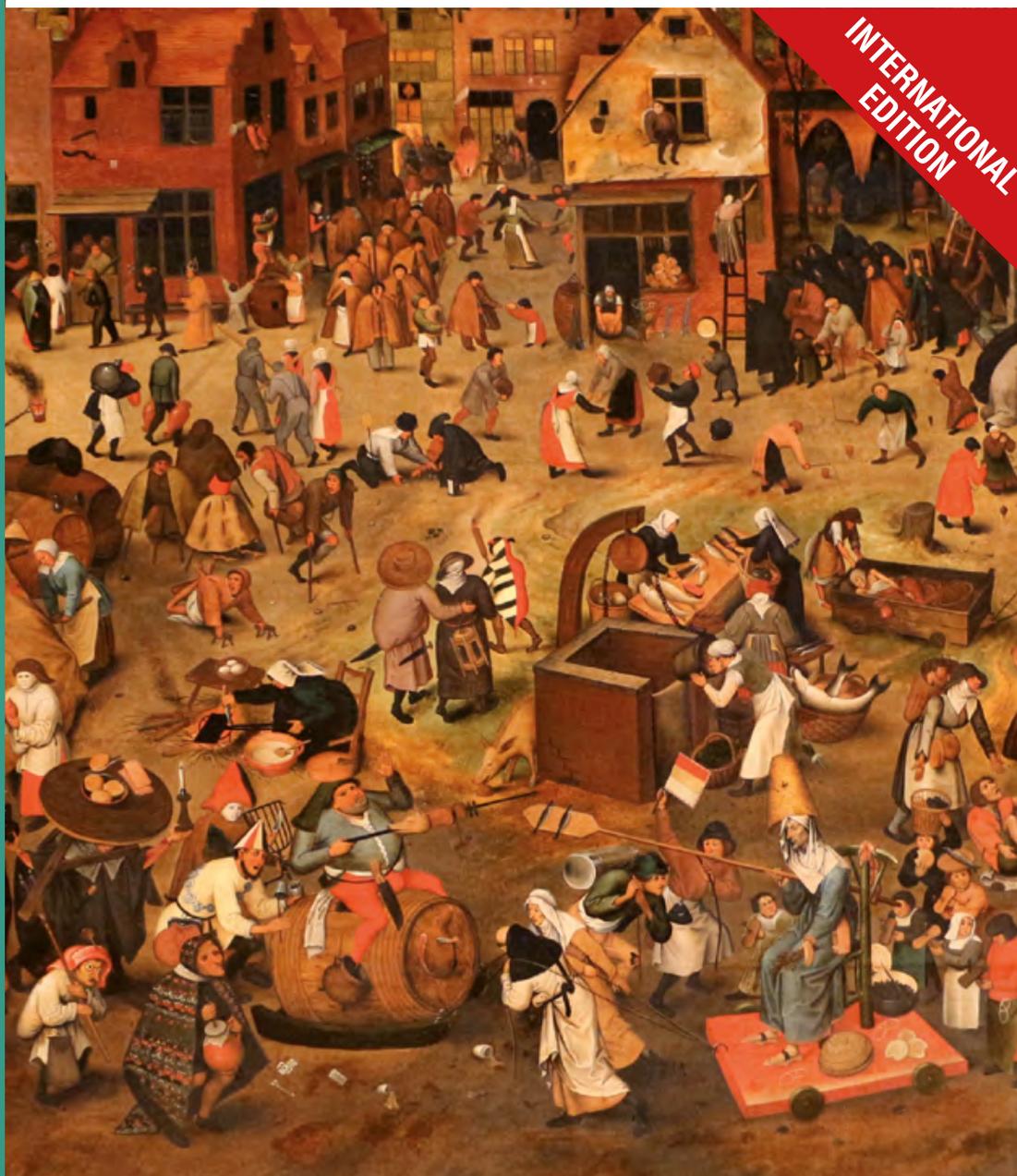


# CIVILTÀ DELLA TAVOLA

ACCADEMIA ITALIANA DELLA CUCINA



**ACCADEMIA ITALIANA DELLA CUCINA**  
ISTITUZIONE CULTURALE DELLA REPUBBLICA ITALIANA  
FONDATA NEL 1953 DA ORIO VERGANI

[www.accademia1953.it](http://www.accademia1953.it)

