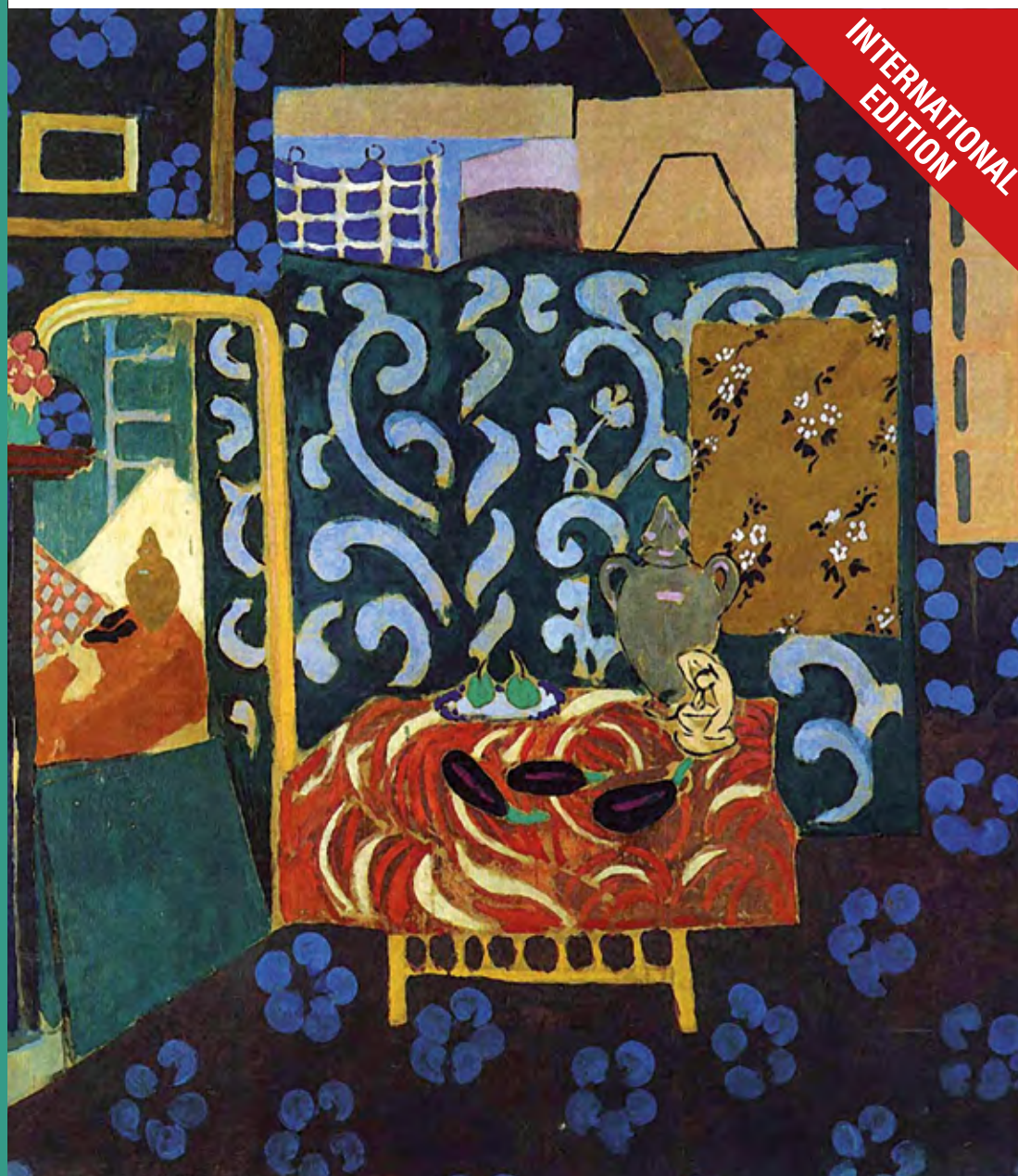


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L'ACCADEMIA ITALIANA DELLA CUCINA
È STATA FONDATA NEL 1953 DA ORIO VERGANI
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GIAN LUIGI PONTI, GIÒ PONTI, DINO VILLANI,
EDOARDO VISCONTI DI MODRONE,
CON MASSIMO ALBERINI E VINCENZO BUONASSISI.



