



# Triangle Sons & Daughters of Italy

*Serving the North Carolina Triangle since 2004*

LODGE 2817

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# IL GIORNALE DI TSDOI

Aprile, 2021



## TSDOI Calendar of Events

April 12\_\_ Interfaith Food Shuttle  
May ? \_\_\_ Movie Night  
May 15\_\_ Bocci Tournament  
May 16\_\_ Helen Wright Dinner  
June 6\_\_ Annual Picnic  
XXXXX\_\_ Durham Bulls (**Cancelled**)  
Aug 15\_\_ Helen Wright Dinner  
Sep 4\_\_ Fund-Raising Breakfast  
Nov 14\_\_ Helen Wright Dinner

## April Birthdays

This month we celebrate the birthdays of those members celebrating in April: Donald Cimorella (3), Matthew Kunath (4), Pat DiLeonardo (14), Joseph Golaszewski (15), Amy Stica (18), Joan Kessler (18), Anna Florio (23), Deborah Nachtrieb (27), Victor Navaroli (28).



## ANNUAL FAMILY PICNIC

The annual family picnic with scholarship winner awards will be held June 6, 2021 - 3:00 PM. It will be held at a new venue this year, the Harold Ritter Park in Lochmere (301 Lochmere Drive West). <https://www.townofcary.org/recreation-enjoyment/parks-greenways-environment/parks> - click on Harold Ritter Park.



The picnic will be catered by Backyard Bistro to include hamburgers, hotdogs, sausage and peppers. We are waiting to get the final menu and price.

Activities will include the 50/50 raffle, Left Right Center, and the bubble gum blowing contest. Our new tee shirts will be available for sale along with our new aprons. We will proudly hang our new banner too.

Due to Covid Restrictions this will be limited to the first 40 people with payment once we post it on the website. We have to make sure we have at least 8-10 spaces reserved for our scholarship winners and families.



## 2021 Scholarships

TSDOI 2817 is awarding up to two \$750 scholarships. Only direct descendants of TSDOI members in good standing are eligible. Winner(s) must enroll in an accredited college or university in the fall of 2021. Here is the link to the 2021 application.

<http://trianglesonsofitaly.org/scholarships>

**The deadline for submission is May 1, 2021.**

## Volunteer Opportunity at the Interfaith Food Shuttle Farm

TSDOI is scheduled to help out at the Food Shuttle Farm on 2300 Dover Farm Road off Tryon Road in Raleigh on April 12, 9 AM to noon. We will likely be transplanting summer vegetables (tomatoes, squash, cucumbers, zucchini, or watermelon) into the fields or helping with other field preparation tasks. The produce that is grown is distributed to the needy and also sold at the farm stand onsite to raise funds for other activities.



If you would like to participate, please email Mary Muth at [marykmuth@yahoo.com](mailto:marykmuth@yahoo.com). She can add you to the online roster with the Interfaith Food Shuttle.

## Durham Bulls Cancelled

TSDOI will not be attending a Durham Bulls game this season. Their schedule has changed and the company that provided the fireworks went bankrupt.

## Good & Welfare

Please pray for Vera Cicero's family as Vera's Mom, "Lillian Travis" who lived in Niagara Falls NY has passed away at age 102 and has started her journey to Heaven. The Cicero family thanks you for your prayers.

## Food is Love – Italian Style

Many thanks to the following members of TSDOI who cooked and donated **26 lasagnas** to the Dorcas Food Pantry under the sponsorship of the Lasagna Love Nonprofit:



Special thanks go to Jan DiSantostefano for organizing this event. Many families will be enjoying a great meal due to the generosity of our members. If you would like to donate lasagnas in the future please contact Jan at 919-909-8716. [irish0515@gmail.com](mailto:irish0515@gmail.com).