**INTERNATIONAL EDITION**

FEBRUARY 2021 / N. 334

**EDITOR IN CHIEF**  
PAOLO PETRONI

**COPY EDITOR**  
SILVIA DE LORENZO

**LAYOUT**  
SIMONA MONGIU

**TRANSLATOR**  
ANTONIA FRASER FUJINAGA

**THIS ISSUE INCLUDES ARTICLES BY**  
MAURIZIA DEBIAGGI,  
ENRICA NICOLINI,  
GIGI PADOVANI,  
PAOLO PETRONI,  
ALBERTO SACCHETTI.

**PHOTO CREDITS**  
ADOBE STOCK.



**PUBLISHER**  
ACCADEMIA ITALIANA DELLA CUCINA  
VIA NAPO TORRIANI 31 - 20124 MILANO  
TEL. 02 66987018 - FAX 02 66987008  
PRESIDENTE@ACCADEMIA1953.IT  
SEGRETERIA@ACCADEMIA1953.IT  
REDAZIONE@ACCADEMIA1953.IT  
WWW.ACCADEMIA1953.IT



MONTHLY MAGAZINE  
REG. N. 4049 - 29-5-1956  
TRIBUNALE DI MILANO

**REGULATIONS REGARDING PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION**

The Italian Academy of Cuisine, in its capacity as data controller, hereby informs its members that their personal data are handled with respect for the principles of integrity, lawfulness and transparency as well as protection of privacy and members' rights, to implement the management of the member-association relationship as delineated by the Association's Statute and By-laws, and for any related purposes where applicable. The processing is carried out by authorised parties, in paper and computerised form, in compliance with the provisions of the aforementioned EU regulations and current national legislation. To view all the information provided under EU regulations, and in particular to learn what members' rights are, please visit the Association's website.



**L'ACCADEMIA ITALIANA DELLA CUCINA**  
È STATA FONDATA NEL 1953 DA ORIO VERGANI  
E DA LUIGI BERTETT, DINO BUZZATI TRAVERSO,  
CESARE CHIODI, GIANNINO CITTERIO, ERNESTO DONÀ  
DALLE ROSE, MICHELE GUIDO FRANCI, GIANNI MAZZOCCHI  
BASTONI, ARNOLDO MONDADORI, ATTILIO NAVA,  
ARTURO ORVIETO, SEVERINO PAGANI, ALDO PASSANTE,  
GIAN LUIGI PONTI, GIÒ PONTI, DINO VILLANI,  
EDOARDO VISCONTI DI MODRONE,  
CON MASSIMO ALBERINI E VINCENZO BUONASSISI.



**On the cover:** Detail of The Battle between Carnival and Lent (1559) by Pieter Bruegel the Elder; Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

**Focus of the President**

**2** A long year of privations  
(Paolo Petroni)



**Traditions • History**

**3** Art and food, arm in arm  
(Alberto Sacchetti)



**Territories • Tourism • Folklore**

**5** Grissini: the king's batons  
(Gigi Padovani)



**Restaurants and Cooks**

**7** In Singapore, Italian cuisine  
also speaks Japanese  
(Maurizia Debiaggi,  
Enrica Nicolini)





# A long year of privations

*The emergency remains in full swing,  
but Academicians have lost none  
of their verve to start anew.*

**D**um Romae consulitur, Saguntum expugnatur: "While Rome deliberates, Saguntum is captured". Never before has Titus Livius' famed and bitter observation rung so true for us. Saguntum, the poor nation rendered threadbare by the pandemic and the ensuing economic and social disaster, falls while Rome discusses and wastes time with Byzantine quibbles bearing no relation to the country's needs. **After a year of pandemic, we remain gripped by an emergency on all fronts;** yet this lengthy experience has yielded no plan, no programme for health, investment and credible solutions to this barrage of problems. For now, the best we've been offered have been wheeled school desks, scooters and cash-back lotteries to incentivise contactless payments.

