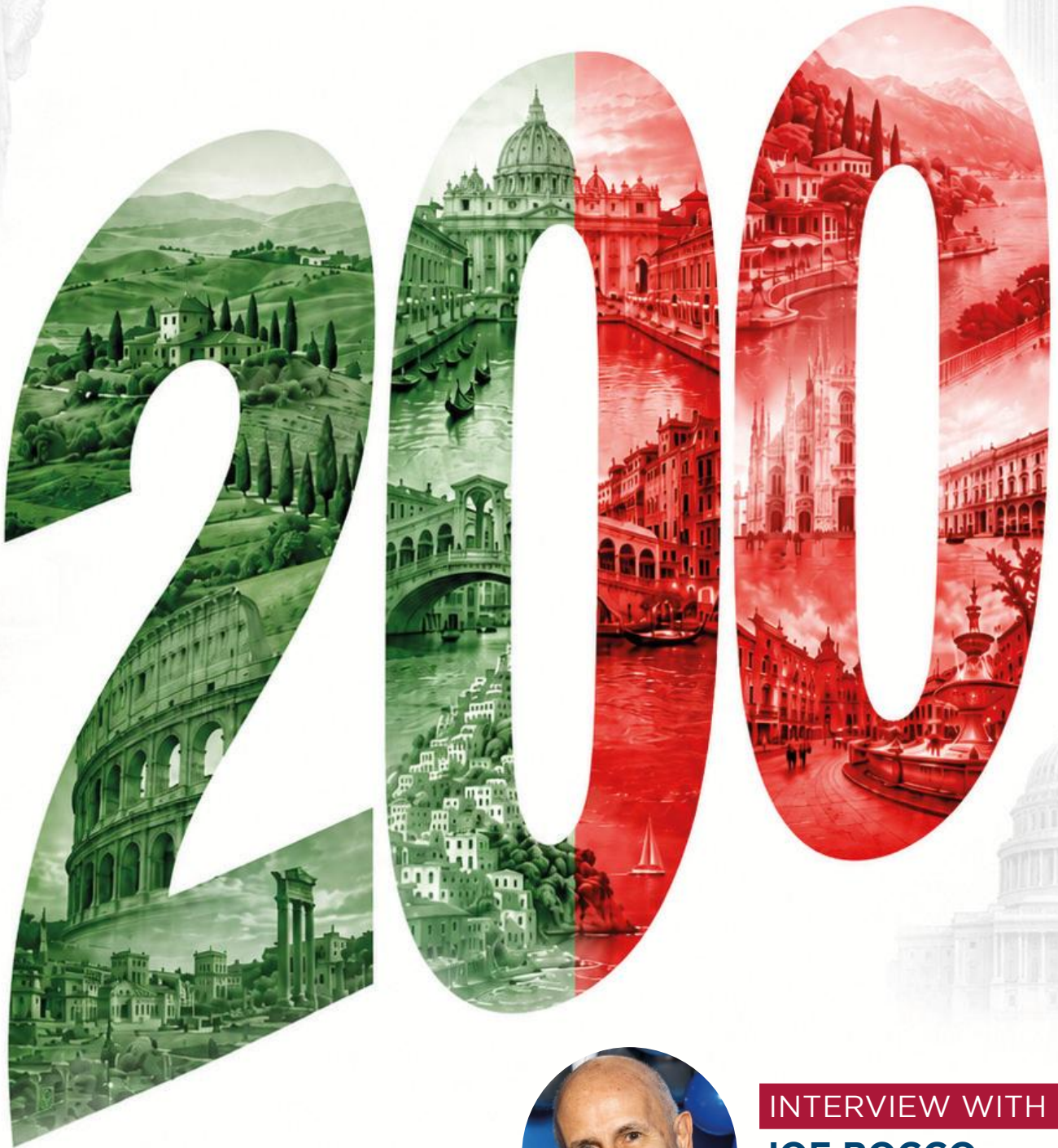


# We the Italians

two flags one heart

N.200 | JUNE 2026



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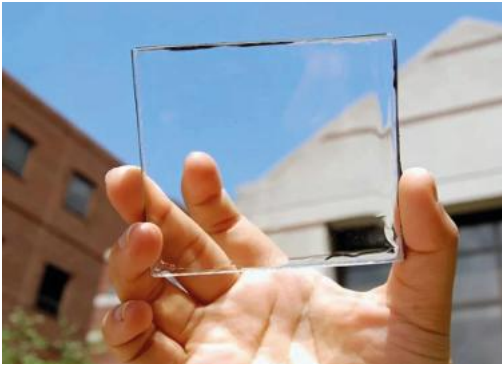
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WHAT'S UP WITH WTI

## Editorial # 200

BY UMBERTO MUCCI

Dear friends,

Welcome to the editorial of the 200th issue of the We the Italians magazine! It is a great pleasure for me to celebrate this incredible milestone. When we first started publishing the magazine, it was actually a weekly publication. The graphics were originally done by William Liani, and then Giovanni Vagnone took over; he still handles the magazine's design today, which you will find completely revamped starting with this issue. I want to thank everyone who has worked on these 200 issues, first and foremost all the authors: there have been 264 of them, an impressive number. 264

friends who had the pleasure, and gave us the honor, of sharing their experience with you across 42 different columns that have alternated over the years: 42 Italian areas of excellence that we have told you about, featuring 2,053 articles about Italy. What other country offers such an incredibly vast reservoir of excellence?

To celebrate our 200th issue, alongside the graphic restyling, we are introducing 4 brand-new columns: **Italian Spirits**, **Italian Sounds**, **Italian Inventions**, and **Italian World Records**.

**Italian Spirits** describes the stories, traditions, and regions that gave life to different Italian spirits. From iconic classics to hidden local specialties, this



The graphic features a background of Italian architectural silhouettes and large brushstrokes in green and red. At the top center is a stylized heart logo with the colors of the Italian flag. Below it, the text reads 'We the Italians' in a large serif font, followed by 'two flags one heart' in a smaller sans-serif font. A horizontal line separates this from the text 'OUR MAGAZINE:'. Below that, the number '200' is written in a very large, bold serif font, followed by the word 'ISSUES' in a large, bold sans-serif font. At the bottom, there are four columns, each with an icon and text: a fountain pen icon above '264 AUTHORS', an open book icon above '42 DIFFERENT SECTIONS', a newspaper icon above '2053 PUBLISHED ARTICLES', and a heart icon above 'A COMMUNITY THAT GROWS EVERY DAY'. A horizontal line at the very bottom contains the cursive text 'Thank you all!'.

  
**We the Italians**  
two flags one heart

OUR MAGAZINE:

**200** ISSUES

 <b>264</b> AUTHORS	 <b>42</b> DIFFERENT SECTIONS	 <b>2053</b> PUBLISHED ARTICLES	 A COMMUNITY THAT GROWS EVERY DAY
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Thank you all!

250 USA YEARS 80 ITALY YEARS

We the Italians  
two anniversaries one heart

SAVE THE DATE

*Two Flags, One Heart*  
Italia e Stati Uniti nel 2026

4 GIUGNO 2026  
ORE 9.30

GRAND HOTEL PARCO DEI PRINCIPI  
VIA GEROLAMO FRESCOBALDI 5, ROMA

REGISTRAZIONE

Si specifica che la partecipazione alla conferenza della mattina del 4 giugno non presuppone automaticamente la partecipazione al gala della sera del 4 giugno.

column uncovers Italy's most beloved liqueurs and aperitifs.

**Italian Sounds** is about the vibrant auditory soul of Italy. This new column explores traditional folk melodies, fascinating regional dialects, contemporary music hits, and the iconic, rhythmic sounds of

authentic Italian daily life.

**Italian Inventions** is about the stories behind Italy's most influential inventions and the visionaries who created them, exploring how Italian ingenuity has shaped technology, science, industry, and everyday life around the world.





> TWO FLAGS ONE HEART PANEL



**Italian World Records** uncovers the places, achievements, inventions, traditions, and milestones where Italy holds world records. Each story reveals a unique Italian primacy that no other country can match.

This past June 4th, we organized a day dedicated to promoting the historic friendship and solid alliance between Italy and the United States. In the morning, the conference “*Two Flags, One Heart. Italia e Stati Uniti nel 2026*” featured 14 extraordinary Italian and American speakers across three different panels. They addressed the relationship between Italy and the US from economic, financial, commercial, tourism, entrepreneurial, sports, cultural, and academic perspectives. [Here you can find](#)

[photos and videos of the conference.](#)

The day concluded with our gala dinner, which we are particularly proud of, because this year more than ever it was fundamental to renew, confirm, and bear witness to the friendship that binds Italy and the United States. [Here you can find photos and videos of the gala](#), and [here is my welcome speech](#), which helped convey the message shared by all 250 attendees, to whom I extend my heartfelt thanks.

During the gala, we also announced [the results of the survey “America 250: tell us your opinion.”](#) *We the Italians* invited its community of Italian Americans and Italians living in the United States to answer a particularly meaningful ques-



> PAOLA SARTORIO AND FRANCO PAVONCELLO



> MARCO MAZZIERI



tion: which of 18 great figures from Italian and Italian American history contributed the most to America’s greatness between 1776 and 2026? Participants were allowed to select up to three names. For this reason, the combined percentages exceed 100%. Francesca Cabrini ranked first with 38.9% of the vote. In second place was Enrico Fermi with 29.5% of the vote. Third place went to Frank Sinatra, selected by 25.3% of respondents. In fourth place was Filippo Mazzei with 24.2% of the vote. Rounding out the top five was Amadeo Giannini with 21.2% of the vote.

Before the gala, I had the honor of participating in two important events, and the organizers made me quite proud to be invited. In Rome, NIAF and the Centro Studi Americani signed a collaboration agreement. While *We the Italians* played no role in facilitating this agreement, we are friends with both organizations, so it was a real pleasure for me to attend the signing.

Similarly, I take no credit other than being a huge supporter of the project “**In Sanguine Foedus. Nuovo Mondo,**” created by my friends Germana Valentini and Francesco Andoli, which we also promoted this past June 4th during both our morning and evening events. The project unites Naples, where a beautiful first mural has been inaugurated, and New York, where there will be another—con-





**250**  
USA YEARS

**80**  
ITALY YEARS

**We the Italians**

# The Survey

**TWO ANNIVERSARIES ONE HEART**

# America 250: tell us your opinion!

In 2026, We the Italians celebrates “Two Anniversaries, One Heart” – the 250th anniversary of the United States and the 80th anniversary of the Italian Republic. We asked our community: which of these 18 great Italian names has done the most for America’s Greatness from 1776 to 2026? Participants could select up to three names. *For this reason, the total percentage exceeds 100%.*

**1** ★

**FRANCESCA CABRINI**

**38.9%**



Dedicated her life to supporting immigrants in the United States. She founded schools, hospitals, and orphanages that provided education and care to thousands. Her work strengthened communities and helped newcomers integrate into American society.

**2** ★

**ENRICO FERMI**

**29.5%**



Played a decisive role in the development of nuclear science in the United States. As part of the Manhattan Project, he led the creation of the first nuclear reactor. His discoveries shaped modern physics, advanced American scientific leadership, and influenced national security and technological progress.

**3** ★

**FRANK SINATRA**

**25.3%**



Became one of the most influential figures in American music and entertainment. Through his songs, films, and performances, he helped define twentieth-century popular culture. Sinatra’s success demonstrated the power of American creativity and the ability of immigrant heritage to enrich the nation’s artistic life.

**4** ★

**FILIPPO MAZZEI**

**24.2%**



Supported the American Revolution and shared ideas about liberty and equality with leaders like Thomas Jefferson. His writings influenced early discussions about democratic principles. Mazzei helped shape the intellectual environment that guided the creation of the United States and its commitment to individual rights.

**5** ★

**AMADEO GIANNINI**

**21.2%**



Revolutionized American banking by founding the Bank of Italy, later Bank of America. He offered financial services to immigrants and ordinary citizens who were often ignored by traditional banks. By financing businesses and infrastructure, Giannini helped expand economic opportunity and support American growth.

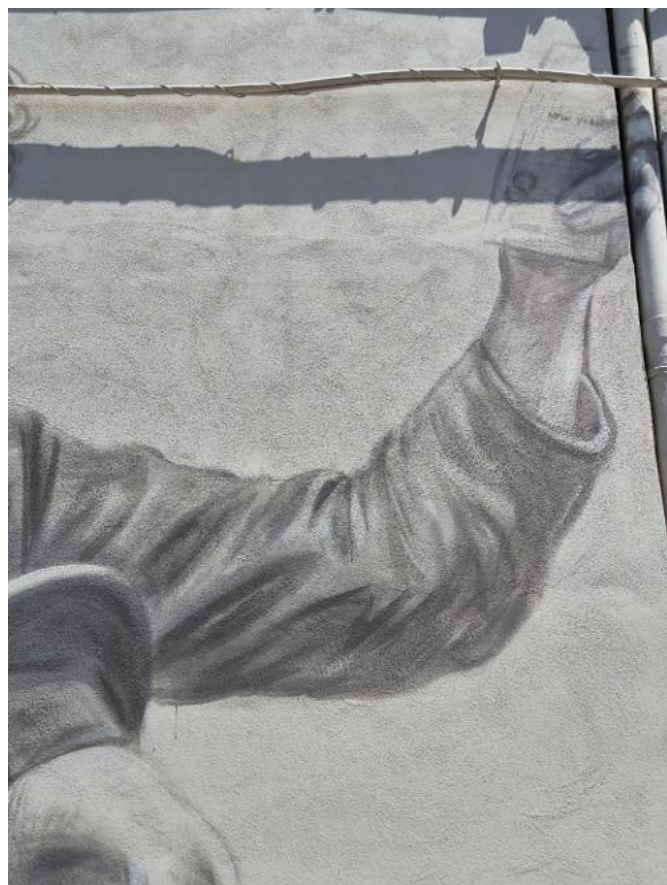
We the Italians **THANKS** everyone who participated in our survey and looks forward to the next survey in 2026, continuing our commitment to listening to the voice of the Italian and Italian American community.



> NIAF AND CENTRO STUDI AMERICANI



> IN SANGUINE FOEDUS



nected to the first by a red thread that is both virtual and real, historical and highly contemporary, and deeply moving. It is an extraordinary project, incredibly difficult to pull off, yet Germana and Francesco succeeded. If you'd like to learn more, [here is their website](#), and [here is the video of their speech at our gala](#).

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.



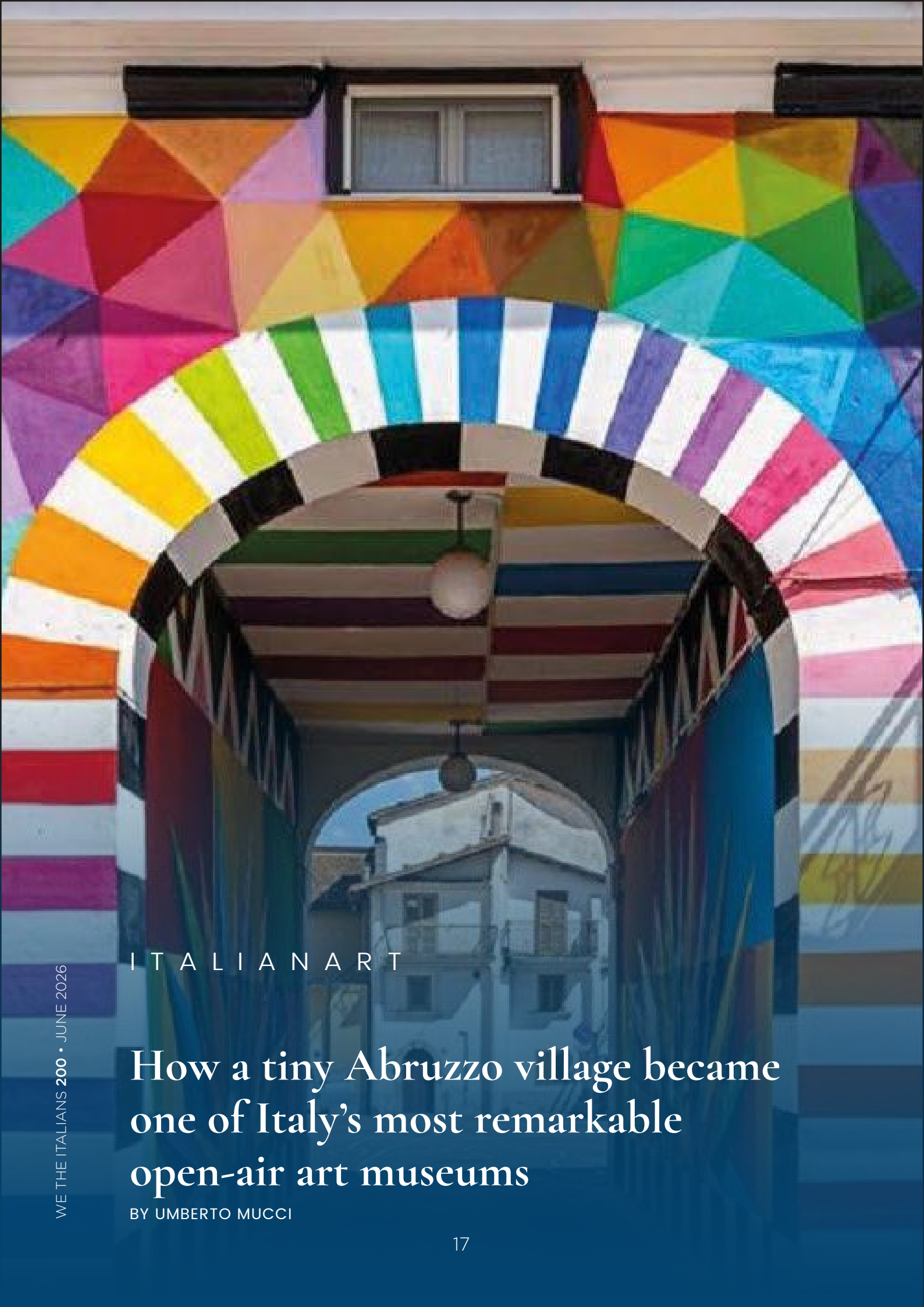
**B**ased in Washington, D.C., NIAF's mission is to celebrate and advance the inspiring achievements and uplifting values of the Italian culture and presence in America and to strengthen and empower ties between the United States and Italy.

**T**he National Italian American Foundation (NIAF) is a nationwide organization headquartered in Washington, D.C., and is the largest and most loyal representative of the more than 20 million Italian American citizens living in the United States. NIAF was founded in 1975 and is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with no political affiliations.

**N**IAF's two most important purposes are to encourage Italian Americans to continue keeping their culturally rich heritage and traditions alive and present, and to ensure that the entire community never forgets the great contribution that Italians have made to the history and progress of the United States. To this end, the Foundation actively collaborates with the United States Congress and the White House on all major issues affecting Italian Americans.

**T**o celebrate the great legacy that unites us and all the objectives achieved so far, NIAF organizes its Anniversary Gala every October in Washington, D.C., which is usually attended by the President of the United States; figureheads from the political, financial and cultural arenas; illustrious Italian Americans; and about 1,200 guests from the United States and Italy.

**O**n this occasion, the Foundation awards honors to eminent Italian and Italian American personalities who have distinguished themselves in their professional or civic role.



WE THE ITALIANS 200 • JUNE 2026

ITALIAN ART

# How a tiny Abruzzo village became one of Italy's most remarkable open-air art museums

BY UMBERTO MUCCI



**I**n the heart of Abruzzo, perched at more than 3,300 feet above sea level within the Sirente Velino Regional Park, the small village of Aielli has accomplished something extraordinary. Once known primarily as a quiet mountain community in the Marsica area of the province of L'Aquila, Aielli has reinvented itself as one of Italy's most innovative centers for street art, attracting visitors, artists, and cultural enthusiasts from across Europe.

What makes Aielli unique is not simply the quality of its murals. It is the way contemporary art, astronomy, history, and local identity have merged

to transform an entire village into a living cultural experience.

The story began in 2017 with the launch of Borgo Universo, a festival created to combat depopulation and revitalize the local economy through creativity and culture. The idea was ambitious: invite internationally recognized street artists to create large-scale works throughout the historic center while connecting the artistic project to Aielli's long-standing relationship with astronomy and the night sky.

The result exceeded all expectations.

Year after year, new murals appeared on houses, stairways, walls, arches, and public spaces. What started as a festival gradually evolved into a permanent open-air museum. Today, visitors can walk through the village and discover more than 50 murals and artistic installations created by Italian and international artists.

