



Italic Cooking: Let's Nurture it with American Creativity!

Piero Bassetti (July 17, 2009)



Do we really need a static way of cooking that is handed down for all time? I would say definitely not. We are Italic and there are millions of American-Italians! Such a people of genius and invention would certainly not want to reject its own culinary and cultural creativity

My friend Ottorino Cappelli asked me to comment on his interesting article "[Cucina Italica? An exercise in post-colonial mutual understanding](#)" [2] which calls into question, once and for all, the



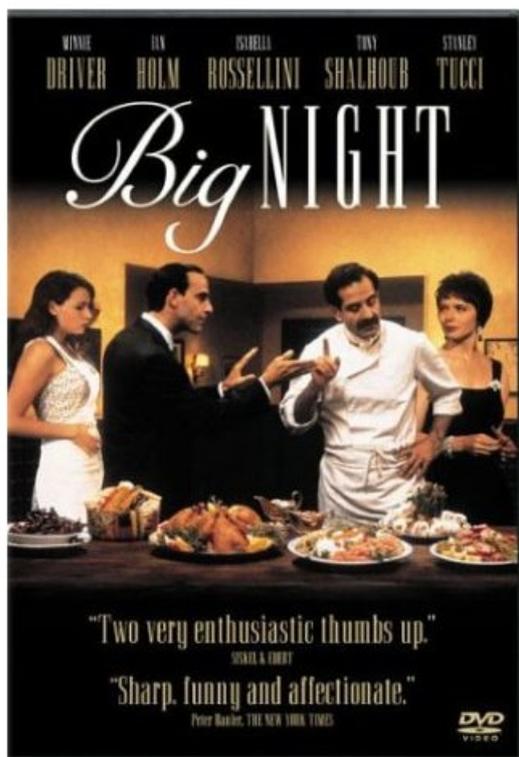
excessive nostalgia for “real Italian food” as opposed to the way in which Italian-Americans cook today. Even if they reconnect to recipes and products used in traditional Italian cooking, they are often willingly go beyond a way of cooking and eating linked to their country of origin (an origin that may be many generations “old”...).

Now do we really need a static way of cooking that is handed down for all time? I would say definitely not. And here I agree with Ottorino Cappelli in the promise to visit the recommended restaurant and taste the excellent “hybrid” between Italian and American cuisine. I would go even further than what Cappelli states: not only is the Italian-American way of cooking highly respectable, I would call this cuisine of new flavors (often the raw ingredients are locally grown) American-Italian.

In fact, those living in America are Americans, even if they are of Italian ancestry, born and raised in an American milieu and educated in American tastes. When they are, as often happens, also Italic (aware of their origins and a universe of values, culture, and taste connected to the Italian peninsula) they have a “value added” experience in Mediterranean cuisine. Effectively incorporating these experiences into a typically American context, using raw ingredients that are usually American and serving an American clientele is an art. And that art precisely lies in the ability to strike a balance between American tastes and the riches of Italian cuisine. So I am certainly for progressive advancement and establishing an American-Italian taste alongside the Italian one.

So that we do limit our discussion to food, it is plain to see that Italic civilization has been influential in other areas. We think of literature where Americans of Italian origin have created works of absolute value in English, often imbued with the sensibility typical of their Italic roots.

Have they “cooked” their novels in English? Of course, and even Italic works have arrived at the table. Or let's consider film. It's no coincidence that Cappelli cites a small gem of independent cinema [like Big Night](#) [3] (which won awards at the [Sundance Film Festival](#) [4]) by the American-Italian or rather the Italic Stanley Tucci and the very American (and Italophile,



therefore Italic) Campbell Scott. It's a sort of Babette's Feast revised in Italic sauce in which Babette's imposing turtle soup gives way to a no less imposing and impressive timballo: a volcanic and baroque symbol of a culinary melting pot that draws its richness and uniqueness from the hybridization of two cultures, Italian and American.



We live in a multi-ethnic and totally contaminated world. This is not in fact a bad thing and I am convinced, considering that Italic civilization is among the most open, that this openness implies the tacit legitimacy of every synergistic attempt between the tradition of departure and the innovation of arrival.

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