



# La Rondine

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ITALIAN CLUB OF ST. LOUIS

August 2003

## "The Leaning Tower of Pisa"

presenter Dominick Alessi

### Next Meeting

Wednesday

August 20th

Cocktails—  
6:30p.m.

Dinner— 7:00p.m.

For the August program, Dominick Alessi will speak about the unusual history of The Leaning Tower of Pisa in Italy. Although he has not been to the Tower due to its closure from 1989-2001, he became intrigued with the architectural character and structural aspects of the building. In 1989, a civic tower in Pavia, Italy, collapsed. That incident raised fears for the safety of the Pisa tower so the Italian

Government closed it. The government later committed funds for its stabilization. The Tower was re-opened to the public on June 16, 2001. Mr. Dominick Alessi is an architect having graduated from Washington University. This year, he and his wife Jean, are celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary. After a period working for a local Architectural Firm, he decided that he really wanted to

build buildings rather than design them. Mickey joined J.J. Altman Company in East St. Louis, IL. In 1980, he joined Charter Development Company in St. Louis. The new venture was called Altman Charter Construction Company. In 1996 he retired as Vice-President of that Company, passing ownership to his son, and son-in-law.

RSVP—

Marie Wehrle

(314) 544-8899 or  
MCWehrle@juno.com

## "Italian Cookies and Biscotti"

presenter Joann Gambaro Arpiani

Italian cookies and biscotti was the subject of the presentation at the Italian Club's July 16th meeting. Guest eyed three very large containers of cookies throughout the meal that no doubt meant that this presentation would involve audience participation.

The presenter, Joann Arpiani, whose family had founded the popular Missouri Baking Company 80 years ago, is an expert on the subject. The bakery is where people go for their *dolci* (sweets) when they visit the Hill. The term biscotti is a general term used for all cookies in Italy. The distinctive names differentiate the variety of types available throughout the country. The word biscotti comes from Latin "biscotus" *bis* means twice and *cottus* means cooked giving us "twice-baked".

Italians seem to have a love affair with cookies. They are eaten for breakfast or a snack with cappuccino or espresso and served when guests drop in. They are a very important part of any Italian celebration such as

baptisms, communions, Christmas, Easter, saints' feast days and other holidays. They definitely are a must at Italian weddings. There is actually a cookie used on the occasion of bereavement call *biscotti di consuolo* – consolation cookies.

Arpiani stated that the earliest known biscotti traces back to the Roman chef Apicius' recipe of thick paste of fine wheat flour boiled and spread out to dry. After the mixture hardened, it was cut into small squares, then baked or fried until crisp. The bakeries of Pompeii made round-shaped biscotti to which the Romans added honey and spices.

During the Arab occupation of Sicily around the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> century, they brought a bevy of ingredients used to make cookies such as cane sugar, almonds, hazelnuts, oranges, lemons, dates and figs. They introduced the wonderful almond paste that is such an important ingredient in Italian cookies. The British and French also introduced varieties of cookies. The word "cookie" comes from Dutch word

*joekje* meaning little cakes. Small amounts of cake batter were used to test oven temperatures and these "test cakes" later became known as cookies.

The various Italian regions offer a large variety of biscotti. In Northern Italy, they are more delicate and buttery than their counterparts in Southern Italy and Sicily. The same cookies can be found in different regions but with other names.

The names of cookies are often unusual and often amusing. To name a few: *brutti ma buoni* – ugly but good; *baci di dama* – lady's kisses; *bocche di lupo* – wolves' mouths; *ossi di morte* – bones of the dead; *bace di Julietta* – kisses of Juliet; *baci di Romeo* – kisses of Romeo; *lingue di gatto* – cat's tongues; *occhi di Santa Lucia* – eyes of St. Lucy; *lingua di suocera* – mother-in-law tongue. Sometime in the 14<sup>th</sup> century in the Prato, a small city near Florence in Tuscany, the popular biscotti of today's coffee houses was developed.

(Continued on page 2)

**"The term biscotti is a general term used for all cookies in Italy. The distinctive names differentiate the variety of types available throughout the country. The word biscotti comes from Latin "biscotus" bis means twice and cottus means cooked giving us "twice-baked". Italians seem to have a love affair with cookies. ."**

## L'Angolo Del Presidente *by James Tognoni*

*My dear fellow members:*

I hope that all of you are staying cool and enjoying the summer season. During this past month, I believe we set an attendance record for a July meeting. We had approximately 80 people in attendance due to the popularity of our speaker, Joann Arpiani, and of course, the hugely popular cookies from Missouri Bakery. It was very nice the way most people stayed afterwards to socialize. Many of you noticed this and commented on how nice this was.