Unlike many urban street art districts, Aielli offers a completely different experience. Here, monumental artworks emerge among medieval stone buildings, narrow alleys, mountain views, and historic architecture. Every corner reveals a dialogue between past and present, tradition and innovation.

Among the artists who have left their mark on the village are internationally respected names such as Okuda San Miguel, Millo, Ericailcane, Agostino Iacurci, Sam3, Marina Capdevila, Gio Pistone, 2501, and many others. Their works explore themes ranging from astronomy and mythology to local history, environmental awareness, and human relationships.

One of the most photographed installations is Okuda San Miguel's colorful geometric intervention, which transforms an entrance arch into what appears to be a portal connecting the village to the universe. Other murals reference ancient myths, endangered wildlife, the stars above Abruzzo, and the resilience of local communities.

Astronomy plays a central role in Aielli's identity. The village is home to the Torre delle Stelle, or Tower of the Stars, a medieval tower that now serves as

an astronomical observatory. This unusual combination of street art and space science has become the defining characteristic of Borgo Universo. Visitors can spend the day exploring murals and the evening observing planets, constellations, and distant galaxies.

Aielli has also developed several artistic projects that are unique in Italy. Among them are giant wall inscriptions featuring major texts of Italian and European culture. The village famously reproduced the entire Italian Constitution on a public wall and later created a 52-meter-long installation dedicated to Dante Alighieri's Divine Comedy. More re-





cently, a mural version of the Ventotene Manifesto was added, reinforcing the village's role as a place where art becomes a vehicle for civic and cultural reflection.

The transformation has brought significant benefits. Tourism has increased dramatically, helping local businesses, restaurants, accommodations, and cultural initiatives. Guided mural tours now operate throughout the year, allowing visitors to explore the artworks while learning about the village's history and traditions.

Yet perhaps Aielli's greatest achievement is proving that contemporary art can thrive far from major cities. Instead of concentrating creativity in metropolitan centers, the village has demonstrated how



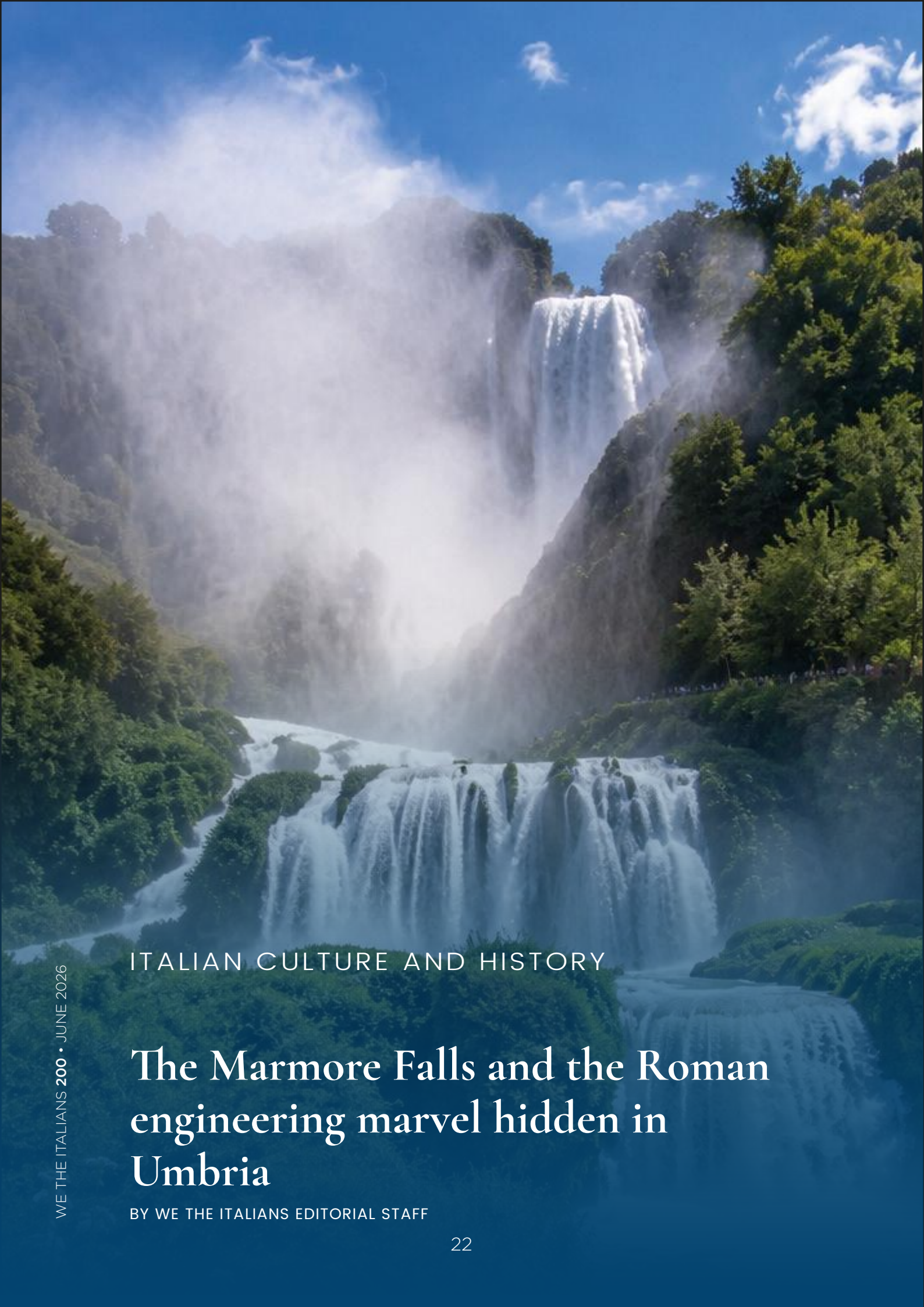
culture can become a powerful tool for regeneration in rural Italy.

Today, Aielli stands as one of the most successful examples of artistic revitalization in the country. It is

simultaneously a medieval village, an astronomical destination, a cultural laboratory, and one of Italy's most fascinating open-air museums.

In a nation famous for Renaissance masterpieces and ancient monuments, Aielli has shown that Italian art continues to evolve. Here, among the mountains of Abruzzo, the walls themselves have become canvases, transforming a small village into a place where imagination, history, and the universe meet.





WE THE ITALIANS 200 • JUNE 2026

ITALIAN CULTURE AND HISTORY

# The Marmore Falls and the Roman engineering marvel hidden in Umbria

BY WE THE ITALIANS EDITORIAL STAFF

Visitors arriving at the Marmore Falls are often struck by the same thought: nature can be astonishing. Water plunges dramatically over three levels, creating a spectacular cascade nearly 540 feet high, making it one of the tallest waterfalls in Europe. Surrounded by lush vegetation and the rolling landscapes of Umbria, the scene appears completely natural.

Yet one of the most fascinating facts about the Marmore Falls is that they are not a natural waterfall at all.

What millions of visitors admire today is actually one of the oldest hydraulic engineering projects in the world, conceived and built by the ancient Romans more than 2,200 years ago. The falls stand as a remarkable testament to Roman ingenuity and remain one of Umbria's greatest historical and technological treasures.

The story begins in 271 B.C., when the Roman consul Manius Curius Dentatus faced a serious environmental problem. The Velino River flowed into a vast marshy area near present-day Rieti, creating stagnant waters that caused flooding and unhealthy living conditions. The Romans decided to solve the problem through engineering.

Rather than attempting to drain the wetlands gradually, they devised a bold solution. Workers excavated a canal that redirected the waters of the Velino River toward the edge of a limestone cliff overlooking the Nera Valley. Once the water reached the precipice, it plunged into the valley below, creating an artificial waterfall unlike anything seen before.

The result was the Cascata delle Marmore.

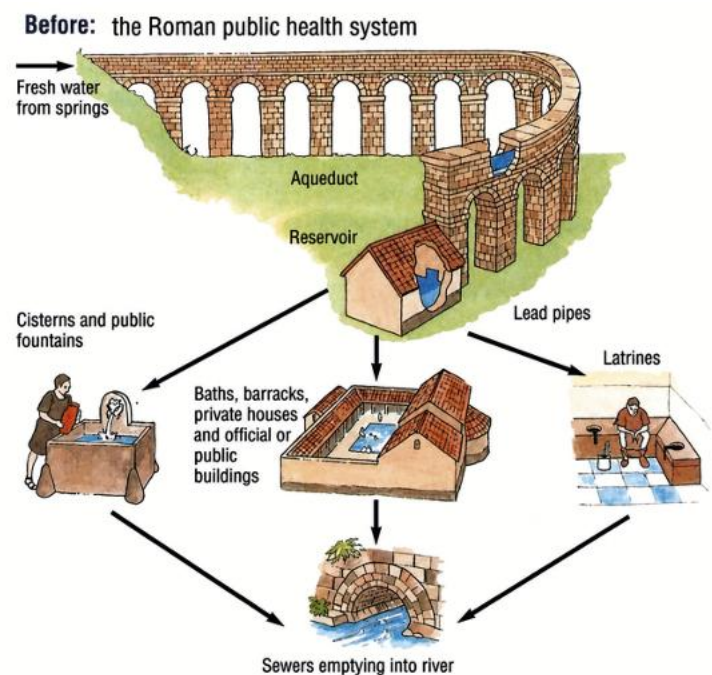
Its name derives from the marble-like deposits of calcium carbonate that formed over centuries on



the surrounding rocks. The brilliant white appearance of these formations inspired the term “Marmore,” which means “marble-like” in Italian.

The project demonstrated the extraordinary capabilities of Roman engineering. The civilization that built aqueducts, roads, bridges, and harbors throughout the Mediterranean was equally capable of reshaping entire landscapes. The Marmore Falls became one of the earliest examples of large-scale environmental engineering, proving that the Romans could control water on a monumental scale.

Of course, managing such a massive hydraulic system was not always easy. Over the centuries, sediment accumulation and changing water flows cre-





ated new challenges. During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, various popes, architects, and engineers worked to improve the system and reduce flooding in nearby areas. Among those involved were some of Italy's greatest minds, including Antonio da Sangallo the Younger and other prominent engineers of the period.

The waterfall that visitors see today is therefore the result of more than two millennia of continuous maintenance, innovation, and adaptation.

What makes the Marmore Falls particularly special is the way human ingenuity and natural beauty have become inseparable. Although created by people, the waterfall has blended perfectly into the Umbrian landscape. Dense forests, scenic trails, and rich biodiversity now surround the cascade, making it difficult to imagine that it originated as a Roman public works project.

Today, the falls are located near Terni, in southern Umbria, a region often described as Italy's green heart. While neighboring Tuscany attracts much of the international spotlight, Umbria preserves some of the country's most authentic landscapes and lesser-known historical treasures. The Marmore Falls perfectly embody this identity. They are spectacular, historic, and uniquely Italian, yet still

capable of surprising visitors who expect only natural wonders.

The site attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. Many come for the panoramic viewpoints and hiking trails, while others enjoy rafting, kayaking, and outdoor activities in the Nera River Park. Yet beyond the adventure and scenery lies a deeper story – one that connects modern travelers to the achievements of ancient Rome.

The Marmore Falls remind us that innovation is not a modern invention. More than 22 centuries ago, Roman engineers transformed a problematic marsh into a functioning hydraulic system that continues to operate today. Few engineering works anywhere in the world can claim such longevity.

In an age fascinated by technology and infrastructure, the Cascata delle Marmore offers a powerful lesson from the past. What appears to be one of Europe's most beautiful natural waterfalls is actually one of humanity's oldest surviving engineering masterpieces.

It is a symbol of Umbria's rich heritage, a monument to Roman genius, and a reminder that sometimes the most extraordinary landscapes are not created by nature alone.



We the  Italians  
two flags one heart

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WE THE ITALIANS 200 • JUNE 2026

ITALIAN CUISINE

# Bombette pugliesi, a taste of Puglia's culinary soul

BY MARCO CRISCUOLO

**F**ew dishes capture the essence of Puglia quite like *Bombette Pugliesi*. Humble in origin yet unforgettable in flavor, these succulent pork rolls have become a symbol of the region's rich culinary heritage, particularly in the picturesque Valle d'Itria, home to the famous trulli houses and centuries-old food traditions.

For Chef Marco Criscuolo, Bombette are much more than a regional specialty, they are a direct connection to his childhood.

Born and raised in an agricultural town in Puglia, Marco developed an appreciation for authentic ingredients and traditional cooking methods from an early age. At just 15 years old, he enrolled in culinary school, where his talent quickly distinguished him from his peers. During his five-year training, he was selected several times to represent his school through prestigious culinary internships in Sweden, Holland, and Egypt, experiences that broadened his culinary horizons while strengthening his commitment to Italian traditions.

His professional journey would eventually take him around the world. After graduation, Marco joined Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts as Chef de Partie, working in renowned properties across London, Santa Barbara, and Sydney. His passion for authentic Italian cuisine later led him to The Resort at Pelican Hill in Newport Coast, California, where he became Executive Chef of Andrea Ristorante. There, he championed traditional Italian craftsmanship, overseeing a temperature-controlled pasta laboratory that produced 17 varieties of handmade pasta daily.

Following his promotion to Executive Sous Chef of the entire resort and several years serving as private chef to a former U.S. Ambassador and fami-

ly, Marco returned to Orange County in 2023 to open Trattoria Trullo. Inspired by the flavors of his homeland, the restaurant reflects his belief that great Italian cuisine is rooted in simplicity, quality ingredients, and respect for tradition.

One dish that perfectly embodies this philosophy is Bombette Pugliesi.

Traditionally prepared by local butchers and grilled over charcoal fires, bombette are made from thin slices of pork shoulder stuffed with regional cheeses and cured meats before being rolled and cooked until golden and juicy. Chef Marco's version features spicy 'Nduja, creamy Caciocavallo cheese, Pecorino, parsley, and garlic—ingredients that showcase the bold yet balanced flavors for which southern Italian cuisine is famous. The result is a perfect harmony of smoky pork, melted cheese, and subtle spice.

Served atop a bright salad of wild arugula, lemon, extra virgin olive oil, pickled red onions, and cherry tomatoes, the dish offers a beautiful contrast of richness and freshness. Every bite reflects the culinary landscape of Puglia, where robust meats, artisanal cheeses, and sun-ripened produce have defined local cooking for generations.

Today, Chef Marco continues to share these traditions with guests, proving that authentic Italian cuisine is not about complexity, but about honoring the stories, people, and places behind every recipe.

## **Bombette Pugliesi with Arugula and Pickled Red Onion Salad**

**By Chef Marco Criscuolo**

**Yield:** 12 Bombette

### **Ingredients**

#### **For the Bombette**

- 1 lb pork shoulder butt (capocollo), cut into 12 thin slices
- 1/2 lb 'Nduja sausage

- 1/4 lb Caciocavallo cheese, diced
- 4 oz Pecorino cheese, grated
- 4 oz fresh Italian parsley, chopped
- 1 garlic clove, finely chopped
- Salt, to taste
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- For the Salad
- 1/2 lb wild arugula
- Juice of 2 lemons
- 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tbsp pickled red onions
- 1/4 lb cherry tomatoes, sliced

## Method

### Step 1: Prepare the Pork

Using a meat mallet, gently pound each slice of pork until thin and even. Season lightly with salt and freshly ground black pepper.

### Step 2: Fill the Bombette

Place a small amount of 'Nduja sausage and diced Caciocavallo cheese in the center of each pork slice. Sprinkle with grated Pecorino cheese, chopped parsley, and a pinch of garlic.

### Step 3: Roll and Secure

Fold the sides inward and roll tightly to seal the filling. Thread 3 to 4 bombette onto each skewer, ensuring they remain compact during cooking.

### Step 4: Grill

Cook over medium to medium-high heat for approximately 6 to 8 minutes, turning halfway through cooking, until the pork is fully cooked and lightly caramelized.

### Step 5: Prepare the Salad

In a large bowl, combine the wild arugula, lemon juice, extra virgin olive oil, pickled red onions, and

cherry tomatoes. Toss gently until evenly dressed.

### Step 6: Serve

Arrange the dressed salad on serving plates and top with the hot grilled bombette. Serve immediately while the cheese is still warm and melted.

## Chef's Note

*"Bombette are one of the most iconic street-food traditions of Puglia. Every town has its own version, but the heart of the recipe remains the same: quality pork, local cheese, and the simple joy of cooking over fire. This dish reminds me of family gatherings, local festivals, and the flavors that shaped my culinary journey."* - Chef Marco Criscuolo





# 5 GOOD REASONS TO JOIN AMCHAM ITALY

## ESPERIENZA

per la solida  
esperienza nei rapporti  
ITALIA / USA

## AUTOREVOLEZZA

per la comprovata  
autorevolezza  
come door opener

## TUTELA

perché tuteliamo i  
tuo*i* interessi

## SEMPLIFICAZIONE

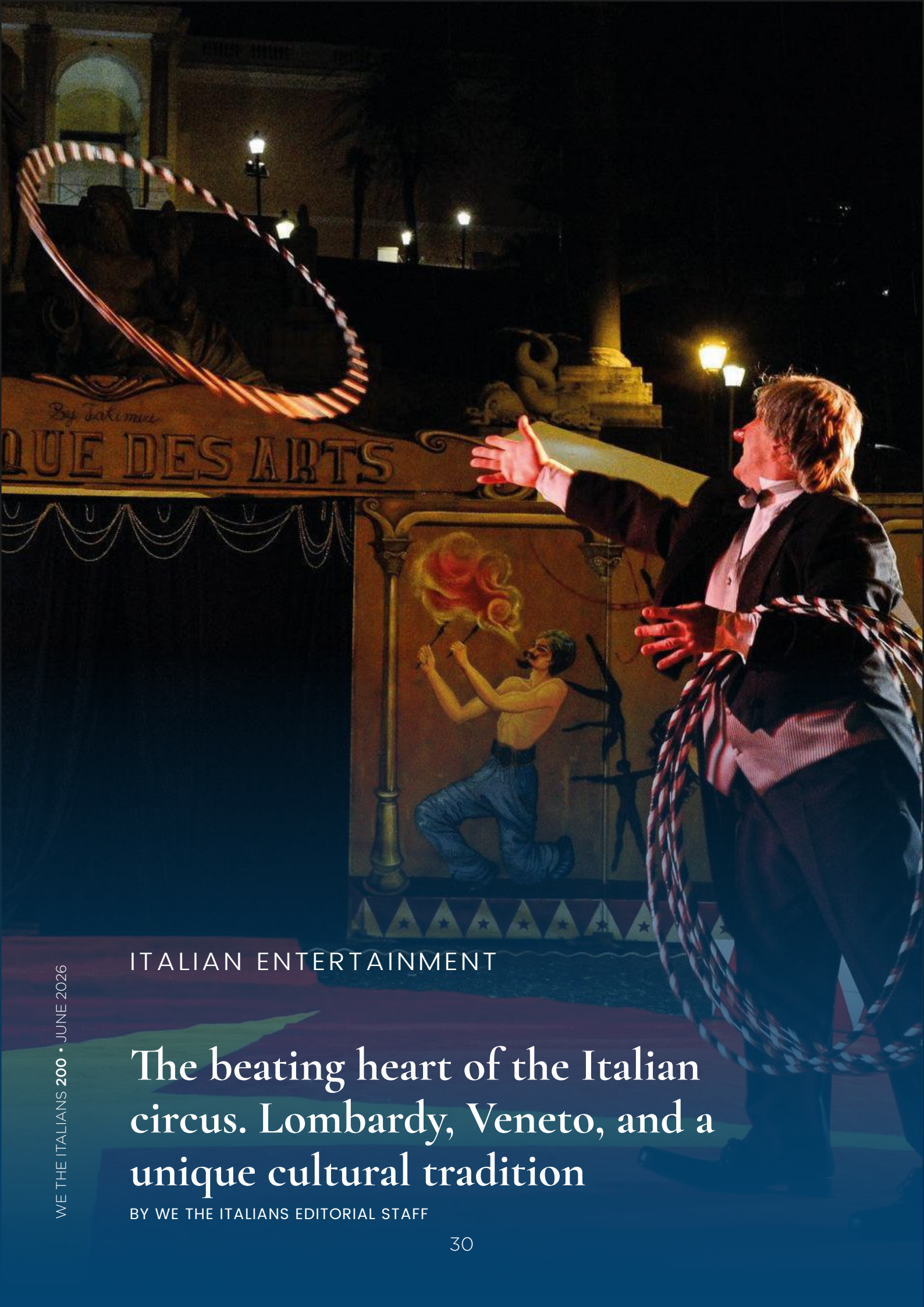
perché siamo un  
efficiente business  
facilitator

## FORZA

per la grande forza  
del nostro network

**Diventa  
Socio**





WE THE ITALIANS 200 • JUNE 2026

ITALIAN ENTERTAINMENT

# The beating heart of the Italian circus. Lombardy, Veneto, and a unique cultural tradition

BY WE THE ITALIANS EDITORIAL STAFF

When discussing the history of the circus in Italy, two regions stand above all others: Lombardy and Veneto. For more than two centuries, these neighboring regions have been the center of Italy's circus world, producing many of the country's most famous families, performers, entrepreneurs, and traveling shows. Even today, Lombardy and Veneto remain the areas where the Italian circus is strongest, preserving traditions that have shaped one of the most distinctive circus cultures in the world.

