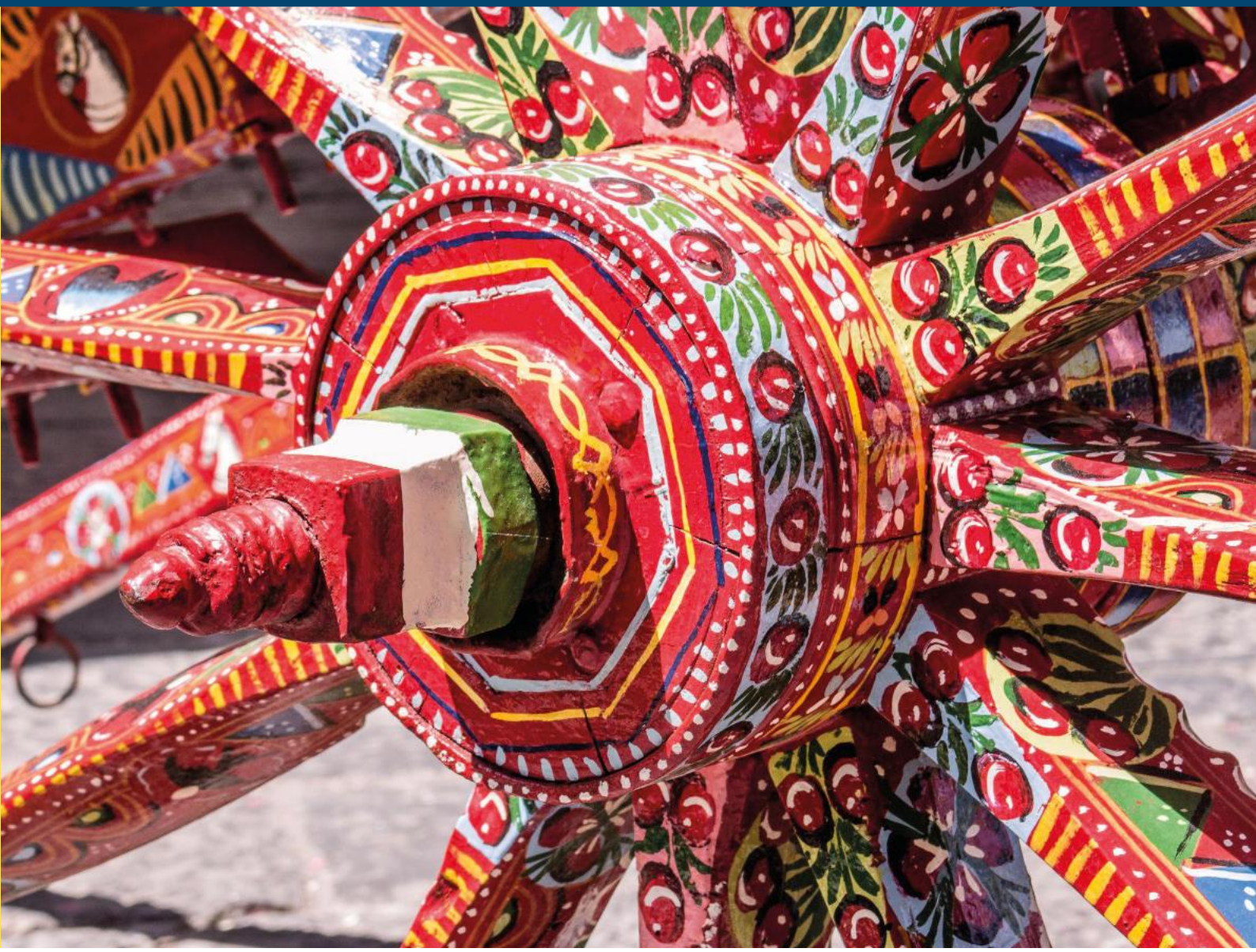
We the Italians

May 2026

N.199

interview with

Elisa Coccia pag 65



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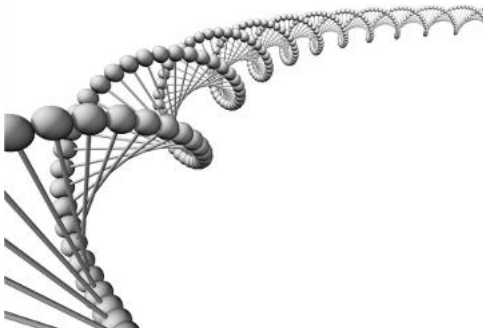

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Editorial

What's up with WTI: Editorial #199

by Umberto Mucci

Dear friends,

All of us at We the Italians are deeply involved in organizing our gala, which carries even greater meaning this year for two reasons. The first is that we are celebrating two major anniversaries – the 250th anniversary of the United States and the 80th anniversary of the Italian Republic. The second is that, regardless of political views, we can see how the new phase in relations between Italy and the United States is creating some turbulence. We notice it on our Facebook page, and we also see it reflected in the organization of the gala itself.

As an organization dedicated to promoting friendship between Italy and the United States, we are even more determined than in previous years, because this year the gala has

Gala awardees

an even stronger symbolic value. Once again, on the morning of the same day and at the same venue as the gala, the prestigious Grand Hotel Parco dei Principi, we will also host a conference that will allow us to explore the relationship between the two countries from three different perspectives. The first will focus on the economy and trade, the second on sports (with the Italian Federations of the main four "American" sports: Baseball, Basketball, Football and Hockey), and the third on relocation to Italy – a trend that is seeing a growing number of Americans changing their lives and moving to Italy. The conference is called "Two Flags One Heart. Italia e Stati Uniti 2026" and has begun an important annual appointment for those who are interested in the Italy-USA relations.

Gala state of honor 2026

So, on June 4, there will be time and space for discussion, analysis, and dialogue during the morning conference; and in the evening, an opportunity to celebrate, network, enjoy an outstanding dinner, and attend a show dedicated to the friendship between our two countries. The gala will feature six extraordi-

nary honorees and a guest state of honor, which this year is Georgia. During the evening, we will recognize the Italian community in the Peach State, represented by our Ambassador Nicola Vidali, organizer of the outstanding Made in Italy Expo.

At the Gala we will announce the result of our first survey of 2026, where we are asking all of you to choose the Italian who has contributed most to the greatness of the United States over these 250 years, whose anniversary we are celebrating this year. There is still time, **please vote here**!

The survey naturally connects to the section "Happy Birthday USA: Italy's role in America's greatness" within our project "Two Anniversaries, One Heart," as the 18 names you are voting on are the same individuals featured in the project's articles. As you know, every even month (February, April, June, August, October, and December) we publish three articles for this section, along

with three articles for the "Happy Birthday Italy" section and a full set of articles dedicated to one U.S. region for the "Happy Birthday USA: Unsung Heroes" section. In April we published the second insert of this wonderful project: it is available here.

Talking about engagement with you, our readers... We didn't need another channel. Then Substack proved us wrong. And We the Italians won another award! Just four months after launching its Substack newsletter, We the Italians achieved unex-

We the Italians
two flags one heart

substack

FOUR MONTHS. ONE NEWSLETTER. A BIG MILESTONE.

Four months ago, we launched our **Substack** page. Today, we're proud to share what this journey has become.

6,000
NEW FOLLOWERS IN JUST 7 DAYS

Selected as "Newsletter of the Week" on Sidestack – and everything changed.

Readers from across the U.S. and Italy joined our community, bringing new connections, stories, and perspectives.

No shortcuts. No noise.
We chose consistency over quick wins. One article at a time.

Organic growth, real impact.
From 1,000 to 1,500... then the momentum that made the difference.

A space for in-between stories.
For expats, journalists, and readers living between two worlds.

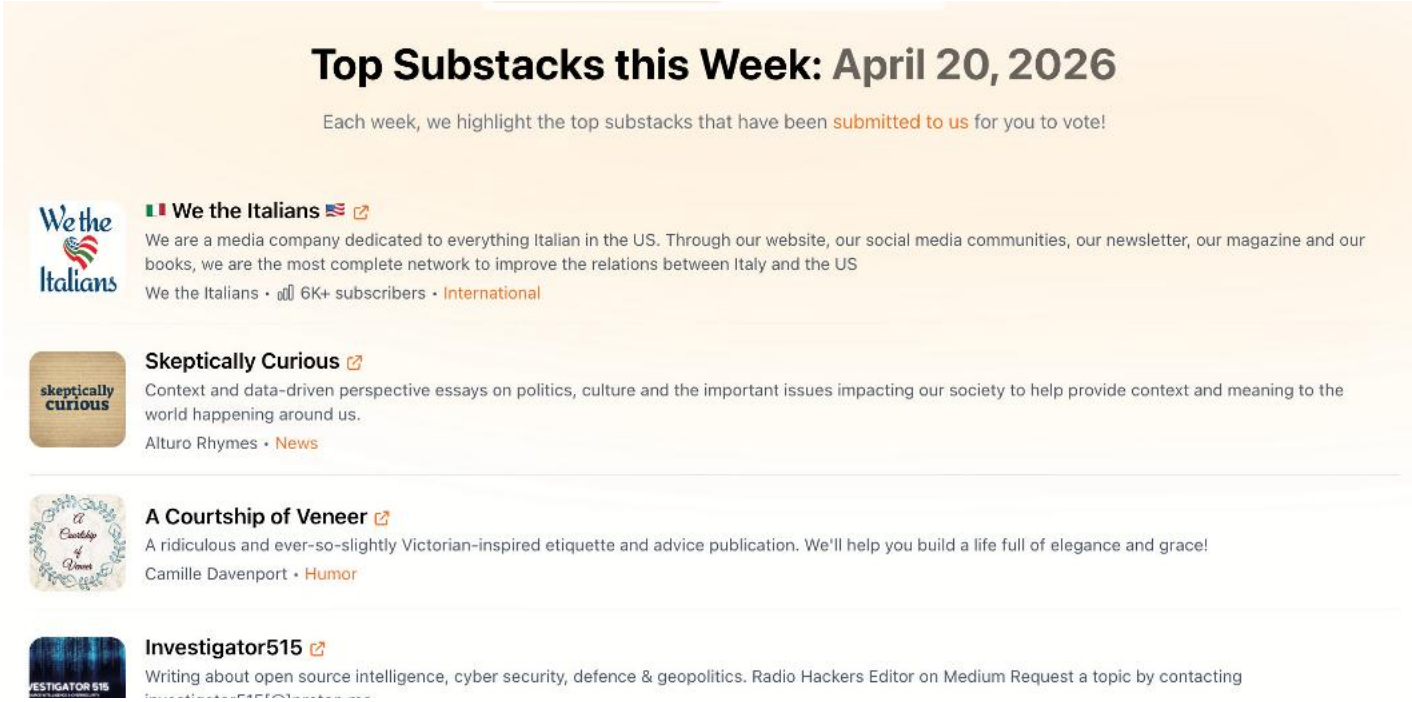
Positioning that matters.
In a crowded ecosystem, our voice stands out – thanks to you.

A small project. A big signal. A shared success.

In the year of 250 years of the United States and 80 years of the Italian Republic, We the Italians found its place in one of the most selective editorial environments out there.

We'll take that.
With gratitude and a bit of well-earned pride.

A special thanks to **Umberto Mucci** and **Matteo Cerri** for leading the way.
One day at a time. One article at a time. One newsletter at a time.



pected success. The project began as an experiment to complement the organization's website, social media, and traditional newsletter, which already reached more than 100,000 Italian Americans daily. Instead of duplicating content, the team created a curated editorial approach tailored specifically for Substack readers. Growth accelerated after the publication was selected as "Newsletter of the Week" by Sidestack, adding more than 6,000 subscribers in a single week and bringing the audience to thousands of engaged readers. The experience confirmed that authentic storytelling and carefully curated content can still thrive in today's crowded digital me-

dia landscape. For this we have to thank in particular Matteo Cerri, without him none of this would have been possible.

We the Italians has launched a strategic partnership with the Italian Football League (IFL) to support the league's international expansion, especially in the United States. The collaboration aims to increase the visibility of Italy's top American football championship through editorial content, event coverage, and digital storytelling focused on the Italian American community. We the Italians will help position the IFL as more than a sports competition – presenting it as part of Italian culture, talent, and lifestyle. The partnership also strengthens the IFL's broader strategy of building stronger connections with U.S. audiences and expanding the international profile of Italian American football.

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.

Italian art

Sicilian carts, a moving canvas of color and form

We the Italians Editorial Staff

The art of Sicilian carts is a visual explosion that seems created to be seen before it is understood. More than an object, the cart is a moving narrative surface – a three-dimensional canvas where color becomes language and detail turns into emotion. Every inch is painted, carved, decorated – nothing is left neutral. It is a total form of art, combining painting, sculpture, and design into a single creative gesture.

What stands out immediately is color. Bright red, vivid yellow, deep blue, saturated green

– there are no half tones. The contrasts are sharp, deliberately bold, almost theatrical. The cart does not aim for balance, but for impact. It is designed to be seen from a distance, to capture attention instantly. In this sense, it feels surprisingly modern, communicating with the same immediacy as pop art or contemporary murals. The surfaces of the cart are completely covered with imagery. The wheels become decorated discs, often among the most striking elements, with spokes painted like rays of sunlight or geometric patterns that suggest motion even when still. The side panels are true pictorial scenes – dense compositions framed by ornamental borders, where every space is filled with almost obsessive precision. Even structural parts – beams, edges, corners – are carved or painted, turning the entire object into a distributed sculpture. One fascinating aspect is repetition. Floral motifs, arabesques,

scrolls, and decorative patterns chase one another, creating a continuous visual rhythm. This is an art form that does not rely on a single image, but on the overall effect. The eye never rests – it moves, jumps, returns. The experience is almost hypnotic. In this sense, the cart is not simply observed – it is visually navigated.

There is also a strong narrative component, but treated in a highly visual way. The painted scenes are not realistic – they are stylized, intense, and full of expression. Faces are sharply defined, gazes direct, gestures exaggerated. Everything is constructed to be immediately readable, almost like illustration or comic art. Figures seem to emerge from the background, often framed by even brighter colors, creating a sim-

ple but effective sense of depth. Perhaps the most striking feature is the absence of empty space. Every surface is filled, every border decorated. This visual density creates a sense of abundance, of constant energy. It is the opposite of minimalism – here, value lies in layering, complexity, and controlled excess. Yet despite the richness of elements, the overall composition remains coherent. There is an internal logic, a precise visual grammar that holds everything together. Wood itself plays a fundamental role. It is not just a support, but an active part of the artwork. Carvings add depth, creating shifts of light and shadow that change throughout the day. When light hits the carved surfaces, the cart seems almost to come alive, as if the decorations were subtly moving. It is an art form that lives through light as much as through color.

Another interesting aspect is the strong stylistic identity. Every cart is different, yet recognizable. There are distinct hands, styles, visual signatures, even without explicit attribution. You can sense a personal language, a variation within a shared aesthetic system. This makes each piece unique while still belonging to a common visual tradition. Today, this art form has moved

beyond its original context and entered the world of design and contemporary art. The motifs of Sicilian carts are reinterpreted in objects, textiles, and installations, retaining their visual power. This is not nostalgia, but transformation – an aesthetic that continues to resonate because it is immediate, bold, and unmistakable. The Sicilian cart is not just decoration. It is a visual statement, an exercise in aesthetic intensity. It is color without hesitation, form without pause, detail without compromise. To look at it is to enter a continuous flow of images, where art is not simply observed – it is experienced.

Italian culture and history

Fibonacci and the revolution of numbers in European history

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Try multiplying XLVII by XXIII using only pen and paper, as people did in Europe around the year 1200. The result can be found, but the process is slow, indirect, and often frustrating. Roman numerals, lacking positional value, made arithmetic inefficient. Even relatively simple operations required an abacus and considerable time. Mathematics, in that context, was more an obstacle than a practical tool. This was the world before Leonardo Fibonacci.

Born in Pisa around 1170, Fibonacci grew up in one of the

Incipit liber Abaci Compositus a leonardo filio Bonacij pisano. In Anno. M°cc°ij°.

Scripsistis mihi domine mi magister Michael Scotte summe philosophe, ut librum de numero quem dudum composui vobis transcriberem; unde vestre obsecundans postulationi, ipsum subtiliori perscrutans indagine, ad vestrum honorem et aliorum multorum utilitatem correxi. In cuius correctione quedam necessaria addidi, et quedam superflua resecavi. In quo plenam numerorum doctrinam edidi iuxta modum indorum, quem modum in ipsa scientia prestantiorem elegi. Et quia arismetica et geometria scientia sunt connexe et suffragatorie sibi ad invicem, non potest de numero plena tradi doctrina nisi interserantur geometrica quedam vel ad geometriam spectantia, que hic tamen iuxta modum numeri operantur; qui modus est sumptus ex multis probationibus et demonstrationibus que figuris geometricis fiunt. Verum in alio libro quem de practica geometrie composui, ea que ad geometriam pertinent et alia plura copiosius explicavi, singula subiectis probationibus geometricis demonstrando. Sane hic liber magis quam ad theoricam spectat ad practicam. Unde qui per eum huius scientie practicam bene scire voluerit, oportet eos continuo usu et exercitio diuturno in eius practicis perstudere, quoniam scientia per practicam versa in habitum, memoria et intellectus adeo concordant cum manibus et figuris, quod quasi uno impulsu et anhelitu in uno et eodem instanti circa idem per omnia naturaliter consonent; et tunc cum fuerit discipulus habitudinem consecutus, gradatim poterit ad perfectionem huius faciliter pervenire. Et ut facilior pateret doctrina, hunc librum per .xv. distinxi capitula, ut quicquid de his lector voluerit possit levius invenire. Porro si in hoc opere reperitur insufficientia vel defectus, illud emendationi vestre subicio.

