



Italian Identity in the Kitchen, or, Food and the Nation (Arts and Traditions of the Table: Perspectives on Culinary History)

Massimo Montanari

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Another entertaining and surprising food history by the scholar who has come to define the discipline, this volume draws readers into the far-flung story of how regional cuisine came to shape a collective Italian identity. From the Romans' encounters with barbarian tribes to the revival and reinvention of local Italian cooking in the twentieth century, Massimo Montanari shows how regional food practices flavored the nation's political and cultural making over time.

The fusion of ancient Roman cuisine, which consisted of bread, wine, and olives, with the barbarian diet, rooted in bread, milk, and meat, first formed the basics of modern eating across Europe. From there, Montanari highlights the importance of the Italian city in the development of gastronomic taste in the Middle Ages, the role of Arab traders in positioning the country as the supreme producers of pasta, and the nation's healthful contribution of vegetables to the fifteenth-century European diet. Italy became a receiving country with the discovery of the New World, absorbing corn, potatoes, and tomatoes into their national cuisine. As disaster dispersed Italians in the nineteenth century, new immigrant stereotypes portraying Italians as "macaroni eaters" spread, yet two world wars and globalization brought the reunification and revival of Italian national identity, centered on its global strength as a traditional regional food producer.

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