point of attention.

In recent years the flooded crypt has become one of Ravenna's most intriguing attractions. Travelers from many countries come to see this unusual meeting between art, architecture, and water. It offers a quiet but powerful reminder that historical spaces often evolve in unexpected ways.

Ironically, the water that might seem like a threat to the mosaics may actually help preserve them. The stable aquatic environment protects the surface from air exposure and temperature changes, creating conditions that can slow deterioration. What might appear to be a fragile situation has instead contributed to the survival of these ancient decorations.

Within just a few square meters, visitors encounter the craftsmanship of early Christian artisans alongside the slow, unpredictable behavior of underground water. The flooded crypt also hints at the legacy of Roman hydraulic systems, some of which still influence the movement of water in Ravenna after nearly sixteen centuries.

The crypt beneath the Basilica of San Francesco offers a rare perspective on history. As lights briefly illuminate the water and goldfish drift over the ancient mosaics, the scene reveals how layers of time continue to exist beneath the surface of everyday places. It is a reminder that the past often survives quietly below our feet, waiting to be rediscovered.

Italian cuisine

Risi e bisi

Maurizio Peccolo

Risi e Bisi is one of the most iconic dishes in the culinary tradition of the Veneto region, closely tied to the history of the Republic of Venice. It was traditionally served to the Doge on April 25, the feast day of Saint Mark – the patron saint of Venice – as a symbol of prosperity and abundance.

Its traditional texture is described as all'onda ("wave-like") – softer and creamier than a classic risotto, yet not as liquid as a soup. The rice most commonly

used is Vialone Nano, prized for its ability to release starch while maintaining a firm structure.

Risi e Bisi was considered the official dish of the Serenissima Republic. It became a symbol of spring thanks to the use of fresh young peas. A popular saying paired it with strawberries – "Risi e bisi e fragole" – referencing the colors of the Italian flag. Traditionally, the broth was also made with the pea pods so that nothing would be wasted.

The Biso de Borso, the pea grown in Borso del Grappa in the province of Treviso, is widely considered one of the best varieties for preparing this dish.

Why it works so well for Risi e Bisi: it has a naturally sweeter flavor thanks to the rich soil at the base of Monte Grappa; the skin is thin and tender, so it does not require long cooking times: t is rich in natural sugars that enhance the creaminess of the rice; it keeps a bright green color even after cooking: its velvety texture contributes to the dish's characteristic all'onda finish.

Traditional Recipe (Serves 4)
Ingredients

- 320 g Vialone Nano rice
- 500–600 g fresh peas (preferably Biso de Borso)
- 1 white onion
- 50 g butter
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 50 g grated Parmigiano Reggiano
- Vegetable broth (preferably made using the pea pods)
- Salt and pepper to taste

Preparation

1. Prepare the broth using the

Biso de Borso del grappa

pea pods.

2. Gently sauté the onion in olive oil.

3. Add the peas and let them absorb the flavors.

4. Add the rice and begin cooking, gradually adding broth.

5. Cook for about 15–17 minutes, keeping the texture soft and creamy.

6. Remove from heat and finish by stirring in the butter and Parmigiano.

7. Serve with the classic all'onda consistency.

After finishing the risotto and plating it, you can drizzle a reduction of red wine – for example Valpolicella – that has been simmered in a small saucepan until it reaches a syrupy consistency.

The red wine adds an elegant contrast between the sweetness of the peas and the wine's fruity, tannic notes, giving the dish greater aromatic depth.

Risi e Bisi is not just a dish – it is a symbol of Venetian agricultural culture and the gastronomic tradition of the Serenissima. Using Biso de Borso elevates the recipe even further, making it one of the purest expressions of the Italian springtime table.

Italian entertainment

The long tradition of Italian film dubbing from the 1930s to the age of AI

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Imagine Robert De Niro, Al Pacino, Sylvester Stallone and Dustin Hoffman. Close your eyes and think about their voices. They're different, right? Yet in Italy they were all dubbed by the same actor – Ferruccio Amendola, perhaps the most famous male voice actor in the history of Italian dubbing. Here's another example: Woody Allen and Peter Sellers were both dubbed by Oreste Lionello.

But it is among film and television actresses that we find a record that is almost impossible to match. Maria Pia Di Meo – not only an exceptional voice actress but also a talented performer in her own right – provided the Italian voice for an entire generation of stars: Meryl Streep, Jane Fonda, Shirley MacLaine, Catherine Deneuve, Barbra Streisand, Audrey Hepburn, Julie Andrews, Joanne Woodward, Julie Christie, Ursula Andress, Sandra Dee, Susan Sarandon, Faye Dunaway, Vanessa Redgrave, Mia Farrow, Romy Schneider, Cher and Natalie Wood.

Italy is widely recognized as one of the world's leading centers for film dubbing, a tradition that has shaped how generations of viewers experience foreign movies and television. Unlike countries where subtitles dominate, Italian audiences have long been accustomed to hearing international actors speak fluent Italian on screen. This distinctive practice has deep historical roots that date back nearly a century.

The development of dubbing in Italy began in the early 1930s, shortly after sound films replaced silent cinema. At that time, international movies were difficult for audiences to understand because language barriers limited their accessibility. The situation changed during the Fascist era, when the government promoted dubbing as both a cultural and political tool. Foreign-language films were required to be translated into Italian, partly to make them understandable and partly to control the content entering the country. In 1934, regulations formally required that most imported films be dubbed domestically.

As a result, a sophisticated dubbing industry quickly emerged. Specialized studios were established in cities such as Rome and Milan, where actors, translators, and sound engineers collaborated to adapt foreign dialogue for Italian audiences. By the 1940s and 1950s – often called the golden age of Italian dubbing – the process had become highly refined. Professional voice actors carefully matched tone, rhythm, and emotion to the performances of the original actors, creating Italian versions that felt natural and convincing.

Over time, certain voice actors became closely associated with specific Hollywood stars. Italian audiences often recognized the voice behind the character as much as the actor on screen. This practice helped create a unique cultural connection between dubbing artists and moviegoers. Many of these performers built long careers lending their voices to dozens, sometimes hundreds, of films and television series.

The dubbing process itself is complex and highly technical. Translators must adapt dialogue so that it matches both the meaning and the lip movements of the original performance. Timing is critical, since the spoken Italian must fit within the same seconds as the original line. Recording sessions typically involve multiple actors working in soundproof studios, guided by a dubbing director who ensures consistency and accuracy.

Italy's dubbing sector grew alongside the expansion of television and international cinema distribution. By the late 20th century, nearly all major forei-

Oreste Lionello

Maria Pia Di Meo

gn films released in Italian theaters were dubbed. Today this remains the dominant format, with estimates suggesting that more than 80% of international movies shown in Italy are presented with Italian-language dubbing rather than subtitles.

Technological changes are now reshaping the industry. Digital tools have streamlined editing, synchronization, and sound mixing, reducing production times compared with traditional analog techniques used decades ago. More recently, artificial intelligence has begun to influence the field. AI-based systems can assist with voice cloning, automatic lip synchronization, and translation, potentially reducing costs and accelerating production.

Despite these innovations, many professionals argue that human interpretation remains essential. Voice actors bring emotional nuance, character identity, and cultural sensitivity that automated systems still struggle to reproduce. For this reason, the future of Italian dubbing may depend on a hybrid model that combines technological efficiency with the artistry of experienced performers.

Nearly 100 years after its origins in the early sound-film era, dubbing remains a defining feature of Italy's audiovisual culture. The industry continues to adapt to new technologies while preserving a tradition that has shaped how millions of Italians watch movies and television. In a country with a deep passion for cinema, the voices behind the screen remain an integral part of the storytelling experience.

Italian curiosities

Taranto and the ancient roman industry of imperial purple dye

We the Italians Editorial Staff

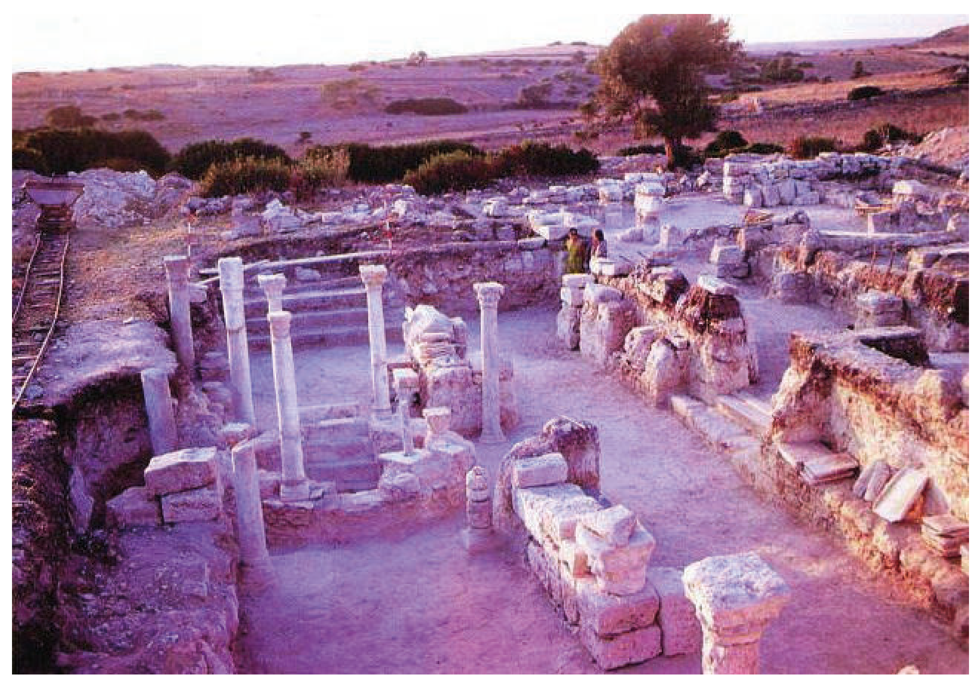
In ancient times, the city of Taranto in southern Italy was known not only as an important naval center but also as one of the Mediterranean's most valuable industrial hubs. Its wealth was linked to a rare and highly prized pigment – purple dye. This color, famous throughout the Roman Empire, symbolized authority, prestige, and wealth. During the 1st century AD, Taranto played a central role in producing this luxury material, supplying a product that only the most powerful people in Roman society could afford.

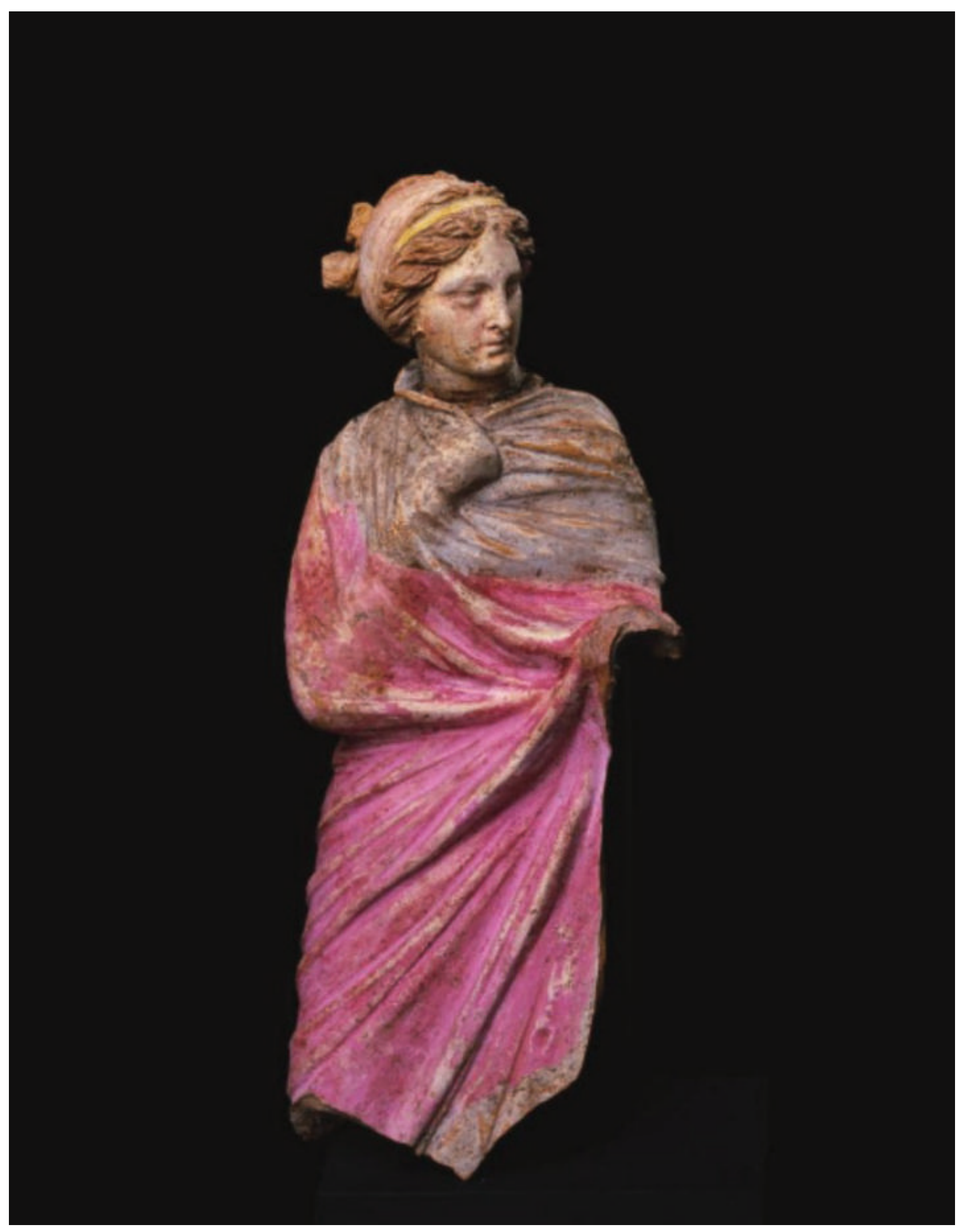
The purple dye was extracted from small sea snails belonging to the murex family, particularly species such as Murex brandaris and Murex trunculus. These mollusks lived in the coastal waters of southern Italy, especially in the Mar Piccolo lagoon near Taranto. Inside each shellfish was a small gland that produced a chemical substance which, after exposure to sunlight and air, transformed into an intense purple pigment.

Producing the dye required enormous quantities of these mollusks. Historical estimates suggest that roughly 12,000 murex shells were needed to obtain about 1.4 grams of pure purple pigment. This extraordinary ratio made the dye one of the most expensive materials in the ancient world. In some cases, 1 gram of purple dye could be worth as much as 10 grams of gold.

Because of its rarity and cost, purple cloth became a powerful symbol of political status. In Roman society the color was closely associated with authority. Certain garments dyed in purple were reserved exclusively for senators and emperors. Wearing a toga or cloak tinted with this pigment immediately signaled wealth and influence. The color itself became so connected to imperial power that the phrase “born in the purple” later came to describe members of ruling dynasties.

Taranto developed an organized production system to support this industry. Archaeological evidence suggests that large





processing areas existed near the shoreline of the Mar Piccolo. Artisans collected the shells, broke them open, and extracted the small glands needed for dye production. The mixture was then processed in stone basins or vats where chemical reactions produced the final pigment.

Excavations conducted between the 1970s and 2020 uncovered several traces of this activity. Researchers discovered fragments of amphorae, processing containers, and piles of broken shells, evidence of the massive quantities of mollusks used in dye production. In some areas these shells accumulated into large deposits sometimes referred to as "shell hills," formed from centuries of industrial waste.