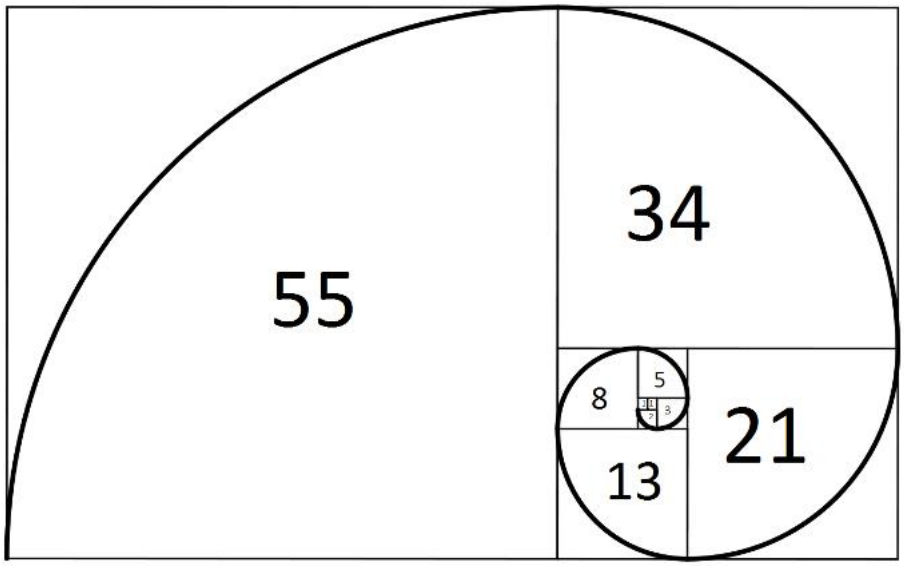
Cum genitor meus a patria publicus scriba in duana bugee pro pisanis mercatoribus ad eam confluentibus constitutus preesset, me in pueritia mea ad se venire faciens, inspecta utilitate et commoditate futura, ibi me studio abbaci per aliquot dies stare voluit et doceri. Ubi ex mirabili magisterio in arte per novem figuras indorum introductus, scientia artis in tantum mihi pre ceteris placuit, et intellexi ad illam, quod quicquid studebatur ex ea apud egyptum, syriam, greciam, siciliam et provinciam cum suis variis modis, ad que loca negotiationis causa postea peragravi per multum studium et disputationis didici conflictum. Sed hoc totum etiam et algorismum atque arcus pictagore quasi errorem computavi respectu modi indorum. Quare amplectens strictius ipsum modum indorum et attentius studens in eo, ex proprio sensu quedam addens, et quedam etiam ex subtilitatibus euclidis geometrice artis apponens, summam huius libri, quam intelligibilius potui, in .xv. capitulis distinctam componere laboravi, fere omnia que inserui certa probatione ostendens, ut extra, perfecto pre ceteris modo, hanc scientiam appetentes instruantur, et gens latina de cetero, sicut hactenus, absque illa minime inveniatur. Si quid forte minus aut plus iusto vel necessario intermisi, mihi deprecor indulgeatur, cum nemo sit qui vitio careat, et in omnibus undique sit circumspectus. Explicit prologus. Incipiunt capitula.

De cognitione novem figurarum yndorum, et qualiter cum eis omnis numerus scribatur, et qualiter numeri retineri debeant in manibus, et de introductionibus abbaci. 1

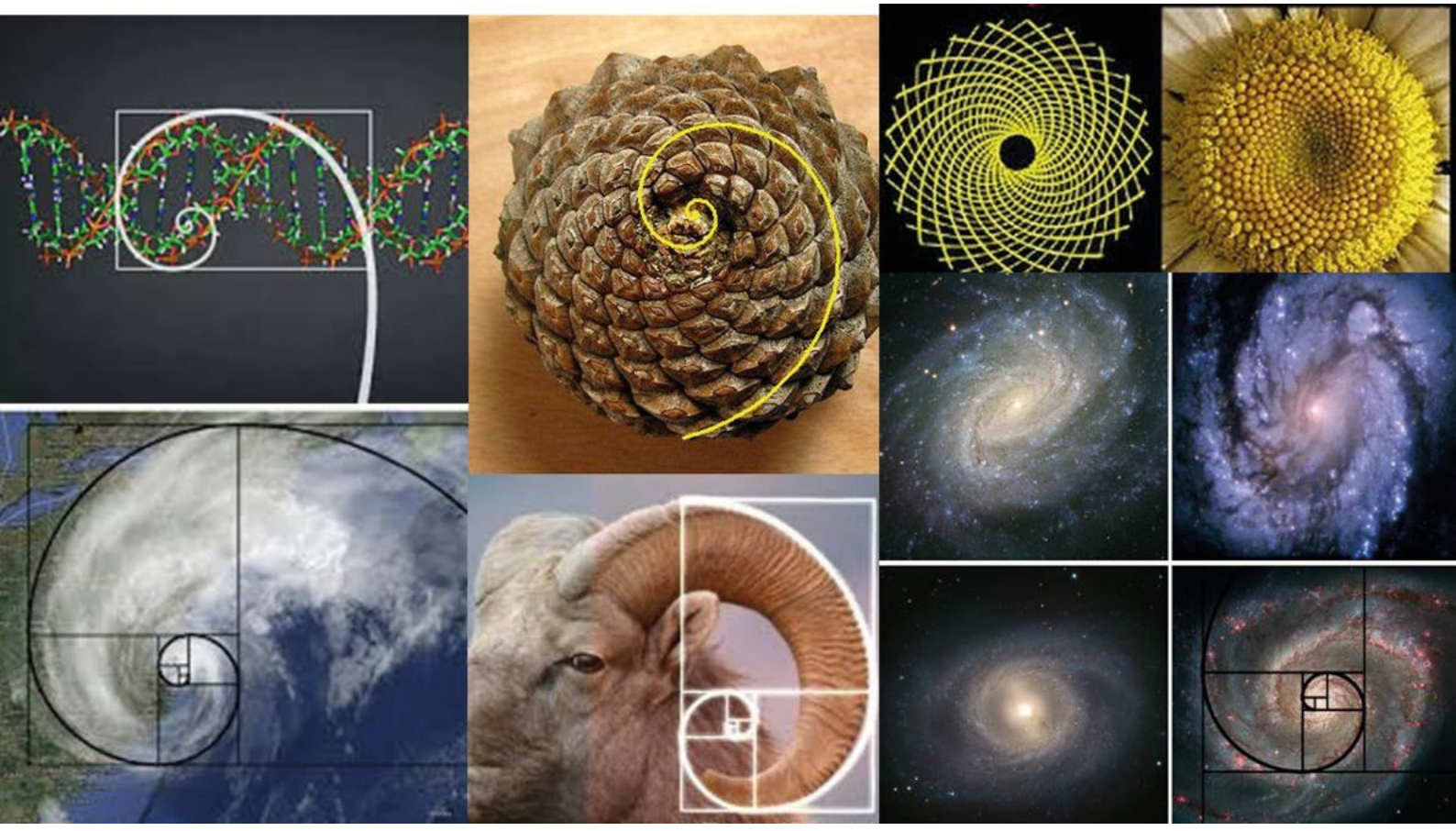
De multiplicatione integrorum numerorum. 2

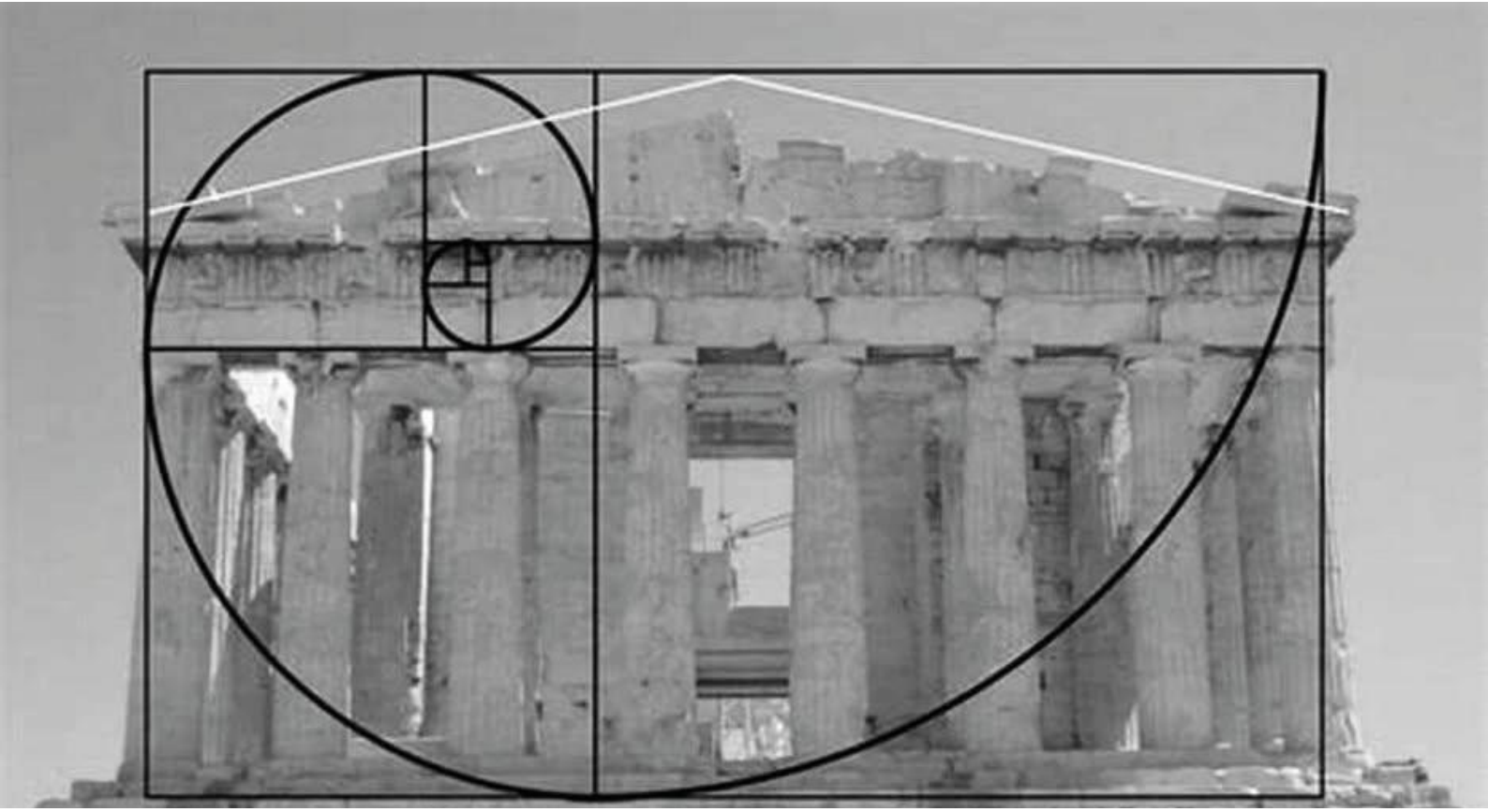
De additione ipsorum adinvicem. 3

Leonardi Pisani Algorismi, geometria ...
Inter Codices designatus num: 44.



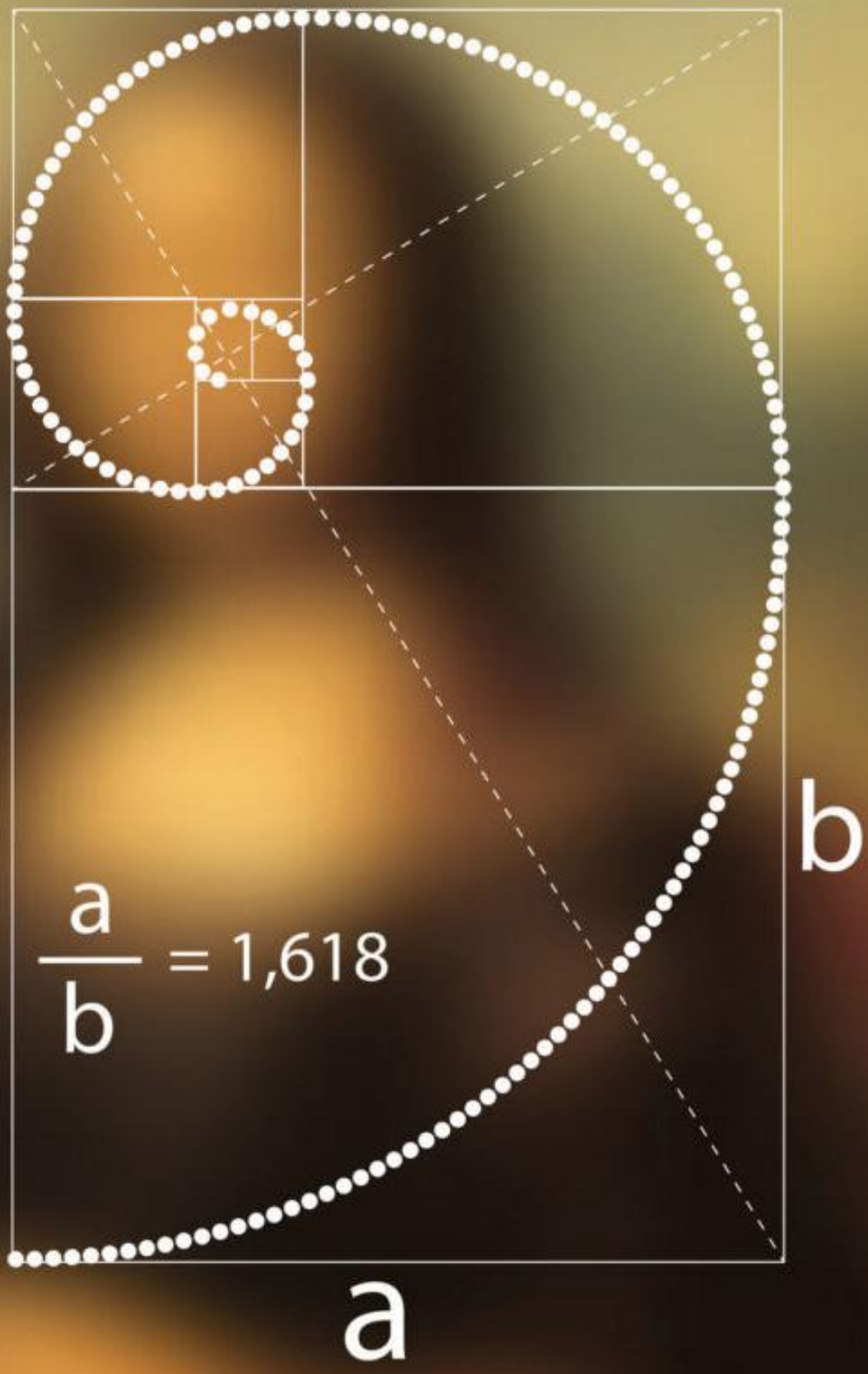
most active maritime centers of medieval Italy. His life changed when he followed his father to Bugia – today Béjaïa, in present-day Algeria – where his father worked for Pisan merchants. There, in a dynamic crossroads of trade and scholarship, Fibonacci encountered the Indo-Arabic numeral system, already widely used across the Islamic world. It was a revelation. The system used ten digits, including zero, and relied on positional value. Numbers could be written compactly, and calculations could be performed using written procedures rather than physical tools. Com-





pared to Roman numerals, the difference was transformative. Fibonacci understood immediately that this was not just a technical improvement but a fundamental shift in how numbers could be handled.

When he returned to Italy, he set out to share this knowledge. In 1202, he published Liber Abaci, a work that would become one of the most influential mathematical texts of the Middle Ages. Rather than focusing on abstract theory, the book was practical in nature. It presented real-life problems related to commerce: exchange rates, profit distribution, weights and measures, and interest calculations. It also explained step by step how to perform arithmetic operations using the new numeral system. Among its many examples appeared a numerical sequence that would later bear his name. This sequence begins with 0 and 1, and each subsequent number is the sum of the two preceding ones – 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, and so on. What makes it extraordinary is how often it appears in the natural world. Spiral patterns following Fibonacci relationships can be observed in sunflower seeds, pinecones, shells, and even the arrangement of leaves on a stem. These structures often reflect efficient growth patterns, where space and resources are optimized. Over time, this connection between mathematics and nature has fascinated scientists, artists, and architects, reinforcing the idea that numerical order can underlie organic forms. A second edition followed in 1228, dedicated to Michael Scot, a scholar connected to the court of


b
a/b = 1,618
a

Emperor Frederick II. Fibonacci himself had already been invited to that court, a sign of how seriously his work was taken at the highest levels. Frederick II, known for his intellectual curiosity, helped create an environment in which new ideas could circulate. From there, the Indo-Arabic system began to spread across Europe. Merchants, scholars, and craftsmen gradually adopted it, recognizing its advantages in everyday use. The transition was not immediate – traditional methods persisted for generations – but the new system proved too effective to ignore.

Fibonacci's role in this transformation is deeply tied to his Italian background. Pisa, like other Italian city-states, was a gateway between different cultures, particularly between Europe and the Mediterranean world. This openness allowed knowledge to move across regions, and Fibonacci became one of the key figures in that exchange. His work reflects a broader Italian tradition of connecting ideas, trade, and innovation. The long-term impact of this shift is immense. The positional number system introduced through Fibonacci's work became the foundation of modern mathematics. Without it, the development of algebra, science, and eventually computing would have been unthinkable. Every digital system in use today relies on numerical principles that trace back to that transition. Fibonacci did not invent the numbers he promoted, but he recognized their power and ensured their adoption in Europe. His achievement lies in making a complex idea accessible and useful, transforming the way numbers were written, understood, and applied. In that sense, his legacy extends far beyond mathematics. It represents a turning point in cultural and intellectual history – one rooted in Italy, shaped by travel and exchange, and still visible in every calculation performed today.

