



Italian Historical Society of America Newsletter

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Tutto Italiano Benvenuto a *Tutto Italiano*

When [Caterina de' Medici](#) and Prince Henry, Duke of Orléans married in 1533 – through an arrangement by Pope Clement VII, a distant Medici relative – both were in their teens. Clement's pact with Henry's father, King Francis I, blended the illustrious Florentine Medici family with French royalty. Although not anticipated, Henry became King of France in 1547, establishing Caterina as Queen of France.

Caterina's influence on French culture began years before she became Queen. When she arrived in France to marry Henry, she brought an entourage to attend to her individual needs; among them [Cosimo Ruggeri](#) (or Ruggieri), described as an alchemist, astrologer, adviser, and also a sorcerer. It's mentioned that Ruggeri "[won a cooking prize](#)" in a contest held by the Medici family, and Caterina was so enamored with his dessert, she brought him with her to France, and the acclaimed creamy frozen dessert was served at the wedding.

In much earlier times, snow and ice were used to cool drinks and later, sweeteners and flavorings were added to create a type of sorbet. By some accounts, the icy treat traveled from China and Eastern Asia to the Middle East and then to Sicily; others give [credit to Marco Polo](#) who returned to Venice from China in the early 1300s with a recipe for a cold refreshment. Whether it arrived from the north or the south, by the mid-1500s, the frozen concoction was a popular indulgence in the [Medici Court](#).

Joining the House of Medici at an early age – and after Caterina had moved to France – [Bernardo Buontalenti](#) received training as a painter, sculptor, and architect, acquiring additional skills in engineering, mathematics, pyrotechnics, stage design, and theatrical productions. In 1574, at 43, he became chief architect for the Medici Court and under the rule of Grand Duke Francesco I, Buontalenti transformed a reservoir (or plant nursery) built for [Boboli Gardens](#) into a cavern of carved art and sculptures, known as [Buontalenti Grotto](#).

Buontalenti's numerous skills included developing methods for keeping snow and ice cold. In 1559, for an extravagant event hosted by Grand Duke Cosimo I, Buontalenti "[whipped up a kind of frozen zabaglione made with sweetened milk, eggs, and wine churned over salted ice](#)." The addition of eggs and milk and the stirring process produced a "velvety texture." In 1979, a gelato competition was held in Florence to honor Bernardo Buontalenti's gelato. The gelateria that won trademarked the name of the gelato egg-cream flavor [Buontalenti](#). The Talenti brand popular today borrows part of Buontalenti's name, but it is an American brand owned by a British conglomerate.

Adding to the history of gelato, in 1686 [Francesco Procopio dei Coltelli](#) (known by several other names) moved from Sicily to Paris and opened [Le Procope](#); the cafe is noted for establishing the [coffee culture of Paris](#). It became a meeting place for the literary elite and American dignitaries, and is renowned as the oldest restaurant in Paris. Before Coltelli moved to Paris, he learned the fishing trade from his father and grandfather, but his grandfather left him something else – a machine that turned ingredients into gelato. Before the cafe opened, the frozen treat was mostly prepared and served to nobility, but it became widely known and [available through the cafe](#).

It's noted that gelato was first served by [Giovanni Biasiolo in New York in 1770](#), six years before the colonies became the United States; but it didn't gain much popularity in America until the 1900s. Market statistics for gelato are difficult to determine, as it is often combined with other frozen dairy products. An [analysis in 2018](#) reported the "gelato industry in the United States currently generates \$2 billion in revenues annually." With shifts toward non-dairy products and healthier alternatives, gelato has more competition; however, the desire for a premium quality dessert prevails. In 2003, [Carpigiani Gelato University](#) was founded to train and educate "gelato entrepreneurs ... chefs and pastry chefs." Located in Bologna (Emilia-Romagna) and with 20 satellite campuses, the University accommodates "more than 4000 students per year." Online courses are also offered, as well as consultations, success stories, a job center, and training materials.

The University is a division of [Carpigiani](#), a "market leader in the production of machines for gourmet gelato," and has numerous [academic collaborations](#) with educational institutions throughout Italy. Carpigiani headquarters also houses the [Gelato Museum](#), a fully immersible experience with "gelato classes, guided tours, [and] special tasting events."

Thank you, Mary, for sending the gelato article from Readers Digest.

