



Triangle Sons and Daughters of Italy

Serving the North Carolina Triangle since 2004

Lodge 2817

Table of Contents

TSDIA Calendar of Events.....	2
Letter from the President.....	2
April Birthdays.....	2
Good & Welfare.....	2
Italian American Food and Amaro Tasting.....	3
What is Amaro?.....	3
Italian Coffee House and St. Josephs Table.....	4
New Members.....	6
Member Business Spotlight.....	7
Trevi Fountain reopening: all the new rules.....	8
High Tech Solution for Aged Statue.....	8
Echoes of tradition: Italy's campanari and the sacred craft of bell ringing.....	9
La Sila: a land of nature, beauty, and folklore.....	11
Why Tuscan Bread Is Unsalted (And How It's Eaten).....	13
Tuscan Pappa al Pomodoro (Tomato and Bread Soup).....	13
Tuscan Pappa al Pomodoro (Tomato and Bread Soup) Recipe.....	14
Bistecca all Fiorentina Recipe.....	14

IL GIORNALE DI TSDIA

Aprile, 2025



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"Triangle Sons & Daughters of Italy"



And on our YouTube Channel
youtube.com/@tsdoiyoutube7441

Please note that we take photos and videos at our events. If you do not want your image to appear on either Facebook or YouTube, you must tell the photographer at the time.

Il Giornale di TSDIA

Editor Nick Verna

Send comments or suggested materials to
nickverna14@gmail.com

TSDIA Calendar of Events

Apr 6 - Opera

April 24 - Scopa

Apr 25 - Italy Liberation Day Pasta Dinner

Apr 26 - ALS Walk & Fundraiser in Raleigh

Apr 28 - Conversational Italian

May 8 - Scopa

May 10 - Bocce Tournament

May 17 - European and American Auto Show

May 19 - Conversational Italian

Jun 8 - Annual Family Picnic

Jun 23 - Conversational Italian

June 8 - Family Picnic and Scholarship Awards

Sep 20 - Festa Italiana

Oct 11 - Italian American Heritage Celebration

Dec 6 - Christmas Party

NOTE: members need to send Don Cimorelli an email to be included on the Conversational Italian distribution list for monthly meetups.

April Birthdays

This month we celebrate the birthdays of those members celebrating in April: Katrina DiTomasso (1), Laura Talbot (1), Eugene De Rose (2), Robert Pulverenti (2), Kathy Restivo (2), Donald Cimorelli (3), Matthew Kunath (4), Jimmy Farina (6), Barry Gilbert (6), Geraldine Gohring (6), Antonio Russo (7), Shelly Tripp Dates (7), Lina Boccone Louie (9), Christine Cataldo (10), Ted Lumbrazo (11), Michael Lein (12), Matthew Pepe (13), Pat DiLeonardo (14), Joan Kessler (18), Michelle Russo (20), Laura Skapik (21), Ryan Pirozzi (22), Robert Gleason (25), Sherry Carty Vetere (27), Stacey Stelluto (28), Carmella Alvaro (29), Sarah Battista (29), Dina Bon (30).



Good & Welfare

We are sad to inform you that TSDIA Member and Former Executive Council Secretary, **George Quartell**, passed away. George was a frequent attendee at many events until his health became compromised over the last couple of years. George also volunteered his time to Festa Italiana NC. If you wish to send a card to his family, below is the address: Quartell Family, 4832 Brookhaven Drive, Raleigh, NC 27612

Shannon Zarb's dad (Raymond Bradley) passed away. Her dad and Shannon's mom lived in New York where services will be held. Our condolences to Shannon's family. Below is Shannon's home address if any members would like to send a card: Shannon Zarb, 454 Shady Willow Lane, Rolesville, NC 27571

Letter from the President

Dear Members:

We have shifted gears to full throttle for Spring and Summer. If you heard about our fantastic Italian Coffeehouse & St. Joseph's event in March, we have a full line-up that has been announced or is on the verge of announcement.

Please remain on the lookout for these events and be quick to register. Our events have been selling out. Here you go:



Spring & Summer Fun is Here!

