



## Accademia del Tartufo nel Mondo

### The World Truffle Academy

# Italian perfection around the world

**SCHEGGINO**  
The home of the Truffle

**ALBA and SANT'ANGELO IN VADO**  
United by a saint and the truffle



**GIAN MARCO CENTINAIO**  
The truffle: let's make it a democratic luxury



*The discovery of a perfect dish is as valuable for mankind as the discovery of a new star.*

*(Anthelme Brillat-Savarin)*



Scheggino · Umbria · Italia

## TASTE, INNOVATION AND CULTURE

Truffle and egg, truffle and pasta, truffle and wine, truffle and cheese... even truffle and cinema!

At the centre of the latest "foodie" trends enthraling palates across the whole world, today the truffle is not only more and more accessible, but, above all, in fashion because it is a spontaneous gift from the earth, delicious and versatile, and able to make even the most simple dishes unique. These are the fundamental elements that have led, in the last few years, to the truffle's role as the undisputed protagonist in a real cultural revolution, becoming a must for all food lovers.

Over time, this product has become more and more accessible, especially when compared with other "luxury" foods such as, for example, caviar.

Indeed, only 10-15 years ago it was an elite product, a luxury for few to enjoy, a fruit to savour on important occasions or an ingredient limited to local gastronomic tradition.

So it was market to be opened up, bringing this exceptional ingredient to tables all over the world.

At Urbani Tartufi, we have been working for years to tell the story of the truffle and its versatility; a food that is as unique as it is perfect for a great many combinations of flavours, but that also holds its own as the central element of cultural and convivial occasions.

The understanding of this raw ingredient that has always distinguished our company, and the innovation that characterises our products, has allowed us to travel down new roads that have made it possible to spread the knowledge of this wonderful product more effectively.

In 2020, in the midst of a pandemic that seems to have brought life to a halt, our company decided to focus on new channels, and launch products that promote conviviality, such as the moment of pre-dinner drinks.

Whether at a bar or in your living room, enjoying an aperitif means sharing, a prelude to a good dinner, the real leading trend in the last few months: indeed, in just the period between June and August 2020, there was an increase in the sale of alcoholic aperitifs (+4.3%), followed by growing sales of gourmet products (+16.9%).\*

A moment that is a symbol of Made in Italy, of the all-Italian pleasure of being together, chatting and laughing.

Our work aims to make this moment of conviviality unique, bringing the truffle to Italian tables at cocktail hour, and transforming any aperitif into a gourmet event for all.

With their unexpected flavour, truffle peanuts, truffle almonds and Truffle Mix pair perfectly with any drink, for a light snack without sacrifices.

Available in single-portion packets or in 100g bags, you only need to open up a packet of these new snacks to be intoxicated by the delicious fragrance of the black gold of the earth, and in an instant your imagination will immerse you in a walk in the Umbrian countryside of Scheggino where our company is based, and has been dedicated lovingly and passionately to the truffle since 1852.

\* Data from the latest Coop Report on the consumption and lifestyle of the Italians of today and tomorrow.





**Accademia del Tartufo nel Mondo**  
The World Truffle Academy

## THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE ITALIAN TRUFFLE

The first cultural, scientific and gastronomic magazine dedicated to the truffle. Now also available in English.

A quarterly periodical, in both printed and digital versions



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**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**  
Giuseppe Cristini

**EDITORIAL**  
Gian Marco Centinaio

**EDITORIAL COMMITTEE**  
 Antonella Brancadoro  
 Claudio Modesti  
 Mario Palenzona  
 Giuseppe Rosati  
 Augusto Tocci  
 Davide Toni  
 Angelo Valentini

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## Centinaio: Working to make the truffle a “democratic luxury”

by Gian Marco Centinaio



**Gian Marco Centinaio**  
Undersecretary for Agricultural Policy,  
specialising in truffles and wine

If we wanted to make a comparison to the automotive world, we could say that the truffle is the Ferrari of the Made in Italy food sector. Hardly anyone drives around every day in a Ferrari, just as hardly anyone eats truffle every day, but we believe that everyone should be able to try and enjoy a unique experience.

Like Ferrari, the truffle is an extraordinary ambassador for Italy around the world. We are its homeland. Not only in terms of quantity, but also quality.

It is a gift that comes out of symbiosis with trees such as oak, hazelnut, English oak, poplar, hornbeam, lime. In this sense, it is a wonderful emblem of biodiversity.

It releases the perfumes of our land and

its flavour is unmistakeable, because it is the fruit of a culture of great respect for the earth. It is a perfect example of a product “Born in Italy”, which I have the objective of promoting in my role as Minister for Agricultural, Food and Forest Policy.

Recently, on the occasion of the last Earth Day, I spoke about the importance of natural resources like the soil. This year's theme was “Restore our Earth”. The forest, with its aura of mystery and magic, needs to be cared for and restored; it needs attention. This is the only way the sector will be able to grow in the future, and provide a source of income for young people as well.

The taste of our truffles is unique, precisely because of the way they are collected. This is why one of the projects I am working on is the establishment of a professional association for truffle hunters, figures who represent the real guardians of the forest in our country. Truffle hunters have the ability to become the storytellers of a territory with a unique identity, and therefore give a further boost to the eno-gastronomic tourism that rests on the pillars of quality and respect for nature, in contrast to other countries where they are only concerned with commercial gains.

There is not only the excellence of the white truffle.

From Piedmont to Lombardy, from Umbria to Basilicata, from Lazio to Molise, passing through Marche and Apulia, truffle territory stretches the entire length of Italy. We will try in every way we

can to promote a territory and a heritage that cannot be reproduced.

I am sure that we will continue to have a productive, collaborative relationship with the Italian World Truffle Academy and its director, Giuseppe Cristini, over the coming months.

All the regions of Italy can offer great opportunities, to suit every budget. For my part, I will work hard to promote the “king of the table”, pursuing agreements with the restaurant sector so that it can become a “democratic luxury”, in order to provide the opportunity to try unique flavours for more than just a niche audience.

Together, we are beginning a journey that may even culminate in a new certification. I hope to be able to speak personally of the developments in this and other initiatives over the course of the 91st edition of the International White Truffle Festival in Alba, planned for next October.

## A New Academy

## With the arrival of the spring, the world reawakens: starting afresh from Mother Earth

by Giuseppe Cristini



**Giuseppe Cristini**  
Director of the World Truffle Academy

us towards this step up to the international level, to telling the secrets of the truffle to the whole world with one click.

A magazine with an international profile that will certainly be more scientific, but without sacrificing its narrative and gastronomic perspective.

A World Truffle Academy in dialogue with all the institutions: we have a great many partners that I thank for their collaboration and authority. We want to be a beacon, a reference, a light that illuminates the truffle.

From this edition, the magazine will also be translated into English, and will embark on an international journey, but we will also have a strong presence on social media, where we will update you weekly with news, stories and reports.

In the role of Editor-in-chief, I take full responsibility for a duty that I am honoured to have, that asks me to always do my best, so that every time we can be more positive, more proactive and more current.

It is with pleasure and honour that we welcome and celebrate the nomination of the Undersecretary for Agricultural Policy, Gian Marco Centinaio, who with his assignment to specialise in truffles and wine will be able to create a dialogue with the entire sector, and especially with our Academy.

A new magazine is presented to the world with an international flavour.

A new logo, new graphics, a new layout, but the primary goals remain the same: the conviction that everything begins from Mother Earth, who creates the truffle that nourishes the world.

A new style, which, through the truffle, expresses Italian dining perfection and aims to relaunch the restaurant sector and the pleasure of dining out, revealing an Italian identity.

The truffle exists somewhere between mystery and reality, between magic and cooking. But it is above all its mysterious charm that we want to speak about, through great events and great occasions.

An Italian truffle that speaks to the whole world, a truffle that tells its story in all kinds of food to be found in an industry that is ready to take off.

