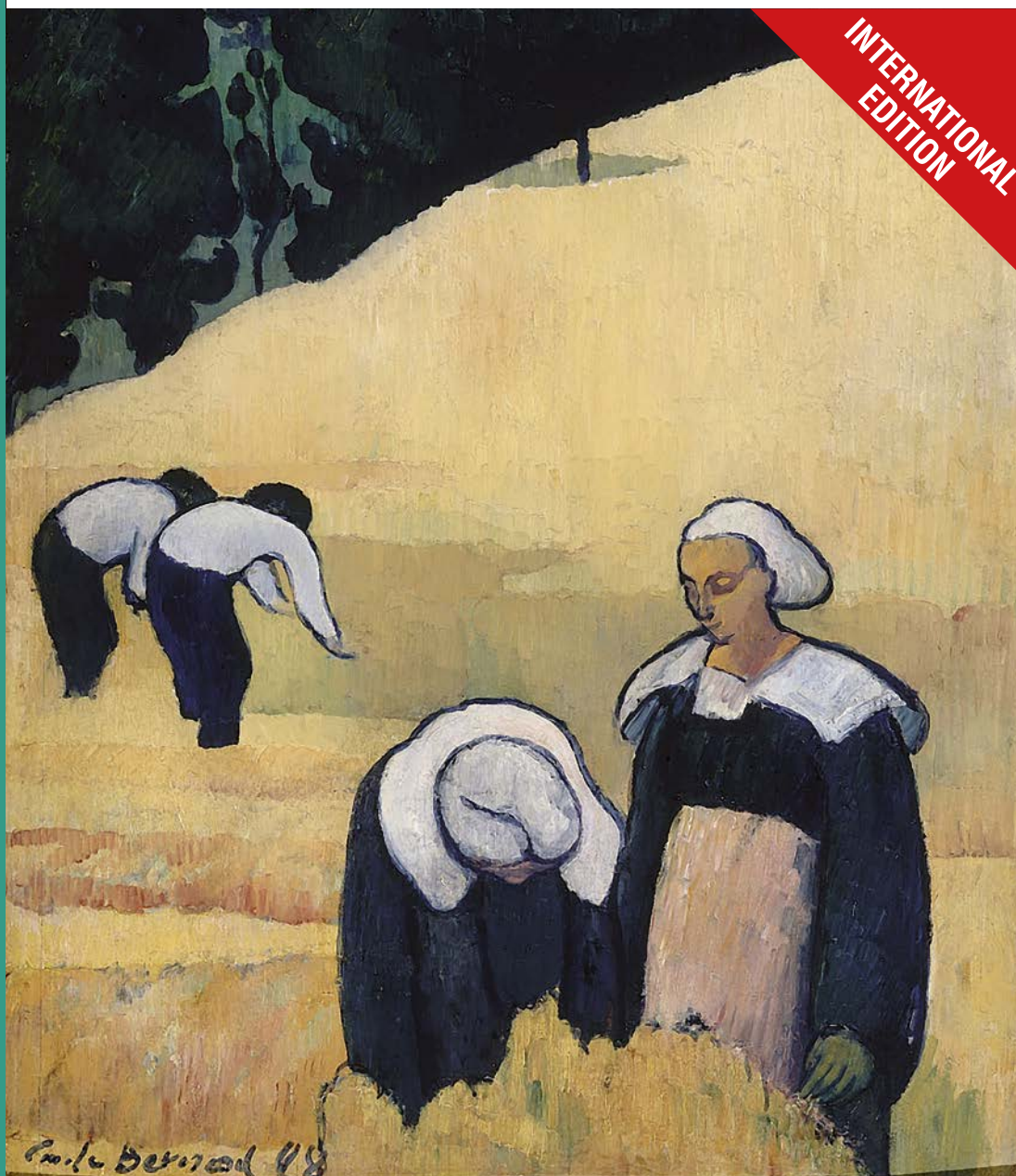


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On the cover: graphic elaboration of *The Harvest* (1888) by Émile Bernard; Musée d'Orsay, Paris

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Being an Academician: a commitment *to sharing and active participation*

by **Paolo Petroni**

President of the Accademia

The meeting in Baveno, in a climate of friendship and pure enthusiasm, highlighted the Academy's ability to keep pace with the times, thanks in great part to the spirit of sharing common to all its members.



During the past month of May, a Special Session of the Assembly of Delegates was held in Baveno, on Lake Maggiore, followed by an Educational Forum delineating the main aspects of Academic life according to the new rules. Attendance was very high, in an atmosphere of Academic friendship reaching levels of pure enthusiasm, as described in this issue's pages dedicated to this highly anticipated event after years of confinement, lockdown and masks.