*Last January, nobody suspected  
what was about to happen*

**The 29<sup>th</sup> of January 2020 was the last day of normal life,** an idyll which today seems an unattainable dream. With detachment, and almost incredulity, we observed the images reaching us from a distant world, from China, and a large but unknown city called Wuhan. A few hours later we would be plunged into an incomprehensible nightmare. On 30 January, the Spallanzani Hospital in Rome confirmed the first coronavirus patients: a Chinese tourist couple (who, for the record, later fully recovered and returned home). But nobody suspected what was on the horizon. **On the 21<sup>st</sup> of February, the first home-grown infection was discovered in the province of Lodi,** in Codogno municipality, our little Wuhan. Cue the first lockdown and 'red zone', creating the illusion of nipping the contagion in the bud. Yet **by then, everything was out of control.** And since then we've witnessed a crescendo of death bulletins, the rediscovery of masks (scarce, and perhaps unnecessary), the imposition of distance which is dubbed 'social' rather than 'physical', and shop and restaurant closures; nobody goes to mass, nobody goes to school. Amid the despair, **hope and solidarity persisted. "Things will go well"**, people said, and balconies resounded with the Nation-

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



al Anthem. **But things did not go well.** On the 11<sup>th</sup> of March, the entire country became a 'red zone'. The military convoys transporting coffins out of Bergamo en masse left us shell-shocked: those images were seen worldwide and Italy was anointed the sick man of Europe. Everyone covered at home, gazing at squabbling virologists, immunologists and epidemiologists talking over each other, and grotesque drone and quad bike chases on the beach.

*The desire to resume in-person Academic  
activity is unchanged*

Our Academy's activities - convivial gatherings and conferences - can no longer be held in person, but virtual meetings, numerous webinars, and initiatives in support of the most vulnerable have been energetically organised. Our magazine's March issue had the usual format, recounting all the events until February. We wrote then that "Restaurants await, chomping at the bit.... **Our Delegates can't wait to take off again with renewed vigour**". We were deluded all summer, but that desire to start anew has remained unchanged. **We are tired of this asociality, this curtailed freedom,** this predicament which has struck at the heart of tourism and the food and wine world. **We are confident,** this time on solid grounds, **that the vaccines will solve these problems before too long,** hoping that despite a slow start, the vaccine campaigns will soon accelerate vigorously.



# Art and food, arm in arm

by **Alberto Sacchetti**  
*Apuana Academician*

*An imaginary voyage among flavours and colours.*

**A**rt and food have a solid long-standing relationship which has deepened over the centuries. **Many artists have used their canvases to celebrate** bread, a simple and precious

food, as well as vegetables, fruit, soups, daily staples, or the culinary masterpieces, whether large and small, appreciated by gourmets, able to pair excellent wines with any type of edible creation, aware that there is no single wine which, alone, can bring out the organoleptic properties of any given dish. If we wish to embark on a voyage among flavours and colours, beyond time and space, we can justifiably start with **Leonardo da Vinci**, recalling the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death celebrated two years ago. **His bond with food is well documented**, not just thanks to his paintings. Similarly to other prominent Renaissance painters, not only in Florence but in other

Italian regions too, the superlative artist and epicure left evidence of his food preferences in his shopping lists, which always included bread. Furthermore, the documents gathered in the Madrid Codices detail phenomenal inventions including a mill and an avant-garde oil press, useful for processing food products. The Codex Atlanticus contains plans for precursors of the corkscrew bottle opener, peppermill and revolving roasting spit.

