



# PAPPAGALLO

Funded by the Greater Rockford Italian American Association - GRIAA  
P.O. Box 1915 • Rockford, Illinois 61110-0415

Spring 2015

## The Old Men of Italy



The "Old Men" of Bisacquino, Sicily, gather daily for conversation

### They gather daily in town squares to share stories

By Mike Doyle

If you have ever traveled to Italy, you have probably seen them. They're commonly found in smaller cities and villages, but big cities have them, too. They gather in the square, a park, or any place people gather. There are no guidelines of how many can gather. They are the Old Men of Italy.

These men do something that has been long lost in America – that is get together in the same place every day and talk. If we do that here, it's probably at a McDonald's. We lost that close-knit camaraderie about the same time our homes began to get air conditioning. In the past, people gathered outside, on porches, in yards, and talked about the day's events. I remember my uncle telling me that he knew when a neighbor got air conditioner installed for the first time because you never saw him or his family outside anymore.

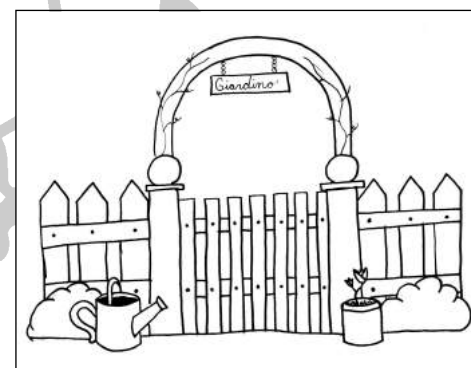
The Ramblesphere blog wrote about this in October, 2011, saying that because air conditioning is uncommon in small towns in Italy because of its expense, "their visibility in Italy highlights their invisibility in my own country. (The old men) are there, walking on the street, sitting on benches in the public square or chairs in front of homes, nestled next to wide open windows to join the world or invite it in." And these gatherings often are the catalyst for more communication. "Old men sit in the square, and before long you see the younger families join them, with children on scooters or chasing a soccer ball," the blog continued.

Rick Steves, writing in his book "Rick Steves' Italy," said: "Italians are more social and communal than most other Europeans. In small towns, everyone knows everyone. People get out of their apartments to socialize on the main square."

Many of them are what we call senior citizens. Italy is the oldest country in Europe, with one out of five Italians older than 65. Most Italians grow old with their families, preferring to live with their children or grandchildren in a land where retirement homes are rare. This sharing of information through generations creates more nostalgia that is shared by all. "Fodor's Italy 2011" describes the impact of that, saying, "It's common to hear even younger Italians celebrate or rue something that happened 50 or 60 years ago earlier as if it had just taken place."

The old men of Roccamena, Sicily, provided my wife Nora and I with one of the best anecdotes of our trip to Italy and Sicily in 2011. We arrived unannounced in the small, mountain village south of Palermo with our driver Sebastiano. Nora's father Joseph Cipolla was born there, and we were hoping to visit the church where he was baptized. We found the church, but it was locked. So we kept walking around the adjacent small square, in full view of the old men, who were seated on a nearby bench. Finally, one of them came over to ask who we were and what were we doing in Roccamena. Sebastiano was our translator, and after we told him that Nora was a Cipolla, our new friend brought us over to the others.

In English and Italian, through hand gestures and nods, we conversed. After a while, one of the men, Gaspar Giamalva, took



Now is the perfect time to plan your Italian garden, story Page 11

*continued on next page*





## About this issue

By Mike Doyle

If it's not spring yet, it will be soon, and that gets many of us thinking about putting in our gardens. The Remembering Rockford feature for this issue focuses on Italian gardens with photos, recipes, and memories of the past as well as some artwork done by our newest contributor – Jilliana Paul. Jill drew the art on the front page and the nano with his grandson on Page 11. She is a senior at Belvidere North High School and is Italian on her father's side. At Ellis Island, her great-grandfather, whose last name was Pologruto, left with a new, more Americanized last name -- Paul. He and her great-grandmother, whose maiden name was DeCola, were from southern Italy. Jill is proud of her Italian heritage and talks about the family tradition of having lasagna at Thanksgiving, a feast of the seven fishes at Christmas and calzones at Easter. After graduation, Jill plans to study education at the University of Louisiana, Bradley University, or North Central College. We hope she continues to draw for us as well!

Anyone who has visited Italy has experienced the topic of our Page 1 story -- the Old Men of Italy. And most of us returned with anecdotes, such as those in the story. We highlight local news in our Italian-American community on Pages 5-7, including several photos about Rockford's Sister City Association. Two pages of Italian features can be found on Pages 8 and 9, the first of which is the story of Colleen and Joan Gullo of Rockford and their memorable visit to a little known mountain town in Sicily, Gagni. Theresa Cascio's regular language feature can be found on Page 13.

As usual, we have a nice collection of recipes. They were selected to fit the season, so we have recipes on how to make St. Joseph Pasta, in addition to two family recipes for that Easter specialty that came to us from Aragona, Sicily -- ta'anu (or tano or tagano ... it's delicious anyway you spell it.) There are also recipes to take advantage of the spring-time availability of asparagus as well as other recipes.

On Pages 3 and 4 is a family history form which can be used to assist you in organizing and writing your family's history for GRIAA's Genealogy Project. Please go to [griaa.org](http://griaa.org), Culture and Education Committee for complete details.

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## The Old Men of Italy *(continued from page 1)*

Nora's hands and said, "You and me, we are family!" His father was godfather to Nora's father.

Later that day, after a wonderful lunch in Sambuca, we visited the beautiful church in the center of the city and wandered around its square. Sure enough, an old man approached us and wanted to know who we were. Again, we faced the language barrier, but we heard him ask where we were from. When we said that we were from

near Chicago, he said, "Oh, is that near Rock-a-ford-a, Illinois?" We laughed as we realized that so many Sicilians in Rockford have roots in Sambuca, and that he recognized Rockford more than Chicago.