Concretely, what do the new Statute and By-laws change?

Concretely, what do the new Statute and By-laws change? First and foremost, I would like to identify **what won't change: the structure of the Academy** and its governing bodies, its goals and its fundamental principles. They have worked for 70 years, preserving and improving our Association; hence nobody dared modify them. After over a year of work, with consultancy from fiscal and commercial experts, and all the necessary approvals, today we finally have **updated norms, in step with the new requirements of practicality** (meetings can be remote) **and transparency** (the Supervisory Body's powers have been expanded) which, crucially, comply with current Italian legislation governing Associations.

The Academician as the driving force of Academic life

Aside from some legal technicalities chiefly pertaining to Delegates, Counsellors, Advisory Board members and their meetings and resolutions, **the new norms place the Academician at the centre of activities**, no longer and not only as a mere member among a group of friends, but as the driving force of Academic life. The word's new definition clarifies the concept from the start: **"Academicians must be committed to the Academy's goals and activities and show a concrete interest in studying, promoting and safeguarding Italian cuisine"**. To ensure a better assessment of these qualities, entry into a Delegation now requires participation in **at least three convivial gatherings**. This will be useful by allowing the Delegate and nominating Academician, but also the candidate, to see if the Academy is a good fit: not just a chance to spend pleasant hours at the table with friends, therefore, but also an opportunity to learn about the Academy's history and structure, best accomplished with help from a 'tutor' of sorts.

Indeed, Academicians are now explicitly, specifically asked to collaborate in organising activities and monitoring restaurants currently or potentially reviewed in the Guide. Being an Academician is an honour, but also a commitment to sharing and active participation.



A midsummer night's dram

by **Giancarlo Burri**
Padua Academician

*The intensely aromatic
Nocino is made
from unripe walnuts
gathered for
St John's feast.*

When seasonal changes in the countryside were clearly marked by customs, popular beliefs and propitiatory rites, **the summer solstice was considered one of the most fascinating and mysterious astronomical events.** Particularly awaited was the **21st of June, the day when 'the sun stands still'** (and thus the longest day of the year in terms of daylight hours), inaugurating astronomical summer: an astral

moment which assumed the **symbolic value of change, of transition towards the future**, of new and promising influences on fertility and abundance.

To eradicate the many pagan rituals deeply rooted in the customs associated with that event, **the Catholic Church** intervened, appropriating but Christianising them, so that **the summer solstice would coincide with the birth of St John the Baptist on 24 June.**





The previous night's dew was credited with miraculous effects

Since St John the Baptist baptised the faithful with water, popular belief attributed miraculous powers to the dew formed the night before his feast day. **This was therefore considered the most favourable time to gather medicinal herbs** capable of curing many ailments (especially skin conditions), pick mugwort for driving away devils and neutralising hexes and the evil eye, and **harvest unripe walnuts, damp from the beneficial guazza (dew)**, for preparing one of the oldest homemade liqueurs: **Nocino**.

Still untouched by climate change, nature guaranteed that by that date, **unripe** walnuts, green and **soft** (enough to pierce easily with a pin), would have attained their medicinal peak. Tradition recommended they be picked by a woman who must climb the tree barefoot and pick the best fruits by hand, without breaking their skin or using metal implements.

The walnuts, crushed with a stone, were kept - with brandy and some sugar - in a thick, opaque glass jar **to steep until, as custom dictated, All Hallows' Eve, namely the night of 31 October** (By adding some good white wine and sugar to the spent husks and steeping briefly, one could prepare a local approximation of cherry brandy to serve with desserts or sip contemplatively).

The various written recipes

Nocino may have originated in the days of the Roman empire, according to sources recounting how the Picts of Scotland would gather on midsummer night and share a tankard containing a dark, acrid, alcoholic walnut-based concoction as a protective potion. **Later traces** are found in apothecaries' antidotaries from **certain Benedictine and Camaldolese monasteries** which cite the **"miraculous" medicinal effects** of a tart alcoholic extract produced from steeping the husks of unripe walnuts in brandy: an astringent, antiparasitic, antibacterial digestive dewormer. Mellowed **by adding honey, aromatic herbs and spices**, the infusion became a **walnut elixir**, reserved for visits by ecclesiastical authorities and the convents' aristocratic benefactors. In 1760, the journalist and man of letters **Gasparo Gozzi** published a **detailed recipe for 'walnut Rosolio'** in the *Gazzetta Veneta*, suggesting, among other things: "As this *rosolio* has not a colour pleasing to the eye, one can improve its hue by mashing several crumbled field poppy leaves in among the walnuts". Another written recipe for **Nocino**, described as **'walnut ratafia'**, is in *Il Cuoco piemontese perfezionato a Parigi* (A Piedmontese Cook Schooled in Paris), published anonymously in Turin in 1766: "When the walnuts are formed, take a dozen, halve them, place them in a jar with three tankards' worth of brandy, seal it well and keep it in a cool place for six