An academy that follows its heart over all the obstacles and aims towards new international collaborations; with Its Majesty the Truffle ready to promote Italian perfection in the kitchen and at the table.

There are many motivations that have pushed

Thanks to the authoritative words of the Undersecretary, we are starting a journey that will provide defining and forward-looking information for the entire Italian agricultural world. We are honoured to host his editorial, which enriches and dignifies the official

magazine for the Italian truffle.

On the cover, we wanted to represent the value of an Italian Mother Earth, who can tell the story of Italy around the world. In this edition we have included three special features that all follow an intriguing common thread.

We begin with Scheggino, a joyful town in Umbria, the home of the truffle and the seat of Urbani Tartufi, the highest quality truffle company in the world, where everything started. We then follow with our direct line with the Minister, an interview with Dr. Francesco Saverio Abate, with whom we have made a pact of good taste for the promotion of the Italian truffle around the world.

To be savoured, the Grana Padano special, dedicated to Latteria San Pietro, and an interview with its president, Stefano Pezzini, a highly authoritative and innovative figure in the world of the most recognisable Italian DOP dairy product, both in Italy and abroad. And then we celebrate the bond between Alba and Sant'Angelo in Vado, towns that not only have the truffle in common, but also two saints.

As always, we have the wonderful regular columns from the Truffle Research Centre in Alba, written by its president, Antonio Degiacomi, and the Cities for the Truffle Association, written by its director, Antonella Brancadoro; and finally, a friendly conversation with the well-known chef from Marche, Fabio Trabocchi, direct from the States, where our correspondent Giuseppe Rosati sets out the future of the star-spangled restaurant industry.

But what gives us the most pleasure is a new entry from a highly-esteemed guest: maestro Angelo Valentini.

A noble gentleman, an artist, a prophet with a rich culture and, above all, experience; a man who loves his native land. A character with style, elegance and sophistication, but above all a great friend, with whom I have shared enlightening experiences.

My life is richer today for having had a friend like Angelo Valentini with me on this journey of global and academic appreciation for the truffle.

## Sant'Angelo in Vado, the Land of the truffle

by Monsignor Davide Tonti



**Monsignor Davide Tonti**

Episcopal vicar for culture and the protection of cultural heritage, for the Diocese of Urbino, Urbania and Sant'Angelo in Vado

### Alba and Sant'Angelo in Vado, as well as the truffle, have a common tradition: Blessed Margherita of Savoy and Saint Margherita della Metola.

Dig anywhere in the earth and you will find a treasure, only you must dig with the faith of a peasant.

#### Kahlil Gibran

Our land of Italy, rich in ancient stories and traditions that depict the mysterious treasures of our culture, offers a solidarity that goes beyond the concept of territory or parish, to acquire that horizon of universal values that have *pulchritude* at their core, from which everything that exists derives its meaning.

In our Italian towns, as well as the harmony of production and work that distinguishes our traditions, we can see other elements, just as profound, that go

far beyond the meaning of regionality or the context of territory that characterises them.

Even the Roman myth that narrates the mysterious origin of the truffle, in which Jupiter throws lightning to the ground, has its origin in the fact that the truffles consumed by the Romans were mainly found close to oak trees, sacred trees for the Celtic religions, and often struck by lightning, which was the prerogative of the father of the gods. This is a seductive explanation, giving the fruit of the earth a mysterious charm, explaining the precious nature of this famous hypogaeal fungus that is as much a feature of the land around Alba as it is of Sant'Angelo in Vado and Montefeltro.

It is interesting to see how from these common Celtic and Roman traditions, Christian culture has built bridges that highlight certain commonalities and harmonies between these cities, such as the adventure of Christian mysticism expressed by two medieval women, both Dominican tertiaries who contributed to the promotion of their cities: Blessed Margherita of Savoy (1390-1464) in Alba, and Saint Margherita della Metola in Città di Castello.

The name Margherita, belonging to both women, comes from the Greek, *Margarītēs*, which means *pearl*. This name, given to highlight radiance and beauty, acquired the meaning "daisy" only in the middle ages, and since then has mainly been understood as a botanical reference.

A fascinating element of the story of Margherita of Savoy, the first daughter of Lord of Piedmont and Prince of Achaea, Amedeo of Savoy, and his wife, Caterina di Ginevra, regards the intersection between political life and a life of faith.

This emphasises how much love and self-sacrifice these women were able to express in their various positions with the

help of God. Their days, characterised by obedience towards their families and reason of state, never numbed their desire to serve the Lord in their religious life.

In the case of Margherita of Savoy, she was determined to achieve her desire to be a Dominican Tertiary: on the 17th January 1403, at only thirteen years old, Margherita married Theodore II, Marquess of Monferrato. For political reasons, the family resided in Genoa, where the marquess was called to fight against the French. Beyond her obligations to the court and the government, Margherita was distinguished by her assistance to the poor, especially in the year 1411, when famine and plague struck the city. After fifteen years of marriage she was left a widow, and was forced to take charge of governing the Marquisate until her stepson, Giangiacomo (1395-1445), took on the position.

The young widow, refusing the marriage proposals offered to her, preferred to retire to Alba to lead the life of a Dominican Tertiary. In these brief tales of existence, maybe it is not possible to glimpse the great spiritual mystery that surrounds these women, called to bring messages of divine mercy, precisely in their situation of being rich, noble and disinherited, becoming bearers of the divine mysteries that change events and the very history of the Church. In 1445, Margherita began the construction of a new Dominican monastery in Alba, which she sponsored and dedicated to Saint Mary Magdalene, and a few years later, she and her companions were authorised to graduate from the Third Dominican Order to the Second Order, becoming Dominican nuns.

It was in this period that she managed to operate a great service of pacification and communion for the Church, taking on the spirit of the great tertiary, Saint Caterina da Siena. Living an austere life,



The City of Alba



The City Council of  
Sant'Angelo in Vado

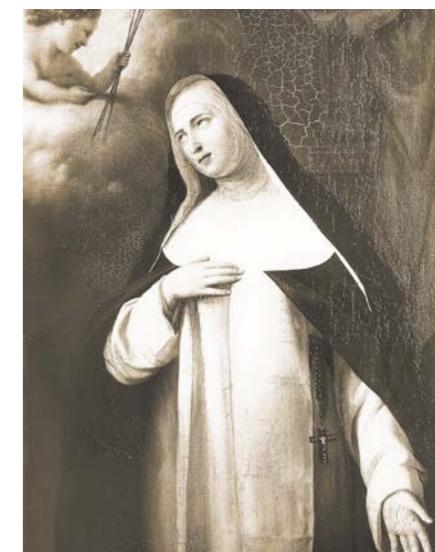
rismatic gifts to reveal themselves and benefit her fellow citizens.

The serenity with which Margherita carried the marks of her illness, and her ability to console and alleviate others' suffering made her a genuine, authentic example of life: nobles and commoners, the poor and the rich, the healthy and the sick all came to her, receiving spiritual comfort that was frequently received as a prophetic message, experienced with the intensity of a miraculous, salvific intervention. Particularly in such trying times, full of sadness, these two women motivated the cities of Alba and Sant'Angelo in Vado to promote harmony and mutual support.

If in the communal age the Dominican Third Order of Penitence performed a delicate task, nourishing civil society with feelings of harmony and promoting behaviour inspired by solidarity, their role became of primary importance when the need for pacification between factions began to present itself, requiring the municipal courts, afflicted by ideological differences and internal conflicts, to show a level of administrative and political stability they were not able to guarantee. In the rapid process of transformation that



Saint Margherita della Metola



Blessed Margherita of Savoy

## The Truffle and Forest Tourism

by Augusto Tocci



**Augusto Tocci**  
Video-journalist and researcher  
of historical Italian cuisine.  
Former founder and director of the Centre  
for Research on the Truffle of the Ministry  
for Agriculture and Forestry.

