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**L'ACCADEMIA ITALIANA DELLA CUCINA**

È STATA FONDATA NEL 1953 DA ORO VERGANI

E DA LUIGI BERTETT, DINO BUZZATI TRAVERSO,  
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GIAN LUIGI PONTI, GIO PONTI, DINO VILLANI,  
EDOARDO VISCONTI DI MODRONE,  
CON MASSIMO ALBERINI E VINCENZO BUONASSISI.



**On the cover:** graphic elaboration of a detail of *The Cherry Tart (1908)* by Pierre Bonnard; private collection

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# The “chef economy” and the transformation of superb Italian cuisine

*Many starred restaurants,  
living off renown more than profit,  
can't make ends meet.*

**A** rapidly evolving sector in the restaurant world has a new, intriguing name: the ‘**chef economy**’. It combines traditional food service with entrepreneurship and the ‘creator economy’. We have already hinted that fine dining, despite its often exorbitant prices, cannot balance the budget for superstar chefs; thus, **pure food service must be supplemented by other income** derived from consultancy, television, books, social media, sponsorships, advertising and venue proliferation.

*Trendy chefs are evolving beyond  
mere cooks working in kitchens*

Trendy chefs are evolving beyond mere cooks working in kitchens, **becoming managers and entrepreneurs capable of handling collateral activities essential for their survival**. It is a reality that many ‘starred’ restaurants live off reputation more than profits. Costs are, obviously, stellar: kitchen crews are numerous, equipment is cutting-edge, front-of-house personnel are well trained and also abundant; then there are the costs for raw materials, which must be of the highest quality, and there must be a first-rate wine cellar, which involves another outlay. **The average price of a tasting menu** is today around 150 euros for a one-star restaurant, 250 euros for two stars, and 400 euros and beyond for three stars. Yet these high prices often don’t suffice to turn a profit. **Wine, often marked up** threefold, can help, sometimes accounting for a third of total revenue. However, various reasons, including reduced consumption due to limits imposed on drivers and some wines’ exaggerated prices, are causing even this income to decline.

**by Paolo Petroni**  
*President of the Accademia*



*The whole sector is gradually changing*

Despite these adversities, fine dining assuredly won’t vanish; star chefs will remain, but the entire sector is gradually changing, **increasingly relying on substance rather than form** and frills, veering towards what some call ‘**fine casual**’. A traditional restaurant survives off clientele, human connexion with customers; a high-end restaurant has few regulars: one goes for the experience, for the thrill of a celebrated name, hardly recalling dishes tasted. Rarely is there a reason to return. **A recently vanished world is that which truly did innovate and modernise Italian cuisine**. I shall recall only **a few of those names that have made history**: Mirella and Peppino Cantarelli (Samboseto), Guido and Lidia (Costigliole d’Asti), Angelo Paracucchi (Ameglia), Fulvio Pierangelini (San Vincenzo), Ezio and Renata Santin (Cassinetta di Lugagnano), Gualtiero Marchesi (Milan), Nadia and Giovanni Santini (Canneto sull’Oglio, still operative) besides many others. People who worked hard, stayed in the kitchen, didn’t think of exhibiting themselves, and **left memorable dishes**. Which of the current super chefs’ recipes will live through the ages?



# Thomas Jefferson and food culture

by Aldo E. Tàmmaro  
Milano Brera Academician

*Two hundred years after his death, we recall the interests, including culinary ones, of a multifaceted Founding Father.*

**T**wo hundred years ago, **Thomas Jefferson** quit this vale of tears. His multifarious personality spurred his active interest in innumerable fields of human activity. He was, for two terms (1801-1809), **the third President of the newborn United States**; his head is carved into Mount Rushmore, South Dakota, alongside those of **George Washington, Abraham Lincoln** and **Theodore Roosevelt**, and his likeness graces the centre of the 2-dollar bill, practically impossible to find in daily transactions and thus now coveted by collectors. He is considered a Founding Father, having inter alia **participated crucially in drafting the Declaration of Independence**: on his initiative the principle whereby “all men are created equal” was included therein,

though he never assumed a clear stance against slavery, then practised even in the Northern States as well as in the South. By pure coincidence, **this year, 2026, marks the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his departure from the earthly realm and the 250<sup>th</sup> birthday of the United States.**

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*Equipped with an eclectic personality*

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He studied the law and successfully practised it, at least so long as his political commitments and other **myriad interests** permitted him the time to do so. He was **appreciated as a violinist** and **passionate about architecture**, founding and contributing to the construction of the University of Virginia and planning buildings at his Monticello estate, with a villa surmounted by an octagonal dome, drawing inspiration from Palladio’s Villa La Rotonda and the Pantheon in Rome. No idler in the **field of invention either**, he invented the wheel cypher, a machine for encrypting messages, and improved the polygraph, a precursor of the photocopier. On 29 April 1962 **John F. Kennedy** told the Western Hemisphere’s living Nobel laureates: “I think this is the most extraordinary collection of talent, of human knowledge, that has ever been gathered together at the White House, with the possible exception of when Thomas Jefferson dined alone.” An explicit reference to the variegated genius of his predecessor.