weeks, upending the jar occasionally to mix its contents; then mix a pound of sugar in a pot with a pint of water, bring to a boil and skim off the foam; after straining the brandy mixture through a cheesecloth, add the sugar with a small piece of cinnamon and a pinch of coriander seeds; let it steep for a month, and then decant it into flasks and seal them well".

"The Order of Modenese Nocino" supports initiatives to protect its ancient tradition

The registered protocol for "Nocino of Modena" reports that, between 1860 and 1867, **Ferdinando Cavazzoni**, the pantler at the influential aristocratic Molza family's palace, began collecting recipes for the best Modenese specialties, and included the technique for what he called, in the first known use of that name, "A Liqueur known as *Nocino*". At Spilamberto, in the province of Modena, there is the *Ordine del Nocino Modenese* ('Order of Modenese *Nocino*'), founded with the purpose of organising and supporting initiatives to protect the venerable *Nocino* tradition. It originally **consisted only of women**, and nowadays, despite some concessions to equal rights, its Council is mostly populated by women (this honours *rezdore*, the matriarchs who were the traditional doyennes of this liqueur's production technique in peasant homes). **Dark in colour, moderately viscous and sweet, and with an intense aroma of the fresh fruit**, according to purists *Nocino* should be served neat and at a slightly cool temperature (16-18°C) as a flavoursome digestive after meals. However, it can also be **included in cocktails, such as Sphere by Mattia Pastori** of the Bamboo Bar at the Armani Hotel in Milan, crowned 'best bartender in Italy' in the European finals of a prestigious international competition: **40 ml of Cardhu whisky, 20 ml of Nocino, 3 bar spoons of quince jam and 1 bar spoon of olive oil** (The contest was a food pairing test, and Mattia had paired the cocktail with a seasoned goat cheese and quince jam).

Giancarlo Burri



How to choose a good cheese

by **Roberto Rubino**

President of ANFOSC free-range cheese association

The elements determining quality and difference.

What do we know about cheese, about milk, beyond the usual persistent, oft-repeated hagiography about our cheese heritage which the world envies and emulates because our products are inimitable? The price of milk is uniform worldwide, being dictated by the commodities exchange, with minor local oscillations which however bear no relation to quality; and if

everything is the same, then it follows that cheese will also be the same. Yet we know that it is not so; how, therefore, can consumers make informed choices?

How can consumers make informed choices?

Let us begin with colour, which is a 'visiting card' providing immediate signals regarding many aspects of quality. **Many consumers are accustomed to white cheeses**; indeed, for many, white is synonymous with perfection, both of processing and of product; why discuss colour, therefore? Because in nature,

looking around us we find that everything is coloured: only the petals of a few flowers are white. This happens because **ultraviolet rays can be dangerous** to vegetable and animal tissues; hence the presence of **antioxidant pigments**. These molecules and compounds generally fall into two large groups: **carotenoids and polyphenols**. Carotenoids in milk have been extensively studied; polyphenols' contributions to colour have attracted less notice. There are about ten **carotenoids in milk**, but **those producing its colour are essentially two: beta carotene and lutein**. Their content varies by species: **cow's milk is the most coloured**, as it contains all the carotenoids; sheep's milk, however, contains no



beta carotene, while goat and water buffalo milk lacks even lutein. This is why cow's milk cheeses have a colour which can reach deep yellow or bright gold (consider certain Sicilian cheeses); sheep's cheeses can be yellow or various shades of greenish; goat or water buffalo cheeses are white, though sometimes with variations. This happens because if pigments are present for defending tissues against ultraviolet rays, antioxidant content will depend on irradiation, altitude, slope configuration and latitude. **The hotter the area, the deeper the colour.** Another colour determinant is the **farming system. With intensive farming,** animals receive **little grass and much grain.** Since polyphenols and carotenoids derive directly from grass, water buffalos, for instance, being almost all raised in the intensive farming manner, may produce porcelain-white milk. **So, colour can tell us at first glance whether an animal has grazed** or eaten copious grass, and even whether that grass was green or dry.