In 2005 Bill and Jo (Giamalva) Wargo of Rockford visited



Italy and Sicily with family members. After taking a ferry from Naples to Palermo, they drove south about an hour to visit the hometowns of Jo's mother and father. "We went to my mother's town first, Contessa Entellina," she said. "Across the valley, you could see my father's hometown, Bisacquino, which was about 20 minutes away by car."

When they arrived in Bisacquino, Jo's son Steve Wargo saw a group of old men and got out his camera. "My son happened to take a picture in the main piazza of these men," Jo said. "They were just sitting there, some of them in suits with ties." They talked to the men as well as a woman who owned a linen store nearby, and with that, they made a connection.

"The woman said, 'I'm going to get my dad.' It turns out that her father was my dad's second cousin. So we started talking and realized, 'Oh, yeah, this is a cousin,'" Jo said.





**Dappagallo '15**



**Dappagallo '15**

Family History Form

**GRIAA IMMIGRATION HISTORIES  
of  
ROCKFORD ITALIAN FAMILIES**

Please use this form to help you gather and prepare your story.

Family Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Maiden names of wives and dates of birth of immigrants to America

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Dates)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Dates)

City or Village of Residence in Italy:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Occupations: \_\_\_\_\_

Year Departed Italy: \_\_\_\_\_

Names of Family Members Left in Italy:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Port of Departure, Name of Ship: \_\_\_\_\_

Port of Arrival, Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Names of Family Members Who Made Initial Crossing:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Family or Friends Already in United States to Greet /Assist Your Ancestors:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Locations Resided Before Settling in Rockford and Years, If Known:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_





**Pappagallo '15**



**Pappagallo '15**

**GRIAA IMMIGRATION HISTORIES of ROCKFORD ITALIAN FAMILIES**

Reasons for Settling in Rockford (include year):

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Addresses or Streets or Residence(s):

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Occupations of Immigrants/Years with and Names of Employers:

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Names of Children of Immigrants:

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Additional information you want to add about your family for example; family traditions, connections to St. Anthony School and church, the old neighborhood:

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For examples of family histories previously submitted to GRIAA, go to <http://www.griaa.org/culture-education-committee/>





## Active Sister Cities group hosts fund-raiser, visits Ferentino

Fall 2014 was a busy time for the Rockford-Italian Sisters Cities Committee when members traveled to Ferentino, Italy, and hosted a successful fund-raiser that featured great local Italian food. And members are hoping to expand its pen pal program and raise more awareness of sister cities in Illinois.

In September, 2014, a group of 14 committee members spent a week visiting Ferentino, Rockford's Italian sister city, where they presented a peace pole to Ferentino's mayor. The pole replicates the 44 flagpoles found at the Keeling-Puri Peace Plaza on Rockford's far east side. "We ordered a pole and had it shipped prior to our arrival in Ferentino," said Holly Lazzerini-Mathur, president of the Sister Cities Board. "Then we went to city hall in Ferentino and presented the mayor with our peace pole."

Lazzerini-Mathur said one of the highlights came when she visited the school where third-grade students exchanged letters with students of the same grade at St. Bridget's in Loves Park for more than a year in the pen-pal program. "I spoke to the students and gave them little gifts from Rockford," she said. "While I was there, they asked me to speak at the junior high and high school to start pen pal programs there." As a result, students at Belvidere High School are writing letters to high schools students in Ferentino. Lazzerini-Mathur said she is hopeful that students from the sister city will be able to come to Rockford for a visit.

On November 15, 2014, more than 200 people attended the sister cities' second annual Taste of Italy, which was held at the Midway Village Museum. "It was phenomenal," Lazzerini-Mathur said. "It was a wonderful turnout. The food was beautifully displayed."

Twelve local Italian restaurants offered food, while several others donated gift certificates.

Lazzerini-Mathur said she is hopeful of arranging gatherings with other sister city groups in the state. These gatherings would be held at Italian restaurants in each of sister cities.



People line up for samples of the food served at the Sister Cities Taste of Italy fund-raiser last November.



The Sister Cities group from Rockford visited Ferentino, Italy.

(Right) Holly Lazzerini-Mathur presents the peace pole to the mayor of Ferentino.



(Below) Third-grade students in Ferentino who participated in the Sister Cities pen pal program.



## Hall of Fame nominations accepted

GRIAA is accepting nominations for persons of Italian heritage whose exemplary lives have made significant contributions to the community in arts, sciences, business, industry, education, and government. Other considered categories are civic, volunteer, or philanthropic activities. Such contributions should reflect a notable community impact and the highest standards and ideals. The primary difference between Hall of Fame and Special Recognition is that the Hall of Fame candidate must have positively impacted the Italian American community.

The nomination forms are available by contacting Frank Perrecone (815-962-2700) or Frank Valentine (815-742-1691). You can also get information from the GRIAA website at [griaa.org](http://griaa.org). It is not necessary to specify which honor you are nominating the individual for. The committee will decide based on the provided information.

The induction and recognition ceremony will take place at the awards banquet in October.



## Ethnic Heritage Museum honors Gene & Shirley Fedeli

The dedication of the Italian flag to former Rockford residents Gene and Shirley Fedeli was one of the highlights of the Ethnic Heritage Museum's 25th anniversary open house in October. The Fedelis were well known volunteers to the museum and Rockford's Italian-American community before they moved to Michigan in 2013.

The museum recognizes the six ethnic groups that made their homes in South Rockford as well as the southeast side near the Rock River – African-Americans, Hispanics, Irish, Italian, Lithuanians, and Poles.

The newest exhibition in the Italian room focuses on the people who immigrated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Included are photos from Ellis Island, Italian money (lira) from that era, identification cards of immigrants, a vintage trunk, and three enlarged family histories of immigrants from Italy to Rockford.

The Ethnic Heritage Museum is located at 1129 S. Main Street in Rockford and is open Sundays from 2 to 4 p.m.



Gene Fedeli, standing next to his wife Shirley, raises the Italian flag dedicated in their honor at the Ethnic Heritage Museum on October 5, 2014.