Italian cuisine

Lobster and shrimp spaghetti in curry sauce

Silvia Baldini

The origins of this recipe are intensely personal. As Silvia Baldini recounts on her website, the inspiration came shortly after her wedding in Tulum, Mexico. During the trip, she and her husband discovered a small restaurant owned by a woman of Roman descent. There, they tasted a pasta unlike anything they had experienced before: spaghetti enveloped in a creamy curry sauce, topped with lobster and shrimp. The memory stayed with her for years.

That emotional connection matters because the dish itself feels emotional. It is not merely an exercise in flavor pairing or technical skill. It carries the warmth of travel, discovery, romance, and surprise, the kinds of experiences that permanently shape how people remember food. This is what elevates the recipe beyond restaurant luxury. It tells a story.

The Ingredients: Elegant but Purposeful

- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- ½ medium yellow onion, finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons curry powder
- ½ teaspoon fine sea salt
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- Juice of ½ lemon
- ½ cup heavy cream
- 1 pound spaghetti
  16 large shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 8 ounces lobster meat, cut into chunks
- 1 cup fresh parsley, finely chopped
- Coarse sea salt for pasta water

Baldini recommends Madras curry powder for its balanced warmth and aromatic complexity, though she notes that different curry blends can personalize the dish. She also emphasizes flexibility, frozen lobster meat works well, and the sauce itself is flavorful enough to support vegetarian adaptations.

The Technique: Precsion Without Complication

Like many great Italian recipes, the success of the dish lies less in complexity and more in execution.

The onions are cooked slowly in olive oil and butter until softened and sweet, creating the flavor base. The curry powder is toasted gently to release its fragrance without becoming bitter. Lemon juice cuts through the richness while cream binds everything into a velvety sauce.

Then comes the critical moment: cooking the seafood. Lobster and shrimp are delicate proteins. Overcook them by even a minute and the dish loses its elegance. Baldini handles them with restraint, allowing their natural

sweetness and tenderness to remain intact.

Finally, the spaghetti is tossed directly into the sauce so it absorbs flavor rather than simply carrying it. This detail matters. In authentic Italian cooking, pasta and sauce are not separate components. They must become one.

Curry and Italian Cuisine: A More Natural Pairing Than It Seems
The use of curry in Italian food may surprise some diners, but historically, Mediterranean cuisine has always been shaped by spices moving through trade routes connecting Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Venice, Sicily, and southern Italy all absorbed outside influences over centuries. Cinnamon, saffron, cloves, nutmeg, and pepper became integrated into regional cooking long before modern ideas of "fusion cuisine" existed.

Baldini's recipe taps into that historical reality.

The curry here does not attempt to imitate Indian cuisine, nor does it abandon Italian culinary identity. Instead, it becomes another layer in a dish fundamentally grounded in Italian technique and balance. That distinction is important because it separates thoughtful culinary evolution from gimmickry.

The Emotional Luxury of Seafood Pasta

There is something inherently celebratory about lobster pasta. It evokes anniversaries, vacations, weddings, birthdays, and long dinners where no one is checking the time. Yet Baldini's version avoids the heaviness that often accompanies luxurious seafood dishes. Despite the cream and shellfish, the pasta remains surprisingly light in spirit. The lemon keeps it vibrant. The curry adds intrigue rather than weight. Fresh parsley brightens the finish.

The dish invites lingering conversation instead of overwhelming the palate.

That is what makes it memorable.

L'Amica geniale

Italian entertainment

The Italian tv series go global with cinematic storytelling in the streaming era

We the Italians Editorial Staff

In recent years, Italian television has undergone a quiet but significant transformation. What was once a largely domestic industry, rooted in traditional formats and local audiences, has evolved into a dynamic sector increasingly shaped by global platforms and cinematic ambition. The rise of streaming services has played a central role in this shift, opening Italian storytelling to international viewers

Mare Fuori

and raising expectations in terms of visual style, narrative complexity, and production quality. Platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, and Disney+ have actively invested in Italian content, recognizing the appeal of stories deeply rooted in place yet universally accessible. Series that once might have remained within national borders are now traveling widely, subtitled and dubbed for audiences far beyond Italy. This global distribution has fundamentally changed how Italian series are conceived and produced. One of the most emblematic examples is Mare Fuori, set in a juvenile detention center in Naples. Its success has extended well beyond Italy, driven by a combination of strong characters, a compelling emotional core, and a soundtrack that resonates with younger audiences. Actors such as Massimiliano Caiazzo and Carolina Crescentini have become widely recognizable, while the show itself demonstrates how local settings can generate global engagement. Earlier productions helped pave the way. Suburra, released on Netflix, introduced international viewers to a darker, more complex vision of Rome, blending crime, politics, and

Carolina Crescentini

Suburra

personal drama. Directed in part by filmmakers like Michele Placido and featuring actors such as Alessandro Borghi, the series showcased a more cinematic approach to television, with high production values and layered storytelling. At the same time, a new generation of creators is reshaping the language of Italian series. Directors like Sydney Sibilia and Francesca Mazzoleni are experimenting with tone and structure, blending genres and pushing beyond traditional television conventions. Their work reflects a broader trend in which the boundaries between cinema and television are increasingly blurred.

This evolution is also evident in the visual style of recent productions. Italian series today often feature carefully crafted cinematography, dynamic camera work, and attention to lighting and composition that rivals feature films. Projects like L'amica geniale, based on Elena Ferrante's novels and directed by filmmakers including Saverio Costanzo, exemplify this shift. The series combines literary depth with a strong visual identity, creating a product that feels both intimate and expansive.

Actors, too, are navigating this changing landscape. Performers such as Matilda De Angelis and Eduardo Scarpetta move fluidly between cinema and television, reflecting a broader integra-

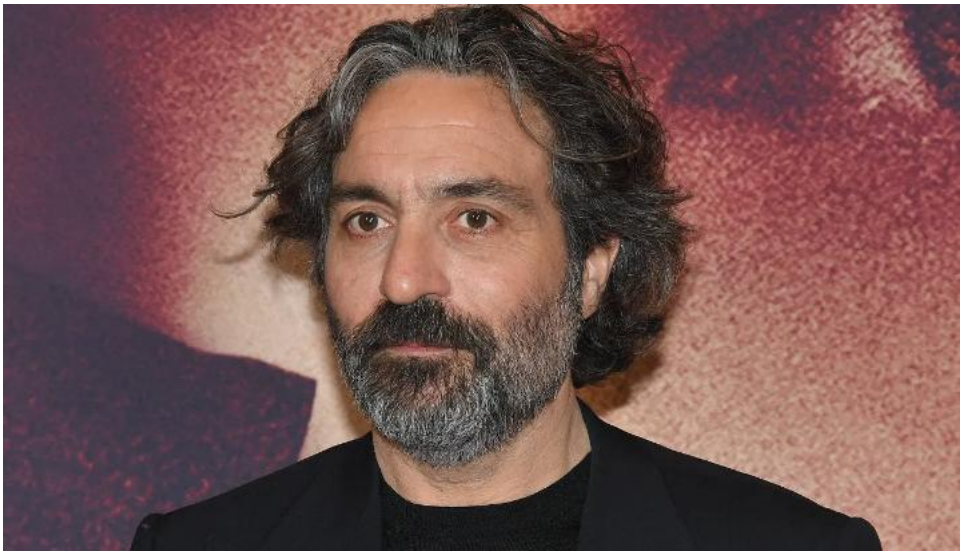
Sydney Sibilia

tion of the two industries. For emerging talents, streaming platforms offer visibility that was previously difficult to achieve, allowing them to reach audiences far beyond Italy.

The reasons behind this transformation are both economic and cultural. Streaming platforms bring increased budgets and international distribution, but they also demand stories that can travel. Italian creators have responded by focusing on themes that resonate globally – identity, power, youth, and social change – while maintaining a strong sense of place. Cities like Naples and Rome are not just backdrops but integral elements of the narrative, contributing to the authenticity that distinguishes Italian productions. Yet this global expansion also presents challenges. As Italian series become more international, there is a risk of losing the specificity that makes them unique. Balancing local identity with global appeal remains a central tension. At the same time, competition is intense,

Francesca Mazzoleni

Saverio Costanzo

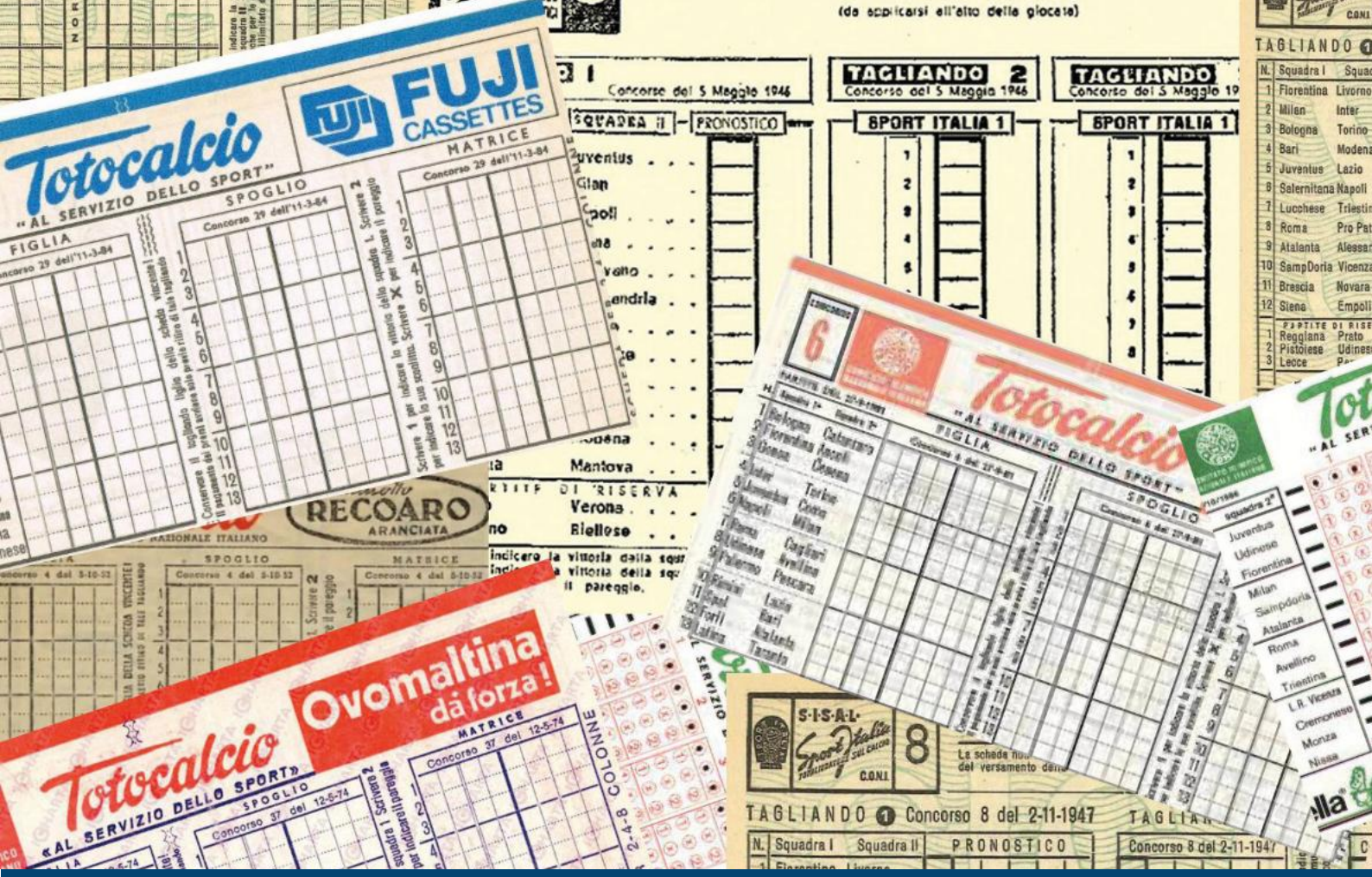


with productions from around the world vying for attention on the same platforms.

Despite these challenges, the trajectory is clear. Italian television is no longer confined to a national framework. It is becoming part of a broader, interconnected entertainment landscape in which quality, originality, and visual ambition are essential. The shift toward more cinematic storytelling is not simply a stylistic choice but a reflection of deeper changes in how stories are produced, distributed, and consumed. In this new context, Italian series are finding a voice that is both rooted and global. They are no longer just television – they are a form of storytelling that stands alongside cinema, capable of reaching audiences worldwide while preserving a distinct cultural identity.

Eduardo Scarpetta

Matilda De Angelis



Italian sport

Totocalcio, 80 years of Italian passion for betting on soccer

Federico Pasquali

There is an object that, from the postwar years onward, slipped into Italians' pockets every week as naturally as a wallet or a set of keys. It was a thin sheet of paper, originally cream-colored, with thirteen lines and three boxes marked with symbols: 1, X, 2. It was called the schedina - the betting slip - and it carried the name of a game that shaped Italy's social, cultural, and even linguistic history after World War II: Totocalcio. Totocalcio was officially born on May 5, 1946, eighty years ago, when Italy was still clearing the rubble of World War II. The idea came from Massimo Della Pergola, a Milanese jour-

nalist inspired by British football pools, which were already popular in England. The Italian National Olympic Committee embraced the project enthusiastically, seeing it as a tool with a dual purpose: to raise funds for national sports - not just soccer - and to offer Italians a small weekly dream at a time when dreams cost little but meant everything.

The mechanism was as simple as it was appealing: players predicted the outcomes of thirteen soccer matches from Serie A and Serie B, choosing for each one a home win (1), a draw (X), or an away win (2). Anyone who correctly guessed all thirteen results won the top prize, the legendary "tredici (thirteen)."

The odds were extremely low - on average, about one winner for every 4.5 million tickets played - but that didn't discourage anyone. On the contrary,

Massimo Della Pergola

within a few years the schedina became a collective ritual. In the 1950s and 1960s, Totocalcio became a true mass phenomenon, profiting from the huge success of soccer in Italy. Every week, millions of Italians went to local betting outlets - small tobacco shops and bars scattered across the country - to fill out their slips with a pen. It became a ritual gesture, almost sacred. Some people studied sports newspapers for days, others consulted almanacs and statistics, while many relied on superstition or dreams. On Friday evenings and Saturday mornings, lively debates over predictions filled taverns, cafés, and barbershops: the derby, the big match, the hardest game to call, the risky pick. It became a shared language that crossed social classes, generations, and regional boundaries.

Especially until the 1970s, Totocalcio was more than just a game. It represented a tangi-

ble hope of changing one's life in an Italy that was still poor and undergoing transformation. Hitting the "tredici" was the dream of social mobility: a new home, a brand-new Fiat 500, a family vacation by the sea. And even when the jackpot didn't come, the betting slip remained a symbol of collective participation in the life of the country. Everyone played: factory workers and professors, homemakers and shopkeepers alike.

The Totocalcio slip became so famous that it entered the imagery and language of cinema, literature, and everyday speech, with a cultural impact few popular phenomena can claim. Italian comedy films, in particular, immortalized Totocalcio as a mirror of the national soul: actors like Alberto Sordi, Nino Manfredi, and Ugo Tognazzi often portrayed characters for whom the betting slip symbolized hope for a better life.

Enduring expressions entered common language. "Fare tredici (to guess all the thirteen results)" became synonymous with an extraordinary stroke of luck, an almost impossible feat achieved. "Giocare la schedina (Playing the slip)" became a metaphor for any risky gamble in life. Even today, eighty years after its invention, an Italian might say of someone who has had incredible luck, "Ha fatto

tredici," even if they have never set foot in a betting shop or filled out a slip.

Between the 1950s and the 1980s, Totocalcio reached its peak. Prize pools grew, winners became public figures, and their stories filled newspapers and TV news. There was the retiree from Naples who won everything with a ticket that cost just a few lire, and the family from Turin that shared the winnings among twelve factory coworkers. Real stories turned into urban legends, feeding the collective dream of a country that still believed in fate and luck as democratic forces, capable of knocking on anyone's door. Then the 1990s marked the beginning of Totocalcio's decline.

The arrival of instant lotteries - scratch-off tickets offering cash prizes - and above all the SuperEnalotto, launched in 1997 with enormous jackpots, drew players away from the old game. But the hardest blow came with the liberalization of sports betting: suddenly Italians could wager on any sporting event in the world, with variable odds, through hundreds of agencies and eventually online. The Saturday betting slip, with its fixed thirteen predictions, suddenly seemed outdated, slow,

and limited.

Soccer itself changed. The rise of pay TV meant that Serie A and Serie B matches were no longer all played on Sundays but spread across different days, disrupting the schedules on which Totocalcio had been built. The identity of the game crumbled along with its foundations.

Today, Totocalcio still exists, but it is only a shadow of its former self. There are fewer players, smaller prize pools, and fewer places where slips can be found. Yet in a changing Italy, that cream-colored slip with thirteen lines remains a valuable historical document.

It tells the story of a country that, for fifty years, turned eleven players against eleven into a collective ritual of hope - one that united Italy beyond fandom and politics, around a sheet of paper and three possibilities: 1, X, 2. And around the dream of one day being able to say: Ho fatto tredici.

