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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 Fruit (1601-1605) by Caravaggio, Denver Art Museum*

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A new prize in honour of Gianni Fossati

by Paolo Petroni

President of the Accademia

Adding to the memory of those who forged the Academy's greatness.

Throughout its long history, the Academy's activities have commemorated those who contributed in various ways to making it great. Our founder **Orio Vergani** is honoured by our most important prize, hitherto the only one including a monetary sum. After an admittedly lacklustre period in which a prize went to the television character **Inspector Montalbano**, and therefore **Andrea Camilleri** who invented the character and the actor **Luca Zingaretti** who played him, several individuals and organisations of great substance were thus honoured, and the media took notice. Two other prizes were dedicated to others among our founders: the **Dino Villani** Prize and the **Massimo Alberini** Prize. I vividly remember that morning many years ago when during a decisive Council meeting organised by the unforgettable **Giovanni Gorìa** at the Salera Hotel in Asti (now sadly closed), Villani rose and launched the idea of a prize for an artisanal product to be protected. On the same occasion, the Council (following my proposal) adopted our current round tricoloured logo instead of the oval version bearing a fork and knife. The prize dedicated to Massimo Alberini, who was present at the Diana with the founders in July 1953 and later became Honorary Vice-President, is more recent, and assigned in the Delegation's name to businesses that have made history in the field of cuisine and local products.

The Nuvoletti Prize honours another great President, long known as the 're-founder'

Another great President, long known as the 're-founder' for his role in the resurgence of Academic life, is honoured through the **Giovanni Nuvoletti** Prize, awarded to those who have contributed to the flourishing of excellent regional cuisine. We should also remember the prize which the determined, passionate **Elena Pepe** supported for many years in memory of her husband **Ettore Pepe**, Secretary of the President's Council during part of the 1980s, assigned to a Delegation for particularly brilliant activities during the year. For some years there was also the **Luigi Volpicelli** Prize, named after the founder and then Delegate of the important Rome Dele-



gation: this rewarded the Delegation with the most visually beautiful menus.

Last but not least, the Academy named the **Franco Marengli** Study Centre and the **Giuseppe Dell'Osso** Library to those who created them.

Gianni Fossati's memory will always remain with all of us and those who come after

This lengthy recollection of the Academy's history is a prelude to the prize most recently approved by the President's Council, named after First Vice-President **Gianni Fossati**, who passed way during the terrible early days of the coronavirus (and whose remains have not yet been laid to rest). The prize is awarded to a print journalist whose articles have contributed to promoting and disseminating knowledge about Italian cuisine. **This is our second prize which includes a monetary sum, alongside a prestigious diploma.** Upon its announcement, this new prize immediately met with unanimous approval, not only among those who knew Fossati personally but also those who witnessed his humanity and professionalism in the course of their Academic activities. **The Secretary is already receiving nominations** and we plan to assign the first Gianni Fossati Prize for 2021 in the early months of next year. In this way, Gianni too, alongside the other Academicians recalled above, will always remain a present memory for all of us and those who come after us.



Pumpkin: delicious and bountiful in the kitchen

by **Morello Pecchioli**

Honorary Academician for Verona

*From rind to seeds,
by way of the flowers
and pulp, the pumpkin
is a long-time favourite.*

The pumpkin is the 'hog' of the vegetable world: **no part of it is wasted, not even the rind** (unless it's drenched in chemicals), rich in minerals, vitamins and fibre. Baked or boiled, it is perfectly edible alongside the pulp. It can also be used for making purée, gnocchi or sweets. Paired with fresh cheese, it yields a delicious cheesecake. **We can also eat pumpkin flowers, battered and fried, and seeds, toasted and salted**, known as *bruscolini*. This was our grandparents' popcorn: 5 Lire would buy a paper twist of *bruscolini* which would last a film and a half.

