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La Piccola Cucina is Back!

By the ICCC Team

La Piccola Cucina is a hands-on cultural culinary experience at the Italian Cultural & Community Center of Houston (ICCC) for children ages 3-10 years old. While wearing chef aprons and toques, the little chefs learn a few basics of the Italian language and culture in addition to some basics of the metric system, all while preparing authentic Italian recipes.

After a three year hiatus, the ICCC brought back the beloved program just in time for *Carnevale*. For the first edition of 2023, the little chefs made *mascherine di Carnevale*, which are Mardi Gras themed masks made of pasta frolla (Italian shortbread).

Carnevale in Italy is a huge celebration that encourages eating, drinking and being merry before the restrictions of Lent. Italians celebrate for multiple weekends throughout February with parades, elaborate masks and brightly colored confetti. The biggest *Carnevale* celebration in Italy is in Venice, which was celebrated this year from Feb. 4 to Feb. 21.

On Feb. 18, ICCC's little chefs arrived

with their guardian prepared to let their creativity flow for the next two hours. They followed a recipe consisting of six simple ingredients: butter, sugar, egg, flour, baking soda and vanilla. The little chefs used their hands to combine the ingredients together to create the cookies. The ICCC provided each little chef with three mask templates for them to cut out their desired masks. Some little chefs made all their cookies the same mask shape, while others used all three templates to have a variety.

After the cookies baked, the children had free time to decorate them however they wished. They were given chocolate and sprinkles. Every mask appeared fabulous and fun, which is on theme for *Carnevale*.

While the masks cooled off, the little chefs got to play with each other. They also practiced their Italian by learning some baking jargon, such as *zucchero* (sugar) and *infornare* (bake).

The full immersion is a reason why this program is very loved among the community. So much so, that it is

recognized as one of the top activities for kids in Houston to participate in.

In November 2022, Dana Cuterroil and Joni Fincham published *111 Places for Kids in Houston That You Must Not Miss*. On page 120, the ICCC's *La Piccola Cucina* is listed as number 56.

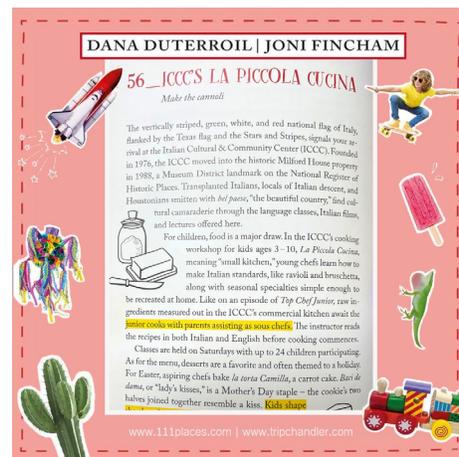
"For children, food is a major draw," the authors said. "In the ICCC's cooking workshop for kids ages 3-10, *La Piccola Cucina*, meaning 'small kitchen,' young chefs learn how to make Italian standards, like ravioli and bruschetta, along with seasonal specialties simple enough to be recreated at home." [Click here](#) to buy the book and read more.

[Click here](#) to read the full article about *La Piccola Cucina* event on Feb. 18 and to view more pictures.

Sign up your kid(s) for our next *La Piccola Cucina* on Saturday, May 6. Little chefs will be making *crostata alle madorle e fragole* (strawberry and almond tarte). Please note, the recipe has almond flour. [Click here](#) to register.



La Piccola Cucina little chefs making *crostata di fragole* (strawberry tarte) in 2017.



ICCC La Piccola Cucina featured in *111 Places for Kids in Houston That You Must Not Miss*.



La Piccola Cucina little chefs decorating *mascherine di Carnevale* in 2023.

New ICCC Members

Benvenuti!

The ICCC welcomes the following new members and invites them to stay engaged with all the wonderful programs and events the ICCC has to offer.

For more information about becoming a member, click [here](#) or contact [Alessandra Pistone](#).

- Mr. Vincent Blair
- Mr. Marco Caminati
- Ann and Paul Campbell
- Ms. Lenice Colangelo
- Mr. Paul Coltrin
- Ms. Jenny Correa
- Ms. Mona DeFrawi
- Ms. Jennifer Gilliam
- Ms. Melissa Grobmyer
- Brooklynn Hood
- Ms. Cristy Leslie
- Mr and Mrs. Anthony Lutkus
- Mr. Jorge Machnizh
- Adriana and Adam Meza
- Ms. Laura Pascali
- David and Maria Perez
- Ms. Beth Quill
- Mr. Joe Rosa
- Mr. Frank Rynd
- Grace Satten
- Ms. Phyllis Self
- Mr. Don Shaw
- Dorian Signori
- Zeke Singerman
- Mr. Jose Solis
- Ms. Dana Tisdale
- Mr. Frank Titoni
- Mr. and Mrs. Everett J. Walsh
- Ms. Ana Yanes
- Ms. Angelica Amaro

“la voce italiana”

Published six times a year (Jan., Mar., May, Jul., Sept. and Nov.) by the Italian Cultural & Community Center of Houston (ICCC).