Italian land and nature

Le lame rosse, a hidden canyon in the heart of Italy

We the Italians Editorial Staff

In a country often defined by Renaissance cities, coastal villages, and rolling vineyards, it is easy to overlook a more unexpected side of Italy. Deep in the Monti Sibillini, in the Marche region, lies a landscape that feels almost out of place: Le Lame Rosse, a series of striking red rock formations shaped by time, erosion, and silence.

Located near the small town of Fiastra, Le Lame Rosse is one of the most unusual natural sites in central Italy. The formations rise like jagged spires from the earth, their reddish tones contrasting sharply with the surrounding greenery. They are the result of thousands of years of geological processes, where wind and water have carved the sedimentary

rock into narrow pinnacles and steep ridges. The effect is dramatic and unexpected – a landscape that evokes distant deserts or canyons rather than the familiar imagery of the Italian peninsula.

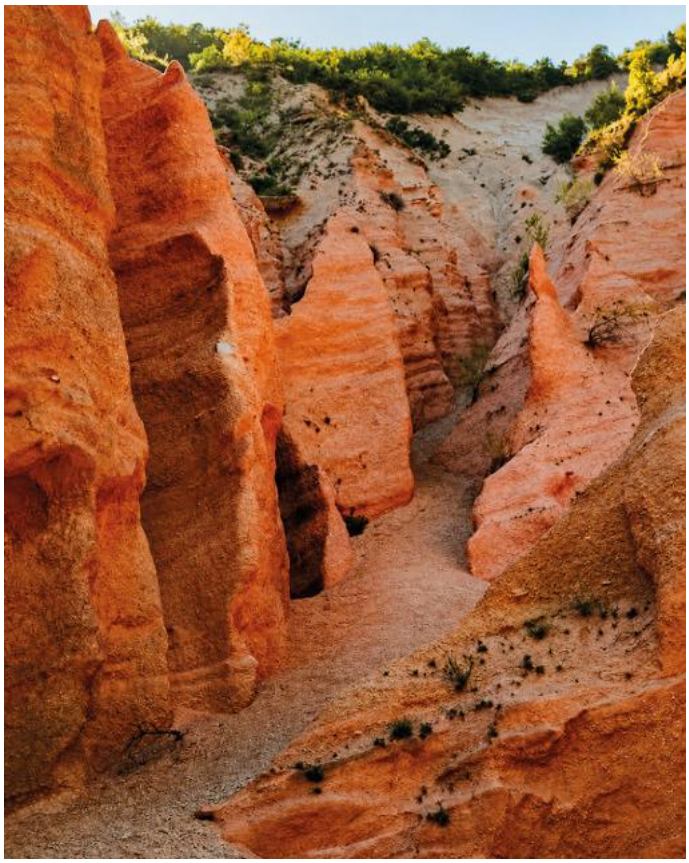
What makes the experience even more compelling is the journey required to reach it.

Le Lame Rosse cannot be accessed by car. Visitors must follow a hiking trail that begins near Lake Fiastra, gradually moving away from the water and into the wooded hills. The path takes roughly 1h30–2h round trip, depending on pace, and unfolds through a variety of environments: forested areas, open clearings, and rocky slopes. This gradual transition builds anticipation, making the final arrival at the formations feel almost cinematic.

As the trail narrows and the vegetation thins, the first glimpses of red appear through the trees. Then, suddenly, the landscape opens

up. The pinnacles stand in clusters, some tall and slender, others broader and more eroded, all shaped by the same natural forces. There is a sense of stillness in the air, broken only by wind or distant sounds from the valley below. Unlike more famous natural landmarks, Le Lame Rosse remains relatively quiet, offering a rare opportunity to experience a dramatic landscape without crowds.

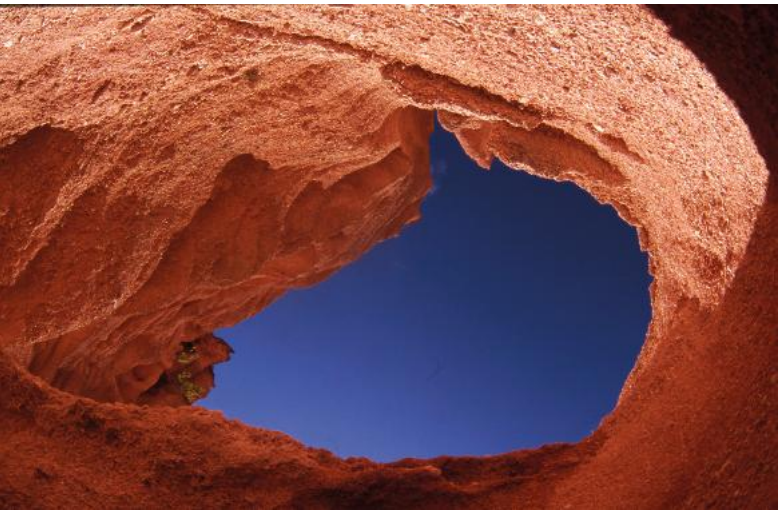
The surrounding territory adds to its uniqueness. Just a short distance away lies Lake Fiastra, with its clear waters and gentle shoreline, creating a striking contrast with the dry, sculpted terrain of the formations. Beyond that, the Monti Sibillini rise with their rolling peaks and wide plateaus, known for their biodiversity and seasonal transformations. This proximity of different environments – water, forest, and canyon-like formations – gives the



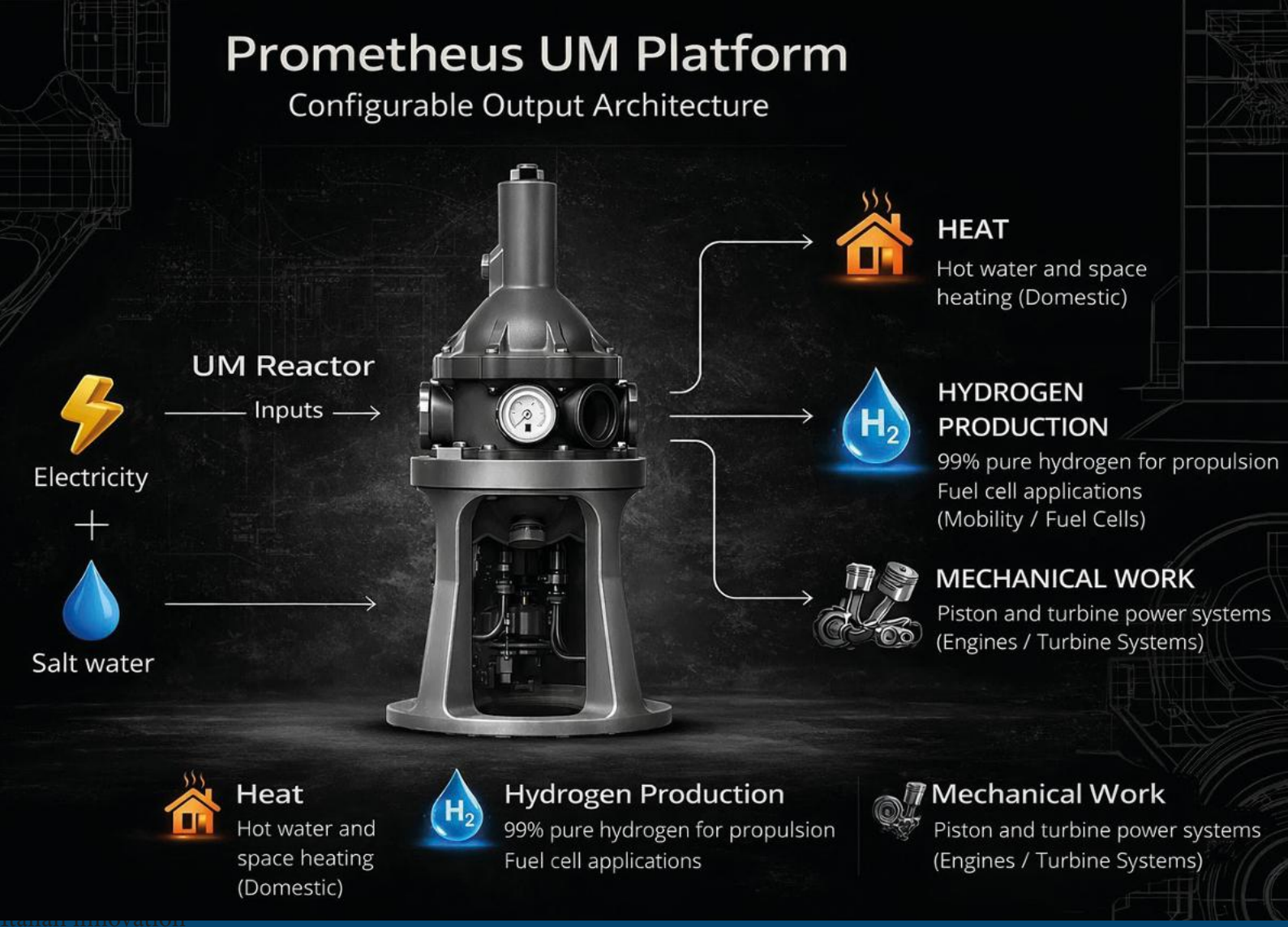
area a layered and dynamic character.

Le Lame Rosse also reflects a broader quality of the Marche region itself: a balance between nature and relative obscurity. While Italy is filled with iconic destinations, places like this remain largely under the radar, known mainly to locals and a smaller number of travelers willing to venture beyond the usual routes. This lack of mass tourism preserves a sense of authenticity that is increasingly rare.

At the same time, the site is not entirely untouched. The trail is marked, and the area is protected, ensuring that access remains possible while limiting environmental impact. Visitors are encouraged to approach the landscape with respect, staying on designated paths and recognizing the fragility of the formations. The same forces that created Le Lame Rosse continue to shape it, slowly altering its form over time.



What makes Le Lame Rosse remarkable is not just its visual impact but its ability to challenge expectations. It reveals a different Italy – one defined not by monuments or cities, but by geological time and natural transformation. For those willing to walk a little further and look a little closer, it offers a rare and memorable encounter with the country's quieter, more elemental side.



Italian innovation

A new Italian reactor aims to produce nuclear energy without uranium

We the Italians Editorial Staff

A new energy technology developed in Italy is drawing attention for its claim to generate nuclear reactions without using uranium or other conventional radioactive materials. The system, created by Prometheus Reactor, is based on Low Energy Nuclear Reactions (LENR), a controversial but increasingly discussed field as global demand for cleaner energy grows. Unlike traditional nuclear power plants, which rely on fission

and heavy elements such as uranium or plutonium, this approach uses only water and electricity. The company states that its process can produce heat, hydrogen, and usable energy without emissions and without generating radioactive waste. This would represent a major shift compared to conventional nuclear systems, which require complex infrastructure and strict waste management protocols. The technology operates at relatively low temperatures compared to both fission and experimental fusion systems. Instead of extreme heat and pressure, LENR attempts to trigger reactions at the atomic level through mechanisms such as cavitation in liquids or interactions within metal lattices. These processes are designed to release energy in a more controlled and compact way.

Prometheus is currently developing a line of microreactors, including the so-called UM series, which is reported to be in advanced testing stages. Early data suggests the system may be capable of producing more energy than it consumes – a threshold known as Q > 1. Achieving this balance is considered a critical milestone in any energy technology, especially in experimental nuclear research.

One of the most notable aspects of the project is its potential for decentralized use. Instead of large power stations, these reactors could theoretically be installed in industrial facilities, cooling systems, or even residential heating units such as boilers. The idea of small-scale nuclear energy devices integrated into everyday infrastructure would mark a major transformation in how energy is produced and distributed. Some projections suggest that initial commercial applications

could appear within about 3 years. However, this timeline depends on multiple factors, including technical validation, regulatory approval, and industrial scalability. The concept of "home-based nuclear reactions" remains highly debated and raises important questions about safety standards and certification.

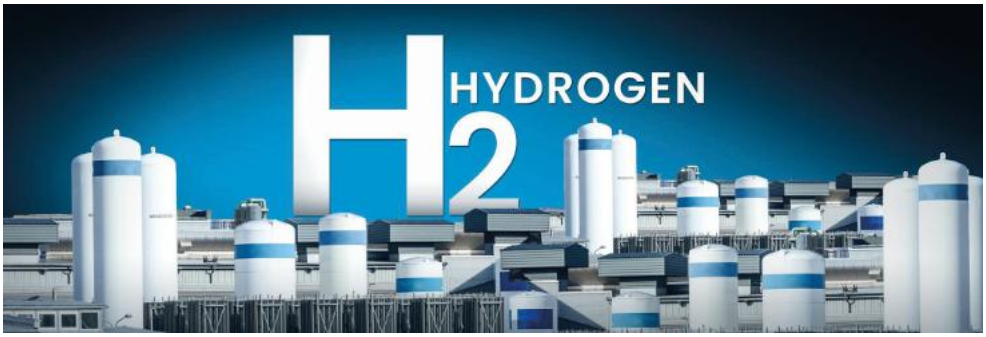
The Italian context adds another layer to the story. Since the shutdown of its nuclear plants after the Chernobyl disaster in 1986, Italy has not produced nuclear energy domestically.

Today, the country is reconsidering nuclear options as part of its long-term energy strategy, with potential policy developments expected by 2027. Globally, interest in alternative nuclear technologies is increasing. LENR and similar approaches are being explored as possible solutions to reduce emissions and improve energy efficiency.

Some analysts believe that the period between 2025–2026 could be crucial for early-stage commercialization and increased investment in these technologies.

Despite growing interest, skepticism within the scientific community remains strong. LENR has faced criticism for decades due to inconsistent experimental results and limited reproducibility. For Prometheus, the key challenge will be to demonstrate consistent performance, scalability, and safety under real-world conditions.

If proven effective, this type of reactor could have a significant impact. A compact system capable of generating heat and hydrogen with 0 emissions would reshape industries ranging from manufacturing to residential energy use. For now, however, the technology remains a promising but unverified development in the evolving global energy landscape.



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

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

"L'Occidente non è in crisi: sta cambiando forma.
E non tornerà quella di prima."

amazon

For readers who live across the Atlantic and still choose to think in Italian.
Read it. Reflect on it.
Join the conversation.

My life in Italy

Moving to Italy is no longer about finding a house. Thankfully

Matteo Cerri

For years, Americans have approached Italy roughly the same way people approach an online furniture catalogue after a difficult week at work: emotionally, impulsively and with an almost heroic level of optimism about how simple life will become once they relocate somewhere with better tomatoes and fewer conference calls.

The formula has become familiar. Somebody spends two weeks in Tuscany, discovers that aperitivo is cheaper than therapy, returns home emotionally compromised by olive oil and medi-

eval villages, and within months starts browsing stone farmhouses online while announcing to friends that they are "moving to Italy."

At which point reality usually enters the conversation carrying seventeen bureaucratic forms, three contradictory tax opinions, a geometra who disappears during Ferragosto and a local office that only accepts appointments through a portal seemingly designed during the collapse of the Roman Empire.

Because here is the uncomfortable truth nobody really explains properly at the beginning: moving to Italy has very little to do with finding the ideal property.

The property is often the easiest part. The real question is whether Italy actually works for the life you are trying to build. And that conversation has become dramatically more sophisticated over the last decade.

Italy today is no longer attracting only retirees and romantic dreamers escaping corporate America after watching too many episodes of Under the Tuscan Sun. Increasingly, the people arriving are remote workers, entrepreneurs, founders, international families, consultants, creatives and highly mobile professionals questioning whether spending extraordinary amounts of money simply to survive inside major global cities still makes much sense.

At the same time, Italy itself has become more complex precisely because opportunities have expanded. Different visas, tax incentives, residency schemes and regional ecosystems now create possibilities that barely existed

twenty years ago. But they also create confusion, because Italy is not one experience.

Puglia is not Milan. Milan is not Sicily. Sicily is not Lake Como.

And perhaps most importantly, the life that works beautifully for a retired couple from Arizona may be a complete disaster for a thirty-five-year-old founder managing a business across three time zones. Yet much of the international conversation still treats Italy as if it were a decorative concept rather than an actual country.

People speak about "moving to Italy" almost the same way they speak about "getting into yoga," as though the entire nation functions as one giant interchangeable lifestyle package featuring pasta, Vespa scooters and emotionally satisfying sunsets. It does not.

Some regions are extraordinary for families but terrible for business connectivity. Some are affordable but isolated. Some are glamorous but economically irrational. Some are ideal for slow living until you realise slow living occasionally means waiting four months for somebody to answer an email. Some towns remain alive year-round. Others become ghost villages the moment summer tourists disappear.

And then there is the question nobody likes addressing publicly because it slightly ruins the fantasy: not everybody actually wants the same version of Italy once they arrive.

Some people discover they love the chaos. Others realise after six months that what they actually missed was efficiency.

Some want integration. Others simply want scenery. Some dream about authenticity until authenticity involves mu-

nicipal offices opening whenever they feel spiritually aligned with the concept of opening. This is precisely why the relocation conversation has evolved so dramatically in recent years.

The old model no longer works. The idea that people can navigate one of the most important lifestyle transitions of their lives through scattered Facebook groups, random WhatsApp contacts and "a guy my cousin knows near Lucca" has started looking increasingly absurd.

Because relocation today is not really a property transaction. It is a strategic life design project involving taxation, healthcare, schools, bureaucracy, visas, renovation planning, legal compliance, infrastructure and long-term sustainability.

In other words, exactly the sort of thing Italians themselves tend to approach by shouting "tranquillo" immediately before everything becomes unnecessarily complicated. Which is why, after years accompanying hundreds of international residents through this process across Italy, we eventually reached a conclusion that was simultaneously obvious and slightly embarrassing: the entire expe-


FOOD MENU

rience needed redesigning from the ground up.

Not just aesthetically. Operationally.

