



Only 10 Percent of Americans Love to Cook... Oh My!

Chiara Basso (February 13, 2019)



Futurist Eddie Yoon shared alarming data at a panel discussion with the Gotha of Italian specialty food in New York: younger generations want to cook less and less, in 20 years they won't probably even drive to a restaurant but they will prefer to have their meals delivered at home, and they want to be fed as quickly as possible without waiting or staying in line. Is it real? Is the food industry ready for this? The panelists of Italian Table Talks, organized by Gruppo Italiano at the NYU Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò, had different thoughts about it.

Food for thoughts: **only 10 percent of Americans love to cook, 45 percent absolutely hate it, while another 45 percent are indifferent.** Author of "[Superconsumers](#) [2]" and growth strategist [Eddie Yoon](#) [3] served this undigestible data yesterday night in front of the Gotha of Italian specialty food in New York: **Lou DiPalo, owner of the Italian Grocery store DiPalo, Louis**



Coluccio, owner of A.L.C Italian Grocery in Brooklyn, Joe Gurrera, owner of the Citarella markets, and Danielle Oteri, historian, writer and founder of Arthur Avenue Food Tours. They were the panelists of the Italian Table Talks' fourth chapter entitled "Consumer Behavior and the Evolution of Italian Food Retail." The event was organized at the NYU Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò by [Gruppo Italiano](#) [4] and moderated by chef and media personality **Michael Colameco**.

The evening started with positive numbers regarding the export of Italian food and products, shared by **Maurizio Forte, director of the Italian Trade Agency (ICE)**. But then **the President of Gruppo Italiano Gianfranco Sorrentino** introduced the special guest Eddie Yoon who wrote the article "[The Grocery Industry Confronts a New Problem: Only 10% of Americans Love Cooking](#) [5]," published in 2017 in the Harvard Business Review.

Yoon depicted a world where **younger generations want to cook less and less, in 20 years they won't probably even drive to a restaurant but they will prefer to have their meals delivered at home, and they want to be fed as quickly as possible without waiting or staying in line.** Yoon's prediction: the only way for the food industry to survive this big wave of change (he did show the picture with an enormous wave is about to swamp a few surfers in Hawaii) is by embracing these new trends and being nimble in answering the consumers' new needs.

We don't know how much Yoon knows about Italian food culture nor if he even heard about a movement called Slow Food, which obviously was created in Italy. He might be right and there is for sure a lot to learn from the data and predictions he shared, however, it is licit to ask: **are we all going to survive with frozen and delivered food?** What about the newly discovered interest of people for cooking shows? Do they just prefer to watch cooking while eating already made meals?

The other guests seemed shocked, but they couldn't even give their immediate feedback to Mr. Yoon because he had to catch a flight back to Chicago. Also, it is unfortunate that another crucial guest couldn't be there. **Dino Borri, Eataly's VP of Global Brand Partnership**, got stuck with his flight in Pittsburgh because of the snowstorm in New York. It would have been nice to hear the impressions of somebody who works for the new empire of Italian food that keeps opening new locations in the US.

At first, all the panelists agreed to disagree with what Yoon said. DiPalo has customers who don't mind to wait their turn in the store "because they know then when we serve them, it is like they are the only one there," Oteri swore that her tours in Arthur Avenue, in the Little Eataly of the Bronx, are more like pilgrimages of people coming from the suburbs to fill their empty bags with real Italian food to prepare, and Gurrera affirmed that his customers don't mind paying extra money for superb quality of raw products like meat and cheese.

Little by little, though, other nuances color the panel discussions. DiPalo acknowledges that now more and more customers prefer to buy already made pasta sauces or lasagnas rather than preparing and cooking them at home. The same thing happens in the Citarella markets, pioneers in Italian already made specialties, and Coluccio sadly admits that it is hard nowadays to find employees who really shared a real passion for food, the same him and his family had for generations.

There are not "already made" answers to the topics touched yesterday night. For sure it would have



been interesting to have an open discussion between futurologists à la Yoon and defenders of the Italian food tradition.

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