The origins of the modern circus can be traced to the late eighteenth century, when equestrian spectacles inspired by English showman Philip Astley began spreading across Europe. In Italy, these performances merged with older traditions of street entertainers, acrobats, jugglers, musicians, animal trainers, and traveling performers who had long animated fairs and public squares. Over time, these influences evolved into a uniquely Italian form of circus entertainment.

By the nineteenth century, circus families had become an integral part of Italian cultural life. Unlike many other professions, circus skills were typically passed directly from one generation to the next. Entire families traveled together, sharing not only their work but also their daily lives. Children learned acrobatics, balancing acts, juggling, horsemanship, music, and technical skills from their parents and grandparents, creating a strong sense of continuity that remains one of the defining features of the Italian circus.

Lombardy played a particularly important role in this development. The provinces of Bergamo, Brescia, and Mantua became home to numerous circus dynasties whose names would later become



famous throughout Europe. These areas produced generations of performers and entrepreneurs who transformed family businesses into internationally respected institutions. Many of Italy's largest circus companies established their operational bases in Lombardy, helping the region become one of the principal centers of the European circus industry.

Veneto developed an equally important connection to the world of traveling entertainment. In particular, the area around Bergantino and Melara, in the province of Rovigo, became internationally known as the "Amusement Ride District." This unique industrial cluster grew from families involved in fairs, carnivals, and traveling shows and eventually developed into a global center for the design and manufacture of amusement rides, attractions, and entertainment equipment. Today, companies from this district export their products around the world,



### > CIRCO ORFEI

demonstrating how circus culture helped generate a broader entertainment industry.

Among the most celebrated names in Italian circus history is the Orfei family. Thanks largely to the extraordinary success of Moira Orfei, the Italian circus achieved unprecedented visibility during the second half of the twentieth century. With her distinctive style, charisma, and entrepreneurial talent, she became the symbol of a tradition that combined spectacle, family heritage, and popular culture.

Another legendary name is the Togni family. The Circo Americano dei Fratelli Togni became one of Europe's most prestigious circus organizations, known for its large productions, international performers, and innovative presentations. For decades, it represented Italian circus excellence around the world.

What makes the Italian circus particularly distinctive compared with circus traditions in other countries is its deeply family-centered structure. In nations such as France, Germany, the United Kingdom, or the United States, performers are often recruited from professional schools and then hired by independent companies. In Italy, however, the circus has traditionally remained a family enterprise. Skills, values, and professional knowledge are transmitted within the family itself, creating a culture that blends business, education, and artistic expression.

Another characteristic that sets the Italian circus apart is the versatility of its performers. Historically, members of circus families often mastered multiple disciplines rather than specializing in only one. An artist might simultaneously perform as an acrobat, juggler, musician, technician, animal trainer, or equestrian performer. This flexibility allowed Italian circuses to adapt quickly to changing audiences and economic conditions while maintaining a high level of artistic diversity.

The Italian circus is also distinguished by its entrepreneurial spirit. Many circus families were not only performers but also innovators and manufacturers. They designed tents, transportation systems, lighting equipment, stage technologies, and, in the case of Veneto, amusement rides and attractions. This close relationship between artistic creativity and industrial production is far less common in many other circus traditions around the world.

Equally important is the circus's connection to local communities. For generations, the arrival of a circus in an Italian town was one of the most anticipated events of the year. Circuses often coincided with religious festivals, local celebrations, and seasonal fairs, creating strong bonds between performers and audiences. This close relationship helped preserve the circus as a popular and accessible form of entertainment deeply rooted in everyday life.

Mobility has always been another essential element



## > CIRCO TOGNI

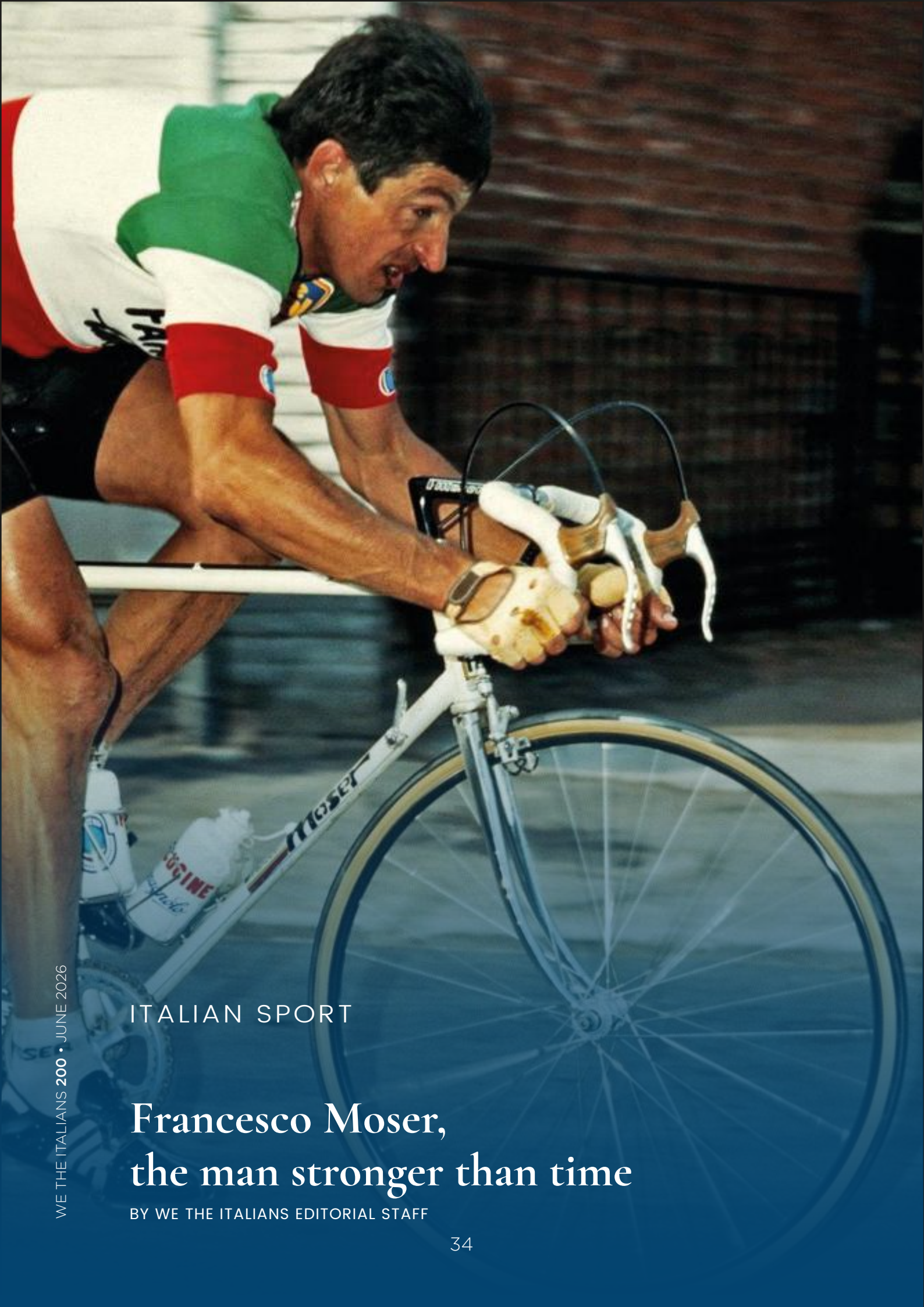
of circus culture. Traveling continuously from city to city and often across national borders, circus families created networks that connected different regions and countries. This itinerant lifestyle encouraged the exchange of techniques, ideas, and innovations while strengthening the sense of belonging to a unique professional community.

Today, the Italian circus is undergoing significant transformation. Alongside traditional big-top productions, contemporary circus companies are increasingly incorporating theater, dance, music, multimedia technology, and visual arts. Yet despite these changes, the historical foundations remain remarkably strong.

Lombardy and Veneto continue to be the beating heart of this world. They are home to many of the most important circus families, specialized manu-

facturers, training institutions, and entertainment companies that sustain the industry. More importantly, they preserve a cultural heritage built on family bonds, craftsmanship, creativity, entrepreneurship, and a remarkable ability to adapt.

In a rapidly changing entertainment landscape, the Italian circus remains a living tradition. Its strength lies not only in spectacular performances but also in a unique way of life that has been passed down through generations. And nowhere is that heritage more visible than in Lombardy and Veneto, the regions where the story of the Italian circus continues to evolve while remaining deeply connected to its roots.



WE THE ITALIANS 200 • JUNE 2026

ITALIAN SPORT

# Francesco Moser, the man stronger than time

BY WE THE ITALIANS EDITORIAL STAFF

There is a small village perched in the mountains of Trentino called Palù di Giovo, where the roads climb steeply toward the sky and the wind carries the scent of snow even in summer. That is where it all began.

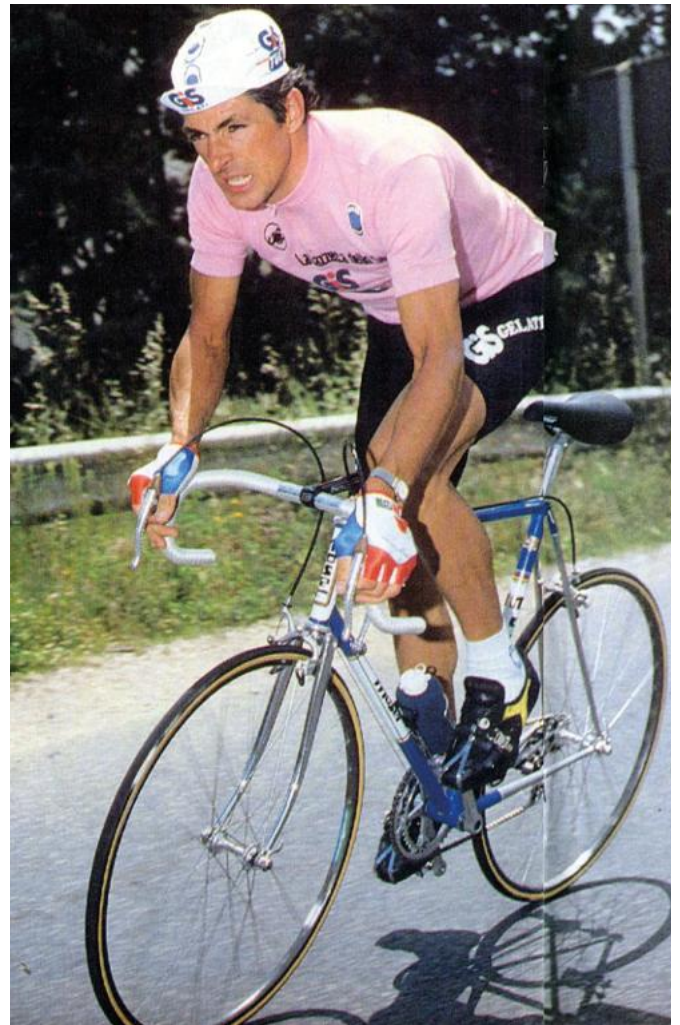
That is where a boy with powerful legs and a heart as hard as rock began training by riding downhill in the morning, knowing that when he returned, tired and exhausted, the climb back home would be waiting for him. That boy was Francesco Moser, who celebrates his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday on June 19.

For those who grew up in Italy during the 1970s and 1980s, the name Moser is more than a name. It is an emotion. It is the radio playing in the kitchen, the newspaper spread across the table, a father rising from his chair.

For those who lived those years far away, in America, in New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and the Little Italies where the aroma of Sunday gravy mixed with homesickness, the name Moser was an invisible thread leading back home. A victory by Francesco was a victory for Italians everywhere, because cyclists around the world envied Italy for having him.

Francesco Moser was born into a large and humble family: twelve siblings, fields to cultivate, vineyards to tend. His father, Ignazio, was a farmer with a passion for bicycles, and three of his sons – Enzo, Aldo, and Diego – became professional cyclists before Francesco. Although older than they were, he was different and showed little interest in cycling as a boy.

Then, at eighteen, almost by chance, he began riding seriously and immediately started winning amateur races. He turned professional at twenty-two in 1973, and the following year earned important victories at the Giro del Piemonte, Giro dell'Emil-



ia, and Paris–Tours. In 1975, he captured his first Giro di Lombardia, and the cycling world began to take notice. Journalists gave him a nickname that would stay with him forever: “The Sheriff,” because he could command the peloton like few others, with natural authority and without ever raising his voice. The year 1977 marked his breakthrough. In San Cristóbal, Venezuela, Moser became Road World



Champion, defeating Germany’s Dietrich Thurau in a sprint finish. Italy celebrated wildly. Wearing the rainbow jersey, Moser returned to racing as if nothing extraordinary had happened, the way only the greatest champions can.

Then came Paris–Roubaix, the race known as “The Hell of the North” – 250 kilometers through northern France, mud, rain, and above all the brutal cobblestones that break bicycles and men alike. It is the cruelest race in cycling, and Moser won it three consecutive times, from 1978 through 1980. No rider has matched that achievement since. Three times he arrived alone at the Roubaix velodrome, his face covered in mud and his eyes shining. Three times he proved that the man from the mountains of Trentino could conquer the stone roads of Northern Europe.

His rivalry with fellow Italian champion Giuseppe Saronni became legendary during those years, as epic as the rivalry between Coppi and Bartali a generation earlier. They were different in every way, yet united by a destiny of competition, resentment, and mutual respect.

But the moment that made Francesco Moser immortal came on January 19, 1984. Mexico City, more than 7,000 feet above sea level, a velodrome, and a bicycle that looked as though it had come from the future: an aerodynamic frame, disc wheels, every detail engineered like a work of mechanical art. Moser was thirty-two years old. Skeptics said he was too old and that Eddy Merckx’s Hour Record – 49.431 kilometers ridden in sixty minutes – was untouchable. Few Italian journalists even traveled to Mexico City to witness the attempt.

Moser pressed on. On January 19, he covered 50.808 kilometers. He became the first man in history to ride more than fifty kilometers in one hour. Four days later, he improved the mark again to 51.151 kilometers. Merckx's record, which had stood for twelve years, was gone.

Italy cried tears of joy. In the homes of Italian immigrants across America, bottles were uncorked in celebration. Because it was more than a sporting victory. It was proof that a boy raised in a mountain village, with twelve siblings and hands roughened by farm work, could challenge the limits of human possibility and win.

That same year, Moser also won Milan–San Remo and the Giro d'Italia. It was an unforgettable season, a masterpiece.

Moser retired in 1988 at the age of thirty-seven with 273 professional victories – more than any other Italian cyclist and the third-highest total in history behind only Eddy Merckx and Rik Van Looy. Yet he never truly

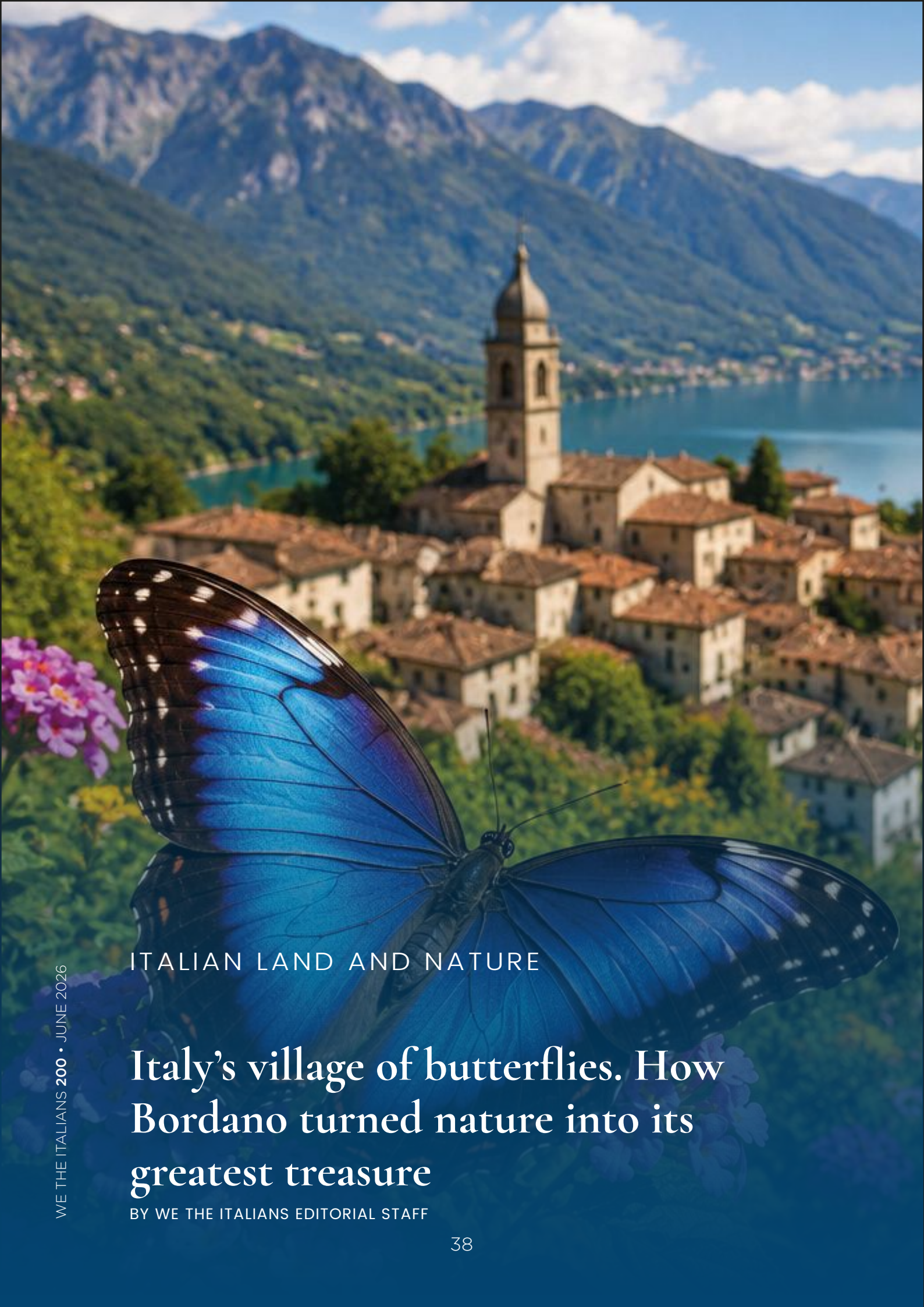
stopped. He returned to the land of his childhood and, together with his brother Diego, cultivated vineyards in the Cembra Valley, producing wines that bear the family name and are now among Italy's most respected. He made wine, built bicycles, and mentored young champions with the wisdom gained over a lifetime.

The call of cycling, however, remained irresistible. In 1994, at forty-two years old, he returned to Mexico City to attempt the Hour Record once again. He did not succeed, but he achieved the second-best performance ever recorded at the time.

Moser is a son of postwar Italy – a country poor in resources but rich in heart, an Italy that never gives up, that keeps pedaling uphill even when exhausted, that always looks ahead.

Happy Birthday, Sheriff. Seventy-five years carried the way a true champion carries himself – with grace, strength, and dignity.





WE THE ITALIANS 200 • JUNE 2026

ITALIAN LAND AND NATURE

# Italy's village of butterflies. How Bordano turned nature into its greatest treasure

BY WE THE ITALIANS EDITORIAL STAFF

**N**estled in the foothills of the Julian and Carnic Alps in the northeastern Italian region of Friuli Venezia Giulia, the small village of Bordano is home to fewer than 800 residents. At first glance, it appears similar to many picturesque mountain communities scattered across northern Italy. Yet this quiet village has achieved something extraordinary: it has become known throughout Italy and beyond as the “Village of Butterflies.”

The story of Bordano is one of resilience, creativity, and renewal. In 1976, Friuli Venezia Giulia was struck by a devastating earthquake that caused widespread destruction across the region. Bordano was among the communities that suffered significant damage. Like many small villages facing reconstruction, it had to decide not only how to rebuild its buildings but also how to reinvent its future.