## Raleigh Regional Bocce Tournament May 15

Our reservation at the Clayton courts is confirmed for our bocce tournament. All comers are welcome with no gender or age limitations. Tell your friends and colleagues. We will be



following the same COVID precautions that we followed last year, including temperature checks, social distancing, and masking. Let Bob Giannuzzi know if you would like to be placed on a team. Net proceeds will be used to support the Doug Flutie Jr. Autism Foundation. Event information can be found at <https://www.trianglesonsofitaly.org/events/>.

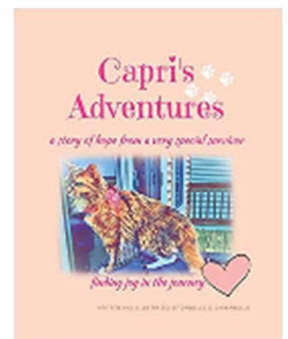
Bob Giannuzzi (919)523-6948  
[bgiannuzzi@hotmail.com](mailto:bgiannuzzi@hotmail.com)

**Saturday, May 15, 2021**  
**Time: 10:00 AM**

## Book Review

### Capri's Adventures: a story of hope from a very special survivor

Many of you will probably not remember one of TSDOI charter members, Danielle Darkangelo, but she has written a beautiful children's book about Capri, a cat who gets cancer and how they deal with it through the eyes of Capri. It is a heartwarming story and she asked that we share it with the membership. Danielle now lives in New Bern. We are lucky to have many authors in our Lodge and hopefully some day we will be able to have an Author night to showcase some of them.



[https://www.amazon.com/Capris-Adventures-story-special-survivor/dp/1736108808/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?crid=3HJ9229EQWHZB&dchild=1&keywords=danielle+darkangelo&qid=1611693916&srefix=Danielle+Darkangelo%2Caps%2C152&sr=8-1](https://www.amazon.com/Capris-Adventures-story-special-survivor/dp/1736108808/ref=sr_1_1?crid=3HJ9229EQWHZB&dchild=1&keywords=danielle+darkangelo&qid=1611693916&srefix=Danielle+Darkangelo%2Caps%2C152&sr=8-1)

## Sons of Italy Awards Lifetime Achievement Award to Joe Mele

The Sons of Italy Foundation is honoring one of our own members, Joe Mele., at the 32<sup>nd</sup> NELA Gala. Joe will be receiving a lifetime achievement award for his work as an engineer /professor/designer/inventor. Lodge 2817 is very proud of all of his accomplishments and is honored to have him as a member of our lodge.



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### NEWS

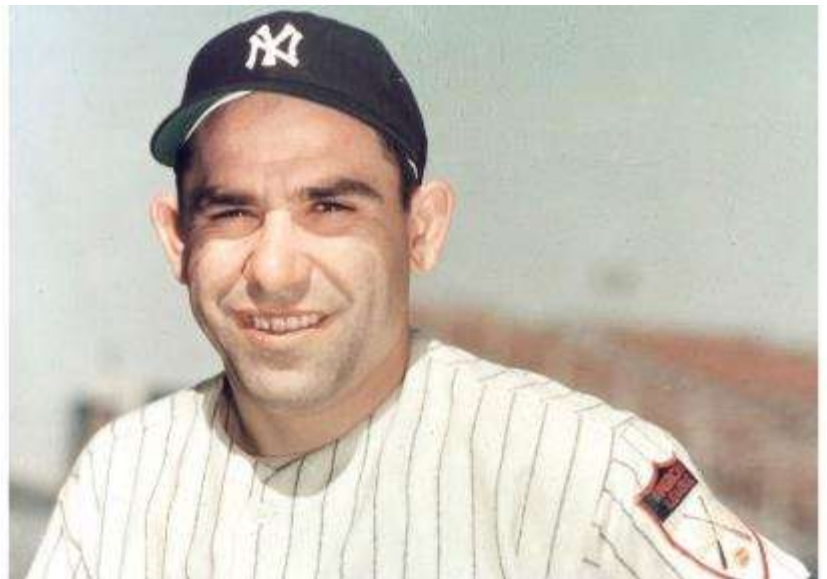
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## Sons of Italy Foundation Salutes The Polo Family, Yolanda Cellucci, Joseph Mele, And Bob & Lisa Tramontano at 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual NELA Gala