The heart of the pumpkin is its pulp, a most versatile ingredient

But the heart of the pumpkin is its pulp: excellent baked, pan-fried or deep-fried. It makes a splendid sauce for pasta, ri-

sotto or timbales. It stars in varieties of **gnocchi, broths, cream or minestrone soups, ravioli, tortelli, savoury pies, relishes, flans, fritters and preserves**. Finely sliced and dressed with a vinegar, oil, salt and pepper vinaigrette, it makes a delicious vegetable *carpaccio*. Finger-cut and fried, it can also stand in as the chips in fish'n'chips, instead of the usual potato version.

Unlike pork, a flavoursome harbinger of calories and cholesterol, pumpkin is a vegetable pharmacopoeia, a treasure of herbal medicine, **a health-giving cornucopia**: not only because it has few calories and no cholesterol, but because it is a mine of vitamin A, beta-carotene, potassium, minerals and water-soluble vitamins. A powerful ally against diabetes, pumpkin helps to keep our skin and organs youthful due to its antioxidants which fight free radicals. Pumpkin seeds, if not toasted and salted, contain cucurbitin, which helps the urinary apparatus;





they also relax and prevent osteoporosis and swelling.

Similarly to hogs, pumpkins, beloved of the palate, are excoriated by the tongue. In Italian, a dunce is known as a *zuccone* ('pumpkin-head'), remaining a *zucca vuota* ('empty pumpkin') for failing to develop more nous as an adult. Disparaged by idioms, the pumpkin is nevertheless redeemed through symbolism.

*Its abundance of seeds
make it an emblem
of plenty and fertility*

Its abundance of seeds make it an emblem of plenty and fertility. Anthropologists report that for certain Asian and African tribes, the pumpkin represented, and still **represents, the cosmic egg**. Even the Church dignifies it through the *zucchetto* ('little pumpkin'), the skullcap worn by bishops (amaranth), cardinals (scarlet) and popes (white).

The humble bounty of the pumpkin is beloved of saints. **Marc'Antonio Cavànis**, a Venetian priest, poet and educator posthumously named a 'servant of God', so loved pumpkins that he dedicated a poem to them in dialect: "Mi che no ghe diga ben? Si che lo ho da dir./ Che la zuca xe quanto un elisir,/ che dà la vita ai morti..." (elevating the pumpkin to an elixir

capable of raising the dead), and so on for another 93 rhyming verses. **Saints Roch and James** travelled on their pilgrimages with a gourd for containing water. Until a few decades ago, hollow gourds were the only male garments used in certain tribes in the Amazon, protecting the 'family jewels'. Maracas originated as two dried gourds containing seeds. Other pumpkins were used in pagan rituals; today, when the druids' fires are quenched, their symbols lost and their gourds emptied, these pumpkins are the jack-o'-lanterns of Hallowe'en trick-or-treaters.

Pliny called the pumpkin 'a solace for mankind'. **Martial** castigated the stingy **Caecilius** in an epigram for using pumpkin, which was cheap, as the main ingredient from starters to dessert, even camouflaging it as mushrooms. If Cinderella, wearing her couture gown designed by the Fairy Godmother, used an Atlantic Giant as her sole mode of transport (bibbidy bobbidy boo), the macaronic poet **Teofilo Folengo** imprisoned those who had taken leave of their senses in an empty pumpkin: philosophers, poets, astronomers, physicians and assorted intellectuals.

We are still unsure where pumpkins originated. Some scholars trace the oldest evidence of pumpkins to Mexico, where eight-thousand-year-old seeds have been found. Others give them an Asian origin.

The pumpkins known in Rome assuredly came from the east. But it is clear that the pumpkins most common today, both delicious and bountiful in the kitchen, arrived in Europe from America after Columbus journeyed there.