## Fall photos highlight GRIAA events

Lewis Maffioli (left) accepts his Hall GRIAA Hall of Fame award from board president Frank Perrecone.



The Vietnam Veterans Honor Society received GRIAA's Special Recognition Award at the annual dinner. From left, Paul Cassioppi and Tony Circelli; from right Tony Bove and Nick Parnello. Paul Logli (center) introduced the group at the dinner.



Tony Bove bears the U.S. flag into St. Anthony of Padua Church at GRIAA's Columbus Day Mass on October 12, 2014.



GRIAA President Frank Perrecone (left) and Treasurer Paul Mastrangeli at the Christopher Columbus monument in St. Anthony's memorial garden following the Columbus Day Mass.



Children of Jake Cason, Maria, John and Joe, accept the Special Recognition Award for Maria's Restaurant at the GRIAA annual dinner.





## Scholarship opportunities for Italian-American students

Several scholarships are available for students of Italian-American descent ranging from elementary and high school to college and post-graduate schools.

### Greater Rockford Italian American Association

Through this committee, scholarships are presented annually to area Italian American families to Boylan High School and local Catholic grade schools based on need. Through the 2014 Festa Italiana, more than \$650,000 in scholarships has been presented. Visit [www.griaa.org](http://www.griaa.org), then onto the Scholarship Committee, chaired by Ben Todaro and Frank Valentine. Scholarships information can be viewed and printed by clicking on Application Form. Application deadline is May 15.

### Columbian Club Charitable Foundation

Several scholarships of various amounts awarded to graduating high school seniors and undergraduate/graduate students of Italian descent who are permanent residents of the state of Illinois. Scholarships are also available for undergraduates in music education and graduate students in law, medicine and dentistry. Deadline is October 31. Presentation is in January. Visit [www.columbianclub.org](http://www.columbianclub.org)

### Joint Civic Committee of Italian Americans

One \$2,000 scholarship awarded to a student of Italian ancestry who is either a high school senior accepted into a college with the intent of establishing a major in journalism or communications, or an undergraduate student majoring in journalism or communications. Deadline and presentation to be announced. Winner must attend presentation. Visit [www.jccia.com](http://www.jccia.com), call 708.450.9050 or email [jcc@jccia.com](mailto:jcc@jccia.com)

### Joint Civic Committee of Italian Americans

One \$2,000 scholarship presented to a male high school senior of Italian ancestry. Deadline and presentation to be announced. Winner must attend presentation. Visit [www.jccia.com](http://www.jccia.com) or call 708.450.9050.

### Joint Civic Committee of Italian Americans Women's Division

Several \$2,000 scholarships awarded to female students of Italian ancestry. Deadline is April 1. Presentation is May 1. Visit [www.jccia.com](http://www.jccia.com), call 708.450.9050 or email [jcc@jccia.com](mailto:jcc@jccia.com).

### Justinian Society of Lawyers

Ten to twenty scholarships of \$1,000 to \$5,000 awarded to law students of Italian ancestry based on academic ability and need. Deadline is early September. Presentation is in mid-October. Visit [www.justinians.org/scholarship-programs](http://www.justinians.org/scholarship-programs), call Anthony Farace at 312.255.8550 or email at [amf@amari-locallo.com](mailto:amf@amari-locallo.com).

### Sons of Italy Foundation, Illinois

Several \$1,000 scholarships will be awarded to students of full or partial Italian ancestry graduating from high school. Financial need, scholastic record, activities showing character and leadership are the criteria. Personal statements

and faculty recommendations are required. Deadline is July 1. Presentation in October. Only written requests will be honored. Send a stamped, self-addressed envelope with your request to Illinois Sons of Italy Foundation, 9447 W. 144th Place, Orland Park, IL 60462.

## Amici Italiani troupes seek new dancers



The Amici Italiani adult troupe dancers at the 2014 Festa Italiana.

Young people from 7- to 14-years old are invited to join the Amici Italiani Youth Troupe. For information, contact Anna Mirabile at 815.871.7789 or Pauline Urso at 815.218.003 or at [amicitalianiyouth@gmail.com](mailto:amicitalianiyouth@gmail.com).

The adult troupe, Amici Italiani, is seeking new dancers as well. Men and women 14-years-old and older are invited to become a part of the group that dances at fairs, festivals, parties and the Festa Italiana. For information, contact Rosie Scalise Sheridan at [sheridanrosie@yahoo.com](mailto:sheridanrosie@yahoo.com).

## Mario Mirabile receives St. Timothy Award

Mario A. Mirabile, a senior at Auburn High School, has received the St. Timothy Award for his outstanding contributions as a catechist for St. Anthony of Padua Church. Mirabile, 17, was honored on Sept. 12, 2014, which he received the national recognition award given to young people by the National Federation for



Mario Mirabile displays his St. Timothy Award

Catholic Youth Ministry in collaboration with the Diocese of Rockford Catholic Education Office. It is the highest award from the national group that a diocese can confer upon a





(Continued from page 7)

high school junior or senior. Mirabile was been a volunteer catechist aide for two years and became a catechist for fourth graders at St. Anthony last September. He has been active with the Amici Italiani Dance Troupe for five years. Mirabile also has been a Mass server at St. Anthony for three years.

## See your own nana's kitchen at Rockford's History Museum

If you remember the wonderful smells and sights of your nana's kitchen, then you should plan to visit the Italian kitchen in the Immigrant House of the Many Faces, One Community exhibition that opened last summer at Rockford's History Museum. The kitchen features vintage gas stove and ice box, porcelain sink with hot- and cold-water faucets as well as canned goods and fixtures that would be found in a south Rockford kitchen in the early twentieth century.

"The idea is to showcase different heritages," said Lonna Converso, the museum's director of marketing. "We have a Swedish parlor and an Italian kitchen. We wanted to tell the family stories of the people of Rockford, as well as being a touch-friendly exhibit."

