

SUMMER • 2009-2010



THE NEWSLETTER of THE COUNCIL of ITALIAN RESTAURANTS in AUSTRALIA

news

The judgement of pasta



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For six young Sydney cooks, the summer of 2010 started with a challenge.

They had to impress three of the most discerning palates in the nation – Terry Durack, food critic of *The Sydney Morning Herald*; Stefano Manfredi, food writer and chef for Bells at Killcare, and Janni Kyritsis, formerly chef at Berowra Waters Inn, Bennelong and MG Garage. The cooks gathered at the CIRA Cooking

School in Annandale, and undertook two tasks – make a “simple” pasta from a set of ingredients placed in front of them and create their own special dish that would knock the judges’ socks off. Only one of them could win a trip to Italy and a scholarship to attend the ALMA cooking school in Parma. Full story, page 4.

The president's message

Buon natale to all our members and friends and to our colleagues in the hospitality business.

The restaurateurs of CIRA have had a very satisfying Spring, not only because we were able to expand our menus with all the new produce of the season but because we had the opportunity to get together for the annual Gala Dinner. It was another great success, particularly because our auction raised \$16,000 for

Diabetes Australia .

I want to say thanks to Joanna Saville for hosting the event, to Simon Marnie for conducting the auctions, and to all the chefs who helped to prepare the meal. What impressed me on the night was the way so many young cooks, coming from a variety of restaurants with diverse cooking styles, worked together so professionally to turn out an impeccable banquet. In the picture, you see me with Beppi Polese, who opened his Sydney restaurant in 1956 and is still going strong, an inspiration to us all.

The only disappointment was that the father of modern Italian cooking, Gualtiero Marchesi, was not able to come to Australia as planned, because his doctors had ordered him not to fly (he is 79). But he sent a video message to encourage every

one of us to hold the Italian flag high.

In the video, Marchesi showed us his ALMA cooking school near Parma, which has kindly offered a scholarship to the winner of CIRA's Young Chef Award (see page 4). ALMA, which "trains the world's leading chefs of tomorrow", has formed partnerships with professional cooking schools in New York, Toronto, Quebec, Seoul and Tokyo, and its representatives made it clear that they would be open to the idea of a partnership in Sydney. Since Italian is the dominant food style in Australia, if you include restaurants, trattorias, pizzerias and cafes, it is surprising that we do not have **an Italian training program for industry professionals**. At the moment, restaurant training in Australia has a strongly French emphasis, so that apprentices from technical colleges arrive in the kitchen of an Italian restaurant able to make a "julienne" of vegetables but unable to understand when asked to make a "soffritto" for a sauce or to find a box of Bavette pasta.

It seems to me that CIRA is ideally placed to develop an Italian restaurant academy in this country. We already run a successful school for home cooks, and that could grow into an establishment where professionals can



learn the history, philosophy, regionalism and technical skills behind the Italian way of eating. Working out how to make that dream a reality will be a primary goal of CIRA in 2010.

A few days after the Gala Dinner, we met with a delegation from the Parma Chamber of Commerce, visiting Australia to promote their classic products such as **parmesan cheese and prosciutto**. I felt I had to ask a question that has been on the minds of many restaurateurs in this country: "Why is it that we sometimes do not get the best prosciutto imported into Australia?"

The president of the delegation pointed out that the Parma area produces some 23 million prosciutti every

year, but only 9 million of these are good enough to receive the "DOC" accreditation (which is a guarantee of quality and regional integrity). It would seem that some of the people importing from Italy to Australia have been choosing from the remaining 14 million.

I find it disappointing that we have not always been able to present to our customers the best that Italy has to offer. Australians have shown with their enthusiasm for the jamon of Spain that they are prepared to pay for quality. Hopefully the importers of Italian products will learn from the Spanish experience. Part of the role of CIRA, I believe, is to campaign for improvements in the standard of everything Italian in Australia.

I wish you felice anno nuovo for 2010,
Armando.



LA NOTTE DELLE NOTTI It was CIRA's biggest night of the year – the Gala dinner, which brings together lovers of Italian cooking and chefs who would normally be rivals for the affections of those gastronomes. If you didn't make it, here's a summary of the menu for your vicarious pleasure...