You leave the highway and you follow the paths through the woods. During these walks, which xenophiles like to call "trekking", you breathe pure, healthy air, you see green, peaceful landscapes, you can hear the wind whispering through the leaves of the trees and the babbling of the brooks, the chirping of birds and, for the most fortunate, the sounds of other woodland animals. What I have just described is certainly the most salient aspect of what, with a new concept, "forest tourism", we want to identify as a new way to experience the environment of our forests.

Tourism in the forest certainly also means searching for truffles in the company of a faithful dog that can lead us in the hunt for this white or black gold. It is truly exciting and captivating to go into the woods and collect, on your knees, as if in devout veneration, these truffles that very much resemble nuggets of gold in their form and colour.

When you then use them to cook, it is a good idea to follow the advice of Pellegrino Artusi: "the truffle must be manipulated as little as possible; do not risk spoiling it in an attempt to prepare

sophisticated dishes that require skill and other ingredients that are hard to find". Since the 1980s, thanks to the valuable work of the mass media, truffles have become public domain even in geographical areas without their own production, and this allows us to carry out "forest tourism" to some extent in all parts of the country. Cultivation of truffles has also developed, further encouraging the phenomenon of a type of tourism that has come very much to the fore, and that we should certainly be promoting by investing resources that promise sure, encouraging returns.

The concept of "forest tourism", in terms of truffles, should be understood in two parallel but divergent ways, as it is one thing to enjoy walks with a dog, searching for the precious fruits, and another to earn money from the tourist appeal that the truffle creates at the feasts, festivals and fairs that are now celebrated in many parts of the country, with a popularity that only a product such as this can gain.

The concept of forest tourism also encapsulates many other aspects linked to the forest, which we can briefly summarise as:

*the small fruits that are an inestimable source of vitamins and other substances important for our health;*  
*the wild herbs that are indispensable for forest cooking;*  
*mushrooms, a gastronomic resource that renews itself from year to year;*  
*folk legends, such as witches and elves, but also plants with definite medicinal powers...*

It is starting from this very premise that the *Forest Tourism School* was founded a few years ago in the area of Badia Tedalda (Province of Arezzo), in the little village of Sampatigrano, where the people have lived for centuries on an economy

mostly based on the forest, at the edges of very poor agriculture where even the sheep had to resort to forest fruits (particularly blackberries) to survive. The farm that hosts the school has productive truffle cultivations, experimental fields of small fruits and wild herbs, an educational arboretum, a cooking school, and therefore also a restaurant that uses forest produce, and even a hostel for those who want to experience the forest in its entirety.

There are a great many dishes to taste and learn to prepare with these absolutely authentic and "truly" organic products, among which those featuring the truffle are never lacking - such as, for example, minced chianina beef with summer scorzone truffle.

[www.selviturismo.it](http://www.selviturismo.it)



## TRUFFLE SPECIAL

### SCHEGGINO The home of the Truffle *Where everything starts*

*"We left for Scheggino in torrential rain, which also accompanied us on our return, but we were satisfied to have eaten tagliatelle with black truffle and did not miss the prized white one"*



## Umbrian Scheggino and the Urbani Family

by Angelo Valentini



**Angelo Valentini**  
Wine master and oxologist

A little village in the heart of Valnerina, at an altitude of 282 metres, with around 500 inhabitants. A fortified outpost in the medieval times, protected by the Duchy of Spoleto from the 12th century. A mighty castle that was raided many times during infighting between the noble Orsini family, supporter of the city of Spoleto on the side of the Guelphs, and the powerful Colonna family on the Ghibelline side. In 1522, Scheggino was besieged, taking advantage of the absence of its inhabitants who were working in the fields, but despite everything, the attempt was unsuccessful thanks to the intervention of the women and young people still in the village. The medieval church of San Nicola, restored in the 16th century, still contains exquisite frescoes depicting the Coronation of the Virgin in homage to Spoleto, whose effigy is present in the apse of the Cathedral.

From 1926 to 1968, the territory of Scheggino enjoyed a rail service on the Spoleto-Norcia line, with its own station. This was a unique railway from an architectural and panoramic perspective, but was unfortunately decommissioned in

the post-war period. Today it would be a tourist attraction; the original location of the tracks is still visible, now designated as a cycle path. Politicians lack the courage to suggest its restoration.

The villagers treasure the traditions passed down by their forefathers. During the night between the 9th and 10th December, they celebrate the Feast of the Coming of the Holy House of Loreto, and large fires are lit.

On the 23rd July, they remember the historical events of 1522, when the women defended the village and prevented its siege.

At Epiphany, they celebrate the Song of Pasquella, sung by young singers, who, singing through the streets of the village, collect offerings and groceries that are eaten together at a joyful shared dinner. Scheggino is recognised around the world thanks to a dynasty that lives in harmony with the "precious Tuber": The Urbani family, which for six generations has worked in the sale and production of the Tuber Magnatum Pico and the Tuber Melanosporum (as well as other types of truffle that grow in nature), with several different production areas that also process mushrooms.

Indeed, since 1852, the Urbani company have dedicated themselves to the truffle with love and passion, starting to export fresh truffles in that period to France, Germany, Switzerland, and then throughout the national territory. It was with Carlo Urbani and his wife Olga, the third generation, that the company became famous all over the world as a pioneer of truffle cultivation in Italy.

The business continued to boom with their sons, Paolo and Bruno, who represented the fourth generation and transformed the company into a truly technologically advanced industry, exporting

their treasures to markets all around the world. Paolo was honoured by the President of the Republic as a Cavaliere del Lavoro, to recognise his achievement of creating a real economic institution based on the truffle, the pride of Italy around the world. Bruno is currently at the helm of the group, and has held important roles in the banking and industrial sectors. The fifth generation, formed by Olga, Paolo's daughter, and her cousins Giammarco and Carlo, Bruno's sons, are successfully continuing their fathers' business, managing the operations of the group with courage and foresight, and taking care of public relations, maintaining the good image passed on by their ancestors.

With Luca and Francesco Loretì Urbani, Olga's sons, we arrive at the sixth generation: Luca, under the guidance of his uncle Carlo, Bruno's son, deals with foreign markets, while Francesco has started his own great project: spreading truffle culture in Italy and around the world through his forward-looking project, Truffleland, protecting the biodiversity of this precious gold of the earth.

The Urbani family, then, has not stopped at just the commercial side of things. They have created a culture, founding the truffle museum, dedicated to their land, to the truffle hunters, their faithful dogs, and to the cuisine connected to the truffle, with publications about the cultivation of truffles. Originally the idea of Olga Urbani, dedicated to the memory of her father, Paolo Urbani, following his death, the museum is not the traditional monothematic exhibit but a museum to experience: this museum presents the legacy not only of a centuries-old tradition, but also the fact that it has become an integral part of the social fabric, with testimonials from the inhabitants of Scheggino, photos, and antique tools for truffle production. The building is also

the seat of the Umbrian Apennine Ridge Eco-museum.

I have had a long friendship with the Urbani family, strengthened over our time together at trade fairs for the enogastronomic sector: Cibus in Parma saw us at nearby stands, with the Urbani family attracting the attention of the visitors with their prized truffles, while I represented Lungarotti Wines and put up the great Paracucchi in one corner with his specialities. Not far from us was the Perugina stand, held by dear Saverio Ripa di Meana. It was a strategic position, artfully chosen to create synergy, all in the shadow of the great Barilla pavilion, generously donating us copious baked products to pair with Vin Santo, with the approval of the great Pietro Barilla and his director, Garedo, much appreciated guests at our stands. The after-party "buzzed" at the legendary Beppino Cantarelli's in San Boseto, a supplier of cured meats and cheeses, where there was no shortage of sublime wines and great personalities from the business world; his little shop would be the envy even of Fauchon in Paris. I remember with nostalgia an evening in Busseto at the restaurant of Giovannino Guareschi, ending in the early hours by the fireside with roasted chestnuts and Lambrusco, fascinated by the tales of the Great Writer: to my question as to why he no longer wrote about politics, he replied: "at my age it is a sport I can no longer afford to play - they have all put me in jail, Christian Democrats, Germans, Fascists, for being a faithful servant of my homeland, like an officer of the Royal Italian Army".