Over the following decades, local leaders and residents developed a vision that transformed the village into a unique destination focused on nature, biodiversity, and environmental education. Their most successful initiative became the Casa delle Farfalle, or Butterfly House, which today represents one of Italy’s most important centers dedicated to butterflies and tropical ecosystems.

What makes Bordano remarkable is that it has turned one of nature’s most delicate creatures into the symbol of an entire community. Visitors arriving in the village quickly notice references to butterflies everywhere. Murals decorate walls, gardens are designed to attract



pollinators, and educational signs explain the importance of biodiversity. The butterfly is not simply a tourist attraction – it has become part of the village’s identity.

The Casa delle Farfalle is the heart of this transformation. Inside large climate-controlled greenhouses, visitors can walk among hundreds of colorful butterflies flying freely in environments that recreate tropical habitats from Asia, Africa, and the Americas. The experience is immersive and unforgettable. Butterflies may land unexpectedly on a visitor’s shoulder or hand, creating moments of wonder that appeal equally to children and adults.

The facility hosts numerous species from around the world, showcasing an astonishing variety of shapes, colors, and behaviors. Some butterflies display brilliant shades of blue, orange, yellow, or green, while others have evolved wing patterns that resemble leaves, tree bark, or even the eyes of larger animals. These adaptations help protect them from predators and demonstrate the extraordinary creativity of nature.

One of the most fascinating aspects of a visit is learning about the butterfly life cycle. Guests can observe every stage of development – from egg to caterpillar, from chrysalis to adult butterfly. The transformation,





known as metamorphosis, remains one of the most remarkable processes in the natural world. Seeing it firsthand helps visitors appreciate the complexity and fragility of these insects.

Bordano's success is also tied to its natural surroundings. Located near the shores of Lake Cavazzo, the largest natural lake in Friuli Venezia Giulia, and surrounded by mountains and forests, the village enjoys an environment rich in wildlife and scenic beauty. Hiking trails, cycling routes, and nature excursions complement the butterfly experience, encouraging visitors to explore the broader territory.

Tourism has become an important part of the local economy. Thousands of visitors arrive each year, including families, school groups, nature enthusiasts,

and international travelers. The Butterfly House has established Bordano as one of the most distinctive destinations in Friuli Venezia Giulia, proving that even a very small village can attract attention through innovation and a strong connection to its natural heritage.

The village also serves an educational mission. Programs focus on conservation, environmental awareness, and the protection of pollinators, which play a crucial role in ecosystems around the world. At a time when many insect populations are declining, Bordano offers a powerful reminder of the importance of safeguarding biodiversity.

Today, nearly fifty years after the earthquake that changed its destiny, Bordano stands as an inspiring example of regeneration. Rather than relying on grand monuments or famous landmarks, it built its future around curiosity, beauty, and respect for nature.

In a country celebrated for its art, history, and cuisine, the Village of Butterflies offers something different: a chance to witness one of nature's greatest wonders up close. It is a place where colorful wings tell a story of transformation – not only for butterflies, but for an entire community that found new life through imagination and perseverance.







WE THE ITALIANS 200 • JUNE 2026

ITALIAN SOUNDS

# Anatomy of Italian musicality and its dialects

BY WE THE ITALIANS EDITORIAL STAFF

It is often repeated, almost as an unconditional reflex, that Italian is an inherently “musical” language. For the countless travelers who fill our historic squares, everyday conversations often sound like veritable sung scores. Yet, behind this romantic and globally widespread perception lies a rigorous engineering infrastructure. Italy “sounds” unique not due to a mere twist of fate or the Mediterranean climate, but because of a precise phonetic architecture. Exploring the anatomy of our language and its innumerable regional dialects means delving into an intangible heritage built upon metrics, harmonies, and pure acoustics.

The fundamental acoustic difference between Italian and languages such as English or German is rooted in a crucial phonetic concept: isochronism. English, for instance, is a stress-timed language: the rhythm of speech is dictated by the distance between stressed syllables, forcing the speaker to compress and speed up the unstressed syllables in between. This generates a syncopated and somewhat irregular rhythm. Italian, by contrast, is predominantly syllable-timed. Each syllable has almost the exact same duration and acoustic weight, creating a measured, regular cadence that closely resembles the ticking of an invisible metronome.

Coupled with this is the golden rule of Italian phonotactics: the vast majority of words end in a vowel. This structure, defined as an “open syllable,” eliminates the harsh final consonant clusters that would abruptly interrupt the airflow. It is the historical reason why Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart entrusted his most immortal operas to the Italian librettos of



Lorenzo Da Ponte. Our five pure vowels maintain an open vocal tract and transform the human larynx into a perfect resonance chamber, allowing the sound to expand without physical obstacles.

If standard Italian represents the composure and pristine clarity of a classical violin, our regional dialects form a multifaceted and vibrant orchestra, where each region “plays” an instrument with highly specific technical characteristics.

Neapolitan, for example, has a deeply syncopated nature. The constant use of the *schwa*—the neutral, whispered, and almost imperceptible final vowel sound—and of apocope (the sharp truncation of a word) shifts the natural accents. This creates a rhythmic tension that closely resembles the upbeat pulse of African American music. It is no coincidence that musical geniuses like Renato Carosone managed to seamlessly and explosively merge American swing and boogie-woogie with Neapolitan melody.

The Roman dialect, on the other hand, acts as a formidable percussion instrument. By exploiting the phenomenon of syntactic doubling—where “a casa” (at home) sounds like *accasa*—and sharply truncating infinitive





verbs (*annà* for *andare*, *cantà* for *cantare*), it acquires a unique metric aggressiveness. The emphasized double consonants become snare drum hits that constantly drive the sentence forward with absolute urgency.

Up North, the Venetian dialect behaves acoustically like a musical *legato*. By softening double consonants and gliding smoothly over vowels, it produces a rapid, horizontal, and uninterrupted cadence—the very frantic and fluid pacing that immortalized the theatrical rhythm of the *Commedia dell'Arte*.

This rhythmic precision turns into a challenge of high engineering when Italian sounds meet international scores. Adapting a great American musical standard into Italian, or into a regional dialect, is never a simple exercise in textual translation.

The golden rule, both in the recording studio and on stage, is inescapable: metric fidelity always dominates over literal meaning. Translating word for word means letting the Italian accents fall on the weak beats of the measure, inevitably destroying the original swing. Excellence in this field requires finding the exact Italian word—or the perfect dialectal truncation—that locks perfectly onto the bassline and the drum hits. If the original English lyrics end a line on the downbeat of the fourth mea-



sure, the Italian adapter must insert a truncated word (such as *città* or *caffè*) to keep the breath and energy of the original arrangement intact.

The Italian language and its incredibly rich dialectal branches are much more than a mere means of communication. They are an intangible masterpiece. Celebrating our inherent musicality means acknowledging that the excellence of the “Made in Italy” brand also lies in the ability to make the air vibrate with an elegance, technique, and rhythm unparalleled anywhere else in the world.





WE THE ITALIANS 200 • JUNE 2026

MY LIFE IN ITALY

# Moving to Italy, there really is something for everyone, if you leave Instagram behind

BY MATTEO CERRI

**F**or many Americans and Italian Americans, the idea of moving to Italy begins with a familiar image. A stone farmhouse among the vineyards of Tuscany. A colourful village suspended above the Mediterranean. A quiet piazza where life appears to move at a gentler pace than back home. Perhaps it comes from a family story, a holiday, a film, or increasingly from Instagram, where Italy often seems like an endless sequence of sunsets, pasta dishes and charming historic centres.



There is nothing wrong with that. Italy is beautiful, and much of what people fall in love with is very real. The problem begins when those images become the basis for major life decisions.

Every year, I meet people who have already decided where they want to live before they have considered what their life in Italy will actually look like. They know they want a house overlooking vineyards, but have not checked how far the nearest hospital is. They dream of a medieval village, but have not considered that the nearest railway station may be thirty kilometres away. They imagine long lunches in the sunshine, but have not spent a single February there.



My first suggestion to anyone considering a move to Italy is therefore quite simple: choose Italy based on your real life, not on your holiday memories.

The good news is that Italy offers an extraordinary range of options. Unlike smaller countries, where lifestyles tend to be relatively similar from one region to another, Italy changes dramatically as you move across the peninsula. Climate, property prices, public services, transport infrastructure, taxation, demographics and even social habits can vary enormously.

In practice, this means that there is genuinely something for almost every budget, profession and lifestyle.



One of the biggest mistakes foreigners make is assuming that Italy has a single property market. In reality, it has dozens of them.

A small apartment in central Milan can easily cost as much as a detached villa in many parts of Southern Italy. In prestigious areas of Florence, Venice, Rome or Lake Como, prices may rival those of major international cities. Meanwhile, in parts of Calabria, Molise, Basilicata, Sicily or inland Sardinia, properties can still be purchased at prices that would seem almost unimaginable in many American metropolitan areas.

The famous “one-euro house” initiatives have attracted considerable international attention, and while they are certainly real, they are often misunderstood. Nobody is giving away a fully renovated dream home overlooking the sea. These programmes usually involve properties requiring substantial investment and renovation. Yet they

are also a useful reminder that Italy’s less publicised regions often offer remarkable value for those willing to look beyond the obvious destinations.

The same applies to the cost of living.

Many Americans arrive expecting Italy to be universally inexpensive. The reality is more nuanced. Milan, for example, has become one of Europe’s most expensive cities, particularly in terms of housing. Living comfortably in central Milan may cost significantly more than living in many provincial American cities.

On the other hand, a family living in a medium-sized city in Southern Italy may find that housing, utilities, dining out and everyday expenses are considerably lower than what they were accustomed to in the United States.

Even within the same region, costs can vary dramatically. A property near the Amalfi Coast and

a property thirty minutes inland may have completely different price tags. The same applies around Lake Garda, Lake Como, Tuscany and many coastal destinations.

This is why the question should never be “How much does life in Italy cost?” but rather “Which Italy are we talking about?”

Transport is another factor that deserves far more attention than it usually receives.

Many Americans are surprised to discover that living in Italy without a car is entirely realistic in some areas and almost impossible in others.

If you live in Milan, Bologna, Turin, Florence or Rome, high-speed rail connections, public transport systems and walkable city centres can make daily life remarkably convenient. Italy’s high-speed rail network connects many major cities efficiently and often more comfortably than domestic air travel.

Move into rural areas, however, and the situation changes considerably. Public transport may become infrequent, services may be concentrated in larger towns, and daily life can quickly become car-dependent.

Neither option is necessarily better. Some people actively seek a slower rural lifestyle and are perfectly happy driving everywhere. Others discover after a few months that they miss the convenience of urban living far more than they expected.

The same principle applies to services.

A picturesque village with three hundred inhabitants may look wonderful in photographs, but practical questions still matter. Is there a doctor nearby? How reliable is internet connectivity? Are essential shops open year-round? How far away is the nearest airport? What happens outside the tourist season?

These questions may sound unromantic, but they often determine whether people remain in Italy happily for decades or leave after a few years.

One aspect that is frequently overlooked abroad is taxation.

For all the criticism that Italy’s tax system sometimes receives domestically, foreigners are often surprised to discover just how attractive some Italian tax regimes can be.

Successive governments have introduced a variety of measures designed to attract investment, retirees, professionals and new residents. The details evolve over time, and professional advice is always essential, but the general principle remains clear: Italy has made significant efforts to compete internationally for talent and capital.

Retirees moving to certain municipalities in Southern Italy, for example, have in recent years benefited from highly favourable flat-tax regimes on foreign income. Individuals relocating substantial wealth or business activities may find dedicated programmes designed to encourage investment. Certain internal areas suffering from population decline actively welcome newcomers. Various incentives have been created over the years to support economic development in less populated regions.

In simple terms, Italy is often much more interested in attracting new residents to Calabria than to central Milan, and much more interested in repopulating small towns than adding further pressure to Venice or Florence.

The result is a situation that occasionally causes some raised eyebrows among local residents. It is not unusual for newcomers to discover that, under certain circumstances, they may access tax arrangements that many long-term Italian taxpayers view with a degree of envy.

Naturally, these incentives should never be the sole reason for moving. Tax advantages can change, while quality of life is something you experience every day. Yet they are often an important part of the overall equation and deserve careful consideration.

Perhaps the most important point of all is that Italy is not one lifestyle.

The Italy experienced by a retired couple in a Sicilian coastal town has very little in common with the Italy of a technology entrepreneur in Milan. The daily life of a family in Bologna differs greatly from that of someone restoring a farmhouse in Umbria. A remote worker living near Lake Garda will have a completely different experience from an Italian American returning

to a village in Abruzzo where their grandparents once lived.

And that is precisely the country's greatest strength.

Too often, people arrive searching for the Italy they have seen in films. What they should be searching for is the Italy that matches their own priorities.

If your priority is international connectivity,



there are cities perfectly suited to that. If your priority is affordability, there are regions where your budget may stretch much further than expected. If your priority is climate, culture, food, outdoor living, history, entrepreneurship or retirement, there are places specifically suited to each of those goals.

The real opportunity is not choosing the most famous destination. It is choosing the destination that makes sense for your life.

Because moving to Italy is not about extending a holiday indefinitely. It is about building a sustainable everyday life in one of the world's most diverse and fascinating countries.

And for those willing to look beyond the clichés, beyond Instagram and beyond the postcards, there is indeed an Italy for almost every taste, every ambition and, perhaps most importantly, every budget.



ITALIAN SUSTAINABILITY

# Italian researcher helps develop invisible solar windows that generate clean energy

BY WE THE ITALIANS EDITORIAL STAFF

Italian scientific talent is playing a key role in a breakthrough that could transform ordinary windows into invisible sources of clean energy. Research led by Italian physicist and materials scientist Silvia Vignolini has contributed to the development of transparent solar cells capable of generating electricity while remaining nearly invisible to the human eye.



The innovation could dramatically change the future of sustainable architecture and urban energy production. The project focuses on a new generation of photovoltaic materials designed to absorb ultraviolet and infrared light while allowing visible light to pass through almost completely.

In practical terms, this means office towers, homes, schools, and public buildings could one day produce energy through their own glass surfaces without altering their appearance. Researchers believe the technology may help cities reduce emissions and improve energy efficiency without sacrificing design or natural light.

Vignolini, originally from Italy and internationally recognized for her work on bio-inspired materials and photonics, has become one of the leading Italian voices in advanced materials research. Her scientific career reflects the strong tradition of Italian excellence in physics, chemistry, and engineering – fields where



Italian researchers continue to contribute to global innovation despite growing international competition.

According to the research team, the transparent cells already achieve promising efficiency levels while maintaining high transparency. Scientists are now working to improve durability and large-scale production methods in order to make the technology commercially viable. If successfully industrialized, the innovation could help transform millions of square meters of glass into decentralized power generators.

The potential market is enormous. Modern skyscrapers often contain thousands of glass panels covering entire facades, while urban buildings account for roughly 40% of global energy consumption. Integrating transparent solar technology into windows could therefore become a major step toward greener cities and lower carbon emissions.

For Italy, the achievement also represents another example of how Italian researchers continue to shape cutting-edge scientific progress worldwide – combining creativity, engineering expertise, and sustainability in ways that could influence the future of global energy systems.





WE THE ITALIANS 200 • JUNE 2026

ITALIAN FLAVORS

## The rise of Ligurian oysters

BY WE THE ITALIANS EDITORIAL STAFF

For generations, when seafood lovers thought of premium oysters, their minds traveled to France, Ireland, or the cold waters of the Atlantic. Today, however, a new chapter is being written on the shores of Liguria, where Italian oyster farming is gaining recognition for its quality, sustainability, and unique connection to the Mediterranean environment.



The story of oysters in Liguria begins with the sea itself. Along the eastern Ligurian coast, particularly in the Gulf of La Spezia, calm waters, favorable currents, and a rich marine ecosystem have created ideal conditions for shellfish cultivation. The area has long been famous for mussel farming, a tradition dating back more than a century. Over time, local producers began exploring oyster cultivation, discovering that the gulf's protected waters offered exceptional potential for producing premium oysters with distinctive characteristics.

Today, Liguria stands at the center of a growing movement to establish a stronger identity for Italian oysters. Producers, researchers, and institutions are working together to promote a national quality label and increase awareness of a product that many believe can compete with the best oysters in Europe. The goal is not only to reduce dependence on imports but also to encourage Italians

to rediscover a seafood delicacy cultivated in their own waters.

What makes Ligurian oysters special is the territory in which they grow. The Ligurian Sea is characterized by clean, oxygen-rich waters and a coastline where mountains plunge dramatically into the Mediterranean. This unique geography influences water circulation and nutrient availability, creating conditions that contribute to the oysters' flavor profile. Unlike some Atlantic varieties known for intense salinity, Ligurian oysters often offer a more delicate balance of marine freshness, subtle sweetness, and elegant mineral notes.

The taste of an oyster is deeply connected to its environment, much like wine reflects its terroir. In Liguria, that maritime terroir creates oysters that capture the essence of the Mediterranean. Their flavor evokes sea breezes, rocky coves, and the pristine waters that surround the Ligurian coastline.





The relationship between Italians and oysters is not new. Historical records show that the Romans greatly appreciated oysters and developed some of the earliest organized cultivation techniques in the Mediterranean. Oysters were transported across the empire and considered a luxury food at aris-

tocratic banquets. Modern oyster farming in Italy builds upon this ancient tradition while incorporating advanced technologies and sustainability practices.

In recent years, La Spezia has emerged as the symbolic capital of Italian oyster culture. The city hosts the Italian Oyster Fest, the country's first festival entirely dedicated to oysters. The event brings together producers, chefs, researchers, and seafood enthusiasts for tastings, workshops, educational programs, and discussions about the future of the industry. More than a culinary celebration, the festival highlights the role oyster farming can play in supporting coastal economies and promoting sustainable aquaculture.

Sustainability is one of the sector's greatest strengths. Oysters naturally filter seawater as they feed, helping improve water quality and contributing to healthier marine ecosystems. Researchers and industry leaders are increasingly focused on developing responsible farming methods that protect biodiversity while supporting local communities. Several scientific ini-



tatives are also working to preserve and expand the cultivation of native European oyster species in the Mediterranean.

For visitors exploring Liguria, tasting local oysters has become an increasingly popular gastronomic experience. Served raw with only a few drops of lemon, paired with a crisp Ligurian white wine, or incorporated into contemporary seafood dishes, they offer a direct connection to the sea. Their flavor is refined yet approachable, reflecting the character of a region where culinary traditions are inseparable from the landscape.

As Italy continues to strengthen its position in premium seafood production, Ligurian oysters are emerging as one of the country's most exciting culinary success stories. They represent tradition and innovation, local identity and international ambition. Most of all, they demonstrate that some of the Mediterranean's finest flavors can still be discovered where the mountains meet the sea.