Teams from Lucio's, Buon Ricordo and Pilu at Freshwater contributed **antipasti** that included raw mushroom and celery salad and bellarossa capsicums stuffed with "inzimino" of spinach and pine nuts. This was served with a Trebbiano from Cantina dei Colli Amerini. The team from Ormezzano (near the Spit Bridge) contributed "**Agnolotti** ripieni di bagoss e ricotta, salsa con olive taggiasche, pomodoro fresco e basilico" (agnolotti stuffed with ricotta and hard bagoss cheese imported from the Brescia area in northern Italy, with a sauce of fresh tomato, olives and basil). This was served with a Piccolo Ernesto Gavi. The Buon Ricordo team contributed "**Fillette di manzo alla 'Rossini'**" (beef fillet with foie gras and black truffle, with Madeira sauce), served with a Kasura Montepulciano d'Abruzzo made by Cielo d'Abruzzo. The Pompei's team contributed two **gelati** and one **sorbetto** made with Amedei dark chocolate, and the Beresford team contributed **Fondente al cioccolato e mascarpone** (a soft centred chocolate pudding with mascarpone), served with Zibbibo Liquoroso made by Rallo. And in case that wasn't enough, there was "**Piccola pasticceria**" (little pastries) with coffee. Chef James Kidman (above left with Ormezzano's Alessandro Pavoni and Buon Ricordo's Darren Taylor) came up for the night from Canberra, where he runs the restaurants in the National Gallery, and Jonathan Barthelmess interrupted his preparations for opening Manly Pavilion restaurant to help the smooth flow of food to the 200 eager eaters. Don't worry, there will be another one next year.

IL SONDAGGIO DEL VINO (the wine poll). Italian grapes, Australian soil – it's a marriage made in heaven, judging by the recent explosion of local wines made with grape varieties that have been familiar in the Mediterranean for hundreds of years. CIRA News has started a survey of the sommeliers of Sydney's top Italian restaurants on their Aussie favourites and here are the first results: **Matteo Galletto** of Lucio's recommends (in no particular order): **Fiano by Coriole** (from MacLaren Vale, South Australia); **Pinot Grigio by Hahndorf Hill** (from the Adelaide Hills, South Australia); **Arneis by La Zona** (King Valley, Victoria); **Nebbiolo by Vinea Mason** (Heathcote, Victoria); and **Corvina Rondinella** – (the grapes used in Italy's Valpolicella) by **Brian Freeman** (Hilltops, NSW, pictured left). **Robert Leys** and **Michael Block** of Buon Ricordo recommend: **Nugan Estate Pinot grigio** (King Valley, Victoria); **Pizzini Arneis** (King Valley, Victoria); **Hentley Farm Zinfandel**, also known as **Primitivo** (Barossa, South Australia); **Lethbridge Park Sangiovese** (Geelong, Victoria); **Murray Darling CSIRO Collection Aglianico** (Mildura, Victoria).



Young talent time

Here's how the winner of the CIRA scholarship to Italy's top restaurant training college was decided...

Early one spring morning, six young chefs are waiting nervously at the CIRA Cooking School in Annandale for three somewhat older judges to set them their tasks for the day. The young talents have already leapt the first hurdle. They were shortlisted on the basis of a statement they wrote, in less than 400 words, explaining their philosophy about Italian cooking. Now comes the test of how they put their philosophies into practice.

The winner of today's contest will win a scholarship to study for two weeks at Italy's top training centre for professional chefs – ALMA, near Parma. They are being scrutinised by Terry Durack, restaurant critic for *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Stefano Manfredi, restaurateur and food writer, and Janni Kyritsis, formerly chef at Berowra Waters Inn, Bennelong and MG Garage.

The judges unveil the first task – look at these ingredients and, using any or all of them, make a pasta dish. The underlying principle is very Italian: If you can cook simple pasta, you can cook anything.

THESE WERE THE INGREDIENTS. WHAT WOULD YOU MAKE OF THEM?