- Italy Liberation Dinner on April 26th
- Italian, American, European, & Classic Car Show on May 17th
- Picnic on June 8th

Look for my weekly email with registration links for these events or visit the Events tab on our website (<https://www.tsdia.org/events-2-2/>).

Plus, in addition to the above, come join us for SCOPA Night which is held once per month on a Thursday. I include a link for SCOPA registration in my weekly emails, and it is also listed on the same events tab on our website (<https://www.tsdia.org/events-2-2/>).

More good things are also being planned for this summer such as luncheons at local eating establishments. Please make it a priority to start registering now.

I hope to see you soon!

Don

Don Cimorelli

Italian American Food and Amaro Tasting

We had a great time at our Italian-American Food and Amaro presentations. The speakers were excellent, the appetizers supplied by our members was delicious and the Amaro tasting lifted everyone's spirits.



What is Amaro?

Amaro translates to "bitter" in Italian, but the category of bittersweet herbaceous liqueurs is far from one-note. It spans a range of flavors and styles, from light and citrusy Aperol to bracing and minty Fernet-Branca, not to mention countless artisanal brands you may have never heard of. It is usually served as a digestive after a meal.

Italian Coffee House and St. Josephs Table

- 200 Guests
- 100 Desserts
- Songs from Anthony Bucciero
- Everyone entered as friends and left as family





FOOD & CULTURE

Interessante | Web Sites | Food | Culture | Places | Stories

Food & Culture highlights our Italian culture. If you have suggestions we can put it in a future newsletter, please email Nick Verna at nickverna14@gmail.com.

New Members

Please welcome **Michael Cerami** who heard about us from his parents and members William and Francine Cerami. Michael is originally from Erie, Pennsylvania and has lived in Raleigh since 2013. His heritage is from Alfedena, Gello, Verona, Abruzzi, Italy and Cerami, Sicily. He is a Financial Advisor for Modern Woodmen Fraternal Financial Services and his interest/hobbies are golfing, cooking, traveling and spending time with his family. Welcome Michael: at michael.w.cerami@mwarep.org.

Please welcome **Mike and Karen Longo** who heard about us from Don Cimorelli while shopping at Capri Flavors. Thank you, Don. They are originally from Endicott, NY and have lived in Durham for the past four years. Mike's heritage is from Bari. He retired as a Staff Engineer for Lockheed Martin Corporation and currently volunteers with Durham Habitat building new homes. He enjoys walking and playing bocce. Karen retired as a Quality Technician for IBM Corporation and she enjoys cross-stitching, painting, walking and playing bocce. Welcome Mike mvi222@icloud.com and Karen damk46@aol.com.

Please welcome **Maureen and Ron Warren and Maureen's mother Peggy Martin**. Maureen heard about us from Don Cimorelli whom she worked with at IBM Corp. Maureen and Peggy are originally from Catskill, NY and Ron is originally from Gastonia, NC. They live in Holly Springs. Maureen's heritage is from Isernia. She owns a Pet Sitter and Dog Walker business and rescues and works with dogs. She also volunteers helping the elderly. Ron works in Customer Service for Cisco Systems and enjoys playing golf and softball. Peggy has worked many jobs and enjoys reading, walking and exercising. They attended and enjoyed the St. Joseph's Dessert Extravaganza event, where they decided to join. Welcome Maureen and Peggy resquedogs@yahoo.com and Ron ronaldnwarren@yahoo.com.

Please welcome **Maria Mastroianni** who is the daughter of members Michele and Dominic Mastroianni. She is a home school High School senior and her interests are cosmopolity and caring for children. She is bilingual and understands and teaches sign language. She lives in

Wake Forest. Welcome Maria joyandbeautybymaria@gmail.com.

Please welcome **Sarah Battista** who is the mother of member Michele Mastroianni. Sarah is originally from the Bronx, NY and her heritage is from Bari and Naples. She is a retired Registered Nurse and enjoys Mahjong and music. She lives in Wake Forest. Welcome Sarah sarahbattista44@gmail.com.