Frankly, it became increasingly ridiculous that in 2026 people relocating internationally still had to manage their future through disconnected emails, forgotten attachments, untranslated documents and fifteen different professionals who often had no communication with one another whatsoever.

So we built something else. Or rather, we are finally building it properly after years of real-world experience, relocation cases handled through ITS Italy and collaborations with communities like We the Italians. Because over time one thing became obvious very quickly: people are not just searching for houses. They are searching for orientation, trust, simplicity and a sense that somebody finally understands the complexity of what they are trying to do without reducing it to a romantic cliché.

The new platform we are preparing to launch is not another generic property portal pretending to "sell the Italian dream." The internet already has enough of those. Instead, it is designed in the same spirit that has always guided ITS Italy itself: flexible, practical and surprisingly affordable considering the amount of coordination usually required behind international relocation projects.

The objective is eliminating enormous amounts of unnecessary friction. Endless coordination between lawyers, surveyors, accountants, municipalities and contractors who often speak limited English while clients speak limited Italian and both sides somehow end up smiling politely while understanding approximately forty percent of the conversation.

What we realised over time is that many people relocating to Italy were not actually paying primarily for expertise. They were paying for fragmentation. For inefficiency. For confusion. For the exhausting process of trying to hold together ten disconnected moving parts at once. So the objective became radically simple: create one visible environment where everything finally exists together coherently.

One dashboard. One ecosystem. One shared point of reference capable of helping users understand where they are, what they still need and what practical steps come next.

And this is where artificial intel-

ligence becomes genuinely useful rather than simply fashionable. Because with the support of AI, processes that traditionally required enormous manual coordination suddenly become dramatically more efficient and therefore accessible at a fraction of the historical cost.

But - and this matters enormously - there are still humans behind the final interface. Always.

Because moving countries is emotional, personal and occasionally chaotic in ways no algorithm fully understands.

Technology should simplify the experience, not sterilise it. Perhaps the funniest part is that the whole thing feels strangely un-Italian in execution: smooth, integrated, user-friendly and occasionally even efficient.

Which is ironic considering the platform itself was conceived in Puglia together with Italian technical teams led by Vincenzo Belpiede and professionals who spent decades living and working in the United States before collaborating with us.

Because to build something genuinely useful for Americans moving to Italy, you probably need a brain capable of thinking comfortably in both worlds at once.

And if while reading this article you recognised yourself even slightly - the exhaustion with hyper-optimised lifestyles, the suspicion that there may be better ways to live, the fascination with Italy mixed with complete confusion about how to approach it seriously - then perhaps this platform was designed with you in mind. Or at the very least, with the version of you that has already spent three evenings secretly browsing properties in Tuscany while pretending to answer work emails.

Italian sustainability

Sustainable packaging reshapes Italian grocery choices

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Sustainable packaging is no longer a secondary detail in Italy's grocery habits but a decisive factor shaping how people shop and eat. Recent research shows that more than 7 out of 10 Italians – about 70% – consider packaging sustainability when choosing food products, confirming a major shift in consumer awareness and priorities. While quality and price still dominate decision-making for roughly 90% of shoppers, environmental impact is rapidly gaining ground. Around 77% of

consumers say the sustainability of packaging influences their purchases, followed by 75% who value practicality, such as resealable or portion-friendly designs, and 72% who pay attention to the type of material used.

This transformation reflects broader changes in lifestyle. Today, 98% of Italians still cook at home, with 83% doing so daily, but eating habits have become more flexible. About 49% of the population uses food delivery services, rising to 73% among people aged 18–30. Takeout is now common for 63% of consumers, while 48% regularly consume food on the go.

As a result, packaging has evolved from a simple container into a key element of the overall food experience. It plays a role not only in preserving products but also in communicating values such as sustainability, transparency, and convenience. Materials like paper and cardboard are increasingly preferred, especially for their recyclability, cited by 48% of respondents, along with perceived environmental benefits and lighter weight.

This growing attention is also tied to environmental concerns. Globally, waste and packaging pollution rank among the top issues for consumers, reinforcing the demand for more responsible solutions. In Italy, this awareness translates into concrete purchasing behavior, with packaging becoming a visible and meaningful part of everyday choices.

The data highlights a cultural shift: packaging is no longer invisible but an active driver in the shopping process. As sustainability becomes embedded in daily life, companies are increasingly required to design solutions that balance functionality, environmental responsibility, and consumer expectations.

Italian flavors

Fontina of the Aosta Valley, a taste of Alpine tradition

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Fontina from the Aosta Valley is one of Italy's most distinctive and deeply rooted cheeses, a product that perfectly reflects its mountainous homeland.

Produced exclusively in the alpine region of Valle d'Aosta in northwestern Italy, Fontina is a protected designation of origin (PDO) cheese, meaning every stage of its production must take place within this specific territory. Its identity is inseparable from the landscape, the climate, and the centuries-old traditions of local farmers.

The flavor of Fontina is rich, complex, and unmistakably tied to the mountain pastures where the cows graze. When

young, the cheese has a delicate, buttery taste with hints of fresh milk and wild herbs.

As it ages, Fontina develops a deeper, nuttier profile with subtle earthy undertones and a lingering savory finish. Its aroma is equally expressive, often evoking alpine flowers, damp hay, and the cool air of high-altitude meadows. The texture is smooth and supple, with a slight elasticity that makes it ideal both for table consumption and for melting.

One of the defining characteristics of Fontina is its exceptional melting quality. It becomes creamy and velvety without separating, which makes it a key ingredient in traditional dishes such as fonduta, the Aosta Valley's version of fondue.

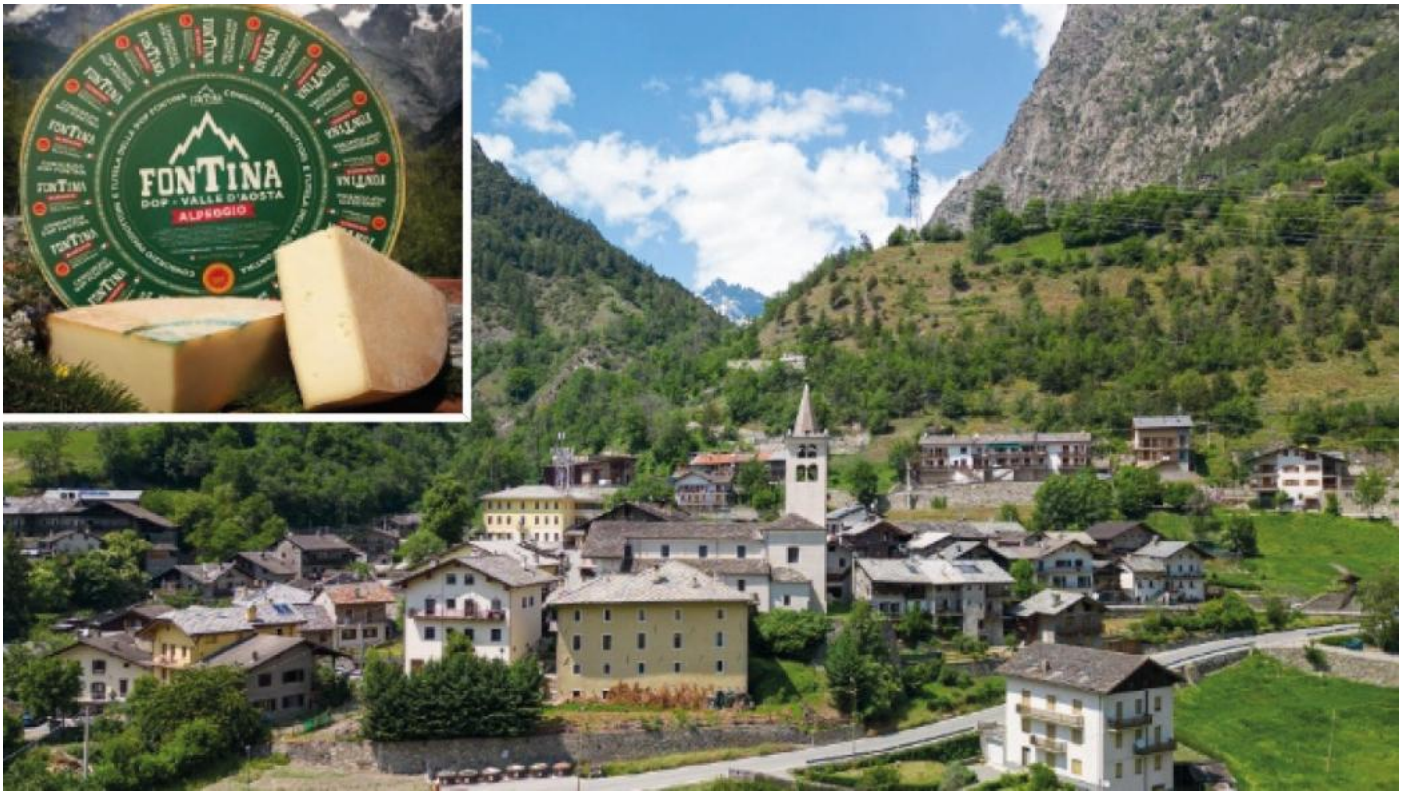
In this preparation, Fontina is gently melted with milk, butter, and egg yolks to create a luxurious sauce that is typically served with bread or polenta. This culinary versatility has helped the cheese gain international recognition while remaining firmly anchored in local tradition.

What truly sets Fontina apart, however, is the way it is produced. The cheese is made from raw milk obtained from a single milking of native Valdostana cows, which are raised on alpine pastures during the summer months. These

cows feed on a wide variety of grasses and herbs, which directly influence the flavor of the milk and, ultimately, the cheese.

The use of raw milk preserves the natural microflora, contributing to the complexity and uniqueness of Fontina's taste. After the curds are formed and pressed into characteristic wheel shapes, the cheeses are aged for a minimum of three months in natural caves or specially designed cellars. These environments maintain consistent humidity and temperature levels, allowing the cheese to mature slowly and develop its signature qualities. During this period, each wheel is regularly turned and brushed, a careful process that requires skill and attention. The rind becomes thin and brownish, while the interior takes on a pale yellow color dotted with small, irregular holes.

The history of Fontina dates back at least to the Middle Ages, with some references appearing in documents and paintings from the 12th century. It is believed that the name may derive from the village of Fontinaz or from a local fami-



ly name, though its exact origin remains debated. What is certain is that Fontina has been a staple of the Aosta Valley for centuries, providing nourishment in a region where agriculture is shaped by altitude and harsh winters.

The territory itself plays a crucial role in defining Fontina's identity. Valle d'Aosta is Italy's smallest region, surrounded by some of Europe's highest peaks, including Mont Blanc and the Matterhorn.

The alpine environment, with its dramatic seasonal changes, creates ideal conditions for transhumance – the traditional movement of livestock between valley floors and high-altitude pastures.

This practice ensures that cows have access to fresh, nutrient-rich forage throughout the year, enhancing the quality of the milk. In essence, Fontina is more than just a cheese; it is a living expression of a unique ecosystem and cultural heritage. Every wheel tells the story of the land, the animals, and the people who continue to preserve this remarkable tradition.

Italian industrial districts

Lavello corsetry district, from post-earthquake recovery to industrial specialization

We the Italians Editorial Staff

The corsetry district of Lavello, in Basilicata, stands out as one of the most unusual and unconventional industrial clusters in Italy. Unlike many districts in the North that developed from centuries-old craft traditions, this one emerged almost from scratch, transforming a small agricultural town in the Vulture-Melfese area into a specialized hub for women's lingerie production.

Its origins are closely tied to a traumatic event: the 1980 Irpinia earthquake. Before then, Lavello had only about 33 local businesses in the textile sector, mostly small tailoring operations with no real industrial focus. In the aftermath of reconstruction, new dynamics took shape. Local cooperatives, connections with external entrepreneurs, and support from other Italian regions - especially Emilia-Ro-

magna - helped introduce new skills and organizational models. In the following years, this early framework expanded rapidly thanks to a combination of factors. On one hand, there was a large supply of female labor, often low-cost but highly adaptable.

On the other, there was strong social cohesion and a widespread need to create stable employment in a region with limited industrial alternatives. The result was the development of a network of small and medium-sized enterprises specializing in bras, corsets, and structured lingerie.

By the late 1990s and early 2000s, the district had reached significant scale. Around 2000, production was estimated at 4-5 million garments per year, accounting for roughly 20% of Italy's total output in the sector. These are notable figures, especially considering the small size of the area and the absence of a long-standing manufacturing tradition. Geographically, Lavello occupies a strategic position at the intersection of Basilicata, Puglia, and Campania, in the Ofanto valley. This location has facilitated logistics and connections with other industrial areas, particularly in central and northern Italy, effectively creating a bridge between different parts of the country.

The district also grew through relationships with external companies that outsourced part of their production while retaining design and commercial control. One of its most distinctive features lies precisely in this dynamic. The Lavello corsetry district did not evolve from a historical manufacturing culture but from a process of industrial "grafting." It demonstrates how imported expertise can quickly take root when supported by favorable social and economic conditions.

In this sense, Lavello represents an atypical district model - closer to a modern construction than to an organic evolution. Over time, local firms organized

themselves into a coordinated system, supported in part by regional institutions. The Corsetry District was formally recognized as a tool to improve competitiveness, encourage innovation, and support the international expansion of local companies. The goal has been to strengthen the area's productive identity and position it more effectively in both domestic and global markets.

From a production standpoint, the district has traditionally focused on the mid-to-low market segment, characterized by high volumes and standardized processes. However, this specialization has also led to the development of precise technical skills, particularly in working with elastic fabrics and constructing complex garments like bras, which require a high level of accuracy and craftsmanship.

Today, the district faces new challenges, including global competition and the relocation of produc-

tion to countries with lower labor costs. Despite this, it remains one of the most important industrial realities in Basilicata, alongside the automotive hub of Melfi and other regional production systems.

The corsetry district of Lavello is a striking example of rapid and targeted economic transformation. Born out of crisis, it built its identity through the combination of local resources and external expertise. More than a tradition, it is the result of a strategy - an industrial system developed over just a few decades that has left a lasting impact on the local economy.

Interview to Elisa Coccia

From immigration to culture: the living legacy of the Coccia Family

Umberto Mucci

There are institutions that are born from the generosity of individuals, and that outlive them after they are gone. They become a remarkable legacy – one that keeps their memory alive with gratitude and pride, honoring those who taught us so much and who will always remain with us. Today we share a story that embodies exactly this spirit, promoting Italy in New Jersey through a wide range of initiatives. We do so by welcoming Elisa Coccia, President of the Coccia Foundation, who continues with dedication and respect the work begun by her parents, Joseph and Elda

Coccia.

My first question is about your family and your Italian roots: which part of Italy do you come from, and how did your family arrive in the United States?

Our family story reflects the broader experience of Italian immigration to the United States. Between 1800 and 1920, more than four million Italians came to America, many settling in cities such as New York, Boston, and Chicago, where they contributed to infrastructure and helped shape American culture. My grandfather, Joseph Coccia, Sr., followed that path when he left Norcia, in the province of Perugia, in 1903 at the age of 17. He came in search of a better life, driven by poverty, unemployment, and limited opportunities. He began working in the mines in Pennsylvania, later married, and eventually moved to New Jersey, where he worked multiple jobs at the same time, including delivering ice, a business he would later own.

President Gerald Ford with Cav. Joseph Coccia, Jr

Elda and Cav. Joseph Coccia, Jr.

Their journey to America was long and difficult, traveling on a crowded ship with scarce food and very tight living conditions. Despite the hardship, it was also a moment of great joy, as the family was finally reunited after many years. Even then, their first year in the United States was filled with struggle and adjustment, and they still faced prejudice.

These experiences shaped the life of Joseph Coccia, Jr., who was born in 1929 during the Great Depression. From a young age, he helped his father with physically demanding work, delivering coal, oil, and ice,

while also attending school and learning Italian. His upbringing instilled a strong work ethic and a deep connection to Italian language, traditions, and values.

What is the history of the Coccia Foundation, and what are its main activities?

The Coccia Foundation was established in 1994 by Cavaliere Joseph Coccia, Jr. and Elda as a charitable organization dedicated to supporting educational and cultural initiatives, particularly for young people in the Italian and Italian American community. Over time, the foundation has focused on promoting awareness of Italian culture, history, and societal contributions, while also celebrating and preserving this heritage for future generations.

A central activity of the foundation is the creation of scholarships, especially for students who pursue Italian studies, either as a major or minor. These scholarships are not only financial support but also a way to build relationships with students as they move forward in their lives. The foundation also supports cultural

and educational events, often in collaboration with institutions of higher education, reinforcing its mission to keep Italian heritage active and meaningful.

The motto of the Coccia Foundation is "Passing the torch": what does it mean?

"Passing the torch" represents the foundation's mission and vision. It is not only symbolic, but essential for the survival, relevance, and growth of the Italian and Italian American community. It means preserving cultural identity by ensuring that traditions rooted in language, history, and values are actively transmitted to younger generations. Without this effort, those traditions can quickly fade.

It also ensures continuity, because organizations depend on new generations to remain active and strong. Younger people bring new energy, ideas, and perspectives, helping the foundation evolve while still honoring its origins. At the same time, it fosters a sense of belonging, encouraging young people to stay connected to


COCCIA
FOUNDATION
SINCE 1994
"PASSING THE TORCH"
to Future Generations
Cav. Joseph Coccia, Jr.
Elda Coccia - Founders
AED

Joseph Coccia, Jr. passing the torch to Elisa Coccia

their heritage and to give back to their community.

Ultimately, "passing the torch" is about respecting the legacy of Italian immigrants, who built these communities through sacrifice and determination, while ensuring that their legacy continues to thrive. It is about preserving the past, strengthening the present, and securing the future.