I remember his faithful collaborator, Pallucco, with affection. He was a colourful, crafty character who used to introduce himself like this: "Pleasure to meet you, Pallucco from the Urbani company - a name, a brand, a guarantee". Exceedin-

gly charming to the promotion girls at the fair.

An episode that ties me to my friend Ada Urbani is when Gualtiero Marchesi and Mariangiola Castrovilli, RAI journalist, my guests in Perugia to taste the pumpkin tortelli made by my wife, Idilia, expressed the desire to eat a black truffle dish, because, as Marchesi said, he maintained that the true Norcia black truffle was superior to the white one. We had just had lunch, and it was cloudy and threatened to rain, but I wanted to make my guests happy at all cost, so I phoned Ada and put my guests' wish to her. She didn't make me say it twice: "I'll be waiting for you with great pleasure". We left for Scheggino in torrential rain, which also accompanied us on our return, but we were satisfied to have eaten tagliatelle with black truffle and did not miss the prized white one.

I spent another memorable evening with Ada and Bruno on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the foundation of the WWF, with all the heads of state and royalty of the world present. Following my friendship with the secretary of Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, the president of the WWF, I managed to organise a gala dinner at the Tre Vaselle, as guests of the Lungarotti family, with the Urbani family as sponsors, at the table next to King Bernhard of the Netherlands, and Maria Grazia next to Prince Philip (I treasure the furtively taken photos, snapped under the nose of one of the English police officers sitting at every table for security).

Another episode that ties me to Scheggino I owe to the mayor of Spoleto at the time, Brunini, Mario Arcangeli, aka Mastro Raphael, and the dear departed Carlo Rinaldi. I was invited along with my wife to lunch at an agritourism in Scheggino, located on a little hill, run by a wo-

man called Elvira Candelori. All around was the flavour of an Umbrian farmhouse, and entering the large kitchen I was amazed by the mise-en-place: the table, the dishes, the cutlery, the table cloths of a great, noble house. Sublime dishes, including the dessert, the coffee, the liqueurs, the perfect wine pairings; an indescribable wonder, in a courtyard with the chickens scratching about. As I write, I have just learnt from my friend Mario Arcangeli that Signora Elvira is still alive! God bless her! Those reading will ask: where did she get such skills? I'll tell you! Elvira was the cook for the Agnelli, or to be more clear, the lawyer, Gianni, and the Urbani family.

After describing the truffle, King of the Table, I would like to give some impartial advice on pairing truffles and wine. So, we must listen to nature, always provident, and here it is no coincidence that the territory produces a white wine called Trebbiano Spoletino, a peculiar clone that resembles more of a Sauvignon in its fragrances, aromas and taste. It was exalted by the Cupbearer of Pope Paul II Farnese, who, travelling to Norcia in 1500 and passing through Scheggino, described the wine: "Spoleti, a city that makes cooked wine, but there are a few that are very good, seeming Greek, and a few times His Holiness drank them, and also a few raw wines, and these are very good".

## The Urbani Museum



## A DIRECT LINE WITH THE MINISTER



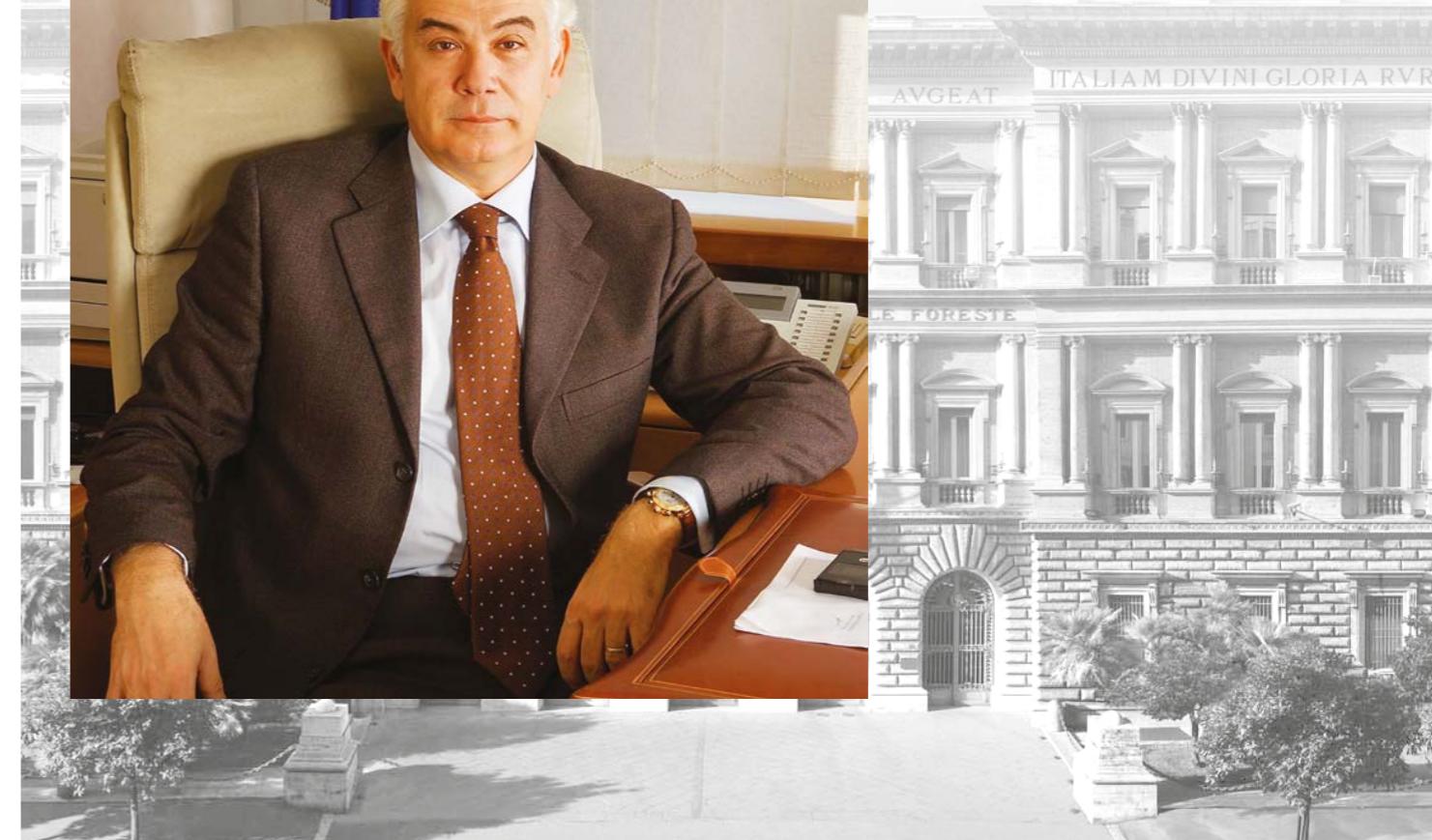
Accademia del Tartufo nel Mondo  
The World Truffle Academy



Ministry of Agricultural,  
Food and Forestry Policies

### Francesco Saverio Abate The truffle industry is served

*"the minister will be in charge of making sure the truffle industry works as efficiently as possible, leaving it to companies and associations to promote the truffle, and I am sure that the whole sector will benefit from this"*



## An Interview with Francesco Saverio Abate

by Giuseppe Cristini

### The truffle industry is served

In our direct line with the Minister, which we aim to include in every edition of the magazine as an important column for the entire agricultural world, today we have the opportunity to interview Dr Francesco Saverio Abate: The Department Head for the Ministry for Agricultural Policy, and in particular competitive policy for agricultural quality in fishing and horseriding. We also turn to him for the promotion and development of the truffle sector.

#### Interview

We would like to ask you straight away how you consider the Italian truffle world, starting directly from the environment, from the forest and the truffle hunter, and arriving at the way the truffle is served in restaurants, beloved around the world.