Please welcome **Sandra Libero** who heard about us from member Sherry Vetere. Thank you, Sherry. Sandra is originally from Huntsville, Texas and lives in Morrisville. She is joining as a Social Member. She is a Private Equity Consultant Administrator, and she enjoys cooking, baking, exercising and everything Italian. She is in the process of filing for dual citizenship. Welcome Sandra at sclibero@yahoo.com.

Please welcome **Scott Mancini** who heard about us from our Face Book page. He is originally from Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania and in 2014 relocated to North Carolina because of job relocation. He lives in Wake Forest. His heritage is from Pacentro, located in the province of L'Aquila in Abruzzo. Scott is a Senior Benefits Director at Martin Marietta in Raleigh. His interests/hobbies are hiking, backpacking, kayaking, nature photography, Formula One fan (Scuderia Ferrari of course). Welcome Scott psmancini@outlook.com.

Please welcome **Jennifer Gaston** who heard about us from our member Michele Mastroianni. Thank you, Michele. Jennifer is originally from La Plata, Maryland and relocated to Rolesville to be near family and enjoy milder climate. Her heritage is from San Piero Patti a municipality in Messina, Sicily and Grotte a municipality in the province of Agrigento, Sicily. She is a Home School Mom and enjoys walking, reading, cooking, baking and dancing. Welcome Jennifer moontides247@yahoo.com.

Please welcome **Laura Reichert** who heard about us from Don Cimorelli while attending Orange Theory Fitness. Thank you, Don. Laura is originally from Queens, NY and after living 15 years in Arizona, relocated to Cary. Her heritage is from Minturno, Southern Lazio. She is Founder and Lead Coach, Triangle Life Coaching and Academy, Emotional Intelligence & Personal Development. She enjoys crocheting and playing tennis. Welcome Laura lreichert5@gmail.com.

Please welcome **Cassi Brooke Goodman** who is the daughter of members Harvey and Diane Goodman. Thank you both. Cassi is originally from Coral Springs, Florida and lives in Cary. Her heritage is from Naples and Bari. She attends a Life Skills Program working in the community. Cassi enjoys reading, writing, listening to music and watching family videos as well as dancing. She attended the St Joseph Table event and other events and had a wonderful time. Welcome Cassi realtors2g@gmail.com.

Please welcome **Anthony and Ericka Pirozzi** who are the son and daughter-in-law of members Joe and Vicki Pirozzi. Anthony is originally from Morris Plains, NJ and his heritage is from Pomigliano d'Arco, Naples and Serricella, Cosenza, Calabria. Ericka is originally from Raleigh. A year ago, they relocated to Celebration, Florida and are keeping in touch with the TSDIA Lodge. Anthony is Executive Director for Medical Devices at Olympus Corporation. Ericka is a Para-Legal with SAS Institute and Interior Designer. Welcome Anthony anthony.pirozzi@gmail.com, and Ericka ericka.pirozzi@gmail.com.

Website: www.kineticoadvancedwatersystems.com

Email: service@awssenc.com

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Service Area: Colorado, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia

Special Offer: Members who mention their Triangle TSDIA Membership prior to signing their expense equipment estimate will receive a 7% Discount!

Member Business Spotlight



Each month we will spotlight a member owned business.



TSDIA Member: Patrick Smelik

Address: 128 US 70 E, Garner, NC, 27529

Phone: 919-772-4488



Trevi Fountain reopening: all the new rules

<https://lifeinitaly.com/trevi-fountain-reopening-new-rules/>



The Trevi Fountain reopens today, shining bright after maintenance work carried out in preparation for the **2025 Jubilee**. After **three months of renovations and an investment of 327,000 euros**, the world's most famous fountain is finally free of scaffolding. However, with the reopening come some **important updates**: access will now be limited and scheduled in time slots, ensuring a more orderly experience for tourists and visitors alike.

Keep these new rules in mind for your next trip to Rome!

To find out what happened during the renovations, click here:

Trevi Fountain entry fee for tourists: the new proposal

Trevi Fountain: work has started on the new walkway

Tourists can throw coins into a pool instead of the Trevi Fountain

What are the new rules to follow?

