

Plating Authenticity in the Eternal City: A Chef's Perspective

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Rome in her grandeur – stranger drink your fill.
– Propertius

While culinary history is rife with disruptions driven by myriad factors, in this paper, derived from an in-progress article, I argue that the course of culinary evolution in Rome has been disrupted most recently by a fossilized dependence on gastrotourism, manifesting in what I term the 'template menu' – an artificial construction intended to satisfy consumer demand for the authentic Roman gastronomic experience. While past research into culinary heritage tourism has emphasized the experiences and expectations of tourists and the preservation of traditions (World Tourism Organization, 2017; Richards, 2012, pp.13–14) or more explicitly the efforts of destination marketing and national tourism organizations (Chang and Mak, 2018, p.2), little attention has been paid to the concerns of chefs and restaurateurs. Here I address that discrepancy in a Roman context in which chefs are seeking to carve out a space for individual expression amidst the rigidity of a market-propelled 'traditional' menu and yet remain commercially viable. The aim of this study is to investigate this predicament by qualitative engagement, focusing specifically on the perspective of food service providers. This exegesis speaks broadly to questions arising in other cities with a high influx of tourists and well-established gastronomic standing, operating in conditions where authenticity has become commodified, although, granted, there is no place like Rome.

Premise and methodology

The transformations that took place in Italy after WWII brought about rapid urbanization and industrialization of Italian food. The modernization that followed the mass exodus from rural areas stimulated a gastronomic nostalgia industry, touted as an effort to slow, stabilize, and capture the progressive of the loss of heritage. A keen awareness throughout Italy (1) that foodways were disappearing from practice and memory stirred a yearning for culinary ties yoking modern life to a romanticized past, spurred on by the spike in gastronomic tourism after 1970. Rome has been a draw to tourists of one sort or another from its inception, most famously from religious pilgrimages and the Grand Tour. Today tourism has become the new pilgrimage, a surrogate for religious experience (MacCannell, 1973, pp.589, 593). The appetite for 'authentic' Roman food - born of the yearning for meaningful cultural experiences - created a market for

culinary heritage commodities that would satisfy both the material and intangible aspects of consumption - the fungible food itself and the staging of it, desiderata that have come to rival the ruins themselves. 'Sightseeing is only partial engagement with otherness, whereas culinary tourism, utilizing the sense of taste, smell, touch, and vision, offers a deeper, more integrated level of experience' (Long, 2004, p.21). These conditions gave rise to the shaping of the 'template menu', a basic repertoire of dishes selected for commercial viability which satisfy the gastrotourist's expectations for authenticity and ease cultural navigation of local culinary offerings.

The template menu, the disruption under investigation, can be defined as an artificial construction of a culinary past with supposed historical and cultural pedigree reflecting the timeless customs of locals. This mosaic of menu items is a gastronomic system that has consolidated as 'standard fare', representing Roman gastronomy as an identifiable 'brand'. The establishment of a brand involves consensus – whether tacit or explicit – regarding which items (material culture) characterize the brand and parameters of execution (authenticity). These delineations facilitate packaging, replication, and presentation for food service providers and uncomplicate culinary navigation for tourists (Laudan, 2009).

As restaurants are not non-profit organizations, and Rome is heavily reliant on gastro-tourism, chefs/ restaurateurs cannot be indifferent to this frame of reference if they expect to profit from tourism revenues. Every alteration to this menu is a risk that a chef must calculate. It is an interdependent act: customer expectations of 'authenticity' are dictated by 'authoritative' chefs' interpretation and execution of the template menu, while at the same time, chefs are locked into adhering to the template menu in order to satisfy customer expectations. This vicious circle homogenizes the cuisine and reduces it to a level of predictability that stymies culinary creativity and retards its evolution.

Although the template menu phenomenon is a response to tourist expectations, a collateral effect of successful commodification is culinary mythologizing, willfully assimilated by locals as cultural pride. This posits restaurateurs/chefs, in theory culinary authorities, as the guardians of 'lost' foodways, shapers of cultural identity, defenders of authenticity. When commercial profits are yoked to cultural identity against a backdrop of decline or stagnation the edges of historicity are willfully blurred. Therefore, given benefits that cultural trade brings, the culture providers and locals in the circle of pride 'may perceive an often astonishing

degree of continuity between the old and the new situation', (Cohen, 1988, p.382), although the transformation is evident to the external analyst, thus demonstrating the power of traditions cum groupthink. This complex backdrop pits chefs and restaurateurs against one another, each vying to reign as definitive, quintessential or authoritative in their rendition of the main culinary product: tradition.

