

I ♥ AM ♥ ITALIAN COOKING
THE FIRST IN THE WORLD

MINISTERO DELLA CULTURA

MINISTERO DELL'AGRICOLTURA DELLA SOVRANITÀ ALIMENTARE E DELLE FORESTE

ITALIAN CUISINE UNESCO INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

THE FIRST IN THE WORLD



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ITALIAN CUISINE: A LIVING HERITAGE THAT TELLS WHO WE ARE



Italian cuisine is much more than a collection of recipes: it is a daily ritual that has always been part of our lives and that, every day, tells who we are. It is a tradition in constant motion, that transforms, adapts and grows richer thanks to the countless local influences that run through it.

It is precisely this vitality, this ability to evolve without losing its essence, that led us to candidate Italian cuisine for UNESCO Heritage status.

The nomination was pursued together with the Ministry of Culture, which I thank for its constant cooperation throughout this effort to promote our beautiful Italy. We did not nominate single dishes or recipes, and we did not turn into a museum piece something that by its very nature lives, changes and renews itself. We nominated a mosaic of diversity, a heritage made of gestures, knowledge, ingredients, dialects, and family and local histories.

Italian cuisine is like a puzzle: each of us holds a piece of it, a unique way of interpreting the act of cooking, one's own recipe, one's own dish. It is the sum of these pieces, no two alike, that forms the authentic picture of our culinary identity. Contrary to what is often said, Italian cuisine is not a monolithic block. Rather, it is a tradition in constant evolution, the result of centuries of cultural exchange and local micro-histories.

Every city and every town have their own culinary memory; and within every city live families who interpret the same recipes in different ways.

Sometimes even within the same family the cooking changes from one pair of hands to another, from one generation to the next. Its strength lies in this plurality. In Italy, cooking is an everyday gesture, a way of telling others who we are, just as a work of art, a painting or a sculpture does. Cuisine is a deep part of our culture. It calls us to conviviality, to sharing, to bringing people together around a table, turning every meal into an experience of community, memory and pleasure. In a few words, Italian cuisine safeguards our identity: passion, care, tradition and joy of living.

The recognition of Italian cuisine as Heritage of Humanity has meant growth for our businesses and, above all, the opportunity to promote a path that can secure, in the future as well, the well-being that our Nation has been able to offer humanity on many occasions. When we speak of Italian cuisine, then, we speak of this extraordinary wealth of variety and identity, of the millions of everyday gestures that make up the great puzzle of our culture.

This is the heritage we wish to protect: a living legacy rather than a fixed model, which is shared, continually reinvented and able to keep telling who we are for a long time to come.

Francesco Lollobrigida
Minister of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty
and Forests

WHAT IS UNESCO INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

It is the set of practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and skills that communities recognise as part of their cultural heritage. It is about living traditions handed down from generation to generation, not objects.

THE ‘ITALIAN CUISINE’ DOSSIER

On 23 March 2023, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forests and the Ministry of Culture launched the nomination of Italian Cuisine for inscription as UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.
The nomination did not concern a single dish or recipe, but a shared cultural model made of community experiences, careful choice of ingredients, the conviviality of the meal, the passing on of knowledge to new generations, and respect for seasons and territories.

VALUES AND MEANING OF THE NOMINATION

Italian cuisine is the ‘cuisine of affection’: it conveys memory, care, relationships and identity, telling the stories of families and communities through food. It reflects the bond between natural landscapes and communities, embodying the memory, daily life and culture of each territory.

PROMOTING COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERS

Accademia Italiana di Cucina (1953), Fondazione Casa Artusi (2007), La Cucina Italiana magazine (1929).

OFFICIAL LOGO

The official logo of the nomination of Italian Cuisine as UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity was unveiled on 4 August 2023 in Pompeii.

Description: A chef's hand tosses ("spadella") elements of Italian cuisine in a pan together with Italian monuments, symbols of the territory and cultural figures, creating a dynamic trail similar to the tail of a comet.

Below, the wording:

I AM ITALIAN COOKING
THE FIRST IN THE WORLD

The logo was created by the Scuola dell'Arte della Medaglia of the Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato (Italian State Mint) in Rome, founded in 1907 and specialised in artistic modelling, metalwork, goldsmithing, silversmithing, gem engraving and graphic art.