*Italia*

# DIAMANTE AZZURRO, ORGOGGIO ITALIANO



TECHNICAL PARTNER



TEAM PARTNER

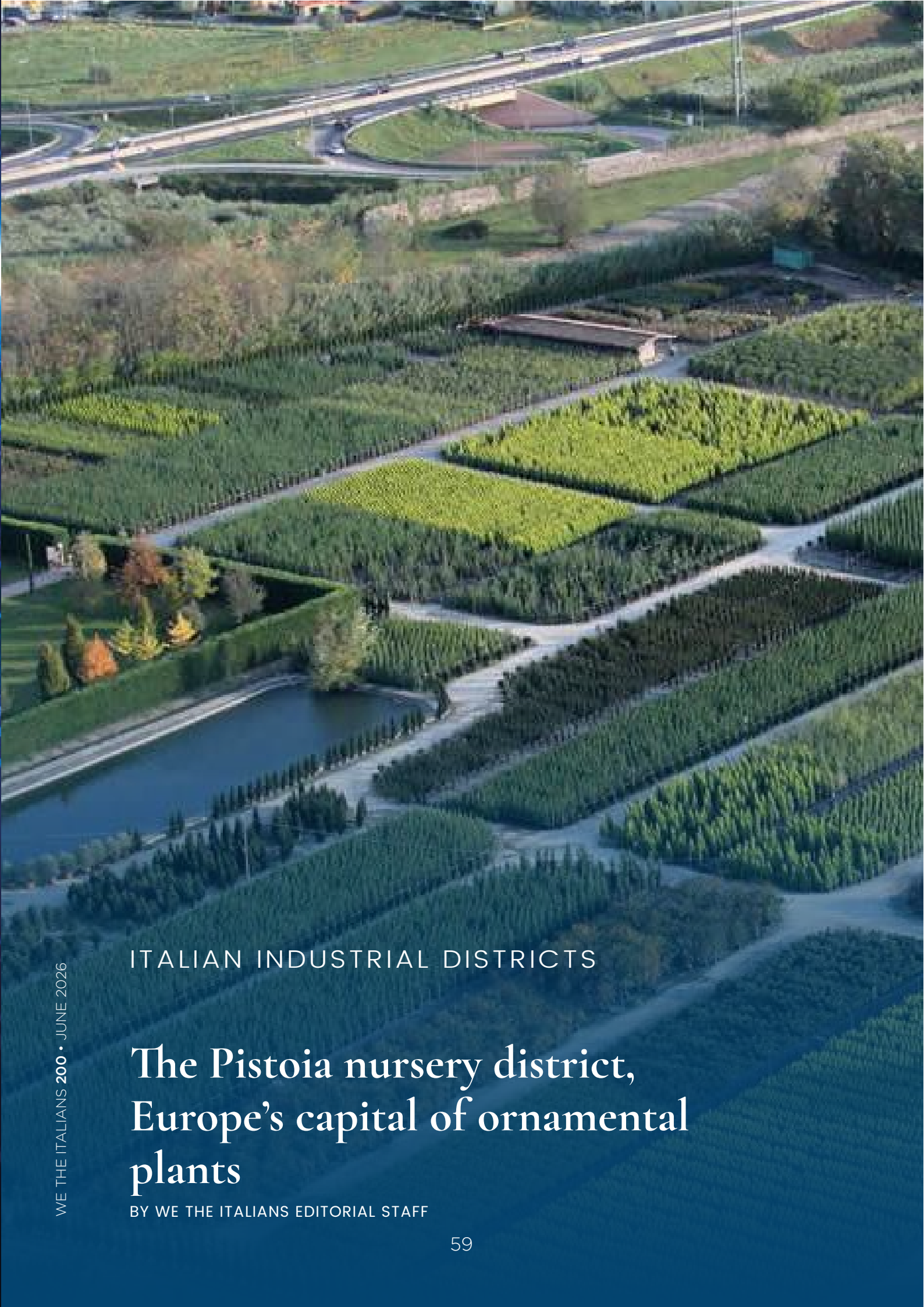


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WE THE ITALIANS 200 • JUNE 2026

ITALIAN INDUSTRIAL DISTRICTS

# The Pistoia nursery district, Europe's capital of ornamental plants

BY WE THE ITALIANS EDITORIAL STAFF

**F**ew agricultural districts in Italy are as deeply connected to their territory as the Pistoia Nursery District. Located in the heart of Tuscany, between Florence and Lucca and at the foot of the Apennine Mountains, it is one of Europe's most important centers for ornamental plant production. For more than 150 years, nursery cultivation has been the economic engine of this area, shaping its landscape, local identity, and international reputation.

The roots of Pistoia's nursery industry date back to the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1859, the first organized cultivation of ornamental plants began, supplying villas and gardens throughout Tuscany. Local growers soon realized that the area possessed exceptional natural advantages: a mild climate, abundant water resources, fertile alluvial soils, and the protection provided by the nearby mountains. These conditions allowed plants to grow vigorously and consistently achieve high-quality standards.

Throughout the twentieth century, the sector expanded dramatically. Nursery operations gradually spread beyond the city limits and into the surrounding countryside, transforming the Pistoia plain into an enormous productive landscape dedicated to ornamental horticulture. Following the two World Wars, advances in cultivation techniques, plant preservation, and varietal research further strengthened the district's leadership position.

Today, the district extends primarily across the Ombrone Valley and includes the municipalities of Pistoia, Quarrata, Agliana, Serravalle Pistoiese, and Montale. Pistoia alone accounts for roughly two-thirds of the district's nursery-growing area. In this region, plant cultivation is not simply an agricultur-

al activity – it is an integral part of everyday life and the local environment.

The numbers illustrate the district's importance. Approximately 1,500 companies operate within the cluster, cultivating more than 5,000 hectares and employing over 5,500 people directly, in addition to thousands of jobs in logistics, transportation, agricultural machinery, and specialized services. Annual production exceeds €500 million, with a significant portion destined for international markets. The district accounts for roughly 35% of Italy's ornamental nursery sector and represents one of Tuscany's most valuable agricultural assets.

Specialization is one of the characteristics that makes Pistoia unique. Local nurseries cultivate thousands of species and varieties, including shade trees, shrubs, conifers, evergreens, roses, climbing plants, and ornamental citrus trees. Some products, particularly large conifers and mature ornamental specimens, are internationally recognized for their





quality and commercial value. These plants are often selected for prestigious landscaping projects throughout Europe and beyond.

Another distinctive feature of the district is its connection to Tuscany's historic gardening traditions. The cultivation of potted citrus trees, exotic plants, and topiary art – the practice of shaping plants into decorative forms – remains an important component of local production. This combination of agricultural expertise, artistic sensibility, and landscape culture creates a unique identity that is difficult to replicate elsewhere.

The production process itself is highly specialized. Over the decades, Pistoia's growers have invested heavily in varietal research, mechanization, technological innovation, and environmental sustainability. Many companies operate according to international quality standards and environmental certification systems, ensuring both product excellence and responsible resource management.



Innovation has become increasingly important as the industry adapts to modern challenges. Precision irrigation systems, digital monitoring technologies, and sustainable cultivation methods are helping

producers improve efficiency while reducing environmental impact. These innovations are particularly important as climate change and water management become central concerns for agriculture worldwide.

The district's success is closely linked to its international outlook. Plants grown in Pistoia can be found in private gardens, public parks, urban landscaping projects, and environmental restoration initiatives across dozens of countries. Export activity plays a crucial role in the local economy and continues to demonstrate the competitiveness of Pistoia's producers on global markets. In recent years, exports have remained at historically high levels, confirming the district's position among Europe's leading nursery-growing centers.



Looking ahead, the district faces both challenges and opportunities. Climate change, the spread of plant diseases, sustainable water management, and increasing international competition require continuous investment in research and innovation. At the same time, growing global interest in urban greening, biodiversity, reforestation, and sustainable landscape design is creating significant new market opportunities.

Cities around the world are increasingly investing in parks, green infrastructure, and climate-resilient landscapes. These trends align perfectly with the expertise developed in Pistoia over generations. As urban planners and governments seek solutions to improve environmental quality and livability, demand for high-quality ornamental plants is expected to continue growing.

The strength of the Pistoia Nursery District lies in its ability to combine tradition and innovation. On one hand, it preserves more than a century and a half of accumulated knowledge and craftsmanship. On the other, it continues to embrace new technologies, sustainable practices, and international markets.



This balance between heritage and progress has made Pistoia not only Italy's capital of ornamental horticulture but also one of Europe's premier nursery-growing districts. It is a remarkable example of how a local tradition can evolve into a global success story, bringing the name of Tuscany – and Italian excellence – to landscapes around the world.

A close-up, high-angle portrait of a middle-aged man with a receding hairline and a light beard. He is smiling slightly, showing his teeth. The background is a blurred blue. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of his skin and the details of his facial features.

WE THE ITALIANS 200 • JUNE 2026

INTERVIEW WITH JOE ROCCO

# Rhode Island, the small State with a big Italian heart

BY UMBERTO MUCCI

**R**hode Island is the smallest state in the United States by area, but it is also home to the city with the highest percentage of Italian Americans: Johnston, where approximately 50% of the town’s 30,000 residents are of Italian descent. Since the office of Mayor of Johnston was established in 1974, there has never been a mayor who was not Italian American.

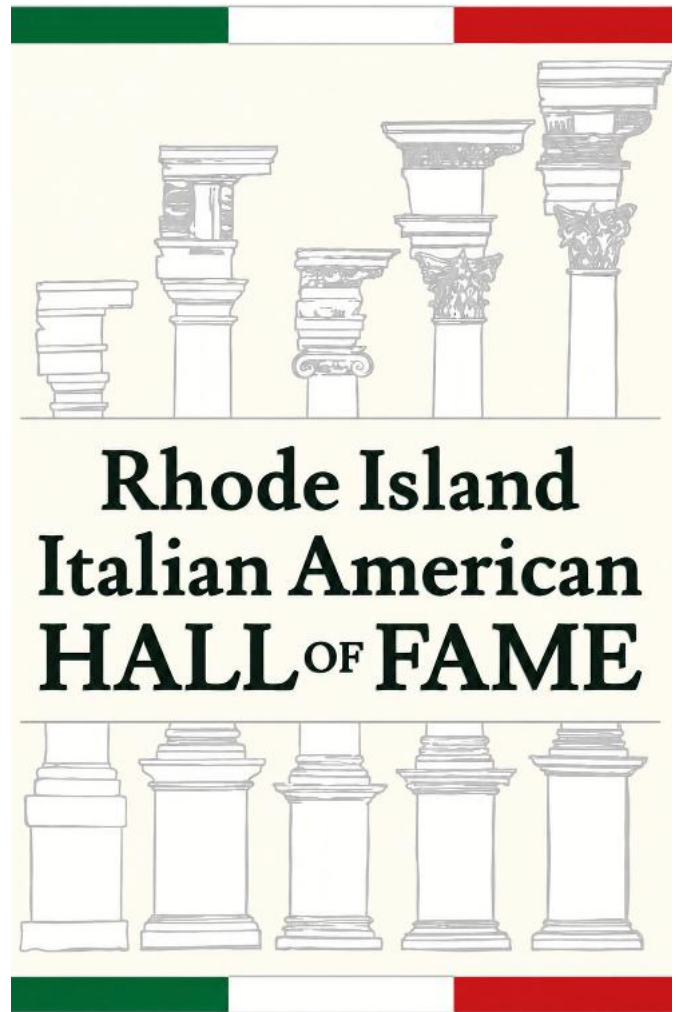
The history of Italian immigration to Rhode Island is a fascinating one, and we are grateful to our Ambassador in the Ocean State for sharing it with us. Joe Rocco, President of the Rhode Island Italian American Hall of Fame, joins us on We the Italians, and we are delighted to welcome him.

**Joe, please tell us about your Italian roots, where your ancestors came from in Italy, and how that heritage shaped your life growing up in Rhode Island**

All four of my grandparents emigrated to the United States from Italy and the province of Avellino. My paternal grandparents were from Serino, a small town 51 km from Naples. My maternal grandparents were from Avella. My parents were born in Massachusetts in the early 1900’s.

I grew up in a suburb north of Boston, but have lived in Rhode Island and on the Rhode Island Massachusetts border for the past 41 years. A position as a television sportscaster at the NBC affiliate in Providence brought me to Rhode Island in 1985. As a proud Italian American, I learned early on mostly from my parents the value of family, loyalty and a strong work ethic.

**Italian Americans played a major role in the history and development of Rhode Island. Who were the first large Italian communities to arrive there, and what kinds of work**



**and businesses helped them build a future in the state?**

Industrial laborers were among the first to arrive in Rhode Island among large scale immigration that occurred between the 1880’s and 1910’s. Many settled mostly in Providence in a neighborhood known as Federal Hill, Rhode Island’s “Little Italy”. They were Tuscan fresco painters, plasterers and sculptors.

Many more settled in the Knightsville section of Cranston, a city just 10 minutes south of Providence. This area saw a massive influx of immigrants specifically from Itri, a town near Naples. These immigrants brought traditions that remain highly visible and popular such as the historic Feast of Saint Mary and the establishment of St. Mary’s Church.

Italian immigrants, mostly from Calabria and Cosenza, including the town of Aciri, settled in the

> JOHNSTON



> FEDERAL HILL, PROVIDENCE

southern Rhode Island town of Westerly. These immigrants transitioned from unskilled laborers to prominent business owners, building the state’s infrastructure and commercial backbone. Westerly’s Calabrian immigrants worked as skilled stonecutters supplying the granite used for major monuments across the United States. Families in West Warwick and Providence provided the heavy manual labor driving the state’s massive textile industry.

Immigrants flooded Providence’s Jewelry District working as molders, tool makers and bench workers in what was once regarded as the “Jewelry Capital of the World”. Entrepreneurs opened markets and bakeries on Federal Hill. Successful laborers formed construction companies while in Cranston and Johnston Italian families established commercial vegetable farms and orchards.

**When people think about Italian Americans**

**in Rhode Island, certain neighborhoods and cities immediately come to mind. Which places have historically been the heart of the Italian American community, and what made them so important culturally and socially?**

Federal Hill (Providence), Knightsville (Cranston) and the North End (Providence) are well established as the core anchors of the Rhode Island Italian American community. For a spiritual anchor one can look no further than the church of the Holy Ghost in Providence, which provided massive social cohesion. It served as a community meeting ground and center for native language services.

The oldest chartered Italo American club in the United States, which began in 1896 in Providence, was a key social setting for new citizens. It remains a vibrant organization today with hundreds of members.

**How is Made in Italy in Rhode Island? Is there room for more goods imported from Italy?**

Made in Italy in Rhode Island is a deeply rooted, vibrant and authentic experience. Many of its towns and cities thrive through historic bakeries, specialized markets and a cuisine that blends southern Italian tradition with local ingredients. Federal Hill is well known for its outstanding Italian restaurants, bakeries and markets. Popular stores like Tony’s Colonial and Venda Ravioli are staples



> SAINT MARY IN CRANSTON

> WESTERLY



> FEDERAL HILL, PROVIDENCE

for imported goods. D. Palmieri’s Bakery in nearby Johnston is famous for its tomato pie while a few miles away at Catanzaro’s Pizzeria in Cranston Sicilian style pan pizzas are popular.

With Rhode Island having the highest percentage of residents with Italian ancestry per capita of any state in the country at approximately 16% of the states population, about 164,000 Rhode Islanders of Italian descent there is undoubtedly room for more products imported from Italy.

**You are the President of the Rhode Island Italian American Hall of Fame, which plays an important role in preserving memory and identity. What inspired its creation, and what is its mission today?**

The Rhode Island Italian American Hall of Fame began in 1987 as a chapter of the National Italian American Sports Hall of Fame (NIASHF) in Chicago. North Providence boxing promoter and well-known former restaurateur Jimmy Burchfield started the chapter after an inspirational trip to Chicago to attend a NIASHF event honoring Joe



DiMaggio. Jimmy became the Rhode Island chapter of the National Italian American Sports Hall of Fame’s first president and remains a proud member today.

The Rhode Island chapter broke its ties with the Chicago organization in 1996 to branch off and become the Rhode Island Italian American Hall of Fame. It’s mission, as has been the case since 1987, remains to provide college scholarship assistance to local and worthy college bound students, honor accomplished Italian Americans from Rhode Island and throughout the country and p r o m o t e its rich Italian heritage. More than a half million dollars have been awarded to exceptional college bound students from all ethnic backgrounds. Mario Andretti, Jay Leno, Leon Panetta, Dan Marino, Lidia Bastianich, Tom Lasorda, Phil Esposito, Joe Paterno, Rick Pitino are among the many prominent Italian Americans who have been honored at prestigious RIIAHF events. All have attended these prestigious and memorable affairs. Some of the memorable moments from these events over the past 39 years are featured in the Hall of Fame’s signature video “Champions for all Seasons”, which can be viewed on [our website](#).

**Over the decades, Italian Americans in Rhode Island contributed to politics, edu-**

> HOLY GHOST CHURCH, PROVIDENCE



cation, business, religion, and the arts. Are there any figures or stories from the community that you believe deserve to be better known today?

Among the many accomplished Rhode Island Italian Americans from six stand out starting with Gina Raimondo who became the first woman governor of Rhode Island in 2015. After serving for six years, she was selected by President Biden to be the Secretary of Commerce, a position she held from March 2021 to January 2025.

The late Frank Caprio, a real - life Providence municipal judge became a global television and online sensation for compassionate courtroom moments as star of his show, “Caught in Providence.” Judge Caprio passed away in 2025. Caprio was chief judge of the Providence municipal court and chairman of the Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education. He was a popular and well-respected



gentleman. Soon after he retired in 2023 the Providence City Council passed legislation to rename his former courtroom, “The Chief Judge Frank Caprio Courtroom”.

Antonio Cirino was a Rhode Island painter whose work reflected both academic training and local scenery, bridging European artistic traditions with



> GINA RAIMONDO

New England life.

A key historical figure is mandolin virtuoso Giuseppe Pettine. He grew up in Providence after emigrating from Italy and became a nationally recognized performer and teacher. His work reflects how Italian musical traditions adapted to American life while retaining strong cultural identity.

Another important Rhode Islander is sculptor Aristide Berto Cianfarani, who trained at the Rhode Island School of Design and produced public monuments that reflect classical and religious artistic traditions carried from Italy into American civic spaces.

**Many younger Italian Americans feel a connection to Italy, but sometimes in a differ-**

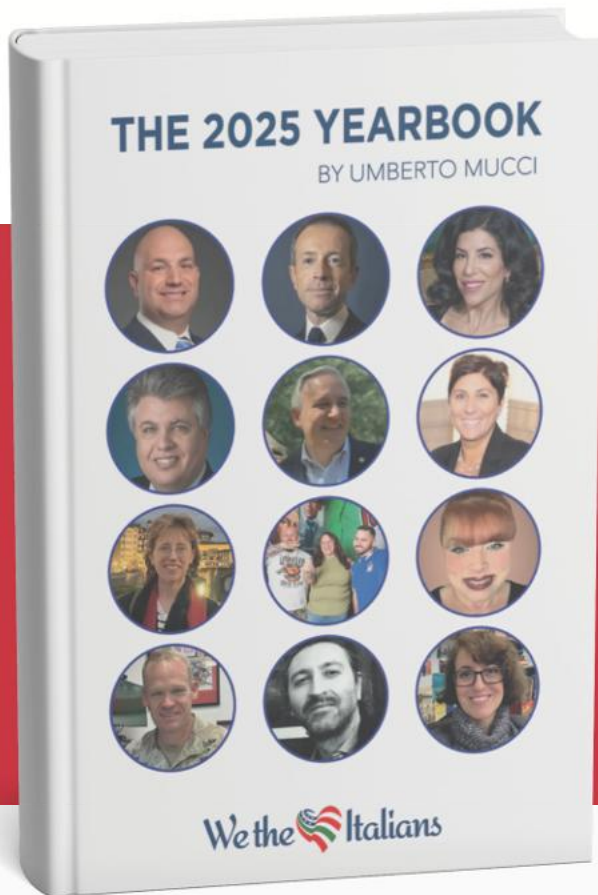


> FRANK CAPRIO

**ent way than previous generations. What do you think is the best way to keep Italian heritage alive for future generations in Rhode Island and across the United States?**

I think it can start with local Italian American organizations like the Sons of Italy, Italo American Club, RI Italian American Hall of Fame and others to commit the time and energy to engage with and educate the younger generation about their rich Italian heritage. This will be challenging, but possible with programs and events that offer information and activities that will be of interest to young Italian Americans.