A packet of bavette pasta	A bowl of roma tomatoes
A bowl of vine-ripened tomatoes	5 tins of tomatoes
Assorted onions (brown, red, spring)	Garlic
Parsley	Chilli
Basil	Butter
Olive oil (light)	Olive oil (extra virgin)
Pancetta	Parmesan
Pecorino	

When that was done, each young chef had the opportunity to knock the judges' socks off with a creation of their own, using ingredients they had brought with them. Meet the contestants:

Robert Bredhauer (pictured below) 19, who works in the kitchen of Pilu at Freshwater, cooked veal involtini with Sardinian pecorino, stuffed baby artichokes and pan juices. In his statement of philosophy, he wrote:

"Cooking and food are amongst the highest expressions in



Italian culture which has been honed over many centuries using a large variety of dishes with family as the most discerning of critics. Like all cooking, Italian food is a good balance of flavours, textures and colours. Creating a balance and fusion of elements on the plate. With often the tastiest dishes being achieved with the fewest and simplest of ingredients."

Christopher Campbell, 22, from Pendolino in the Sydney CBD, cooked snapper with prawn ravioli. He wrote:

"I have come to believe that the Italian culture and cuisine should continue to embrace the changes and influences it has often experienced throughout its extensive past. However, most importantly it should also continue to keep those traditional values of family, hardship, poverty, simplicity and most of all passion for their food. This is not just via the cooking process but nurturing the complete ideal from the farm to the table, passing the knowledge from generation to generation."

Alexandra Rispoli (pictured above), 25, from Buon Ricordo cooked three desserts: canoli, cassata wrapped in marzipan, and pastiera (a wheat, ricotta and

candied fruit pie). She wrote:

"Italian food will always be in my heart and home, and I love the memories of when I was a child, being taught how to start my passion, by picking tomatoes and zucchini from paddocks in my country town Hay. Shelling broad beans on the back veranda of my Nonna and Nonno's house, talking about life as time slowly goes by. Helping them by squashing grapes with my feet to make wine and grappa, fishing for trout and wearing plastic overalls whilst yabby catching. Picking apples of trees and driving to local farms to pick up sheep's stomach to make salami. I will always have those delicious aromas and tastes of properly prepared food in my heart."

Immanuel Giuseppe Arena, 21, who works at the Beresford Hotel, cooked seared tuna. He wrote: "Growing up with the simplest foods such as sugo di pomodoro, pasta e broccoli, zuppa di vitello e pastina, uova alla campagnola, made me realise that for food to be delicious there is no need for a multitude of ingredients because the simplest foods are nine times out of ten the most tasty."

"This is what Italian food is for me...home. Every aroma, every texture, every taste forces me back into the garden with my father."



This is why so many people enjoy eating Italian food; it's welcoming, flavoursome and makes you feel like you're a part of something more than just a simple meal, almost like you're part of a worldwide gastronomic family."

Jason Saxby, 23, from Pulu at Freshwater, cooked calamari with fregola and a salad of fennel and bottarga. The judges were impressed that he had "the balls" to make his pasta sauce with just pancetta and no tomato.

In his written statement, Jason wondered if the term "Italian cuisine" makes any sense, since food in Italy differs so much from region to region. He discussed his preference

for Sardinian cooking: "Some of the highlights have been malloreddus, the traditional shell shaped pasta, perfect for ragus and thick sauces. Carta di Musica, the crispy flat bread made by shepherds to put in their saddle bags to eat while they were away. Nearly every cuisine has a flat bread in some form, but I believe this to be the best. Bottarga, dried mullet roe, used to grate or shave over dishes is an ingredient most prized by the Sardinians and Greeks, yet so unknown to most people, an acquired taste that has grown on me. The texture and salty flavour it adds to the simplest pasta or risotto is amazing. Pecorino cheese, uniquely

Sardinian and perhaps the biggest commodity for Sardinian people. In order to produce this, sheep outnumber people 3 to 1 on the island."

David Wright, 21, from Buon Ricordo, cooked suckling pig three ways: the meat from the head in a cabbage soup; the loin with a seasoning of garlic, rosemary and fennel seeds; and the skin rolled around parsley, garlic, raisins and pine nuts.

In his philosophy, David wrote that in a recent visit to Italy, he realised that "ideas that seem new, like sustainability, are part of the traditional food culture of Italy. Not only did I gain knowledge and experience from working at Don Alfonso restaurant in Napoli but also

living with family in Sicily, I was able to see life and how much food is a part of that life, from purely an Italian point of view...

"In Sicily winter food is strictly winter food as is summer and all the seasons. Produce is bought daily, and the knowledge of the general public is really something to be admired. I learnt from seeing the people who produced or caught their produce driving around and selling in the street.