More than the world of the truffle, it would be better to speak about the truffle industry; that is, a series of economic actors who manage to bring this prized hypogaeal fungus from the forests and truffle farms to the tables of consumers all over the world. It is a very well-structured industry which, before 2018, was based on truffle collectors (or tartufai) who carried out the activity of collecting truffles, unfortunately "benefiting" from a large amount of "fiscal anonymity". Since 2019, thanks to Budget Law no.145 of 30/12/2018 (Article 1, paragraphs 692-701), there has been definite

*progress towards the formalisation of the industry, bringing in very significant figures for the entire primary segment. The numbers, which are certainly not exact, indicate around 100,000 truffle collectors who deliver to over 300 traders distributed all over the country, as well as around thirty companies that process truffles, whose production is primarily destined for foreign markets. We estimate, as of today, that the truffle market exceeds 500 million euros of annual revenue, of which unfortunately only part is declared. The Ministry is making efforts, through the sector plan shared at the State-Region Conference, to improve the sector and encourage respect for the traceability of the national product, but the road is still long and complex.*

**As the World Truffle Academy we have the obligation to give everyone the opportunity to discover Italy's legacy of truffles, in all seasons, in all regions and on all occasions. I believe that this dissemination is also one of the interests of the Ministry.**

*One could say that the truffle sells itself, but the industry is the true driving force behind communication in foreign markets. As much as we can invest in institutional communication,*

*it is the jar of truffle cream that arrives on the tables of American, English or Chinese consumers that really becomes one of the main vectors of communication and marketing for the Truffle. It is great to have fairs and events for regional promotion, but without our products being sold abroad, it is unlikely that "the customer" who appreciated the product will visit our country as a tourist.*

**The truffle represents a thousand-year-old Italian culture, and its perfumed aroma, a mix of mystery and reality, between magic and cooking, is appreciated as an added value of Italianness, but it is still little used; we need an easy guidebook - simple, accessible and immersive, able to tell the story of the Italian truffle to the world!**

*It is important to recount the culinary experiences of different regions where the truffle has been eaten for hundreds of years through a guidebook, bearing in mind that companies have already organised a multitude of marketing and customer-loyalty tools that are aiming in that direction. There are already similar experiences in many regional and local organisations, so in our opinion, it is necessary for the Ministry to make sure the truffle industry works as efficiently as possible, leaving it to companies and associations to promote the truffle, and I am sure that the whole sector will benefit from this.*

**The objective of this collaboration, and of the Pact of Good Taste that we recently signed with the Ministry, is to create a truffle culture and give a face to an industry that creates a significant economy!**

*The culture of the truffle can be created if the truffle is cultivated, harvested or processed in Italy. As a Ministry, it is our intention to encourage, first of all, the production that in recent years has been slowly declining, faced*

*with large quantities imported from abroad. Speaking of culture without speaking of cultivation is redundant, and not realistic. The Ministry must oversee the productive part, and this involves spreading a "new culture" that aims to increase the cultivated areas, protecting the management of forests and protecting against the impoverishment of territories, or in other words, encouraging environmental sustainability.*

**The Italian truffle can create an important brand for tourist appeal, with Italian and international restaurants offering great attractions to the consumer who chooses Italy partly for its rich cuisine.**

*The update to law no.752/85, which is already a long way behind European sanitary and hygiene regulations, has been under discussion since 2003. Today we are in 2021, and we are still a long way from having national guidelines for the regions (DDL at a standstill for the last year in the Agricultural Commission in the Senate). For example, there is a great need for coordination of regional activities regarding the creation of collective brands for the different territories. The Ministry could also propose production regulations with a single national brand, but that would involve significant organisational efforts and costs that could instead be addressed through a shared process carried out by all the actors in the truffle industry. In this regard, the National Plan for the truffle industry has already confirmed the need to promote a national brand for international recognition. Indeed, the activation of simplified procedures has been planned for, in order to encourage certification of the product by the chambers of commerce, but as of today it is still on hold.*

**Italian truffles all year round, also to create new**

**jobs and new opportunities, starting from the forest, right up to the table, opening up new possibilities for employment. I'm thinking of a Forest Caretaker, right up to a Restaurant Steward.**

*Creating new roles? Perhaps, but in the immediate future it is better to manage those that already exist. A forest caretaker that isn't the owner of the land does not appear to be a very functional position for the sector; on the contrary, the owner or renter of a truffle wood is more interested in investing in the property, and therefore becomes a protector of the territory, encouraging ecological and economic stability. Furthermore, I don't believe adding extra obligations for forest owners is forward-thinking if the final goal is the creation and maintenance of the social and economic fabric in rural areas of the country.*

**The truffle as an ecological sentinel: starting from the idea of new truffle plantations, with the opportunity to plant certified species even in the most marginalised and abandoned areas in order to repopulate and bring back income opportunities, even to the mountains.**

*Of course. As I said before, truffle cultivations are a de facto socio-economic protection for rural territories. However, given the numerous failures derived from truffle cultivations, we need to create market mechanisms that favour the creation of innovative truffle farms. We need to remember that it is only today, twenty years after the disastrous launch of truffle cultivation on a large scale in Italy, that we have reached a point where the nurseries selling mycorrhized plants are of a higher quality. The proposed legislation (unified text under discussion in the Senate) is a step in the right direction, as it is an attempt to prepare an obligatory certification (with accompanying procedure) for plants sold within the national*

*territory. Certification for the plants is the only route the Ministry requires to be followed today to improve truffle cultivation, with a system that brings into play the regions and training courses in dedicated territories, also through authorised consultants expert in the subject, in order to train staff.*

**With our magazine and this direct line with the Minister, we are always aiming to inform the agricultural and restaurant sectors: what advice would you like to give these two areas?**

*Investing in the national product seems obvious. By purchasing a traceable product, not only do you have the guarantee of knowing the entire production process, but you are also laying the foundations for future policies. One thing is certain, and has been clearly evidenced in the Sector Plan: without statistical data available, which would require an industry in which every product is traceable, the Ministry and the Regions will never be able to make the funds from European policies available to allow financing for new cultivations or investments in truffle forest capital. Therefore, I suggest purchasing national products that support our economy and the inland areas of the country.*

**And finally, arriving at the pleasure of savouring the truffle all year round, I would like to ask: what is your favourite truffle dish?**

*To tell the truth, there are two: tagliolini with white truffle, and meat tartare with scorzone. I hope to eat both in a few months' time once the scorzone season starts. For now, I must content myself with the bianchetto truffle, the prince of spring.*

A direct line with the Minister



**mipaaf**

Ministry of Agricultural,  
Food and Forestry Policies

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## PARTNERS OF THE ACADEMY



**SAN PIETRO**  
Latteria 474

**Latteria San Pietro**  
is a dairy cooperative that produces  
Grana Padano DOP

The cooperative was founded in the upper Pianura Padana in 1966, when 31 partners who raised cattle grazed only on stable, permanent pastures came together to produce this prized cheese.



## A friendly conversation with Stefano Pezzini

by Giuseppe Cristini

### Grana Padano, the best-known Italian DOP product in the world



**Stefano Pezzini**  
The President of Latteria San Pietro



#### Interview

Today, Grana Padano DOP is the best-known and best-selling Italian product in the world. How have you reached this achievement?

Today, Grana Padano is the most consumed DOP cheese in the world, and to understand this success, we have to go a long way back in time, because this story really began in the middle ages, in 1100, when the first cheesemaking took place in the Abbey of Chiaravalle.

From then on, cheese became a way to preserve excess milk produced by the animals, effectively coming to represent riches for rural populations, especially during famines. There are testimonies from 1500 that document the presence of Grana Padano at renaissance banquets for princes and dukes. "Grana Padano" has therefore become an expression of an entire social and economic culture, transcending class, appreciated both by the rich and noble, accustomed to high-quality cuisine, and by the poor, whose everyday recipes are simple and traditional.