[Caterina de' Medici and the Art of Cooking](#)

[How is Gelato Made?](#)

[Gelato in Florence: a Long History](#)

[Firenze e il Gelato](#) (In Italian)

[Bologna's New Ice-Cream Museum Charts History of the Italian Treat](#) (2012)

[Italian University Spreads the 'Gelato Gospel'](#) (2013)

[Buontalenti Grotto, 3D Virtual Tour](#)

Italian American Press

The Italian American Press offers a great selection of books – culture, history, memoirs, art, family, food, the supernatural, the natural beauty of Italy, and more – for every interest. Help preserve Italian American heritage and history. Support authors of Italian heritage who write about Italian American and Italian culture and let them know you found their books on the Italian American Press.

On the IAP in the months ahead ...

Murder mystery on the Riviera: new English translation by Kazabo Publishing.

A tribute to Bensonhurst, New York by Joseph C. Polacco.

The life of an Italian brigand and folk hero by Dan Possumato.

Thirty-One Days of Italians

Plan ahead to celebrate Italian American Heritage Month in October.

The 2023-2024 List of Thirty-One Days of Italians provides a date and a person to learn about and celebrate for each day in October. Thirty-One Days of Italians was founded in 2006, publicizing a list of Italians and Italian Americans who should be recognized for their extraordinary achievements in contributing to American culture and history.

The website features 75 names, but the Annual List is limited to 31 – one for each day in October. The first day in October honors the [Italian Immigrant](#) and the last day is set aside to honor someone special in your life.

[Honorary Members](#) [HM] On the List every year (in alphabetical order): Father Pietro Bandini, Constantino Brumidi, Mother Francis Cabrini, Enrico Caruso, Christopher Columbus, Enrico Fermi, Amadeo Pietro Giannini, Guglielmo Marconi, Filippo Mazzei, Antonio Meucci, Maria Montessori, Andrea Palladio, Antonio Pasin, Arturo Toscanini, and Amerigo Vespucci.

[The Annual List](#) Other names are rotated, giving everyone on Thirty-One Days of Italians a chance to have their day. The 2023-24 List includes (in alphabetical order) Helen Barolini, Yogi Berra, Giovanni Caboto, Joe DiMaggio, Anthony Fauci, Geraldine Ferraro, Ernest and Julio Gallo, Dominick Ghirardelli, Fiorello La Guardia, Lee Iacocca, Vince Lombardi, Henry Mancini, Anthony Rossi, and Frank Sinatra.

[View calendar of dates and names.](#)

Italian American Heritage Project

Last month, RICO (Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act) was headline news. That it sounds Italian – and is strongly identified with the mafia – is bad enough; but using a fictional Italian crime family as an example of the Act is disingenuous.

Fictional Italian crime families grab attention in any form of media. In [“The Hollywood Curriculum on Italian Americans: Evolution of an Icon of Ethnicity,”](#) Carlos E. Cortés (Professor Emeritus, University of California, Riverside), wrote: “there’s gold in them there mafia movies.” *Read more about Professor Cortés in the [April issue of Tutto Italiano.](#)*

It’s not just movies; it’s also television shows, and any type of digital and print media; and it doesn’t matter if the mafia/gangster/mob comparisons malign Italian American heritage, culture, and history.

The RICO Act was established in 1970, [“to address the infiltration of legitimate enterprises by organized crime and other illegal ventures.”](#) Last March, a federal indictment charged “18 alleged members of the Simon City Royals (a street gang in Chicago) with a [racketeering conspiracy](#) involving murder, attempted murder, narcotics trafficking, witness tampering, obstruction of justice, wire fraud, and money laundering.” Recall any media coverage?

In 2013, a leader of another organized crime enterprise – the Pueblo Bishop Bloods street gang in Los Angeles – was “sentenced today to 40 years in federal prison for his role in a [racketeering plot](#) ...” In 2015, the “Court of Appeals ... upheld the racketeering conviction against a former Dobbs Elementary principal in the [Atlanta Public Schools test-cheating scandal.](#)”

Above are three real-life cases of RICO indictments. Yet, a major media network [published an opinion piece by a former United States attorney](#) that denigrates Italian Americans by using “the make-believe Corleones” as a model for “ruthless and powerful crime families throughout the United States ...”

The Atlanta school scandal is mentioned in the subheading, and in a sentence at the end of the article. The (make-believe) Corleones are mentioned four times, including in the title of the article; and a link to a mob museum website is provided. The subtitle states RICO “is not just for mobsters;” but a mobster is [“a member of a criminal gang;”](#) and essentially, those convicted in all the above indictments were part of a gang that had criminal intent. In the article, though, mobsters are defined by a fictional Italian American crime family.