WASHINGTON, D.C., March 26, 2021 – The Sons of Italy Foundation® (SIF), the philanthropic arm of the Order Sons and Daughters of Italy in America® (OSDIA), will be hosting its 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual National Education & Leadership Awards (NELA) Gala on Friday, May 28, 2021. The gala will be held virtually and will recognize highly accomplished honorees, award scholarships to outstanding students, present a van donation to Help Our Military Heroes, and feature a special musical performance by “The People’s Tenor” Michael Amante.

The Polo Family, successful aeronautic manufacturers, will be honored with the prestigious National Education & Leadership Award. The other honorees will be Fashion Entrepreneur Yolanda Cellucci (Excellence for Business Award), Bob and Lisa Tramontano (Humanitarian Award), and Engineer/Professor/Designer/Inventor Joseph Mele (Lifetime Achievement Award). The recipients of the SIF’s 2021 Scholarship Program will be recognized for their academic achievements. For the 18<sup>th</sup> straight year, actor Joe Mantegna will serve as the NELA Gala’s Master of Ceremonies. General Peter W. Chiarelli (U.S. Army, retired) will serve as the NELA Gala’s second-ever Honorary Chairman.



Yankees legend Yogi Berra to be featured on new stamp

## Wall Street 'Charging Bull' sculptor Arturo Di Modica dies at 80



ROME — The artist who sculpted “Charging Bull,” the bronze statue in New York which became an iconic symbol of Wall Street, has died in his hometown in Sicily at age 80.

Arturo Di Modica died at his home in Vittoria on Friday evening, the town said in a statement on Saturday. Di Modica had been ill for some time, it said.

The sculptor lived in New York for more than 40 years in New York. He arrived in 1973 and opened an art studio in the city’s SoHo neighborhood. With the help of a truck and crane, Di Modica installed the bronze bull sculpture in New York’s financial district without permission on the night of Dec. 16, 1989.

The artist reportedly spent \$350,000 of his money to create the 3.5-ton bronze beast that came to symbolize the resilience of the U.S. economy after a 1987 stock market crash.

“It was a period of crisis. The New York Stock Exchange lost in one night more than 20 percent, and so many people were plunged into the blackest of depressions,” Rome daily La Repubblica quoted Di Modica as saying in an interview earlier this month.

Arturo Di Modica holds a model of his "Charging Bull" sculpture during a news conference, on April 12, 2017, in New York. Craig Ruttle / AP file

He said he conceived of the bull sculpture as “a joke, a provocation. Instead, it became a cursedly serious thing,” destined to be one of New York’s more visited monuments.

In the La Repubblica interview, Di Modica detailed how he, some 40 friends, a crane and a truck carried out a lightning-swift operation to plant the statue near Bowling Green park, a short stroll from the headquarters of the New York Stock Exchange, without official authorization.

“Five minutes. The operations shouldn’t have lasted more. Otherwise, we’d risk big,” he recalled. “After a couple of scouting trips, I had discovered that at night, the police made its rounds on Wall Street every 7-8 minutes.”





CREMONA, Italy — In one of the hardest-hit parts of the West's most aged nation, the coronavirus blitzed through a generation in a matter of weeks. It killed more than 100 of 400 residents in the local nursing home. It forced this city to rush-order eight refrigerated trailers to hold the corpses. It created a horrifying landscape of ambulances racing to the private homes of seniors, who were dying at a rate 400% above the norm.

"The pain was atrocious," said Gilberto Anelli, 82, who lost his wife of 57 years and now starts every morning speaking to her photograph.

As a global event, the coronavirus pandemic has upended nearly every person's life. But in the country that was Europe's first major epicenter, a year of data and personal accounts show how the virus concentrated its blow on a single, already-vulnerable age group, causing a historic spike in elderly mortality.

