
La Voce della Dante

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Ciao a tutti, e buon capodanno!

I hope this greeting finds you well, and having enjoyed the Holiday with loved ones.

"Your friendly presidente e suo marito" survived Nutcracker season, racking up about 60 performances for the household, and cheered by the crowded

audiences throughout the month. We are looking forward to NOT playing that show again for awhile, and catching up with friends in its wake.



Our Dante-Il Punto joint Festa di Natale was a splendid success. The venue was great, and working with Alessandra and John from our “sister club” was fun. About 70 people attended, sharing a wonderful potluck meal, concluding with a round of lovely pannettone from Alessandra and her husband. Of course the high point was our Tombola game, with Maestro Tassone callin’ the numbers. Ten lucky prize winners went home with the loot....Perhaps we will look to sharing this event again? Some

photos are shared within this issue.



Looking ahead to 2024, we now have four Dante presentations via Zoom, not only to ride out the cold weather season without driving, but to welcome our wider audience to join us for Dante evenings. See the listings from our program chairs for this month.

January is also renewal month, so if you have not already renewed your Dante

membership, please do so... It's a great time to join Dante if you're not already a member. We are also happy to receive donations beyond your membership dues; if that is possible for your budget, please consider adding a bit when you renew. Your dues and donations cover the costs of all of our presentations and support this very worthy organization. The “join-renew-donate” link is in this issue of La Voce and on our web site as well.



Later this month, the board will undertake to set up this year's nominating committee. As you know, we are seeking new folks to step up. The office of President will be vacant this year; other long-time officers would also appreciate replacement. So this is an important year for Dante elections. Please consider taking an active role in the governance of our organization.

Email me if you have questions. joyce@danteseattle.org

Blessings to all in this new year, and may some of the craziness in this crazy world find resolution!

A presto

Joyce

JAN 10 ENGLISH MEETING

TOPIC: HISTORY AND STORY: ELSA MORANTE, ROME,
LA STORIA AND THE SHOAH

PRESENTER: GABRIELLE ORSI

Elsa Morante (1912-1985), Roman author and poet, drew upon her own life, including her experience as a Jewish refugee in World War II, to write her bestselling 1974 novel *La Storia*. Dr. Orsi will provide the historical context to Elsa Morante's novel-- the multiple centuries of Jewish life on the Italian peninsula, Morante's own life, and the questions surrounding the novel and its portrayal of the Holocaust which persist to this day. Elsa Morante-- hailed by her husband Alberto Moravia as a genius and the better writer of the two, and viewed by many Italian writers, including Elena Ferrante, as a major 20th century figure and lasting inspiration-- remains little known to English-speaking audiences (though that may change with the 2023 translation of her first novel and masterpiece, *Menzogna e sortilegio* by Jenny McPhee as *Lies and Sorcery*.)

Bio

A native of San Diego, California, Gabrielle Orsi earned her PhD in Italian at Columbia University in 2008, focusing on modern Italian literature and Holocaust Studies. She has taught at University of Denver, University of Kentucky, Lexington, City University of New York, Queens College Department of European Languages & Literatures, Barnard College, Columbia University, Colorado Mountain College, and Bellevue College in WA, and held fellowships at the American Academy in Rome, Northwestern University, the Getty Institute of Los Angeles, and the Institute of Modern Languages Research at University of London. She has published a number of academic articles and book chapters on Italian literature and Italian Jewish history as well as contributing original research on Italian female authors to the University of Chicago's Italian Women Writers Database. She currently works for the University of Washington's School of Medicine and resides in Oregon.

JAN 25 ITALIAN MEETING

TOPIC: ITALIAN GENIUS FROM DANTE TO MONTALE

PRESENTER: SERGIO MAURO

I intend to investigate whether there really is an Italian way of being a genius in literature, from Dante to Montale. I will highlight the original way of examining the human condition and the role of the human being in the universe, particularly in Dante, Leopardi and Montale.

Bio

Prof. Mauro was born in São Paulo, Brazil on 28/11/1961 to Italian parents from the province of Salerno. Doctor of Letters (USP) since 1995. From 1999 to 2013, he did 08 postdoctoral research in Italy (UNIBO, Normale di Pisa, UNISI) with 5 scholarships from the Brazilian government. Professor (retired) of Italian literature from 29/05/1986 to 04/12/2019 in UNESP (State University of São Paulo). Editor-in-chief of the journal "Revista de Letras" (since January 2010) He has given about 34 lectures on Italian and Brazilian literature at different Brazilian and international cultural institutes. He has written several scientific articles and two books: "O sorriso do carrasco" (short stories, 1994) and "O girassol enlouquecido" (novel, 2018).

by Giuseppe Tassone

As for the previous issue of La Voce you will find in my news, in addition to some updates about our language program, five sections dedicated to well-known cultural facts, Italian words, proverbs, idioms, and a tongue twister. I hope you will enjoy reading them as much as I enjoy sharing them with you and don't hesitate to contact me for comments, questions and/or suggestions.