*Food-related symbols and mysteries in the Last Supper*



*Supper at Emmaus by Caravaggio, Brera art gallery, Milan*

The close link between art and food, seasoned with mystery, can be perceived by 'reading' Leonardo's *Last Supper*, located on a refectory wall in the Dominican Convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie, in Milan. With unparalleled mastery and sensibility, the artist **uses imagery to show how the table represents humanity, forming a conduit for understanding the underlying mystery**, through foods which the language of art imbues with symbolism, embodying a union between Heaven and Earth. **Bread and wine** indicate the body and blood of Jesus; the **lamb**, his sacrifice; the cut **fish** represent his passion; the **oranges** express love. Did the genius Leonardo, a lover of enigmas and riddles, hide clues to an esoteric reading of his paintings? Hard to say. He certainly left sufficiently clear traces of his love of good eating to lend credence to the story whereby he and his friend and fellow

artist Sandro Botticelli ran the Tre Rane ('Three Frogs') tavern, in Florence of course, though there is no known documentary evidence of this.

---

*Creativity and imagination  
have characterised great artists'  
relationship with food*

---

And if Raphael, whose 500<sup>th</sup> death anniversary occurred last year, was an exception because he disliked portraying laden tables or still lifes, anyone can see that **from the Renaissance onwards, many artists depicted the link between art and food through their works**, filtered through their imagination and culinary preferences. These include the still incompletely deciphered 16<sup>th</sup>-century artist **Giuseppe Arcimboldi**, known as Arcimboldo, whose incredible combination of creativity and imagination spawned allegorical figures wherein whatever becomes food, such as vegetables, fruits and small animals, is part of a **puzzle, a peculiar and grotesque anthropomorphic image** which also constitutes a message: "we are what we eat", as the 19<sup>th</sup>-century German philosopher **Ludwig Feuerbach** declared. And this is precisely why we must take care of the gastronomic aspect of life. As **Virginia Woolf** maintained: "One cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well". By carefully looking at the paintings illustrating various elements of fine dining, we readily understand not only what relation their creators had with food, but how people ate during their era. Again in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, **Pieter Bruegel the Elder** depicted a **country wedding banquet**, with peasants wearing their festive clothes and a meal based on polenta, soup and beer, while **Paolo Veronese** enchants us with **sumptuous and metaphorical Venetian banquets**. On these richly laden tables, the protagonists are the delicious meat and fish dishes, desserts and wines served to aristocratic gentlemen and bejewelled ladies tightly encased in precious cloth. These two gastronomic realities indicate the

*Salvador Dali and bread*



habits and customs of two different worlds. In terms of simple, essential foods, such as bread, legumes and fruit, the scenes of daily life ably depicted by **An-nibale Carracci** in his *Bean-eater* and **Vincenzo Campi** in his *Fruit Seller* are particularly insightful.

---

*Bread, the protagonist  
of tables and canvases  
from the Renaissance to Dali*

---

Bread often stars overall, flanked by cured meats on canvases from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. **Caravaggio exalts it with light**, elevating it to a mystic plane in his *Supper at Emmaus*, while **Giacomo Ceruti**, known as Pitocchetto, depicted it alongside salame and nuts. **Giuseppe Recco** makes us drool by **combining bread with prosciutto and a traditional pie** 'testifying' to Neapolitan culinary customs. Instead, **Evaristo Baschenis** displays **kitchens bursting with foods of all kinds**, from fowl of different sizes to various types of cheese: a visual barrage of opulence which makes us anticipate the flavour of succulent meals and luscious banquets. Observing these paintings attentively,