All the while, the very measures designed to keep the elderly safe have erected a wall around them. Survivors in places such as Cremona are trying to cope with a mass death event that has also left many feeling cut off, depressed and without purpose.

Not every aged country has been ravaged. Japan is one notable outlier. And some nations with younger populations, including the United States, have suffered extraordinary blows because of government mishandling and pervasive health problems. But in Italy, health experts say, demographics amplified a death toll that is approaching 100,000, among the highest of any country.

In that way, the virus has proved different from other cataclysms, including wars and the 1918 flu pandemic, which levied heavy tolls among the young. In many European countries, the median COVID-19 victim has been older than 80. In Italy, the average is 83, and the dichotomy between generations is especially stark. Even with the virus raging, the 2020 death rate for Italians 50 and younger fell compared with previous years, with lockdown measures keeping people off the roads and indoors. But the country's overall death rate nonetheless spiked some 15%.

Those 80 and older — a group that makes up 7% of Italy's population — have so far accounted for 60% of the nation's COVID-19 deaths.

"It was just devastating here," said Emilio Tanzi, director of the Cremona nursing home, which at one point had 24 bodies on hand. Its morgue holds a maximum of nine.

One of the surviving residents, Fulvio Signori, 86, said he had generally been surrounded by friends before the pandemic. They would gather in his room after dinner, as he played old recordings of his own music.

A retired singer, Signori spent his career on cruise ships, performing in tight pants and colorful tops. He traveled around the world the equivalent of 17 times, he said. He met Jacqueline Kennedy. He spent several months in the 1980s posted in Las Vegas, a city he described as full of "smiles and malice."

In the nursing home, his regular audience before the pandemic, his network of support, consisted of a retired electrician, a retired bank employee and a retired bus driver.

"They all died within a month," he said.

He said that now, when he plays his own music, he sometimes turns up the volume hoping somebody in another room might hear.

### "Nothingness"

In a year when the virus seemed like it might be anywhere, the key to survival has created its own kind of pain: isolation from everyone else, including children, grandchildren and friends. Cremona, a city devastated last March, avoided a similarly catastrophic second wave, in part because so many of the oldest citizens had decided to shield themselves. But the deep cost of that strategy became apparent in recent weeks, as those 80 and older took what for some were their first tentative steps out of their homes and apartments, arriving at a sixth-floor hospital wing marked, "Anti-Covid Vaccination."

In waiting rooms, before and after receiving shots, those people described a year that had gradually dampened their hopes for the last stage of their lives. One said her existence had become "nothingness." Another said she had been "closed totally in the house." For some, the closest regular contact with others came via the TV. One man, who hadn't been out of his house since a fall flu shot, arrived at the hospital too overwhelmed to even speak. His son, who was escorting him, said his father was lucid but no longer accustomed to other people.

Audilia Ruggeri, 93, said she'd lost her social "point of reference" early in the pandemic, when a local senior center closed. It had been a place where she'd see friends, have coffee, play cards for a couple of hours. She tried to replace those gatherings with long days of phone calls, but the telephone, Ruggeri said, only worked "up to a point," and the center showed no signs of reopening.

Weeks ago, she started crying more often. Ruggeri said it was an accumulation of boredom and sadness. Her daughter moved in temporarily to stem her slide.

"I think I just succumbed," Ruggeri said.

# THE SECRET LIFE OF THE MANDOLIN

The delightful mandolin is a symbol of Neapolitan culture and music that, outside of Italy, came to symbolize the Bel Paese as a whole. Almost two centuries of migration towards all corners of the world, especially of people coming from the southern regions of the country, meant that, to many, a specific local heritage became signifier of Italy as a whole.

And so, around the globe, this beautiful little instrument typical of Neapolitan tradition is one of our most recognizable symbols, even if its use is not common everywhere. At the same time, Neapolitan traditional music, of which mandolin is such important part, is in fact at the root of Italian popular music as a whole and also of that bel canto our country made famous everywhere: in this sense, then, each element of Neapolitan music is relevant to our musical culture, to its very development.