Nearby a streetscape depicts well known locally owned stores, including the Ingrassia Cash Grocery, a Mexican buffet and Ekeburg's Dry Goods. Midway Village Museum and Rockford's History Museum is located at 6799 Guilford Road, in Rockford, and is open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesdays through Fridays and 10:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturdays through April.

Lonna Converso of the Rockford's History Museum checks out the Italian kitchen.



From May through August, it is also open on Sundays from 10:30 to 4 p.m.

## Sicilian mountain town of Gangi is a real jewel to Gullo sisters

By Mike Doyle

Colleen and Joan Gullo of Rockford were told to forget about visiting a certain small mountain village in Sicily. Instead, they found a gem when they visited Gangi in May, 2014.

"Our travel agent had done a lot of traveling in Sicily and thought Gangi was too remote, and that we wouldn't be happy if we went," Joan said.

Their tour guide, a native of Catania, Sicily, agreed. "As we were driving there, he said, 'Why in the world in all of Sicily did you choose Gangi? The town is two blocks long and the people there haven't seen anybody since World War II,'" Joan said.

Then they saw the town, the beautiful crown on a mountain. It was a stunning sight. "When we could see the town, (the tour guide) was surprised," Joan said. "It was built on the mountain top and kind of reddish in the sun. He said, 'Oh my goodness. That is a good-sized town.'"

The Gullo sisters found out more about Gangi while staying at the Agriturismo Casale Villa Raino nearby. "While we were there, (their host, Aldo Conte) told us that he had found out that Gangi was named the top village in all of Italy," Joan said.



A narrow street in Gangi.

Every year, a popular TV travel show in Italy sponsors a contest to determine Borgo Piu Bello d'Italia, the most beautiful village in Italy. Of the 20 villages in the competition, Gangi won with 134,000 votes in results announced in April, 2014. Located in the Madonie Mountains, southeast of Cefalù, Gangi was singled

out for its art, culture, local traditions and handicraft, and good food.

Gangi was one of the highlights of the trip the Gullos took with their cousins, DeDe and Linda. Both sisters had visited Italy and Sicily several times, but it was the first trip for one of their cousins, so they made a grand tour, spending nine days on the Italian peninsula and nine on the island at the tip of the boot.

In Gangi, they had a chance to wander through its rustic and historic places. "We walked from one end of the town to the other on the cobblestone paths past the buildings," Joan said. "Everything was so pristine."

Gangi isn't found in most tour books because it is a small town, with fewer than 8,000 people. It was much larger until mass emigrations at the start of the twentieth century sent residents to North and South America and Northern Europe. Topping Monte Marone, it was settled by Minoans



The mountain town of Gangi, Sicily.





(continued from page 8)



Sisters Joan (left) and Colleen Gullo (right) with their cousins DeDe and Linda and Aldo Conte at the Agriturismo Casale Villa Raino in Gangi.

Nicolo, which features 100 mummified priests from the 1700s. One of its most notable attractions is the Palazzo Sgadari, which features a permanent exhibition of the master Sicilian painter Gianbecchina.

"Gianbecchina is originally from Sambuca and has a main gallery there, but he had painted in those mountains and people welcomed him with open arms," Joan said. "So he left them some works there."

The artist, also known as John Becchina, was born in Sambuca in 1902 and died in 2001. In donating some of his works to the people of Gangi, he said, "A feeling of affection binds me to the noble land of Gangi. Knowing Gangi, a country of ancient origins and so rich in art and traditions, has been for me a source of spiritual enrichment. I have found in it many similarities with my dear Sambuca, not only the rural culture and craft traditions, not only in the architectural richness of its churches and palaces, but also, and especially, in the virtues of its people ... perched as it is on a crest of a hill and surrounded by a natural setting of beauty."

For the Gullos, who have a Gianbecchina print in their home, seeing his works in Gangi "was like a cherry on the top of the cake."

## Il Bellissimo Palazzo Storico – Giorgi Roffi Isabelli

**By Theresa Cascio**

When talking about historical fairy tale-like buildings in Italy, Palazzo Giorgi-Roffi Isabelli is among one of the most unique. Not only can our community of Rockford Italians relate to the location of our sister city, Ferentino, but we can also appreciate the history behind this beautiful landmark.

This building is in the historic center of Ferentino on Via Consolare. The age of the building is evident through stratification on the palace walls, exposing years of stories waiting to be told. In fact, many architectural elements in the basements reference back to medieval times and others to the first century.

The cultural rise of the palace is owed in part to Don Vittorio Giorgi (1760-1820) and his influence can be seen

from Crete, and earlier Greece, about 1200 BC. It features narrow streets and notable sites, including the fourteenth century Castle of Ventimiglia, the Palazzo Bongiorno, and the church of San

throughout the palace. In 1863, Pope Pius IX visited Ferentino and contracted Giorgi and Roffi Isabelli to initiate an aqueduct, further aiding in the growth of the city. The walls of the palace are also lined with their own layering of Italian history. Even with the destruction caused by earthquakes and the bombings during World War II, the building has surprisingly still been able to tell its story through the art in its galleries, frescoes, and architectural symbols.

There is still a strong archaeological collection at the palace, including sculptures such as the Head of Augustus made in the Augustan age. The palace is now owned by Pio and Laura Roffi and their two children Francesca and Vincenzo.

My sister Caroline was fortunate enough to stay with this kind-hearted family during a trip to Ferentino in 2009. To plan a trip when you find yourself wandering through the Roman area, visit <http://www.palagrisa.it>.



Interior view of the Palazzo Giorgi-Roffi Isabelli

## Lucca – A Tuscan Treasure

**By Theresa Cascio**

Located in the beautiful hills of Tuscany, Lucca is a city that many tourists do not have the privilege of visiting. Surrounded by city walls that date back to the Renaissance, there is no denying that Lucca has many stories to tell.



The Tuscan town of Lucca seen from one of its city walls.