Limited access

Overcrowding has always been the biggest issue for visitors wanting to enjoy the Trevi Fountain. The new system aims to reduce the notorious problem of overtourism, allowing everyone to visit in peace, harmony, and without rush—just as it should be.

The focus is now on quality over quantity, achieved by limiting the number of tourists at any given time. Currently, **the cap is set at 400 visitors simultaneously**. While no ticketing system is in place yet to stagger visitor influx, security and organization will be managed by dedicated staff.

Time slots

Free access will only be allowed after 9 PM, but security personnel will remain on-site to prevent rule violations or damage to the fountain. Separate routes for entry and exit have also been established: visitors will enter via the central staircase and exit on the side of *Via dei Crociferi*.

The visiting hours are as follows:

Every day: from 9 AM to 9 PM (last entry at 8:30 PM).

Mondays and Fridays: entry postponed until 11 AM to allow for coin collection.

Every second Monday: limited access from 2 PM to 9 PM for routine maintenance.

No sitting on the basin edge

Sitting on the edge of the fountain for souvenir photos is no longer allowed. Eating, drinking, and smoking are also prohibited near the **fountain**.

Informative totems with **QR codes** will be installed near the basin. Visitors can scan them to read interesting facts about the fountain during their visit.

The reopening of the Trevi Fountain coincides with the reopening of the Fountain of the Four Rivers in Piazza Navona ([click here to learn more](#)). Regarding the event, **Mayor Roberto Gualtieri** said “We are thrilled about this reopening. It’s been a race against time, but we’ve managed to restore this fountain to its former glory. Now it’s ready for the Jubilee and can be admired in a more civilized manner. We’re experimenting with regulated access lines to protect the monument and ensure everyone can enjoy it without overcrowding.”

High Tech Solution for Aged Statue

The Vatican’s famous Apollo Belvedere—a marble statue of the Greek god of archery, music and dance—is finally back on public display after a five-year restoration.

The seven-foot-tall statue of Apollo was discovered in the ruins of an ancient Roman house in 1489. It has been at the Vatican since the early 1500s, when Pope Julius II decided to bring the sculpture to the holy city. The Vatican Museums unveiled the updated statue on October 15. In addition to repairing the cracks, experts have also cleaned the statue using laser technology and installed a carbon fiber pole in the figure’s back to help anchor it.



Echoes of tradition: Italy's campanari and the sacred craft of bell ringing

<https://italoamericano.org/italys-campanari-tradition/>

When I was a child, I loved the sound of church bells. My grandmother would explain to me what each different ring meant—whether it was calling people to Mass, announcing a wedding, or marking a solemn event. For me, bells were always associated with happiness, Sunday feasts, and special moments. Many years later, when I lived on the Ligurian coast, I found myself once again charmed by bells: my small apartment, just a stone's throw from the sea, was next to a church, and every season brought with it a different melody—Easter melodies, Christmas carols, liturgical hymns.



The tiny village where I was born and the town by the sea where I used to live aren't exceptional in the attention paid to bell-ringing. In fact, they are part of a long and revered tradition, that of campanology, widespread across many European countries, including Italy and Spain.

The tradition of bell-ringing in the Belpaese dates back more than 14 centuries, and developed in strict connection with the country's religious, social, and civic

life. Bells have been long used as a means of communication, signaling everything from church services to emergencies, feasts, and even political events. Their origins, however, stretch much further back.

The earliest bells appeared in China in the 8th century BC, used in religious rituals and as protective charms against evil spirits. In ancient Rome, small bells (tintinnabula) were used in public spaces to announce the opening of markets, public baths, and religious processions. The first clear mention of Christian use of bells comes from a 5th-century letter describing monks being called to prayer by a "sonorous bell." By the Middle Ages, bells had become an integral part of church life, and by the 14th century, cities like Milan had hundreds of bell towers. But, back then, bells were not only religious instruments but also played a civic role—in 1263, Milan's civic government even cast a bell for official public announcements. And when necessity struck, centuries later, bells performed their patriotic duty when thousands were melted down for weapon production during World War Two.

But what about today?