Our mandolin hasn't had an easy life though, especially in recent decades, when all that was local, traditional and popular — that is, coming from the people, in its literal sense — was perceived as too "provincial" for a cultural world more and more determined to become global and fashionably oriented towards the foreign. In times closer to us — truly, in the last 10 to 20 years — we finally understood that embracing the world doesn't mean rejecting our roots and that, in fact, taking pride in them and keeping them alive and well is the only manner to truly be a cultural citizen of the world: feet solidly placed in our traditions, ready to understand the beauty of others.

But even if we look to the mandolin through the lenses of the value of our heritage, its complexity and wealth remain largely unknown. Behind this small, smooth and round string instrument are a long history of luthiers' craftsmanship, of music and creativity, one that not many know.

Most of us, of course, have a very specific image in mind when they think of il mandolino: Naples, Mount Vesuvius, Pulcinella, who's often seen playing one. Its voice is unmistakable: chirpy, fun, warm, filled with the silvery cheer of laughter, but also replete of pathos, of sorrow, of the tears of deceived lovers and migrants who miss their Fatherland. The voice of the mandolin has become the voice of Neapolitan music and its themes and, in this already, we should recognize a musical instrument able to paint with accuracy the many facets of human emotions and feelings. Not many are aware, however, that the mandolin had an enormous success also among classical composers, including Vivaldi, Mozart, Handel, Beethoven and Verdi. This is to say: mandolin is more than a folk music instrument.

It's not only the richness of its creative language that strikes, though, but also its history, which is in part still steeped in mystery. Its origins are not simple to pinpoint, but most historians seem to agree that its forefather was an oriental instrument, the oud, which was already known in pre-roman times. However, it is in 18th century Naples, in its opulently baroque streets, that our mandolin starts becoming famous, thanks to the craftsmanship of the Vinaccia family, able luthiers not only known for the quality, but also for the beauty of their instruments: Vinaccia mandolins had richly carved and decorated bodies and elegant ivory inserts along their necks. In the 19th century, Pasquale Vinaccia, luthier to the Queen of



Italy, introduced a way to regulate string tension in mandolins which is still in use on modern instruments. He also used steel strings instead of brass ones, which made the sound of mandolins much clearer.

But the relationship between the Vinaccia family and mandolins goes back to the 18th century, when they were already known luthiers in the city of Parthenope. We remember Gennaro, who worked between 1755 and 1784, his sons Antonio, Vincenzo (who produced mandolins between 1767 and 1802) and Giovanni (particularly active between 1767 and 1777). Antonio's son, Gaetano, was responsible for the family atelier between 1779 and 1821. To him succeeded Pasquale Vinaccia, whom we mentioned already.

While the Vinaccias were undoubtedly the most famous mandolin makers in Naples, there were other luthiers active in the city, especially between 1720 and 1820, a sign of the popularity of the instrument also outside the boundaries of the Kingdom of Naples and of Italy. Indeed, even the Tzars were interested in mandolins, so much so they sent for a mandolin maker to hire and work for them in Russia: they eventually chose Eduardo Amurri. Among all the luthier families in Naples, however, the Vinaccias had, perhaps, only one rival, the Fabbricatore Brothers, who didn't only specialize in the production of mandolins and guitars but also in music printing.

While today we tend to associate the mandolin to popular music, that performed, so to speak, in the street, it hasn't always been the case. In fact, especially in the 19th century, the mandolin was an élite instrument, loved and played especially among Neapolitan nobility. Actually, even Italy's own queen, the Regina Margherita — yes, that Regina Margherita, who inspired the homonymous pizza — played it. However, when Neapolitan music made of the mandolin its most typical instrument, it became too popular for the VIPs of those times to keep on playing it. In those very years, towards the late 19th century, another famous family of Neapolitan luthiers emerges, the Calace family. Nicola Calace, who was confined to Procida because of political reasons, began producing mandolins on the island and, after his death, his two sons, Antonio and Raffaele, moved to Naples continuing the activity. The Calace brothers, however, weren't too keen on one another, at least professionally and so Antonio eventually moved to the US, where he continued his luthier's activity along with another Neapolitan immigrant, Nicola Turturro. Raffaele remained in Naples and became both a famous luthier and composer.