Ancient writers also described the industry. The Greek geographer Strabo mentioned the strong smell associated with purple dye production. The process required fermenting organic materials and processing thousands of shells, creating odors that were reportedly intense and difficult to ignore. Despite this unpleasant aspect, the economic value of the dye made the activity extremely profitable.

The purple pigment produced in Taranto was widely distributed across the Roman world. Textiles dyed with this color appeared in ceremonial clothing, decorative fabrics, and luxury garments. Some sources referred to the local product as Rubra Tarantina, highlighting its reputation throughout the Mediterranean.

After the decline of the Roman Empire, large-scale purple dye production gradually disappeared. The knowledge required to produce the pigment became rare, and by the Middle Ages much of the original technique had been lost. Later attempts to recreate ancient purple dyes required new experimentation and research.

Today Taranto no longer produces imperial purple, but archaeological discoveries continue to reveal the scale of the ancient industry. What once filled the harbor with the smell of fermentation and shellfish is now part of the city's historical identity – a reminder that Taranto was once a center of one of the most valuable chemical industries of the ancient world.

Italian sport

Sara Gama, the star of Italian women's soccer

Federico Pasquali

Italian women's soccer had to wait almost a century before gaining visibility and professional recognition in Italy, a country where men's soccer is often treated almost like a religion. The earliest traces of women's soccer date back to the 1930s, when the Gruppo Femminile Calcistico was founded in Milan, one of the first teams made up entirely of women. The experiment did not last long, partly because of the cultural resistance of the time, and for many years women's soccer remained a marginal phenomenon.

A real restart came only in 1968,

when the Italian Women's Football Federation was established and organized the first national championships. During the 1990s, women's soccer began to strengthen, with the creation of competitive clubs and the emergence of key figures who helped bring greater attention to the sport. Among them was Carolina Morace, one of the first great stars of Italian women's soccer and a symbol of a generation that made the national team competitive internationally.

Morace, born in Venice in 1964, was an extraordinary forward and one of the first major icons of the sport in Italy, paving the way for the generations that followed. With the Italian women's national team she earned more than 150 caps and scored over 100 goals. At the club level, particularly with Lazio and Milan, she won numerous league titles and cups, establishing herself as one of the most successful players in European women's soccer during the 1980s and 1990s.

Morace was also a pioneer off the field. In 1999 she made history by becoming the first woman to coach a professional men's team in Italy, Viterbese, a role that attracted major media attention. She later coached several national teams, including Canada's, helping promote the inter-

GRUPPO CALCIATRICI MILANESI

E' in... avanzata costituzione a Milano un Gruppo Calciatrici, che ha già raccolto notevoli adesioni, di cui potete ammirare le prime tredici. *Da sinistra*: Piccicci, Glingani, Boccalini I, Bolzoni, Carozzi, Ricci, Loverro, Bedetti, Mantoan, Banetti, Boccalini II, Stringaro e Torri.

national development of the women's game.
It was in the new millennium, however, that women's soccer began to grow significantly, thanks to greater media coverage, increased investment from major clubs, and strong results by the national team. The turning point came on July 1, 2022, when Italy's women's Serie A officially became a professional league – a historic change that introduced contracts, benefits, and stronger protections for players.

Today, nearly a century after its beginnings, Italian women's soccer attracts strong attendance in stadiums and growing media coverage. This surge in popularity has also been driven by a player who has become as famous in Italy as legendary male stars such as Alessandro Del Piero, Francesco Totti, and Roberto Baggio.
More than simply a player, Sara Gama has become a symbol of Italian women's soccer. A defender for the national team for more than a decade and captain of the Azzurre, she represents a generation that did not simply play the game but helped change its status and public perception in Italy.

Born in Trieste (Friuli Venezia Giulia) in 1989, Gama began playing as a child on fields in her hometown before starting a path that quickly led her to become one of the sport's leading figures. A key stage in her development came in 2010 when she moved to the United States and played for the Pali Blues Soccer Club, a professional women's team based in Los Angeles.

Her career, which ended in 2025, unfolded between Italy and the rest of Europe. She became one of the pillars of the Italian national team, earning 135 caps, scoring seven goals, and wearing the captain's armband for several years. At the club level she played more than 340 matches, wearing the jerseys of Tavagnacco, Chiasiellis, Paris Saint-Germain Féminine, Brescia, and Juventus Women, the Turin club with which she played 153 games and scored six

Carolina Morace

goals between 2017 and 2025.

Her list of achievements includes seven Italian league titles, four Italian Cups, and five Italian Super Cups, as well as the UEFA Women's Under-19 European Championship won with Italy in 2008. In 2019 she was inducted into the Italian Soccer Hall of Fame, a recognition that confirmed her place in the history of women's soccer.

Alongside her athletic achievements, Gama has also played a central role off the field. Over the years she became an influential voice in the fight for the recognition of women players' rights,

contributing to the process that led to the professionalization of women's soccer in Italy in 2022.

She has also become a cultural symbol beyond sports. Mattel created a Barbie doll in her likeness, designed to encourage girls to pursue their dreams in sports. Yet her legacy goes beyond trophies and titles. For many young Italian players, Sara Gama has been proof that soccer can become a profession and not just a passion – a figure capable of combining sport, civic commitment, and representation while playing a decisive role in the transformation of women's soccer in Italy.

Italian land and nature

Mount Etna, fire and ice in the southernmost perennial glacier in Europe

We the Italians Editorial Staff

On Mount Etna in Sicily, one of Europe's most active volcanoes, fire and ice have coexisted for centuries. Long before modern refrigeration, local communities developed an unusual mountain industry that revolved around snow and ice. Until the early decades of the 20th century, workers known as nivari – or nevaioli – climbed the volcano during winter to collect snow that would later be sold throughout Sicily and beyond.

Mount Etna rises to more than

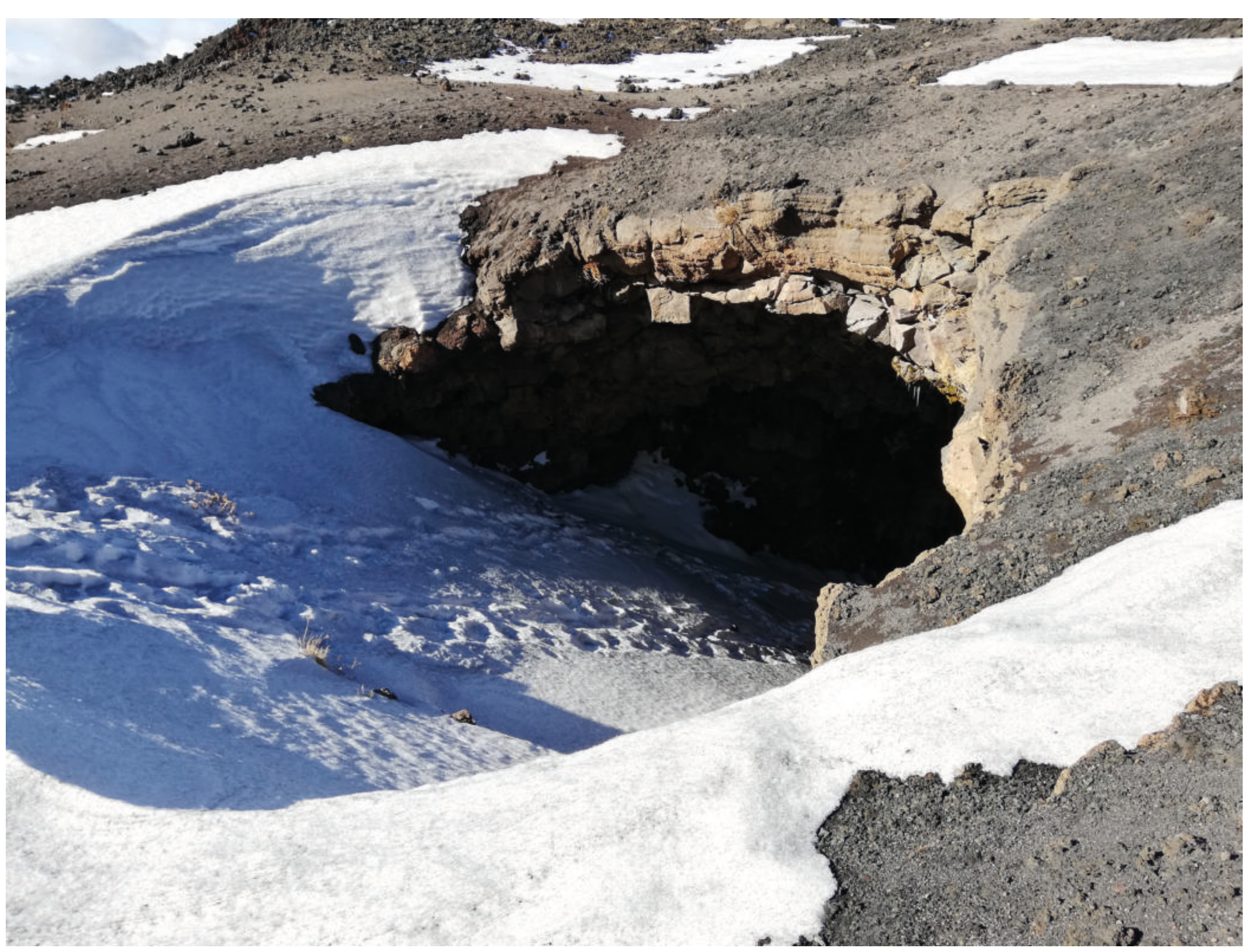
11,000 feet and its upper slopes receive heavy snowfall during the cold months. For centuries, this natural resource became the basis of a seasonal economy. Each winter, hundreds of workers traveled to high-altitude areas of the volcano, often between 5,000 and 8,000 feet, where snow accumulated in large quantities. The work was physically demanding and took place in harsh conditions, with strong winds, freezing temperatures, and steep

volcanic terrain.

Once collected, the snow was stored in special structures known as neviere, or nivare in the local dialect. These were natural lava caves or stone-built pits designed to preserve snow for long periods. The volcanic rock surrounding the chambers acted as natural insulation, slowing the melting process even during the hot Mediterranean summer. Workers packed the snow tightly inside these cavities, compressing it into dense layers of ice.

Some of these storage sites were carefully engineered. Stone walls reinforced the pits, and layers of straw, branches, or volcanic ash were sometimes used to help maintain low temperatures. In certain areas dozens of neviere operated simultaneously, forming an organized network of storage points scattered across the slopes of Etna.

When summer arrived, the stored ice became extremely valuable. Workers cut the compacted snow into large blocks that could weigh dozens of



pounds. To prevent melting during transport, the blocks were wrapped in insulating materials such as straw and fern leaves. The ice was then loaded onto mules and carried down the mountain along narrow trails that connected high-altitude storage sites to towns and coastal markets.

The demand for this ice was significant. Before the introduction of refrigeration, ice was essential for preserving food and cooling drinks. Fish markets relied on it to keep seafood fresh, while wealthy households used it to chill wine and other beverages. It also played a role in Sicilian culinary traditions. Ice from Mount Etna was widely used to prepare early versions of granite and sorbets, frozen desserts that remain iconic in Sicily today.

This trade extended beyond the island itself. Historical accounts suggest that Etna's ice was exported across parts of the Mediterranean, including Malta. For many mountain communities, the seasonal harvest and sale of snow

provided an important source of income.

One of the most remarkable places connected to this tradition is the Grotta del Gelo, or Ice Cave, located on the northern side of Etna. Formed during a long volcanic eruption in the 17th century, the cave contains what is considered the southernmost perennial glacier in Europe. Inside the lava tunnel, thick layers of ice can persist year-round thanks to the cave's stable microclimate.

The snow trade continued for generations but gradually declined during the first half of the 20th century. As mechanical refrigeration spread across Europe between the 1930s and 1950s, the economic value of natural ice disappeared. The work of the nevaioli slowly came to an end.

Today the neviere and mountain caves remain as traces of a forgotten industry. On a volcano known for lava flows and eruptions, these structures remind visitors that Etna was once not only a place of fire, but also a mountain where snow and ice shaped an entire local economy.

Grotta del Gelo

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

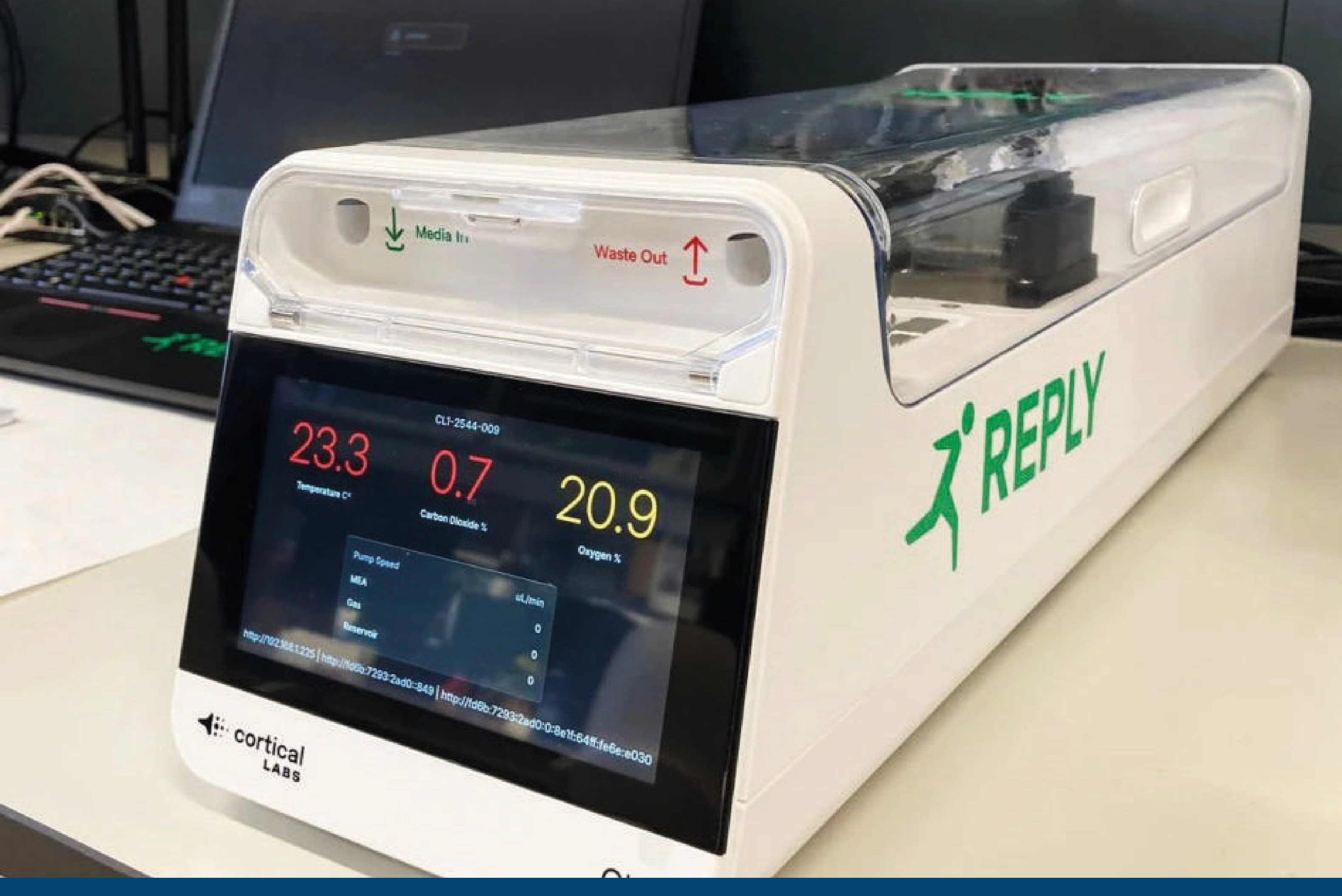
ERA BETA - Mondo senza ritorno is an Italian-language book that reflects on the profound transformation reshaping both Europe and the United States — not a temporary crisis, but a change of phase.