La Voce Italiana is a benefit to ICCC members and followers. It can be found at www.iccchouston.com

For more information, please call 713-524-4222 ext. 4 or email info@iccchouston.com.

All'ICCC (At the ICCC)

Cari Amici,

We're off to a great start here at ICCC for 2023. Our *La Befana* celebration was a roaring success. Many thanks to Margret Norton, who because of Lucia Khurana's last minute illness, stepped in as a sub for the Befana role with good humor and aplomb, much to the delight of the more than 150 children and parents in attendance.

On a more somber note, we marked our annual observance of *Il Giorno della Memoria* (Holocaust Remembrance Day) with a compelling presentation by Dr. Marla Stone on *Jewish Life in Rome*. We are grateful to the Consulate General of Italy in Houston and Humanities Texas for helping to make this significant program possible.

Our language classes are humming along. And, speaking of humming along, we just completed a delightful series of classes to a sell-out audience on the "History of Opera" led by Buck Ross.

For literary types who want to take a deep-dive into Italo Calvino, one of Italy's pre-eminent writers (If On a Winter's Night a Traveler), Dr. Dominic Aquila will be leading [Italo Calvino: A Centennial Celebration](#), a 4-part course in March devoted entirely to Calvino.

Sell-out seems to be the operative phrase these days as so many of our programs and events sell out quickly. Among the most popular are the *Aperitivo Italiano* and the *Dine Around*. Renditions of the *Aperitivo Italiano* are coming up and will surely sell out. To avoid disappointment, make your reservations TODAY by calling the office or visiting our website for further info, www.iccchouston.com.

All this activity at ICCC is made possible by the dedication and hard work of our stellar staff: Erika Myers, Ray Miller, Alessandra Pistone, Brissa Ramos, Keith Johnson, and our outstanding teachers who help make our Italian language school the best in Houston. Of course, we are grateful for our many presenters who share their expertise through lectures and presentations ranging from wine to opera to deeply researched and moving programs of great importance.

I also want to acknowledge our board of directors for unselfishly giving their time and talents: Monica Ercolani, immediate past president and current vice president; Julie Mastroianni, treasurer and Property Committee, chair; Flavio Zannin, secretary; Marguerite Gabriele, assistant secretary, Bylaws Committee chair,



ICCC President Claudia Gentile Sims.

Scholarship Committee chair; Jerry Baiamonte, Marketing Committee co-chair*; Laura Ferro, Finance Committee; Sandra Celli Harris, Education and Culture Committee chair; Gina Gusemano Leck, Fashion Show chair; Dr. Angel Munoz, Finance Committee chair; and Diane Nizza, Education Committee.

In addition to the board volunteers, we have a cadre of outstanding member volunteers who always step up to fill in wherever there is a need. Where would be without them? It takes all of them and all of you to make ICCC such a success, therefore, I urge you to stay engaged. Don't forget to make your reservations early for whichever program you are interested in. We need your talents and expertise, so come volunteer and participate with us, you'll be glad you did. I look forward to seeing you soon.

A presto,
Claudia Gentile Sims, president

*Thann Dauterive, who retired from the ICCC board in December, is the Marketing Committee chair.

2023 ICCC Board of Directors

Officers

- Claudia Sims President
- Monica Ercolani Vice President
- Julie Mastroianni Treasurer
- Flavio Zannin Secretary
- Marguerite Gabriele Assistant Secretary

Board of Directors

- Jerry Baiamonte
- Sandra Celli Harris
- Laura Ferro
- Gina Gusemano Leck
- Jesus Angelberto Muñoz
- Diane Nizza

We Appreciate Our Members in These Special Categories!

By the ICCC Team

We would like to take a moment to acknowledge our Friend of the ICCC members, Patron members and our Individual or Family Lifetime members. We are incredibly thankful for your support!