The aim of this study is to investigate ways in which Roman chefs exercise creative expression within the constraints of the disruption, the extent to which they dare push the boundaries, and how they experience conformity when they cannot deviate. To that end, I provide a brief outline the sources which served as the basis for establishing the Roman template menu, with the menu itself detailed in Appendix 1, followed by a presentation of the interviewees. I then flesh out this foundational information with varying perspectives and approaches derived from interviews with chefs and provide ulterior observations on variables that complete the concept of staged authenticity. I conclude with a hypothesis for maintaining traditions while allowing for innovation.

Authority, Authors, and Authenticity

In order to establish an itemized composite of the template menu (Appendix 1), I drew upon a variety of sources: the menus of restaurants recommended by the most popular social media arbiters of Roman culinary culture writing for an English speaking audience, Rachel Roddy (rachel eats) and Katie Parla (Katie Parla), and BBC travel editor Amanda Ruggeri (2011, 2015, 2019), the 'best' Roman restaurant lists of The Guardian (Seed, 2011; Parla 2011) and Condé Nast Traveler (Parla, 2016), as well as my own field research of the menus of restaurants around the main tourist hubs that are not 'Best of': the Colosseum, the Vatican, Campo de' Fiori, Termini station, Trastevere and newly gentrified San Lorenzo neighborhood.

The chefs/restaurateurs invited to participate in this investigation derive their authoritative standing from various backgrounds:

- Arcangelo Dandini (2019) derives his from social capital and the oral transmission of foodways; his family involvement in food service dates back to his grandparents' trattoria.
- Similarly, in 1943, Mario Mozzetti's (2019) grandfather had bought the original fettuccine Alfredo restaurant, where he had worked as a waiter. Mozzetti's authority is completely reliant on the international diffusion of their signature dish, whereas in Rome, it is hostilely dismissed as inauthentic.
- Antonello Magliari's (2019) Grappolo d'oro is in Campo de' Fiori, a central tourist hub. After starting as a sommelier, he became increasingly active in the kitchen and has now accrued twenty-five years' experience.
- Tommaso Tonioni (2019), sous chef and principle innovator at the two-Michelin star restaurant

Pagliaccio, studied formally and although he is 29, he gained considerable experience and renown while working and researching abroad.

- Sara Cicolini (2019), aged 30, from Abruzzo, is the head chef of a trattoria owned by a wealthy backer, a common way in Italy for talented chefs lacking collateral to get their start. She learned her craft cooking in various venues, then apprenticed at the Michelin star restaurant Metamorfofi, where her talents were recognized.
- Nabil Hassen (2019) is Tunisian and head chef at Salumeria Roscioli. At 17 he left Tunisia and went to Pantelleria where he started as a dishwasher and moved up through the ranks. In time he moved to Rome, working at a Sicilian restaurant which used French culinary techniques. After two years at Roscioli, in 2008, Hassen won Rome's first competition for the best *pasta alla carbonara*, which led to international renown (2).
- An interesting addition to this list is the co-owners of Trattoria Penneestri, a Roman neighborhood trattoria whose clientele is mostly locals. It has been highly celebrated in the Italian press but has received little notice as yet in the anglophone world (3). Valeria Payero is Argentinian and Tommaso Penneestri (2019) is Roman born, but his mother was Danish. Payero and Penneestri worked together in the 'classic' Roman template style restaurants before striking out on their own. Like Cicolini's Santo Palato, they have an extensive background, but have only been in business for themselves for two years.

After the preamble explaining the nature of my investigation, the interviewees were somewhat nonplussed by the candor of my research topic. However, as it was unpacked, all agreed that the template menu was a non-negotiable foundation, and that distinguishing oneself within the confines of that construction, rather than breaking out of it, was the goal that gave their work meaning. They also agreed implicitly that the menu construct reflects neither the *longue durée*, nor how Romans actually eat at home. (4) It is from this common understanding that we explored how each one carved out a creative space to distinguish her/his/their restaurant from the others, while at the same time, remaining distinctly Roman and recognizably 'authentic' enough to be commercially viable.