*Once a plebeian food,
pumpkin was later prized
on wealthier tables*

Pumpkin, once a plebeian food, slowly gained aristocratic status over the centuries, gradually enveloping gourmets in its tendrils. **Martino de Rossi**, the pre-eminent 15th-century cook who ushered cuisine from the Middle Ages into the Renaissance, vastly appreciated pumpkin and served it to the wealthy. In his *Libro de Arte Coquinaria (The Art of Cooking)*, he teaches how to prepare gourds and offers recipes: pumpkin fritters, *Zucche al lacte d'amandole* (pumpkins with almond milk) and *Carabaze alla catalana* (Catalan-style pumpkins) cooked in pounded lard (*lardo battuto*), fatty broth, saffron, sugar and sweet spices. In what proportions? Master Martino recommends: "Following your Lord's preferences". This, and all the recipes by this humanist cook, must indeed have satisfied his various 'Lords' preferences', as he went from triumph to triumph, from court to court,



from the Sforza kitchens to those of **Ludovico Scarampi Mezzarota** (Trevisan), chamberlain for four popes, known as ‘cardinal Lucullus’ for the opulent banquets held in his palace. He assigned Martino a weekly shopping budget of 140 ducats, corresponding to 3500 present-day Euros, give or take a ducat. It stands to reason that had he become pope, he would have erased gluttony from the list of deadly sins.

The humanist and gastronomist **Bartolomeo Sacchi** (known as Platina), though not a cook, also placed pumpkin on a pedestal. He was tutor to the children of **Lodovico III Gonzaga**. A luminary, he served as chancellor to two popes and prefect of the Vatican Library. His fame derives from a tractate on gastronomy and nutrition, *De honesta voluptate et valetudine* (*On Honourable Pleasure and Health*). He influenced customs and cui-

sine at the court of Mantua, where he found attentive ears when deprecating the overuse of meat, which causes gout, while praising the beneficial consumption of seasonal fruits and vegetables grown locally, first and foremost the pumpkin. Five and a half centuries later, Platina’s honestly delicious advice lives on in the refined cuisine of Mantua, which has many delectable uses for *suca*: pumpkin gnocchi, marinated pumpkin, pumpkin relish, and, their splendour undimmed by the centuries, **pumpkin tortelli**.

Another **Bartolomeo**, namely **Scappi**, was the 16th-century cook for two papal Piuses, Pius IV and V, and produced a ponderous cooking tractate in six volumes: *Opera di Bartolomeo Scappi maestro dell’arte del cucinare* (*The Opus of Bartolomeo Scappi, Master of the Culinary Arts*). His virtues did not include modesty, but how can we fault anyone who

gathers a thousand recipes, makes detailed illustrations of innumerable cooking implements, provides the earliest known representation of a fork, explains new food preparation methods and meticulously describes the uses of products imported from the New World, such as multiple types of American pumpkin? We cannot. Thus, Humanism and the Renaissance revolutionised not only art, architecture, customs and thought, but also cuisine and nutrition. The pumpkin, long considered a food for peasants and livestock, was socially rehabilitated.

*A seasonal fruit;
a star in the kitchen*

A seasonal fruit, pumpkin still adores playing the star at the table, thanks to its versatility and beautiful hue reminiscent of old gold. **Giorgio Gioco**, the late and lamented cook of the 12 Apostoli in Verona, a friend of journalists, writers and artists and a writer and poet himself, presented a pumpkin purée as an enthroned sun at a cooking competition in Badoer. He cut an enormous pumpkin in half, hollowed it out, filled it with a purée of its own pulp, arranged sweet-corn ears over it in the form of rays, placed it on a regal palanquin, and served this golden cream with toasted truffle bread. A triumph.

Another great, **Paolo Monelli**, compares a plateful of pumpkin to Bardolino wine in his *Il ghiottone errante* (*The Wandering Glutton*). Praising Venetian cooks who “play with raw materials”, he writes that they preserve the original flavour of ingredients, “so that strange alliances do not produce a bastard race, but the noble remains noble, the Greek, Greek, the slave, a slave; and Othello the Moor taints not the golden-haired Desdemona, but harmonises with her: Venetian-style liver with *zucca barucca*” (the so-called ‘holy pumpkin’). No jealousy, then, if a ruddy youth takes his place between the swarthy stalwart and the golden damsel: at the table, the more the merrier.