In times much closer to ours, the evolution of gastronomic culture and food practices brought about the need to define more clearly the characteristics and particular qualities of this incredible cheese, as well as to protect it in order to guarantee its standards and traditional quality.

The Consortium for the Protection of Grana Padano was founded in 1954, and in 1996 it gained DOP certification. The great success of Grana Padano, therefore, is really the success of a population that knew how to recognise and perfect a product with unique characteristics: nutritional

value, quality of the raw ingredients, production know-how and the ability to protect its characteristics.

When we think of Grana Padano, then, we think of a cheese that keeps us company throughout our life, in all seasons; a cheese with unique versatility, because in the kitchen you really can use it in everything. When a product wins the trust of consumers, success is assured. From there, the great responsibility of all the 129 dairies producing it is not to disappoint an attentive and loyal consumer.

#### What are the current production figures for the Consortium of Grana Padano?

A total of 5,164,759 wheels produced in 2019 - 2,051,125 wheels exported in 2019 - 129 producers - 40,000 dedicated workers.

Latteria San Pietro interprets its role as a Grana Padano producer with a modern, health-focused vision, and a special feature: our Grana Padano Select from permanent pasture hay.

Latteria San Pietro is located in the Province of Mantua, in the heart of the area for Grana Padano production. Here you can find the stable pastures of the Mincio Valley, real polyphytic meadows that boast a history of over 100 years. In all that time, the pastures have not undergone a single work process except for mowing and natural fertilization: this is where the adjective "stable" comes from. Seeding is 100% natural, with absolutely no human interference. Indeed, it is nature itself, through insects, wind, rain, that guarantees the propagation of the seeds of the many diffe-

rent plants that live in the meadow (in every square metre of meadow there are 60 different plant species, whereas in a common field you will find only a third of this).

But how does Grana Padano benefit from this? The answer is in the milk. Indeed, Grana Padano Select from hay is produced with milk from cows fed only on hay from stable pastures, and a little local feed. The hay we take from the stable pasture contains a complex variety of aromatic molecules and volatile substances that enrich the milk, and therefore the cheese, giving it a unique taste.

Producing Grana Padano Select from Hay is also the best way to protect stable meadows, which, due to mistaken agricultural policies, are now very small in number. The stable pasture is a sustainable model for agriculture: they can absorb large quantities of carbon and do not need artificial fertilization, therefore reducing the greenhouse effect. They help to preserve the health of local aquifers and represent a huge store of biodiversity, which is fundamental for the survival of the entire planet.

Latteria San Pietro focuses a lot on product communication at a global level, and recently you have also launched the Cheese Experience: what actions have you put in place in recent months?

Our cooperative has always used innovation as a way to reach objectives and realise our dreams. First, through product innovation, thanks to which we have created our Select from Hay and Organic lines, and another line that is currently in research. And now also through digital and structural innovation.

This spring, the new factory went into

operation, with 40 boilers and a mechanised process for the wellbeing of workers. In this new factory, equipped with the most sophisticated technology, there are some operations that, yes, could have been engineered, but that we wanted to keep manual, and they have remained unchanged, because the experience of man is irreplaceable.

The digitalisation plan started in 2018 with the "GestiGrana" project, thanks to which it is possible to access all the supply chain information for our Grana Padano DOP by simply scanning a QRCode on the packaging of the cheese.

In 2019, we launched a supply chain project called "Jump into the chain" that aims to increase the transparency of our supply chain to the maximum: thanks to this project, we have installed a system of cameras that film all the phases of production of Grana Padano, from the fields to the aging.

It is thanks to this last project that we have revolutionised the concept of a gastronomic tour through the first Digital Cheese Experience: a unique tour experience in collaboration with Microsoft Italia. For a cheese experience, you receive a digital cheese box delivered directly to your house, containing the Grana Padano tasting kit and the link to connect to the event. On the day of the experience, the spectator is guided through the discovery of the entire supply chain, thanks to the livestreaming cameras, and then an expert taster leads the Grana Padano tasting.

What future can we expect for Grana Padano around the world, also considering the new political changes in the United States?

In terms of exports, there are considerations to be made with respect to three different markets:

the Asian market: we are experiencing a double-figure increase in consumption of dairy products imported into the area, where the "hunger" for food continues to grow significantly. Up until 2/3 years ago, this market was growing, but it was only a very slow growth.

The American market: the new president Biden gives us hope that he will reduce American protectionism and open up discussion on the current tariffs. This could reset the balance for consumption after a significant drop in exports, which as of today has reached -35% compared to 2019.

The Russian market: the Russian embargo continues and there are no glimmers of hope of a recovery in exports.

#### Grana Padano in the kitchen: what is President Stefano Pezzini's favourite dish?

A very difficult question! Living in the Province of Mantua, we really do have a lot of traditional dishes that are special. Definitely one of the dishes closest to my heart is the Dish of Perfection: a simple dish of egg tagliolini with Grana Padano Riserva Select from Hay and seasonal truffle, maybe paired with a good local wine!



## San Pietro today

Today, our members continue to follow the path of our founders on an extraordinary economic and industrial journey to create a product that, over its 1000-year history, has told the story of the efforts of man, animals and nature, imbuing it with the flavours of an extraordinary region.

The hay from permanent pastures, the base nutrition for our animals, infuses our milk with all the flavours of the season.

The experience and hard work of our partners and collaborators does the rest. The factory has a well-equipped processing room and spacious storage areas for aging, allowing us to transform 40,000 tonnes of milk a year and age over 65,000 wheels of Grana Padano DOP.

Today, the milk we process comes exclusively from our 26 partner farms.

### THE TEAM

#### **Stefano Pezzini, President of the cooperative**

"My job is to manage a company formed by 27 partners, and guide it through the changes of the modern era, while preserving the fundamental values of a product with such a long history: a very short list of ingredients and the quality obtained through aging time and experience."

#### **Paolo Pernumian - Production Manager**

"My work starts at 3 in the morning, because, as the dairymen of the past used to say, "milk should never see the light of day".

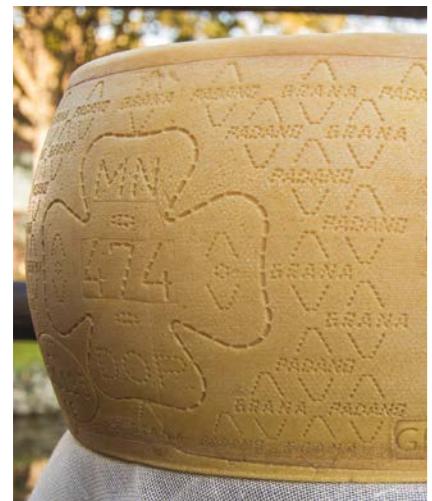
The work requires constant dedication: I start by refilling the vats, and then guide my collaborators through all the intermediate phases of processing, right up to controlling the aging process. This way, we always guarantee a top quality product."

#### **Laura Zecchini - Communications Manager**

San Pietro is distinguished by its enterprise and dynamism. The diversification of San Pietro has gone hand in hand with the desire to spread the word, not only of the product itself, but also of the whole philosophy underpinning the production process.

#### **Simona Rotondo - Quality Manager**

"My job is to take care of "how" all the company's operations are carried out, ensuring that the modus operandi follows EU and foreign legislation, and that it passes the strict controls imposed by the authorities. Through product and process testing, we protect the safety of consumers and guarantee respect throughout the production process. This is a job requiring uncompromising, constant dedication to control."



## The Science of the Truffle

### Nuggets of knowledge about Truffles acquired over half a century, by an old man from Piedmont

by Mario Palenzona



**Mario Palenzona**  
former Director of IPLA, Turin

#### Part II: from the *Tuber Maculatum* to the "Bianchetto"

The field observations and controlled synthesis experiments on the *Tuber Maculatum* Vitt., performed by Fassi and Fontana and referred to in the magazine last December, opened up access to important knowledge, now taken for granted, about the biology of these fungi, that at the time was still highly uncertain. Indeed, the results reached by the two researchers offered demonstrative proof of the symbiotic nature of this hypogaeal ascomycete, able to bear fruit after a vegetative phase spent intimately connected to the absorbent rootlets of its host tree, forming its typical ectomycorrhizas.