On the cover: *Graphic elaboration of Still Life with Aubergines (1911) by Henri Matisse, Centre Pompidou, Paris*

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Restaurants sink *into a morass of improvisation*

by **Paolo Petroni**

President of the Accademia

*Prohibitions, closures,
uncertainties, risible assistance.*

A basic premise appears necessary: are we sure that this most ingenious virus understands regional, provincial and even municipal administrative boundaries? The evidence so suggests: it is indeed aware that a while ago (to multiply bureaucratic posts), Molise became a region unto itself after separating from the 'Abruzzi and Molise' region. Hence the virus infects people there differently. It likewise displays its geographical erudition by distinguishing the Autonomous Province of Trento from Bolzano, which its brutal onslaught has classified as a 'red zone'.

A kaleidoscope of weekly regional colour changes

With such suppositions being elevated to gospel truths by fervent virologists, Italy's map is now a riot of yellow, orange and red thanks to the new **regional colour-coding game**. Cue: whiplash-inducing weekly colour changes and unstable, tentative decisions taken overnight, with minimal notice and brief validity periods. When the three colours were deemed insufficient, the powers that be invented a **fortified yellow** tinged with orange and a fabled, unattainable Utopia: a white or green region, where happiness reigns and all is possible - until disaster strikes there too. All told, this **Babel of regulations and prohibitions confounds** citizens and especially restaurateurs, hoteliers and merchants in general, **heartlessly abandoned to their fate with miserly compensation** more similar to alms, barely grazing 20% of losses. **There's no end in sight**, judging from the Prime Ministerial Decrees (DPCMs) that are on the cards. To quote **Lino Stoppani**, President of the **FIPE** (Italian Federation of Public Enterprises, encompassing restaurants, bars etc) and First Vice-President of the business association Confcommercio: *"Why can a plant with thousands of workers remain open with shifts, refectories, entries and exits, while we cannot? Are the security protocols required of us not enough? Then let them tell us what we should add. It's been almost a year: time to discontinue this paradigm, with its uncertainties, proliferation of decrees and last-minute decisions.*



We are not switches to be turned on or off at a moment's notice. The sacrifices continually demanded of us appear ineffectual against contagion, as demonstrated by recent events".

Youngsters' education and serenity are severely compromised

This issue is not directly relevant to our Academy's activities, but it is distressing to see our children and young relatives buffeted by the regrettable squabbling between government, regions and parties regarding school reopening. Our youngsters are shackled to computers, tablets and other screens for days, months, perhaps years: they cannot go out, must return by 10 p.m., and cannot play sports or socialise. **An entire generation will pay dearly in terms of education and psychological well-being.**

The former 'lab rats', now omnipotent and omnipresent showboaters (the types decried by Artusi when he excoriated *cuochi da baldacchino* - show-off cooks), who daily spout self-fulfilling prophecies of doom and bring solace, aid or comfort to none, exhort us never to lower our guard. But if we stay permanently, excessively on guard, we end up sprawled on the mat anyway.



Film and food delivery (or carryout)

by Egidio Banti

La Spezia Academician

*From the classics
Miseria e Nobiltà
(Poverty and Nobility)
and L'oro di Napoli
(The Gold of Naples)
to present-day
delivery drivers in
Sorry We Missed You.*

Lood delivery and carryout have, for better or worse, been hallmarks of the pandemic for months. Carryout, however, has an illustrious pedigree: consider the ice cream cone. The collective imagination entrusts food preparation to people in the home, who coordinate the somewhat solemn, if brief, 'procession' of dishes from the kitchen to the dining room. Eating out, instead - whether frequently or not - represented, other than when required by circumstances (travel, working too far from home, obstacles to adequate home cooking), something of an escape, though accompanied by 'compensating rituals': always the same table, perhaps the same waiter if possible, and maybe the same dish. **The pandemic has introduced a variable**, which objectively isn't yet widespread: **home-delivered food**. This notably differs from carryout: we don't go and fetch the food home,

but it comes to us. This carries a symbolic value of sorts: a different version of the traditional 'meetings' between the kitchen, where food is prepared, and the dining room, where it is consumed; this is inevitably enhanced when those very 'meetings' are hindered and reduced - by the pandemic and 'curfews', of course.