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

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 innovation

Italy enters the age of biological computing

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Italy is stepping into one of the most radical frontiers of computing with a project that blends neuroscience, artificial intelligence, and a distinctly Italian research tradition. At the University of Milan, a new experimental study is exploring biological computing using living human neurons integrated into a computing platform. The initiative is led in partnership with Reply, a technology group founded in Italy and still deeply rooted in the country's innovation ecosystem, and represents the first structured research effort of its kind in Europe.

At the center of the project is a biological computer based on living neurons cultivated in a laboratory environment and connected to silicon hardware. Unlike conventional AI systems, which rely on mathematical models and massive datasets, this approach uses real neural cells capable of learning, adapting, and responding to stimuli in ways closer to the human brain. The platform employed in Milan contains tens of thousands of neurons grown from stem cells, arranged on microelectrode arrays that allow two-way communication between biology and software.

The research officially began in early 2025 and is expected to run for at least 12 months. Scientists are testing how these neurons process information, how quickly they learn compared to traditional neural networks, and how energy-efficient biological computation can be. Early estimates suggest that biological systems could perform certain tasks using up to 90% less energy than today's data centers, a critical factor at a time when global electricity demand from computing is rising sharply.

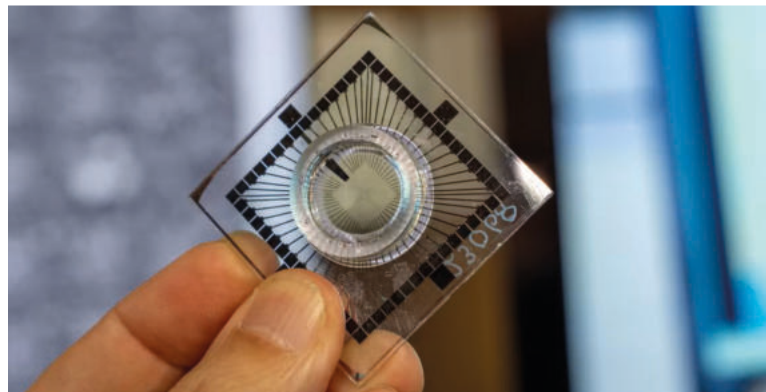
Italian identity plays a central role in this project. The University of Milan brings decades of expertise in neuroscience, biology, and medical research, while Reply contributes applied AI knowledge and industrial-scale experimentation. This collaboration reflects a broader Italian model of innovation, where academic research and private enterprise work closely rather than in isolation. It also highlights Italy's ambition to remain competitive in deep tech fields often domina-

ted by the US and China.

The implications go beyond performance metrics. Researchers are studying how biological computers could improve pattern recognition, decision-making under uncertainty, and adaptive control systems. Potential applications range from drug discovery and disease modeling to robotics and autonomous systems. In healthcare alone, biological computing could help simulate neurological disorders with unprecedented accuracy, reducing development times and costs for new treatments by 20–30%.

Ethical oversight is a key component of the Milan study. All neurons are derived from certified stem cell lines, and the research follows strict European and Italian regulations. A multidisciplinary ethics committee monitors every phase of the experimentation, ensuring transparency and public accountability. This careful approach reflects Italy's long-standing emphasis on responsible science and human-centered technology.

There is also a strategic dimension. Europe currently accounts for less than 15% of global investment in advanced AI hardware research. By hosting the first European study on biological computing, Italy positions itself as a gateway for future projects in this emerging field. Researchers involved in the study estimate that within 10 years, hybrid systems combining silicon and living neurons could handle specific tasks faster and more efficiently than purely digital machines.



For Italy, the project is more than a scientific milestone. It is a statement that cutting-edge innovation does not have to abandon cultural roots. By combining Italian academic excellence, an Italian-founded tech company, and a global scientific vision, the Milan experiment shows how Italy can contribute original ideas to the future of computing rather than simply importing them.

My life in Italy

Why so many Americans buy homes in Italy they will never use

Matteo Cerri

If one spends even a modest amount of time on social media these days, one could easily reach the conclusion that half of America is in the process of relocating to Italy.

Everywhere one looks there are cheerful videos explaining how surprisingly simple it is to buy a house in a charming Italian village. Instagram is full of smiling couples proudly standing in front of crumbling stone buil-

dings that will soon become elegant homes.

Television programmes document, with great enthusiasm, the miraculous transformation of neglected properties into dream residences (remember Lorrain Bracco and her 'one euro' deal in Sicily?). The tone is invariably optimistic. The narrative is reassuring. Buying property in Italy appears not only achievable but almost inevitable.

At the same time, if you spend time speaking to property owners across Italy, particularly in smaller towns and villages, you will often hear another familiar sentence repeated with quiet confidence.

"We have American clients looking for houses."

It is a phrase that travels remarkably well across the Italian peninsula. One hears it in Tuscany, of course, but also in regions that Americans have barely discovered. It appears in glossy real estate brochures and in casual conversations between agents and proper-

ty owners. And it tends to produce the same reaction everywhere. Sellers feel encouraged to hold out for higher prices. Buyers feel encouraged to move quickly before someone else secures the opportunity.

Between these two narratives sits reality, which is usually a little calmer than either side of the story suggests.

None of this is particularly sinister. The property market has always been enthusiastic by nature. Yet anyone who has spent several years observing the international fascination with Italian homes begins to notice a curious pattern that receives far less attention than the dream itself.

Across the country there are thousands of houses purchased with excitement and genuine affection that remain closed for most of the year.

The shutters are drawn. The garden is maintained just enough to avoid appearing abandoned. Lights appear briefly during the summer and perhaps again at Christmas, before the house returns to silence for long stretches of time.

These houses are rarely neglected. Many of them are beautifully restored. Yet they exist in a curious state between presence and absence. They belong to people who love Italy but who rarely manage to spend as much time there as they once imagined.

Understanding why this happens requires a closer look at the way Italy is presented to the world and at the way property decisions are sometimes made under the influence of powerful narratives.

The Italian dream seen from abroad

Italy has a remarkable ability to compress an entire lifestyle into a handful of images.

A table set under a pergola. Olive trees moving gently in the afternoon breeze. A long lunch that stretches naturally into the early evening. Church bells marking the passing hours with a calm indifference to the modern world.

For visitors arriving from large cities where life moves quickly and relentlessly, these moments can feel almost transformative. It is hardly surprising that many Americans who travel through Tuscany, Umbria, Sicily or Puglia return home with a lingering thought.

What if we had a place here?

The idea usually appears innocently. A house in Italy becomes a symbol of something larger than property ownership. It represents a slower rhythm of life and a sense of connection to a place that seems to operate according to different priorities.

Occasionally the dream becomes reality. A property is purchased. Renovation plans begin. The keys are handed over with understandable excitement.

And yet, if one spends time in the streets of many Italian towns outside the main tourist season, another quieter reality begins to appear.

There are houses with foreign names on the doorbells that remain closed for most of the year. They are visited occasionally but not regularly. Their owners intend to return more often, but work, distance and the rhythm of life elsewhere intervene.

The dream remains sincere, yet the house becomes something slightly different from what was originally imagined.

Two very different markets

Part of the explanation lies in the

peculiar structure of the Italian property market for international buyers.

At one end of the spectrum stand the famous hotspots. Tuscany, Lake Como, the Amalfi Coast and certain coastal areas have attracted international buyers for decades. These places are undeniably beautiful and have been celebrated so frequently in films and magazines that they have become part of the global imagination.

In these locations the romance of Italy has long since met the realities of international demand. Prices are not necessarily unreasonable when compared with major American cities, but they are rarely the effortless bargains that some first-time visitors expect.

At the other end of the spectrum lies a very different narrative. These are the villages that appear in viral articles and television programmes celebrating astonishingly cheap houses waiting to be restored. Many of these towns have lost population over the decades. Properties can be acquired for surprisingly modest sums because they require significant work.

From the perspective of someone accustomed to the property markets of New York or San Francisco, the numbers can appear extraordinary. A house built from centuries-old stone available for less than the cost of a modest apartment parking space.

What is not always explained with equal enthusiasm is that the purchase price is only the beginning of a much longer story.

The renovation reality

Historic houses possess immense charm. They also possess complexities that are sometimes overlooked during the excitement of a purchase.

Old buildings require careful attention. Structural elements may need reinforcement. Electrical and plumbing systems often belong to earlier decades. Local planning rules must be respected and permits obtained before work begins.

Italy has remarkable craftsmen and builders who know how to restore historic buildings with skill and patience. Renovations take place across the country every day and many of them are extremely successful.

However, renovations require time, coordination and, most im-

portantly, presence.

When decisions must be made about materials, layouts or unexpected discoveries inside ancient walls, it is far easier to address those questions while standing in the building itself rather than discussing them from another continent.

Television programmes often condense a year of renovation work into a single episode filled with cheerful music and triumphant final reveals. Real projects tend to unfold more slowly and require a greater degree of patience.

The distance factor

Geography also plays a role that is often underestimated.

Owning a property in Italy while living in the United States is entirely possible and often rewarding. Yet distance inevitably shapes how the property is used.

A house that is visited only during holidays still requires attention throughout the year. Gardens grow. Roofs occasionally require repairs. Administrative matters must be handled locally. Flights across the Atlantic require planning and time away from work. The house that once

seemed like the centre of a new life gradually becomes a special destination visited only during certain moments of the year.

This does not diminish the affection owners feel for their Italian homes, but it does change the role those homes play in everyday life.

The social media narrative

Meanwhile the online version of Italy continues to exist in a permanent state of perfection.

Videos and posts present a world in which buying property appears remarkably simple and life unfolds in endless sequences of sunsets, wine glasses and picturesque renovations.

Some voices online offer confident advice on immigration rules, taxation and property law after relatively brief personal experiences with the country.

Anyone who has spent time dealing with Italian bureaucracy will know that these subjects are slightly more complex than they sometimes appear in short videos.
The result is that the conversation surrounding property often focuses almost entirely on the purchase itself. Very little attention is given to the far more important question of what it actually means to live somewhere.

It is not really about the house

After years of observing this transatlantic fascination with Italian homes, one conclusion becomes increasingly clear.

The house itself is rarely the real story.

What people are seeking is an experience. They are searching for a different rhythm of life and a connection with a place that feels authentic and human.

A house may provide the setting for that experience, but it cannot create it on its own.

Without time spent in the community, without learning the language and without navigating the systems that shape daily life, the house remains simply a building that holds a dream inside it.

That dream can be beautiful, but it remains incomplete if the house itself is rarely used.

A more thoughtful approach

For anyone genuinely conside-

ring the idea of buying property in Italy, a more deliberate approach can make the experience far more rewarding.

Spending extended periods renting in a place before purchasing allows prospective buyers to understand how a town functions outside the tourist season. Winter reveals a great deal about daily life.

Understanding immigration regulations is essential for anyone planning to spend significant time in the country. Fiscal obligations should be considered carefully as well.

Learning even a modest amount of Italian transforms everyday interactions and deepens the sense of belonging in ways that are difficult to describe.

Most importantly, it is worth asking a simple but honest question.

Is the desire to own property driven by a holiday fantasy or by a genuine intention to build a life connected to a particular place?

Both answers are valid. Confusing the two, however, can lead to disappointment.

he extraordinary potential

When international buyers approach Italy thoughtfully, the results can be remarkable.

New residents can revitalise communities that have struggled with declining populations. Local businesses gain customers. Schools gain students. Cultural exchanges take place naturally in markets, cafés and neighbourhood gatherings.

Foreign homeowners who spend time in their communities contribute far more than the restoration of buildings. They become part of the social life that keeps towns alive.

This is where the relationship between Americans and Italy becomes genuinely meaningful.

A final reflection

Dreaming about Italy is not a mistake. It is one of the great pleasures of travel and culture.

The landscapes are extraordinary, the food remains one of the great civilisations of the table, and the sense of history woven into daily life continues to inspire visitors from around the world.

But dreams deserve a solid foundation.

Before buying property, it is wise to spend time understanding the place itself. Walk the streets during quiet months. Speak with neighbours. Observe how life actually unfolds in the town that captured your imagination.

Italy does not need fewer international admirers.

What it needs are people who are willing to engage with the country beyond the purchase of a house. People who recognise that living somewhere requires curiosity, patience and participation.

When Americans arrive with that spirit, they do far more than restore buildings.

They become part of the life that fills those buildings with meaning.

And that, in the end, is far more valuable than simply owning a house whose shutters remain closed for most of the year.

Italian sustainability

Piemonte plans hydrogen valley to transform former industrial sites by 2030

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Northern Italy is preparing a major step in the energy transition. The Piedmont region has launched an initiative designed to transform abandoned industrial areas into hubs dedicated to the production and use of green hydrogen. The program, called "Piemonte Hydrogen Valley," aims to create a complete ecosystem that integrates renewable energy, hydrogen production, distribution, and industrial applications.

The project is supported by a budget of 10 million euros from national funding linked to

Italy's energy transition strategy and the PNRR recovery plan. Regional authorities want to use these resources to accelerate the development of hydrogen technologies and promote new economic activity in areas that have been unused for decades.

The call for proposals opens on March 2, 2026 and will remain available until June 30. Companies, research institutions, and public bodies can submit projects individually or as partnerships. The selected proposals must begin construction within 12 months after receiving funding and complete the work within a maximum of 36 months, unless special extensions are granted.

The hydrogen valley model is based on the idea of geographic proximity. Production facilities, storage systems, and final uses must be located within the same area to minimize energy losses and environmental impact. In practice, renewable electricity from solar or wind plants will power electrolyzers that split water into hydrogen and oxygen. These electrolyzers

are expected to have capacities ranging from 1 MW to 10 MW and should be installed within 10 kilometers of renewable energy sources.

Technical requirements are strict. The electrolyzers must operate with energy consumption below 58 MWh for every ton of hydrogen produced, ensuring high efficiency and lower operating costs. Projects will be evaluated using a scoring system where about 70% of the points relate to hydrogen production performance and 18% to final uses and industrial applications.

One of the main goals is to replace fossil fuels in sectors that are difficult to decarbonize, especially heavy transport and energy-intensive industries. Hydrogen produced from renewable sources could power buses, logistics fleets, agricultural machinery, or waste collection vehicles. The program also allows the development of fueling stations dedicated to hydrogen mobility.

Another important aspect is industrial reconversion. Some projects may involve converting existing production lines so that hydrogen replaces traditional fuels. Others may experiment with biohydrogen produced from biogas or biomethane, expanding the technological options available within the hydrogen economy.

Infrastructure development is also part of the strategy. The initiative encourages the construction of hydrogen refueling stations designed for heavy vehicles, which European regulations expect to rely on 100% renewable hydrogen by 2035. Beyond technology, the regional plan includes education and workforce development. Each project must include a long-term training and outreach program designed to spread technical knowledge and build public awareness through courses, certifications, and open events.