Is it possible that, amid such a plethora of commitments, our hero **could have carved out the time to dabble in culinary matters?**

The Thomas Jefferson Memorial, Washington






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*A predilection for the joys  
of the table and of conviviality*

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It is recorded that Thomas Jefferson always had a particular predilection for the joys of the table and of conviviality, but it is indubitable that **the four years (1785-89) that he spent in Paris as Minister Plenipotentiary** of the United States **were decisive** to his education in this field and for his status as **the first American foodie**. In those days, French cuisine occupied a paramount position internationally, and in that context it cannot be overlooked that President Jefferson also has the distinction of having commissioned the Louisiana Purchase: some consider Cajun cuisine, with its undeniable French roots, the only authentically local cuisine of the United States. In Paris, Jefferson **sent James Hemings, a slave of his and brother to Sally**, with whom he shared a long liaison and several children, to the Château de Chantilly **to learn the secrets of French cuisine**. Upon entering the White House, Jefferson **hired the Frenchman Etienne Lemaire as maître d'hôtel and Honoré Julien as cook**. He even visited **northern Italy, attracted by its regional cookery** and particularly by **curiosity regarding why rice grown in the Vercelli and Pavia provinces was markedly better than that available across the Pond**, grown in Carolina. He smuggled a few fistfuls of that rice in his pockets, defying the rigid

laws of the Kingsom of Sardinia which imposed capital punishment for food contraband. **He even loaded several sacks** of rice on a ship departing Genoa, but attempts to cultivate that refined crop in the Colonies did not yield the desired results.

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*He introduced recipes  
that still form part  
of popular cuisine in the USA*

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The gourmet President is credited with introducing several dishes which remain part of popular cuisine in the USA: among the foremost are **maccheroni al parmigiano**, as enjoyed in Naples, appearing often in his luxurious menus and surviving to the present as **mac and cheese**; and then **ice cream**, frequently served within a warm pastry shell and the waffles discovered in the Netherlands. Potentially filling a chapter of their own are the **French fine-cut fried potatoes now served as 'French fries'**. Notwithstanding the opulence of his gatherings and his appreciation of haute cuisine, **in daily life Jefferson gave priority to fresh vegetables** (he grew over 250 species in his garden, including 15 varieties of peas), **ears of sweetcorn, sweet potatoes, stewed tomatoes, apple fritters and warm bread**, commonly served in American restaurants today. He rarely ate beef, disliked pork and **had a strong preference for turkey**.

Having said all this, we hold this truth to be self-evident that the President also dedicated **considerable attention to wine**, according a privileged position to Champagne. Returning from France he apparently brought 680 bottles of the nectar of Bacchus in his luggage; he also imported several vine cuttings from European vineyards, but in this case too, his attempted creation of a vineyard was unsuccessful. However, he didn't give up, and reached an agreement with an Italian wine grower, **Philip Mazzei**, who settled into some property adjoining Monticello: Philip took care of the vineyards for Thomas, while the President's gardeners oversaw his estate. The agreement worked perfectly: those vineyards are still producing Chardonnay, Merlot and Cabernet Franc which can be purchased online or tasted during guided tours of Monticello.

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*He disliked dining alone*

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Jefferson would not have been remembered as a **refined man of the word had he not felt strongly about conviviality**, a fortiori since, as noted above, he disliked dining alone, but he also did not want staff eavesdropping on dinner conversations, considering the sensitive topics discussed. He consequently had a dumb waiter installed, connecting to the kitchen, as well as trolleys to circulate among the guests. Another providential habit of his was **never discussing politics before the end of a meal**: on 20 June 1790, after sampling a half-Virginian and half-French menu, he reached a crucial agreement with his former political rival **Alexander Hamilton**, the Compromise of 1790, about financing the debt for the War of Independence and the national capital's location. Despite his culinary interest, according to the *Good Food Saint Louis* blog, Jefferson only entered the kitchen to wind the clock. No contradiction: merely the expression of a personality which prioritised results over how they were achieved.