we discover that not only the palate and stomach, but the eyes too demand satisfaction. As Voltaire said: "Nothing would be more tiresome than eating and drinking if God had not made them a pleasure as well as a necessity". Evidently, **art has gladly gone arm in arm with food through the centuries**, just as bread has but rarely been absent from a laden table. To **Salvador Dali** whose love of bread verged on obsession, eating it wasn't enough: he **immortalised it in his paintings**, including hyper-realist and minimalist works, and even used it as a hat. We cannot conclude this voyage, however, without emphasising **the importance of wine**. It has even been celebrated through the Roman wine deity, **Bacchus, exalted by numerous artists** with differing styles, including **Caravaggio**, in a commission by the Cardinal Francesco Maria Del Monte, and **Velázquez**. Wine is encountered as frequently as bread in paintings: two quintessentially Italian foods, indispensable on our family tables, especially during celebrations. As Pope Francis has rightly pointed out: "There's no celebration without wine: imagine ending a party by drinking tea".

**Alberto Sacchetti**



# Grissini: the king's batons

by Gigi Padovani

Honorary Academician for Torino Lingotto

*According to legend, they were prepared in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century at the court in Turin to alleviate the stomach pains of Duke Victor Amadeus II.*

**W**hen in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century the philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau left his native Geneva for Turin, sent by his father to perfect his education, he was pleasantly surprised by this “great city”, deciding to remain for several years working as a tutor. In his *Confessions* (his autobiography, published posthumously in 1782), **several passages extol the local food, which he had tried for the first time:** “I was hungry, it was hot: I entered a cheesemonger’s and was given *giuncata* [a fresh cheese of cow’s, goat’s or sheep’s milk], and **two**

**grissini of that excellent Piedmontese bread** which I love above all others: for five or six pennies I had one of the best meals of my life”.

Those crunchy breadsticks were a Piedmontese speciality dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> century; today **“grissini di Torino” are found on tables around the world.** In the finest restaurants, *grissini* are often prepared by the chefs, with delicious variations, such as whole-grain, spiced or olive-flavoured.

*The original Turin grissini exist in two variants: stirati and rubatà*

In fact, the historic Turinese *grissini* come in two variants: **stirati** (**‘pulled’**), **more urban and aristocratic, and rubatà** (**‘rolled; in dialect**), **shorter and more rustic**, typical of the Chieri hills near Turin. The term *grissia*, Italianised as *griccia*, already existed in the *Dictionnaire italien et françois* by Antoine Oudin (1663). **Popular legend attributes grissini’s birth to 1679**, when Antonio Brunero, a baker from the small mountain town of Lanzo

near Turin, was summoned to the palace by the court physician, don Teobaldo Pechio, to prepare well-cooked, therefore easily digestible, bread sticks for Victor Amadeus II of Savoy. Acceding to the Dukedom of Savoy aged nine under the regency of his mother, Maria Jeanne Baptiste of Savoy-Nemours, he was delicate and sickly, with frequent stomach pains, unable to digest the stodgy courtly bread. However, the capable baker was able to prepare the long, slender, easily digestible ‘twice-cooked’ (*bis-cotti* – ‘biscuit’) bread sticks which allowed the Savoy sovereign to recover.

**Historians instead attribute their origin to the increased price of grain** and bakers’ resulting ‘resourcefulness’ in thinning out ordinary loaves, called *ghërse*, thereby using less dough. Probably the *ghërsa* (singular) was elongated into the breadsticks then dubbed *ghërsin* (diminutive). They were certainly a speciality on the monarch’s table for centuries: Charles Felix, king of Sardinia, duke of Savoy (1765-1831), so adored them that he munched them with abandon during performances at the Royal Theatre. Another **enthusiast of the *petits bâtons de Turin* was Napoleon Bonaparte**, probably responsible for their transalpine spread.

*In 1998 the grissino was included in Piedmont’s PAT list*

In 1986, the ‘pulled *grissino*’ (singular) starred in a festival in Lanzo Torinese, wherein the municipalities of Turin, Chieri, Andezeno and Lanzo signed a memorandum of understanding to protect and



Foreground: rubatà; behind: stirati (‘pulled’ grissini)

promote this speciality; in 1998 the “flaky, crunchy breadstick named *grissino* or *ghers(s)in* (the original term)” was included in Piedmont’s list of Traditional Agrifood Products (PAT) by the Italian Agricultural Ministry as proposed by Piedmont’s regional government.