Italy currently counts more than 50 hydrogen valley initiatives funded through the national recovery plan, with roughly half located in southern regions and none fully operational yet. Piedmont's plan aims to become a model that could be replicated elsewhere by combining environmental regeneration with industrial innovation.

If successful, the program could turn abandoned industrial land into productive energy centers and help accelerate the shift toward cleaner fuels in Europe's manufacturing and transportation sectors.

Italian flavors

The high-altitude lentils of Castelluccio di Norcia in Umbria

We the Italians Editorial Staff

High in the Apennine Mountains of central Italy, a small legume has become one of the most recognizable agricultural products of the region of Umbria. The lentils grown on the plateau of Castelluccio di Norcia are famous for their flavor, size, and ability to grow in a challenging mountain environment. Cultivated at altitudes between about 4,300 and 4,900 feet, these lentils represent a unique example of how agriculture can adapt to high-altitude landscapes.

The production area lies within the Castelluccio plateau, a wide basin surrounded by mountains inside the Sibillini range. This agricultural zone covers roughly 3,000 acres and sits more than 4,000 feet above sea level. Winters are cold, and the growing season is relatively short, typically lasting from late spring to early autumn. These conditions limit crop diversity, but they create an ideal environment for lentils.

Castelluccio lentils are known for their small size and thin skin. Unlike larger varieties, they generally measure only 0.08–0.16 inches in diameter. Their color varies from light brown to green with subtle darker speckles. One distinctive characteristic is that they do not require soaking before cooking, and they maintain their shape during preparation.

Cultivation techniques remain relatively simple and are closely connected to the natural rhythm of the plateau. Farmers usual-

ly sow the seeds between March and May, depending on weather conditions. Harvesting typically takes place between late July and early August. Because the terrain is uneven and located at high altitude, mechanized farming is limited, and much of the work still depends on small-scale agricultural operations.

One of the most visually striking aspects of the region occurs during the flowering season. Between late May and early July, fields across the plateau bloom with a variety of plants grown alongside lentils, including poppies, cornflowers, and wild mustard. This seasonal transformation, often called the flowering of Castelluccio, creates bands of red, yellow, blue, and violet across the landscape. Each year thousands of visitors travel to the area to see this natural spectacle.

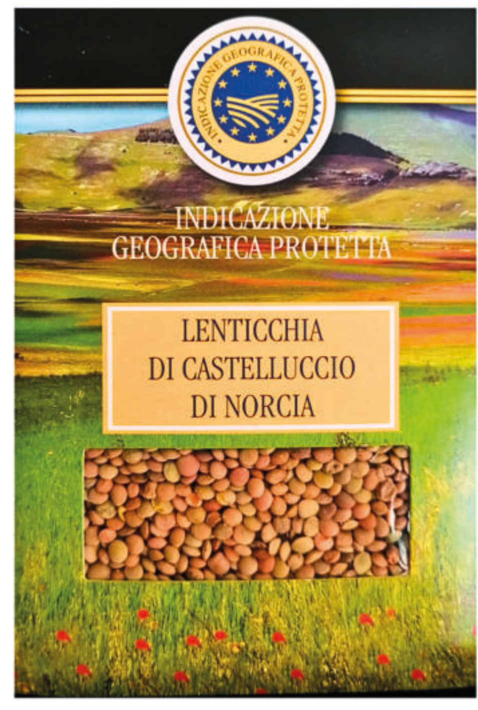
The lentils of Castelluccio have received official European recognition as a protected product. The IGP – Protected Geographical Indication – designation confirms that the crop must be grown within the defined production zone and according to specific standards. This certification helps protect the reputation of the product and supports local farmers in maintaining traditional cultivation methods.

Despite the relatively small scale of production, the lentils play an important role in the local economy. Annual output varies depending on weather conditions,

but it generally ranges between several hundred and about 1,000 tons. Most of the harvest is sold within Italy, although demand has grown internationally as interest in regional foods and traditional agriculture continues to expand.

In the kitchen, Castelluccio lentils are valued for their delicate texture and slightly earthy flavor. They are often used in soups, salads, or simple dishes prepared with olive oil, garlic, and herbs. Because they hold their shape when cooked, they are also served as a side dish with meats or sausages.

Today the lentils of Castelluccio di Norcia represent more than just a local crop. They are part of a landscape where agriculture, environment, and cultural tradition intersect. On a mountain plateau where farming conditions are demanding, this small legume has become a symbol of regional identity and sustainable high-altitude agriculture.



Interview with Jane Biagini

A gratitude that has endured for 50 Years – From Friuli Venezia Giulia to the United States

Umberto Mucci

In this year of important anniversaries, one concerns an Italian region, a tragic earthquake, and an extraordinary demonstration of friendship and solidarity that the United States offered to Italy. Fifty years ago, in May 1976, Friuli Venezia Giulia was struck by a powerful earthquake.

At that time, the U.S. presence in Friuli Venezia Giulia was significant, especially from a military standpoint. The main hub was Aviano Air Base, near Pordenone, used by the U.S. Air Force within

Nome:	Tullio A. BIAGINI
Data Nascita:	20 Luglio 1922
Luogo nascita:	Parenzo(Pola) ex Italia
Luogo di residenza in Italia:	Via Mazzini 13- Pordenone (Italy) 33170
Cittadinanza:	U.S.A.
Passaporto No:	Z 3103162(U.S.A) rinnovato il 6 Aprile 1978 dal Consolato U.S.A di Trieste
Titolo:	Incaricato Speciale per le relazioni pubbliche, per la coordinazione e la programmazione in Italia del Programma AID/ANA per la ricostruzione del Friuli. Assistente diretto del Direttore/Coordinatore.
Incarico:	Incaricato per l'Agency of International Development delle relazioni pubbliche e del coordinamento programmatico con l'A.N.A, le autorita' Statali, Regionali, Provinciali e Comunali della Regione Friuli-Venezia Giulia per l'implementazione del programma A.I di ricostruzione del Friuli terremotato, in diretta collaborazione con il Direttore/Coordinatore.

the NATO framework during the Cold War. The base hosted American military personnel and represented one of the key strategic U.S. outposts in northeastern Italy. This presence also fostered ongoing relationships with the local territory, both with public authorities and with the population.

The United States also had a Consulate General in Trieste, which was still active at the time and carried out diplomatic and consular functions for the entire region. Thanks to the presence of Aviano Air Base and the already well-established relationships between Italian and American authorities, U.S. aid could be organized and coordinated very quickly after the earthquake.

Within the small but highly effective team that managed American aid for the reconstruction of Friuli Venezia Giulia, a fundamental role was played by Tullio Biagini – Italian, American, Friulian. We

are pleased to welcome his daughter Jane, who will share with us the story of her father and of the American aid to Friuli Venezia Giulia, one of the many reasons why we are grateful to the United States.

Ciao Jane, welcome on We the Italians. First of all, I would ask you to briefly tell us a bit about your story and that of your family

Thanks Umberto. I was born on an American military base in in North Carolina, and although I was there for only 5 years I have some clear memories of that period. Dad's yellow Toyota, seeing "The Aristocrats" at the movie theater, the kindergarten and how they unsuccessfully tried to make me write with my right hand (I am a left-hander!)
But then we moved to Italy, and I understood where I came from. Suddenly I had grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins: this is where we belonged! In 1974 we moved to Friuli, and everything there was related to my family.

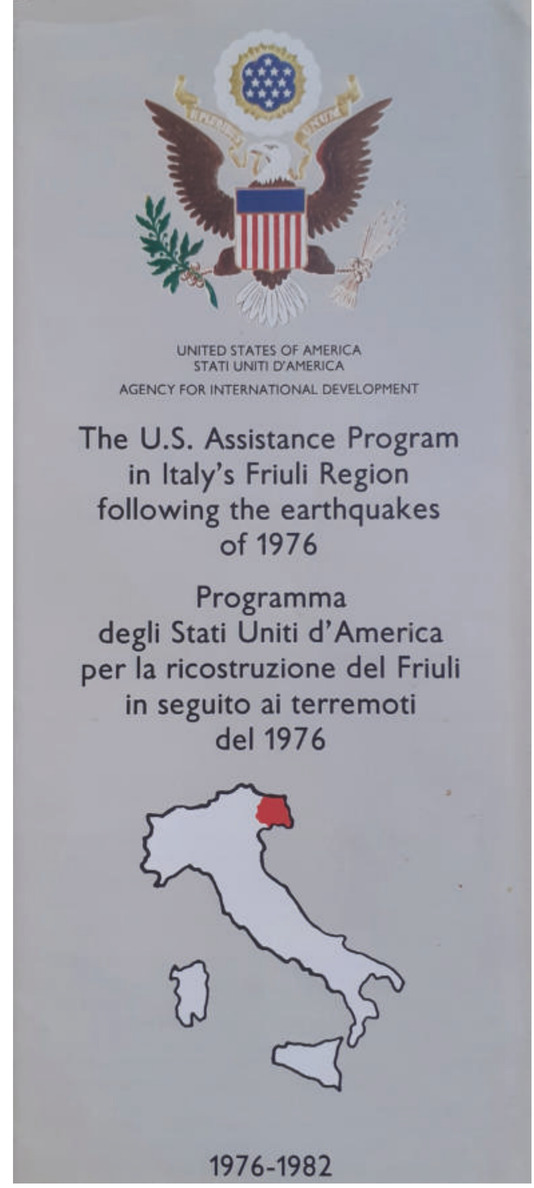
But my father's story started much before in 1922, in Istria, an Italian region east of Friuli which had been part of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. He lived there and after he was drafted for WWII, he ended up a prisoner to the Germans working in coal mines near the Flanders until his liberation in 1945. The arrival of US soldiers gave him back his liberty, and this was his first reason to be grateful to the US.

While returning home, he found out that Istria was being threatened by the communist regime of Tito and the population was escaping. He would never return to his childhood home and was for-

ced to stop in Friuli, where his parents had found hospitality and refuge with some relatives.

In the post-war years he worked as a teacher in Friuli, until the opportunity came to go to the US. The Italian Americans had offered to help their fellow countrymen by providing jobs and my father, with a cousin of his, decide to accept the proposal and leave for the US. They embarked on a US Navy ship - the USS Gen.R.M. Blatchford - from Bremerhaven in Germany and arrived on Ellis Island (NY) in the fall of 1951.

The Italian American that hi-



red him upon arrival was Jeno Paulucci, a prominent 2nd generation business man from Duluth, Minnesota who founded Chun King, the number 1 company in processed Chinese foods. My father got to work in his new "frozen pizza" division, but soon the freezing temperatures in Minnesota became a problem to his health. The years in the coal mines weakened his respiratory system and the cold weather brought severe asthma. Jeno helped my father to find a new job in California and they parted, remaining friends. Jeno would then become an important Congressman and they would meet again.

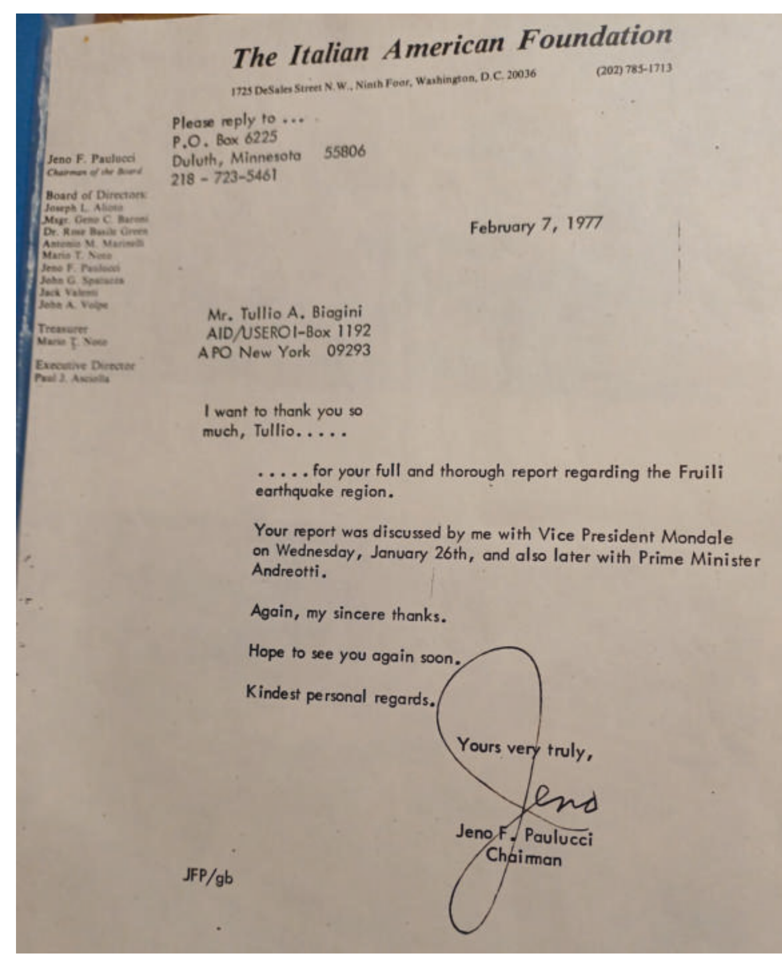
After changing a few jobs, my father finally ended up being drafted into the Air Force and started his military career in Clovis, New Mexico. In 1957 he became a naturalized American and was forever grateful to the USA for having given him the opportunity for a new life. He remained in the Air Force for 20 years as a non-commissioned officer with the rank of Chief Master Sergeant, the highest position possible, and was involved in the set-up of Aviano Air Force Base in Italy thanks to his linguistic knowledge and familiarity with the Friuli territory. Aviano Air Force Base was his last military destination.

What do you remember of the Friuli Venezia Giulia earthquake days in 1976?

The earthquake in 1976 was devastating. I was a child and really didn't know what an earthquake was but it was frightening. We slept in the car that night, and the next day we rushed to see how the nonni were doing. The house was no longer safe, my grandparents set up a tent in the garden and after a couple of weeks they were given an RV.

As a child I enjoyed the RV: it was cozy. I remember the fallen buildings, and the cracks in the walls, I remember the damaged churches and the constant tremors. In school they taught us to hide under our desks in case of earthquake, and still today my first reaction to a tremor is to get under the table. In my life there is a "before" and "after" the earthquake.

Your father's role in coordinating the American aid was crucial, and I was moved when you told me about it. I would ask you to describe it to our readers as well



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Mr. Tullio A. Biagini
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I want to thank you so much, Tullio. . . . .

. . . . . for your full and thorough report regarding the Fruili earthquake region.

Your report was discussed by me with Vice President Mondale on Wednesday, January 26th, and also later with Prime Minister Andreotti.

Again, my sincere thanks.

Hope to see you again soon.

Kindest personal regards.

Yours very truly,

Jeno

Jeno F. Paulucci
Chairman

JFP/gb

The Americans responded quickly to the emergency sending a task force to assess and report on the damages. Immediate help was provided by the military already present in Friuli. Then through Congress, the USA released $25 + $25 million (in total $50 million) for relief assistance.

These funds had to be channeled into a program and managed appropriately and this is when the A.I.D. (Agency for International Development) Office opened in Italy. A.I.D. provided foreign aid and assistance worldwide but did not have an office in Italy as it mainly provided its missions to low-income countries needing assistance in socio-economic development. Italy's program was opened as a disaster-relief program and was not meant to be a long-term mission.

My father was quickly identified as the right person to run the resident office in Udine. He had a number of fundamental characteristics: he was fluent in English and Italian, he lived in the territory and had numerous relationships, he had administrative experience and he had personal affection to the area, having friends and relatives directly involved and having lived there prior to his departure for the States. I can't think of a better match!