The Italian language program will resume on January 4th after the winter break with four classes offered. Winter quarter is the second quarter for all levels. All levels offered are full with a total of 90 students enrolled in alignment with the previous years. We are very happy with the excellent retention and proud of our students' commitment to the program. Students' evaluations at the end of fall quarter were positive and encouraging as you can read from the following excerpts:

"I love taking classes with Damiano. I think he is a very patient and effective instructor, and he makes learning fun and interesting. He's very good at not only conveying the material, but often times expanding on context and important additional notes that are very helpful. He creates a very good learning experience, and I'm lucky to have him as my teacher."

"I think Francesca is a fabulous teacher. She speaks Italian super clear and at the right pace for our level. She is excellent at keeping the content engaging for the whole 90 minute class (impressive!). I enjoy her teaching style and pace and hope to have her as my teacher again."

"Nicla was excellent!"

"I'm very happy with our instructor's expertise, approachability, and professionalism as well as a class of students who really challenge me with their high level Italian. The class is a perfect balance of being supportive and yet challenging."

"I liked the way this class is taught. I have taken several classes before and this time

I actually am retaining the grammar better."

"Book was good and so was the workbook."

"I think the way the materials are presented for class are very helpful, and the formatting works well."

"The only other language class I have taken is high school Spanish, and I think this class is more fun and better structured."

"It has been the best Italian language program I have taken."

"This is the best Italian class I've taken with an excellent instructor; it's intense, but really fun."

Best Wishes for a successful quarter and Happy New Year! Buon Anno!

COSE CHE TUTTI SANNO. Animals in daily conversation.

Nelle conversazioni quotidiane degli Italiani, gli animali vengono spesso nominati in senso figurato e comparato. Si può pertanto sentire dire che qualcuno/a è **noioso/a** come una *mosca*, **furbo/a** come una *volpe*, **pazzo/a** come un *cavallo*, **grasso/a** come un *maiale*, **solo/a** come un *cane*, **lento/a** come una *lumaca*, **curioso/a** come una *scimmia*, **coraggioso/a** come un *leone*, **cieco/a** come una *talpa*, **testardo/a** come un *mulo* ed infine **mutolo/a** ma anche **sano/a** come un *pesce*. Riguardo al mangiare c'è chi **mangia** come un *uccellino* se mangia pochissimo, quanto un *bue* se mangia moltissimo e come un *maiale* se mangia maleducatamente o con ingordigia. C'è chi poi **piange** come un *vitello*, **dorme** come un *ghiro*, **salta** come un *grillo* o **corre** come una *lepre*. Chi ha invece una voce bellissima si dice che **canta** come un *usignolo*.

• PAROLE DEL MESE

gente, s.f. *people, folk*

"Oggi c'è molta gente in piazza."; "I miei nonni erano gente di campagna."; "Secondo l'ISTAT molta gente non ce la fa ad arrivare a fine mese."; "C'è chi dice che la gente non si fa mai i fatti propri."; "I genitori della mia amica sono davvero brava gente."

insieme, avv. *together*

"Per Natale abbiamo festeggiato insieme ai nostri cari."; "Adesso cantiamo tutti insieme."; "Quei ragazzi stanno insieme da due mesi."; "Alla fine della cena gli ospiti sono partiti tutti insieme."; E' bello vedere i bambini giocare insieme."

• ESPRESSIONI IDIOMATICHE DEL MESE

Fare d'ogni erba un fascio.

Literally, to make one bundle of all (types of) grass. It is used to point out that someone is making a generalization.

“Ma non vedi che si tratta di due casi completamente diversi. Tu fai sempre d’ogni erba un fascio.”

Abbiamo fatto trenta, facciamo trentuno.

Literally, we have made thirty, let’s make thirty-one. It is used when you decide to make one last effort after working hard and completing most of the task.

“Alla fine ho lavato tutti i piatti ieri sera, avevo fatto trenta e ho fatto trentuno.”

• PROVERBI DEL MESE

Il lupo perde il pelo ma non il vizio.

Bad habits are very difficult to change.

Can che abbaia non morde.

Threats are not as dangerous as they seem.

• SCIOGLILINGUA DEL MESE

“Tigre contro tigre”

Tiger against tiger.

Pratica. Now let’s practice one of the *parole del mese* by [listening to the song Insieme by Mina](#), one of the greatest Italian singers.

THE FOUR PRONGED FORK

by James Hoffman

Most of us are pretty familiar with a fork. You know, the implement we eat with. La forchetta in Italiano. And we are accustomed to using a four-pronged fork, not two or three.