The power of authority

The template menu is the reference point when opening a restaurant in Rome. Deviation is approached cautiously once a foundation of authority has been established. Payero said that not only did they adhere, they even shied away from some of the more gustatorily challenging options, like the *coratella* and sweetbreads. Not until they had a regular clientele encouraging them to branch out did they feel

comfortable making choices based on personal interpretations of the classics and pursuing unexplored avenues in Roman culinary history.

For Magliari, branching out is a question of time earned reputation. It wasn't until he had been in business for ten years and had received a positive write up from the head of Slow Food - which sealed his standing - that he changed his focus from pleasing as many people as possible through slavish replication of the classics, to freely reinterpreting them.

Cicolini, whose menu was comparatively daring from the start, looks forward to the day that her reputation is solid enough that she can remove certain template items from her menu like *cacio pepe*, but feels that other foundational dishes like *carbonara* and the *pagliata* must be maintained. Her freedom to choose also depends on gaining independence from her financier. It is worth mentioning that these backers are a common phenomenon in Italy and that their interest is not in food, but in making an investment with a substantial return. As such, they play a significant role in the proliferation of the template menu. Chefs, in these cases, are vetted for talent but are not given *cart blanche*.

The Michelin 2-star restaurant Pagliaccio, whose executive chef is French, has avoided the template, as his reputation preceded the opening of the venture in Rome. It is significantly more expensive and the clientele know what to expect. But, as sous chef Tonioni says, they are still affected by the template menu: while select tourists may splurge on Pagliaccio once, they will spend the rest of their stay frequenting trattorias and pizzerias that serve 'traditional fare', because those venues embody the culinary experience that brought them to Rome.

Variations on a Theme

The most common first response to the question of 'distinction' was ingredients and sourcing. A fundamental obstacle is EU health regulations, which have made illicit what was once common practice. The interviewees were surprisingly candid, stating that in order to obtain fresh produce of exceptional variety and quality they could not rely on vendors operating with serial numbers. Wild greens in particular, an important part of Rome's culinary past, are best procured through unregulated small producers and foragers. Chefs stressed the importance of the personal relationship with these suppliers, knowing them by name, knowing their practices and the places where they forage or cultivate. These sources and quality products give them an edge that is worth the risk.

Carbonara, undoubtedly the dish most associated with Rome's culinary identity, is a case in point. Such is its affective importance, there is even a Ten Commandments of Carbonara delineating the parameters of its proper execution (Memescan.it; Moyer-Nocchi, p.173). Archangelo Dandini credits himself with establishing the strictures of the perfect carbonara. Hassen, who picked up

his carbonara know-how from Dandini, also believes that the definitive recipe has been achieved. Interestingly, Hassen thought that the dish dated back to the 1500s. I informed him that it was a very recent tradition and was surprised that this fact had never surfaced during the twelve years he has been head chef at Roscioli, celebrated for this particular dish.

How does one navigate within perfection? Dandini detailed the main ingredients of his recipe: three Asian black peppers, his own blend, eggs sourced from an exclusive supplier in Pisa, pecorino romano from the hills of Abruzzo made only from the May milking at 400 meters, and guanciale from a trusted *salumificio* in the Marche region. When asked why he so freely shared his secrets, he replied that they were not secrets. Letting others know how the dish should be done may improve the overall quality of the *Made in Rome* brand. Dandini sees the utility of trattorias that follow the template to the letter and feed busloads of tourists, but he feels that slinging the classics without a modicum of protocol reflects badly on Rome as a culinary destination.

Hassen agrees and invited me without hesitation to film him in the Roscioli kitchen, divulging his method for making carbonara. Standardization, however, is intended for the lower ranks. Chefs in the same league are watchful to vary slightly from one another. Whereas Dandini uses rigatoni, Hassen opts for spaghetti as a professional courtesy.

The drawback to meticulously sourced ingredients is the price. Restaurateurs are compelled to engage in 'staging' through table-side explanations, elaborations under menu items, or advertising on social media not only to justify the cost to the undiscerning, but also to educate their palate. Customers, from connoisseurs to novices, revel in these pre-salivatory excursions, which feed the senses before the food even arrives. But it is not necessarily the foreigners who require explanation: 'I would say that only 5% of Italians are capable of judging with their own palates. That's why the explanation at the table', says Magliari (2019). 'For years I've been fighting this idea that Italians have of themselves that somehow, just because they are Italian, they are culinarily superior beings—as if God had put his hand on their heads, and suddenly, they know all about food. They don't realize how many foreigners come here to eat who make a concerted effort to read up on things—and some are ultra-informed'.