Friend(s) of the ICCC Members

Mrs. Dominique Varner
Mr. Paul Cinciripini

Patron of the ICCC Members

Mr. Jack Fassetta
Mr. Jerry Baiamonte
Ms. Sandra Porter

ICCC Individual or Family Lifetime Members

Ms. Caroline Whitmore-Knotts
Mrs. James J. Liuzza
Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Aspromonte
Mr. Gary DeSerio
Mrs. Vincent Quartaro
Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Meyers
Mr. and Mrs. Carmelo Mauro

Mr. Michael Massa
Mr. and Mrs. Frank A. Mandola
Mr. and Mrs. Alvin Albert
Ms. Cynthia L. Tybor
Ms. Barbara Barcelona
Mr. and Mrs. William Sinacori
Mr. and Mrs. Giorgio Borlenghi
Mr. Nick Ferrantino
Mr. and Mrs. Alfred J. Fatica
Mr. and Mrs. Vincent Guariglia
Miss Barbara Teague
Mr. and Mrs. J. Hunter Todd
Mr. Christopher Parkerson
Mr. Robert Tucci
Ms. Kathryn Kase
Dr. Joseph Caruso

New members are always welcome! We offer six different memberships, all which include amazing benefits. [Click here to view our membership options.](#)

Friend(s) of the ICCC members receive discounts on our language school classes, discounts on selected events,

discounts on Milford House rentals, free admission for two movie screenings, free admission for two lectures, and a friend listing in *La Voce Italiana* for one year!

Patron of the ICCC members receive exclusive benefits such as discounts on our language classes, discounts on Milford House rentals, free admission for two movie screenings, free admission for two lectures, complimentary seats (2) to any of our Aperitivo Italiano wine tasting events, and a friend listing in *La Voce Italiana* for one year!

ICCC Individual or Family Lifetime Members get the ultimate exclusive perks we offer. [Click here to view the benefits of being a Lifetime Member](#) or call the Center at 713-524-4222 ext. 6 for more information.

Scholarship Deadlines Are Right Around the Corner

By the ICCC Team



Italian Cultural & Community Center Scholarships Photo.

The ICCC awards \$1,000 renewable scholarships to graduating high school seniors who are of Italian descent to any degree and who submit complete applications by the specified deadline. This year the deadline is Thursday, Apr. 6, at 5 p.m.

The ICCC has the following scholarships available: [ICCC Merit Only Scholarship \(for ICCC members only\)](#) and [ICCC Merit Based and Financial Need Scholarship](#).

Recipients are chosen by the ICCC Scholarship Committee based on scholarship, leadership, and financial need. The recipient may apply for a renewal of the scholarship every spring for a period totaling four years. Renewal applicants are due by July each year. Renewals are only awarded for consecutive fall and spring semesters during the four-year period of eligibility. To qualify for a scholarship renewal, the student must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 and a minimum semester total of 12 hours. If applicable, students should complete separate applications for each scholarship for which they are eligible.

The ICCC also awards \$2,500 scholarships to Houston area college students participating in study abroad programs in Italy. Study abroad programs should be two weeks or greater and up to a full semester. Deadline for [Study Abroad Scholarship](#) Spring 2023 semester is Mar. 15. The only way applications can be accepted is via mail, overnight delivery, and brought in-person.

Students enrolled full-time at any four-year college or university, including Graduate School and PhD programs with a physical campus location in the United States are eligible to apply if applicant, the applicants' parents, or the applicants' grandparents have been active members of the ICCC-Houston for at least the past two years. An ICCC staff member will confirm membership.

The Scholarship Committee will select applicants who have demonstrated success in college, as determined from their GPA and letters of recommendation. The essay regarding why the applicant chose Italy, or the essay regarding how the applicant will apply the learning/experience upon return, will be evaluated. The Committee may invite the finalists for an interview before making the final selection.

For all scholarship instructions and applications, please refer to the [ICCC website](#).

Many Thanks for Your Support

By the ICCC Team

The Italian Cultural & Community Center (ICCC) of Houston has been awarded two grants from the Humanities Texas/National Endowment for the Humanities for the recent lecture, *Holocaust Memorial Day-History and Memory-The Jews of Rome* (\$1,000),

and for the recent cultural enrichment class, *A Brief History of Italian Opera* (\$600). We want to thank everyone at Humanities Texas and National Endowment for the Humanities.

The ICCC has also been awarded a grant of \$20,000 from the Texas

Travel Industry Recovery Program under the Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund established under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. We want to thank everyone at State of Texas and the Office of the Governor Economic Development & Tourism.

Grazie Mille to Our Milford House Fund Supporters

By the ICCC Team



2022 Milford House Fund.

We'd like to say a sincere thank you to all our members and friends who supported Giving Tuesday and the Milford House Fund Campaign in December 2022. The Italian Cultural & Community Center (ICCC) could not continue its mission "to advance, celebrate and preserve Italian culture and heritage" if it weren't for all the continued support.

Your contributions to the Milford House Fund will allow us to do necessary maintenance and improvement to our most important capital asset, the Milford House.

Thanks to you, we were able to raise a total of \$12,930 through 36 donors. We are looking forward to continuing to expand our programs and activities.