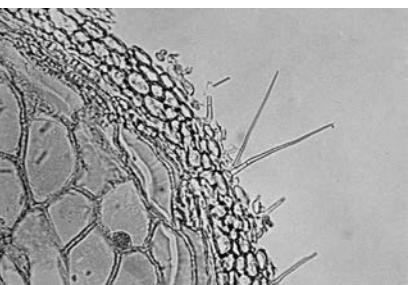
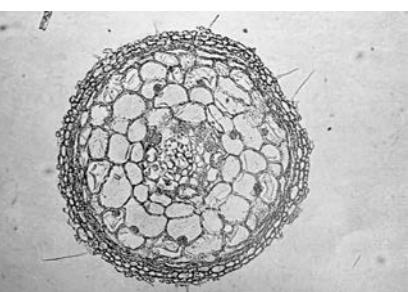
In fact, Mattirolo had already expressed his conviction about the symbiotic relationship between Truffles and trees or shrubs from particular arboreal families a century earlier, but without evidence of the connections between the mycelium and the root tips, doubts always remained at a scientific level regarding their patterns of behaviour.

As a lucky young agronomist in training, I was enthusiastically involved in these applied research studies. I did not want to miss the opportunity of an apprenticeship based on such stimulating topics, under the leadership of a tutor with such great experience as Bruno Fassi, and with the open collaboration of excellent mycologists such as those working at the Centre for Soil Mycology Studies at the National Research Council at the time.

This is how I gained my abilities to identify and attribute specific mycorrhizic forms found on conifers and deciduous trees in nurseries, plantations and woodlands to various symbiotic mycetes, through surveys, field samples and macro-microscopic observations in the laboratory. In the autumn of 1967, upon explantation from a field of hybrid StroboxExcelsa Pine transplants, I discovered copious fruits ascribable to truffles, the size of a large walnut and bigger, with a lightly pungent but pleasant aroma. I ascertained that they belonged to the *Tuber Albidum* species, a ubiquitous species known to collectors as the "bianchetto". From examination and sampling of the rootlets with the most contact with the fruits, I discovered the almost pure presence of mycorrhizal tips, which, upon microscopic confirmation in cross-section, presented a form, colour and structure similar to that described for the *Tuber Maculatum*. As well as sharing a swollen appearance, pale or dark amber based on age and lack of surrounding mycelial growth, these fungal tips showed the distinctive presence of hyphae with "spinules" emerging from the wall, which, on the young root tips, resembled the spiny burrs of the chestnut tree when magnified. These formations were also observable on the wall (peridium) of the truffles.

But the final, most significant evidence that this form of mycorrhiza, identified

and described, belonged to the *Tuber Albidum* species, I got from my collaboration with the dear departed Silvano Scannerini, from the aforementioned Centre for Mycology. Indeed, from cross-sections under the ultramicroscope, it was possible to observe the parenchymal cortex of the rootlets in the septae of the hyphae that constitute the enveloping lattice, known as the Hartig net, the typical structure of Ascomycetes, the class that truffles belong to. The confirmation of the symbiotic nature of "maculatum" and "albidum" and the characterisation of the mycorrhizae they produced on the young pines, in terms of common, distinctive aspects useful for recognition, constituted a good reference basis for the continuation of experimentation in this area. In particular, their implementation in the development of mycorrhization for other Tubers, used in the production of controlled planting stock for modern truffle cultivation. But this will be the subject of the next short memory, coming soon. ... and the story continues



## Sometimes the American Dream really does come true

by Giuseppe Rosati



**Giuseppe Rosati**

Man of Relations. Facilitator of relationships, both commercial and public; influencer; communicator and observer of a changing world

### Giuseppe Rosati in conversation with Fabio Trabocchi: a chef from Marche who has conquered America

If you work hard and believe in your dream, results and recognition will follow.

Who doesn't have it in the back of their mind? The dream of going to America and making it. We all thought about it when we were young. Leaving to make our own dreams come true in the city that never sleeps: "If I can make it there, I'll make it anywhere, It's up to you," as Frank Sinatra sang in the famous New York, New York. If you can make it there, you can make it anywhere, and it is right there, from New York, that the chef Fabio Trabocchi started his conquest of the States. A native of Marche, he has been travelling since he was young. The work of a chef means sacrifice and a packed suitcase. The desire to learn and travel, and our Fabio has travelled, observed, learned from his experiences, and taken advantage of them to create one of the



most successful restaurant groups in the last decade.

If you work hard and believe in your dreams, results and recognition will follow, and, indeed, in 2006, Fabio Trabocchi was awarded by the James Beard Foundation, the largest culinary institution in the United States, as the best up-and-coming chef for Food & Wine Magazine. This is how he laid the foundations for realising certain dreams.

In 2009, in Washington DC, Fabio Trabocchi Restaurants was launched, with Fiola as the first restaurant 100% designed and operated by Fabio. The quality of the ingredients creates a cuisine that encompasses his Marche origins, Spain, another of his inspirations, and the United States. FTR now numbers 6 restaurants, each one with its own identity, but with a

common thread: Fabio's sense of quality. Top quality food and service, with no compromises. You can take a seat in Washington DC at the iconic, michelin-starred Fiola, for a complete experience of the best of Italy and the States, or at its annex on the Potomac River, Fiola Mare, where you can taste top-quality seafood dishes with an Italian flair. Del Mar is the delight of those with a passion for Spain and its cuisine. The latest addition is Sfoglina, a restaurant focusing on pasta. Outside the general area of Washington, Fabio has opened up in Miami (Fiola), and back home, running the restaurant at JW Marriott Venice, Fiola al Dopolavoro.

I asked Fabio for his impressions on this moment, his passions, and, of course, the Truffle.

#### Interview

##### What ingredients are always in stock in your ideal pantry?

*Sicilian sea salt, Alba hazelnuts, Calabrian chillis, Calabrian oregano, Pienolo tomatoes, Castelluccio lentils, wild fennel, Controne beans, colatura di alici from Cetara.*

##### The ingredient of the future?

*It is a healthy diet that will determine what the most successful ingredients will be in the future. The current demand for a healthy lifestyle will lead consumers towards power foods and healthy ingredients.*

##### How did you first encounter the truffle?

*In my youth, due to my modest education, I was never introduced to luxury ingredients such as truffles. I encountered the truffle working as a*

*commis in a kitchen, and from then on I was in love.*

##### What is it like to manage restaurants in this historic moment?

*We are constantly reinventing ourselves, facing our work with a lot of creativity. We have had to find new ways to serve our clients and adapt in order to survive and keep our place in the business world, but also to provide a service to the community.*

*We have created a line, Fabio at Home, and we embraced the approach of a grocery store during the worst period of the crisis. We have created a new segment of operations that we have never had before. But we also have to prepare to return to normality, and that normality has to be better than ever.*

#### What does an Italian restaurant abroad do best?

*It brings the Italian approach to cooking and hospitality: these two things combined make an excellent restaurant outside Italy. Genuine, sincere hospitality, which Italians are really good at, and have been good at for a long time.*

#### How has your clientele changed?

*In the last 10, 15 years, our clients in the United States and all over the world have become more knowledgeable, recognising ingredients and good food, and this is because they travel more and there is more information about good ingredients and good food, and also other excellent restaurants.*

*We are always serving ever more edu-*

*cated clients in the restaurant, whether it is high-end food or everyday food. This is thanks to the constant improvement in quality at the restaurant.*

#### Truffle: added value or ingredient?

*Both. Truffles are a fundamental ingredient, and they can therefore stand alone. But the use of truffles can also be an "added value" for other dishes.*