Of all the great Neapolitan mandolin makers, the Calace family is the only still active.

## Interessante Italian Web Sites, Food Culture and Places

Here are some links that showcase our Italian culture. If you have suggestions please email Nick Verna at [nickverna14@gmail.com](mailto:nickverna14@gmail.com) the URL site and we can put it in a future newsletter.

### FOOD

#### Ciao Italia PBS

<https://www.ciaoitalia.com/> PBS America's longest-running cooking show.



#### ConVivo Italian Restaurant

[www.convivo.wine](http://www.convivo.wine)

I met the owner of ConVivo today. His restaurant has a lot of Umbrian dishes and is located in downtown Durham. He is from the town



of Turni in Umbria. He has welcomed our group anytime and will have a large outdoor patio in about a month. The restaurant is 1 1/2 years old. – Karen Bledsoe.

### Culture

#### The Italian Language Foundation

Supports students and teachers with Italian Language educational resources, especially the College Board's AP Italian Language and Culture Course and Examination. Karen Bledsoe's older girls are members of this foundation- other high school youth may be interested.

<https://www.italianlanguagefoundation.org/members/>

#### Flash Mob - Italian Grocery Store

<https://www.ebaumsworld.com/videos/flash-mob-italian-grocery-store/83560073/>



## The Abruzzo and Molise Heritage Society of the Washington D.C. Area



For members with roots in Abruzzo or Molise, you might be interested in the Abruzzo and Molise Heritage Society of the Washington D.C. Area. The Abruzzo and Molise Heritage Society promotes the heritage of the Abruzzo

and Molise regions of Italy and the contributions by Italian-Americans. This organization also sponsors a lot of ongoing events that are free to attend even if you aren't a member. Go to the society's Facebook page for more info.

<https://www.facebook.com/abruzzomoliseheritagesociety>

#### Crazy older Italians – Facebook Group

This group on Facebook has many interesting and funny posts that are hilarious, especially if you are an older Italian.

### Movies

#### The Truffle Hunters



In the secret forests of Northern Italy, a dwindling group of joyful old men and their faithful dogs search for the world's most expensive ingredient, the white Alba truffle. Their stories form a real-life fairy tale that celebrates human passion in a fragile land that seems forgotten in time. Currently only available in theaters. In Italian with English subtitles.

#### When an Italian Mom Visits Her Children





# THE MOST POTTERESQUE CORNER OF ROME, THE QUARTIERE COPPEDÈ

<https://italoamericano.org/potteresque-rome-coppede/>

26 apartment houses and 17 independent townhouses, all developing around Piazza Mincio.

Created by eclectic and highly creative architect Gino Coppedè between 1913 and 1926,



quartiere Coppedè holds within all that necessity to surprise, that balance of forms and that mix of shapes, words, colors and secret meanings that was so typical of art at the beginning of the 20th century. Because, even before its beauty, even before its elegance, Coppedè strikes for its magic: time melts and space takes a different meaning, as if you found yourself, all of a sudden, strolling hand in hand with Harry Potter and his friends. Yes, if J.K. Rowling set her best-selling novels in Italy, Coppedè

What they say about Rome is true: a lifetime wouldn't suffice to learn all there is to learn about her, nor to see all there is to see. Of course, there are other cities in the world, and in Italy of course, where art, culture and history left deep marks of their passage and presence, but no place — and I am sure you'll agree with me — compares to Rome for the importance, the history-changing and culture-forming nature and what we can see strolling in her streets.