While the article, itself, is disconcerting; the comments provide a look into other perspectives. Comments pertaining to criminal offenses in headline news are often peppered with remarks about Al Capone, the Corleone family, and the mafia, further denigrating Italian Americans.

In late June, Rossana Rodriguez-Sanchez, a councilmember in a Chicago district, [“posted a poll](#) to her Twitter account, asking, ‘What’s the best way to honor Italian heritage?’ The choices included ‘Italian ice monument,’ ‘Bialetti monument’ and ‘Columbus statue.’” On July 10th, a [letter from the OSDIA Commission for Social Justice](#) was sent to Rodriguez-Sanchez requesting a meeting to discuss her published remarks. (A search brought no updated news.)

From the [Chicago Tribune](#) (July 8, 2023):

“Rodriguez Sanchez, a member of the City Council’s Democratic Socialist Caucus, has supported the anti-Columbus efforts and in her response Friday to the criticism over the poll she noted one of the options was a statue of Columbus, ‘a man responsible for so much violence, genocide & enslavement.’”

Both of these instances show a general mindset about those of Italian heritage – either a gangster or a fool; or in referring to Columbus – a loathsome miscreant. We need a strong coalition in the Italian American community to communicate the facts about Italian American history to politicians, educators, and those in charge of all digital and print media.

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Keep your Italian heritage alive. An excellent source for learning about Italian American culture and heritage is a museum specifically established to focus on the Italian American experience. Many have virtual exhibits and tours available on their websites. [List of Italian American Museums.](#)

Talk with your children (no matter what age), grandchildren, other family members, friends, and educators. Tell them about the significant contributions people of Italian heritage have made to America ... and the world. [List of more than 70 contributors on Thirty-One Days of Italians.](#)

Learn about Columbus. It’s difficult to correct over 30 years of misinformation, and the rapid spread through digital sources is disheartening. In 2018, the Italian American Heritage Project was established to provide educational resources about Italian American history, heritage, and culture. The website also addresses the Columbus Controversy by providing facts about Columbus, how the controversy started, and why it continues. Read [What is the Truth About Columbus?](#) To understand how Columbus became an important part of American history, read [Christopher Columbus: When Did the Hero Become a Villain?](#) (Some links are no longer active.)

[Lesson plans developed from the letters Columbus wrote after his first voyage.](#)

The groups opposing Columbus Day have an organized agenda to eliminate it from America. Although the statements of truth and facts posted on Italian American websites are filled with historical facts, they are not very effective in reaching and educating the intended audience. Columbus Day has lost much of its relevance in American history; but battles for his legacy in American history are being won. Even so, the war against Columbus and our Italian heritage continues. Indigenous People already have a designated day, and Native Americans have a day and a month to celebrate their culture.

Indigenous Peoples Day – August 9

Native American Month – November

Native American Heritage Day – Friday after Thanksgiving

Visit the [IAHP website](#) to read my articles, learn about the lesson plans, see the resources I’ve used, and support my work. Donate for a cause – preserving Italian heritage and Italian American history and culture through education. [All donations are tax-deductible.](#)

## On Exhibit

National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

[Canova: Sketching in Clay](#); Closes October 9<sup>th</sup>

“ ... Antonio Canova (1757–1822), the most famous artist of Europe’s revolutionary period ... working with his hands and small tools, Canova produced dazzling sketch models in clay, which helped him plan his designs for his large statues in marble. ... More than 30 of his some 60 or so surviving models reveal the artist’s extraordinary working process—a process that led to the creation of some of the most iconic works in the history of sculpture.”

Canova produced numerous works – statues, busts, and memorial monuments – for nobles and royalty throughout Europe. At Thomas Jefferson’s recommendation, Canova received a commission to sculpt a statue of George Washington. It’s Canova’s only sculpture of an American dignitary, and a copy is housed in the North Carolina State Capitol building.