# THE 2025 YEARBOOK OF WE THE ITALIANS

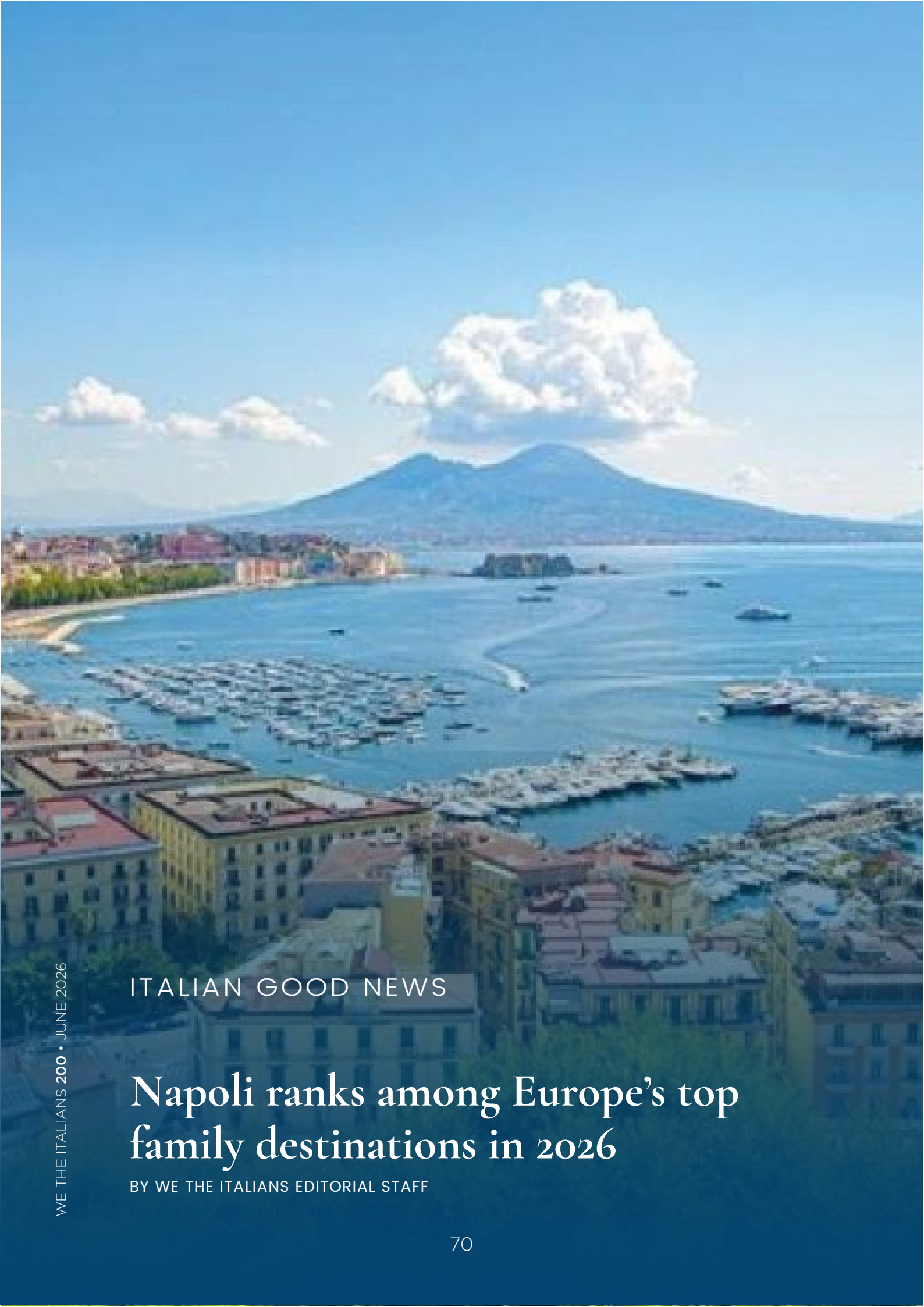


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ITALIAN GOOD NEWS

# Napoli ranks among Europe's top family destinations in 2026

BY WE THE ITALIANS EDITORIAL STAFF

**N**apoli is emerging as one of Europe's most attractive destinations for family travel, offering a combination of cultural richness, entertainment options, and favorable weather. In 2026, the city ranked second among more than 150 European coastal destinations in a major international study focused on child-friendly holidays. With a score of 9.12 out of 10, Napoli finished just behind Lisbon, which reached 9.16, confirming its growing popularity among families.

The ranking was based on several indicators designed to measure how suitable a destination is for travelers with children. These included the number of family-oriented attractions such as water parks, theme parks, and aquariums per 10 km<sup>2</sup>, as well as climate conditions and accessibility. Napoli performed particularly well thanks to its balanced offering and mild Mediterranean weather, with average summer temperatures around 25.2°C, making it comfortable for outdoor activities.

A key strength of Napoli is the variety of experiences available. The city offers at least 154 organized excursions and activities, ranging from boat tours

in the Gulf of Napoli to guided visits to nearby archaeological sites like Pompeii and Herculaneum. These activities are designed to engage both children and adults, making the destination suitable for families looking for a mix of fun and education.

The city also received an entertainment score of 6.14 out of 10, reflecting the concentration of child-friendly facilities. While traditionally known for its history, art, and cuisine, Napoli has expanded its tourism offering to include more interactive and accessible experiences. Gelaterias, swimming pools, and family-oriented tours contribute to a well-rounded environment that appeals to younger visitors.

With a population of about 908,000 residents, Napoli combines the advantages of a major city with relatively manageable distances. Many attractions are located within close proximity, making it easier for families to move around without long travel times. This accessibility is a significant advantage for those traveling with children.

Its coastal location is another important factor. Families visiting Napoli can easily combine city exploration with outdoor activities, including beach outings and day trips to nearby islands such as Capri, Ischia, and Procida. This flexibility allows visitors to create varied itineraries that include both relaxation and cultural discovery.



> POMPEI



Tourism continues to grow steadily. In 2025, the city welcomed around 20 million visitors, reflecting strong demand and ongoing improvements in infrastructure and services. Investments in transportation and hospitality have made Napoli more accessible and better equipped to handle increasing numbers of international tourists.

Napoli is redefining its image as a travel destination. No longer seen only as a city of history and

food, it is now recognized as a well-rounded option for families. With a score above 9 out of 10 and a wide range of activities tailored to children, Napoli stands out as one of Europe's leading destinations for family vacations, offering a mix of culture, leisure, and convenience that appeals to travelers of all ages.



ITALIAN SPIRITS

# Mistrà and the Adriatic spirit of the Marche

BY WE THE ITALIANS EDITORIAL STAFF

**A**mong Italy's great traditional spirits, few are as deeply connected to a specific territory as *Mistrà*. Aromatic, distinctive, and rich in history, this anise-flavored liqueur has been part of everyday life in the Marche region for centuries. Long before it found a place in cocktail bars and gourmet food shops, *Mistrà* was the drink of fishermen, sailors, farmers, and rural families who relied on it for warmth, hospitality, and tradition.



Today, it remains one of the most authentic symbols of the Marche, offering a taste of a region where the Adriatic Sea meets rolling hills, medieval villages, and agricultural landscapes.

The origins of *Mistrà* are closely linked to the maritime history of central Italy. Most historians believe its name derives from the Greek port city of Monemvasia, known to Venetians as “Malvasia” and associated with the trade routes that connected the Adriatic to the eastern Mediterranean. Through centuries of commerce, spices, herbs, and distillation techniques traveled across the sea, eventually influencing local traditions in the Marche.

By the 18th and 19th centuries, *Mistrà* had become firmly rooted in the region's culture. Produced primarily from alcohol infused with anise seeds



and other aromatic botanicals, it was appreciated for both its flavor and its practical uses. In fishing communities along the Adriatic coast, sailors often drank a small amount before heading out to sea, especially during cold winter mornings. Farmers in the inland countryside enjoyed it after long days in the fields, while many families kept a bottle at home to offer guests as a sign of welcome.

Unlike sweeter liqueurs, *Mistrà* is typically dry and intensely aromatic. Its defining characteristic is the fragrance of anise, which delivers notes of licorice, herbs, and Mediterranean spices. The flavor is bold but balanced, with a clean finish that makes it suitable both as a digestif and as an ingredient in cooking.

One of the spirit's most distinctive qualities is its versatility. Across the Marche, generations have used *Mistrà* not only as a beverage but also as a culinary ingredient. It is frequently added to traditional baked goods, cookies, doughnuts, and holiday desserts. In many households, family recipes for *ciambelloni*, *biscotti*, and other pastries include



a splash of Mistrà to enhance aroma and flavor.

The connection between Mistrà and the Marche is impossible to separate from the region’s geography. Stretching from the Adriatic coastline to the Apennine Mountains, the Marche has long been a crossroads of maritime and rural cultures. Coastal towns such as Ancona, Senigallia, Civitanova Marche, and San Benedetto del Tronto developed strong trading traditions, while inland communities relied on agriculture and livestock farming. Mistrà became one of the few products shared by both worlds, equally at home on a fishing boat and in a farmhouse kitchen.

The spirit also reflects the region’s agricultural heritage. Anise has been cultivated in parts of central Italy for centuries, and local producers perfected methods for extracting its aromatic oils. The result is a drink that captures the scents and flavors of the Mediterranean landscape in a remarkably simple form.

Among the most famous producers is Varnelli, a family-owned company founded in 1868 in the province of Macerata. Over generations, Varnelli helped preserve and promote the tradition of Mistrà, turning what was once a local specialty into a product recognized throughout Italy and increasingly appreciated abroad.

In recent years, Mistrà has experienced a revival thanks to the growing interest in authentic regional foods and craft spirits. Bartenders have begun

incorporating it into innovative cocktails, while chefs continue to celebrate its role in traditional recipes. Yet despite these modern interpretations, the essence of Mistrà remains unchanged.

More than a liqueur, Mistrà is a cultural symbol of the Marche. It tells the story of fishermen navigating the Adriatic, farmers working the hills, merchants crossing the sea, and families preserving traditions across generations. In every glass, there is a connection to a region whose identity has been shaped by both land and water.

For those seeking to discover the authentic flavors of the Marche, few experiences are more genuine than tasting a glass of Mistrà. Its aroma carries echoes of the Adriatic breeze, while its history reflects centuries of craftsmanship, resilience, and Italian tradition.





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ITALIAN ECONOMY

The new economic bridge between  
Italy and America runs on trust,  
not just trade

BY FABRIZIO FASANI

Every year, the Governor of the Bank of Italy’s closing remarks offer more than an economic assessment. They provide a snapshot of the country’s position in a rapidly changing world. This year, the message emerging from Governor Fabio Panetta’s analysis is not simply about growth, inflation, public debt, or productivity. It is about the end of an era in which global economic integration was often taken for granted.

For decades, international trade seemed almost inevitable. Supply chains stretched across continents, companies searched for lower production costs, consumers benefited from competitive prices, and technology connected markets at unprecedented speed. Italy thrived in this environment. Despite its relatively modest size, the country became a global manufacturing powerhouse thanks to its industrial districts, family-owned businesses, craftsmanship, and the worldwide appeal of the Made in Italy brand.

That world has not disappeared, but it has become more complex. Today, success in international commerce depends on much more than product quality or price competitiveness. Supply chain security, political stability, energy availability, technological capabilities, data governance, financial strength, and reputation all play a critical role. At the center



of these factors lies a single concept: trust.

This shift gives new meaning to the relationship between Italy and the United States. Historically, the connection between the two nations has been strengthened by cultural affinity, shared values, and the presence of a vibrant Italian American community. Yet in today’s environment, that community can become something even more significant – a strategic economic asset that helps bridge two markets, two cultures, and two business ecosystems.

The United States remains one of the world’s primary engines of growth. Much of its recent economic strength has been fueled by artificial intelligence, investments in advanced computing infrastructure, technological innovation, and the resulting expansion of financial wealth and consumer spending. America is no longer simply a destination for Italian exports such as wine, fashion, machinery, design, food products, and luxury goods. It is increasingly the place where many of the rules shaping future economic competition are being written.

Artificial intelligence is perhaps the clearest exam-





ple. It is not merely another technological tool; it is becoming a foundational economic infrastructure. Organizations that successfully integrate AI into production, logistics, finance, customer relationships, cybersecurity, and workforce development will gain substantial advantages in productivity and competitiveness. Those that treat it as a temporary trend risk falling behind.

For Italy, this represents both an opportunity and a challenge. The country possesses extraordinary entrepreneurial talent, flexible companies, and world-renowned expertise. Yet many firms remain fragmented and struggle to scale innovation into industrial success. Italy excels at creating value but often faces difficulties in expanding, financing, and protecting that value on a global stage. The country's significant private savings could become a powerful source of investment capital, but too often remain locked in caution rather than directed toward long-term growth.

This is where collaboration with the United States becomes particularly important. America offers

deep capital markets, a culture of growth, strong venture financing, and rapid technological adoption. Italy contributes manufacturing excellence, product culture, design expertise, and a unique connection between business and local identity. When these strengths are combined, the relationship can evolve beyond trade into a partnership built on shared innovation, investment, and knowledge exchange.

At the same time, both countries face a more uncertain global environment marked by tariffs, protectionist pressures, and geopolitical tensions. While trade barriers are often presented as tools of national defense, their economic consequences are rarely confined to exporters alone. Costs spread throughout supply chains, increase prices, discourage investment, and can ultimately weaken the very industries they are intended to protect. Addressing global imbalances requires smart partnerships rather than simplistic isolation.

In this context, Italian Americans can play a uniquely modern role. Their contribution extends



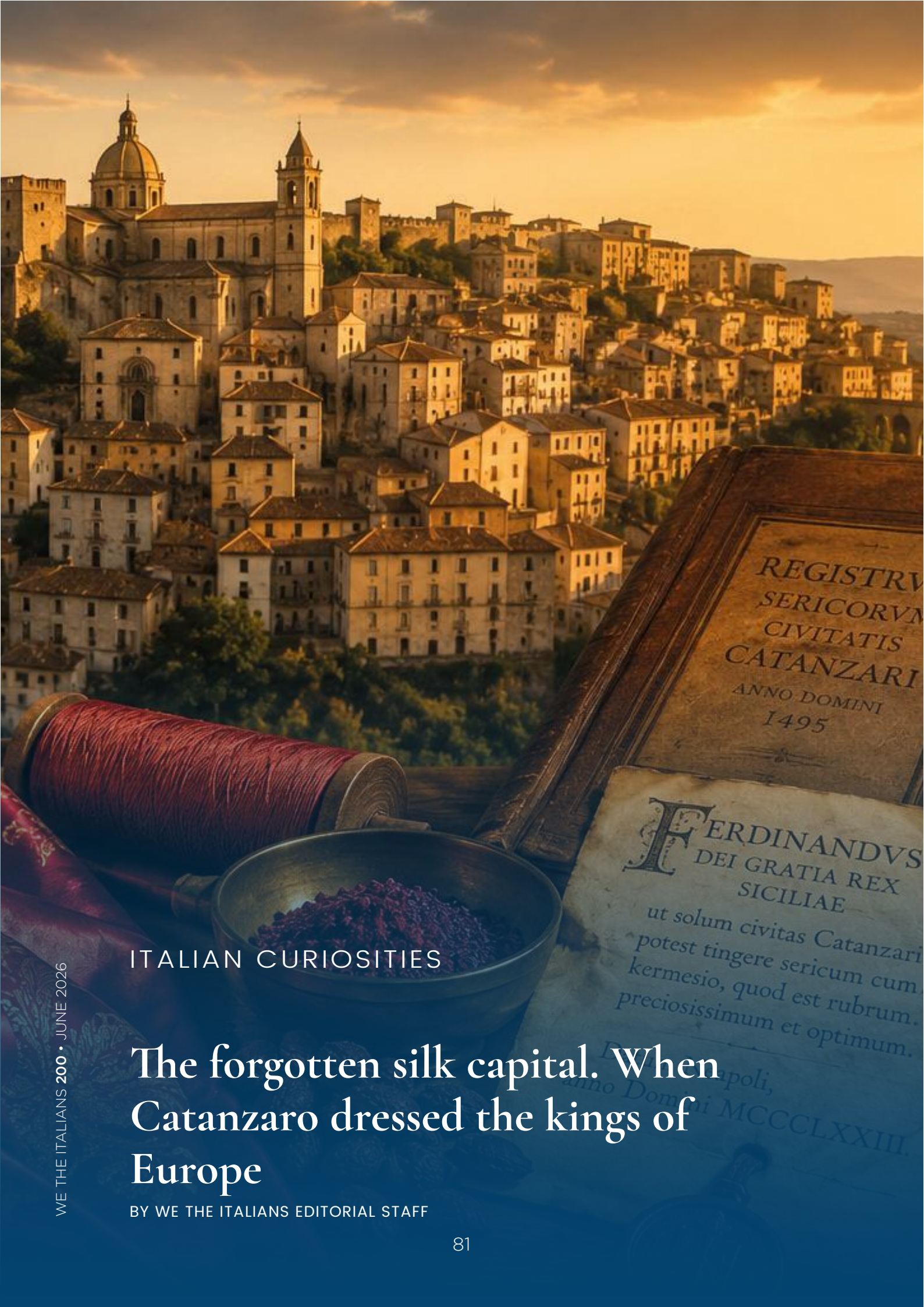
far beyond preserving heritage and traditions. They can facilitate business relationships, guide American investors toward opportunities in Italy, support technology partnerships, encourage educational exchanges, promote roots tourism, and help create truly transatlantic projects. Their greatest asset is not merely their numbers but their ability to connect people, institutions, ideas, and capital across borders.

The future of the economic relationship between Italy and America will depend increasingly on data, innovation, talent, energy security, advanced

technologies, and trusted networks. The strongest bridge between the two countries will not be built solely through goods crossing oceans, but through relationships capable of transforming shared confidence into long-term growth.

In a fragmented world, trust has become one of the most valuable economic resources. Italy, the United States, and the Italian American community possess a unique opportunity to build that trust together – creating a partnership that generates value not only through commerce, but through collaboration, innovation, and a common vision for the future.





ITALIAN CURIOSITIES

# The forgotten silk capital. When Catanzaro dressed the kings of Europe

BY WE THE ITALIANS EDITORIAL STAFF



**T**oday, Catanzaro is known as the capital of Calabria, a hilltop city overlooking the Ionian Sea in southern Italy. Few people realize, however, that five centuries ago this same city occupied a position of extraordinary importance in the European economy. During the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, Catanzaro was one of the continent's leading silk manufacturing centers, producing fabrics so prized that they reached royal courts from Italy to Northern Europe.

Its success was built on a combination of technical expertise, international trade connections, and a highly specialized workforce. At a time when luxury textiles were among the most valuable goods in Europe, Catanzaro's silk industry became a source of wealth, prestige, and political influence.

One of the most remarkable episodes in the city's history occurred in 1473, when King Ferdinand I of Naples granted Catanzaro an exclusive privilege linked to one of the most sought-after luxury products of the era: crimson-dyed silk. The color came



from kermes, a tiny scale insect that produced a vivid red pigment considered among the most expensive dyes available before the arrival of cochineal from the Americas.

The royal decree effectively recognized Catanzaro's mastery in producing and dyeing silk fabrics with this prestigious shade. Crimson garments were symbols of power, wealth, and status. Kings, princes, cardinals, and noble families across Europe paid enormous sums for textiles colored with these rare pigments.



The artisans of Catanzaro were far more than simple weavers. They combined the skills of chemists, engineers, merchants, and entrepreneurs. Their knowledge of spinning, weaving, dyeing, and finishing fabrics represented some of the most advanced manufacturing expertise of the period. The city developed a reputation for quality that extended far beyond the Kingdom of Naples.

Historical records indicate that Catanzaro became a major exporter of finished silk products. By the late 15th century, merchants were shipping large quantities of textiles to Florence, Milan, Venice, and the markets of Northern Europe. Documents from the Crown of Aragon record annual exports exceeding 1,500 bales of processed silk. Considering that each bale weighed dozens of pounds, the scale of production was extraordinary for a city of its size.

The economic impact was enormous. Silk generated employment, attracted investment, and financed

urban development. Churches, noble residences, public buildings, and infrastructure benefited from the prosperity created by the textile trade. Long before the Industrial Revolution transformed northern Europe, Catanzaro had already established itself as a sophisticated manufacturing hub whose products circulated throughout international markets.

The city's influence extended beyond economics. Catanzaro became a center for technological innovation in textile production. Historians credit local craftsmen with helping refine weaving techniques and machinery that later spread to other regions. The expertise developed in Calabria contributed to Italy's broader reputation as a leader in luxury textile production.

At its peak, Catanzaro stood alongside some of the most important commercial cities in the Mediterranean. Its workshops supplied fabrics that symbol-

ized prestige and authority. Wearing crimson silk produced in Catanzaro was not simply a fashion statement – it was a visible display of status.

Yet prosperity did not last forever. Between the 16th and 17th centuries, changing trade routes, political instability, foreign competition, and shifting economic conditions gradually weakened the city's dominance. New global markets emerged, monopolies disappeared, and the center of textile production slowly moved elsewhere. Over time, much of Catanzaro's once-thriving silk industry faded.

Today, only fragments of this remarkable story remain visible. The city's historic center, churches, palaces, and archival records preserve traces of an era when Catanzaro helped define luxury fashion across Europe. Yet outside specialized historical circles, its role is largely forgotten.

That makes Catanzaro one of Italy's most fascinating hidden stories. Long before Milan became a global fashion capital, this Calabrian city had already built an international reputation based on craftsmanship, innovation, and the production of one of the world's most coveted luxury goods.

For centuries, the crimson silks of Catanzaro clothed Europe's elite. The city may no longer dominate the textile trade, but its legacy remains a powerful reminder that some of Italy's greatest economic achievements were born far from the country's modern industrial centers.





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ITALIAN HANDCRAFTS

# Shaping soccer glory in Milan

BY WE THE ITALIANS EDITORIAL STAFF

As the soccer world focuses its attention on the stadiums of the United States, Canada, and Mexico for the FIFA World Cup, a quiet industrial town just outside Milan celebrates its own continuous victory. The tournament represents the absolute pinnacle of athletic achievement, yet the ultimate symbol of that triumph is born far from the bright stadium lights.