What was the American contribution?

The American contribution was meant to provide long-lasting and tangible evidence of their help.

The funds came in two phases. The first $25 million were released following the May 6th tremor and were meant to cover the expenses for the building of 8 schools and 4 centers for the aged. The second $25 million were released following the September 16th tremor and were committed to build 6 additional schools and 3 more centers for the aged.

The program heads had identified the young and the old as beneficiaries of their help, as they represented the more fragile ends of the communities. The construction of schools would guarantee the presence of families and the centers for the aged would allow the elderly not to leave, thus keeping the legacy with their towns and avoiding them from being abandoned.

The A.I.D. Task Force worked very rapidly to identify the communities in which to build the facilities. Once chosen, an agreement was made with the local administrators. Projects were

commissioned to top-notch architects both from the US and from Italy and were built in accordance with American seismic codes.

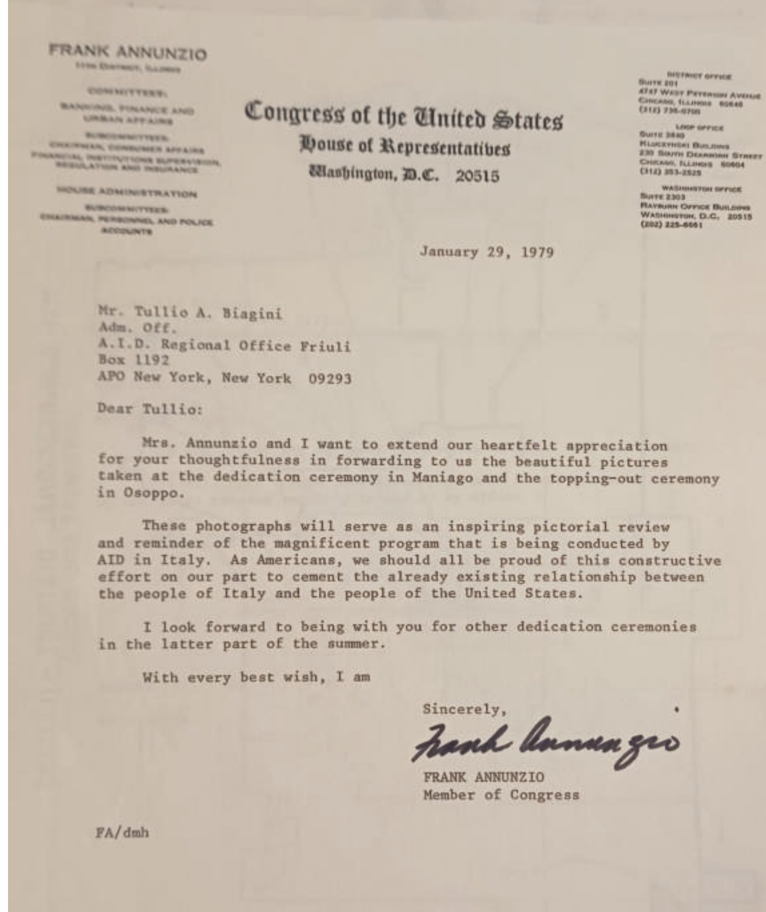
When the construction was to begin, a formal initiation ceremony was held in the presence of both the Italian and American authorities to formalize the cooperation and emphasize the importance of the event. The local priest blessed a symbolic hollow "first brick" inserting a parchment on which was an oath of friendship and solidarity, and then the work officially began.

The construction sites were run and supervised by the Alpini, the association of retired mountain troops, who were and still are renowned for their loyalty and integrity. All projects were monitored regularly and executed rapidly. Each completed project had a permanent plaque placed in a prominent position stating that the facility is a gift of the people of the United States.

Upon completion, an impressive "Opening Ceremony" was held with speeches, music, gift exchanging, happiness and gra-

titude. American Congressmen involved in the approval of funds were invited to Italy for the ceremonies and were greeted like kings by the local population.

Overall the program was a great success and my father received extensive recognition from both sides. Not only was he conferred the Italian title of Commendatore, an honorific title given to citizens who have distinguished themselves in diverse fields, but he was also awarded the U.S. Meritorious Service Medal for the exceptional quality of his work and contribution to the effectiveness of the A.I.D. mission.



FRANK ANNUNZIO

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SUBCOMMITTEES:
CHAIRMAN, CONSUMER AFFAIRS
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January 29, 1979

Mr. Tullio A. Biagini
Adm. Off.
A.I.D. Regional Office Friuli
Box 1192
APO New York, New York 09293

Dear Tullio:

Mrs. Annunzio and I want to extend our heartfelt appreciation for your thoughtfulness in forwarding to us the beautiful pictures taken at the dedication ceremony in Maniago and the topping-out ceremony in Osoppo.

These photographs will serve as an inspiring pictorial review and reminder of the magnificent program that is being conducted by AID in Italy. As Americans, we should all be proud of this constructive effort on our part to cement the already existing relationship between the people of Italy and the people of the United States.

I look forward to being with you for other dedication ceremonies in the latter part of the summer.

With every best wish, I am

Sincerely,

Frank Annunzio

FRANK ANNUNZIO
Member of Congress

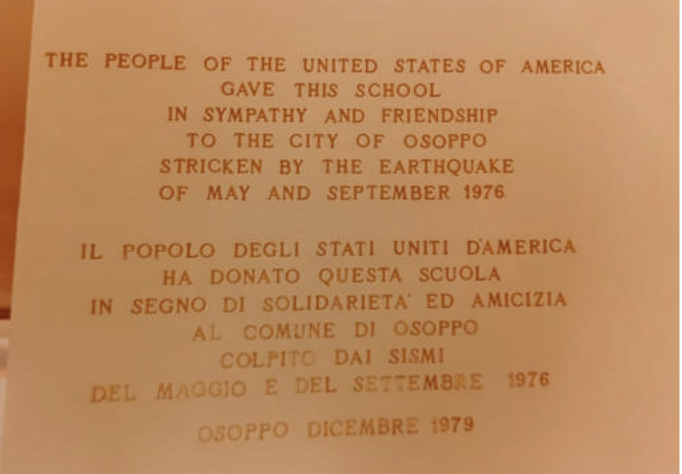
FA/dmh

Your father's work in coordinating the American aid was so hi-

ghly appreciated that he was called upon to lead the relief efforts for another earthquake – the one that struck Irpinia in 1980…

Yes, when the 1980 earthquake hit Irpinia, another A.I.D. program was opened with the same objectives as in Friuli. My father

was again assigned Liasion Manager/Administrator of the new office located in the American Consulate in Naples. Again, the Italian Americans called on a task force to evaluate the damages in order to release funds. Jeno Paulucci, my father's first sponsor, was in charge of presenting the overview to President Carter! The program set-up for the Irpina region ($50 + $30 million) yielded the construction of 28 schools. A part of the funds were channeled in smaller side projects which included the set-up of a modern computerized data center to monitor seismic and volcanic activity in the Flegrean Fields and a



Fellowship program to send 40 university professors to the US for a one year research period.

The two programs together spanned 10 years. They have been two extraordinary programs which prove how much the American people have a strong connection with Italy and how Americans and Italians can successfully work together.

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Italian industrial districs

The industrial gold jewelry district of Campania

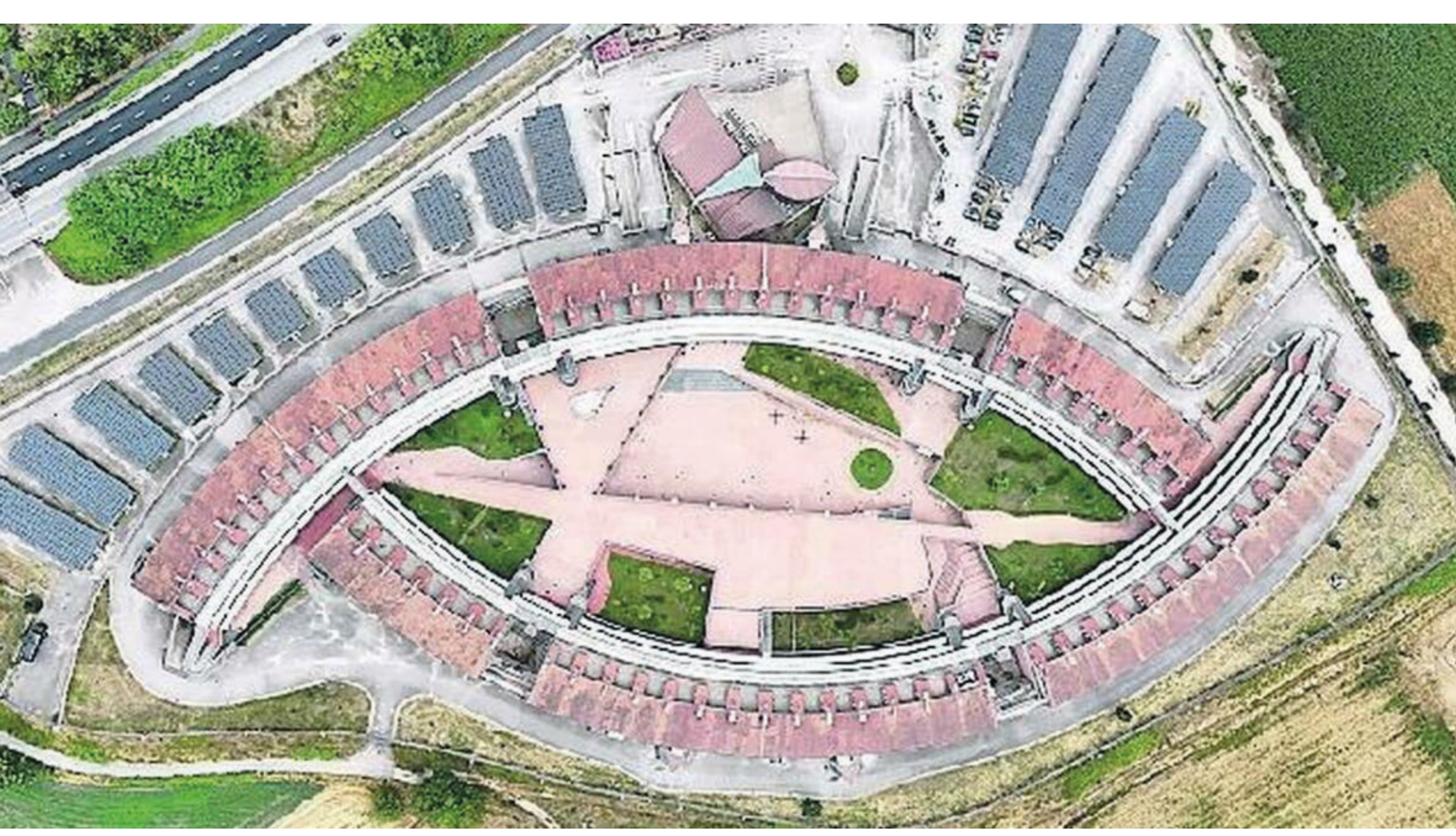
We the Italians Editorial Staff

The Campania gold jewelry district represents one of the most significant industrial clusters in southern Italy. Concentrated mainly between the provinces of Naples and Caserta, the sector has evolved from traditional goldsmith activity into a structured manufacturing system that integrates production, technology, logistics, and international trade. Today the district includes hundreds of companies that operate across the entire supply chain – from metal processing and jewelry manufacturing to

distribution and export.

One of the main centers of this industrial network is Marcianise, located about 20 kilometers north of Naples. Over the past few decades the area has become a strategic hub for large-scale jewelry production and wholesale trade. Industrial zones in Marcianise host modern facilities equipped with advanced machinery for casting, finishing, and assembling gold jewelry. The presence of major commercial platforms and logistics centers has further strengthened the area's role as a distribution point for both domestic and international markets.

The scale of the Campania jewelry sector is considerable. Estimates indicate that the regional supply chain involves several hundred specialized companies and more than 8,000–10,000 employees. Unlike the small artisan workshops traditionally associated with Italian goldsmithing, many firms in this district operate as medium-sized industrial producers capable of manufacturing large volumes of standardized jewelry collections. This industrial structure allows companies to compete in global markets where efficiency, speed, and consistency are essential.



Exports represent a crucial component of the district's economic activity. Italian gold jewelry is widely appreciated for its design and manufacturing quality, and companies in Campania ship their products to markets across Europe, North America, the Middle East, and Asia. In some segments of the sector, international sales account for more than 60% of total production. This export orientation has helped the district maintain growth even during periods of domestic economic slowdown.

Another defining feature of the Campania jewelry district is the integration between production and trade. Large wholesale centers and exhibition spaces allow manufacturers to present collections directly to buyers from around the world. One of the best-known commercial hubs is the Tarì jewelry center in Marcianise, a complex that brings together hundreds of companies within a single industrial and commercial platform. Facilities like this function not only as production areas

but also as meeting points for international buyers, designers, and distributors.

Technology has played an increasingly important role in the district's development. Many companies have adopted digital tools such as computer-aided design (CAD), automated casting systems, and laser-based finishing equipment. These technologies allow manufacturers to create complex designs while maintaining high production volumes and precise quality standards. The adoption of industrial processes has significantly reduced production times compared with traditional methods.

The district also benefits from a dense network of specialized suppliers. Companies providing molds, precision tools, plating services, packaging, and logistics operate within the same geographic area. This proximity allows for efficient collaboration between different stages of production and reduces transportation costs and delivery times.
Today the Campania gold district stands as one of Italy's most important industrial jewelry centers. By combining manufacturing capacity, technological innovation, and strong export networks, the region has built a competitive production system capable of operating on a global scale while continuing to play a key role in Italy's jewelry industry.

Italian good news

Connecting generations Italian style to fight loneliness in old age

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Italy is facing a quiet but massive demographic challenge. Today, more than 55 million people worldwide live alone in old age, and Italy sits near the top of this trend. In the country, roughly 8.5 million people are over the age of 65, and close to 40% of them live by themselves.

That share rises sharply in large cities and among women over 75, where loneliness often

overlaps with reduced mobility, declining health, and limited access to social networks. The social cost of isolation is not abstract – studies link loneliness to a 30% higher risk of cognitive decline, increased hospitalizations, and higher public healthcare spending.

Against this backdrop, a young Italian startup called Congen is experimenting with a different response to aging. Instead of focusing on medical devices or emergency monitoring, Congen works on the social layer of longevity. Its core idea is simple: connect older adults with younger people based on shared interests, skills, and availability, turning companionship into a structured, accessible service.

Congen operates through a digital platform designed to be usable even by people with limited tech familiarity. Seniors, often with the help of family members or local associations, create a profile highlighting hobbies, interests, and daily needs – from conversation and walks to help with technology or cultural activities. On the other side, students and young adults sign up to offer

time and skills. The matching process does not rely only on proximity but also on common ground, such as a love for books, cooking, local history, or music.

The numbers behind the model are telling. In pilot cities, more than 70% of participating seniors reported a measurable improvement in mood and perceived well-being after three months of regular interactions. Among younger participants, over 60% said the experience changed their perception of aging and social responsibility. Sessions typically last 1–2 hours and can happen weekly or biweekly, creating continuity rather than one-off visits.

Economically, Congen sits at the intersection of social innovation and the care economy.