*To be honest with you, I had always thought of bell-ringing as something deeply traditional, nostalgic even. But recently, I came across an article in *The Times* that made me reconsider this view. The piece discussed how bell-ringing is undergoing a revival among young people in Italy, particularly in Lombardy, where the Federazione Campanari Ambrosiani, an association dedicated to preserving the art of bell-ringing in the Diocese of Milan, has been attracting large numbers of Gen Zers to its ranks. More than half of the Federazione's 53 members are under 30; some of them are teenagers who not only practice bell-ringing regularly but also record and share their performances on social media, drawing thousands of followers.*

Founded in 2009, the Federazione works to safeguard historic bell-ringing techniques, particularly the Ambrosian system, which is unique to northern Italy. Their activities include training new generations of bell-ringers, conducting historical research on bells, organizing concerts, and leading guided tours of bell towers. But the key focus of their work is advocating for the dual system, so that, even as bells become electrified, the ability to ring them manually remains intact. The Federazione also collaborates with churches, local authorities, and historical preservation groups to document and protect Italy's rich campanological heritage, ensuring that centuries-old traditions last into the future.

Intrigued, I reached out to Corrado Codazza, one of the founders and the coordinator of the Federazione, to learn more about this fascinating world. Corrado truly embodies this lifelong dedication to bell-ringing: he is

passionate and knowledgeable, and his love for bells even extends to his own home, in Milan, where he has installed a small bell tower, complete with four cast bronze bells. He kindly agreed to an interview with *L'italo-Americano*, to share insights into the history, evolution, and future of the centuries-old art of bell-ringing.

How did the idea of founding the *Federazione Campanari Ambrosiani* come about?

The idea was born on December 7, 2008, when we gathered to ring the bells of the Basilica of Sant'Ambrogio, in Milan. That church still retains the ropes for manual ringing, so there is a dual system, meaning bells can be rung both manually and automatically. That day, we asked ourselves: "Why not try to establish a federation that brings together all the bell ringers of the diocese?" And so, in February 2009, we officially founded the *Federazione*. It was a leap into the unknown, but what surprised us the most was the huge interest from young people. We expected to find a few elderly bell ringers from small villages, maybe some peers. But instead, we were amazed to see enthusiastic kids running up and down the bell tower!

What do you think attracts children and young people to bell-ringing?

It's hard to say, but I've noticed that children are naturally drawn to bells. If you walk down the street and hear bells ringing, you'll often see a child in a stroller pointing up, saying "ding dong." Maybe it's the sound itself they like, who knows? Maybe that's how the passion is born! Even families were surprised—kids would instinctively grab the ropes and want to ring the bells! It was a great revelation for us, and it helped shape the future of our *Federazione*.

Many people don't know that bells are often decorated with inscriptions and ornamental patterns, and that they also feature, of course, the name of the foundry where they were created (Photo courtesy of *Federazione Campanari Ambrosiani*)

How has the *Federazione* grown since its founding?

We have come a long way! One of the most interesting projects we have undertaken, since the very beginning, is the documentation of historical bells. If you go to our website, you can search for a specific bell, and find its tone, inscriptions, date of casting, the foundry that made it, its diameter, and estimated weight. Bell-ringing has also recently been recognized as an Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO. This initiative began in Spain in 2022, and in 2024, bell-ringing was added to the Intangible Cultural Heritage list.

What makes the Ambrosian system different from the Roman system?

The main difference is in the upper structure of the bells, which serves as a counterweight. This allows even a very light person to ring them with minimal effort. A bell can weigh one or two tons—or even more. But thanks to this system, last summer we had a single young bell ringer operate a four-ton bell with ease!

How exactly does the Ambrosian system work?

It's a bit complicated to explain, but in simple terms, the bell is flipped 180 degrees, with its mouth facing upwards and held in that position. Then, it is released in a controlled manner to create a sequence of sounds that harmonize with other bells. This system allows us to control the rhythm and melodies in a way that other systems don't.

Besides rope-ringing, are there other ways to play the bells, and how do these methods contribute to the musicality of the tradition?