Aside from the history, the walls around the city are what makes this place so special. The exterior walls were originally constructed for military purposes, but locals and tourists can now enjoy a walk around them (as they are over two stories tall and wide enough to fit multiple cars).

Once inside the city, visitors can enjoy an entire day in the Piazza Anfitreato. This oval market gathering has some of the best authentic shops. While the gifts that I bought my family were great, the most unique part of this market place is that it was built on an ancient Roman amphitheater. The mix of old and new really shows all of the layers of Lucca.

During my last trip to Lucca in 2011, after a long day in Piazza Anfitreato, we were brought to a small house in the middle of the city. It was here that we learned how to make pasta from scratch, cutting each piece of fettuccine by hand. But of course, let's not make your mouth water thinking about pasta made in Italy. Lucca's history, beautiful views, and unique shops rank this city on my top ten favorite cities in Italy. I challenge you to take a picture on the top of the wall ... as long as you aren't afraid of heights!

**Dappagallo '15****Dappagallo '15**

## Spring and summer festivals and holidays of Italy

### March (Marzo)

19 -- Fathers' Day and St. Joseph's Day

### April (Aprile)

3 -- Good Friday  
5 -- Easter Day  
25 -- Liberation Day and Feast of St. Mark

### May (Maggio)

1 -- Labor Day

### June (Giugno)

2 -- Republic Day  
24 -- Feast of St. John  
29 -- Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul

### July (Luglio)

15 -- Feast of St. Rosalia

### August (Agosto)

15 -- Assumption of Mary

### September (Settembre)

19 -- Feast of St. Gennaro



## Top 10 Italian places to eat in Chicago

The National Italian-American Foundation recently posted a list of its top 10 Italian restaurants in the city of Chicago. The restaurants, identified by neighborhood, are listed alphabetically.

- Balena, Lincoln Park
- Bruna's, Little Italy
- Ceres' Table, Lakeview
- Coco Pizza, River North
- Davanti Enoteca, University Village-River North
- Piccolo Sogno, River West
- Quartino, River North
- Saperi Trattoria, Lincoln Park
- Spiaggia, Gold Coast
- Via Carducci, Lincoln Park-Wicker Park

## The world loves Italian food, especially Parmagiano Reggiano

So much of western civilization owes its heritage to Italy, from art and architecture to Roman innovations. But you can't visit a decent-sized city in the U.S. – or the world for that matter – and fail to find a place to order pasta or pizza. Food may be Italy's longest lasting contribution, and, in November 2014, the non-profit group I Love Italian Food conducted an online contest via [www.iloveitalianfood.org](http://www.iloveitalianfood.org) to determine what the world loves most about our food.

More than 700,000 food lovers and 500 culinary professionals, ranging from bloggers and chiefs to restaurateurs and cooking schools, voted for the twelve most popular Italian foods ever. When the results were released in December 2014, Alessandro Schiatti, founder of I Love Italian Food, said, "This contest made us understand which of our traditional foods are the real ambassadors outside of Italy."

No. 1 on the list is something that can likely be found on the table of any Italian restaurant or family home – Parmagiano Reggiano. As the site described, the "King of Cheese" got 20 percent of the votes. Three of the top twelve items are from the Emilia-Romagna region – Parmagiano cheese, prosciutto di Parma and Aceto Balsamico (Balsamic vinegar). According to the website, that region has more products that are DOP and IGP (protected designation of origin) than any other region.

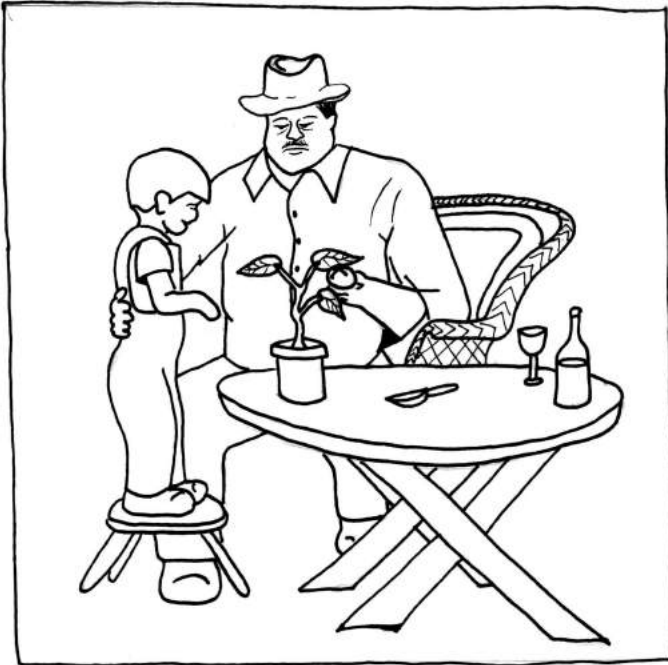
Here is the list:

- Parmagiano Reggiano
- Pasta
- Prosciutto di Parma
- Pizza
- Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- Tiramisu
- Gelato
- Espresso
- Mozzarella
- Aceto Balsamico
- Ravioli
- Risotto





## Some tips on planning an Italian garden



Artwork by Jilliana Paul.

### By Mike Doyle

If you travel through Italy's countryside, you probably will notice that nearly every house has a large garden. That was nostalgic enough, but what brought me back to my past were the tomato plants. Nearly all were tied to tall wooden stakes that were evenly spaced out in a clear grid.

It reminded me of my nano's garden on Montague Street in South Rockford, which was like so many others we remember growing up the 1950s and '60s. What will follow is a look back at gardens of the past with some suggestions on planting your own Italian garden along with some springtime recipes.