The ICCC initiated an annual fund campaign in 2014 and we have received a total of 326 donors, totaling over \$97,000 for the years 2014 through January 2023.

Thank you to all who have responded to those campaigns and made other donations throughout the year.

The following donors have contributed to the 2022 Milford House Fund Campaign as of February 22, 2023.

Mr. James A. Amodeo
 Mr. and Mrs. James Avioli
 Mr. and Mrs. Nick A. Bacile
 Mr. Jerry Baiamonte
 Mr. and Mrs. Brad Baker
 Ms. Lynn Barsky
 Mr. and Mrs. Giorgio Borlenghi
 Mr. Thomas Brandino Jr. and
 Mrs. Kathy Haueisen
 Mr. and Mrs. William Brown
 Mrs. Sarah Cannata and Family
 Mr. David Capobianco
 Mr. Carlo Cotrone
 Mr. and Mrs. Larry Cucciniello

Mr. David De Vido
 Ms. Gloria Secontino Dulworth
 Mr. Barney M. Francescon
 Mr. and Mrs. Stacy Gallagher
 Mr. and Mrs. John Mastroianni
 Ms. Margey Meyer in memory of Allan Korsakov
 Mr. and Mrs. Nirell
 Mr. and Mrs. David Nuzzo
 Ms. Linda Petersen
 Ms. Mary Ann Samaniego in memory of Louis and Katherine Carrabba
 Ms. Priscilla Graffeo Shadburne
 Mr. and Mrs. Dan Silvestri
 Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Sims
 Ms. Lesley Teitelbaum
 Mr. Len Trombetta
 Mr. and Mrs. Roy Varner
 Mr. and Mrs. William Walters
 Mr. Peter Williamson
 Ms. Dana Tisdale
 Mrs. Sheila Echols and
 Mr. Jerome Smesny
 Mrs. Tracy Lalasz
 Anonymous donors

ICCC Clubs and Organizations

Daughters of Italian Heritage

By Christina Nance | Donna Patterson – President



The Daughters of Italian Heritage.

INSTALLATION:

2023 brings a new leadership team for the Daughters of Italian Heritage (DOIH)!

The installation meeting of the new board was held on Saturday, January 21, 2023. Please welcome our new board members:

President – Donna Patterson
 President-Elect – Christina Nance
 Recording Secretary – Brenda Benigno
 Corresponding Secretary – Michelle Belco
 Treasurer – Anna Messer

Installation morning began with an immense (of course, we are Italians!) breakfast bar. Accolades for the outgoing president, Debora Graustein, were shared and presentation of gratitude for her service before she passed the gavel to the new DOIH president, Donna Patterson.

Community Service Group Volunteer Event

The Daughters will volunteer at the "Girl Power – Caritas Day 2023" at the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, on Saturday, March 4. This community service event hosted by the Co-Cathedral will make toiletry kits for U.S. veteran women living in short term housing. The day will begin at 8:00

a.m. with a mass at the Co-Cathedral and end with lunch on the 4th floor of the Cathedral Centre.

St. Joseph's Altar

The Daughters will be assisting St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church with a donation towards the St. Joseph Altar and celebration. The Daughters will participate in the celebration on Sunday, March 19 as a group.

Meeting Date and Time Change

New meeting date and time on the 2nd Saturday of each month at 9:30 a.m. continuing at the ICCC. There may be times where the meetings will be off site at another location.

If you are interested in attending any of our meetings or becoming a member, we would love to have you! Contact [Anna Messer](#) or visit our [website](#) to receive information on upcoming meetings. Blessings to all.



Aperitivo Italiano: Biodynamic Wines



SCAN ME



Thursday,
March 23, 2023
7:00 - 8:00 PM

Join us on Thursday, March 23, at 7 p.m. for a spectacular Aperitivo Italiano, featuring RAINA wines. We will learn about and taste four Italian wines, accompanied by Italian-style small bites. Presented by Pierina Bianchini from Emotion for Passion.



Aperitivo Italiano: The Wines of "Via Francigena"



SCAN ME

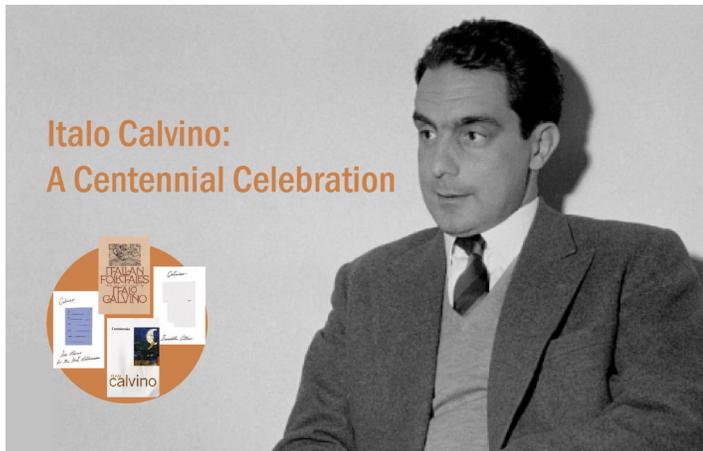


Tuesday,
April 25, 2023
7:00 - 8:00 PM

Sip and learn about the vineyards of Tuscany and Lazio along the Great Pilgrim Route! Join us on Tuesday, April 25, at 7 p.m. to learn about and taste four Italian wines, accompanied by Italian-style small bites. Presented by Riccardo Guerrieri, owner of VinSanto.