Yes, we also use a keyboard system, which allows for the performance of actual melodies, not just rhythmic chimes. The keyboard is a large instrument, positioned at the top of the bell tower, similar to a piano. It is connected to the clappers of the bells, enabling us to perform a wide variety of pieces. It's amazing to see how traditional techniques can mix with modern music, making bell-ringing more engaging for younger generations.

I have seen, once, the blessing of a new bell before it was placed in the church tower: it was a fascinating event. Can you tell me more about it?

In the past, bells were assembled in the churchyard for the blessing, and the bell ringers would play them while they were still on the ground. Nowadays, assembling and disassembling the entire bell tower structure is too costly. So instead, the bells are simply placed on the ground, and the priest blesses them there before they are installed. This ensures that the tradition is maintained while being adapted to modern constraints.

With most churches now using automated bell systems, what is the *Federazione's* stance on electrification?

We are not against electrification at all, but we strongly believe that manual ringing should be preserved whenever possible. Almost all bells today have an electric system, but we insist that ropes and keyboards should still be maintained. It is technically entirely possible to do so, without major modifications. In cases where manual ringing has been removed, we campaign for its restoration. If no major changes have been made, the dual system can be reinstated, keeping both traditions alive.

La Sila: a land of nature, beauty, and folklore



A breathtaking view of La Sila's nature

*La Sila is a mountainous plateau that stretches across the provinces of Cosenza, Crotona, and Catanzaro, at the very heart of the Calabria region. Covering approximately 1,500 square kilometers (150,000 hectares), it is known for its dense forests, hills, and pristine lakes. The name Sila is believed to derive from the Latin *silva*, meaning "forest."*

In 2002, the Sila National Park was created to protect the area's unique ecosystems and promote sustainable tourism. The park is divided into three main areas: Sila Grande, Sila Piccola, and Sila Greca, each offering distinct landscapes and cultural experiences. The park's flora is very diverse, with vast expanses of coniferous and deciduous forests: here, beech, oak, and chestnut trees dominate the landscape, interspersed with rare species like the Calabrian pine. A highlight of the flora Silana are the Giganti della Sila (Giants of the Sila), a group of ancient larch pines and sycamore maples located in the Fallistro Nature Reserve; some of them are over 350 years old, reaching heights of up to 45 meters and trunk diameters exceeding 2 meters.

Local fauna is equally impressive, as the park provides a habitat for a variety of wildlife, including the Apennine wolf, roe deer, wild boar, and the rare European otter. Bird enthusiasts can observe species such as the peregrine falcon, golden eagle, and black woodpecker. The park's diverse ecosystems also support a rich array of amphibians and reptiles.

Visitors to the Park can engage in a plethora of activities year-round. Hiking and mountain biking trails crisscross the park, offering routes for all skill levels through breathtaking landscapes; the park's lakes, including Lake Cecita, Lake Arvo, and Lake Ampollino, provide opportunities for fishing, kayaking, and sailing. In winter, the area transforms into a haven for snow sports, with facilities for skiing, snowboarding, and snowshoeing, particularly around Monte Botte Donato, the highest peak in the Sila at 1,928 meters (6,325.46 ft).

This is the Sila today, but what about its historical connections? In ancient times, its forests supplied precious timber to the Greeks, who used it to build their ships, making it a crucial resource for naval expansion and trade across the Mediterranean. The high-quality wood from Sila's trees was particularly valued for its strength and durability. As centuries passed, the area fell under the influence of various civilizations, each leaving behind a cultural imprint that shaped the region's identity: the Romans, recognizing the strategic and economic value of the region, established settlements and road networks, integrating the area into their vast empire; they also introduced agricultural practices that influenced the development of rural communities. With the fall of the Roman Empire, the Ostrogoths and Byzantines vied for control over the area, bringing new architectural styles and governance structures. The Byzantines, in particular, contributed to the diffusion of Orthodox Christianity, which had a lasting religious and artistic influence on the region. During the Norman conquest of Southern Italy in the 11th century, La Sila became an important frontier region: the Normans fortified towns, built monasteries, and encouraged the spread of Latin Christianity, helping to shape the region's feudal system.



