



How Italian Food Conquered the World

By John F. Mariani

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Not so long ago, Italian food was regarded as a poor man's gruel? little more than pizza, macaroni with sauce, and red wines in a box. Here, John Mariani shows how the Italian immigrants to America created, through perseverance and sheer necessity, an Italian-American food culture, and how it became a global obsession. Featuring evil villains such as the Atkins diet and French chefs, this is a rollicking tale of how Italian cuisine rose to its place as the most beloved fare in the world, through the lives of the people who led the charge. Full of savory anecdotes from top chefs and restaurateurs including Mario Batali, Danny Meyer, Tony Mantuan, Nigella Lawson, and many others, the book also goes inside famous restaurants such as Da Spiaggia, Piaggia, Union Square Cafe, Rao's and others.

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How Italian Food Conquered the World By John F. Mariani Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #779390 in Books
- Published on: 2012-05-22
- Released on: 2012-05-22
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x .65" w x 6.00" l, .67 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 288 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Mariani, author of *The Encyclopedia of American Food & Drink* and the food and wine correspondent for *Esquire* magazine, makes a declarative statement in this fact-filled, entertaining history and substantiates it with hundreds of facts in this meaty history of the rise of Italian food culture around the globe. From Charles Dickens's journey through Italy in 1844 to 20th-century immigrants to America selling ice cream on the streets of New Orleans, Mariani constantly surprises the reader with little-known culinary anecdotes about Italy and its people, who have made pasta and pizza household dishes in the U.S. and beyond. Mariani's heavy emphasis on specific chefs and restaurant owners in the latter half of the book may tire your average reader, but foodies will delight as he details the rise and fall of French cuisine during the 1980s and '90s as trattorias eventually take the States by storm. Mariani includes many recipes throughout. (Mar.)

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From [Booklist](#)

Making sense of Italian food's history is no small undertaking, but like any true professional, longtime *Esquire* food correspondent and legendary restaurant columnist Mariani handles the subject with ease. Organized into categories and loosely chronological, Mariani's trove of facts and anecdotes helps chronicle the cuisine's rise to fame. Italian food had some troubles early on. Often viewed as cheap peasant grub, it took decades to gain traction outside of Italy. But with time, it was everywhere and could compete (for dollars and critical praise) with even French cuisine, the perennial gold standard. Mariani explains the obvious factors, like pizza's immeasurable contribution, but touches on many surprising ones, like the allure the Mafia brought to family-owned establishments. The world outside of the U.S. and Europe is barely addressed, though. One wonders whether fettuccini alfredo is as pervasive in, say, India, as it is on American menus. And if not, why? But readers will be salivating too much to mind. Fortunately, classic recipes are included throughout. --Casey Bayer

Review

"An entertaining and fact-filled chronicle." *?Wall Street Journal*

"Informative and entertaining examination of the rise of Italian cookery" *?Washington Post*

"Eating Italian will never be the same after reading John Mariani's entertaining and savory gastronomical history of the cuisine of Italy and how it won over appetites worldwide." *?USA Today*

"Informed and enlightening, loving and luscious." *?Kirkus Reviews*

"Fact-filled, entertaining history." *?Publisher's Weekly*

"A comprehensive and entertaining chronicle of Italian food, as much about colorful characters as ingredients." *?Everett Potter's Travel Report*

"Making sense of Italian food's history is no small undertaking, but like any true professional, long-time *Esquire Magazine* food correspondent and legendary restaurant columnist Mariani handles the subject with ease." *?Booklist*

"Mariani captures the history and elemental beauty of a cuisine that really does seem to appeal to more

palates than any other... you owe it to yourself to read this book.” ?*Las Vegas Weekly*

“John Mariani offers a full-course menu on the history of Italian cooking. The book has both a solid main course on changing food through the ages as well as tasty side dishes on Italian wine and the Mediterranean diet. To enjoy it properly, read the book with a glass of Vin Santo and a biscotti at your elbow.” ?*George M. Taber, author of Judgment of Paris: California vs. France and the Historic 1976 Paris Tasting That Revolutionized Wine*

“John Mariani's thoroughly researched book is a fantastic and fascinating read, covering everything from the influence of Venice's spice trade to the impact of Italian immigrants in America and the evolution of alta cucina. This book will serve as a terrific resource to anyone interested in the real story of Italian food. Told in a conversational voice, Mariani knows his subject well and weaves a historical story rich in facts and traditions.” ?*Mary Ann Esposito, host of PBS' "Ciao Italia," television's longest-running cooking show*

“A mouthwatering, delectable and delightful romp through peasant kitchens and luxurious restaurants from Italy to the UK and America. Mariani is a cultural anthropologist, social historian and amiable dinner companion as he traces the evolution of Italian cuisine from the denigration to apotheosis.” ?*Stanislao G. Pugliese, Queensboro Unico Distinguished Professor of Italian and Italian American Studies, Hofstra University and author of Bitter Spring: A Life of Ignazio Silone*

“This is the book that John Mariani was born to write, and, quite frankly, I know of nobody else who has the rich family background, keen grasp of Italian culinary history, vast professional connections, and overall first-hand experience necessary to relate such a fascinating and important story. I found myself reading this chronicle as if it were a novel packed full of intriguing events, unexpected developments, and a cast of colorful characters, and if you love great Italian food (and who doesn't?), you won't be able to put the book down.” ?*James Villas, author of The Bacon Cookbook and Pig: King of the Southern Table*

“Equal parts history, sociology, gastronomy, and just plain fun, *How Italian Food Conquered the World* tells the captivating and delicious story of (let's face it) everybody's favorite cuisine with clarity and verve and more than one surprise.” ?*Colman Andrews, author, Ferran: The Inside Story of El Bulli and the Man Who Reinvented Food, and editorial director, The Daily Meal.com*

“In this fascinating culinary and cultural tale, John F. Mariani details the imaginative genius of Italian-American chefs and restaurateurs who transformed restaurant meals from overcooked macaroni and jug wine into perfect bites of pasta al dente and heavenly sips of Barolo and Barbaresco, ensuring that Italian cuisine would be the envy of the world. With a sweeping narrative that begins in ancient Rome and concludes with a behind-the-scenes look at today's trendiest restaurants, *How Italian Food Conquered the World* is a food lover's delight. Raise *la forchetta* and dig in!” ?*Maria Laurino*

“John Mariani has written the definitive history of the how the Italians won their way into our hearts, minds, and stomachs. It's a story of pleasure over pomp and taste over technique. About the only territory they've left alone is Thanksgiving. And come to think of it, in my family we'll be serving spaghetti with turkey meatballs this year.” ?*Danny Meyer*

“Beautifully told, food critic John Mariani weaves together a captivating chronicle of the rise of Italian cuisine, from the courage and ingenuity of poor immigrants to the sophistication and business-savvy of today's five-star chefs. A book to be savored.” ?*Marchese Piero Antinori*

“John Mariani's superb writing has captured perfectly the rise of Italian food throughout history, unraveling the evolution of a cuisine that confused the world before conquering it! *How Italian Food Conquered the World* will fascinate future generations who wish to know more about Italian food and wine culture.” ?*Tony*

Users Review

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