**Aldo E. Tàmmaro**



# Decorated bread in the heart of Barbagia

by Maria Ausilia Fadda  
Nuoro Academician

*“Pintaderas” and  
“pintapanes”:  
loaf-decorating  
instruments with  
an ancient history.*

One can easily request “give us this day our daily bread”: a prayer known by all pious Christians; but Sardinians do not settle for mere bread, for **over the centuries they have preserved and transformed baking that is a veritable art form** worthy of a signature, or a distinguishing mark, which indeed was wrought **through the uses of *pintapanes* or *pintaderas* of innumerable types.**

The *pintadera* (the singular) **has very ancient origins**; round ones with raised geometric designs were standard housewares in Bronze-Age Nuragic villages (1500-1200 BC). **Even religious sites** have yielded many bronze figures offering **loaves decorated in a starburst pattern,**

and the same pattern radiates from the central boss of warriors’ shields, also found carved into coronation blocks from Nuragic temples in Nuoro.

*For Sardinians, *pintaderas* are potent symbols of identity*

For Sardinians, *pintaderas* are potent symbols of identity, so much so that the Bank of Sardinia has adopted a *pintadera* discovered in the *nuraghe* of Santu Antine as its logo. Many amateur archaeologists and ethnologists have pondered the matter, unaffected by scientific data and incompatible chronologies, proposing far-fetched theories associating the motifs on *pintaderas* with calendars from ancient European or Meso-American civilisations or even the magical symbols of astral religions.

**In the heart of Sardinia, the use of *pintapanes* has remained rooted in domestic baking,** and each family has personalised these little wooden stamps by carving the name of the lady of the



*Pintadera from the nuraghe Santu Antine*

house or simply her initials. **Motifs vary widely by type of bread:** whether daily or, for example, **destined for a wedding banquet,** and thus distinguished by **hearts, love knots** and floral designs carved into circular or rectangular bases, with a plain or cross-hatched background, and with two handles at their extremities or a simple central gripping area for being held while in use.

**Many *pintapanes* are decorated with religious motifs:** Latin or Byzantine crosses, chalices surmounted by consecrated hosts, monstrances, representa-



*Pintaderas with religious symbols*



*Stamps with initials, hearts and chequerboard motifs*

tions of patron saints, views of dedicated churches, or animals that are offered symbolically to God or to protective saints during banquets in rural chapels or to pilgrims or those praying novenas.

*Larger pintapanes are made for particular celebrations*

September once marked the beginning of the agricultural year and the renewal of contracts and is thus known as *cabudanni*, from the Latin *caput anni* ('head of the year'). 8 September, **the Nativity of the Virgin Mary**, is one of those festivities for which elderly ladies use traditional techniques inherited from their forebears to make large bread sculptures **with complex decorations**, such as that of Ortueroi with **many flowers and chicks coloured with saffron brush-strokes** disposed around a central hole for placement **atop an *albero di cuccagna*** ('tree of plenty', similar to a maypole; also called *sa bandela*). This round creation, called ***su pizzudu de Santa Maria*** (differing from the cheese-filled fried dough *pizzudu* or *pitzudu* enjoyed in many parts of Sardinia), was formerly combined with a pair of fowl, money and a silk handkerchief as the prize for the *balentes* ('braves') who still scale the slippery pole, greased with hog fat. Birds also adorn the *Pane di San Giovanni* at the Feast of St John the Baptist (24 June) in Fonni.

**Throughout Barbagia**, families have intergenerationally retained **various types of *pintapanes*** to decorate durum loaves or *coccone* flatbread, which of course does not replace the long-lasting staple *carasau* flatbread prepared in large quantities by families. Decorative bread reaches unimaginable heights of complexity in Sardinia, achieved with tiny knives, toothed wheels and *pintapanes*, **transforming durum semolina dough into works of ephemeral art** inspiring consumers with a conscious respect for bread, perceived as a sacred and precious resource preserving the seeds of an ancient culture which Sardinians intend to protect and perpetuate.

**Maria Ausilia Fadda**

First phase of baking carasau bread, Nuoro





# Chicory: delicious and rustic

by **Giancarlo Burri**  
Padua Academician

*This ancient, ubiquitous herb is healthy and versatile in the kitchen.*

**T**hough the etymology of the word **chicory** is not altogether certain, one intriguing hypothesis links it to the Greek term *kichorion*, combining *kio* ('I go') and *chorion* ('field'), indicating **its tendency to spread spontaneously anywhere** as a wild herb (though it is also cultivated nowadays). Considered the wild progenitor of all cultivated radicchio varieties, including the celebrated PGI red radicchio of Treviso, **wild chicory (*Cichorium intybus* L.) is a perennial herbaceous plant**, with a long taproot and a **basal rosette** of dark

green, lanceolate, dentate leaves, harvested in spring (March-May) and autumn (September-November), when the leaves are softer and less bitter.