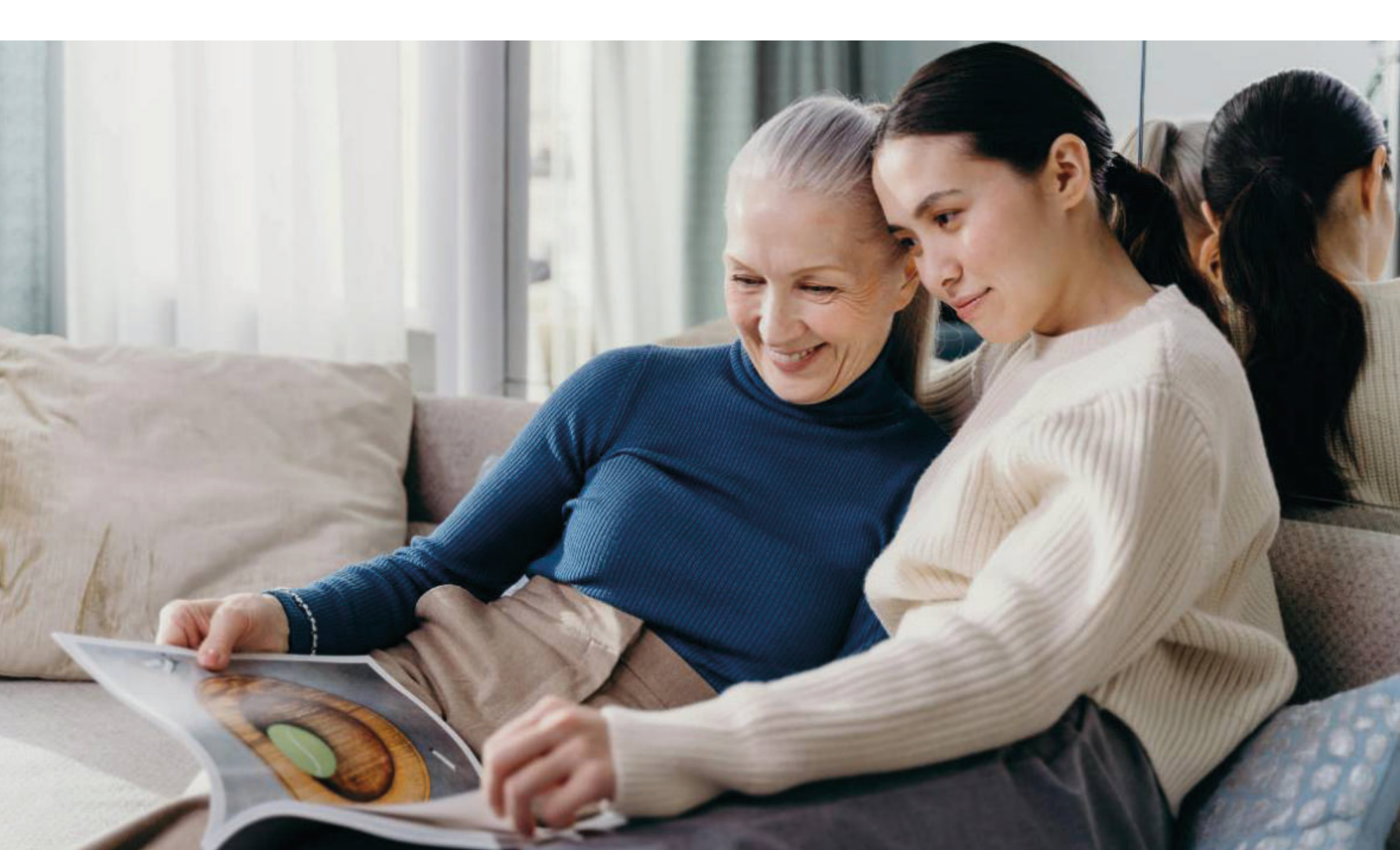
Families contribute a modest monthly fee, often lower than traditional in-home services, while young participants receive compensation or credits. This hybrid approach keeps costs relatively low while ensuring reliability. According to early estimates, structured companionship programs like this could reduce non-urgent medical visits among isolated seniors by up to 15%, easing pressure on local health systems.

Italy's demographic trajectory makes such experiments urgent. By 2050, people over 65 are expected to represent more than 34% of the population. At the same time, public re-

sources for long-term care are stretched thin, and informal family support is weakening due to smaller households and geographic mobility. Solutions that rebuild social ties, rather than only treating symptoms, are increasingly seen as part of the answer.

Congen's approach also challenges a cultural narrative. Aging is often framed as decline, while youth is framed as productivity. By creating structured, meaningful exchanges, the platform reframes both groups as resources for one another. Seniors are not passive recipients of care but active participants with stories, knowledge, and companionship to offer. Young people gain not only income but exposure to experiences rarely accessible in fast-paced urban life.

While still small in scale, Congen reflects a broader shift in how societies might respond to loneliness in old age. If replicated and supported, models like this could transform millions of hours of isolation into shared time – a resource as valuable as any technological breakthrough.



Italian economy

When the state returns to the economy. The new era of industrial policy

Fabrizio Fasani

In recent months, discussing the global economy in the pages of this magazine, we have observed how international trade is changing in nature. Value chains are being reorganized, companies are seeking more secure supply networks, and governments are once again confronting a question that once seemed outdated: economic security.

It is a profound shift. For more than thirty years we lived with the idea that the global market was capable of regulating itself.

Companies moved freely across continents, production was distributed on a planetary scale, and governments appeared destined for an increasingly marginal role - referees of the economic game rather than key players.

It was the great era of globalization. For many years the system operated according to an apparently simple logic: produce where costs are lowest, innovate where capital and expertise are available, and sell wherever markets allow. In that environment, the economic geography of the world seemed almost to dissolve.

In recent years, however, something has changed.

The pandemic revealed how fragile global production chains can be. Geopolitical tensions made clear the dependence on certain strategic technologies. Competition among major powers brought back to the center a question that seemed to belong to the twentieth century: who truly controls the essential industrial infrastructure?

Almost quietly, governments have returned to the economy.

In the United States this shift has been especially visible. With the Inflation Reduction Act and the CHIPS and Science Act, Washington has mobilized hundreds of billions of dollars to support domestic production of strategic technologies - semiconductors, renewable energy, and advanced industrial infrastructure.

This is not simply a matter of economic incentives. It is a strategic decision. It means recognizing that some industrial supply chains are too important to be left entirely to the logic of the global market.

Economist Dani Rodrik explained it clearly: “The future of the global economy will not only be competition among firms, but increasingly competition among development models supported by governments.”
Europe, although more cautiously, is moving in the same direction. European programs focused on the energy transition, semiconductors, and technological sovereignty represent attempts to strengthen the continent’s industrial autonomy.

This is not a return to the pro-

tectionism of the past. Rather, it reflects the emergence of a new form of strategic capitalism, in which governments seek to guide the major trajectories of innovation.

Within this global scenario, Italy's position deserves careful attention. In international debates, Italy is sometimes described through categories that are now outdated: slow growth, high public debt, and an industrial system that struggles to compete with major technological powers. Yet the reality is more complex.

Italy remains today the second-largest manufacturing power in Europe and one of the most diversified industrial economies in the world. Manufacturing generates more than €320 billion in added value each year, equal to roughly sixteen percent of the country's gross domestic product.

What truly makes the Italian industrial model distinctive, however, is not only the scale of production. It is its structure.

Unlike other major economic systems, Italian industry is not built around a small number of dominant giants. Instead, it is based on a widespread network of highly specialized companies - often medium-sized or family-owned businesses that, over time, have developed extraordinary technical expertise in very specific production segments.

In certain sectors - such as automated machinery for packaging or for the food industry - Italian companies hold global market shares exceeding thirty percent. This means that many American manufacturing plants operate every day than-

ks to technologies designed and built in Italy.

It is a deep form of industrial integration, often invisible to the general public but essential for understanding how interconnected the two economies truly are.

The economic world now taking shape, however, is different from the one we have known over the past decades. It is no longer simply a competition among companies. Increasingly, it is a competition among economic systems.

The United States focuses on technological innovation and on its ability to attract capital and talent from around the world. China continues to sustain its industrial growth through a long-term state strategy. Europe seeks a balance between open markets and the protection of its strategic supply chains.

In this context, the key concept becomes economic resilience - the capacity of a country to produce technology, energy, and strategic goods without depending entirely on external suppliers.

It is no coincidence that today more than seventy percent of international trade takes place within regional value chains or among countries with strong economic and institutional affinities. The world remains global, but it is also becoming more selective.

And it is precisely in this environment that the relationship between Italy and the United States continues to maintain a special strength - not only for economic reasons, but also because of a cultural and human dimension that often escapes purely statistical analysis.

More than twenty million Americans are of Italian descent. Over generations, this community has made a significant contribution to the economic, cultural, and entrepreneurial life of the country.

This presence represents something more than a simple historical legacy. It is an extraordinary form of relational capital, built on mutual knowledge, cultural trust, and familiarity with two different economic models.

Those who belong to the Italian American community understand well the American entrepreneurial mindset, characterized by speed, innovation, and investment capacity. But they

also understand the value of manufacturing, quality, and industrial continuity that define the Italian economic tradition.

In an increasingly complex world, this dual perspective can become a valuable resource.

Adriano Olivetti once wrote that "a company must not look only at profit margins, but must also distribute wealth, culture, and services." It was a reminder that the economy is not only about production, but also about responsibility.

Perhaps this is one of the most relevant lessons for today's global economy: globalization has not ended - it has simply changed.
Economies no longer compete only on the speed of production chains or the cost of labor. They compete on their ability to build industrial systems that are resilient, innovative, and culturally cohesive.

It is on this terrain that one of the decisive challenges of the coming years will unfold - determining who will lead the major technological and industrial transformations of the twenty-first century.

A question that concerns not only governments and companies, but also communities - such as the Italian American one - that have always lived at the intersection of two economic and cultural worlds.

Because, in the end, the great transformations of the global economy are never born only in factories or markets.

They are born in the relationships among people who know how to build bridges between different experiences.

Italian culture and history

The enduring allure of Italy's maritime museums

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Italy's long and storied relationship with the sea is on full display in a number of maritime museums across the country, offering visitors a chance to step into the world of sailors, explorers and traditional boatbuilders. These cultural institutions preserve centuries of nautical history, from ancient navigation techniques to the lived experience of life at sea. In many cases, the exhibits combine massive ship models, real vessels, interactive displays and carefully restored artifacts to tell stories that span millennia. One of the most prominent maritime museums in Italy is found in Genoa, where more

Genoa

than 12,000 square meters of exhibition space unfold over five levels of displays. Visitors can explore historical navigation instruments like astrolabes and sextants, and walk through immersive sections dedicated to the history of Italian exploration. A major highlight of the Genoese museum is a full-scale submarine affectionately named after an Italian naval vessel from the late 20th century. Guests can descend into the interior and experience the tight, utilitarian quarters where submariners once operated deep beneath the surface. This blend of immersive experience and historical narrative makes the museum a standout for anyone interested in the evolution of seafaring life.

Along the Adriatic coast, another unique maritime museum brings history to life in a different way. In Cesenatico, the maritime museum includes not only indoor exhibitions but also a floating section along the historic canal. Here, ten traditional wooden boats from the late 19th and early 20th centuries are moored in

authentic configuration, offering visitors a rare look at the actual craft used by fishermen and sailors centuries ago. The vessels, complete with rigging and sails, help illustrate how coastal communities lived and worked, harnessing wind power and seamanship long before modern engines became standard. Seasonal demonstrations sometimes allow visitors to see these boats under sail, connecting modern audiences with techniques passed down through generations.

Across Italy, smaller museums dedicated to ancient navigation and maritime culture complement these major sites. In Tuscany, halls once used for medieval carpentry now display amphorae, nautical tools, and ship fragments uncovered from the littoral waters nearby, giving context to Italy's earliest seaborne trade routes. Along other coastal regions, museums house scale models of galleys and vessels that once crisscrossed the Mediterranean, emphasizing the intricate craftsmanship that

Cesenatico

went into each hull.

What unites these institutions is a commitment to preserving the heritage of navigation and the marine world. Visitors encounter stories of human courage, technical innovation and cultural exchange that played out on waves and winds across the Mediterranean and beyond. For families and students alike, these museums provide a hands-on way to understand how seafarers navigated by stars, how ports developed into trade hubs, and how centuries of interaction with the sea shaped Italian communities.

Together, maritime museums in Italy remind visitors that the sea has long been a classroom of exploration – from the early sailors who charted unknown waters to more recent seafarers whose journeys connected continents and cultures. By preserving vessels, tools and tales from the deep, these museums make maritime history accessible and engaging for generations of visitors.

Italian healthcare

Record plasma donations in Italy reach new high in 2025

We the Italians Editorial Staff

In 2025 Italy hit a new high in plasma donation, setting a record with nearly 920 tonnes of plasma collected nationwide. It's the second straight year the country has passed the 900-tonne mark, as the total reached 919.7 tonnes, roughly 11 tonnes more than in 2024. This progress reflects growing engagement from millions of voluntary donors and the efforts of blood collection centers across the national health system.

Despite this milestone, Italy is still working toward full self-sufficiency in plasma-derived products. Plasma is the liquid portion of blood that contains proteins essential for producing life-saving medicines such as immunoglobulins, albumin and clotting factors. These medicines are used to treat a range of conditions including immune deficiencies, bleeding disorders, and other serious health challenges.

The bulk of the increase in plasma collection came from a procedure called plasmapheresis. In this process, blood is drawn from a donor, plasma is separated by a machine and collected, and the remaining blood components – red and white blood cells along with platelets – are returned to the donor. This method typically yields more plasma than traditional whole blood donation, allows donors to recover faster, and supports more frequent donations – up to once every 15 days. In 2025, collections by plasmapheresis rose by about 6.4%, which helped push the total upward.

On a per-person basis, last year Italy delivered 15.6 kilograms of plasma to industry for the manufacture of plasma-derived medicines for every 1,000 residents. That marks progress, yet it still falls short of the medium-term target of 18 kilograms per 1,000 people that health authorities view as a key milestone toward strategic independence for these critical therapies.

One of the biggest challenges remains meeting demand for immunoglobulins, a class of medicines derived from plasma proteins that help people with immune system disorders. Over the past decade, demand for immunoglobulins has surged by about 57%, driven by both expanded clinical use and growing recognition of their value for treating various conditions. At present, Italy is able to supply about 60% of its own need for these products from domestically collected plasma. A larger share must still be purchased on international markets, which entails significant costs for the national health system.

The picture is more favorable for albumin, another plasma-derived product critical in treating liver disease, shock and burns. In this case, Italy's domestic

collection covers more than 75% of national requirements, reducing reliance on outside sources.

Health officials emphasize that reaching full self-sufficiency will require both continued donor participation and strategic improvements in how plasma is collected and used. Associations that support donor recruitment, including national volunteer organizations and local blood banks, are stepping up education and outreach efforts to encourage more people – particularly younger adults – to become regular donors. At the same time, clinical programs are underway to study and promote the appropriate use of plasma-derived medicines so that supplies are used efficiently and effectively for patients who need them most.

Overall, while Italy's 2025 plasma collection figures represent a historic achievement, they also highlight the work that remains to ensure a resilient, sustainable supply of plasma-based therapies for the future.

Italian design

Lamborghini Miura, the legend turns 60

Alberto Improda

The automobile is a highly evocative and identity–defining product – one of the fields in which Italian design has created some absolute masterpieces. Among these, the Lamborghini Miura certainly stands out, an extremely iconic car that has recently celebrated its 60th anniversary.