Morello Pecchioli





Induction Stovetops

by **Roberto Zottar**
Gorizia Delegate

A flameless, quick, safe and aesthetically satisfying cooking technology.

Among the latest cooking innovations is **the stovetop which cooks without flames or hot plates**. This is the induction cooker,

which bring the same results as its traditional predecessors, using electricity rather than gas. **Induction cooktops** represent a true cooking revolution: they deliver the required performance while respecting the environment and blending aesthetically into contemporary open-plan kitchens. In Italy, they have constantly evolved over several years, and **are gaining ground among those building new kitchens**, while abroad they are mandatory in areas which ban gas cookers.

A coil generates a magnetic field which heats the bottom of the pan

Induction cooktops use electricity: a coil generates a magnetic field which can directly, hence rapidly, heat the metallic bottom of a pan. **The system is always on full power, but with constant monitoring which switches power on and off** (power management) with a speed





invisible to our senses, giving the impression of continuity; this **limits energy absorption** to the desired levels, avoiding electrical overloads (making the system compatible even with a 3-kW contracted load supply). **The principle recalls the transition from photo to film:** a film reel projects a sequence of images rapidly, creating the illusion of movement, whereas each frame represents a frozen moment. With such a system, **induction cookers are fast, safe and low-energy**, being 90% energy-efficient. Most of the energy bill generated by an induction cooker is used on cooking, whereas with gas, around 50% goes to cooking, while the remaining 50% dissipates, warming the chef's heart while having a chilling effect on our pocketbooks.

In Italy, the cultural association of cooking with flames and economic and practical reasons involving the cost of energy and the presence of electric metres with limited capacity have kept demand lukewarm, but is recently soaring.

*The flame-free advantage:
heating the pot,
not the cooking surface*

The first real advantage of induction cookers is the absence of flames, meaning no risk, no possible gas leaks, safe cooking even in poorly ventilated areas, and heating speed. To these must be added that these cookers do not heat the cooktop itself, as with traditional stovetops, but only the cooking vessel itself, in which heat is induced by the magnetism: this

means **no accidental burns** and nothing burning **on the cooktop, which remains cool, hence easy to clean quickly**. There's also no risk in forgetting to turn off the cooker, since upon removing the pan, **the stovetop ceases to function in the absence of any surface in which to induce heat**. Induction cooktops look similar to radiant-heat glass-ceramic stovetops, but the latter use thermal resistance and heat up, while the former stay cool: only the bottom of the pan heats up, and may in turn lend heat to the stovetop.

*Induction cooking
is marvellously swift*

When it comes to cooking, induction brings considerable advantages in terms of both time and quality. Induction cooking is marvellously swift: 2 litres of water generally require at least 8 minutes to boil on a traditional gas cooker, against 3-4 for an induction stovetop, which dissipates hardly any heat. **Food heats more evenly and faster than on a flame**, and precise temperatures can remain constant over time. Food is heated ultimately in the same way as over gas, while microwave ovens transfer energy from inside to outside food, altering cooking times but also removing effects such as browning.

Initially one must become accustomed to pre-heating times, but a pot roast will always be cooked in the same way and at the same temperature. Induction cooktops, however, allow the same effects on anti-stick pans as is traditionally produced

with classic Lyon steel pans which must never be washed and are so beloved and indispensable among professional cooks: **the induction cooker on high will produce a perfectly browned steak which remains juicy inside**. Certainly, those who are not born cooks cannot be 'induced' into becoming chefs through mere use of induction stovetops; they will, however, have more chances to hone their skills during the same amount of time!