The link between taste and aroma

In cheese as in any food, paramount qualities are **flavour, namely the combination of taste and aroma, and nutritional value.**

Aroma is due to volatile compounds, which determine smell nuances. These include aldehydes, ketones, alcohols, esters and especially terpenes. These compounds are all **present in plants,** and their content wanes as a plant advances towards seed production. Therefore, colour and aroma, carotenoids and volatile compounds go hand in hand; that is why colour is a good indicator of quality, at least of aroma and antioxidant content.

Then there is taste. We know that the basic tastes are: sweet, salty, sour, bitter and umami. In a tasting, using these parameters, at most we can claim that a cheese is faintly salty, or slightly bitter, but we cannot ascertain its quality. If a



cheese has a strong odour, we can already assign it a certain level of quality. We should therefore be capable of doing the same with taste: **we should focus on the intensity and persistence that invoke pasture grass and farming style.** We have noted that colour and olfactive qualities go hand in hand, waning as a plant ages. Polyphenols, however, develop oppositely: they increase with a plant's age, and the proportions of different classes changes (especially phenolic acids and flavonoids). If we could, therefore, taste a given cheese produced by the same animals throughout the grazing season, we would notice a deeper hue and stronger odour, but a more delicate and less persistent taste, in the first months; as the grass progressively dried, the cheese would lose aromatic and colour intensity, but its taste would gain strength and persistence. Naturally, there would be a period when the three parameters would be balanced, producing taste, colour and aroma at the same time.

The inverse relation between quality and quantity

Normally, **animals are also fed concentrates, grain and other feed** to increase milk yield. Given the inverse relation between quality and quantity, **the more milk is produced, the more it will be**

diluted. This explains why many cow or sheep cheeses are white, similarly to goat cheeses, especially French ones, because those goats produce vast amounts of milk and are fed mostly silage and similar feeds. This is also why **water buffalo mozzarella is white.**

Finally, a word on **nutritional value.** We have said that polyphenols are very high in pastured livestock, even ten or twenty times greater than in grain-fed animals. Polyphenols are known to be potent antioxidants.

Pasturing also changes fat quality: unsaturated fats increase and the omega-6/omega-3 proportion falls below 1 for pastured animals as opposed to approximately 15 when animals are kept in stables. Hence **there are huge differences in flavour and nutritional value between intensive and extensive rearing systems.** Yet all milk receives the same price, and therefore cheese prices are very similar and even sometimes identical between the two rearing methods, with evident and comprehensible repercussions on the decline of milk quality.

Roberto Rubino





Pizza calling in Singapore

by Elena Simmen

Singapore-Malaysia-Indonesia Academician

The 'dough-whispering' pizza master.

Davide Tanda

Pizza again? For Pete's sake! Yes, but this time, we mention pizza to announce that in this world of 'designer' and 'branded' goods, justice has been served. **In 2017, "The Art of the Neapolitan Pizzaiuolo" was included in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List.** This historic recognition elevates the pizza master's dexterity to

an art and an expression of a region's cultural signature. This art is performed in precise phases: preparing the dough, letting it rise, kneading it with acrobatic rotational movements, and baking; and it can be learnt and developed only through passion and experience. This is exactly why, despite the simplicity of its ingredients, pizza has no 'recipe'. **The pizzaiuolo is the true recipe, the true secret:** the pizzaiuolo artist, the Banksy of street food, who defends tradition but **has also been capable of innovating the product, making it evolve to stay up to date,** adapting to a modern, increasingly demanding public. Satisfying hunger, yes; quickly, yes; but also, better.

The history of contemporary pizza is one of constant evolution



The history of contemporary pizza, of Italian 'fast food', is one of constant evolution. **Today** it bears the mark of great 'artists' including **Gabriele Bonci**, with his 'starter yeast revolution'; **Simone Padoan**, gourmet pizza pioneer; **Daniele Donatelli**, recent winner of *Gambero Rosso* magazine's 'Research and Innovation' Prize; and, last but not least, **Enzo Coccia**, 'world pizza ambassador'. Resisting the 'call of pizza' is difficult; fortunately, Singapore offers a wide array of pizza choices, but finding 'the flavours of home' was not a foregone conclusion - or so I thought, until I came across the **d.o.c. restaurant** and its affable, supremely likeable and hyper-



View of Singapore

active *pizzaiuolo* of Sardinian origins:
Davide Tanda.