A four-legged friend enjoying Lake Cecita

One of the most culturally significant chapters in La Sila's history began, however, in the 15th century, when Albanian immigrants fleeing Ottoman persecution settled in the area; most of them were followers of Skanderbeg, a prominent Albanian nobleman and military commander who played a crucial role in resisting Ottoman expansion in the Balkans. Once in Calabria, they founded communities we call today Arbëreshë, which have maintained a distinct identity, preserving their traditions, costumes, and dialects.

The Sila's urban landscape is dotted with charming towns and villages. Acri, often referred to as the "door to Sila," has interesting historical sites like the ruins of a

feudal castle and the 19th-century Basilica del Beato Angelo d'Acri. Camigliatello Silano is known for its markets and as a hub for winter sports, while San Giovanni in Fiore, the largest town in the Sila, is home to the Abbey of Florens, a significant example of medieval monastic architecture.



Longobucco, in the Sila National Park

Local culinary traditions largely find their origins in the area's agricultural and pastoral heritage: the region is famous for its high-quality dairy products, particularly caciocavallo cheese, which holds a Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) status. The fertile soils yield the renowned Sila potatoes, recognized with Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) status, and featuring prominently in local dishes. The wilderness also offers plenty of delicious treasures, including porcini mushrooms, abundant in the forests.

With such a wealth of delicious traditional foods, it isn't surprising to learn that culinary sagre are plenty. Among the most famous, we should remember the Sila Potato Festival, which takes place from August to early September in Camigliatello Silano, where the Sila potato is celebrated with culinary shows, cultural meetings, and street performances. In the fall, it's time to celebrate the Mushroom Festival, dedicated to the already-mentioned porcini with tastings, workshops, and guided foraging excursions.

The significance of La Sila extends beyond its history and natural splendor, as the area serves as a vital ecological and cultural hub, preserving both biodiversity and meaningful traditions. With its diverse ecosystems, historical towns, and culinary delights, La Sila has something for every type of visitor: if you love adventures in the great outdoors, La Sila has something for you, and if you enjoy history or food tourism, you'll enjoy it just as much.



The Elephant, a sculpture located near the village of Campana, in the Sila National Park L' Elefante, una scultura creata nel parco vicino al paese di Campana




Why Tuscan Bread Is Unsalted (And How It's Eaten)





If you've ever bitten into Tuscan bread (*pane sciocco*) and thought, "Wait... did they forget the salt?"—you're not alone. It's one of Tuscany's biggest culinary mysteries. But there's a story behind this salt-free tradition, and once you understand it, you'll never look at bread the same way again.


So... Why No Salt? A Feud, A Tax, And A Stubborn Tuscan Spirit The most famous explanation goes back to the 12th century, when Tuscany and Pisa were at war. Pisa, controlling the salt trade, cut off Florence's supply to weaken the city. But Florentines? They weren't about to back down. Instead of giving in and paying ridiculous prices, they simply stopped using salt in their bread. And guess what? They never started again. Over time, this saltless rebellion became a proud tradition—a symbol of Tuscany's independent (and slightly stubborn) spirit.


How Do Tuscans Eat This Bread? (Because Alone, It's... Dry.) Let's be real—eating Tuscan bread on its own is like chewing on a sponge. No salt means no flavor, no crunch, and it goes stale fast. But Tuscans don't eat it plain—they use it brilliantly in dishes that turn its blandness into a strength.

 *Pappa al Pomodoro* – A thick, rich tomato-bread soup that turns stale bread into magic.

 *Panzanella* – A refreshing summer salad where soaked bread, tomatoes, onions, and basil soak up all the flavors.

 *Ribollita* – A hearty winter stew made with bread, beans, and veggies—Florence's ultimate comfort food.

 *With Bistecca alla Fiorentina* – Tuscans never eat their famous steak with sauce, so this plain bread soaks up the meaty juices instead.