*Flat-bottomed pans
with specific magnetic
properties must be used*

The real problem lies in the type of cooking vessels to be used. Induction cooking requires flat-bottomed vessels with specific magnetic properties. **To check if a cooking vessel is induction-compatible, place a magnet under it**. If it sticks, the vessel will work on an induction cooker, and if not, it will not activate the mechanism. Electromagnetic heating requires iron-rich material; therefore, **cast iron, steel and enamelled iron are suitable**, and even better if they are fully flat-bottomed. Hence our beloved slow-cooking earthenware pots cannot be used: when purchasing future casseroles, one should check for the **coil 'induction' symbol** indicating compatibility. **Adaptor plates are commercially available: they go between cooktop and vessel** to permit the use of, for example, aluminium pans, though this reduces energy efficiency since the ferrous adaptor will itself heat up and in turn heat the vessel, as happened with old-style electrical cookers. Induction-compatible moka coffeepots are also commonly sold. Prices for induction cooktops **range from €40-50 for a portable single cooker, easy to store and place on any surface**, hence useful for cooking anywhere, to around €300 for a high-quality 60cm 4-vessel unit or €450 for 80cm and space for 5 vessels. Since each coin has two sides, there is a disadvantage: no electricity means a cold dinner!

Roberto Zottar



Persimmon: the fruit of the gods

by Giancarlo Burri
Padua Academician

A colourful, delicious protagonist of autumn!

"Gaunt, sharp limbs/ reach for the leaden sky,/ heavy with bright orange orbs". These stark verses by **Taos Aganoor** poetically capture the evocative image of a persimmon tree in late autumn.

Originating in China, later spreading to adjacent areas such as Japan and Korea, and only reaching Europe in the mid-19th century, ***Diospyros kaki L.f.*** is a fruit tree of the **Ebenaceae**, or ebony, family. Characterised by slow growth

and longevity, it has a straight trunk with rough bark, and can reach a height of 10 metres. Its large elliptical leaves are dark green in spring and summer, assuming a typical yellow and red hue in autumn, before falling.

Its fruit, known in various languages as Japanese lotus, Oriental apple etc, and more popularly named **persimmon, date plum, kaki or diospyros**, is a large, roughly spherical berry, yellow-orange when mature, whose varieties are distinguished





li brothers in Milan, he offers thanks for the gift of six fruits, “sending you the wish that this plant, whose fruits are so splendid, will soon be known and appreciated in our parts too”.

One could imagine an entire menu made from these delicious fruits

We could even imagine a hypothetical meal centred entirely on persimmons, beginning with an appetiser of whole-wheat **bruschetta** spread with creamy gorgonzola surmounted by a dollop of creamy persimmon flesh and a drop of balsamic vinegar. Next, perhaps, a **persimmon and almond risotto**, made by toasting an excellent Vialone Nano rice in a spoonful of butter and then, nearing the end of the traditional cooking in stock, adding abundant puréed persimmon pulp, folding in finely sliced Asiago d’Alvevo cheese, and dusting with minced almonds before serving.

As a second course, we might enjoy **pork in persimmon sauce** following the recipe of the eclectic **Alessandro Borghese**: pork fillet seasoned with celery salt and pepper, brushed with oil and lightly coated in minced wild fennel, then briefly sautéed and finally baked and served with a cream of persimmon pulp, chilli pepper, oil and salt. As a sweet ending, a **persimmon and yoghurt mousse**, a persimmon and *amaretti* frozen dessert (*semifreddo*), or a traditional tart, using persimmon jam. **In Japan, there is also a long tradition of eating dried persimmons, called *hoshigaki*.**

While still astringent, they are peeled and hung on frames for two or three weeks in a dry and sunlit area. When drying, the fruits begin curling up, so they are delicately massaged every day for 3-4 weeks. This process evenly distributes sugars, which crystallise on the surface of the fruits; these assume **the appearance of tiny lanterns** with an attractive dark amber hue. They can keep for several months in tins or glass jars.

Giancarlo Burri

by the presence or absence of astringency at harvest: one category, including the cultivars **ragno**, **lycopersicon** and **loto di Romagna**, is astringent when normally harvested, only **becoming edible after bletting** (a softening beyond ripening); while the second, including the varieties **caco mela** (‘apple persimmon’) and **caco vaniglia** (‘vanilla persimmon’), is edible immediately after harvesting.