It was March 10, 1966, when the new car appeared before the public for the first time at the International Motor Show in Geneva. The car's full name is Lamborghini P400 Miura, with the letter P indicating the rear engine placement and 400 referring to the 4-liter displacement.

From 1966 to 1968, 265 units of the first version were produced. They were followed by 338 examples of the P400 Miura S between 1969 and 1971 and by 150 Miura SV models built from 1971 to 1973. Among the special versions are the four SVJ models derived from the Miura Jota prototype and the Miura Spider created by Bertone. The Miura's shape, designed by the young Marcello Gandini for Carrozzeria Bertone, represents a true sculpture of our time.

The body stands out for extremely bold and innovative solutions, such as the long, low front hood, the front headlights surrounded by the distinctive "eyelashes," and the extremely low ground clearance of both the car and the roof of the cabin, which sits only 110 centimeters above the asphalt.

At the rear, the large engine hood – integrated with the trunk and fenders – is closed by metal slats that are not only design elements but also help dissipate the heat produced by the engine.

Inside, the cabin is refined and characterized by the two "binocular" gauges for the tachometer and speedometer, with the secondary control levers positioned, in the first series, high up on the roof panel.

Engineered by Giampaolo Dallara and Paolo Stanzani, the Miura was the first true high-performance production road car with a tran-

Marcello Gandini

sverse mid-rear engine: a 3.9-liter V12 producing 350 horsepower in its first version.

With that level of power – pushing it to a top speed of 290 km/h – it became the fastest production car in the world at the time.

The beautiful automobile immediately won over the public and soon became almost an emblem of its era – of the dynamic and daring Italy of the 1960s and the years of the Economic Boom.

Many aspects of its history have now taken on the flavor of legend. It is even said that the term "supercar" was coined by journalists precisely to describe the Miura.

It is also said that Ferruccio Lamborghini, the first time he saw the drawings of the new car, uttered the fateful words: "I like this one – with this we will enter legend."
The Miura can almost be considered the manifesto of the relationship that the extraordinary entrepreneur from Emilia had with the future.

Vincenzo Borgomeo wrote brilliantly in La Stampa on March 10, 2026:

Ferruccio Lamborghini

"Ferruccio Lamborghini, it is said, could not stand the dust of the past. 'Old stuff dies in the homes of fools,' he often repeated, throwing away anything that was more than five years old. Furniture, objects, but above all ideas, habits, compromises. A man who lived as if the future were already late, and the present an offense that had to be corrected immediately."

The Miura quickly acquired an iconic status, captivating entertainment stars and public figures in Europe, the United States, and the rest of the world.

Many films have featured it, but its role in the 1969 movie The Italian Job, in which Rossano Brazzi drives his orange Miura along the Great St. Bernard Pass while accompanied by the soundtrack "In Days Like These" by Matt Monro, remains unforgettable – a scene that is still one of the most admired and recognizable in the history of automotive cinema.

We can again quote the remarkable article by Vincenzo Borgomeo mentioned earlier: "Everyone wanted it. Everyone who mattered, at least. Frank Sinatra bought an orange one and drove it around Los Angeles as if he were trying to escape himself."

And again: "Dean Martin had a blue one parked in front of his villa with the nonchalance of someone who already has everything. Miles Davis almost played it, with that engine reminding him of his saxophone. Elton John, Rod Stewart, the Prince of Bahrain, the Shah of Iran, even the King of Saudi Arabia – the Miura became the passport that opened the doors of the world."

Shortly before the Miura was born – indeed when it was already practically in gestation – Herbert Marshall McLuhan wrote: "The automobile has become an article of clothing without which we feel naked, uncertain, and incomplete" (Understanding Media, 1964). Remaining within the metaphor of the brilliant Canadian sociologist and philosopher, we might say that the Miura introduced into the wardrobe of the contemporary world a garment that had never existed before – a piece of clothing with a revolutionary cut, irresistibly fascinating and exclusive.

Today the automotive sector, throughout the Western world, is experiencing a period of profound transformation and serious challenges.

The 60th anniversary of the Lamborghini Miura arrives almost like a good omen – an anniversary that seems to trace a path for the future of the industry.

Design, as the great examples of the past teach us, can be the too for shaping a future of development and progress.

Ferruccio Lamborghini himself once said: "The past is important for history, but we must always look to the future."

Italian street food

Lampredotto and the centuries-old street food tradition of Florence

We the Italians Editorial Staff

In Florence, one of the most recognizable street foods comes from an ingredient many people would not expect. Lampredotto, a sandwich made from a specific part of a cow's stomach, has been part of the city's culinary life for centuries. Despite its humble origins, it remains one of the most beloved traditional foods in Tuscany and an essential stop for visitors exploring Florence's markets and squares.

Lampredotto is prepared using

the fourth stomach of cattle, known as the abomasum. This cut belongs to the broader category of tripe, a type of offal that has long been used in Italian cooking. In medieval and Renaissance Florence, expensive cuts of meat were reserved for wealthy families, while workers and laborers relied on less costly parts of the animal. Organs and stomachs, which were cheaper and widely available, became the basis for many popular dishes.

The name “lampredotto” has an unusual origin. Many historians believe it comes from the lamprey eel, a fish once common in the Arno River. Lampreys were considered a delicacy among noble families, and their elongated shape reminded Florentines of the cooked tripe used for lampredotto. Over time, the comparison gave the dish its name.

Street vendors selling lampredotto began appearing in Florence hundreds of years ago. Known locally as trippai, these vendors specialized in preparing and serving tripe-based dishes to workers, artisans, and travelers. By the 1800s, lampredotto stalls had become a familiar sight in busy areas of the city. Vendors cooked the meat slowly in large metal pots filled with broth flavored with vegetables such as celery, onion, carrot, and parsley.

The traditional preparation process remains largely unchanged today. The lampredotto is simmered for several hours until it becomes tender and flavorful. Once cooked, the meat is sliced into small pieces and placed inside a crusty bread roll called a rosetta or semelle. Before serving, the bread is usually dipped briefly in the hot broth to soften it and enhance the flavor.

Two classic condiments complete the sandwich. One is salsa verde, a green sauce made from parsley, garlic, capers, olive oil, and sometimes anchovies. The other is a spicy red sauce often based on tomatoes and chili pepper. Locals typically choose one or the other, although some vendors offer both together.

Even today, lampredotto remains closely connected to Florence's street food culture. Dozens of kiosks operate across the city, particularly near markets such as Mercato Centrale and in busy public squares. For many Florentines, eating a lampredotto sandwich during a lunch break or while walking through the city is part of everyday life.

In recent years the dish has also attracted international attention.

Food tourism has grown significantly in Florence, with millions of visitors arriving every year to experience Tuscan cuisine. According to tourism estimates, more than 10 million travelers visit the city annually, and many seek out authentic local foods. Lampredotto has become a symbol of Florence's culinary identity, often recommended alongside dishes like ribollita and bistecca alla fiorentina.

Despite its growing popularity, lampredotto still reflects its working-class roots. It represents a culinary tradition built on resourcefulness, where no part of the animal was wasted. This philosophy of using every ingredient continues to resonate today, especially as modern chefs and diners increasingly value sustainable cooking.

After hundreds of years, lampredotto remains a simple yet powerful example of Florence's food culture. A few slices of slow-cooked tripe, a piece of bread soaked in broth, and a spoonful of sauce are enough to connect present-day diners with a tradition that has shaped the city's street food for generations.

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Italian Citizenship Assistance

Changes to Italy's Flat Tax Regime – 2026

Italian Citizenship Assistance

Following the 2026 Annual Budget has come an important change to one of Italy's flat tax regimes, an incentive that provides some tax relief for persons of certain qualifications. In this article, we cover what is changing this year, along with visa options to explore if you would like to call Italy your home.

What's changing for the flat tax regime for high-net-worth individuals

The change comes for the flat tax regime for high-net-wor-

th individuals, or those who hold liquid assets above $1 million in foreign income. In 2026, the flat tax will be raised from €200,000 to €300,000 for qualifying persons, and from €25,000 to €50,000 for qualifying family members. This follows a raise in 2024 from €100,000 to €200,000. These changes are only active in 2026 and will not be retroactively applied to those who already benefit from the regime. This flat tax is only for foreigners who relocate to Italy and have not lived there for 9 out of the past 10 years. It can apply for up to 15 years. It also exempts Italian gift and inheritance tax.

How to legally come to Italy: the Investor Visa and the Elective Residency Visa

There are two visas that might be of particular interest to those seeking to benefit from the flat tax regime for high-net-worth individuals: the Investor Visa and the Elective Residency Visa.

The Investor Visa allows non-EU citizens to reside in Italy for up to two years (with the possibility of renewal so long as conditions continue to be met) if they invest in Italy's economy. Specifically, this means an investment of at least €500,000 in a current Italian company, €250,000 in a startup, or €2,000,000 in government bonds.

The Elective Residency visa is specifically for passive income, and therefore tends to attract retirees. Anyone, though, can apply for it, but all income must be passive in nature (e.g. investments, pensions), and the applicant cannot work while in Italy. It is valid for one year, with the possibility of renewal.

How other flat tax regimes compare

There are other flat tax regimes in Italy besides the one for high-net-worth individuals. Those with a foreign pension who reside in a qualifying municipality in Southern Italy can take advantage of a 7% flat tax. This generally means that the municipality has fewer than 20,000 residents. The person must also not have reside in Italy in 9 out of the last 10 years. There is also a flat tax of between 5% and 15% available for new businesses. Income must also not have exceeded €35,000 in the past year, with employee expenses not above €20,000.

Ultimately, the flat tax regi-

me you choose to benefit from should be the one that best fits your particular circumstances and desires when it comes to relocating to Italy.

Citizenship by naturalization

Finally, if you are a non-EU citizen and reside in Italy for at least 10 years, you might qualify for citizenship by naturalization. (For EU citizens, the time required is 4 years, while those with Italian parents or grandparents have only 2 years).

To apply, you will also need a certificate showing knowledge of the Italian language at at least the B1 level, and proof of income of at least €11,362.05 plus €516.46 per dependent child. You will also need a background check issued by your country of origin.

Let Italian Citizenship Assistance help

If you are interested in benefiting from the tax regime for high-net-worth individuals, need help with your citizenship case, or have any other questions about relocating to Italy, our friendly experts at Italian Citizenship Assistance are here to help! You can contact us today at info@italiancitizenshipassistance.com.

Italian traditions

The living pictures tradition of Avigliano in Basilicata

We the Italians Editorial Staff

In the town of Avigliano, in the southern Italian region of Basilicata, an unusual artistic tradition transforms people into living paintings. Known as quadri plastici, or "living pictures," this cultural event combines theater, sculpture, and visual art. Each year during religious celebrations, dozens of residents take part in carefully staged scenes

that recreate famous works of art and historical moments.

The tradition dates back more than a century. The first documented performances took place in the late 19th century, when local communities organized religious and cultural events connected to Catholic festivities. Over time, the performances evolved into a distinctive form of artistic representation. Instead of actors moving on stage, participants remain perfectly still, posing to reproduce well-known images from art history.

A typical quadro plastico involves a group of performers arranged on a stage or platform to recreate a specific painting. Costumes, lighting, and props are used to match the original artwork as closely as possible. The participants must maintain their pose for several minutes at a time, sometimes up to 5–10 minutes, while spectators observe the scene. The stillness is essential because the goal is to make the performers appear like figures in a painting rather than

actors in motion.

The subjects chosen for these living pictures often come from classical art and religious iconography. Works by artists such as Caravaggio, Raphael, and Michelangelo frequently inspire the scenes. Biblical episodes and historical moments are also common themes. Each composition requires careful preparation to reproduce details such as body position, facial expression, clothing, and background elements.

Producing these scenes requires weeks of planning. Volunteers collaborate with organizers to select the artworks and design the staging. Tailors prepare costumes, carpenters build sets, and lighting technicians arrange illumination to replicate the atmosphere of the original painting. In many cases, the entire community contributes to the preparation process.

Participation is broad and intergenerational. Children, adults, and older residents all take part, sometimes involving more than 100 performers in a single edition of the event. Families often return

year after year, and many participants consider their involvement a matter of local pride. For a town with roughly 11,000 residents, the tradition represents an important moment of collective identity.

The event typically takes place during summer celebrations connected to local religious festivals. Temporary stages are installed in public squares, allowing large audiences to gather. Visitors from nearby towns and other parts of Italy travel to Avigliano to watch the performances. For many spectators, the combination of visual precision and human stillness creates a striking artistic effect.

Over time, the quadri plastici have become one of the best-known cultural traditions in Basilicata. The performances blend elements of theater, sculpture, and painting while maintaining a strong connection to the region's religious heritage. Unlike conventional stage productions, the emphasis is not on movement or dialogue but on visual composition and symbolic meaning.

Today the tradition continues to evolve while preserving its histo-

rical roots. Modern lighting systems and stage design have improved the realism of the scenes, but the central concept remains unchanged – people transforming themselves into living artworks. In Avigliano, this unique form of performance demonstrates how a small community can reinterpret the masterpieces of art history through collective participation and creativity.

Italian historical trademarks

The century-long journey of Valente's industrial rails

Associazione Marchi Storici d'Italia

Its long history began in 1919. Since then, the race along the rails of Valente S.p.A. has continued swiftly and without interruption. For 106 years, the company has worked from its factory in Lainate, just outside Milan, producing and distributing every type of rail. These rails are not used only – or even mainly – for traditional railway systems, but for applications far beyond what one might imagine. Valente's rails

are found in ports, underground tunnels, and mines. It is a Made in Italy success story that has carved out a place in the global market by focusing on a highly specialized niche with worldwide demand. Just looking at ports alone, the potential is enormous: more than 90% of international trade moves by sea, which means ports must constantly become more efficient.

When the company was first founded, the horizon was not nearly as broad. The founder, Vincenzo Valente, initially focused on the most traditional use of rails – railways. He used to describe himself as "a Neapolitan industrialist who never failed," and he was right. The company came close to shutting down in the 1980s but never capitulated and never laid off employees. Instead, under the leadership of Alberto Menoncello it returned to prosperity. Menoncello could be described as "a forward-thinking Milanese." A graduate of Bocconi University with a master's degree from Harvard and a background in finance, he had no experience in the steel industry. Yet a quick look at the company's accounts convinced him that Valente could be saved by focusing on long-standing clients and developing an increasingly specialized business strategy.

That was when the key insight emerged: concentrating on rail-based handling systems for large lifting infrastructures in commercial ports. This choice paved the way for Valente's revival, restoring the company's financial health and making the maritime economy its core busi-

ness. Today Menoncello leads the company as CEO and chairman, alongside his son Luca, who serves as general manager.

Valente-branded tracks and transport systems are used to move tunnel-boring machines forward underground, carry concrete and materials used to reinforce tunnel walls, and transport workers, machinery, and goods in complex environments in Italy and abroad. In 2024, the company completed projects in 18 countries. Its international debut came with the supply of rails and wagons for the Channel Tunnel, a milestone that also established Valente as a leading company in the tunneling sector. Other key moments included its involvement in the Turin-Lyon rail project and work at the Imetame port in Aratù, Brazil, between late 2024 and early 2025. Since then, in addition to upgrading several Italian ports, the company has seen a rise in demand, particularly in North Africa and Saudi Arabia. New projects could soon arrive from Central America as well. The goal is to increase exports from the current 30% of revenue to 45% within the next three years, focusing on Europe, the Gulf region, India, and sub-Saharan Africa.