Well, did you know that the four-pronged fork was developed by chamberlain of the court of Ferdinand IV of Bourbon Gennaro Spadaccini,

in 1770? Gennaro Spadaccini conceived the fork with four tines as we know it today.

The four-pronged fork is now the standard fork used around the world. The previous two and three prong fork (whose concept dates back to Ancient Greece and the Byzantine Empire) was good at spearing food, mainly chunks of meat, but not so good at scooping and transporting food to the mouth. It is from the Byzantine Empire that the fork was introduced in the West, around 1000 AD. The spread in Italy of the fork occurred in the fourteenth century under the Kingdom of Naples.

The ancient Greeks and Romans used mainly their hands to eat. In the richest families there was the habit of wearing silver thimbles to avoid getting fingers dirty. In Italy, the use of the fork occurred in the fourteenth century under the Kingdom of Naples.

Only in 1700, using a fork at the table began to be considered normal.

Italy was quick to adopt this utensil, especially as pasta became an integral part of the diet. Gennaro Spadaccini was also a writer and poet: he wrote a number of books and poems, including a text on the history of the fork.

YOUR NEW FAVORITE ITALIAN BREAD RECIPE

by Trevor Keaton Pogue

Moist, bubbly, and essential to every Italian cook's repertoire, I love how this focaccia takes to lapping up red sauce, food scraps, and extra virgin olive oil with the ease of the family labradoodle.



I had two goals when I returned from Tuscany: figure out the meaning of life and learn to make bread and pasta. Brief but impactful stints in Italian restaurants around Seattle taught me the principles of working with flour and water. They also taught me that whatever the elusive answer to life's oldest question was, it wasn't working the line in a restaurant.

The recipe below is a remix, revision, and clear ripoff, of one of the focaccia recipes I learned to make. I tinkered to adjust for the home cook. In an ode to the countless hours I spent picking,

cleaning, and fussing over blemish-free rosemary leaves for Crema Di Lardo, as part of my education as a Tuscan norcino's apprentice, I added fresh rosemary to the recipe. I find the addition brings about a sweet herbal fragrance to the bread that was otherwise absent in the original recipe. Plus it gives me an excuse to rummage about the alleys looking for hidden gardens and city miracles in the form of edible plant life.

The flour I use is the same I use for sourdough, pizza crust, and pasta, Shepard's Grain High-Gluten Flour. I buy the 50-pound bag from the Chef's Store and keep it tucked next to the fridge so it stays warm and dry. It costs around .70cents a pound when you buy it in bulk and leaves me feeling like when the shit hits the fan, and all the electricity goes out, at least with the assistance of fire, I can still make bread.

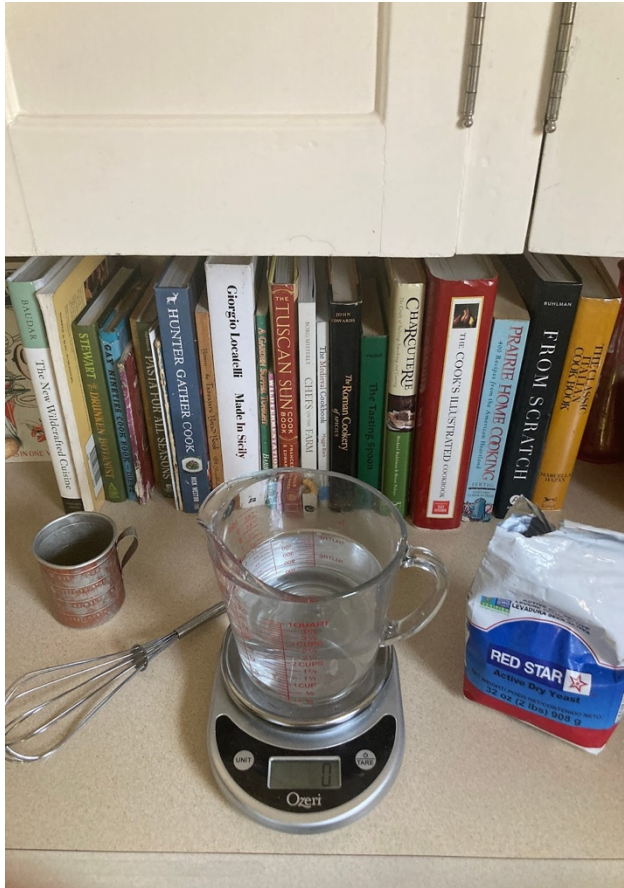
Ingredients

- 625g High-Gluten Flour
- 560 Tepid Water
- 7g Yeast
- 19g Honey
- 13g Salt

Fresh Rosemary (New-growth sprigs, preferably harvested from around the neighborhood or your P-patch)

Rock Salt and Olive Oil For After-Bake Seasoning

Where's the Proof?