And so it happens that a place so special, quirky and beautiful it'd be a main attraction in any other city, gets almost lost in the overwhelming "plenty" of our capital's artistic and cultural patrimony: I am talking about the quartiere Coppedè.

A triumph of Liberty (that's how we call Art Nouveau in Italy) and Art Deco, with hints of baroque, gothic, classical and medieval, this perfectly self-contained corner of fantastic creativity is located in the quartiere Trieste of the zona Nomentana, between Piazza Buenos Aires and Via Tagliamento, not far from Rome's canonical "city centre." While its name has the word "quartiere," or borough, in it, Coppedè is really an architectural complex which comprises

would have most definitely had an important role in them.

Even entering the area seems filled with magical, surreal meanings: from Via Dora, access takes place by walking under a monumental arch surmounted by a mascherone, that joins together two buildings known as Palazzi degli Ambasciatori: an interesting name, when you think that Coppedè is home to three embassies, those of South Africa, Morocco and Bolivia. Speaking of mascheroni, you'll see plenty of them at Coppedè: they're one of its most notable features. What probably strikes visitors the most about the entrance arch, however, is the large wrought iron chandelier hanging from it: such an unexpected view, there, outdoors. And so, all of a sudden, while the hustle and bustle of Corso Regina Margherita is left behind, one feels just like entering someone's palace, the residence of a wizard or of some incredibly talented, slightly mad artist.



The world of the quartiere Coppedè is different, is far from the city, is in Rome but is not Rome. It's Coppedè, it's a corner of magic. This is the feeling one gets when encountering its townhouses and homes, with their timeless and surreal façades, but also the quirky Fontana delle Rane (the fountain of the frogs) in Piazza Mincio, embellished by 12 sculpted frogs and known because the Beatles, in their heyday, took a bath in it fully clothed, after a concert they had at the Piper, Club. Some say that Gino Coppedè was inspired by Bernini's own Fontana delle Tartarughe, located in the Roman ghetto, a thought that somehow fits perfectly with the nature of the quartiere, with its being in Rome, yet different from Rome at the same time.

From an architectural point of view, other landmarks strike the visitor: The Palazzo del Ragnò, located at 4 Piazza Mincio, was built in an Assyrian-Babylonian style and owes its name to the large spider embellishing its façade. Architect Coppedè built it in 1920 and wanted it to symbolize industriousness and work, as embodied by the spider, but also by the black and gold painting of a horse surmounted by an anvil held high by two gryphons and the Latin word labor, work, etched on it.

Possibly even more striking is the Villino delle Fate, the Fairy Townhouse, which in truth is three distinct homes connected to one another. Their asymmetric structure is enriched by the variety of materials used for their construction, including, stone, glass, terra-cotta, marble and travertine. Each of the three homes is an homage to a city: Florence, Venice and Rome. Each of them is represented by symbols, imagery and famous historical and literary figures that made them

famous painted or sculpted on and around each house.

Coppedè is more than architecture, though, and I guess you understood that. Coppedè is truly magic, and this time, I am not talking about Harry Potter, but about sheer esotericism. You see, legends say that its creator, Gino Coppedè, was a free mason and that, for this reason, he filled the area with esoteric references. For instance, the already mentioned wrought iron chandelier under the entrance arch is by many seen not only as a beautiful prop, but also as a symbol of "enlightenment" and connection with the light of knowledge. Now, if you consider that free masons are also known as the children of light, it all makes sense. There is more. If you look at the arch carefully, you'll notice how richly decorated it is: a cup, symbol of the Graal, but also towers,



apotropaic figures and other symbols associated with the idea of protection from Evil. In fact, the magical and mysterious side of Coppedè is pretty popular, so popular that more than a guided tour focuses on it.

Last but not least, Coppedè is special also for cinephiles. Dario Argento, Italy's most famous thriller and horror director, set here *Inferno* and *The Bird with the Crystal Plumage*. Francesco Barilli chose it for *Il Profumo della Signora in Nero* and Nanni Loy favored it for his *Audace Colpo dei Soliti Ignoti*, which starred Vittorio Gassman.