**Today, many bakers from Turin are once more defending this tradition by producing high-quality artisanal *grissini***

to counteract the squalid mass-produced pre-packed versions, which are tasteless and greasy. Leaving one of their workshops under the porticoes of the town centre with a lovingly prepared packet of *grissini* tied with a red cord is among the pleasures that life in Turin still affords, alongside an excellent Vermouth and a *gianduiotto* chocolate: the city’s three gastronomic symbols. In one of his wonderful reportages for Italy’s national RAI television, during the programme *Alla ricerca dei cibi genuini. Viaggio nella valle del Po* (‘In search of authentic food: a voyage along the Po valley’, **Mario Soldati** pointed out (it was 1957): “The *grissino*, though reproduced everywhere in Italy and abroad, **cannot be exported, because even at 50 kilometres from Turin, it ceases to be itself**.”

The Turinese writer’s rigour may appear excessive today, but the destiny of these breadsticks is manifestly linked to the Piedmontese capital, which the celebrated novelist **Emilio Salgari** dubbed “Grissinopoli” (perhaps with some ill-concealed scorn), having arrived there in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, summoned there by Speirani, the publisher of his adventure novels. In his book *Voci e cose del vecchio Piemonte (Voices and Things of Old Piedmont, 1917)*, the historian **Alberto Viriglio** went so far as to add *grissini* to the city’s coat of arms: “If gratitude were a civic virtue, the heraldic device of Turin Municipality should portray a bull holding a glass, crowned with matches and ornamented with vermouth and *grissini*”.

What may be the strongest evidence of the bond between Turin and *grissini* dates to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, when **an obelisk dedicated to the minister Giuseppe Siccardi** was raised in the city’s Piazza Savoia. The monument was built in 1852-53 in honour of the ‘Siccardi laws’ which

## GRISSINI SOUP

**Ingredients: for the broth: 800 grammes of stewing veal, 2 chicken drumsticks, 2 celery stalks, 1 onion, 1 carrot, 1 bunch of aromatic herbs. For the soup: 2 litres of broth, 200g of yellow onions, 250g of pork sausage, 1 glass of dry white wine, 150g of *grissini stirati all’acqua* (*grissini hand-stretched in water*), 4 tablespoons of extra-virgin olive oil.**



**Preparation: boil the meats, vegetables and herbs for approximately 90 minutes to obtain a rich broth. Strain and keep warm. Meanwhile, slow-fry the finely chopped onion in the oil using an earthenware cooking dish, and add the sausage, removed from its casing and minced. Flavour by adding the wine and letting it evaporate. Add the *grissini* in small pieces.**

**Mix well, cover in broth and cook on minimum heat for 45-50 minutes, adding broth as needed, resulting in a delicious, creamy soup, ideal for winter evenings. (Recipe from Clara Vada Padovani, gastronomic author and storyteller)**

abolished clerical privileges, including the ecclesiastical courts. Its funding was gathered through a popular appeal for donations by the daily paper *La Gazzetta del Popolo* (*The People’s Gazette*), with participation from over 800 municipalities in Piedmont, Valle d’Aosta, Liguria, Savoy (now in France) and Sardinia.

The 21-metre obelisk’s pink Baveno marble bears the engraved motto “la legge è uguale per tutti” (‘the law is equal for all’) and the names of all the cities that aided its creation. Its foundations conceal a ‘treasure chest of memories’. It contains: two copies of the *Gazzetta del Popolo*; two coins (a 5-centesimi piece of Charles Albert of Sardinia from 1862, and a *scudo*, or 5 *lire*, piece of Victor Emmanuel II from 1851); a box with gunpowder in memory of the Wars of Italian Independence; wheat, rice and melon seeds; “a small bot-

tle of ordinary country wine”, probably Barbera; and finally “another parcel with four sticks of *grissino* bread”. **This little symbolic treasure was buried in a solemn ceremony** on the 17<sup>th</sup> of June 1852 by a very dignified delegation with ten members or so, including deputies from Quaglia, Bottone and Borella.