OFFICIAL ANTHEM

The official anthem of Italian Cuisine as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity is “Vai Italia”, written by Mogol, one of Italy’s greatest lyricists and record producers, author of the lyrics of Lucio Battisti’s songs, and sung by Al Bano, one of Italy’s most popular singers, with over 25 million records sold worldwide and 26 gold and 24 platinum records to his name.

The song, with music by Oscar Prudente, was recorded with the Piccolo Coro dell’Antoniano, the famous choir founded in 1963 by Mariele Ventre at the Istituto Antoniano in Bologna to accompany the young performers of the Zecchino d’Oro song festival, a UNICEF ambassador of music culture for children worldwide and listed by UNESCO among the heritage of humanity for a culture of peace, and with the Piccolo Coro di Caivano, promoted by the Ministry of Culture with Antoniano-Opere Francescane and the participation of the Ministry for Family, Birth and Equal Opportunities.



EVENTS IN SUPPORT OF THE NOMINATION

The Sunday Lunch on 21 September 2025 involved over 80 Italian municipalities, with live coverage on RAI and the participation of figures from culture and entertainment.



UNESCO EVALUATION PROCESS

The 24 Member States of the UNESCO Committee were called to decide on Italian Cuisine, recognised as UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in December 2025 in New Delhi.

- Group I: France, Germany, Spain
- Group II: Slovakia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan
- Group III: Barbados, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Paraguay
- Group IV: Bangladesh, China, India, Malaysia, Viet Nam
- Group V(a): Angola, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Uganda, Zambia
- Group V(b): Algeria, Mauritania, United Arab Emirates

Role of the Evaluation Body - Made up of 12 members (6 experts and 6 NGOs), it played a key role in the technical evaluation of the nominations in the first half of 2025.

A positive opinion from the Evaluation Body virtually guarantees success.

On 10 November, UNESCO’s body of international experts recommended the inscription of Italian cuisine on the List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. This was the first, fundamental opinion submitted for the final, political decision, taken by the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee, which met in New Delhi, India, on 10 December 2025.

The published technical evaluation states that the dossier is well prepared and consistent with UNESCO's objectives.

In its evaluation report, the technical body found that the dossier highlights the contribution of Italian cuisine to sustainable development, in particular by promoting gender equality and social cohesion. The practice of Italian cuisine is considered inherently inclusive, characterised by interchangeable roles that allow anyone to take part, overcoming cultural and generational barriers. Furthermore, its adherence to principles such as fighting food waste and reducing resource consumption makes it a model of environmental sustainability.



KEY MILESTONES

23 March 2023 Official announcement of the nomination by the Government (MASAF and MiC).

1 July 2023 Launch of the nomination aboard the tall ship Amerigo Vespucci, on the departure of the Vespucci World Tour and Villaggio Italia (2023-2025), with travelling events around the world to promote Italian cuisine.

4 August 2023 Official presentation of the logo, designed by the Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, at the Archaeological Park of Pompeii.

14 December 2023 "Italian Space Food" conference at the Embassy of Italy in Washington: presentation of the project taking pasta into space with the Axiom 3 mission, as a symbol of innovation and tradition.

10 January 2024 Launch of the Axiom 3 space mission with Italian pasta aboard the ISS, an international media event linked to the nomination.

2024 – 2025 Promotion of the nomination in major international settings — such as the G7 Agriculture meeting in Ortigia, the "Agricoltura È" initiative in Rome and the leading agri-food trade fairs in Europe and worldwide — through communication campaigns and promotional activities.

2024 – 2025 Promotion of the nomination at major sporting events such as the Piazza di Siena Horse Show, the Ryder Cup, the Giro d'Italia, the Rugby World Cup and many others.

10 June 2025 Grand finale of the Vespucci Tour in Genoa with a drone show and a celebration of Italian cuisine as cultural heritage.

29 June 2025 International event in New York, with a projection in Times Square and an event at Gotham Hall to promote the nomination, attended by Italian institutions and ITA (Italian Trade Agency).