*The meal's arrival becomes
a sort of 'exorcism' against
the new fears of our times*

The meal's arrival becomes a sort of 'exorcism' against the new fears of our times: the virus, and even more, **solitude and isolation**. As we wait for psychologists and sociologists to explain this better, this clarifying role is assumed by an art which, since its inception, has kept its finger on the pulse more than any other, depicting or even predicting the zeitgeist: cinema. **Food delivery's most illustrious ancestor**, however unsolicited in that case, is depicted in the film *Miseria e nobiltà (Poverty and Nobility)* by Mario Mattoli, from 1954, starring Totò and Sophia Loren, based on the comic tale of the same name by Eduardo Scarpetta. We've all seen it at least once, and remember the scene in which a white-clad waiter and his crew suddenly descend upon an impoverished home where there's nothing to eat. It's the film's central scene, introducing the acclaimed 'spaghetti dance'. A legendary, highly symbolic scene: indeed, that waiter in white appears as an angelic figure, representing rebirth, an **unexpected recovery from the atavistic affliction of hunger**, which tor-

Loro di Napoli (The Gold of Naples)





The panaro: the basket lowered from Neapolitan balconies

85,000 are for the spirits already drunk and never paid for”: both a pro and a con of home delivery at a time of infrequent credit card use. And it is the boy’s arrival which thaws out the conversation between the two. **Food and drink delivery, then, can also be harbingers of good fortune and a better future.**

Today, cinema also pays attention to those who deliver the food

Today, however, again often a step ahead of society, cinema also shifts the focus to another character: no longer the recipient but the deliverer of the food. An example is a 2019 film directed by **Ken Loach**, last doyen of British Free Cinema, namely ***Sorry We Missed You***, a title which cites the note left on the door by delivery drivers in Britain when the recipients don’t open. The protagonist is Kris, a plumber who loses his job as a result of the economic crisis and ‘re-invents’ himself as a food delivery driver. Kris thereby enters **a new category of workers: food deliverers**, mostly still unprotected by regulations, and often exploited and underpaid. Having directed many films tackling social issues in decades past, Loach offers a new version of Chaplin’s *Modern Times*, whither, even well before the COVID-19 era, increasing technologisation of the work market seems to have led us. The perspective is inverted with respect to *Poverty and Nobility*: **the centre of attention is not on the recipients but on the deliverer of the food**, who remains a contractual ‘outsider’, being physically and metaphorically excluded from the feast. This exemplifies the crisis which in recent months has engulfed not only the delivery sector but also, and with particular severity, restaurants as a whole. What’s the moral of the story? Perhaps that such crises can be overcome together, while rescuing the sense of peace and serenity that food has always provided, and rolling up our sleeves.

Egidio Banti

mented generations of our ancestors. In the same year and city - Naples - Vittorio De Sica directed ***Loro di Napoli*** (*The Gold of Naples*). Its protagonists include a very young Sophia Loren who manages a **fried pizza carryout joint** in the Materdei district with her justifiably jealous husband. Fried pizza owes its Neapolitan success to the post-war period, when Neapolitans facing poverty (returning to the previous film’s theme) did what they do so well: they rolled up their sleeves and reinvented themselves. Inhabitants of rough neighbourhoods often fried at home, and sold pizza on credit, delivering it on the fly or with a *panaro*, **a basket lowered from the balcony**. And the selfsame *panaro* stars in a splendid sequence in the film: donna Concetta asks don Rosario, Sophia Loren’s husband, for two pizzas through

the window (“Don Rosa’, mi favorite due pizze” - ‘two pizzas, if you please’). Don Rosario complies, and as the camera focuses on the basket’s ascent, we almost smell the two fried pizzas: veritable heralds of a civilisation - the Neapolitan - and, here too, of a new beginning. A different though droll instance occurs in ***Grandi magazzini*** (*Department Store*; Castellano & Pipolo, 1986), starring Nino Manfredi and Leo Gullotta. Manfredi plays Marco Salviati, a washed-up actor who has turned to drink, while Gullotta plays his agent, who visits him to offer him a bit part. Manfredi asks him to order something from the nearby bar by phone (“Maybe they’ll hear a different voice”). The bar’s delivery boy soon arrives with a bill for 86,000 lire (a substantial sum at the time). “For milk and cappuccino?”, asks an amazed Gullotta. “No,



“Sorry we missed you”



The sweet salt of Cervia

by Giancarlo Saran
Treviso Academician

*The area's milder
sunshine allows
a gentler maturation,
without the
accumulation
of chlorides with a
faintly bitter aftertaste.*

Good things come to those who wait. Our ancestors' lore valued salt highly, as a **white gold** which could preserve food; as a 'fifth element' completing the circle in which human life was inscribed, formed by earth, fire, air and water. In its name, epochal wars were waged over control of resources, and therefore of commerce, the basis of economies at the time, just as petroleum or natural gas deposits are fought over today. It was a compass tracing the great routes of those eras, first and foremost the Salaria ('salt road'), but also others, leading inland from the sea, and linking north and south. Then came economic expansion and **health-conscious demomisation** of salt. *Vade retro*, salt - though the preserved-food industry continued smuggling it in by other means, mostly

in processed foods that entered many homes, dismantling the culinary traditions of our grandmothers, with their wisdom and expert frugality in all things including salt. But **a time of rediscovery**, of rehabilitating ancient values, may be at hand. Someone has written that "**the cold chain forced salt to find a new path, just as television compelled radio to reinvent a new role for itself**". Italy as a salt-working area has been redrawn in the modern era. Many salt works are gone: in the Venetian lagoon, there was once the *sal clugiae* from Chioggia; or consider the salt works in Volterra, Tarquinia and Carloforte among many others. **There are pockets of saline resistance, however**; and they are worth discovering.