Many writers have mentioned *grissini* in their works, from Massimo D’Azeglio to Edmondo De Amicis (in his *Cuore*, known to every Italian schoolchild), from Grazia Deledda to Giovanni Arpino in *La suora giovane* (*The Novice*), and even Walt Disney’s cartoons. Today, this bread’s elongated shape is used figuratively in Italian to denote a particularly slender person: “to be a *grissino*” or “skinny as a *grissino*”: this even became the nickname of a mayor of Turin, Piero Fassino.

**Gigi Padovani**



The ‘treasure chest of memories’ in the obelisk’s foundation contains ‘grissino bread’



# In Singapore, Italian cuisine also speaks Japanese

by **Maurizia Debiaggi and Enrica Nicolini**  
*Singapore-Malaysia-Indonesia Academicians*

*Interview with two Japanese chefs who learned their craft in Italy.*

**F**rom the land of the Rising Sun, they arrived in Italy to study: many are the Japanese chefs who fall under the spell of Italian cuisine. Some have already scaled Olympian heights, including the Michelin-starred **Yoji Tokuyoshi**, of the eponymous restaurant in **Milan**, and **Kotaro Noda** of Bistrot 64 in **Rome**, or again, **Takahiko Kondo**, Massimo Bottura's *sous chef*. Why are so many Japanese chefs enchanted by our cuisine? Digging beneath these two very different

cultures, we find **important commonalities: simplicity; fresh ingredients; an emphasis on seasonality.**

Even in **Singapore**, a true food hub of south-east Asia boasting **over 100 Italian restaurants**, where food is tantamount to a religion, there are Japanese chefs 'enraptured by the allure' of Italy. No small challenge for **Yohei Sasaki** and **Seita Nakahara**, who, having studied and worked in our *Bel Paese*, are now passionate interpreters of its cuisine - a challenge equivalent to that facing an Italian chef opening a sushi bar in New York!

---

*When he cooks in his restaurant, Il Cielo, Yohei Sasaki thinks in Italian*

---

**Chef Sasaki**, aged 38 and with a perennial smile on his eternally adolescent

face, is our guide at **Il Cielo**, in the elegant Hilton Hotel on the bustling Orchard Road. He offers his clientele a solid Italian gastronomic experience, perfected with a talent which is quintessentially Japanese. Kind, understated and friendly, he exudes the patience and ambition to reliably serve his diners the dish that most satisfies them. He tells me his story between one course and the next, quietly pleased to answer my curious questions.

**"I first encountered Italian cuisine when tasting morsels of mozzarella and Parma ham; their flavour shocked me ... I fell in love with their deliciousness!"** he recalls, in rather good Italian, while constantly smiling. This love led Sasaki-san to seek professional training in Japan's best Italian restaurants and then travel to Italy to work in Michelin-starred restaurants, including Romano in Viareggio, Arnolfo Ristorante in Siena, and Da Vittorio in Brusaporto (Bergamo).