The company is also active in the mining sector, both in extraction operations and in the restoration of former mines for tourism. Valente is currently involved in projects to modernize mining infrastructure in Sardinia and in the creation of rail-based routes designed to bring visitors through the spectacular underground landscapes of former mining sites.

Valente remains a small Italian company with big ambitions. Revenue reached €11 million in 2024 and is expected to rise to €15 million by the end of the year. But the company does not need to be a giant to compete globally. The number of competitors in this highly specialized field is extremely limited, and success depends on reliability. Here Valente holds a strong advantage: it combines more than a century of experience with a continuous commitment to excellence and innovation. For some of its applications, such as the development of rail fastening systems, the company collaborates closely with the Politecnico di Milano. Even as advanced technologies continue to evolve, they have not changed the essence of this century-old company. At its core, Valente still relies on craftsmanship – while keeping a close eye on digitalization and artificial intelligence as new opportunities for growth.

Civita di Bagnoregio

Italian territories

Tuscia, between etruscan heritage, medieval towns, and volcanic landscapes in the Lazio region

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Tuscia is a historic region of central Italy whose roots go back to the time of the Etruscans. While the name once referred broadly to lands ruled by the ancient Etruscan civilization, today it is most often used to describe the territory around the province of Viterbo in northern La-

zio. This area, located about 60–100 kilometers north of Rome, preserves one of the richest concentrations of archaeological sites, medieval towns, and natural landscapes in the region.

The Lazio portion of Tuscia extends between the Tyrrhenian coast and the inland hills bordering Umbria and Tuscany. Its geography includes volcanic plateaus, lakes formed by ancient craters, forests, and fertile agricultural land. Two of the most prominent natural landmarks are Lake Bolsena and Lake Vico, both created by volcanic activity thousands of years ago. Lake Bolsena, with a surface area of about 114 square kilometers, is the largest volcanic lake in Europe and a central feature of the region's landscape.

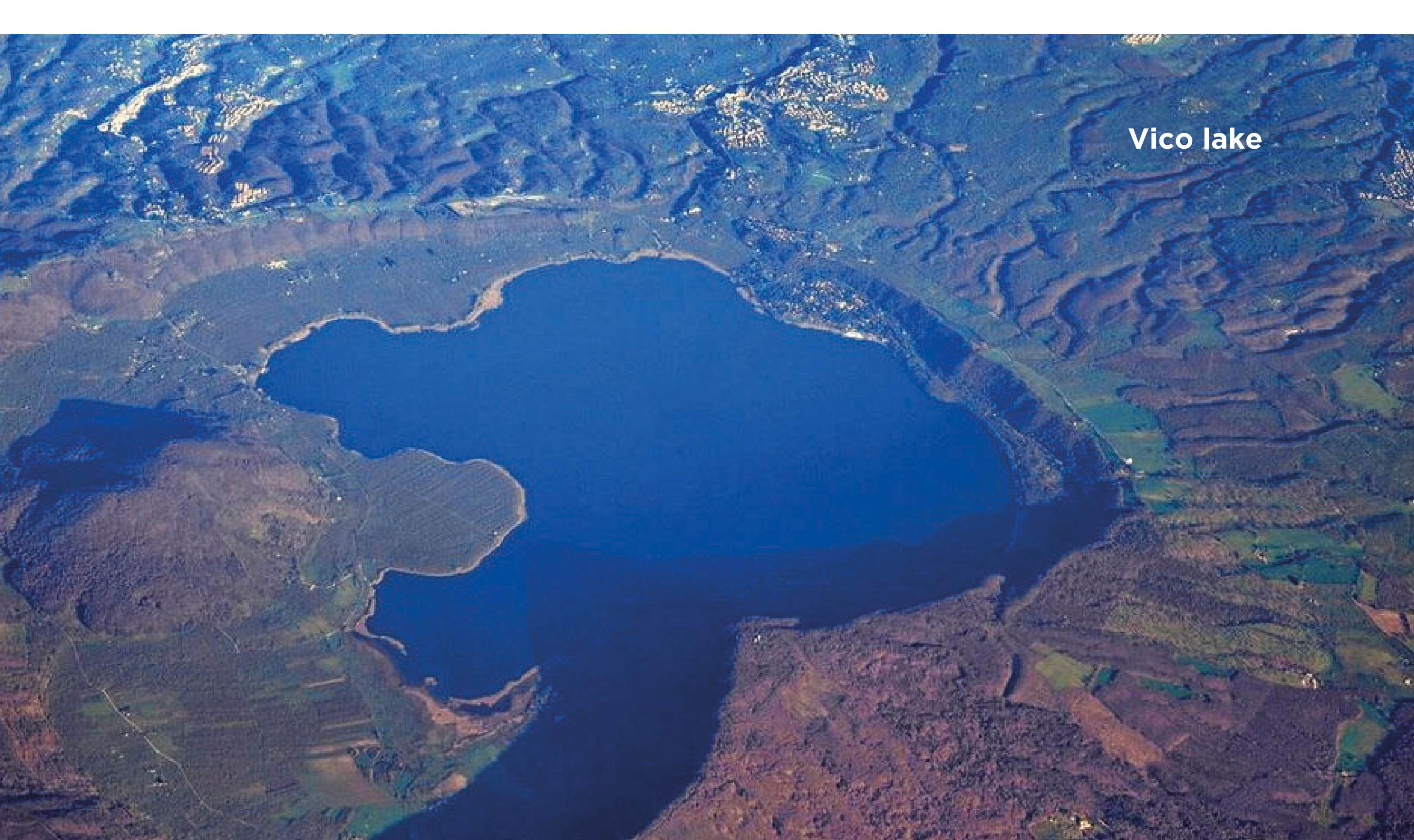
Long before the rise of Rome, Tuscia was a core territory of the Etruscan civilization, which flourished in central Italy between the 9th and 3rd centuries BC. Important Etruscan settlements existed in places such as Tarquinia and Vulci, both located within what is now northern Lazio. Archaeological excavations have uncovered extensive necropolises, temples, and tomb paintings that provide valuable insight into Etruscan society. The painted tombs of Tarquinia are among the most famous examples, featuring vibrant scenes that are more than 2,500 years old.

During the Roman era the region gradually became integrated into the expanding Roman state. Roads, agricultural estates, and settlements spread across the territory, linking the area more closely with Rome. Even today, parts of the ancient Roman road network can still be traced through the countryside of Tuscia.

In the Middle Ages Tuscia became known for its fortified towns and strategic role along pilgrimage routes. One of the most important of these routes was the Via Francigena, a medieval road that connected northern Europe to Rome. Pilgrims traveling this path passed through towns such as Viterbo, Bolsena, and Montefiascone. Many of these towns still preserve medieval walls, towers, and historic centers that reflect their importance during that period.

Viterbo eventually emerged as the main urban center of the region. During the 13th century it even served as a temporary residence for several popes, earning the nickname "City of the Popes." The Palazzo dei Papi, built in the 1200s, remains one of the most recognizable medieval structures in the area.

One of the most striking villages in the Tuscia area is Civita di Bagnoregio, a small medieval settlement perched on a narrow plateau of volcanic rock about 120 kilometers north of Rome.


Vico lake

Connected to the surrounding landscape by a long pedestrian bridge, the village is often called "the dying town" because erosion has gradually worn away the cliffs that support it for centuries.

Agriculture continues to play a major role in the modern economy of Tuscia. The fertile volcanic soil supports crops such as olives, hazelnuts, grapes, and grains. In fact, the province of Viterbo produces a large share of Italy's hazelnuts, with thousands of hectares dedicated to this crop. Olive oil and wine production are also important parts of the local agricultural system.

Today Tuscia represents a blend of natural beauty, historical heritage, and rural culture. Within a relatively compact area of roughly 3,600 square kilometers, visitors can encounter Etruscan archaeological sites, medieval towns, volcanic lakes, and agricultural landscapes that have shaped the region for centuries. This combination of history and environment makes Tuscia one of the most distinctive cultural territories in central Italy.

Tarquinia

Viterbo

Italian wine

The emerging wine tradition of Molise between the Adriatic and the Apennines

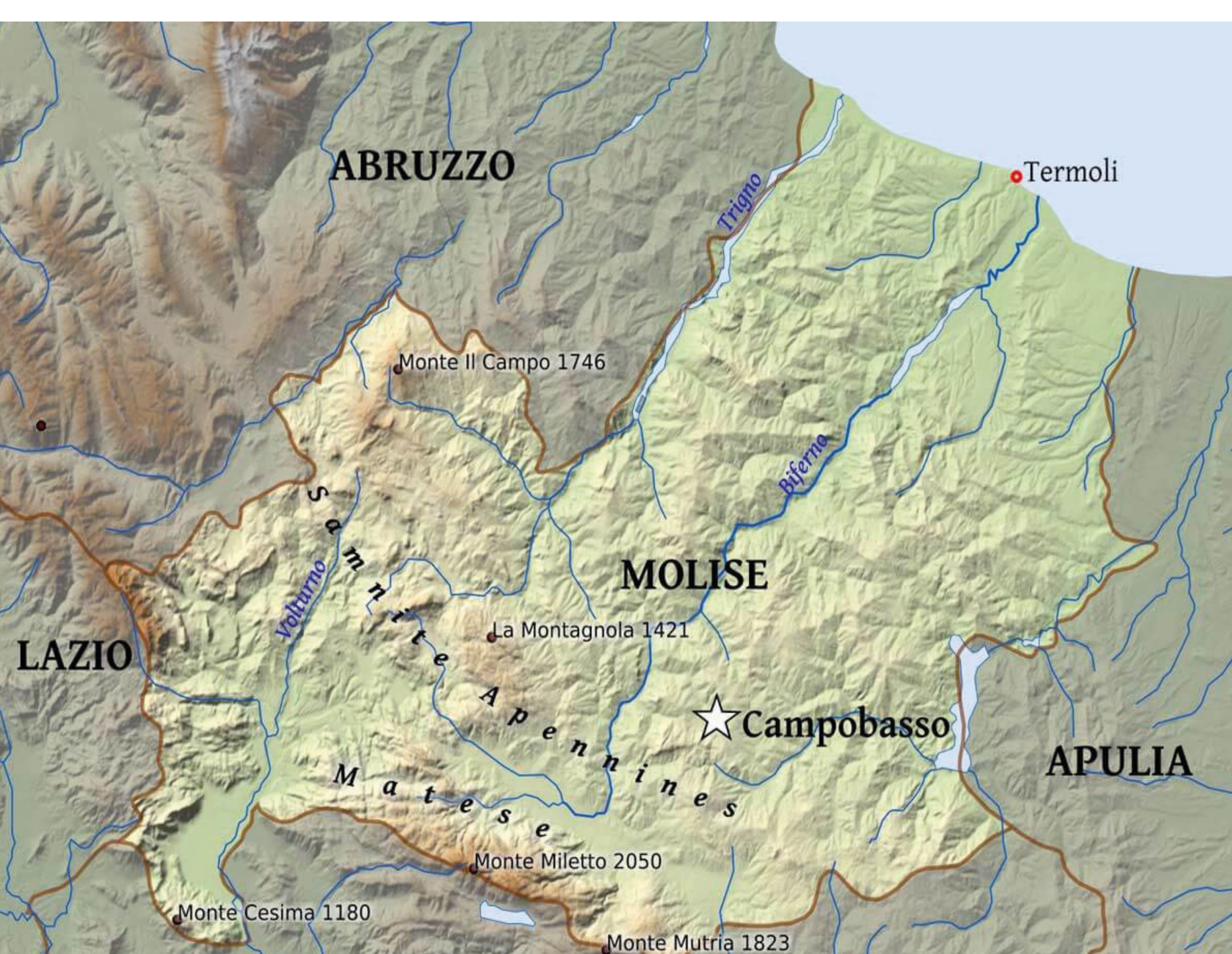
We the Italians Editorial Staff

Molise, one of Italy's smallest and least populated regions, has a wine tradition that dates back thousands of years. Located between the Adriatic Sea and the Apennine Mountains, this central-southern Italian territory combines coastal plains, rolling hills, and higher mountain slopes. Within this relatively compact landscape, vineyards cover several thousand acres and support

a wine sector that remains small in scale but increasingly recognized for its quality and regional identity.

Viticulture in Molise has ancient origins. Archaeological evidence suggests that grape cultivation existed in this area during the time of the Samnites and later expanded under Roman influence. The Romans developed agricultural systems throughout central and southern Italy, introducing techniques that improved both vineyard management and wine production. Over time these traditions became part of the region's rural culture and remained closely tied to small farming communities.

Today Molise's vineyards are concentrated mainly in the provinces of Campobasso and Isernia. Many of the most productive areas lie between 650 and 1,650 feet above sea



level, where moderate temperatures and consistent sunlight help grapes ripen gradually. The proximity of the Adriatic Sea also plays an important role, bringing breezes that help regulate humidity and reduce the risk of plant diseases. At the same time, the nearby mountains create temperature differences between day and night that contribute to the development of balanced aromas and acidity in the grapes.

Despite its limited geographic size, Molise cultivates a wide range of grape varieties. Both native and international grapes are grown across the region's vineyards. Among the most important red varieties is Montepulciano, which produces structured wines with dark fruit flavors and moderate tannins. Aglianico, another well-known southern Italian grape, is also present in some areas and can produce more powerful and age-worthy wines.

White wines also play a role in the region's production. Trebbiano is one of the most widely planted white varieties, often used to produce fresh and approachable wines. Falanghina, a grape more commonly associated with neighboring Campania, has also found suitable conditions in parts of Molise and contributes to aromatic white wines with notes of citrus and flowers.

The region's main quality designation is Molise DOC, which covers a broad range of red, white, and rosé wines. Within this classification producers can work with several grape varieties and styles, reflecting the diversity of the territory.

Although Molise does not have as many protected wine denominations as some larger Italian regions, its producers have increasingly focused on improving vineyard practices and emphasizing local characteristics.

Annual wine production in Molise remains relatively modest compared with major Italian wine regions such as Tuscany or Veneto. Total output is estimated at around 200,000–300,000 hectoliters per year, depending on the harvest. This limited volume reflects both the small size of the region and the fact that many vineyards are operated by small and medium-sized wineries rather than large industrial producers.

In recent decades Molise has gradually attracted more attention from wine enthusiasts and critics. Producers have invested in modern winemaking equipment and improved vineyard management techniques, aiming to highlight the unique environmental conditions of the region. The combination of hillside vineyards, Adriatic breezes, and long agricultural traditions gives Molise wines a distinct identity within Italy's diverse wine landscape.

Although it remains less well known internationally, Molise continues to strengthen its position as a niche wine region. By balancing tradition with innovation and maintaining relatively small production volumes, the region offers wines that reflect the character of its hills, climate, and rural heritage.

Italian proverbs

Occhio per occhio, dente per dente

We the Italians Editorial Staff

The Italian proverb "Occhio per occhio, dente per dente" (literally "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth") refers to the ancient principle known as the law of retaliation, or lex talionis. This rule states that punishment should match the harm inflicted. The idea appears in very old legal traditions, including the Code of Hammurabi and the Bible. Its original purpose was not to encourage revenge but to limit it, establishing proportional justice instead of uncontrolled retaliation.

In the Old Testament – particularly in Exodus 21:24 and Leviticus 24:20 – the rule served as guidance for judges when determining penalties. Later, in the New Testament, Jesus encouraged a different approach based on forgiveness and nonviolence, famously teaching people to "turn the other cheek." Today the expression is often used to describe proportional revenge or retaliation.

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