Your academic spin-off is the "Joseph and Elda Coccia Institute for the Italian Experience in America": please tell us about it

The Joseph and Elda Coccia Institute for the Italian Experience in America was established in 2003 at Montclair State University as the academic arm of the foundation. It is part of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences and focuses on promoting Italian and Italian American culture within an academic setting. Its key initiatives include annual Teaching Italian Symposiums, where educators come together to discuss innovative teaching methods and Italian language education. The Institute also organizes cultural events in partnership with various organizations, such as the Italian Flag Raising event at the university. In addition, it promotes community engagement by collaborating with Ital-

ian businesses and organizations, helping to strengthen cultural exchange and connections.

A question about the Coccia Institute's study abroad program: why are these study abroad programs in Italy so popular among American students, especially Italian Americans?

Studying in Italy offers a unique experience that goes beyond traditional academics. It combines education with real-life cultural immersion, allowing students to live within the history, art, and architecture that define the country. Cities like Rome and Florence become part of the learning experience, where culture is present in everyday life.

Italy is especially attractive for fields such as art history, fashion, culinary arts, and language. Many universities have established partnerships with Italian institutions, making it easier for students to study abroad and transfer credits.

Students who participate in these programs often return with stronger language skills and a deeper understanding of Italian culture. They move beyond textbook learning and gain a more natural and authentic connection to the language. For many, this experience builds confidence, adaptability, and a broader perspective, and it often inspires a lasting passion for Italian culture and heritage.

What is the Coccia-Inserra Award?

The Coccia-Inserra Award for Excellence and Innovation in the Teaching of Italian was established in 2010 by Cavaliere Joseph Coccia, Jr. together with Lawrence R. Inserra, Jr. It recognizes exceptional educators who contribute to advancing the teaching of Italian language and culture.

The award is presented each year during the Teaching Italian Symposium at Montclair State University. Initially set at $1,000, it has grown to $5,000.

Half of the award is designated for professional development, while the other half is specifically intended to support Italian language and cultural programs within the recipient's classroom. This reflects the foundation's ongoing commitment to strengthening Italian education.

You are based in New Jersey, a state with a large Italian American community. Do you collaborate with Italian American organizations in the Garden State?

Yes, collaboration is an important part of our work. The foundation has partnered with and supported many Italian American organizations in the region, including AIAE, D'Italia Programs, the Federation of Italian American Societies of New Jersey, the Italian American Museum in New York, ITANJ, the Mario Lanza Institute, the New Jersey Heritage Commission, and UNICO National.

These collaborations allow us to support a wide range of cultural and educational initiatives, strengthening connections within the community and helping to promote Italian heritage across different generations. Through these partnerships, we continue to expand the reach and impact of our mission.

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Italian good news

Italy reaches record low in school dropout rates ahead of EU targets

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Italy has made rare and measurable progress against early school leaving, bringing the country to its lowest level on record. In 2025, the national rate fell to 8.2%, allowing Italy to beat the European Union's 2030 target of staying below 9% a full five years ahead of schedule. The change looks even more striking when set against recent history: the figure was 14.2% in 2020, 11.5% in 2022, 10.5% in 2023, and 9.8% in 2024.

That steady decline suggests that what once seemed like a chronic

structural weakness is now moving in the opposite direction. The result matters not only within Italy, but across Europe. Eurostat reports that the EU average for early leavers from education and training stood at 9.3% in 2024, with rates ranging from 2.0% in Croatia to 16.8% in Romania. Seventeen EU countries had already reached the sub-9% benchmark by 2024, while Germany remained at 12.4% and Spain at 13.0%. Italy's 2025 result therefore places it below the EU target and improves on its own 2024 position, when it was still slightly above that threshold.

One of the most encouraging signs is that improvement is no longer limited to a few stronger regions.

Official updates point to a rate of 8.4% in southern Italy in 2025, showing that the gap between the country's most fragile areas and its stronger ones is narrowing.

Among students with Italian citizenship only, the rate falls to 6.7%, a level that compares favorably with some of Europe's better-performing education systems. At the same time, the data also show where more work is needed, especially among students with migrant backgrounds and in communities where language, income, and access to services still create barriers to school completion.

Government officials and education observers have linked part of this progress to targeted anti-dropout policies, expanded full-time schooling, regional support measures, and vocational pathways tied more closely to the labor market.

A major role appears to have been played by dual-track vocational education and training. According to the Ministry of Labor, that system trained 189,000 young people compared with an original target of 90,000 – exceeding the goal by 100%. In southern regions, participation reached 250% of the initial target. The same ministry also pointed to €600 million in European Recovery Program funding for the 2022–2025 period, with annual national funding expected to rise above €500 million going forward.

Regional examples help explain the trend. In Campania, enrollment in dual vocational pathways rose from 734 students in 2020–2021 to 4,315 in 2024–2025, an increase of 588%.

Over that same period, successful completion climbed from 42% to 75%. Sicily also posted strong results, with 24,631 dual-training pathways completed successfully, placing it first in the South and third nationwide behind Lombardy and Veneto. Campania alone reportedly brought about 8,000 students back into regular attendance during the 2024–2025 school year. Together, these numbers suggest that Italy's progress is not just statistical – it reflects a broader attempt to keep more young people connected to education, skills, and future employment.

Italian economy

Italy and the US. Not only roots, but new infrastructures of trust

Fabrizio Fasani

For many years, the economic relationship between Italy and the United States has been described through a familiar image: Made in Italy crossing the Atlantic carrying food, fashion, design, machinery, pharmaceuticals, craftsmanship, and that uniquely Italian ability to transform quality into recognizable value.

These stories remain important because Italian products

carry more than merchandise. They reflect attention to detail, respect for materials, ties to local territories, and the belief that every product or service should offer something beyond its immediate function. Yet today the relationship between Italy and the United States can no longer be viewed only as Italian products reaching American consumers, or as the emotional connection between Italian Americans and their ancestral homeland. Those dimensions still matter, but they are no longer enough. In the emerging global landscape, the central issue is not simply selling products more effectively, but becoming part of the new infrastructures of trust.

For decades, globalization was built around efficiency. Production moved wherever labor costs were lower, supply chains stretched across continents, and businesses assumed the world would remain stable enough to support that model. Then came the pandemic, wars, energy shocks, trade tensions, technological rivalries, and fragile logistics systems. As a result, the language of economics changed. The discussion shifted from cost to security, from simple internationalization to reliable supply chains, and from convenience to strategic autonomy. This is where Italy may have a greater role to play than many people realize.

The United States remains Italy's leading non-European export market, but the real issue

is no longer only how much Italy sells. The key question is where Italy positions itself within the new American and European industrial systems, at a time when companies and governments are searching for reliable suppliers, secure technologies, and industrial partnerships less vulnerable to geopolitical pressure.

An example comes from Pirelli, which announced the production in the United States of Cyber Tyres – intelligent tires equipped with sensors capable of transmitting real-time vehicle data. Manufacturing these products at the company's plant in Rome, Georgia, represents much more than a standard industrial investment. It shows Italian manufacturing entering the world of connected mobility, data, and technological security, where the product is no longer simply rubber and performance, but part of a digital ecosystem.

For the Italian American community, this transformation creates a new role. Italian Americans are not only emotional ambassadors of Italy in the United States. They can also become interpreters of a more advanced economic bridge: professionals, entrepreneurs, executives, and investors who understand both cultures and can help Italy present itself in America not only through the appeal of its history, but through the strength of its industrial capabilities.

The history of Italians in America has always been an economic story as well – a story of work, entrepreneurship, adaptation, sacrifice, and credibility earned in a competitive and pragmatic country. Today, that story can evolve again.

The challenge is no longer limited to importing Italian excellence or celebrating cultural heritage. It now involves helping Italy compete in the supply chains of the future: semiconductors, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, robotics, automation, smart mobility, advanced manufacturing, and energy systems. Italy may not possess the largest capital markets or the greatest reserves of raw materials, but it excels at designing, transforming, integrating, certifying, producing components, building machinery, and managing complex industrial processes.

This is one of the least visible yet strongest sides of the Italian economy. Italy's industrial system includes highly specialized mid-sized companies, industrial districts, mechatronics, automation, packaging technologies, specialty chemicals, metallurgy, robotics, and process engineering. It is a less visible image of Italy than luxury fashion or cuisine, but it is equally representative of the country's identity.

In many ways, this may be the most modern expression of Made in Italy: not only creating beautiful finished products, but enabling the products of others to exist.

Italy often presents itself through beauty, history, and uniqueness. Those narratives remain powerful, but they are not always sufficient. In a world increasingly focused on secure supply chains and advanced technology, Italy must also present itself as a country capable of producing complexity with reliability.

That capability may become one of Italy's greatest competitive advantages in the United States. America is financially powerful, technologically dominant, and fast-moving, but it also needs partners capable of contributing specialized expertise, industrial culture, customization, process management, and long-term vision.

For this reason, the bridge between Italy and the United States is no longer only cultural or emotional – it is increasingly operational.

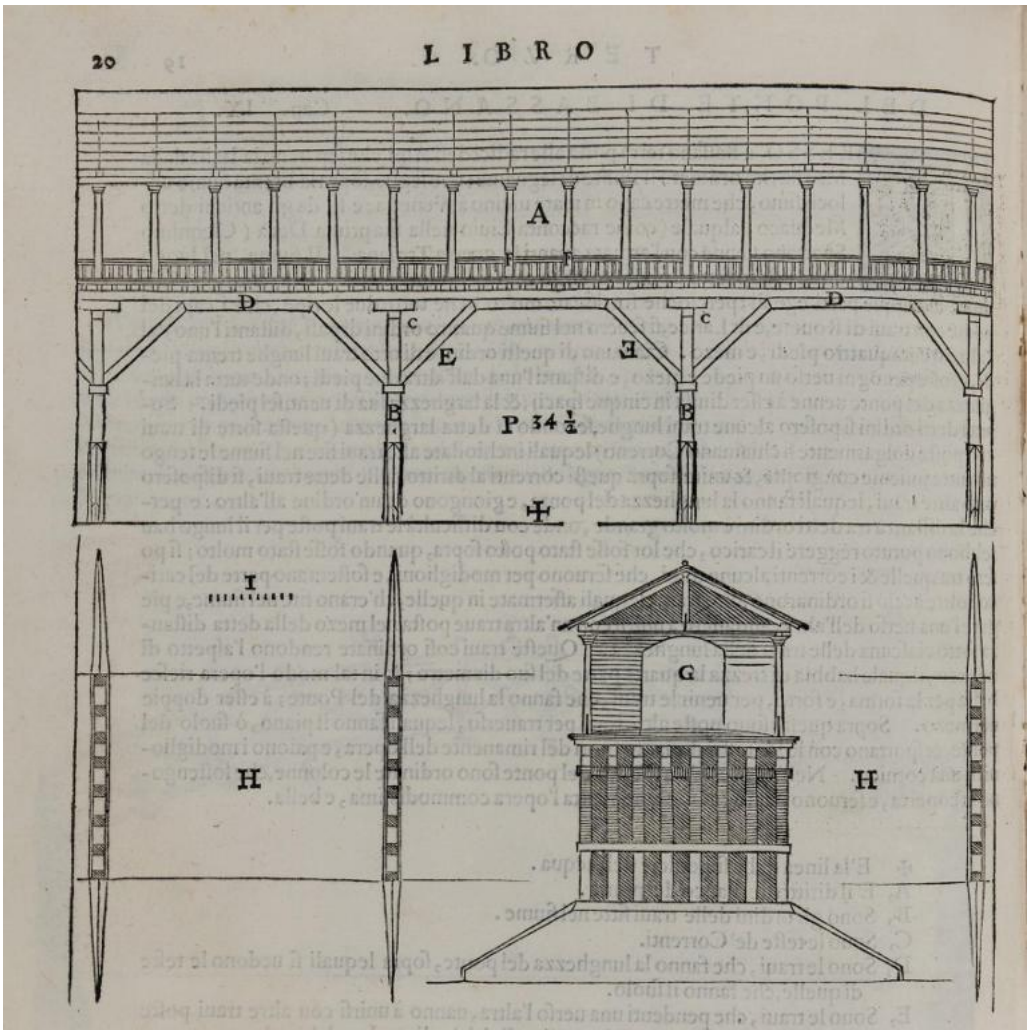
The future of the relationship between the two countries will not depend only on what Italy sells to America, but increasingly on what Italians and Americans will be able to build together.

Italian curiosities

The many lives of the bridge of Bassano del Grappa

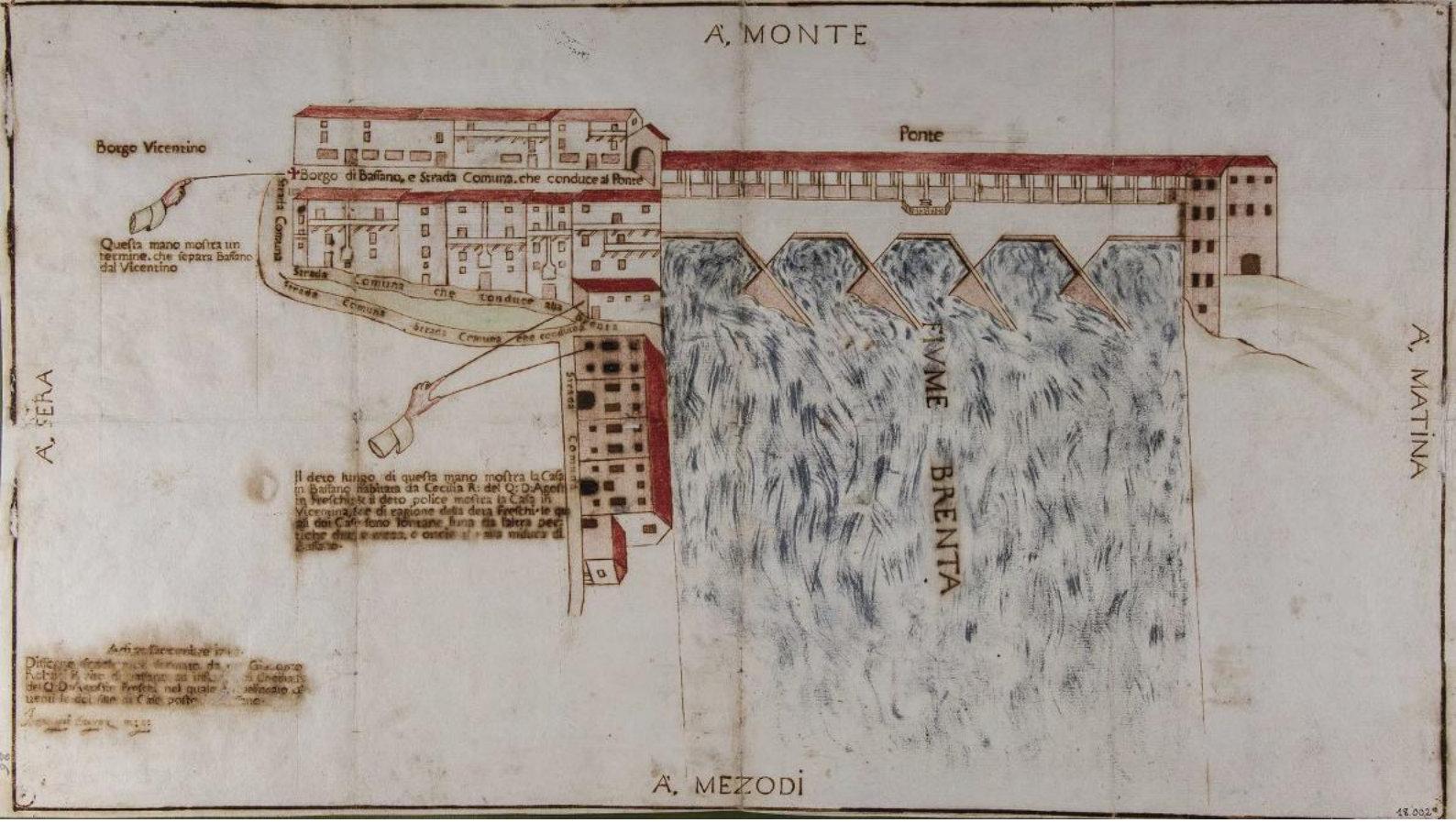
We the Italians Editorial Staff

Few landmarks in Italy embody resilience quite like the Ponte degli Alpini in Bassano del Grappa. Known simply as the Ponte di Bassano, this wooden bridge over the Brenta River has been destroyed and rebuilt multiple times across the centuries. Its current appearance, inspired by a 16th century design, hides a turbulent history marked by floods, wars, and human determination. The first bridge on this site dates back to the 13th century, when Bassano was an important commercial hub linking the Venetian



plains with Alpine routes. Built primarily of wood, the structure was practical but vulnerable. The Brenta River, fed by mountain waters, is known for its unpredictable floods, and early versions of the bridge were repeatedly swept away.

The turning point came in 1569, when the Venetian Republic commissioned the architect Andrea Palladio to design a new bridge. Palladio made an unusual choice. Instead of replacing wood with stone, which might seem more durable, he embraced timber but introduced a sophisticated engineering solution. His design used a system of angled supports that allowed the structure to withstand strong currents while remaining flexible. It was both elegant and functional, a hallmark of Palladio's genius.



Despite this innovation, nature proved relentless. The bridge was destroyed again in 1748 during a particularly violent flood. It was rebuilt following Palladio's original plans, a decision that established a tradition: every reconstruction would remain faithful to his design, turning the bridge into a living example of architectural continuity. The Napoleonic Wars brought another dramatic chapter. In 1813, during the retreat of French troops, the bridge was burned to slow advancing enemies. Once again, the people of Bassano rebuilt it, reaffirming its symbolic importance to the town.