**"When I cook, I think in Italian, and I use Italian ingredients and Japanese techniques.** For fish carpaccio, prepared according to Italian tradition, I employ sashimi slicing methods, and for my favourite recipe, spaghetti *aglio olio e peperoncino* (garlic, oil and chillies), I prepare the spaghetti with a ramen machine, which yields a better texture. The recipe is identical to that for classic spaghetti: I use 100% twice-milled *semola* flour and water, adding some oil to the dough to increase flavour and cohesion". Yohei Sasaki-san, however, also possesses an assured mastery over authentic Italian techniques, as I immediately realised when tasting his *spaghetti alla*



Yohei Sasaki



Seita Nakahara



Davide Tanda

*chitarra*, the square-sectioned 'guitar-cut' spaghetti fashioned using a real Italian pasta cutter, cooked *al dente* and dressed with a surprisingly light and flavoursome scampi sauce. In some of his dishes a very subtle note of culinary cross-pollination is perceptible, but asked if his is 'fusion' cuisine, Sasaki-san answered unwaveringly: "When I started at Il Cielo, **I only prepared authentic Italian food, and Singaporean customers appreciatively commented 'what excellent fusion cuisine' - but it was not fusion!** So I began offering two menus, one Italian and one Japanese ... but even when making Japanese food I think in Italian. My food" - he declares mischievously - "is not 'fusion'; it's 'Sasaki'".

*Nakahara's fusion cuisine: Italian and Japanese ingredients meet in refined creations*

**Chef Seita Nakahara also thinks in Italian as he serves *Omakase* ('chef's choice') at Terra, Tokyo Italian**, his fine-dining restaurant in the lively Tanjong Pagar neighbourhood, which garnered a Michelin star in 2016. Besides the spare elegance of pastel colours and blond wood furnishings, what immediately strikes the eye upon entering the restaurant is a sign reading "Japanese Food Culture in Italian Cuisine", declaring a sincere, devoted respect for both cuisines. This is indeed

fully-fledged fusion, in case it wasn't clear from the start, and Nakahara-san goes food-shopping in Tokyo.

Seated at a table in his restaurant, I have just had a gastronomic experience which has surprised me: **the Italian identity of every dish is immediately manifest, and the flavours of the Japanese ingredients offer a subtle, well-tuned note.** To understand this, one only need close one's eyes and sample his *spaghettini* with Hokkaido crab, his Kinki fish with *acqua pazza* and *yuzu* fragrance, or his country bread *bruschetta* with *uni* (sea urchin) or *ikura* (salmon roe) and *mascarpone* cream, to cite some particularly representative examples. A fusion of the highest order, where Italian and Japanese ingredients blend and frolic together, creating unique dishes for refined palates!

Nakahara-san also politely answers my questions about his passion for Italian food, which has deep, remote and very intriguing roots.

"It was my fifth birthday" - he recounts, his eyes radiating childlike emotion - "and my mother had prepared a creamy chicken dish, describing it as 'Italian chicken'. **Without knowing what 'Italian' meant, I immediately associated that word with the concept 'good'.** It may sound strange, but it all started with that gift, which I only realised much later was Italian in name only".

From then on, the idea of 'good' and 'Italian' food never left him, and follow-

ing his studies in Tokyo and some restaurant experience in Japan and elsewhere in Asia, he went to Italy, homeland of his fabled childhood chicken, to **pursue his burning passion: cooking Italian food.**

**"In Italy I especially wanted to work in trattorie [rustic taverns] to learn food culture, true regional cuisine, basic techniques.** In eight years I learned the art of fresh pasta, the wise use of truffles, how to make tomato sauce with freshly picked vegetables, and of course I learned Italian too!" Tickled, he continues: "When I was in Florence, I was a bit homesick for Japan, so, while creating my recipes, I imagined going food-shopping in Tokyo, pretending that it was round the corner. This is why, **when I cook, I use fresh and seasonal Japanese ingredients: my food is inspired by Japanese *shoku bunka* (food culture) and by my passion for Italian gastronomic tradition**". Following these experiences in our country, chef Nakahara has truly gone far, with determination, fortitude and the awareness of following a path as difficult as it is gratifying. In Singapore, after additional professional experience in prestigious restaurants, he now has his own: Terra, where each Italian dish conceals a little surprise from Tokyo: yes, that elegant Tokyo which is just around the corner.

Sasaki-san and Nakahara-san are good friends!

**Maurizia Debiaggi, Enrica Nicolini**