MORE INFORMATION AT WWW.ICCCHOUSTON.COM

Upcoming Events at the Milford House



Italo Calvino: A Centennial Celebration

In celebration of the 100th anniversary of the birth of Italo Calvino, one of Italy's most celebrated authors of the twentieth century, Dr. Dominic Aquila will offer a short course on Calvino's most important and beloved writings.

4 Mondays, starting March 20 | 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.

\$100 ICCM Members | \$125 Non-members

Click [HERE](#) to register



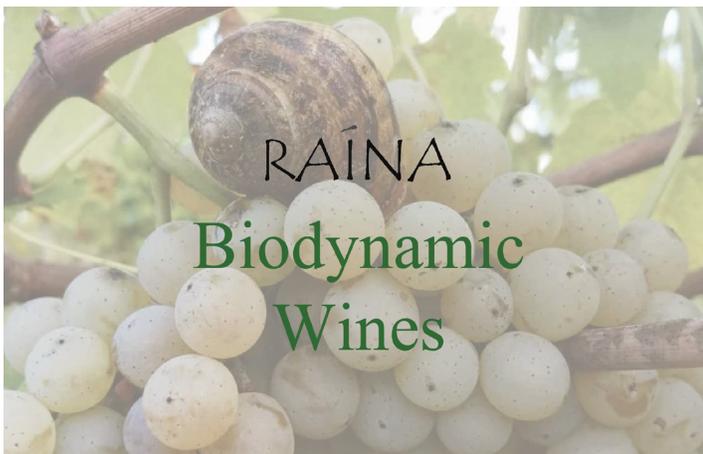
Con Chi Viaggi (Drive Me Crazy)

Don't miss out on this comedy! Purchase your ticket to watch Con Chi Viaggi (Drive Me Crazy) on Wednesday, March 22 at 7 p.m. The movie will be in Italian with English subtitles. [Click here](#) to read the plot.

Wednesday, March 22, 2023 | 7:00 p.m.

\$10 ICCM Members | \$15 Non-members

Click [HERE](#) to register



Aperitivo Italiano - Biodynamic Wines

Join us for Happy Hour to taste four Italian wines accompanied by Italian-style small bites. Presented by Pierina Bianchini from Emotion for Passion.

Thursday, March 23 | 7:00 to 8:00 p.m.

\$30 ICCM Members | \$35 Non-members

Click [HERE](#) to register



Italian for Beginners - AISI (Online)

Join our online Italian for Beginners class to learn the basics of *la bella lingua*. Learn everyday words and phrases that will help you speak Italian comfortably.

7 Mondays, starting April 10 | 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.

\$202.50 ICCM Members | \$125 Non-members

Click [HERE](#) to register

MARZO 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20 Italo Calvino 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. Italian for Beginners - AISI (Online) 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.	21	22 Italian Contemporary Film Series: Drive Me Crazy 7:00 p.m.	23 Italian for Beginners - AISI 9:00 - 11:00 a.m. Aperitivo Italiano - Biodynamic Wines 7:00 - 8:00 p.m.	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

Italo Calvino: A Centennial Celebration

In celebration of the 100th anniversary of the birth of Italo Calvino, one of Italy's most celebrated authors of the twentieth century, Dr. Dominic Aquila will offer a four week course on Calvino's most important and beloved writings. He blended fantasy, comedy, and fable to provide his readers with an illuminating perspective on modern life. Known as a highly innovative writer who established new forms of literature, he was nonetheless deeply respectful of the past, and particularly Italian and European literary and folk traditions. Among the works discussed in this course: *Calvino Collection of Italian Folktales*, *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*, *Cosmicomics*, and *Invisible Cities*. All works are in translation. Dr. Aquila is a tenured professor of history and Director of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness at the University of St. Thomas in Houston, TX.

Date: Mondays, from March 20 to April 10 | 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.

Price: \$100 ICCM Members and \$125 Non-members

Place: ICCM Houston

Italian for Beginners - AISI (Online)

Immerse yourself in the beautiful language and culture of Italy! Join our online Italian for Beginners class to learn the basics of the *la bella lingua*.