*The Cervia salt pans attract
attention through the quality
of their product*

Cervia is on the Adriatic Riviera which has become a hub of seaside tourism. It was not always thus. Malaria was rampant. Inland there was **Ficcole**, a 'seaweed city' of Etruscan origin. Its inhabitants busied themselves in manifold ways with what was offered by the pine forest (most importantly, timber) and the salt obtained from the Adriatic water which pooled there, though the risks outweighed the benefits. Salt was an important resource bolstering the temporal power of the popes, intent on defending this sliver of coastline from the expansionism of the neighbouring Most Serene Venetian Republic, motivating them to entrust its





defences to the **Malatesta lords of Rimini**. A sea change occurred in **1697**, when **Pope Innocent XII** accepted the citizens' pleas and allowed the establishment of a new settlement of **Cervia**, **etymologically derived from *acervum*, 'salt mound'**. A small fortified city was founded, serving as an exemplar of Renaissance architecture. Within its walls, the city was meticulously planned to protect its residents from pirate raids. Until 1870 its gates were locked at night and guarded. **A salt storehouse was constructed**, wherein to keep the product synthesising earth and water, obtained by the mediation of the sun and the hard work of humans. The **Cervia salt pans** (some 200 small lagoons managed by individual families) soon attracted attention for the quality of their product. This territory was more northerly than other, more important salt-producing areas (including, for example, those in Sicily and Puglia). It **produced a 'sweet' salt**, because **the sunshine in that latitude is milder, permitting a gentler maturation** without the accumulation of chlorides with a faintly bitter aftertaste. Unlike many other European salts, **it is not artificially dried or chemically whitened**, so it maintains its humidity and therefore **retains a wealth of trace elements** (iodine, copper, zinc and many others) deposited by the water whence it originates. The salt works came under state monopoly control, and in 1920, the local administrator **Emanuele Aliprandi** effected some changes. Workers were no longer paid by number of **corbelle** (round baskets) of salt gathered, but received a minimum guaranteed salary. This pro-

tected not only male breadwinners but also many female workers, including a substantial number of war widows, who derived their livelihood from working with salt.

A group of citizens obtained a licence to operate the centuries-old salt works

In 1959, more change was afoot. The Cervia salt pans are less lucrative than most other salt works because of their small size, and therefore **salt harvesting was mechanised**. A **small train** conveyed the salt piles to an inclined conveyor belt named '**giraffe**', which deposited them into a storage area. However, this was not enough, and around the mid-1990s, the state monopoly relinquished some of its control. Though the local economy found a new springboard for development, **one cannot entirely turn one's back on history and its traditions**. A group of citizens took action, obtaining a licence to operate the ancient, centuries-old salt works. A volunteer committee, the **Salt-Working Culture Association** (*Gruppo Culturale di Civiltà Salinara*), was soon formed, maintaining the **Camillone salt pans** according to venerable traditions: there, salt is still collected and processed by hand, and guided tours are provided for curious visitors. In **2004**, the **Salt Museum, or MUSA** (*Museo del Sale*), was inaugurated within the old salt storehouse. The salt pans are **in a nature reserve** aiming to protect the delicate local ecosystem, safeguarding

its fauna such as the renowned **pink flamingoes** but also including many other species that are safe here, such as the **pied avocets** that symbolise the park. **Plant life is also protected** through the development of species which can thrive in the specific biosphere of the salt pans. Most notable is the **salicornia** (samphire, glasswort), a small succulent whose fleshy leaves make the most of the scarce water available.