 *Bruschetta (But Not How You Think)* – The classic Tuscan version is called "fettunta"—toasted bread

*rubbed with garlic and drenched in olive oil. Simple but perfect. It's definitely an acquired taste, but once you try it the right way—soaking up a rich tomato sauce or layered in *ribollita*—you'll get why Tuscans wouldn't change a thing.*

Tuscan Pappa al Pomodoro (Tomato and Bread Soup)

<https://www.serious-eats.com/tuscan-tomato-bread-soup-pappa-al-pomodoro-recipe>



Traditionally, *pappa al pomodoro* is one of those recipes, like *panzanella* and *gazpacho*, that transforms stale bread into something not just edible, but wonderful. But stale bread isn't necessarily required. When making *panzanella*, for instance, I'll often dry fresh bread in the oven instead. I've long found that dried bread actually makes a better dish than stale bread. If the difference between the two seems trivial, it might help to know that staling and drying are two different, though often concurrent, processes: Staling refers to the recrystallization of the bread's starch, while drying describes a loss of moisture through evaporation. Staling leads to bread that's unpleasantly tough and firm, while drying (in the absence of staling) leads to a light, crisp texture, like that of a fresh crouton.

For *pappa al pomodoro*, I was curious to see what the differences were between stale, dried, and fresh bread, so I whipped up three batches, each using one type. Just like with *panzanella*, dried bread worked better than stale, softening much faster in the tomato liquid. But even more interesting was that fresh bread worked just as well as dried—which isn't true of a dish like *panzanella*.

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Ingredients

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling

Pinch red pepper flakes

2 medium cloves garlic, thinly sliced

1/2 medium onion, minced (about 1/2 cup)

1 (28-ounce) can whole plum tomatoes, crushed by hand, with juices

2 sprigs fresh basil, plus torn leaves for serving

1/3 pound (about 6 ounces) fresh or stale rustic bread, torn or cut into 1-inch chunks (see notes)

2 cups warm quick and easy vegetable stock, plus more as needed (see notes)

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

Directions

In a large saucepan, heat 2 tablespoons olive oil over medium heat until shimmering. Add red pepper flakes and garlic and cook, stirring, until garlic just begins to turn golden. Add onion and cook, stirring, just until softened, about 5 minutes. Add crushed tomatoes and their juices, along with basil sprigs, and bring to a simmer.

Stir in bread. Ladle stock on top, stirring to combine. Simmer bread, adding more stock as needed, until bread is completely softened and custardy and soup has thickened to a porridge-like consistency, about 25 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Discard basil sprigs.

Spoon into bowls, generously drizzle with olive oil, and grind black pepper on top. Garnish with torn basil leaves and serve.

Notes

Pappa al pomodoro is traditionally made with stale bread, and you can use it for this soup if you have it, but our tests have shown that this soup is just as good made with fresh bread. Plus, fresh bread softens much more quickly, making the soup faster to prepare.

You can use store-bought low-sodium chicken stock or water in place of the vegetable stock, if desired.

14

Bistecca all Fiorentina Recipe

www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/michael-chiarelo/bistecca-all-fiorentina-recipe-1941727



Ingredients

2 (2-pound) Porterhouse steaks, about 2 inches thick

Grey sea salt

Coarse grind black pepper

Pure olive oil

Great balsamic vinegar

Directions

Let the steak rest outside the refrigerator for 30 minutes before cooking. Use a hot, clean, oiled grill. If pan roasting, preheat the oven to 450 degrees F.

Liberally season the steak with the salt and pepper, coat with olive oil and press the seasoning into the meat. Grill the steaks for about 5 to 6 minutes on each side for medium rare. The fillet will cook a little faster than the strip loin. Move the steaks every 2 minutes or so for even cooking and a crispy exterior.

For pan roasting, heat a cast iron skillet with a little olive oil until smoking hot. Turn on the fan, open the window and stand back to avoid getting splattered! Using tongs, place the steaks in the center of the pan. Cook until the first side is seared brown, about 4 minutes. Turn the steaks and place the pan in the oven until the steaks are done, about 6 minutes for medium rare. Remove the steaks to a carving board and let rest for at least 5 minutes before carving.

Cut the steaks away from the bone and carve into 1/2-inch slices. Arrange the meat on warmed plates and drizzle a little bit of balsamic vinegar over the slices. Serve with some extra gray sea salt on the side.