Date: Mondays, March 20 to May 1 | 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Price: \$202.50 ICCM Members and \$225 Non-Members

Place: Online via ZOOM

Italian Contemporary Film Series: Drive Me Crazy

Plot: Four strangers meet through a car-sharing app and start a car trip together. Everything seems normal but, as often happens,

things are not completely as they look. Paolo is a restless man with a nice demeanor, who seems to be hiding something. Michele and Anna already know each other but haven't mentioned it to their companions. Elisa doesn't know she has a very special link with Paolo. Among idle small talk, laughter, and plot twists, they embark on a road-trip comedy with noir undertones that explores unexpected human relationships; a journey that turns into an adventure destined to change the lives of all the characters involved.

Time: Wednesday, March 22 | 7:00 p.m.

Price: \$10 ICCM Members and \$15 Non-members

Place: ICCM Houston

Italian for Beginners - AISI (In person)

Immerse yourself in the beautiful language and culture of Italy! Join our in-person Italian for Beginners class to learn the basics of *la bella lingua*.

Date: Thursdays, March 23 to May 4 | 9:00 to 11:00 a.m.

Price: \$202.50 ICCM Members and \$225 Non-Members

Place: ICCM Houston

Aperitivo Italiano - Biodynamic Wines

Join us on Thursday, March 23, at the Milford House to taste four great Italian wines accompanied by Italian style small bites. Presented by Pierina Bianchini from Emotion for Passion.

Time: Thursday, March 23 | 7:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Price: \$30 ICCM Members and \$35 Non-Members

Place: ICCM Houston

APRILE 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10 Italian for Beginners - AISI (Online) 4:00 - 6:00 p.m.	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19 Italian Contemporary Film Series: With All My Heart 7:00 p.m.	20	21	22
23	24 Elena Ferrante: Toxic Environments and the Damaged Planet 7:00 - 8:00 p.m.	25 Aperitivo Italiano - The Wines of "Via Francigena" 7:00 - 8:00 p.m.	26	27	28	29

Italian for Beginners - AISI (Online)

Immerse yourself in the beautiful language and culture of Italy! Join our online Italian for Beginners class to learn the basics of the *la bella lingua*.

Date: Mondays, April 10 to May 22 | 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.
Price: \$202.50 ICCC Members and \$225 Non-Members
Place: Online via ZOOM

Italian Contemporary Film Series: With All My Heart

Plot: What would happen if the heart of a violent Camorra hitman would be transplanted into the chest of a dorky professor? Would this defenseless man turn immediately into a cruel criminal like his donor was? Science tells us that these are silly and ancient beliefs. But what if instead the killer's ruthless mother, was convinced that her son was still alive within the heart now beating inside the professor's chest and would ask him to seek revenge for his son?

Time: Wednesday, April 19 | 7:00 PM
Price: \$10 ICCC Members and \$15 Non-members
Place: ICCC Houston

Elena Ferrante: Toxic Environments and the Damaged Planet

In one of her columns written for *The Guardian*, world-renown Italian novelist Elena Ferrante confesses to be terrified and "obsessed" by the signs of climate change. And yet, ecocritical approaches to her work are missing. In this talk, Dr. Stefania Porcelli seeks environmental attentiveness in *My Brilliant Friend* by looking at the toxicity of the family environments and the way it spills over, so to speak, infiltrating not only the porous reality of Naples, but ultimately damaging the entire globe.

Stefania Porcelli is Visiting Assistant Professor at Miami University,

Ohio, where she teaches Italian language and culture classes, as well classes on food cultures, environmental issues, and sustainability. She holds a doctoral degree in English from Sapienza University of Rome and a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. Her publications explore wartime writing, the concept of political action as developed by Hannah Arendt, the representation of violence and other exclusionary practices, and the language of political discourse. She has also written on Elizabeth Bowen and Shakespeare.

This event is organized by the University of Houston in collaboration with the ICCC.

Time: Monday, April 24 | 7:00 to 8:00 p.m.
Price: Free Event
Place: ICCC Houston

Aperitivo Italiano - The Wines of "Via Francigena"

Sip and learn about the vineyards of Tuscany and Lazio along the Great Pilgrim Route! Join us on Tuesday, April 25, at the Milford House to taste four great Italian wines accompanied by Italian style small bites. Presented by Riccardo Guerrieri, certified sommelier and owner of VinSanto, a wine bar, shop and bistro located in Memorial-Houston.

Time: Tuesday, April 25 | 7:00 to 8:00 p.m.
Price: \$30 ICCC Members and \$35 Non-Members
Place: ICCC Houston

Wine, masks and debauchery: How did Italy's Carnival tradition begin?