Of course, the grand dame of Italian gardens is the tomato plant. There are as many varieties as there are places to buy them in the Rockford area. I usually check out the big box stores, but always make time to stop at the smaller garden shops. A typical Italian garden would include a variety of these vegetables:

- Tomatoes, *pomodoro* including Roma, Big Boy, Early Girl, Heirloom
- Green peppers, *pepe verde*
- Squash, zucchini, but also *cucuzza* (Italian squash)
- Eggplant, *milingiana*
- Green beans, *fagioliverde*
- Broccoli, *broccolo*
- Burdock, *garduna*
- Fennel, *finocchio*
- Onion, *cipolla*

Garlic (*aglio*) and asparagus (*aspanagi*) are commonly found in Italian gardens, but neither will be harvested for at



Alfeo Bari shared this September 2, 1956, photo of his grandfather's garden on Ferguson Street. Bari said that Joseph Gaziano's garden grew corn, tomatoes, green peppers, eggplant, green peas, green beans, radishes, broccoli, cauliflower, celery, onions and "thrunza" (like turnip). There also were cherry, apple and pear trees.

least one more year. However, they return every year after. In addition, you could plant a number of herbs to go along with the vegetables. They include:

- Basil, *basilico*
- Parsley, *prezzemolo*
- Mint, *menta*
- Oregano, *origano*
- Rosemary, *rosmarino*
- Sage, *salvia*
- Tyme, *timo*

...

One of the signs of spring is when the perennial herbs appear, including parsley, chives, and mint. Here is a recipe for Garlic Mint Sauce, which my family uses on grilled meats. It can also be used as a marinade.



Packets of basil seed are on sale in Padua, Italy.



(continued from page 11)



Joseph Caruana plants onions in his garden on Montague Street in the mid-1970s. He tilled the entire garden by hand.

### Garlic Mint Sauce

4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil  
 2 tablespoons water  
 1 teaspoon lemon juice  
 5-6 cloves garlic, chopped  
 12 leaves fresh mint, julienned  
 Salt and pepper to taste  
 Chop garlic into small pieces and place in flat-bottomed bowl. Julienne the mint, add to the garlic and crush. Add olive oil, water, lemon juice and seasonings. Mix well and chill. Can be used as a marinade or topping for grilled meat, fish or chicken.

...

Joseph Pasteris wrote this about his father's garden in "Cucina Italiana, Rockford Style."

"During the summer months when our garden was producing large amounts of beautiful vegetables, my father would prepare a table laden with freshly picked vegetables. He then would prepare one of his favorite Piedmontese treat, Bagna Cauda. The smell of sautéed garlic was like a dinner bell." The recipe provided by Joseph Pasteris follows:

### Bagna Cauda (Vegetable Fondue)

1 cup olive oil  
 ¼ pound (one stick) butter  
 1 small can anchovies, drained and chopped  
 6 cloves garlic, chopped  
 (Suggested cut-up fresh vegetables: cabbage, celery, broccoli, cauliflower, green pepper, asparagus spears, mushrooms.)

Melt butter and oil in a saucepan over medium heat. Add the chopped garlic and turn the heat to low, making sure not to scorch the garlic. Add chopped anchovies, stir well

and simmer for 10 to 15 minutes. Place the sauce in a fondue dish and place over a candle or a very low heat source. Dip fresh vegetables into the sauce. Serve with slices of crusty bread. Dip the vegetables in the sauce, then place on the bread to catch the drippings. Serves 10.



John LaRosa visits his nano, Sam LaRosa, who is tilling his garden in the spring of 1970.

...

Because we have a long growing season in northern Illinois, you can adjust your plans individually. Seed packets generally have suggestions for times to plant based on geography. Generally, onions and most greens are planted early in the spring, including spinach, Swiss chard, lettuce, and mustard greens. Many gardeners plant beans twice, in the spring and early summer. Tomatoes are pretty resilient but tend to grow best in the hot and humid days of mid-summer.

According to [motherearthnews.com](http://motherearthnews.com), the best tomato varieties for us in the Midwest are Early Girl, Super Sweet 100 Cherry, Roma and Beefsteak. Depending on your space, you can include rows of herbs on the outside of the garden or plant a separate, smaller herb garden. Many gardens in South Rockford included a fruit tree. My nano had a plum tree near his garden and a peach tree outside the back porch.

Although I watched my nano, Sam LaRosa, plant a garden over the years, I learned most of my gardening skills from my wife Nora's grandfather, Joseph Caruana. He said that once the tomato plant is set in the ground, take the hand shovel and slide it into the ground a few inches away, then jam the soil toward the plant to make a little well for water to collect. He also told me never to plant tomatoes before Mother's Day. I took the photo of him in the mid-1970s, planting his onions. He tilled his entire garden the old way ... by hand ... when he was in his 90s. So I take his gardening tips seriously.



## Italian 101 — knowing your days of the week and the time

By Theresa Cascio

During the last two issues, I have explained how to get around Italy with essential phrases. Now I will be focusing on more in depth conversation that dives a little deeper.

Let's start with the days of the week. This will help when making plans with people.

- Monday -- *Lunedì* (lu-neh-dee)
- Tuesday -- *Martedì* (mahr-the-dee)
- Wednesday -- *Mercoledì* (mehr-coh-leh-dee)
- Thursday -- *Giovedì* (joe-veh-dee)
- Friday -- *Venerdì* (veh-nehr-dee)
- Saturday -- *Sabato* (sah-bah-toe)
- Sunday -- *Domenica* (doh-meh-neek-a)

Are you free on Friday? -- *Sei libera venerdì?* (say-lee-beer-ah veh-nehr-dee)

At what time? -- *A che ora?* (ah kay oh-rah)

Eight at my place. -- *Alle otto da me.* (ah-leh oh-toe dah meh)

I'm busy on Sunday. -- *Domenica sono occupata.* (doh-meh-neek-a soh-no ok-oo-pah-tah)

While I was in Rome in 2011, I was making plans with some Italian friends to meet the next day. They told me we should meet at 10 o'clock, and I remember thinking that was a little late to be meeting. It wasn't until later that I remembered that Italians go by military time, so they meant 10 a.m.