The three varieties of Cervia salt

Cervia salt is now subdivided into three main variants. There is a **coarse** and a **medium-fine** variant (known as the **salt of popes**), obtained by sifting the salt crystals by size and separating the larger from the smaller grains. Then there is the **cru della riserva Camillone** (Camillone Reserve Cru), the quintessence of the area, naturally dried under reed mats. The **salfiore di Cervia** (*Cervia fleur de sel*), gathered with a sieve, is particularly fine-grained; and, since boundless ingenuity is possible in pursuit of a good cause, there is also **limited production of aromatic salts**, infused with anything **from salicornia to seaweed, truffle or even balsamic vinegar**. An enlightened **production team** has taken up this mission. Others use Cervia salt for affinage of **cheeses** from *raviggiolo* to *squacquerone* or for curing **ham** or **salami**. As written by **Letizia Magnani**, who has dedicated three handsome volumes to Cervia salt: **"Cervia dishes are amphibious, their feet firmly planted in salt water and their heads turned inland"** towards the earth's bounty. To all this one can add another touch of flair: the **mattonella salata** ('salt brick'). This was an invention "just waiting for someone to discover it". Pressed salt is oven-baked for twenty minutes or so; then its **gradual cooling at the table allows various foods to be prepared on the spot**, from fish to meats to vegetables. **"Its use is limited only by the horizons of our imagination"**. Try it and see!

Giancarlo Saran



The Great Beauty at the table

by Antonio Gaddoni

Imola Delegate

In memory of the recently departed Gianluigi Morini, historic founder of the San Domenico restaurant.



Who better than an actor to spearhead an epoch-making shift in the restaurant world half a century ago? But for “our” Gianluigi, art and music were also among the Muses who informed his worldview and his passions. He wasn’t born to do sums, but to display his glittering dream on a stage, which he then designed and created between the four walls of a house inhabited by his forebears. **Thus arose the ‘Great Beauty’ of the table, and of all that surrounded it, from its décor to its subterranean cellars.** An *unicum* of which Imola is more than proud, which resists through trying times, offering a crescendo of spectacle within a spectacle which is impossible to replicate. **Gianluigi Morini accepted and tackled the initial challenge fuelled by an emotive force** more than stark reason, **relying**

on that little spark of folly which never abandoned him.

He arranged his San Domenico with little rooms and furnishings reminiscent of a film set

The layout of his San Domenico, with little rooms and furnishings that could have figured well in a stunning film set, **came naturally to him: it flowed from his manner of being, carrying himself and welcoming guests.** In all his greatness, he could also be caustic, inflicting rare, well-aimed and well-timed barbs laced with a hint of his effortless dry wit. Flanked by his ebullient wife Renza, he had entirely dedicated himself, and much more besides, to his jewel, with his gaze always aimed upwards at people and things, **never deigning, even from the beginning, to seek short-term approval.** He made many decisions, and perhaps they didn’t all satisfy him fully; but the fundamental ones, the supporting pillars of the San Domenico, bore fruits well exceeding his rosiest expectations. In such cases it is natural to recall his **splendid flights of fancy which made the difference**, which were crucial, drawing his dreams ever closer to unattainable goals. The Latin maxim “*ad impossibilia nemo tenetur*” (‘don’t commit to the impossible’) clearly didn’t apply to Gianluigi. Ample proof of this is provided by the recollections and anecdotes faithfully reproduced in the press or in several valuable filmed scenes, such as those of Giuseppe Savini and Mauro Bartoli, or in the video recorded by Sergio Silvestrini during the meeting organised just over a year ago by the Academy’s Imola Delegation. An early and splendid

example is his heartfelt and hard-won alliance with **Nino Bergese**, known as the King of Cooks and Cook of Kings. Here, too, he was victorious thanks to his elegance, determination, carriage and empathy - the virtues, indeed, of an actor who is constantly in the limelight, with the ingenuity to populate every role on the stage with other eminent, yet arrestingly humble, stars.

He pointed out that he was always hungry because he was born at noon, in time for lunch

He’d worked in a bank, it’s true: swift and precise in his assigned tasks, always ready with some adroit repartee. The time that he gained through quick work at his desk was used for soaring into the exalted realm of his dreams. His personality is exemplified by his words during an event that the Imola Delegation dedicated to him seven years after his retirement - words well worth repeating: “People always ask why I always have such a healthy appetite; the answer is simple: **a so né a mezdè** [I was born at noon]”. Gianluigi was born precisely at noon, in time for lunch, on the 19th of June 1935, in the rooms above what would later become “the kitchen of a great and magnificent house”. He was **a success with the public, fascinated by a character who spent his life in the manner most congenial to him**, allowing others to partake of the hidden treasure that was his ‘Great Beauty’ and leaving us, not alone, but in the hands, and savouring the dishes, of a dream team: Valentino, Natale, Massimiliano, Giacomo, and the sommelier Francesco to fill the goblets with liquid wonderment.