Interview with Davide Tanda: Italian “pizzaiuolo” in Singapore

“I’m proud of being a *pizzaiuolo*. I’m not a cook”, Davide begins. “I’m inspired by the concept of *guaranteed quality and origin* already inherent in the restaurant’s name, to offer my clientele not only a surprisingly light and digestible product but also an authentic *Neapolitan* flavour”. (D.O.C. means ‘controlled designation of origin’).

Davide told me his story all in one go, in an engagingly colourful, enthusiastic manner, when he sat beside me to fulfil my curiosity at the end of dinner on a night made typically hot and humid by the recent monsoon rains.

He discovered his passion for pizza in Bosa, in the province of Nuoro, when, aged only 15, he began working in a small pizza restaurant run by **Angelo Cabula**, whom he defines as his ‘mentor and father’. There he learned the art of dough, to ‘understand’ and ‘hear’ its rising and its timing, dedicating himself to an occupation that absorbed and gratified him ever more. “**I whisper to the dough**”, he says, laughing.

Enthusiasm and the constant search for new challenges led him to professional experiences even as far as Trentino-Alto Adige and then in the Netherlands, Thailand and finally Singapore. “**My secrets are ... poolish dough and my tenacity**”, he declares with a half-smile. “My

magic formula is: 70% dough hydration, 22 degrees Celsius for the water, and rest for 24 hours... and then my stubbornness which led me to *refine my recipe and ingredient doses*, because humidity in Singapore is greater than standard European levels. Singapore water is fine, though”, he adds. “This is, of course, the result of intense work”, Davide concludes, “but I’m satisfied by the results, at least for now”.

In his menu, both traditional and more ‘modern’ pizzas stand out

And those results speak volumes. His restaurant, in the Tanjong Pagar district near the vibrant Chinatown, is always full! His clientele is loyal and joyously

rowdy. At d.o.c., traditional pizzas stand out, but ‘modern’ ones too, such as **the mozzarella, mushroom and pistachio cream pizza**, or the surf and turf or sea urchin pizza, to name a few.

“The pistachio cream pizza is my masterpiece, my most beloved mural, but I mustn’t rest on my laurels”, he affirms with a sly, contented smile. “I always want to improve and innovate; indeed, I’m now working on my next dough, with increasingly selected raw materials. I owe it to myself, to my clients here in Singapore who stick with me and appreciate me, and to my trusty suitcase over there in my wardrobe, my boon companion through the past 20 years’ adventures... you know, I’m still young; I still have many miles to go” - or perhaps many ever more delicious pizzas? Go for it, Davide!

Elena Simmen





The importance of the menu *and its legal value*

by **Sergio Maria Bianchi**
Valdarno Aretino Academician

Habit causes us to undervalue it, but it is the first line of protection for restaurateurs, for customers and for our recipes.

Any of us might go to a restaurant on our lunch break, for an evening with friends, or for some special event, and hungrily read the menu too fast, ordering as quickly as we can. However, our routine overlooks the true importance of **the menu, which many of us perceive as a mere 'piece of paper' listing dishes**. From the legal standpoint, however, it is well to point out, a fortiori considering recent rulings by the Supreme Court of Cassation, that the **menu constitutes a veritable contract**.

The menu is a bilateral contract between two parties: the restaurateur and the client

The restaurant contract is, more specifically, a bilateral contract because it is entered into by the two contracting parties, namely the restaurateur and the



client. Positioned on the table, the menu is **initially a contract proposal** which is taken up and **concretised at the moment of the order**, a document wherein the restaurateur takes down the client's choices, initiating *the meeting between proposal and acceptance*.

Laws also keep in step with new technology, as contracts can now be **activated through electronic and touch-screen orders** directly conveyed to kitchens and tills.

Menus also protect our first-rate food products

The menu is therefore the first line of defence for customers but especially for our products and culinary excellence. Indeed, **the dishes described on the**

menu must correspond to those actually served; if this does not happen, according to article 515 of Italy's Penal Code, the restaurateur may become guilty of *commercial fraud*.

Restaurateurs tread a fine line with attempted commercial fraud. Indeed, they can stumble into it by serving the client the wrong dish, or something **differing in origin or quality** from what was agreed or declared: for example, **serving a dish with previously frozen raw materials without disclosing this** on the menu; or promising a *prized and exclusive Chianina steak* and then serving, unbeknownst to the client, a thick, splendid cut of meat of any other provenance; or **misrepresenting a 'trout foam' as a 'sea bream foam'**.

The menu is our friend and looks after us; **isn't it time to read it more carefully?**