"I was lucky to spend time on a farm that functions purely in a local capacity. We cooked daily, using home made olive oil from our own olive trees. Wine from our own grapes, cheese from our own goats and of course all the fruit and vegetables go without saying. The best experience came from killing a lamb. For the first time I saw food from the beginning to the end. The nervous young chefs had to wait till the CIRA Gala Dinner to learn who would be heading for Parma. The winner was David Wright. (pictured below, centre, congratulated by Jason Saxby left).





the season

FRUITS AND VEG AT THEIR BEST IN SUMMER

Here's how to make the most of the ingredients that flourish between December and February, Italian style

Basil (basilico)

Now is the time to make a luscious Caprese salad, because tomatoes are as flavoursome as basil in summer. Slice ripe tomatoes into discs, and place a basil leaf and a slice of creamy mozzarella (made with buffalo milk, if you can find it) on each disc. Layer and splash with extra virgin olive oil, salt and freshly ground pepper.

Beans - green, flat, and butter (fagiolini)

Boil for 3 minutes, then dress with a sauce of oil in which you've fried garlic, anchovies and finely chopped parsley.

Blackberries (mora)

Bake in a pie with peaches, cinnamon and sugar.

Capsicums (peperone)

Burn the outside, peel off the blackened skin. Cut off the top, scoop out the seeds, stuff with boiled rice, pine nuts, mince and herbs, and bake in the oven.

Celery (sedano)

Finely slice and serve with sliced raw mushrooms, parmesan and extra virgin olive oil.



Corn (granoturco)

Burn on the barbie, then smear with extra virgin olive oil, salt and pepper. Or slice off the kernels and steam them with peas to make a colourful salad.

Eggplant (melanzana)

Make a "rattauia" by frying diced eggplants in oil with zucchini, capsicum, celery and tomato. Stir in basil leaves at the end.

Okra (ocra)



They are more familiar to our Mediterranean neighbours, the Greeks, but they can become part of an antipasto. Cut off and discard the tops,

deep fry the rest in very hot oil for five minutes, then saute with tomato and onion.

Peas (piselli)

Mix with fried onion, parmesan and leftover pasta, then stir into beaten eggs and bake, to make a frittata.



Pawpaw (papaia)

Serve instead of melon with prosciutto.

Pears – Williams (pere)

Slice, toss with lemon juice, and mix with rocket leaves, shaved parmesan and olive oil.

Radish (rafano)

Slice and serve raw as part of a pinzimonio (with raw carrots, celery, capsicum and the best extra virgin olive oil – balsamic optional).

Raspberries (lampone)

Serve them with zabaglione (whipped egg yolks, sugar and sweet liqueur such as Marsala).



Tomatoes (pomodori)

Make Caprese salad, above, or layer them with finely sliced Spanish onions and sprinkle with lots of dried oregano and extra virgin oil.





How did Italy conquer Australia so peacefully and comprehensively? David Dale presents part two of a research project...

Any Italians who stepped off the boat in Sydney in the 1880s would have discovered two points of similarity to their homeland. First, the local citizenry were in the midst of a passionate debate about whether a bunch of city-states could ever unite to form one nation – an uncanny echo of the discussions that led to the unification of Italy in 1860. And second, the citizenry were in the grip of a coffee craze.

The Sydney arguments for and against federation were conducted in cafes which enticed customers by advertising their use of the latest technology from France – a machine called a “cafetiere”. It produced “a beverage as clear as crystal in which is concentrated the very essence and full aroma of the berry”. It must have been comfortingly familiar to the Mediterranean immigrants.



The empire goes south continued.

The circle of good humour

The first wave of the Italian invasion came in 1881, when 200 people from the Veneto region of north east Italy applied to the NSW Government to be allowed to settle here. Their original destination had been New Guinea, where they hoped to join a utopian settlement established by idealists from France and Spain. As soon as they saw the fever-ridden fiasco that the paradise had become, they knew they had to sail further south.

The NSW Premier of the time, Henry Parkes, agreed to let the Italians stay -- as long as they didn't form a ghetto. A committee of inquiry into their application warned: “The customs of the country and other circumstances render it undesirable, indeed almost impossible, for them to settle down together in one locality. Even if this were practicable, it would not be for their own good to do so.”