It would be great to have people linger after more of the meetings. If you have ideas on how we could encourage this activity, please let me know. At our recent board meeting we discussed many ways to improve our club and make it more interesting and fun with every meeting. If you have questions, suggestions, complaints, or compliments, we want to hear from you.

Remember to check this newsletter to stay up-to-date on what is happening. Additional sources of

information are: *Il Pensiero* and the ItalySTL web site. These sources contains a wealth of information about all that is Italian in our community.

The August meeting promises to be very interesting with speaker Dominick Alessi on "The Leaning Tower of Pisa". Please join us and bring your friends. We look forward to seeing you there.

*Ciao,*

*Jim*

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## "Italian Cookies and Biscotti"



*Joann Gambaro Arpiani*

*(Continued from page 1)*

These twice-baked cookies are the favored dessert after a Tuscan meal, especially dipped in wine. Because the hard cookie resists spoilage and mold, Columbus took them on his long voyages. Originally, they were made with almonds or hazelnuts but their popularity has opened them to various flavors such as pistachio, cappuccino and chocolate. Each region now has its own version of the famous cookie. They are called "dipping cookies" used to dip in coffee, cappuccino or wine and have been proclaimed "The cookies of the 90's".

Other popular cookies include: *Amarelli* or *Amaretti* made with almond paste and flavored with a variety of fruits, nuts and cinnamon; *Savoardi*, a Piemontese specialty that is also used to make *tiramisu*; *Cuccidati*, a Sicilian favorite made with dried figs and nuts, especially popular at Christmas; *Pan Dei Morti* are found across Milan for All Soul's Day and All Saint's Day and are made with almonds or walnuts; *Pizzelli*, originated in the Abruzzi region, is a light wafer that is among the oldest known Italian cookie.

These and many more delicious cookies were shown on a slide presentation making the audience more than ready to taste the delectable cookies that Arpiani had brought. Her nieces passed the trays around the

tables as guests sampled the many types. She also gave out recipes and a few Internet sites that offered Italian cookie recipes. For those interested try: [geocities.com/gulfcoast/ethnic/html](http://geocities.com/gulfcoast/ethnic/html); [mangiabenepasta.com/biscotti.html](http://mangiabenepasta.com/biscotti.html); [recipesource.com/ethnic/europe/italian/index1.html](http://recipesource.com/ethnic/europe/italian/index1.html); [italian-foodforever.com/recipes/cookies.php](http://italian-foodforever.com/recipes/cookies.php); [www.cooks.com/rec/doc/0,13-1,biscotti.FF.html](http://www.cooks.com/rec/doc/0,13-1,biscotti.FF.html); [recipeview.com/Scott/htm](http://recipeview.com/Scott/htm); [justgreatrecipes.com/italian-cookie.asp](http://justgreatrecipes.com/italian-cookie.asp); [allrecipes.com/directory/2641.asp](http://allrecipes.com/directory/2641.asp). **by Marianne Peri Sack**

### National and International Publicity for the Italian Club

Articles regarding the International Conference on Italian Immigration, held in Cuggiono, Italy, on July 19-20, appeared in the National Italian American Foundation (NIAF) News summer edition (Volume 19 No.3) and the *Corriere della Sera's* July 17th edition. Both articles mentioned the Italian Club's co-sponsorship of the event. In addition, the *Corriere della Sera* article mentioned Francis Slay's Mayoral proclamation of July 19th as "Cuggiono Day" in St. Louis. Thanks to Carolyn Stelzer and Gene Mariani for obtaining the proclamation. A related article in the *Corriere della Sera* described the immigration of Carol Clivio's father from Arconate to St. Louis. Carol, a friend of the Italian Club responded to the it's request for documentation and stories related to immigration for the conference.

### "GAME OF THEIR LIVES"

***Calling all actors!  
Calling all actors!***

A number of our members and their families have been involved in the filming of the "Game of Their Lives". We want to hear about your role in the movie.

Please contact Marie Cuccia-Brand and let her know of your involvement.