According to a peasant custom, persimmon seeds can predict winter weather

In August 1945, some persimmon trees survived the atomic bombing of Nagasaki: the persimmon tree is therefore also known as the “**peace tree**”.

A curious peasant custom predicts winter weather through persimmon seeds. Slicing them open and observing the shoot inside, one should see **the silhouette of a knife, a fork or a spoon, with the following meanings**: spoon: snowy

winter; fork: mild winter; knife: dry, cold winter with scarce precipitation. Definitely interesting are the persimmon’s **nutritional properties**: it is certainly an **energetic** food, yielding 70 kcal per 100g (hence recommended for loss of appetite or those who regularly perform sports), and is rich in **minerals**, including phosphorus, magnesium, sodium and especially potassium (with diuretic and purifying properties). Persimmons are also **high in vitamin C** and carotenoids (which confer immune protections), while their **elevated fibre content** makes them an excellent natural remedy against constipation.

The best way to savour a persimmon’s sweet flesh is to eat it, fully ripe, with a spoon; however, **snooping here and there among menus and cookbooks, one can find many tempting recipes**. One might cut them in half, sprinkle them in sugar and irrigate them with dry sparkling wine, in the manner of **Giuseppe Verdi**, an inveterate persimmon admirer: in a letter from March 1888 to the celebrated horticultural **Ingegno-**



Cooking is tiring

by **Gigi Padovani**

Honorary Academician for Torino Lingotto

*Psychologists
in support of chefs
and restaurants.*

Isabella Corradini



The first known victim of cooking-induced stress was a celebrated 17th-century chef immortalised by being played in a film by **G rard Depardieu**: the Frenchman **Fran ois Vattel, who committed suicide** on the 23rd of April 1671, in Chantilly Castle, by falling on his sword **because the fresh fish** for a banquet where the king would be present **did not arrive in time** from the port of Boulogne-sur-Mer. More recently, many other acclaimed chefs stricken by depression have alas emulated his gesture: from the French-American television star **Anthony Bourdain** to the Swiss **Beno t Violier**, to the Italian-American **Joseph Cerniglia**, to the Italian **Luciano Zizzeri**, owner of the restaurant La Pineta in Marina di Bibbona (Livorno). Personal problems must surely have influenced these extreme acts, whose impetus cannot have been only a guide’s bad review - as claimed in the case of **Bernard Loiseau** - or a scorching on a television programme.

Chefs have one of the most stressful, exhausting jobs

It’s true, however, that the chef’s job in an haute-cuisine restaurant, or perhaps even in an ordinary *trattoria*, is among the most stressful and exhausting, on a par with those of managers, lawyers or surgeons. One might paraphrase the famous line “Lavorare stanca” (literally, ‘work is exhausting’) by the poet **Cesare Pavese**, asserting that ‘cooking is exhausting’, **despite the televised image of celebrity chefs.**

In 2015, the actor **Bradley Cooper** played a well-known Parisian chef with two Michelin stars in the film *Burnt*; the chef’s alcohol and drug addictions cause his restaurant to fail, but he redeems himself thanks to the support of a young sous-chef.

Nowadays, of course, to be a chef - which, one must remember, literally means the ‘head’ of a kitchen crew - one must have the abilities of an entrepreneur, a personnel chief, and a communication expert. The Covid-19 emergency has profoundly affected the lives of restaurateurs, not only economically but also regarding their private and work life. To recover from this problematic situation entailing increased ‘work fatigue’, the **Italian Association of Taste Ambassadors** has used funds from the “50 Best for Recovery” initiative to start **an interesting research and study project alongside the Order of Psychologists for the Latium Region**: “Psychology Supporting Restaurants”.