Perhaps the most emotional connection to the bridge comes from its association with the Alpini, the elite mountain troops of the Italian army. During World War I, Bassano del Grappa was a strategic location near the front lines. Soldiers crossed the bridge on their way to the mountains, and many never returned. After the war, the bridge became a symbol of their sacrifice, earning the name Ponte degli Alpini. World War II brought further destruction. In 1945, retreating forces blew up the bridge. This time, its reconstruction became a national effort. Veterans of the Alpini corps played a key role, both symbolically and practically, in rebuilding it.

When the bridge reopened in 1948, it was not just an architectural restoration but a powerful act of collective memory.

One of the most fascinating aspects of the bridge is that, despite being rebuilt around eight times, it has never lost its identity. Each ver-

sion has adhered closely to Palladio's concept, preserving not only its appearance but also its structural philosophy. This continuity makes the bridge unique: it is both ancient and modern at the same time.

There are also smaller curiosities that add to its charm. At one end of the bridge stands the historic Grapperia Nardini, founded in 1779 and considered Italy's oldest distillery. For generations, visitors have crossed the bridge and stopped there for a glass of grappa, turning the act of crossing into a ritual.

Another detail often overlooked is the sound of the bridge itself. Being made of wood, it creaks gen-

tly underfoot, especially when crowded. For locals, this sound is part of its identity, a reminder that the structure is alive and responsive, not static like stone. Today, after a major restoration completed in the early 21st century, the Ponte degli Alpini continues to stand as a symbol of endurance.

More than just a crossing, it represents the ability of a community to rebuild, again and again, without losing its soul.

Italian handcrafts

Wood craftsmanship in Emilia Romagna, a living system of tradition and innovation

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Emilia Romagna is globally recognized for its food culture and high-performance automotive industry, yet its wood craftsmanship tradition represents an equally rich though less visible pillar of regional identity. Rather than being concentrated in a single industrial district, the woodworking sector here operates as a diffuse artisanal system, spread across cities, small towns, and mountain communities. This decentralized structure is one of its defining strengths: it allows for flexibility, specialization, and deep rooted local knowledge.

Historically, woodworking in

Emilia Romagna dates back to medieval and Renaissance times, when guilds of carpenters and cabinetmakers played a crucial role in urban economies. Churches, palaces, and rural homes all relied on skilled artisans capable of shaping wood into structural elements, furnishings, and decorative works. Over centuries, these skills were passed down through generations, often within family run workshops. At the core of Emilia Romagna's woodworking excellence lies a combination of technical mastery and material sensitivity. Artisans work with a wide range of woods such as walnut, oak, cherry, and fir, each selected for specific structural or aesthetic qualities.

Traditional techniques remain central. Joinery methods such as dovetail and mortise and tenon joints ensure durability without excessive reliance on industrial fasteners. Hand finishing processes, including sanding and polishing, enhance the natural grain. Natural treatments like oils and waxes preserve the material while maintaining its tactile quality. Marquetry and carving, used in high end pieces, reflect a deep artistic heritage. These processes require years of training and a refined understanding of both tools and materials. Even when digital tools such as CNC machines are introduced, they are typically integrated into a workflow still guided by human

expertise.

The woodworking system in Emilia Romagna is geographically widespread. Cities like Bologna and Modena host a mix of traditional workshops and contemporary studios, often collaborating with architects and designers. Parma is particularly known for restoration and fine cabinetmaking, linked to its rich artistic heritage.

In the Apennine areas, smaller towns maintain a closer relationship with raw materials, historically sourcing timber locally. These mountain communities have preserved a more essential form of craftsmanship, where woodworking is tied to everyday life as much as to artistic production.

One of the defining features of this system is its ability to evolve. Since the late twentieth century, many artisans have begun collaborating with designers, integrating traditional skills into modern aesthetics. The result is a hybrid production model that includes bespoke furniture for private clients, interior design solutions for hospitality spaces, and limited edition collections that blend craftsmanship and innovation.

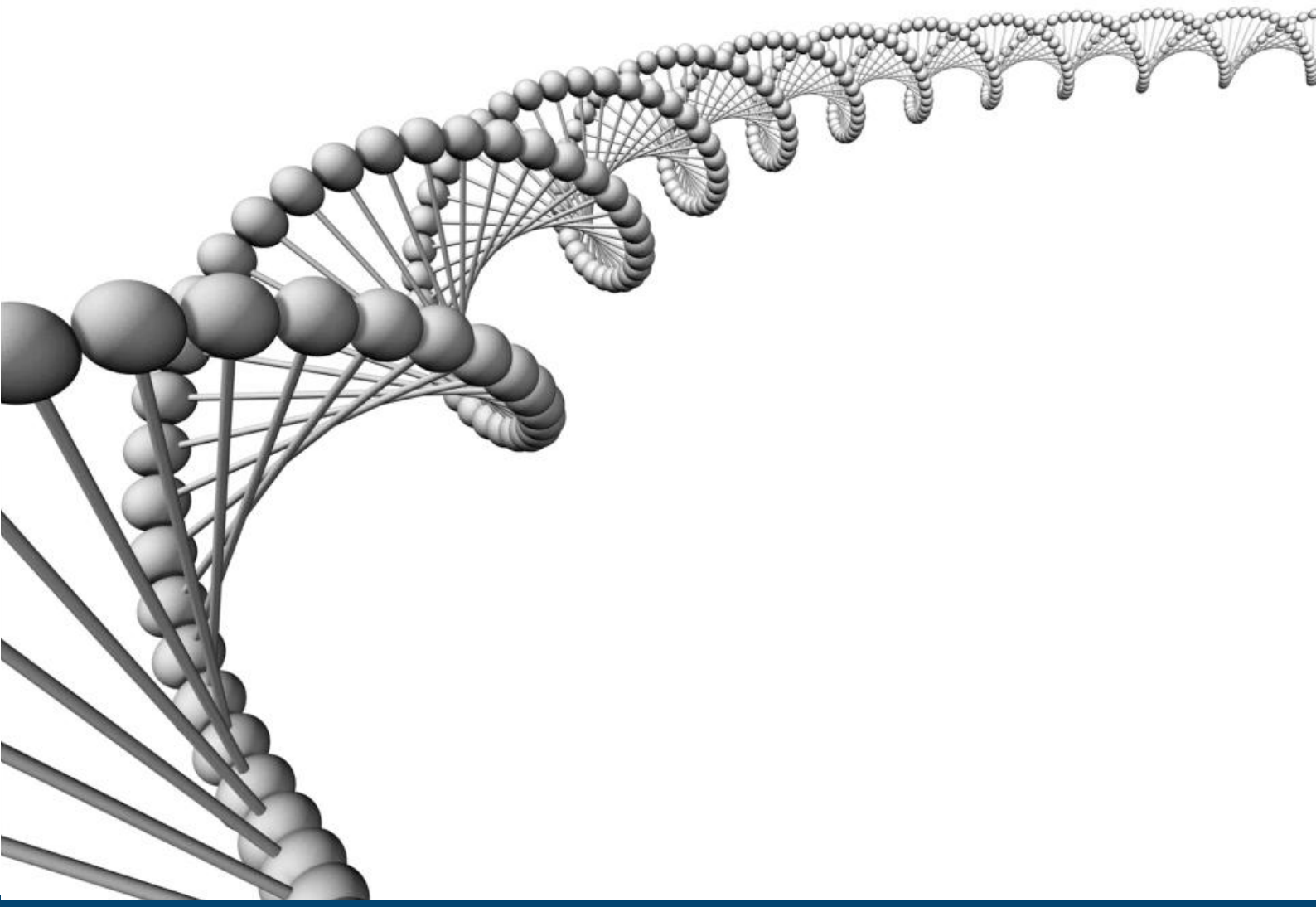
This dialogue between past and present has positioned Emilia Romagna's woodworking sector within the broader narrative of Italian design excellence.

Today, sustainability plays an increasingly central role. Many workshops prioritize responsibly sourced or certified wood, reclaimed materi-

als, and low impact finishing techniques. This approach responds to environmental concerns while reinforcing the intrinsic values of craftsmanship such as durability, repairability, and respect for resources.

Beyond economics, woodworking remains a cultural system. Workshops function as spaces of knowledge transmission, where younger generations learn through apprenticeship rather than standardized education. This human dimension is essential to maintaining quality and authenticity.

In Emilia Romagna, wood craftsmanship does not seek the spotlight. It exists alongside more famous industries, yet it continues to define interiors, restore heritage, and shape everyday life with understated precision. Its strength lies in continuity, a balance between inherited knowledge and contemporary vision that ensures its relevance in a rapidly changing world.



Italian healthcare

Italy builds national network for gene therapy and rna-based medicines

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Italy is rapidly building a national ecosystem for advanced therapies, positioning itself at the forefront of gene therapy and RNA-based medicines.

Backed by more than €320 million in funding from the EU's recovery plan, the country has created a coordinated research network designed to accelerate innovation and move discoveries from the lab to clinical use.

At the center of this effort is a structured system connecting

universities, hospitals, and private partners. The network includes 10 specialized hubs, 44 research institutions, and 58 affiliated organizations working together across the country. This model allows Italy not only to participate in global biomedical innovation but increasingly to generate its own technologies and therapies.

The scale of the initiative is significant. Around 1,500 scientists are involved, collaborating across more than 30 academic centers and multiple companies. Research projects are divided into thematic areas – from basic science to industrial development – creating a pipeline that links early-stage discovery with real-world medical applications.

One of the most advanced fields is cell and gene therapy. Clinical trials using CAR-T treatments have already delivered notable results, particularly in pediatric cancers such as neuroblastoma. In one set of studies, 54 patients were

treated, with a 77% positive response rate. After five years, 67.6% of patients were still alive, and 52.8% showed no signs of disease progression.

These outcomes highlight how targeted genetic approaches are reshaping treatment for conditions once considered untreatable.

RNA-based therapies are another key pillar. Technologies such as mRNA, antisense RNA, and RNA interference are being developed to regulate protein production inside cells or silence harmful genes.

These approaches have broad applications – from rare genetic disorders to neurodegenerative diseases and cancer – and are central to the shift toward precision medicine, where treatments are tailored to individual patients.

Infrastructure has also expanded. New facilities for producing RNA-based drugs under GMP standards have been established, including a major platform in Naples designed for early-phase clinical trials. In Rome, a 700 m² gene therapy laboratory supports both research and pharmaceutical manufacturing, helping bridge the gap between

experimentation and clinical deployment.

Beyond scientific progress, the project reflects a broader strategic shift. About 41% of total funding has been directed to southern regions, aiming to reduce geographic disparities and strengthen the national research base.

Overall, Italy is moving from a system that primarily imported advanced therapies to one capable of developing them domestically. The integration of research, clinical trials, and production marks a turning point – one that could redefine the country's role in global biotechnology and open new possibilities for treating complex diseases.

Italian design

The BIC pen from Bíró's patent to the Seletti lamp

Alberto Improda

The invention of the ballpoint pen is attributed by some sources to American lawyer and leather tanner John J. Loud, who obtained U.S. Patent No. 392,046 on October 30, 1888.

The patent described the following writing instrument: "My invention consists in an improved reservoir or fountain pen, particularly useful, among other purposes, for marking upon rough surfaces such as wood, coarse wrapping paper, and other articles where an ordinary pen could not be used."

More commonly, however, the birth of the ballpoint pen is associated with an idea developed by Hungarian journalist, later naturalized Argentine

citizen, László József Bíró.

According to legend, he came up with the concept while watching a group of children playing marbles in a puddle: once the marbles rolled out of the water, they left behind a smooth, regular wet trail on the ground.

Because of his work, Bíró needed a writing instrument that could write quickly and continuously, while fountain pens required constant refilling and careful handling to avoid ink stains.

Starting from that simple observation, the journalist developed a small steel ball placed at the tip of a tube, capable of transferring ink onto paper as it rotated. Bíró patented the invention in Great Britain on June 15, 1938, effectively creating the modern ballpoint pen, which in many countries is still called a "biro" in his honor.

An important step in the spread of the product came when the British Royal Air Force decided to purchase large quantities of the pens. At high altitudes, where fountain pens became unreliable, the ballpoint mechanism continued to function effectively, offering pilots a dependable solution.

But the ballpoint pen truly took metaphorical flight, becoming the everyday object that has accompanied generations, only after World War II, thanks to Baron Marcel Bich. His family, originally named Bic-

Marcel Bich

chi, came from Siena and had settled in Châtillon, where the surname was modified.

Attorney Jean-Jacques Pantaleon Bich, mayor of Châtillon in the early 19th century, married Philippine Passerin d'Entrèves, heir to the local feudal family.

Their son Emmanuel Bich was born in Châtillon in 1800. He graduated in medicine in Turin, furthered his studies in Paris, became mayor of Aosta, and was granted hereditary baron status in 1841 by King Charles Albert.

His grandson Aimé-Mario Bich attempted to revive the family fortunes through industry, but with limited success. He eventually sought new opportunities in France, settling in Paris with his family, including his son Marcel, born in Turin on July 29, 1914, at 60 Corso Re Umberto.

After acquiring Bíró's patent, Marcel Bich refined the manufacturing process of the ballpoint pen, drastically lowering production costs. In 1950, he launched the BIC brand – a shortened version of his surname chosen to avoid pronunciation mistakes.

The launch of the BIC Cristal ballpoint pen, sold at the affordable price of 50 centimes, was an extraordinary success: since its introduction, more than 100 billion units have been sold worldwide.

Today, the ballpoint pen is universally regarded as a design object, so much so that it is displayed in prestigious museums such as the Centre Pompidou and the Museum of Modern Art.

In 2025, to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the BIC Cristal, the company chose to mark the occasion with an unexpected reinterpretation: the creation of a lamp directly inspired by the pen. Presented in Paris in 2026, the BIC Lamp, designed by Mario Paroli, was born from the collaboration between BIC and Seletti.

In the design world, there was probably no more fitting partner for BIC than Seletti, a company known for its playful spirit, irony, and lighthearted creativity.

The lamp faithfully reproduces the silhouette of the BIC Cristal on a much larger scale. The transparent body becomes a light diffuser, while the ink cartridge is replaced by an LED tube.

This transformation highlights the strength of the original design: without altering its essential features, the BIC Cristal changes function and effortlessly enters the field of interior design. What is especially striking about the BIC Lamp is its fidelity to the original. It appears as a giant BIC Cristal reproduced at a 12:1 scale, recreated with almost philological attention to detail, from the cap to the transparent barrel.

Only instead of ink, there is an LED light source, transforming it

into a floor lamp, hanging lamp, or wall sconce.

The project is perfectly in line with Seletti's spirit: the goal was not to reinvent the icon, but to amplify its voice in an original way, unexpectedly bringing it into domestic spaces. Here, the BIC Lamp – strongly evocative of the ballpoint pen that accompanied generations of students and office workers – becomes a presence that is at once deeply familiar and surprisingly disorienting.

The BIC Lamp project can be considered an emblematic example of contemporary design, understood not only as a tool for stylistic and functional solutions, but also as a vehicle for emotions, messages, and meaning.

Italian street food

Supplì, Rome's classic icon

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Supplì is one of the most iconic examples of Roman street food, a simple yet deeply rooted specialty that reflects the culinary identity of Italy's capital.

Found in pizzerias, bakeries, and takeaway counters across Rome, this fried rice croquette is widely consumed as a quick snack, an appetizer, or even a light meal. Today, it remains a staple of everyday eating habits, with thousands of pieces sold daily in the city's many "pizza al taglio" shops, confirming its

enduring popularity.

At its core, supplì is made from rice cooked in tomato sauce or meat ragù, shaped into an oval or cylindrical form, filled with mozzarella, coated in breadcrumbs, and deep-fried at around 180°C (356°F). The result is a crispy exterior that contrasts with a soft interior and a melted cheese center. Typical recipes use risotto rice varieties such as Arborio or Carnaroli, along with eggs and breadcrumbs for coating, ensuring a compact structure and a golden crust after frying. One of the defining features of this dish is the so-called "supplì al telefono." When the croquette is broken in half while still hot, the melted mozzarella stretches into a thin strand resembling a telephone wire. This visual effect is not just a curiosity but a hallmark of proper preparation, indicating the correct temperature and texture of the filling.

The origins of supplì date back to at least the 19th century. Written evidence appears as early as 1847,

when a similar preparation was listed on a Roman trattoria menu under the name "soplis di riso." Over time, the dish became widely associated with street vendors who fried and sold these croquettes directly in the streets, making them accessible to a broad urban population. This connection to street culture remains central to its identity today.

The name "supplì" itself is derived from the French word "surprise," reflecting the hidden filling inside the rice ball. This linguistic influence is often linked to the period of French presence in Rome during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The "surprise" refers specifically to the molten mozzarella at the center, which reveals itself only after the first bite.

Historically, the recipe has evolved significantly. Early versions included ingredients such as chicken giblets and offal, which were common in traditional Roman cooking and reflected a culture of minimizing waste. In modern preparations, these elements have largely been replaced by ground meat ragù or even vegetarian alternatives, making the dish more accessible and adaptable to contemporary tastes. In fact, some sources note that early variations could be meat-free, highlighting the flexibility of the recipe over time.

Today, supplì is not limited to its classic form. Creative reinterpretations have emerged, incorporating flavors inspired by traditional Roman pasta dishes such as cacio e pepe or amatriciana. These variations demonstrate how a historic street food can evolve while maintaining its essential structure and cultural significance.