The 200 Venetians were dispersed over NSW on work contracts, but a year later, when they had served out their terms, they got together again to form a commune

near Lismore, which came to be called “New Italy”. It was soon producing wine and fruit for sale in Sydney, and became world famous as a silk-making centre. The photo above shows the first settlers of New Italy.

In the 1880s, word was spreading around the world that Sydney was an exciting place to visit. There was still plenty of money around after the gold rushes of the 1850s, and plenty of fine restaurants, pubs and shops in which to spend it.

Sydneysiders had the time to discuss radical ideas for political and social reform. Louisa Lawson was arguing that women should be given the right to vote and to initiate divorces, while her son Henry was arguing that Australia should cut its dependence on Britain and become a republic.

Premier Parkes was having more success convincing political leaders that the various British colonies on the continent should unite in a federation which would be represented by a single government.

Sydney became a mecca for Italian artists, two of whom,

the sculptor Tomaso Sani and the interior designer Augusto Lorenzini, formed a social club called Il Circolo del Buon Umore (the circle of good humour). The circle met regularly for meals and organised a public celebration, on June 2 every year, of the birthday of Giuseppe Garibaldi, the most famous activist for Italian unification.

Sani created public controversy by decorating the Pitt Street façade of the new GPO building with sculptures of working class people, instead of the noble images from classical mythology the citizens had been expecting. But Premier Parkes was clearly a fan, because he commissioned Sani to create a statue (pictured left) called “We Won!”, in honour of rugby football, which was erected in Cenennial Park in 1893 and which still overlooks the café there.

Lorenzini, who shared Sani's studio in Phillip Street, designed and painted lavish renaissance interiors for the three-storey Gunsler's Café in Pitt Street, the Roberts Hotel on the corner of George and Market Streets, and the Garrick Theatre in Castlereagh Street.

In the 1890s the circle was joined by a painter from Naples, Antonio Dattilo Rubbo, who set up an art school and became hugely influential on 20th century Australian art. In 1903 he was one of the first Italians to become a naturalised citizen of the new nation called Australia, two years after its foundation.

Continued in the autumn issue of CIRA NEWS.

Time-tested traditions are the basis of all successful innovation, and cooking is no exception.

Italian food has taken Australia by storm. The variety and adaptability of Italy's regional cooking allowed it to flourish when transplanted, so in a new country it has become simultaneously an Australian and an Italian experience.

CIRA was formed to help this gastronomic culture to prosper and be passed on to the next generations of cooks and food lovers. Learn more by going to CIRA's website www.cira.com.au – and join our crusade to advance Italian fare.



How to join CIRA

AIMS

- Safeguard the culinary cultures of Italy's regions
- Increase public knowledge of traditional and evolving values in Italian cooking
- Encourage informed experimentation in the industry
- Encourage members to strive for excellence in their individual market niches -whether trattoria, pizzeria, café, catering, restaurant or providore
- Provide support and advice to members in relevant aspects of restaurant operation

practical understanding of the methods and philosophies of Italian food, to a new generation of chefs and restaurateurs

- Create links with cultural institutions
- Promote research and publications on Italian food
- Conduct workshops, master classes, and symposiums on specific aspects of Italian gastronomy -- wines, cheeses, pasta, olives, etc

- Establishing 'internships' within prestigious restaurants both in Australia and Italy.
- Through symposia on specific items, eg: olives and oils, sponsored by producers
- Providing a resource for food writers to help them evaluate dishes in their regional and historical context.

STRATEGIES

- Promoting partnerships with educational and training institutions to transmit a

FROM HERE

CIRA further aims at facilitating training 'on the ground' by

- Training students and apprentices on the job in member restaurants
- 'Training the Trainers' on the job

TO JOIN CIRA

If you are professionally involved in producing Italian food in Australia, you can become a member of CIRA. The annual membership fee is \$90.

If you are a lover of Italian food who shares our aims, you can become an associate member of CIRA for \$90 annually. If you are a student, apprentice or senior the annual fee is \$25.

2009

Annual Fee \$90.00

Concessions \$25.00
(Students, apprentices, Seniors)

Name	First	Second
Restaurant		
Address		
	State	Postcode
Email		
Phone		

Method of Payment (Please tick one)

Cheque – Please make payable to CIRA Money Order

EFT Transfer BSB 012 362 - Acc No 498 980 981

Signature	Date

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