21 September 2025 National and international event "Il pranzo della domenica – Italiani a tavola" (Sunday Lunch – Italians at the Table), in hundreds of Italian squares and embassies around the world, to celebrate conviviality and the ritual of the meal.

10 November 2025 First positive technical opinion from UNESCO on the dossier "Italian Cuisine, between sustainability and biocultural diversity".

10 December 2025 Final decision of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee in New Delhi.

ITALIAN CUISINE IN NUMBERS

Italian Cuisine Worldwide (Source: Deloitte Foodservice Market Monitor 2025)

- In 2024 Italian cuisine reached a total value of €251 billion, with growth of +4.5% year on year.
- It accounts for 19% of the global full-service restaurant market, with particular weight in the United States and China, which together cover over 65% of global consumption of Italian cuisine.
- It will help protect against the damaging phenomenon of Italian Sounding

Italian Agri-Food Supply Chain (Source: Ismea-Qualivita)

- Italian agricultural value added exceeds €44 billion, up 2% on 2023. According to ISTAT (Italian National Institute of Statistics), it is one of the sectors contributing to the growth of Italy's GDP.
- In Italy, agri-food production value reached €20.7 billion in 2024 (+3.5% year on year), with growth of 25% since 2020 and a 19% share of the national agri-food sector.
- The food segment grew for the fourth consecutive year (+7.7%), exceeding €9.7 billion; bottled wine remained stable at €11 billion.

- PDO and PGI exports exceeded €12 billion for the first time (+8.2% on 2023), with record values: €5.15 billion for food (+12.7%) and over €7 billion for wine.

- Strong increases for cheeses, fruit and vegetables, cereals and olive oils; wine grew by +5.2% to €7.19 billion, equal to 88% of Italian wine exports.

- Exports grew by +5.9% in EU countries and by +10.4% in non-EU countries; the United States remains the leading market, with 22% of the total.

- These results are made possible by the work of 328 Protection Consortia and 184,000 operators, employing over 864,000 people (+1.6% on 2023).

- According to ISTAT, companies in the PDO Economy are led by younger and better-trained entrepreneurs, with greater innovation and multifunctionality, and achieve stronger economic results: their average standard output is over three times that of national farms.

- Large-scale retail spending on GI products grew by 1.1%, reaching €6.2 billion.

Food and Wine Tourism (Source: Qualivita – Ismea)

- The Qualivita Italian Food and Wine Tourism Report – 2024 Edition certifies a value of €40.1 billion, up +12% on 2023 and +49% on 2016.

UNESCO Outlook *(Fiepet Confesercenti on data from Bank of Italy, Unioncamere and Movimprese)*

The proclamation of Italian cuisine as UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity has had, and will continue to have, a significant impact on tourist arrivals:

- Increases of between +6% and +8% in the first years.
- More moderate growth of between +2% and +3% over the following five years.
- Estimates: around 18 million additional tourist nights over two years.
- The result achieved will be a multiplier for tourism, the economy and the country's image.

Tourism in Italy *(Source: ENIT, Italian National Agency for Tourism)*

According to ENIT, tourism will contribute €237.4 billion to GDP by the end of 2025, with estimated growth to €282.6 billion over the next decade. In the first 7 months of 2025:

- Italy ranked second in Europe for international tourist nights (151.8 million) and for total stays (268.4 million).
- The country ranked third for domestic tourism, with 116.6 million overnight stays from January to July.

ITALIAN CUISINE: A LIVING HERITAGE THAT BRINGS PEOPLE TOGETHER

Italian cuisine is a living heritage, able to cross generations and territories without losing its evocative power.

With this achievement, Italy claims no supremacy: it offers the world a daily ritual that brings conviviality, happiness and hope. Other countries around the world have seen individual culinary traditions recognised, from the French gastronomic meal to Mexican celebratory meals, from Kimchi-making in Korea to Japanese Washoku, but none, until now, the full breadth of their cuisine.

UNESCO recognition has made Italian cuisine the first cuisine in the world to be recognised as Heritage of Humanity in its entirety: an intangible heritage that keeps growing, innovating and, above all, bringing people together.




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