If you're using sourdough starter, active dry, or cake/fresh yeast (this does not apply to Instant yeast), it's always best to verify the yeast elves are up for the job. This is where "proofing" comes in. As the name implies, it's a chance for the yeast to prove itself up to the demands of the baker.

In the world of yeast, bubbles equal life. Like beer, kombucha, and Chat GPT, focaccia dough is alive. Yeast is the heart of that life. So before you do anything, check to make sure it's got a pulse.

Many commercial yeast will tell you there is no need to proof. "Our stuff is high

grade. We guarantee it or your money back." Just like with your high school weed dealer, trust but verify.

Start with baby-bath warm water, add in your yeast, and then your honey. Mix the whole thing up so the honey is dissolved and any clumps of yeast have separated. The temperature of your room is going to play an impact. Ideally, you want to be somewhere between 75 and 85 degrees. The warmer and more humid the room the quicker the proof. The quicker the proof, the better your rise. If your room is cold, you can also let your dough rise in the oven. Preheat at 250 for 5 minutes and let it slowly cool down with the dough inside.



Set a timer for 10 minutes. When you return, the mixture should be dancing and a little bit foamy. If it isn't, give it a mix with a whisk and set the timer for another 10 minutes or until you see movement. If nothing is within 20 minutes, it's either too cold in your igloo or your yeast is unhappy.

Combine Flour and Salt.

Use a whisk or another suitable tool to separate any globs of flour and salt. You can also use a sifter.

(Important Note on Tools: Never feel like just because you don't have the correct tool

for the job you can't make a certain dish. The home kitchen should be a place for experimentation and joy. Three meals a day means three meals to experiment with. Take advantage that no one is writing a Yelp review except your inner critic. And they're a bunch of jerks anyway.)

Add liquid

Pour the water, yeast, and honey mix to evenly cover the flour. Make sure you use a big enough bowl. to account for your dough doubling in size. Using a wetter hand, mix the dough vigorously. A stand mixer can be used as a substitute but won't let you feel if any clumps need breaking up. This is a very touchy-feely sort of dough. If you aren't comfortable getting your hands a little dirty, you might as well just give up now. Like the best food, Focaccia takes a little bit of the cook with it.

Cover Dough Bowl

You can use plastic wrap, or an old plastic bag you have lying around. Try to get it airtight and set the bowl in a reasonably warm spot on the counter or table. We're aiming for the dough to double, if not triple in size. This usually takes around 30 minutes.



Cover a (9x13) baking sheet with a generous amount of good-quality olive oil.

After the dough has doubled in size, scrape the mixture out onto the baking sheet using your hand. Make sure not to let the dough stretch too much so that it breaks apart. Shape the dough into the shape of the baking sheet. With your fingers, perform a cat paw kneading action on the dough. You should be able to see little dimples. Flip the upper half of the dough onto the lower half, as if you were folding a sheet of paper in half. Cat paw again. Repeat this process twice more. First from the right to left, and then from the bottom to top. Mist the top of the dough with lukewarm water. Set a timer for 30 minutes.

Allow Dough to Double in Size

Repeat the cat paw motion and bi-fold on three sides of the dough. Set a timer for 30 minutes. Spray the dough with some water so it doesn't get dried out. Turn your oven to 400 Degrees so it can begin preheating.

Spread the dough out gently so it completely covers your baking tray

We want the dough to be evenly spread out on the baking tray. This will allow it to cook throughout and make it easier to portion. I like to use wet

hands whenever handling the dough. It cuts down on the dough sticking to me. The same technique applies when working with heavily starched items like rice, say when you're making arancini, or cold pasta dishes that require a hand toss.

Add Washed/Chopped Rosemary

It's okay to leave the leaves a little damp. This will actually help keep them from overcooking. I like to add the rosemary and then spray the whole thing down with a little more water just to make sure everything is nice and moist. The nice thing about focaccia is that it's a very tolerant bread in terms of water content. Some people even go so far as to add even parts of water and dough to create 100% hydration.

Bake at 400 for 20-25 minutes

Not all ovens are created equal. A good piece of advice is to keep an external thermometer handy. Also, be quick with your actions when opening and closing the oven door. Lots of heat is lost during that time. If on the slower side, preheat your oven 20 degrees above what the recipe calls for. You can then turn it down once the dish is inside. (JUST DON'T FORGET!) Some ovens cook unevenly. Use the oven light to make sure you're getting consistent coverage. If not, rotate the loaf halfway through.



Remove From Oven, Brush With Olive Oil, Sprinkle With Rock Salt

Let the loaf cool in the baking sheet for an hour or two. Remove, slice, and eat with friends, family, or by yourself with a good glass of red wine. You've earned it.

Buon Appetito 🍷



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Dante Alighieri Society of Washington

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