E-mail: [mcucciasbj@aol.com](mailto:mcucciasbj@aol.com)  
Phone: (314) 993-2252

## La Terza Pagina

### TOMATE POMO d'ORO POMODORO

Cari amici,

Siamo arrivati alla stagione di "tomates"! o Pomo d'oro! o Pomodoro! Speriamo che le vostre piante vi forniscono tante.

"Tomates" e' una parola dialettale in molti regioni d'Italia. Deriva dalla parola "tomatl" del linguaggio Nahuatl. I Nahuatl era una popolazione indigena dal Messico al America Centrale . Oggi giorno rimangono gli aztechi discendenti dai nahuatl che parlono questa lingua. La parola era incorporata nella lingua spagnola, percio' tomate. Vedete, questa parola e' usata in certi dialetti ed anche l'inglese.

Probabilmente il tomate veniva portata in Europa dagli spagnoli nel sedicesimo secolo. La frutta venne studiata dai botanici. Pero' il popola era scettica. Adoperavno questa frutta come decorazione giardinale e anche per curiosita'. Le viti rampicanti avevano foligliagi rigogliosi e frutti di colore brillante: giallo, arancione e rosso. Così arrivano al pomo d'oro.

Il tipo di pomo d'oro che si presento' in Europa nel sedicesimo secolo probabilmente era di color giallo-arancione. Il nome descrivo' questa combinazione di colori: pomo d'oro o mele d'oro. Certe ditte usano "pomi d'oro" nella loro descrizione d'ingredienti sulle scatole di pomodori. Purtroppo in questo tempo la frutta non venne usata. Pensavano che era velenosa.

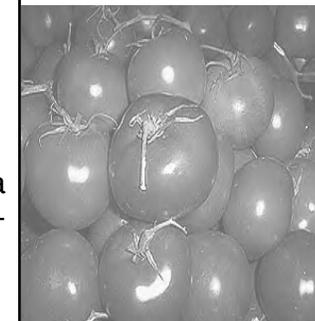
Finalmente nel diciottesimo secolo cominciarono a mangiare il pomodoro. Perfino la parola e' cambiata in pomodoro. I francesi pensarono che era un frutta afrodisiaco e la chiamarono "pomme d'amour".

Gli italiani consumano circa 110 libbre di pomodori all'anno! Pensate: l'Italia senza pomodori! Quante ricette che non avremmo! Le salse, insalate di pomodori con la mozzarella o cipolla, gli stufati, la pasta, minestre. I napoletani, gia' nel 1700, metevano sulle le loro pizze.

Che valori che hanno i nostri giardini! Se avete pomodori avete quel'oro di che parlavano una volta POMO d'ORO. Che ricchezza! Buon appetito!

Carolina

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***Celebrating over  
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## **Prossime Manifestazioni**

### **Future Italian Club Meetings**

- August 20 - "The Leaning Tower of Pisa",**  
presenter retired architect-  
contractor, Dominick Alessi.
- September 17 - "Italy-1943"**  
presenter Cav. Valerio Bianco
- October 15 - "Canzone degli Alpini"**  
presenter Peter Puleo and chorus
- November 19 - "Doge Dandolo of Venice"**  
presenter Prof. Tomm Madden
- December 17 - Christmas celebration and the  
Panettone Players**
- The Italian Club meets the third Wednesday  
of each month for dinner at  
da Baldo's Restaurant  
Cocktails - 6:30p.m.  
Dinner - 7:00p.m.*

### **Events of Interest**

**"Respiro" now being shown at the Plaza Fronte-  
nac Cinema**

The synopsis: On an island near Western Sicily, village life can be as cruel as it is heartwarming and as suffocation as it is charming. Grazia (Valeria Golino), an affectionate young mother of three, unwillingly becomes the talk of the entire village due to her free spirit. When her reckless behavior becomes misinterpreted, her husband's family decides she needs medical treatment in faraway Milan. When Grazia protests, her thirteen-year-old son Pasquale tries to find a way to protect the mother he adores. English subtitles.

#### **ITALIAN CLUB'S FALL FILM AND OPERA SERIES**

**"The Organizer"** winner of four international film festival awards, with Marcello Mastroianni.

**"Il Trovatore"** by Giuseppe Verdi, with Luciano Pavarotti, Sherrill Milnes.

**"Bitter Rice"** with Silvana Mangano, Vittorio Gassman, Raf Vallone.

**"Turandot"** by Giacomo Puccini, with Placido Domingo, Eva Marton.

*Exact dates and times will be announced.*