Learn about Canova’s work and the Washington statue in the new slide presentation *Antonio Canova 1757-1822, Extraordinary Neoclassic Sculptor*. The presentation is suitable for classrooms (art, history, culture), and any organization seeking topics of interest about Italian and Italian American heritage, culture, and history. For more information, visit the Italian American Heritage Project here:

[http://italamerheritage.com/antonio\\_canova.htm](http://italamerheritage.com/antonio_canova.htm)

## Italian American News

### Anthony Dominick Benedetto

The passing of Tony Bennett on July 21st was a top news story for several weeks, and new articles about his life and legacy continue to post online. Many stories note his strong ties to his Italian heritage, his faith and determination, and his belief in civil rights. In 1999, Bennett and his wife Susan founded [Frank Sinatra School of the Arts](#), “a public high school for young artists,” and [Exploring The Arts](#) “to help run programs and provide support for the Frank Sinatra School.”

In addition to being an accomplished singer and a humanitarian, Bennett was a [professional painter](#), mostly of nature and his fellow musicians. He has also painted on commission and his artwork is exhibited in galleries worldwide.

[Tony Bennett: The Music Never Ends](#)

[Tony Bennett, the Last Italian-American Crooner](#)

[A Musical Farewell: Honoring the Life of Tony Bennett](#)

[Tony Bennett on His First Job, Sinatra's Advice and San Francisco](#)

[Tony Bennett Portrait of Duke Ellington Dedicated, Displayed](#)

[Tony Bennett, King of the American Songbook, Dead at 96](#)

[Tony Bennett, Crooner Who Sang 'I Left My Heart in San Francisco,' Dies at 96](#)

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Fra Noi Special Edition: Embrace Your Inner Italian®

This month, [Fra Noi](#) “Chicagoland’s Italian American Voice®,” features a Special Edition of “Italian genius through the centuries, modern Italy’s gifts to the world, the travails of our immigrant forebears and the truth about Columbus, all in one colorful, portable package.”

Created at the suggestion of [Joint Civic Committee of Italian Americans](#) President Ron Onesti, “the cost of printing and mailing the section has been underwritten by the JCCIA.” The 28-page supplement, “Proud and Positive, Celebrating Our Italian

Legacy,” has been mailed to its subscribers and “thousands of extra copies [have been] printed for distribution to elected officials, classrooms, and Italian-American organizations across Illinois and around the country.”

[View this beautiful educational publication online.](#)

[Purchase copies.](#)

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[Hidden in Plain Sight](#) (italic.org; August 13, 2023)

[A Musical Full House with the Queen: The Italian-American World of the Crooners](#) (italoamericano.org; July 31, 2023)

[California Dreamin'](#) (italic.org; July 3, 2023)

[A Tour of Little Italy in the Bronx](#) (westfaironline.com; June 26, 2023)

[Pride Redefined](#) (italic.org; June 18, 2023)

[V. Formusa Co. Celebrates Landmark Anniversary](#) (franoi.com; June 6, 2023)

### **News about Italy**

[Tourists Arrested for Spraying Soccer Graffiti on 460-Year-Old Italian Landmark](#) (cnn.com; August 24, 2023)

[Italian Legend Toto Cutugno Dead At 80](#) (msn.com; August 23, 2023)  
[Toto Cutugno - L'Italiano Lyrics + English Translation](#) (You Tube)

[Who Gets to Curate 'David'? In Italy, the Culture Wars get a Nationalist Edge](#) (washingtonpost.com; August 21, 2023)

[Don't Fill Your Bottle in the Trevi Fountain](#) (washingtonpost.com; August 17, 2023)

[The U.S. Has Returned 266 Ancient Artifacts ... to Italy](#) (news.artnet.com; August 16, 2023)

[The Leaning Tower of Pisa 850-Years Birthday](#) (cnn.com; August 9, 2023)

[Cinque Terre's Iconic 'Path of Love' is Back](#) (nationalgeographic.com; August 3, 2023)

[UNESCO Wants to Add Venice to List of Endangered Heritage Sites](#) (msn.com; August 1, 2023)

[Lost for Centuries, Emperor Nero's Theater is Unearthed in Rome](#) (cnn.com; July 28, 2023)

[Italy's Forgotten Super Battleship Roma Was Sunk by Nazi Germany](#) (msn.com; July 2, 2023)

[Tourists in Italy are Behaving Badly this Year ...](#) (cnn.com; July 1, 2023)

### **From the Past**

[Epoch or event? Defining the Anthropocene](#) (physicsworld.com; December 20, 2022)  
“The roots of the Anthropocene concept can be traced back to at least as early as 1873, and the writings of the Italian geologist Antonio Stoppani.”

*Buon anno, buon tutto, buona vita,*  
Janice

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