By Silvia Marchetti | [The Local.it](#)

Towns across Italy are holding pageants and parades as Carnival season begins, but few people know the true origins of this festivity, writes Silvia Marchetti.



Photo: Walks of Italy.

Masks, wild costumes, confetti, fried frappe and castagnole – Carnival's back. But not everyone knows that these festivities date back to the dawn of time.

"At exactly the same time of the year, now, the Ancient Greeks celebrated the Bacchanali, which they likely imported from Mesopotamia. Then the Romans turned the Greek partying into the Saturnali and Lupercali", says Giorgio Franchetti, an historian of Ancient Rome.

During the Bacchanali – feasts held in honor of Bacchus, or Dionysius, the god of wine – revelers would dance and get drunk on wine mixed with honey, which allowed them to let loose, free their souls and connect with the divinities and the afterworld. The wine supposedly sent them into a physical and spiritual ecstasy, a sort of purifying trance.

The ancient Romans took these wild events further. The Saturnali celebrations, in honor of Saturno, who was also the god of agriculture, coincided with the sowing of the fields and fertility rites.

"Lumps of earth would be overturned to allow the seeds to sink in, in the same way the Saturnali triggered an overturning of the established order, social roles and hierarchies: women would dress as men, men as women, slaves as masters, masters as slaves, and all partook in extreme acts", says Franchetti. Wine and lavish meals went on for a week, and nobody, not even the slaves, worked.

The destruction of the known order of things by allowing people to vent out their desires and instincts once a year was necessary to maintain the establishment of such order. Creating chaos was the only rule; it was a blank cheque to debauchery. Italians still have a saying: "A Carnevale

ogni scherzo vale" (during Carnival any kind of trick goes). Morality and taboos drop, transgression takes over, the boundaries between evil and good, profane and sacred, blur.

The Saturnali were the celebration of a topsy-turvy subversive world, where disguises and masks concealed identities and allowed revelers to act with total freedom and commit all sorts of mischief.

Sexuality plays a key part: extreme sexual activity and sex role reversal triggered a strong fertility force believed to regenerate nature ahead of spring.

February was also when the empire honored the Febbris goddess, worshipped by the pre-Roman Etruscans too as a bringer of purification.

"The Ancient Romans had another festival as well during our period of Carnival; it was called Lupercali in honor of the god-wolf Luperco, otherwise known as Caco or Fauno, whose cult hails back to the Etruscans", says Franchetti.



Photo: Vincenzo Pinto / AFP.

Luperco represented the most vicious human passions and animal instincts, and in his name a free pass to perversion was granted to the people.

According to Franchetti, who studied ancient sources, during the Lupercali drunk partygoers would wrap themselves in animal skins, before taking them off to run naked across the Roman forum – men, women and slaves alike. Random coupling and animal sacrifices were carried out.

The nakedness symbolized that, for one moment of the year, all were equal. Wars paused, famine became a momentary abundance of food. It was a break from the harsh reality of

authority. During one such Lupercali it is said even Julius Caesar participated and foresaw his future coronation as emperor, as in a vision.

When Christianity came along it overlapped with these pagan celebrations, making the need for social release even stronger.

Catholicism regulated and integrated carnival into the Christian calendar, marking it as a pre-Lent festivity. And Lent, the 40-days period of reflection and profound soul-cleansing in preparation for Easter with fasting and penance, stopped the wild parties.

Franchetti explains that the origin of the term 'carnival' stems from the Latin 'carnem levare', meaning 'farewell to meat', to mark Shrove Tuesday, the last day when eating fat or meat, considered an extravagance, was still allowed before Lent.

The perception and existence of a tyrannical church that terrified sinners with images of hell and punished vices, lust and amorality, only intensified peoples' desire to have fun during carnival.

And even the clergy couldn't resist the party: for two centuries during the middle ages masked priests celebrated "the feast of the crazy" by using sausages instead of sacramental bread for mass.

"If it wants to survive, society's structured order needs Carnival as a momentary worship of chaos and disorder, to justify and strengthen such order", says Franchetti.