It is crafted by hand in Paderno Dugnano, a small municipality in the Lombardy region of northern Italy. Here, the historic workshop GDE Bertoni transforms raw metal into soccer immortality, keeping a decades-old tradition of Italian artisanal excellence alive.

The story of the current trophy began in 1970 after Brazil won its third World Cup title, earning permanent possession of the original Jules Rimet Cup. FIFA needed a replacement and launched an international design competition, drawing 53 sub-



> SILVIO GAZZANIGA

missions from artists worldwide. The winning bid came from Silvio Gazzaniga, a Milanese sculptor who served as the artistic director for Bertoni.

Gazzaniga understood that a simple two-dimensional sketch could not fully capture the energy of his vision. To convince the FIFA committee in Zurich, he took a bold approach and created a three-dimensional plaster model instead. His hands-on technique allowed the judges to feel the physical weight and dynamic texture of the art, securing the historic commission for the Italian workshop.

Gazzaniga designed the trophy in 1971 to break away from the rigid, traditional cup shapes of the past. He wanted to capture the raw emotion, movement, and joy of victory. The final sculpture depicts two stylized athletes rising from a rough base, stretching upward in a moment of pure jubilation to support the entire world.

Standing 14.5 inches tall and weighing over 13 pounds, the solid 18-carat gold masterpiece features two rings of green malachite at the bottom.

The green stone was chosen deliberately to mirror the vibrant color of a soccer pitch.

While FIFA keeps the gold original locked away in its Swiss museum, the artisans at GDE Bertoni return to work every four years to create an official replica for the winning nation.

The manufacturing process relies on time-tested metalworking traditions passed down through generations. It begins in the foundry, where molten brass is poured into a specialized mold based on Gazzaniga's original plaster model. Once the metal cools, master engravers use grinders and chisels to painstakingly carve out excess material, shaping the fine muscular details of the figures by hand.

After manual chiseling, the object undergoes intensive polishing to remove any imperfections. It then moves to a specialized bath for heavy gold plating, giving the replica its signature brilliant shine. Finally, the brass body is assembled with the green malachite base and protected with a clear lacquer coat. The workshop also receives the solid gold original before each tournament, gently cleaning and restoring it to ensure it looks flawless under the stadium lights.



The creative mastery of this Paderno Dugnano workshop extends far praise beyond the FIFA World Cup alone. Over the decades, GDE Bertoni has built a legendary reputation as the ultimate sculptor of global sports glory. The workshop produces almost all of European club soccer's most coveted prizes, including the iconic UEFA Champions League trophy. Known affectionately as Big Ears due to its oversized handles, this massive silver cup requires weeks of precise manual welding and alignment by



Italian master craftsmen to ensure the metal handles curve perfectly.

The workshop also shapes the elegant UEFA Europa League trophy, which features a heavy octagonal silver cup supported by a hand-carved group of players fighting for a soccer ball. Other major continental prizes forged in this Lombardy facility include the UEFA Super Cup and the Africa Cup of Nations trophy. Beyond soccer tournaments, GDE Bertoni's artistic legacy is deeply tied to the Olympic Games. The company burst onto the international stage by manufacturing the official medals for the 1960 Summer Olympics in Rome, followed by the

1980 Olympic medals for the Moscow Games.

The global spotlight shines directly on North America during this tournament, but the emotional heart of the victory remains deeply rooted in Italian craftsmanship. The artisans of Paderno Dugnano prove that true excellence is not just manufactured – it is sculpted, chiseled, and brought to life by human hands. When the winning captain lifts the golden globe into the air, they hold a piece of Lombardy's rich artistic heritage.



LIBRI CHE FORMANO  
E TRASFORMANO



WE THE ITALIANS 200 • JUNE 2026

ITALIAN INVENTIONS

# The chip that changed history

BY WE THE ITALIANS EDITORIAL STAFF

Every smartphone, laptop, tablet, and data center on Earth depends on a tiny piece of technology that transformed human history. Billions of people use it every day without giving it a second thought. Yet few know that one of the most important inventions of the digital age was created by an Italian engineer.

His name was Federico Faggin, and his invention was the world's first commercial microprocessor.

Born in Vicenza in 1941, Faggin grew up in postwar Italy at a time when electronics was still in its infancy. Fascinated by science and technology, he studied physics and engineering before beginning his career in Italy's growing electronics sector. His talent quickly became evident. While still in his twenties, he worked on advanced computer systems and semiconductor technologies, developing expertise that would eventually change the world.

In the late 1960s, Faggin moved to the United States, where the semiconductor industry was rapidly evolving. Silicon Valley was beginning to emerge as a center of innovation, and companies were searching for ways to make computers smaller, faster, and more affordable.

At the time, computers relied on multiple integrated circuits, each performing a specific task. Building a computer required numerous components, making systems expensive, complex, and difficult to miniaturize. Engineers dreamed of placing an entire central processing unit on a single chip, but nobody had successfully achieved it.

That challenge became the foundation of one of the most important patents in technological history.

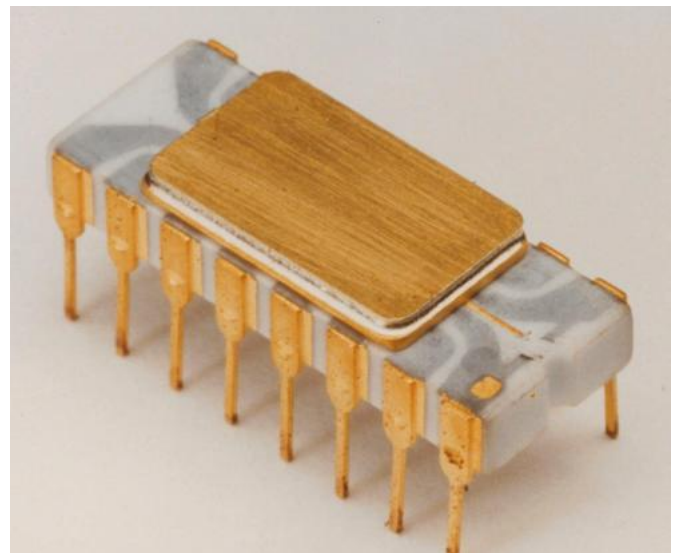
Working at Intel, Federico Faggin led the development of the Intel 4004, introduced in 1971. It was the first commercially available microprocessor – a complete CPU integrated onto a single silicon chip.

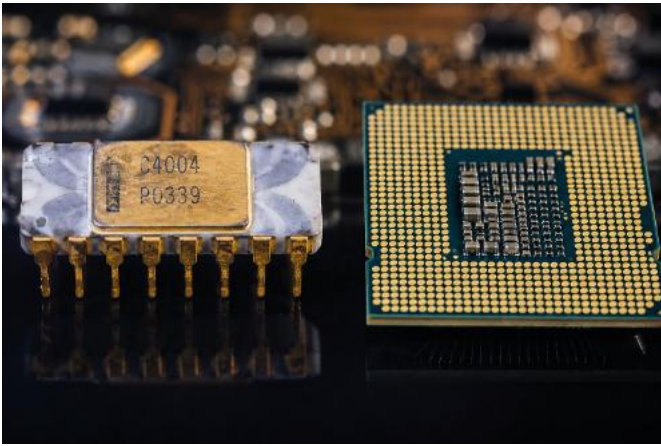


The breakthrough was revolutionary.

For the first time, the computational power that previously required numerous electronic components could be concentrated into a device measuring only a few millimeters. The Intel 4004 contained approximately 2,300 transistors and could perform around 92,000 operations per second. By today's standards, that may seem modest, but at the time it represented a technological leap comparable to the transition from horse-drawn carriages to automobiles.

Faggin's contribution went far beyond the concept itself. He developed critical manufacturing techniques and design methods that made the microprocessor practical and commercially viable. His patented silicon gate technology dramatically improved the performance and reliability of integrated circuits and became the foundation for future





generations of chips.

The impact was immediate and far-reaching.

Without the microprocessor, personal computers would likely have remained laboratory tools and corporate machines. The digital revolution that produced laptops, smartphones, gaming systems, GPS navigation, artificial intelligence, and cloud computing would have unfolded very differently.

Today, modern processors contain tens of billions of transistors, but they all trace their origins back to the same fundamental idea realized by Faggin and his team more than fifty years ago.

The invention also highlights a lesser-known aspect of Italian excellence. Italy is often associated with art, fashion, cuisine, and design, yet the country has also produced extraordinary inventors, engineers, and scientists whose innovations have shaped the modern world. From Marconi's radio to Fermi's nuclear research, Italian ingenuity has repeatedly crossed borders and transformed entire industries.

Faggin's story demonstrates how Italian creativity extends beyond traditional stereotypes. His achievement combined scientific knowledge, engineering precision, entrepreneurial vision, and the ability to solve complex problems through elegant solutions – qualities that have long characterized Italian innovation.

Over the decades, Federico Faggin has received numerous international honors recognizing his contribution to technology. Historians of computing



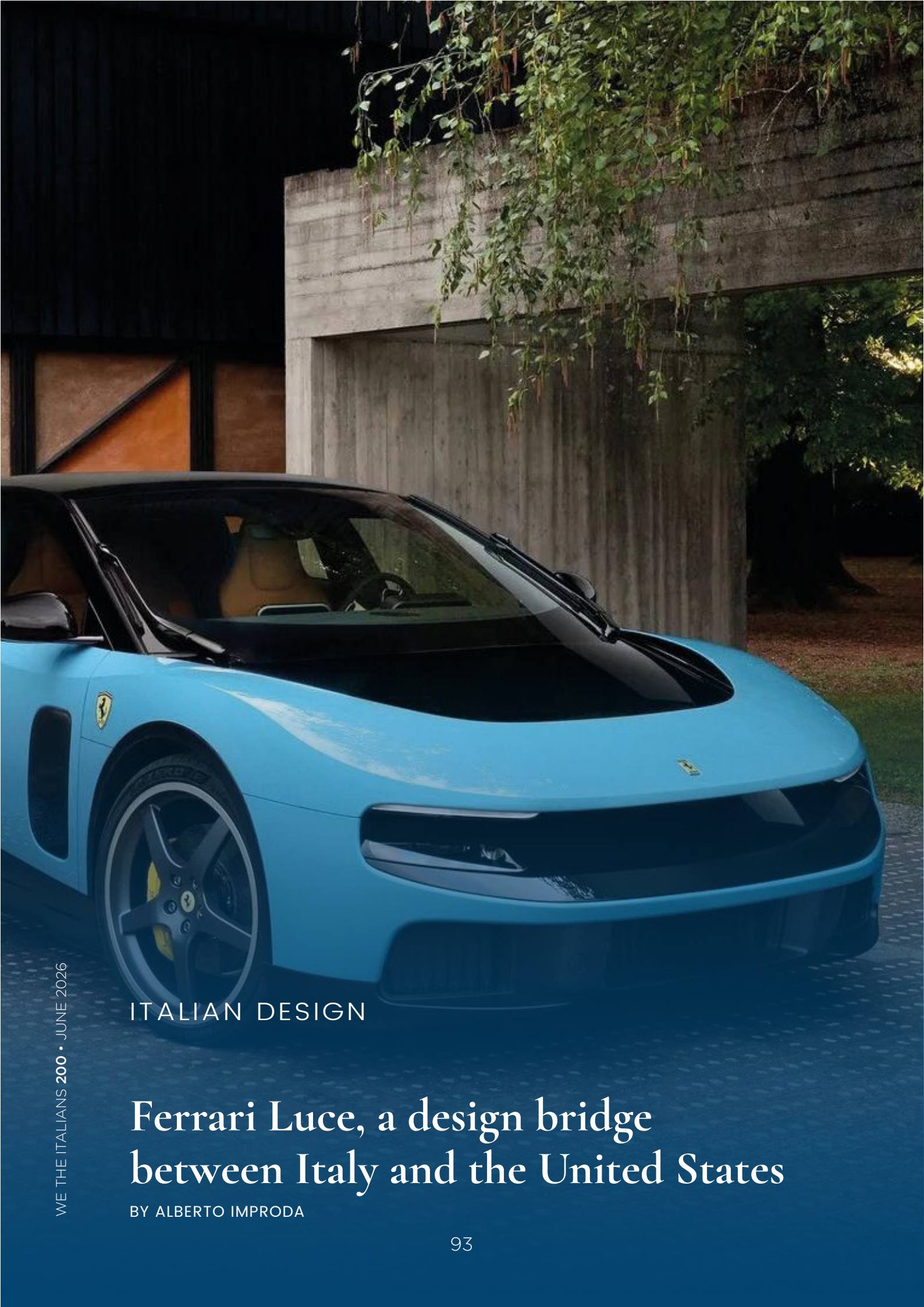
place him among the pioneers of the digital age, alongside the figures who laid the foundations of modern electronics and information technology.

Yet his name remains far less familiar than the products his invention made possible.

Every email sent, every website visited, every on-line purchase completed, and every artificial intelligence system developed relies on descendants of the microprocessor he helped create. It is difficult to imagine a modern activity untouched by this technology.

Few patents can claim to have transformed everyday life on a global scale. The microprocessor is one of them.

And at the heart of that revolution stands an Italian inventor from Vicenza whose vision helped usher humanity into the digital era.



WE THE ITALIANS 200 • JUNE 2026

ITALIAN DESIGN

# Ferrari Luce, a design bridge between Italy and the United States

BY ALBERTO IMPRODA

**F**errari recently unveiled the new Ferrari Luce, the Prancing Horse's first fully electric model. At first glance, the car's styling has raised considerable doubts, both among industry experts and the general public.

The Ferrari Luce indeed departs sharply from the traditional aesthetic standards of the Maranello marque, which have historically been defined by boldness and muscularity.

Nevertheless, the Ferrari Luce project is undoubtedly the result of a courageous vision, one that creates an unprecedented design bridge between Italy and the United States.

The car's styling stems from the meeting of the Ferrari Design Studio, led by Flavio Manzoni, and the interdisciplinary approach of the American group LoveFrom.

LoveFrom is a creative company founded by Jony Ive and Marc Newson, two figures who have re-

defined the relationship between technology and luxury over the past thirty years.

The driving force behind LoveFrom, and unquestionably its most emblematic and representative figure, is the first of the two: Sir Jonathan Paul Ive.

Born in London in 1967, the designer became Steve Jobs' creative partner at Apple in the early 1990s, the right-hand man who gave physical form to the dreams of the company's founder.

It was Jony Ive who designed the products that entered legend, from the iPhone to the iPad, helping make Apple one of the most important and iconic technology companies in the world.

In other words, the British designer was the principal formal interpreter of the Apple revolution – from the colorful iMacs of the 1990s to the iPhone, passing through the iPod, iPad, and Apple Watch.

Not surprisingly, Steve Jobs regarded him as his creative alter ego, the man and technician capable of giving shape and substance to the insights of the Cupertino-based company.



> FERRARI DESIGN STUDIO



By taking his work far beyond the dimension of form, Jony Ive succeeded in creating and innovating a chromatic language later adopted by virtually everyone else.

Initially, the designer emphasized color, freeing computers from their traditional gray appearance and making them seem more approachable and less alien in the public imagination.

He then moved decisively toward white, transforming them into elegant objects, almost pieces of furniture capable of enhancing the design of homes and offices.

More recently, he focused on a distinctive combination of glass and steel, which has since become a defining characteristic of contemporary technology.

Holder of more than 14,300 patents and the recipient of a knighthood conferred by Queen Elizabeth II in 2012, Jony Ive left Apple in 2019 to found LoveFrom, a collective bringing together creatives from every background: architects, sound designers, filmmakers, and human-machine interface

specialists.

The result of the collaboration between Ferrari Design Studio and LoveFrom is a highly disruptive automobile that, at least in part, moves away from the sculptural aggressiveness traditionally associated with the Maranello brand.

The Ferrari Luce moves explicitly, one might even say deliberately, toward an aesthetic with a domestic undertone: clean lines, continuous surfaces, transparent materials, and the invisible integration of interfaces.

It seems undeniable that the project's most influential cultural reference is Dieter Rams, the historic Braun designer and theorist of the "less but better" philosophy, who has long been a key inspiration for Jony Ive.

Every element of the Ferrari Luce appears designed to eliminate the superfluous without sacrificing the symbolic character of the object.

The interior, dominated by glass, steel, and haptic surfaces, immediately evokes the Apple design vo-



> JONATHAN PAUL IVE

cabulary: the central display becomes a continuous sheet of glass, while physical controls dissolve into tactile feedback and nearly imperceptible vibrations.

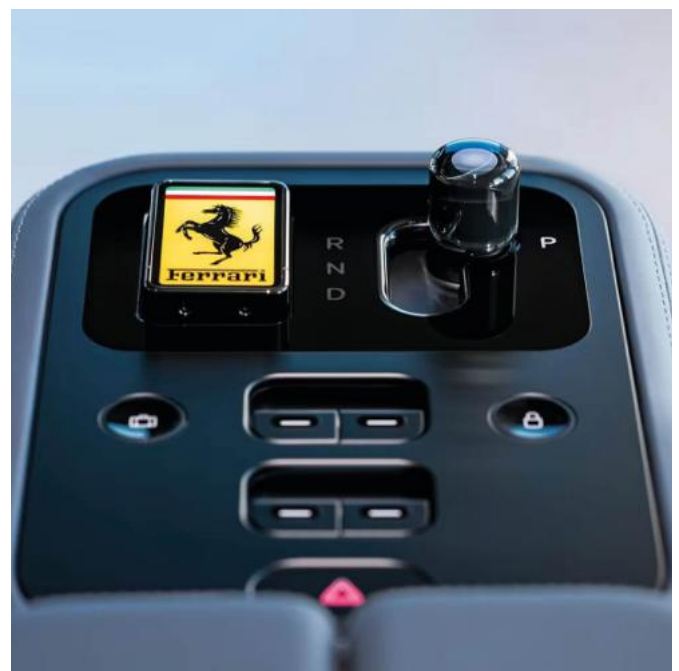
The British designer's idea – one that Ferrari Design Studio has also embraced for years – is that digital technology should not replace the analog world but rather absorb and blend with it.

For Jony Ive, hardware must create a continuum with software, offering immediate ease of use through a dialogue between the digital and the analog.

In the Ferrari Luce, one example is the haptic feedback of the central screen, whose distinctive vibration allows users to perceive buttons that exist only virtually, while traditional gauges coexist with virtual overlays.

As stated in a note from the Maranello company: “The interpretation of the project by a designer external to the Ferrari Design Studio led by Flavio Manzoni made it possible to bring in a fresh per-

spective and encourage the cross-fertilization that allows new languages to emerge. LoveFrom was given the creative space necessary to help define the project's design direction from the outset, translating a new interdisciplinary design language into an authentic Ferrari experience.”



These words reveal the full meaning, courage, and vision underlying the Ferrari Luce project, through which the Prancing Horse explicitly leaves its comfort zone and ventures into new territory, projecting itself toward the future.

It almost seems as if Benedetto Vigna and his team were inspired by a passage from *Beyond the Hedge*, a recent essay by Mauro Gallegati, which reads: “Let us not look backward: it is of little interest, if only because we have already been there.”

Only time will tell whether this fearless – perhaps in some respects even daring – gamble will prove to be an industrial success.

For now, we can only greet the initiative with warm sympathy and genuine admiration, as a boldly unconventional project.

At a time when cultural differences are deepening and the shores of the Atlantic seem to be drifting



farther apart, the Ferrari Luce creates a genuine bridge of design between Italy and the United States.





WE THE ITALIANS 200 • JUNE 2026

ITALIAN STREET FOOD

# Discovering Sardinia's unique street food tradition

BY WE THE ITALIANS EDITORIAL STAFF

**W**hen people think of Sardinia, images of crystal-clear beaches, rugged mountains, and ancient villages often come to mind. Yet one of the island's most fascinating treasures can be found in its street food culture, where centuries-old traditions, pastoral heritage, and Mediterranean flavors come together in every bite.

Unlike the bustling street food scenes of major Italian cities such as Naples or Palermo, Sardinian street food reflects the island's rural identity. For centuries, shepherds, farmers, fishermen, and travelers needed simple, nutritious foods that could be prepared with local ingredients and enjoyed on the go. The result is a distinctive culinary tradition that remains deeply connected to the land and sea.

One of Sardinia's most iconic street foods is pane carasau, often called "carta da musica" because of its thin, crisp texture. This traditional flatbread

dates back hundreds of years and was originally created for shepherds who spent long periods away from home tending flocks in the island's interior. Thanks to its long shelf life, pane carasau became an essential travel food. Today, it is commonly enjoyed as a snack, topped with olive oil, local cheeses, or cured meats at markets and festivals throughout Sardinia.