I would like ... -- *Vorrei* (voh-rey)

Excuse me, can we have the menu? -- *Scusi, ci puo' portare il menu'?* (scoo-see chee poo-oh pohr-tahr-eh il meh-nu)

A glass of red wine -- *Un bicchiere di vino rosso* (uhn bee-key-eh-eh dee vee-no roh-soh)

What kind of dessert do you have? -- *Che cosa avete come dessert?* (kay coh-sah ah-veh-the coh-meh dessert)

Can we have the bill? -- *Ci puo' portare il conto per favore?* (chee poo-oh pohr-tah-reh il cohn-toe pehr fah-voh-reh)

Where do you live? -- *Dove abiti?* (doh-veh ah-bee-tee)

I live near Chicago. -- *Abito vicino a Chicago.* (Ah-bee-toe vee-chee-noh a Chicago)

Sorry, I didn't understand. -- *Scusa, non ho capito.* (Scoo-sah non oh cah-pee-toe)

What do you do? -- *Che lavoro fai?* (Kay lah-voh-roh f-eye)

Italians love Chicago. No matter what region you're in, they always get so excited when someone says they're from Chicago.

How much? -- *Quanto costa?* (Quan-toe coh-stah)

Can I try it on? -- *Posso provarla?* (Poh-soh proh-vahr-lah)

Excuse me, where is the fitting room? -- *Scusi, dov'e' il camerino?* (Scoo-see doh-vey il cah-mehr-een-oh)

It's too big/small. -- *E' troppo grande/piccolo.* (eh troh-

poh gran-deh/ pee-coh-loh)

Can I pay with my credit card? -- *Posso pagare con carta di credito?* (Poh-soh pah-gah-reh con cah-r-tah dee creh-dee-toh)

Now that you can quickly get around the essential places of Italy, always remember what I said before -- hand gestures help tremendously, and Italians are more than happy to help you learn the language. Have fun on your next trip, and *buon viaggio!*

## Pesto Broccoli Pasta

This recipe appears in "Cooking with Italian Grandmothers" by Theresa Theroux.

### Pesto recipe:

- Kosher salt
- 1 bunch of broccoli rabe, tough lower stems removed, coarsely chopped into 1-inch lengths
- ½ cup chopped pistachios
- ¾ cup freshly grated Parmigiano cheese
- Extra virgin olive oil
- ¼ cup marscapone

Bring a large pot of well-salted water to a boil. Drop the rabe into the water, give it a swish, and remove it immediately. Saving the water to cook your pasta in later. Reserve a cup of the rabe. Toss the rest in a food processor, pulse until you have a coarse paste. Add the pistachios and Parmigiano cheese and puree until smooth. If it seems dry, drizzle in a little olive oil, while the machine is running. It should be slightly bitter, nutty and creamy at the same time.

### Pasta recipe:

- Extra virgin olive oil
  - ½ pound Italian sausage, sweet or spicy, casings removed
  - ½ pound orecchiette
  - Freshly grated Parmigiano
- Coat a large sauté pan with olive oil and bring to medium-high heat. Add the sausage, using a spoon to break it up, and cook until brown and crumbly, 8-10 minutes. Bring the rabe water back to a boil and toss in the pasta, cook for 1 minute less than the package recommends. Drain the pasta and add it, along with ½ cup reserved pasta water, the reserved rabe, and two-thirds of the pesto, to the pan with the sausage. Stir to combine and cook until the water evaporates and the pesto is clinging to the pasta. Remove from the heat, drizzle with some olive oil, sprinkle with more Parmigiano cheese and stir vigorously to combine. Serve immediately.

*Recipe suggested by Theresa Cascio*







## Sicilians (and Italians) celebrate St. Joseph's Day on March 19



The St. Joseph Altar at St. Anthony of Padua Church, March 2014.

The St. Joseph Day tradition continues to be celebrated by Rockford's Italian-American community on the small and large scale. St. Anthony of Padua Church will hold its annual St. Joseph Day Altar on Sunday, March 15, from 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. There is no charge but donations are accepted. Individual altars are also created to honor St. Joseph, and one of those is at the home of Rose Scalise Sheridan. Information can be found below in the flyer.

If you want to make your own Pasta con Sardi, we have included a recipe below. At least two places in town sell the Condimento per Pasta con Sarde – DiTullio's Italian Market and Café, 2207 East State Street and Schnuck's on East State Street.



The St. Joseph Altar Committee at St. Anthony of Padua Church.

### St. Joseph's Pasta (Pasta con sardi)

1 six-ounce can tomato paste  
1 large (28- to 32-ounces) can tomato sauce  
Salt and pepper to taste  
Basil, several fresh sprigs

1 tomato paste can cold water  
1 large onion, minced  
2-3 gloves garlic, minced  
2 tablespoons cooking oil  
1 can Condimento per Pasta con Sarde (seasoning for macaroni with sardines)  
1 cup fennel, chopped  
Place chopped fennel in small saucepan with water to cover and cook until tender. In a large saucepan, cook garlic and onion in oil. Add tomato paste, water (1-2 cans), tomatoes with the juice. Stir and

mix well. Add salt and pepper to taste, basil and can of condimento. Let simmer 1-2 hours until done to taste and desired thickness, stirring often.

Cook spaghetti according to directions. Drain and top with sauce and toasted bread crumbs. Makes 8 to 10 servings.



### Toasted Bread Crumbs (Modica)

2 cups unseasoned bread crumbs  
1 teaspoon oil  
1 teaspoon sugar

In a saucepan, heat oil and add breadcrumbs, cooking on low until the crumbs are lightly browned. Stir constantly to prevent burning. Remove from heat and add sugar. Use as topping over Pasta con Sardi.