Coppedè, mysterious, beautiful and magic, is a corner of Rome where everything is possible, even meeting wizards around the streets. Yes, it's the most picturesque spot in our capital, without a doubt.

## GNOCCHI ALLA ROMANA: THE GNOCCHI THAT AREN'T GNOCCHI!

<https://italoamericano.org/gnocchi-alla-romana/>

It is true: gnocchi alla Romana are a delicious comfort food. Warm, creamy, decadent, yet simple and traditional, they originate from the region of Lazio, as their name betrays, but they are today popular across the country. They are special, because they are called gnocchi, but they have nothing in common with the famous potato dumplings everyone knows, as there are no potatoes nor flour in sight here.

The main ingredients of gnocchi alla Romana are semolina, milk, butter and Parmesan. It was, eventually, the great Pellegrino Artusiodispel all doubts when, in his seminal culinary work *La Scienza in Cucina e l'Arte di Mangiar Bene*, he defined gnocchi alla Romana one of the sette piatti dichiaratamente romani, that is, one of the seven dishes he called "overtly Roman." If Artusi's words weren't enough, those of another food expert, Ada Boni, came to help: in her *La Cucina Romana*, whose aim was, in fact, that of preserving and passing on the capital's own culinary traditions, she explained how gnocchi alla Romana are the last vestige of a Roman way of life that no longer exists. She wrote: "milk gnocchi alla Romana used to be, a long time ago, a common dish that good Romans would make every time there was something to celebrate. In particular, they would triumph at christening banquets or at Carnevale dinners."



In spite of their unknown origins, then, gnocchi alla Romana are a staple of the Eternal City's food tradition. But they are so delicious you'll find them everywhere in Italy: indeed, they are a popular "rotisserie" dish, one you can buy and bring home, heat up in the oven and just enjoy. While in Rome Thursday is notably the day of gnocchi, in my family, up in Piedmont, they were more of a Sunday dish. Either way, they are comforting, filling, good for your belly. And good for your soul, too.

### Ingredients (4 people)

1 liter (4 cups) of milk  
1 ½ cup of semolina  
½ cup of butter

2/3 cup grated parmigiano or grana  
2 egg yolks  
nutmeg (to taste)  
salt (to taste)

Bring the milk to the boil, adding 1 1/2 tbsps. of butter and a pinch of salt to it. Once the mixture boils, pour the semolina "a pioggia," that is, sparingly, little by little and over the whole surface of the liquid (this helps avoid lumps to form). Stir with a whisker until the mixture begins to thicken, then switch to a spoon. Cook for about 15 minutes, then turn the heat off and add a tad of nutmeg, a tbsps of grated parmigiano or grana and the two egg yolks.

Pour the mixture on a tray (or large plate, or large oven dish: what you need is something flat and relatively big), ensuring you wet its surface lightly with water first. With a spatula or a rolling pin, spread the mixture evenly, so that it reaches a thickness of about 1/2 inch (1.5 to 2 cm). Let it all cool completely. If you want, you can do so in the fridge.

Now, the fun part begins: cutting the gnocchi! You can use either a round cookie cutter or a glass, of about 1.5/2 in diameter (Personal note: my own grandmother, whose gnocchi alla Romana were just-to-die-for, used to cut them into small squares of about 1/2 inch).

Once they've been cut, place them in layers into a previously buttered oven dish. You have to be careful here and avoid laying them flat: your first row of gnocchi should be propped against the side of the oven dish, and the other placed at an angle against them, pretty much the way you do when you make scalloped potatoes. Take your grated cheese and sprinkle it all over the gnocchi.

In a saucepan, melt the butter. Once that's done, pour it all over the gnocchi and bake at 390F (200C) until they are gold and crunchy on top (that should take about 30 minutes, but keep an eye on them to be on the safe side. Let them cool slightly and serve! If you like, you can serve them with some sage leaves, too, to add some extra depth to the dish.