A questionnaire for over 100 chefs, pastry chefs, pizza masters and front-of-house staff

The study, based on a questionnaire sent to over 100 chefs, pastry chefs, pizza masters and front-of-house staff, began in late 2019, **acquiring new research goals** after the pandemic broke out. Its working group consists of the psychologists **Franco Amore, Davide Pelusi and Isabella Corradini**, a social psychologist and work safety expert. The impetus for it came from the President of the Taste



Bradley Cooper in a scene from *Burnt*

Ambassadors, chef **Cristina Bowerman**: “In Italy, we never speak” - she says - “about the work stress affecting everyone in our field. Yet it is a staggeringly widespread, shared phenomenon”. Data gathering, partially through focus groups, and elaboration are still under way: the results **will be presented in February 2022**, forming a sort of ‘best practice manual’ to prevent chefs from falling into depression and becoming victims of malaise. **A publication destined for all restaurant workers will also offer practical advice to prevent and combat kitchen burnout**, while remaining open to the judgement of clients and critics.

‘Colleague turnover’ is among the two foremost stressors

Dr Corradini gives us advance notice of some early results. The difficulties identified include **the emotional toll of excessively rapid personnel turnover**, which is among the two foremost stressors. The Covid emergency has had serious effects, including a 54% rise in sleep disturbances. **Psychological problems have also become apparent**: generalised anxiety (41%), sadness (39%) and social isolation (35%) are three conditions identified as ‘stable’, even pre-Covid, by over a third of respondents. “We broadened our research” - explains Isabella Corradini - “extending it beyond

the job’s identifying factors that we already knew about, such as shifts and working hours, and comparing pre-Covid and post-pandemic working activities in restaurants, as this was a watershed. Two thirds of voluntary respondents were restaurateurs and 57% were chefs. Undefined working hours, including holiday hours, and workload have always been problems for them. **The health emergency has revealed restaurant workers’ resiliency**: everyone displayed entrepreneurial initiative to keep their businesses afloat at any cost. They understood that they would need more time and space to themselves, to reflect, remaining aware that they are still responsible for maintaining a certain image, especially in the case of acclaimed chefs. Nevertheless, a general re-think then occurred, alongside the need to organise activities more efficiently, for example by motivating personnel better. They understood that enhanced crew relations also improve service quality. This is clearly a way to forge ahead and beyond, in a positive manner”.

By now, social networks affect us all

The terrible months that we all endured - let us hope that we are past them, thanks to vaccines and ‘green passes’ - have taught us what values really matter in life, encouraging us, as the psycholo-

gist states, to “love ourselves a bit more, identifying the essential elements of our activities and seeking viable alternatives”. By now, social networks affect us all, and **clearly impinge on the reputations of chefs, who often feel unjustly attacked** by customers who give unmotivated bad reviews on platforms such as TripAdvisor. “In reality, restaurateurs have used the web to network, to seek information useful to their work” - the psychologist replies - “but on the other hand, consumers have also undergone a period of restrictions and may now expect more. Consequently it is **important to reinstate a positive rapport with customers**. Regarding social media, we must acknowledge that they’ve clearly changed our lives, because, whether or not we have an account, we are evaluated. **We must learn to use these tools well**: they can confer advantages; let us not forget that restaurants are inherently relational”. We mentioned bad reviews potentially leading to suicide. “I don’t think a review is enough; there’s always a set of factors to consider when understanding such an extreme decision. If we are insulted on social media, replying in kind is most inadvisable. However, silence in response to customer complaints could be considered a provocation. Everyone must choose the content that suits them best, but one must never stoop to provocation”. Buying online or booking a restaurant table using a smart phone offers customers immediate gratification: “We want the object of our desires immediately”, adds Dr Corradini. “Sometimes online reviews foster positive interactions, and best practices can also be disseminated through the internet: let us not only see the negative aspects of these technologies; we have set up a webinar with Cristina Bowerman on this topic”. Experience with delivery in emergency situations has proved useful. The psychologist concludes: “During the pandemic, chefs have shown resiliency, and are now ready to face future challenges: let us hope that we can give them new tools”.

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