## Spring Recipes

### Ta'ano (LaRosa Family Recipe)

2 pounds ground meat made into meatballs and cooked in sugo  
1 pound Rigatoni pasta  
2 pounds sliced tuma cheese  
½-1 pound grated Pecorino Romano cheese  
3 dozen eggs  
½ cup fresh parsley, finely chopped  
Small packet of saffron



Using your own meatball recipe, make meatballs and cook in sugo. Beat eggs with parsley, salt and pepper, add grated cheese and saffron. Parboil pasta in salted water; cook until it is *al dente*. To assemble the ta'ano, grease a wide Pyrex bowl or large deep dish casserole and line with parchment paper. Drain the meatballs well, then cut them into pieces and stuff the meat into the pasta. Place a layer of stuffed pasta on the bottom of the pan then pour some of the egg-cheese mixture. Dip pieces of tuna into the mixture and add it as the next layer. Repeat the process. Cover the top layer with tuma cheese and the remaining mixture. To get a browner crust, add a small amount (1-2 cups) of chicken broth on top. Bake at 350 degrees for two hours but check often to make sure ta'ano is not too dry (If you cut in with a sharp knife, it should come out clean and dry). Makes a lot.



**St. Joseph  
Altar**

Thursday,  
March 19, 2015

Celebrate St. Joseph's Day with us.  
We start serving pasta at noon on Thursday  
and continue all day through the dinner hour.

**OPEN HOUSE**  
Wednesday Night – March 18<sup>th</sup>  
5:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Rosie Scalise Sheridan  
7020 Cikeman Road  
Rockford, IL 61101



**Tanu (Cascio Family Recipe)**

1 pound rigatoni  
 Salt (to cook the pasta)  
 2 to 2-1/2 dozen eggs  
 1 handful of chopped parsley  
 3/4 cups of grated cheese  
 1 large container of ricotta cheese  
 1/4 cup chicken broth

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees and grease the bowl you are going to bake with. Cook the pasta *al dente*. Beat eggs. Mix in salt, cheese, and parsley. Place an egg in the bottom of the bowl and follow with a layer of pasta. Add a layer of cheese and ricotta. Repeat the cycle ending with egg. Stop 1 inch from the top of the bowl, poke holes in the top and fill with chicken broth. Bake for 2 hours. Then there are no runny eggs, it is thoroughly cooked.

**Shrimp and Artichoke Marinara Ziti**

1 pound ziti (or penne)  
 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil  
 2 cloves minced garlic  
 1-1/2 lb raw shrimp, peeled and deveined  
 1/4 cup dry white wine  
 1 tablespoon unsalted butter  
 1 jar marinated artichokes (drained)  
 2 cups marinara sauce  
 2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil  
 1/4 cup parmesan cheese



Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Cook the pasta *al dente*. In another pan, heat the olive oil on a medium-high setting. Once hot, add garlic and shrimp. Cook shrimp until pink (about 5 minutes). Remove shrimp and set aside. Add wine to the pan and allow it to reduce by half (about 3 minutes). Next add artichokes and 1 tablespoon of butter. Sauté artichokes for 3 minutes. Return shrimp to the pan. Stir in marinara sauce and cook until the sauce begins to bubble. Garnish with chopped basil and parmesan cheese.

**Lentils with Sausage**

1 cup lentils, rinsed  
 2 cups water  
 1 cup dry wine  
 2 tablespoons olive oil  
 1 large tomato, peeled, seeded and chopped (I use a can of cut up tomatoes with basil, drain juice)  
 1 slice of bacon, diced  
 1 clove garlic, chopped  
 3 peppercorns  
 1 small bay leaf  
 Salt to taste  
 2 pounds Italian sausage (I like Rinaldi brand)  
 1 small onion  
 1 small carrot, diced  
 1 stalk celery, cut in pieces  
 4 peppercorns  
 1 small bay leaf

Combine lentils, water, wine, oil, tomato, bacon, garlic, 3 peppercorns, 1 bay leaf, and salt in a saucepan. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer covered about 1 hour, or until lentils are soft. Meanwhile, put sausage, onion, carrot, celery, and remaining peppercorns, and bay leaf into a large saucepan. Add enough water to cover by 1 inch. Bring to boil, reduce heat, and simmer covered 30 minutes. Remove sausage from liquid, remove casing, and cut into thick slices. Strain the onion, carrot, celery then, add sausage back into the lentil mix. (Remember to take out the peppercorns and bay leaves!) Serves four. (Submitted by Shirley Martignoni Fedeli, who usually doubles the recipe.)

**Steamed Asparagus with Garlic**

1 pound fresh asparagus spears, cut  
 3 cloves garlic, chopped  
 2-3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil  
 1 one-ounce packet G Washington's Golden Seasoning  
 1/2 cup water  
 Salt and pepper to taste  
 Break off the bottom end of each asparagus spear, then cut remainder into two-inch pieces. Sauté garlic in olive oil in saucepan until translucent. Add asparagus and cover, stirring often, over medium heat for 3-4 minutes. Once asparagus begins to cook, add olive oil. Cover and continue to cook for 3-4 minutes. Mix half of the Golden Seasoning with the water. Add to saucepan with salt and pepper and cook until spears are soft. Serve as a side or over pasta. (If you prefer your asparagus with some bite, reduce the cooking time).

**Roasted Italian Asparagus with Parmesan**

1 pound asparagus (trimmed)  
 1/2 cup Italian dressing  
 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder  
 1/4 cup parmesan cheese

Mix garlic powder into dressing. Toss dressing with asparagus. Roast asparagus in 400 degree oven for 15 minutes. Sprinkle with parmesan and cool for 3 minutes before serving.

Greater Rockford Italian American Association - GRIAA  
**PAPPAGALLO**  
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Rockford, IL 61110-0415

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**Mike Doyle, Theresa Cascio,**  
**Frank Perrecone**



## 2015 Calendar Items

### 2015 Local Calendar Items

**March**

15 – St. Joseph Altar, St. Anthony of Padua Church, 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
19 – St. Joseph Altar, 7020 Clikeman Road, Rockford, serving from noon through dinner

**June**

29 – Women’s Italian Open at Mauh-Nah-Tee-See Country Club

**July**

31 – Festa Italiana at Boylan High School

**August**

1-2 – Festa Italiana at Boylan High School  
10 – Men’s Italian Open at Mauh-Nah-Tee-See Country Club

**October**

10 – GRIAA Hall of Fame Dinner, Cliffbreakers

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