Another beloved specialty is panino con porchetta sarda, a sandwich filled with slow-roasted pork seasoned with local herbs such as myrtle, rosemary, and wild fennel. Roast suckling pig, known locally as porceddu, is one of Sardinia's most famous dishes, and its flavors are often adapted into convenient street food versions sold during village celebrations and outdoor events.

Seafood also plays a central role in the island's culinary identity. Along the coasts, visitors can find fried fish served in paper cones, featuring fresh anchovies, squid, shrimp, and small local fish. In fishing communities such as Alghero, Cagliari, and Carloforte, tuna-based snacks are particularly popular. Carloforte, located on the island of San Pietro,





is internationally known for its centuries-old tuna fishing tradition and offers numerous street food specialties centered on this prized ingredient.

Among Sardinia's most distinctive portable foods are its savory pastries. Panadas, originally from the town of Assemini, are round pastry pies filled with lamb, pork, eel, or vegetables. Their sturdy crust made them ideal meals for workers in the fields. Similar in spirit are empanada-like preparations found throughout the Mediterranean, yet Sardinian panadas maintain a unique identity thanks to local ingredients and recipes passed down through generations.

Street markets also showcase a variety of cheeses, perhaps the most famous being Pecorino Sardo. Produced from sheep's milk, this cheese reflects the island's long pastoral tradition. Vendors frequently serve small portions alongside local honey, bread, and olives, creating simple but unforgettable snacks. Sardinia is home to more than three million sheep, significantly outnumbering its population of

approximately 1.6 million residents, highlighting the importance of sheep farming to the local economy and culture.

Sweet treats are equally important. Seadas, one of Sardinia's most celebrated desserts, are fried pastries filled with fresh cheese and topped with honey. Though traditionally served as a dessert, they are commonly found at festivals and outdoor food events where visitors can enjoy them while strolling through historic streets. Other popular sweets include amaretti, made with almonds, and pabasinis, rich pastries prepared especially during holidays.

Throughout the year, Sardinia hosts hundreds of village festivals known as sagre, where local communities celebrate regional products and culinary traditions. These events provide the perfect opportunity to experience authentic street food while discovering the island's diverse cultural heritage. From mountain towns in Barbagia to coastal villages overlooking the Mediterranean, each area offers

> CARASAU



its own specialties, recipes, and flavors.

What makes Sardinian street food truly special is its authenticity. Rather than following modern food trends, the island continues to preserve recipes rooted in centuries of history. Every sandwich, pastry, bread, or seafood snack tells a story of shepherds, fishermen, farmers, and families who have shaped Sardinia's culture over generations.

For travelers seeking a deeper connection to the island, exploring Sardinia's street food is far more than a culinary experience – it is a journey into the heart of one of Italy's most distinctive and enduring traditions.

> SEADAS





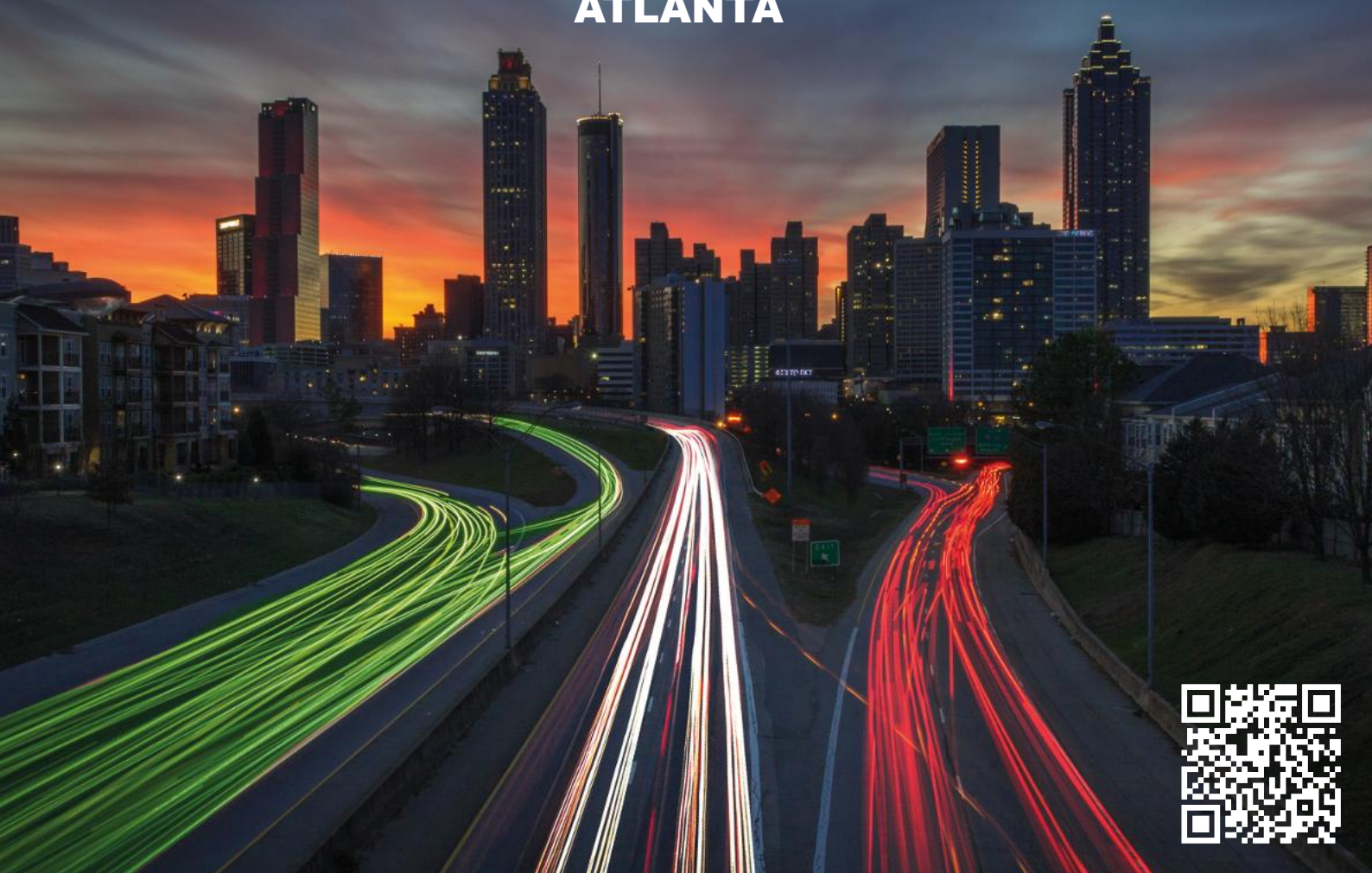
MADE IN ITALY EXPO

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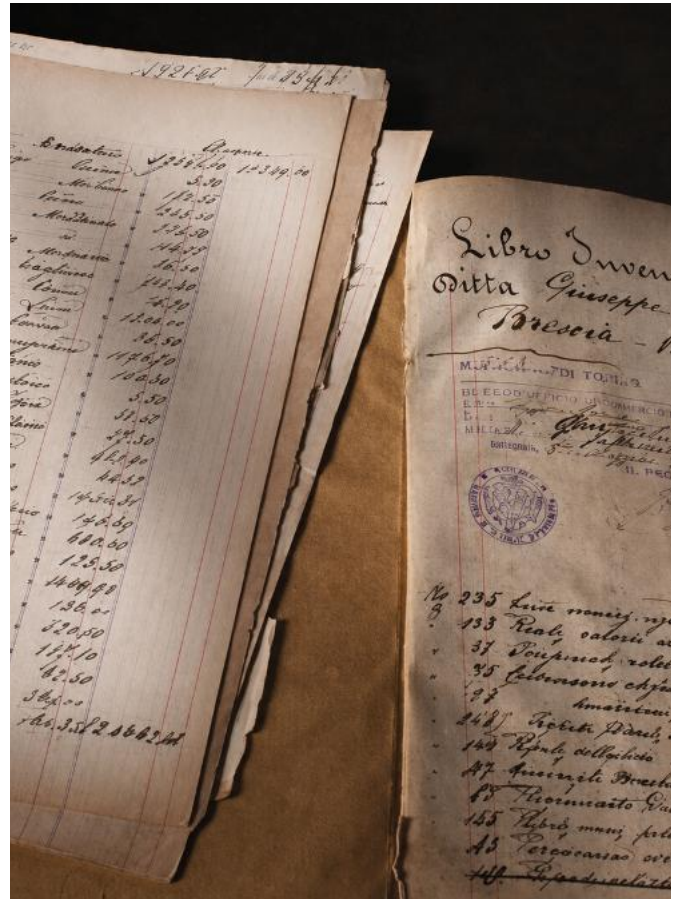
SEPTEMBER 2026  
ATLANTA





When people think of world records held by Italy, they often picture UNESCO sites, artistic masterpieces, or culinary traditions. Yet one of the country's most remarkable achievements is far less known outside its borders: Italy is home to an extraordinary concentration of family businesses that have survived for centuries, in some cases for more than half a millennium.

In an age when companies are born and disappear within a few decades, Italy offers a strikingly different model. Across the country, family enterprises continue to operate generation after generation, passing down knowledge, skills, relationships, and values that have survived wars, political upheavals, economic crises, and technological revolutions. The



# ITALY'S WORLD RECORD

— IN FAMILY BUSINESS LONGEVITY —

**2,600+**  
COMPANIES OVER 100 YEARS OLD  
REGISTERED IN ITALY'S NATIONAL REGISTRY OF HISTORIC COMPANIES

- FAMILY OWNERSHIP ACROSS GENERATIONS
- CENTURIES OF HISTORY
- ROOTED IN ITALIAN TERRITORIES
- SURVIVING TIME, BUILDING THE FUTURE

SIX (OF MANY) EXAMPLES OF CENTURIES OF HISTORY

1000	1385	1526	1605	1731	1779
MARINELLI	ANTINORI	BERETTA	GIUSTI	AMARELLI	NARDINI

1385 ANTINORI Tuscany  
1731 AMARELLI Rossano (Calabria)

- 1526 BERETTA** Gardone Val Trompia (Lombardy)
- 1605 GIUSTI** Modena (Emilia-Romagna)
- 1000 MARINELLI** Agnone (Molise)
- 1779 NARDINI** Bassano del Grappa (Veneto)

PRESENT IN EVERY SECTOR

- MANUFACTURING
- FOOD & BEVERAGE
- RETAIL & TRADE
- CRAFTS
- HOSPITALITY
- PUBLISHING
- AND MORE



**15** ITALIAN MEMBERS OF HENOKIENS  
The global association of family businesses with 200+ years of history



> MARINELLI

result is a business ecosystem unlike any other in the world.

According to Unioncamere, the Italian Registry of Historic Companies includes more than 2,600 businesses that have remained active for at least 100 years. These firms are found throughout the country, from the Alps to Sicily, and represent virtually every sector imaginable: agriculture, food production, wine, publishing, textiles, jewelry, manufacturing, hospitality, and traditional crafts.

What makes Italy unique is not simply the number of old companies. Many countries have historic businesses. What distinguishes Italy is the combination of longevity, family ownership, and deep local roots. These companies are often inseparable from the towns and regions where they were founded. Their identity is tied not only to a product but also to a place, a family story, and a centuries-old tradition.

One of the most extraordinary examples can be found in Agnone, a small town in the region of Molise. Here, the Pontificia Fonderia Marinelli has been producing bells for churches and cathedrals for nearly a thousand years. According to family tradition, its origins date back to around the year 1000. Over the centuries, Marinelli bells have been installed throughout Italy and around the world. The foundry still employs ancient techniques involving molds made of clay, wax, and bronze. Walking through its workshops is like stepping into the Middle Ages, yet the company continues to operate successfully in the modern economy.

Wine provides another powerful example of Italian continuity. The Antinori family has been involved in winemaking since 1385, when Giovanni di Piero Antinori joined the Florentine winemakers' guild. More than 640 years later, the family remains one of the most respected names in global wine. The



> RICASOLI

company combines centuries-old traditions with cutting-edge research, international marketing, and sustainable production methods. It demonstrates how Italian family businesses often balance preservation and innovation rather than choosing between them.

A similar story can be found at Castello di Brolio in Tuscany, home to the Ricasoli family since the 12th century. The family played a central role in the development of modern Chianti wine. Bettino Ricasoli, known as the “Iron Baron,” not only served as Prime Minister of Italy but also helped define the wine blend that became the foundation of Chianti’s global success.

Italian longevity is not limited to food and wine. In Gardone Val Trompia, in the province of Brescia, Beretta traces its history back to 1526, when Bar-

tolomeo Beretta supplied gun barrels to the Arsenal of Venice. Nearly five centuries later, the company remains under family control and is one of the oldest industrial businesses in the world.

Other remarkable examples include Acetaia Giusti in Modena, which has produced traditional balsamic vinegar since 1605; Amarelli in Calabria, famous for licorice since 1731; and Nardini in Bassano del Grappa, Italy’s oldest distillery, founded in 1779.

The secret behind these extraordinary survival stories goes beyond good management. Italian family businesses often view themselves as custodians rather than owners. Each generation inherits a responsibility to preserve and strengthen what previous generations built. Decisions are frequently made with a long-term perspective measured in decades rather than quarters.

This mindset reflects a broader characteristic of Italian culture. In many parts of the country, business is not merely an economic activity. It is a form of cultural heritage. A winery, a foundry, a distillery, or a workshop can be as closely tied to local identity as a monument, a church, or a historic square.

That is why Italy's world record in family entrepreneurship is so remarkable. These companies are not simply old businesses. They are living institutions that connect the present to centuries of history. In a rapidly changing world, they offer a rare example of continuity, proving that innovation and tradition can grow together across generations.





CORTE DI CASSAZIONE

ITALIAN CITIZENSHIP ASSISTANCE

# Landmark decision by the Italian Supreme Court for those who could not obtain an appointment

BY ITALIAN CITIZENSHIP ASSISTANCE

**I**taly's supreme court (Corte di Cassazione) issued a ruling on May 12, 2026 (n.13818/2026) that could positively impact persons who unsuccessfully attempted to secure a citizenship appointment under the old rules, prior to the Tajani Decree.

Although the particular case for this ruling was initially presented in 2022, the principal basis of the Court of Cassation's decision applies also to those who attempted applications in good faith before the Tajani Decree restricted citizenship by descent.

*The Supreme Court of Cassation's decision*

The group of applicants in question had appealed to the Court of Appeal of Genoa after repeated unsuccessful attempts to secure a citizenship by descent appointment at their local consulate. Genoa had rejected this, stating that the applicants had not had sufficient recourse to pursue legal action in this way. The Court of Cassation then overturned the Court of Appeal's decision.

Significantly, the Court of Cassation argued that *jure sanguinis* citizenship was a right that could not be hindered or revoked by bureaucratic pro-

cesses. Therefore, if hopeful applicants could not make a citizenship appointment, they had a right to pursue a legal route. The applicants in this case had been successful because they produced proof to demonstrate their numerous attempts to secure an appointment.

*What happened before with the Constitutional Court*

Not long before this decision, the Constitutional Court held a hearing (on March 11, 2026) to review issues brought before it against the Tajani Decree. Specifically, this included the retroactive application of the decree, the necessity of the decree-law action, and whether or not the decree treated people fairly. Although the Constitutional Court, for now, upheld the Tajani Decree, in their official statement released on April 30<sup>th</sup>, they acknowledged the group of people who had attempted in good faith to secure a citizenship appointment before the decree, but without success.

The court did not specifically issue a ruling on such persons, though they reiterated that those who had secured an appointment before the decree (with a date *after* the decree's effect, March 28, 2025) would still be considered under the old rules.

*The Constitutional Court's upcoming review*





In June, the Constitutional Court will again review the Tajani Decree, according to different aspects brought forward by the Courts of Mantua and Campobasso. More specifically, the court will examine whether or not the decree violates broader EU law.

The fact that the lower courts continue to challenge the Tajani Decree is promising that the decree will be sufficiently examined from all angles to ensure that it does not violate the rights of those with Italian ancestors.

*What this means for future citizenship by descent cases*

As mentioned, the basis for the Supreme Court of Cassation's decision applies also to those who attempted in good faith to secure a citizenship appointment before the Tajani Decree, but were unsuccessful due to consular delays or other bureaucratic obstacles outside of their control. In other words, *jure sanguinis* is an inherent right that no Italian court can arbitrarily take away from a person.

Unlike other forms of Italian citizenship, such as by naturalization or marriage, which are granted at the moment of citizenship recognition, *jure sanguinis* is considered to exist at the moment of birth. Since the Constitutional Court also did not specifically rule on those who had attempted to secure an appointment before the decree, this, along with the Court of Cassation's recent ruling, provides a hopeful pathway for such persons.

*Italian Citizenship Assistance can help*

If you attempted to secure a citizenship by descent appointment prior to the Tajani Decree, or if you have further questions about other legal pathways to make Italy your home, Italian Citizenship Assistance is here to help! Contact them today at [info@italiancitizenshipassistance.com](mailto:info@italiancitizenshipassistance.com).

ITALIAN TERRITORIES

# Welcome to Roero, Piedmont's hidden land of castles, vineyards and ancient landscapes

BY WE THE ITALIANS EDITORIAL STAFF

**W**hen travelers think of Piedmont, their minds often go immediately to the celebrated vineyards of Barolo and Barbaresco. Yet just across the Tanaro River lies a territory that remains one of northern Italy's most fascinating hidden gems: the Roero. Rich in history, dramatic landscapes, renowned wines, and distinctive agricultural traditions, the Roero offers a different side of Piedmont – one that combines natural beauty with centuries of cultural heritage.

Located in the northeastern corner of the Province of Cuneo, the Roero stretches across rolling hills north of Alba. The Tanaro River forms its southern boundary, separating it from the neighboring Langhe. Although the two territories share a passion for wine, they possess very different identities. The Roero is characterized by a more varied landscape, where vineyards coexist with forests, orchards, and unique geological formations that cannot be found elsewhere in Italy.

The region takes its name from the Roero family,

a powerful dynasty of bankers, merchants, and nobles from Asti who dominated the area for centuries during the Middle Ages. Their influence was so significant that the territory itself eventually adopted their name. Even today, castles, towers, and historic residences scattered throughout the countryside bear witness to their legacy.

One of the most extraordinary features of the Roero is the Rocche, a series of spectacular cliffs, ravines, and deep gorges that cut through the landscape for more than 20 miles. These formations were created by geological erosion over thousands of years and give the region an appearance unlike any other wine-growing area in Italy. Walking among the Rocche feels almost like exploring a miniature canyon system, where forests, vineyards, and steep walls coexist in a remarkable natural environment.

The geological history of the Roero is equally fascinating. Millions of years ago, much of this territory lay beneath an ancient sea. Evidence of that marine past can still be found today in fossil deposits and sandy soils that contribute to the character of the region's wines. These soils differ significantly from those of the Langhe, giving Roero wines their own distinctive personality.

Wine remains the territory's most famous resource.





The Roero DOCG, produced primarily from Nebbiolo grapes, offers elegant reds that are often more approachable in their youth than neighboring Barolo wines. The region is equally celebrated for Roero Arneis, a white wine that has become one of Piedmont's signature varieties. Fresh, aromatic, and mineral-driven, Arneis has experienced a remarkable revival over the last few decades and today represents one of the area's greatest success stories. In 2005, Roero achieved DOCG status, Italy's highest wine classification.

Beyond wine, agriculture remains central to local identity. The hills produce peaches, strawberries, hazelnuts, and the famous Madernassa pear, a local



variety that originated in the late 18th century and remains one of the region's culinary symbols. Seasonal markets and festivals celebrate these products throughout the year, reinforcing the connection between the land and its communities.

The Roero is also a land of castles and picturesque villages. Communities such as Canale, Guarene, Montà, Monteu Roero, and Santo Stefano Roero preserve historic centers that blend medieval architecture with rural traditions. Many of these villages



### > MADERNASSA PEARS

occupy strategic hilltop positions that once controlled trade routes linking Turin, Asti, Alba, and the Ligurian coast.

International recognition arrived in 2014, when the wine landscapes of Langhe, Roero, and Monferrato were inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List. UNESCO praised the area as an outstanding example of the interaction between people and nature, where centuries of viticulture have shaped both the landscape and local culture.

Today, the Roero remains one of Italy's most authentic destinations. It lacks the crowds of more famous wine regions but offers visitors something equally valuable: a landscape where history, agriculture, nature, and tradition continue to coexist. It is a place where medieval castles overlook vineyards, where ancient seabeds produce world-class wines, and where every hill tells a story that stretches back centuries.

For those seeking the true soul of Piedmont, the Roero may be its best-kept secret.



## *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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