Chicory can be considered a **'floral clock'**, as its characteristic blue flowers open at a specific time and close about five hours later; their opening hour varies by latitude, while its leaves always point north. **Linnaeus** thus chose chicory as one of the flowers in his hypothetical floral clock at Uppsala (Sweden), since at that latitude it regularly opens at 5 and closed at 10.



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*Its therapeutic value is documented by celebrated physicians, herbalists and philosophers*

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The therapeutic value of chicory has been continuously documented through the centuries in the works of celebrated physicians, herbalists and philosophers, from the Ebers Papyrus, one of the most important Ancient Egyptian medical treatises, to *De materia medica* by **Dioscorides**, **Galen's** *De alimentorum facultatibus*, the *Herbario novo* by **Castore Durante** and even *De noxiis paludum effluviis eorumque remediis* by **Giovanni Maria Lancisi**.

**Modern scientific research is confirming** and expanding traditional knowledge regarding chicory's curative and nutritional properties, classifying it as a veritable **functional food**, whose possible benefits range from prebiotic activity (thanks to its inulin) to **liver detoxification** (due principally to the presence of such bitter substances as cichoric acid and cichoriin), from **cholesterol and blood sugar control** (for its high fibre content) to **antioxidant and anti-inflammatory** powers (due to its high concentration of bioactive compounds including phenolic acids and flavonoids).

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*A gastronomic history spanning millennia*

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Chicory has a gastronomic history spanning millennia, with **humble cuisine alongside the opulent creations of great court cooks** and our starred chefs' imaginative recipes.

Known as *intybus* in **ancient Rome**, chicory was highly appreciated both as daily fare and for its medicinal qualities, found in both humble homes and the most refined banquets. Its leaves were boiled and served as a side dish or preserved, sometimes with the roots, in vinegar or brine to be enjoyed all year.



**Apicius**, in his celebrated treatise *De re coquinaria*, **suggested a special condiment** for making field-harvested chicory more appetising: "To all cooked herbs add pepper, cumin, mastic berries and a little honey, diluting with *liquamen* [fermented fish sauce]". "*Me pascunt olivae, me cichorea levesque malvae*" ("Olives, chicory and light mallow nourish me"), wrote **Horace** in his *Odes*.

**Modern Romans' tenacious bond with chicory** is represented by a dish which perfectly showcases their home cooking: ***cicoria ripassata* or *strascinata*** (twice-cooked or sautéed chicory). After being cleaned, carefully washed, boiled in salt water (but if the leaves are small and tender, boiling is unnecessary), drained and squeezed, the chicory is sautéed in a pan with abundant extra-virgin olive oil, fragrant garlic and a pinch of chilli, and extensively 'dragged' (*strascinata*) to combine all the flavours. (Representing the visceral Roman identity of the great **Alberto Sordi** is the famous scene in the 1955 film *Bravissimo* wherein he plays the teacher Ubaldo Impallato who, interestingly, teaches children to recognise and harvest wild chicory in fields).

Considered **an icon of Apulian cuisine**, common throughout the region with different names (*fe e fogghe* or *favenette con cicine*), **fava beans with chicory** is officially recognised as a PAT (Traditional Agrifood Product) from Apulia (Puglia): a pairing originated by farmhands combining dried legumes (available all year

with wild herbs found in fields, including wild chicory, creating a nutritious meal at almost no cost.

Fava beans (dried and peeled) were originally slow-cooked in a *pignata*, a rotund earthenware pot, at the fireplace, forming a dense purée. Separately, the chicory was parboiled in salt water to remove its excess bitterness and pan-fried with oil, garlic and chilli. The bean purée was served in plates, garnished with the chicory and raw oil.

**Uniting the flavours of land and sea, the multi-starred chef Antonino Cannavacciuolo** offers his refined version of this Pugliese classic: **octopus, fava beans and chicory**, enriching the traditional bean purée and sautéed chicory with grilled octopus tentacles.

Original, delicious **culinary interpretations** of chicory are **available during spring fairs and feasts** which celebrate it intending to maintain the link between the new generations and the land, from the **Chicory Festival** in Leffe (Bergamo), with its **potato gnocchetti with chicory and caper cream** or **home-style bundt with chicory honey and flowers**, to the **Zicoria FestiVal di Sole** in Val di Rabbi (Trent), which welcomes visitors with **chicory canederli with mascarpone cream**, strawberries and chicory honey, or **tortelloni al casolet with chicory pesto**, to the **Wild Chicory Festival** in Colosimi (Cosenza) with **chicory and eggs** or **preserved chicory** in extra-virgin olive oil with garlic and chilli.

**Giancarlo Burri**