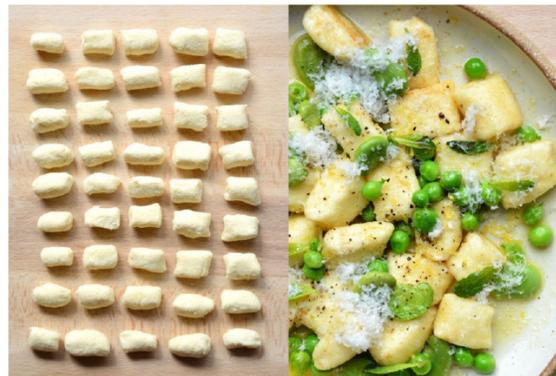
In Cucina con gli Italiani

Gnocchi di ricotta di Fabrizia con piselli, fave e menta (Fabrizia's ricotta gnocchi with peas, broad beans and mint)

Recipe by [Paola Bacchia](#)

Serves 4 people

450g (15.9 oz) firm ricotta
1 large egg
3 tablespoons flour
2 tablespoons parmesan cheese
fine semolina for dusting
100g (3.5 oz) butter, unsalted
couple of handfuls each of podded peas and podded broad beans
handful baby mint leaves
a small lemon, zest only
parmesan cheese, grated
salt and pepper to taste



Preparation

To make the gnocchi, put the ricotta and egg in a bowl and mash with a fork until the ricotta is creamy. Add the flour and parmesan cheese and stir. The mixture will be quite soft.

Drop a small handful of mixture onto a working surface that has been well dusted with fine semolina. Work the dough into a long sausage shape and cut off 2-3cm portions. Roll individual gnocchi in semolina and set aside. Repeat with the remaining ricotta and set aside.

To double-pod the broad beans, drop them in boiling water for couple of minutes. Drain them and then pop them out of their second shell. Wash them well (as they can be a bit sticky) and set aside. Blanch the peas for about a minute in boiling salted water (and refresh in iced water).

Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to the boil. Drop in about half of the gnocchi so as not to over-crowd the pan (or use two saucepans). They will rise to the surface and cook in about two minutes. Lift them out with

a slotted spoon, draining them well.

Whilst the gnocchi are cooking, heat the butter in a large frypan. Drop the cooked gnocchi into the melted butter, tossing them so they are well coated. Add the peas and broad beans, tossing them with the gnocchi and allowing them to heat through.

Serve on warmed plates, scattering freshly ground pepper and salt to taste, lemon zest, baby mint leaves and plenty of parmesan cheese. Serve immediately.

Pair it with: Abbazia di Novacella 2019 Pinot Grigio (Alto Adige Valle Isarco)

By [Wine.com](#)



This pinot grigio is pale straw yellow in color with an attractive aroma of citrus fruits, green apple, pear, peach and honeydew melon; medium rich, fruity and direct on the palate with orchard fruit flavours, green melon, ginger and tangy acidity on the finish. It's bright and delicious, with tangy acidity before a fresh, clean close.

This wine is made from vines grown in gravelly marine soils at 600-750 meters in elevation. Two-thirds of the wine was fermented and stored in stainless steel tanks and one-third was fermented in 30 hectolitre oak casks

using natural yeasts.

A mountainous northern Italian region heavily influenced by German culture, Trentino-Alto Adige is actually made up of two separate but similar regions: Alto Adige and Trentino.

Trentino is primarily Italian-speaking and largely responsible for the production of non-native, international grapes. There is a significant quantity of Chardonnay, Pinot Grigio and Merlot produced.



La Piccola Cucina - Strawberry and Almond Tarte

By the ICCC Team

Calling all young chefs!

Join us on Saturday, May 6 from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. at the Milford House for another fun edition of *La Piccola Cucina*. It costs \$40 for ICCC Members and \$50 for non-members. [Click here to register.](#)

The little chefs will be making *crostatina alle mandorle e fragole* (strawberry and almond tarte). Please note, the recipe has almond flour.

This is an event for kids and one guardian or parent to assist.

La Piccola Cucina is a hands-on cultural culinary experience for children ages 3-10 years old. Children will wear chef aprons and toques and learn basic Italian language, metric system and culture while preparing authentic Italian recipes.



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The ICCC thanks all the sponsors for supporting *La Voce Italiana*. For more information on sponsorships, please email marketing@iccchouston.com.

We mark with pride, our achievements and promise to continue improving the Italian Cultural & Community Center (ICCC) as we fulfill our mission to advance, celebrate, and preserve Italian culture for all Houstonians, and continue to place the ICCC on the city's culture map. We thank you for your continued support.

Thank you to the following major donors for supporting the ICCC.

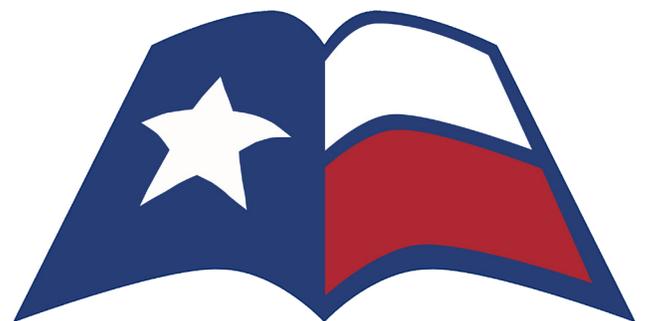




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