#### The first thing you eat when you return to Italy?

*Normally I love to taste the traditional food of the region I am in at the time. At the moment that means a lot of fish for me!*



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## Cultivating the prized white truffle?

by Antonio Degiacomi



**Antonio Degiacomi**  
President of The International Truffle Research Centre in Alba

In this lethargic, difficult winter season, when the focus of our attention and concern is the vaccines against Covid-19, the news has arrived that in France they have collected prized white truffles from mycorrhized plants cultivated in a field in the Nouvelle-Aquitaine region, an area that is not naturally suited to truffles, least of all the *Tuber Magnatum Pico*. The reactions among experts and from the more superficial news reports have gone from treating the news as a hoax, to minimising it (how many have they found? Seven in two years!), or insisting that anyway our Italian truffle will always be the best, and it is here that you need to come to taste it, all the way to - at the other extreme - claiming the imminent obsolescence of free truffle hunting in natural environments, with its accompanying mystery and relationship with the dog, already erroneously imagining fields of truffles planted like potatoes, harvested mechanically, with the consequent collapse of prices to the joy of the consumer and the desperation of truffle hunters and traders. Others, with a shrug of the shoulders, murmur about

having been harvesting a good number of white truffles for years from cuttings from truffle-hosting trees or planting acorns; some soaking the land with water in which truffles have been immersed; some implying that they have discovered new techniques that they don't want to talk about...

The truth is, the news is based on a scientific article published in the journal *Mycorrhiza*, and a press conference held by INRAE, the French National Institute for Research on Agriculture, Food, Environment. The objectives of this study were to evaluate the persistence of *T. Magnatum* in the soil of plantations created with mycorrhized plants, and characterise the first cultivation of *T. Magnatum* that has produced ascocarps outside the known natural geographical area for this species. In 2018, five installations were sampled in France, and *T. Magnatum* was studied in the ground. The mycelium of *T. Magnatum* survived in the soil for 3-8 years after being planted. The key result of this study was the harvest of *T. Magnatum* in 2019 and 2020 from under different trees and in two consecutive seasons in a plantation after 4.5 years.

We must increasingly consider the Italian *T. Magnatum Pico* not only as a product to promote and guarantee the quality of, but also as a cultural treasure linked to tradition, environmental protection and diversity, and skilful use in the kitchen.



plants that are adequate for a profitable cultivation, and there are still, even after this significant result, many aspects to investigate in terms of its ecology and the techniques needed to encourage its production.

I would like to highlight four points, in anticipation of this further investigation: in Italy, too, where very important pioneering studies have been carried out, we need to invest more in research, and coordinate and apply it better;

we need to test new possibilities in Italy, with a certified scientific method, starting with the native prized white truffles of various regions, and collaborating with France;

we have a great natural heritage that can continue to offer us an exceptional product, the *T. Magnatum*, but we need to protect it with specific forest maintenance projects (also enriching them with mycorrhized plants) and pass on the best knowledge and practices for searching and collecting.

As we know, after the experimentation in the 1970s in laboratories and nurseries on mycorrhization between roots and mycelium, large areas of truffle cultivation were created for a few species of black truffle - in particular the prized *melanosporum*. Spain in particular was a resounding success, starting from nothing and joining France at the top of the biggest producers in the world. An interesting, little known fact is that in France, truffle cultivation has "saved" the prized black truffle, and today represents 97-98% of production, in the face of a steep drop in its spontaneous occurrence.

With the prized white truffle, it has been difficult until now to produce mycorrhized

## The Truffle Community heading for UNESCO: initiatives for 2021

by Antonella Brancadoro



**Antonella Brancadoro**  
Director of the National Association of Cities for the Truffle

the collaboration of the territories, which have sent, and continue to send, new material relating to the associated topics to increase the amount of archival content and provide evidence of the richness of this area proposed as world heritage: photos showing the hunt; the relationship between man and dog; the uniqueness of a territory's truffle production; interviews and comments, anecdotes and stories, fables and legends, testimonies and documents on the world of the truffle.

Similarly, it has also been necessary to coordinate the launch of a series of initiatives still allowed by the pandemic in municipal territories, always with the aim of contributing to and carrying out the safeguarding measures presented in the UNESCO application file. In September 2020, during an event in Campobasso, Molise, the editorial project created in collaboration with the UNESCO MiBACT Office was presented to the press and distributed to our members. The brochure, published in a bilingual edition on the website [www.cittadeltartufo.com](http://www.cittadeltartufo.com), has provided the starting point for the organisation of publicity events and territorial activities permitted in 2021. Indeed, the Cities for the Truffle will be working to involve schools in the area, truffle hunters' associations, museums and research centres, and companies that process the product, to carry out a project following the themes contained in the brochure, to be chosen between environment and diversity, education, animal wellbeing and training, historical-cultural-anthropological and social value of the proposed topic in relation to the territory, or the commitment to and value of the transmission of knowledge to the younger generations.

To support these territorial initiatives that will be included in the communications of the Association, the Cities for the Truffle will organise at least three public events, staying within current legal guidelines, whose dates will be published on the website.

The first will be a sensory analysis in whi-

ch the basics of the topic will be provided to prove its importance in terms of the Truffle, and the possibilities of its use if the cities involved want to hold, in their own territory or jointly between them, a complete course in sensory analysis to train a group of experts to use as a qualifying element for future initiatives. The Alba Truffle Research Centre will be involved in the organisation, and the event will be held at the end of March.

The second event will be dedicated to animal wellbeing, starting with dog training: for the technical and methodological parts, the Roddi University for Truffle Dogs (Province of Cuneo) will be involved, along with representatives of all the communities of truffle hunters to testify to the special relationship they have with their dogs, both emotionally and strategically. The event is planned for the end of April. Hoping for an end to the anti-Covid restrictions, the Cities for the Truffle are also planning a third event, held in person, on environmental biodiversity and its effect on nutritional biodiversity, for which there will be widespread follow-up communication. There will also be the institution of a National Award called "A Truffle Makes Culture", which the Association may award to an individual that, starting from 2021, has been committed to research, culture, economic development, solidarity and information.

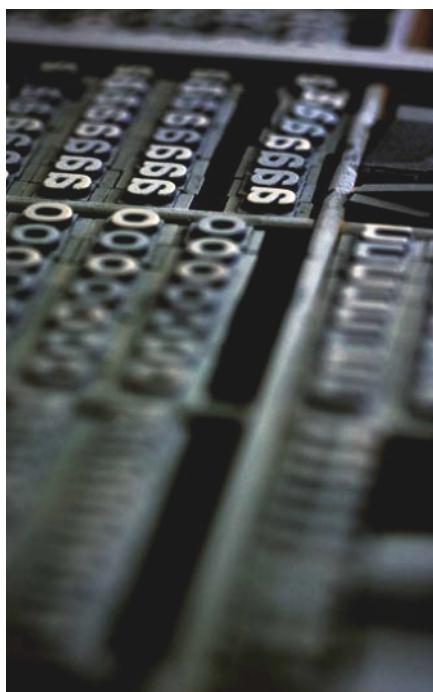
All these events aim to fill this period while we are waiting to achieve a goal that is very important for the whole truffle community, in a year in which it is complicated to be physically present in the territories, and the strength of communication and publicity is required to overcome physical distance.



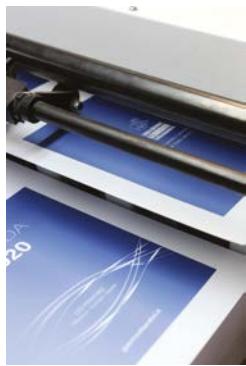
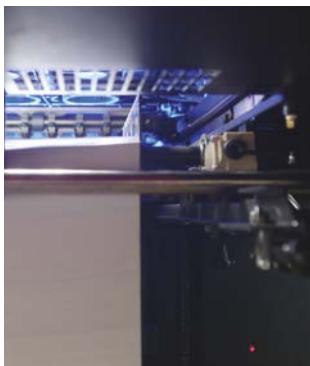


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