Despite these innovations, the original version remains the most widely recognized and consumed. Consumption patterns also highlight its versatility. Supplì is commonly eaten as a pre-meal snack, especially before pizza, but it is equally popular as a standalone street food. Its portability, affordability, and satisfying texture make it ideal for fast-paced urban life. Unlike more elaborate dishes, it requires no utensils and can be eaten on the go, reinforcing its role as a practical and accessible food option. In comparison with similar Italian foods, such as Sicilian arancini, supplì stands out for its elongated shape and its emphasis on a stringy mozzarella center rather than a more complex filling. This distinction has helped preserve its unique identity within Italy's diverse street food landscape.

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Italian Citizenship Assistance

Your Guide to Italy's Digital Nomad Visa

By Italian Citizenship Assistance

If you're a remote worker desiring a change of scenery, you might be interested in the various "digital nomad" visas that many countries offer. Italy has its own, granting non-EU remote workers the right to work and reside in Italy long-term. In this article, we break down what you need to know about the visa, and how to apply.

What is the digital nomad visa?

The digital nomad visa was introduced in Italy in February 2024 as a way for remote workers of non-Italian companies to reside in Italy longer than the usual 90-day period for non-EU citizens. It encompasses both contracted workers for a company, along with freelancers who

conduct their business remotely. Such persons can now take advantage of Italy's high quality of life, exceptional healthcare, and general affordable cost of living outside major cities while maintaining the comfort and security of the job they enjoyed prior to relocation.

How to know if you qualify

In order to be considered for the digital nomad visa, an applicant must be both a non-EU citizen and considered "highly skilled" in the field they are working remotely in. The definition of "highly skilled" might vary somewhat from consulate to consulate, but in general, they will take into account an applicant's educational background and experience working in the field. For instance, those with advanced degrees and many years of experience could be considered "highly skilled." The visa itself also requires at least five years' experience in the field, and six months in the current position prior to applying.

How to apply

To apply, you will need to provide these documents:

- A valid passport

- Proof of residence in the consular jurisdiction (e.g. utility bill or driver's license)
- Visa application form
- Passport-sized photo
- Proof of travel insurance
- Proof of your qualifying profession (this will differ greatly depending on your field and current job, but could include an employment contract, degree certificates, and/or licensing certificates if applicable)
- Proof of lodging in Italy
- Proof of income
- Proof of six months or more of work in the field
- Self-addressed and stamped envelope

Always check the requirements of your local consulate to see if there are any changes to the above. If approved, the visa will be valid for one year, though you will be able to renew if your circumstances remain unchanged.

The permesso di soggiorno

Within 8 days of arrival in Italy, you need to apply for your permesso di soggiorno, or permit of stay. This will require filling out a "kit" at the post office and receiving an appointment at your local immigration office, or Questura. There, you will need to present copies of the same documents you submitted for your visa. If you intend to remain in Italy past the one year term of your visa, it will be this document that you renew, not the visa itself, allowing you to remain in Italy rather than having to travel back to your home country.

Permanent residency and citizenship by residency

Permanent residency can be obtained after five years of continuous residence in Italy. One of the biggest benefits of having permanent residency is the longer duration of the card, necessitating an update only every 10 years. In order to apply, you will need to present your latest tax returns, a background check, certificate of residency, and proof of A2-level knowledge of the Italian language.

After 10 years of continuous residence, you might also qualify for citizenship by naturalization. (If you have an Italian parent or grandparent, you could qualify after only 2 years). This would grant you the ability to reside in Italy without limits, without updating a permit of stay, the right to vote in Italian elections, and the ability to reside elsewhere in the EU.

Conclusion

If you're interested in applying for the digital nomad visa or filing an Italian citizenship application, Italian Citizenship Assistance is here to help! Get in touch with an expert today at info@italiancitizenshipassistance.com.

Italian traditions

Recco's explosive tradition. The Festa della Madonna del suffragio

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Every September, the coastal town of Recco, a small community on the Ligurian Riviera just east of Genoa, transforms into one of Italy's most intense and unusual festival settings. The Festa della Madonna del Suffragio is not simply a religious celebration – it is a powerful blend of faith, local identity, and explosive spectacle that

sets it apart from any other event in the country.

At the heart of the festival is a devotion to the Madonna del Suffragio, the town's patron figure, whose protection has been invoked by generations of residents, especially those connected to the sea. But what makes Recco truly unique is how this devotion is expressed. Instead of quiet processions alone, the celebration unfolds through a dramatic series of fireworks displays and thunderous firecracker barrages known locally as "spari," organized by the town's historic neighborhoods.

Recco is divided into several quarters, each with its own identity and long-standing traditions. During the festival, these neighborhoods engage in a kind of friendly but intense rivalry, competing to produce the loudest, most impressive, and most creative pyrotechnic displays. The result is a near-constant sequence of explosions that echo through the narrow streets and along the waterfront, creating an atmosphere that is both chaotic and exhilarating.

One of the most striking aspects of the Festa della Madonna del Suffragio is the use of fireworks

during daylight hours. While fireworks are typically associated with nighttime celebrations, in Recco they are set off under the bright September sun, filling the sky with smoke and sound rather than color. These daytime displays emphasize the raw power of the explosions, turning sound into the primary sensory experience. The ground trembles, the air vibrates, and the entire town seems to pulse with energy.

At night, the festival shifts into a more visually spectacular phase. Fireworks illuminate the coastline, reflecting off the Ligurian Sea and drawing large crowds to the waterfront. Each neighborhood takes its turn, presenting carefully choreographed displays that combine tradition with innovation. Despite the competitive spirit, there is also a shared sense of pride – every explosion, every burst of light, is part of a collective expression of Recco's identity.

Religious elements remain central throughout the event. A solemn procession carries the image of the Madonna through the streets, accompanied by confraternities, music, and the participation of the local community. This moment of reflection contrasts with the intensity of the fireworks, grounding the celebration in its spiritual origins. The coexistence of devotion and spectacle is one of the defining features of the festival.

The setting itself plays a crucial role. Recco's geography – nestled between steep hills and the open sea – amplifies both the sound and the visual impact of the fireworks. The echoes bounce off the surrounding landscape, making each detonation feel even more powerful. At the same time, the proximity to the water creates a dramatic backdrop that enhances the nighttime displays.

For locals, the festival is more than an annual event. It is a deeply rooted tradition passed down through generations, a moment when the community comes together to reaffirm its identity and its connection to the past.

Families return, neighborhoods mobilize, and preparations begin months in advance. For visitors, it offers a rare glimpse into a form of celebration that is both intensely local and undeniably spectacular. In a country known for its festivals, the Festa della Madonna del Suffragio stands out for its originality. Few places combine religious devotion, neighborhood rivalry, and such an overwhelming sensory experience. In Recco, tradition is not quiet or reserved – it is loud, vibrant, and impossible to ignore.

Italian historical trademarks

Carthusia, the perfumes of Capri

Associazione Marchi Storici d'Italia

For nearly eighty years, Carthusia has shared with the world – through its collections of fragrances and products for the body and home – the allure and magic that surround the Island of Capri.

Now recognized as a historic brand, Carthusia is an Italian love story, where an unbreakable bond with a one-of-a-kind land intertwines with that of the monks of the Certosa di San Giacomo.


CARTUJA
PELIGRO

According to a legend passed down through the centuries, Queen Giovanna d'Angiò was expected to visit the monastery. To honor her arrival, the monks gathered the island's most beautiful flowers. The water in which they were immersed – though the queen reportedly never arrived – began to release the scent of Garofilium silvestre caprese, one of Capri's most widespread wildflowers. From that moment, the monks began to imagine producing perfumes, a vision that came to life in the 1940s when, with explicit papal authorization, the prior of the Certosa, working with an expert chemist, officially launched production.

Today, Carthusia is carefully preserved by the Ruocco family – Capri entrepreneurs for generations, deeply in love with their land – who acquired the company about twenty years ago with the clear goal of making it a leading expression of Made in Italy in the niche perfumery sector.

"For those of us who grew up on Capri, the Giardini di Augusto meant everything – the first kiss, the first declaration of love..." recalls Silvio Ruocco, the company's CEO. "Living surrounded by those flowers was enchanting."

Today, the world's smallest perfume laboratory is located just steps from the Giardini di Augusto, in the very

place where the first perfume shop opened. Within its original wood-paneled interiors, a large window allows visitors to observe some stages of the production and packaging of fragrances and other products.

Carthusia's authenticity is immediately evident. A symbol of tradition and olfactory culture, the brand remains faithful to its founding values. As in the past, every stage of production is carried out by hand, ensuring the use of natural methods and the care of true craftsmanship. From maceration to bottling to packaging, each phase is done in small batches to preserve the artisanal spirit and the quality of the raw materials.

Many of the essences come from Capri's natural elements – such as wild carnation from Monte Solaro, rosemary, and other Mediterranean flowers and citrus fruits.

The connection between fragrance and place is central: Carthusia is not simply a perfume house, but an olfactory evocation of the island in every season. Its emblem – a "floral siren" designed in Art Nouveau style by Mario Laboccetta – visually captures the brand's mythical and natural spirit.

At the same time, its entrepreneurial vision is clear and ambitious: to tell the world the story of Capri's magic, where the Mediterranean sets the rhythm of time and nature surrounds the island's people with its pure, enveloping scents.

Choosing a Carthusia fragrance means embracing a refined yet cosmopolitan Italian style, where meticulous attention to every detail becomes the driving force behind the creation of truly unique essences. The olfactory experience Carthusia offers celebrates the land from which everything begins. More than just a perfume house, Carthusia is an "olfactory bridge" between the island and those who visit it. Each bottle is conceived as a keepsake – a fragrance that recalls island landscapes, Mediterranean flowers, and sea breezes, designed to evoke not only scents but also emotions and memories.

"Protecting the cultural and natural heritage of a land of which we are merely custodians, sharing our love for it, and teaching future generations the importance of our roots will remain the deepest purpose of the Carthusia project in the years to come," concludes Virginia Ruocco, the company's Brand and Marketing Manager.

Italian territories

Piana di Sibari, a fertile crossroads of Calabrian history and landscape

We the Italians Editorial Staff

The Piana di Sibari is one of the most distinctive and historically layered territories in southern Italy, located in northern Calabria along the Ionian coast. It is the largest plain in the region, positioned between two major mountain systems – the Pollino massif to the north and the Sila plateau to the south – creating a natural corridor

that connects inland Calabria with the sea.

Geographically, the plain is defined by its alluvial nature. It is crossed by the Crati River, the most important watercourse in Calabria, and its tributary Coscile, which together shape the landscape before flowing into the Ionian Sea. This network of rivers has created a fertile basin over thousands of years, making the Piana di Sibari one of the most agriculturally productive areas in southern Italy. The terrain is largely flat, a rarity in a region dominated by hills and mountains, and this physical openness has played a crucial role in its historical development and economic use.

The origins of the territory date back to prehistoric times, with archaeological evidence showing human presence as early as the Bronze and Iron Ages. However, the identity of the Piana di Sibari is deeply tied to the ancient Greek city of Sybaris, from which it takes its name.

Founded around the 8th century BCE, Sybaris quickly became one of the most powerful and wealthy cities of Magna Graecia, known throughout the ancient

world for its prosperity and refined lifestyle. The city's wealth was largely due to the fertility of the surrounding plain and its strategic position along Mediterranean trade routes.

Sybaris became so famous for luxury that its name gave rise to the term "sybaritic," still used today to describe a life of comfort and indulgence. Yet its success also made it vulnerable, and in 510 BCE the city was destroyed by its rival Croton. Despite this dramatic end, the area continued to be inhabited by successive populations, including the Enotri and the Bruzi, who relied on agriculture and pastoralism. Over time, the plain remained a vital agricultural zone, even as political control shifted through Roman, Byzantine, and later medieval powers.

One of the defining characteristics of the Piana di Sibari is its transformation in the modern era. Historically, much of the area was marshy and unhealthy, limiting settlement and development. It was only in the 20th century, particularly during the land reclamation projects of the 1930s, that the territory was drained and made fully cultivable. This process marked a turning point, attracting populations from nearby mountainous areas and laying the foundation for a modern agricultural economy.

Today, agriculture remains central to the identity of the plain.

The region is known for its production of citrus fruits, olives, and even rice – a rare crop in southern Italy, made possible by the abundance of water and flat terrain. These agricultural practices reflect both the natural fertility of the land and a long tradition of working the soil, connecting contemporary life to ancient patterns of cultivation.

The territory also includes a network of towns such as Corigliano-Rossano, Cassano all'Ionio, and Castrovillari, which serve as economic and cultural centers. Near Cassano lies the archaeological park of Sibari, where the remains of ancient cities – Sybaris, Thurii, and Copia – offer tangible evidence of the area's historical importance. These layers of history coexist within a landscape that is both natural and cultivated, where ancient ruins stand alongside modern farms.

What makes the Piana di Sibari truly unique is this combination of geography, history, and transformation. It is a place where natural conditions have consistently shaped human activity, from ancient Greek colonization to modern agricultural development. The coexistence of fertile land, strategic location, and deep historical roots gives the plain a strong and recognizable identity. In essence, the Piana di Sibari is not just a geographic area but a living landscape. It tells a story

of continuity and change – from one of the richest cities of the ancient world to a modern agricultural hub – while maintaining a clear connection between its past and present.

Italian wine

From barolo to moscato, Piedmont is a landscape of wine complexity

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Piedmont is widely considered one of Italy's most prestigious wine regions, producing some of the country's most structured, age-worthy, and internationally recognized wines. Located in northwestern Italy, at the foot of the Alps, the region benefits from a unique combination of climate, soil diversity, and centuries of winemaking expertise. With over 45,000 hectares (about


BAROLO
- ITALIA -

111,000 acres) of vineyards and more than 40 DOC and DOCG designations, Piedmont accounts for roughly 7% of Italy's total wine production but a much higher share of its premium output.

At the heart of Piedmont's identity is the Nebbiolo grape, responsible for two of Italy's most famous wines: Barolo and Barbaresco. Barolo DOCG, often referred to as the "king of wines," is produced in 11 communes in the Langhe area and requires a minimum aging of 38 months, including at least 18 months in oak. Barbaresco DOCG, from a smaller zone with slightly warmer conditions, requires 26 months of aging. Both wines are known for high tannins, acidity, and complex aromas that can include rose, tar, cherry, and truffle. Together, Barolo and Barbaresco represent a significant portion of Piedmont's export value, with Barolo alone accounting for over 50 million bottles annually.

The Langhe hills, a UNESCO World Heritage site since 2014, are the core of Nebbiolo production. Here, soil composition varies between marl and sandstone, influencing the structure and elegance of the wines. Microclimates and

elevation – typically between 200 and 500 meters above sea level – play a crucial role in grape development, contributing to the distinctive character of each vineyard.

Another key grape is Barbera, which is more widely planted than Nebbiolo and produces wines that are more approachable and fruit-driven. Barbera d'Asti DOCG and Barbera d'Alba DOC are the most important denominations. These wines are known for their high acidity, low tannins, and flavors of red cherry and plum. Production volumes are significant, with Barbera accounting for approximately 30% of the region's total output.

Dolcetto is another traditional variety, despite its name suggesting sweetness. In reality, Dolcetto wines are dry, soft, and easy to drink, with moderate acidity and notes of blackberry and almond.

Dolcetto d'Alba DOC and Dogliani DOCG are among the most recognized expressions. These wines are typically consumed young and are an essential part of local everyday drinking culture.

Piedmont is also home to one of Italy's most famous aromatic white wines, Moscato d'Asti DOCG. Produced from the Moscato Bianco grape, it is lightly sparkling (frizzante), low in alcohol – usually around 5–6% – and characterized by intense aromas of peach, apricot, and orange blossom. Annual production exceeds 80 million bottles, making it one of the region's most commercially successful wines, particularly in export markets.

In addition to still wines, Piedmont produces important sparkling wines such as Asti Spumante DOCG, made using the Charmat method, and Alta Langa DOCG, a smaller but growing category of traditional method sparkling wines made from Pinot Noir and Chardonnay.

Alta Langa requires a minimum aging of 30 months on the lees, reflecting a focus on quality and structure.

The region's wine culture is deeply tied to its landscape. Vineyard plots are often small and fragmented, reflecting historical inheritance patterns. This has led to a strong emphasis on terroir, with single-vineyard bottlings becoming increasingly common.

Many producers highlight specific crus, particularly in Barolo and Barbaresco, where differences in soil, exposure, and altitude can significantly influence the final wine. Historically, Piedmont's modern wine identity began to take shape in the 19th century, when figures such as Camillo Benso di Cavour and winemaker Louis Oudart helped refine Barolo into a dry, structured wine. This transformation marked a shift from sweet styles to the powerful reds that define the region today.

Today, Piedmont continues to balance tradition and innovation. While classic methods remain central, many producers experiment with aging techniques, vineyard management, and sustainability practices. Organic and biodynamic farming are on the rise, with an estimated 15% of vineyards now managed under certified organic practices.

In summary, Piedmont offers a diverse and complex wine landscape, defined by powerful reds, aromatic whites, and a deep connection to terroir. Its combination of history, quality, and distinctive grape varieties makes it one of the most influential wine regions in the world.

Italian proverbs

Quando il gatto non c'è i topi ballano

We the Italians Editorial Staff

The Italian proverb “Quando il gatto non c'è i topi ballano” (literally “When the cat isn’t there, the mice dance”) means that in the absence of authority or supervision, people tend to act more freely, often ignoring rules or slacking off. It’s a common saying used to describe situations where discipline breaks down or responsibilities are temporarily set aside. It comes from the medieval Latin phrase “Dum felis dormit, mus gaudet et exsilit antro” (when the cat sleeps, the mouse rejoices and jumps out of its hole). It’s often used in workplaces to suggest employees may slow down or stop working when the boss isn’t around.

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