It is not only the food but the furnishings and rapport that must be calibrated to frame and contextualize the cultural product, showcasing the menu items to generate lasting memories and stories that can be recounted long after the fact (Gilmore and Pine, 1999, p.12). The restaurateur becomes a 'culture broker' responsible for managing this relationship. In Rome, they must interface aesthetics not only between cultures, but also historical timeframes.

Conscious efforts to break away from standards of execution, set trends, and contribute to the evolution of the *cucina romana*, range in the extreme. As an example, both

Cicolini and Magliari have independently re-conceptualised *coda alla vaccinara*, the traditional second course oxtail stew. Both propose the stew as a boned antipasto; Magliari forms it into a patty and presents it as a *polpetta* on a simple platter with other Roman specialties. His prosaic motivation is that people no longer want to fuss with picking meat off bones and risk having sauce splash up onto their clothes. Customers say they want authenticity, but the reality of oxtail bones is inhibiting. In Cicolini's version, the shredded meat is shaped like an arancini, breaded and deep fried, affixed atop a dab of peanut sauce and finished with a suggestion of cacao powder on top – one of the stew ingredients.

Pennestri, having begun with fears of challenging customs, now boldly serves his *pagliata* with whole grain rigatoni, livened up with a dash of *colatura di pesce*, a nod to the ancient Roman *liquamem*. Pennestri has also dared to venture out of the standard historical construct to look at other options informed by Rome's culinary past. One audacious dish derives from the little-known Roman tradition for *carne equina*, or horse meat. It is sourced from a nearby small producer, an extra appeal to locavores. A curious reach back into recent history led to the resuscitation of *risotto con crema di scampi*, a dish popularized in mediocre family restaurants of the 1980s, the age of cream. Theirs is an attempt to make this cliché hip.

The objective overall is to make valid deviations and yet remain defensibly Roman. Younger chefs challenging the old pecking order have come in for unkind criticism from unaccommodating senior peers. The comment, 'They aren't even Roman. They should stick to making their own food', sums up the sentiment.

Archangelo Dandini, a highly respected Roman culinary authority with a broad following of both local and foreign custom, has the clout to willfully and whimsically reinterpret culinary history without risking his reputation. He claims to draw inspiration from Apicius and the renaissance chef Bartolomeo Scappi, albeit in the most abstract terms. He brings these notions together with his own memories of growing up in a Roman kitchen, expressed in dishes that traverse the line between craft and art. His poached egg antipasto, for example, is adorned with bitter field greens, and dressed with candied sour black cherries, caramelized almonds, bits of meringue and *colatura di pesce*, then finished with contrasting spices. He considers the dish a testament to his journey, both professionally and personally, with a nod to the sensory values of the Renaissance. As a symbolic reminder to his clientele of the emphasis he places on past experience and memory, each table has small, vintage toy cars on it, recalling Dandini's boyhood.

Standing on the foundation of a Michelin 2-star reputation, Tonioni (2019) takes the gastronomic conceptualization of Rome further into the abstract. 'We are all leaving 'cuisines' today. The way I might bring Rome into the kitchen is that I might see a church and be inspired by the way a leaf is set on a column. Or, for example, I really

like symbolism and so maybe seeing a laurel leaf, or better artemisia, wormwood; the inspiration from that leaf might find its way into a dish. That is one way of interacting with Rome. Or reinterpreting Apicius, so not just stopping with the last 100–150 years'. However, Tonioni has not been able to find a backer willing to invest in him. 'This is Rome, so there are certain things I can't talk about - but let me just say that here there are some things you just can't do. There are people blocking the way. I am nearly 30, I am working as sous chef at the only two-star restaurant in Rome, where I have a creative role. I should have been singled out by a potential investor at this point. I have spread the word around, but no one contacts me, and I think it is because of the sort of place that I am proposing'.

Mario Mozzetti's Alfredo alla Scrofa, and its signature dish present an odd study in authenticity and traditions. Fettuccine Alfredo is ridiculed by locals as 'inauthentic' and summarily dismissed from Roman culinary culture, denied any recognition as a Roman tradition. And yet, historically, it has a stronger claim than carbonara, which features prominently on every Roman menu. The antecedents of fettuccini Alfredo were first recorded in the English cookery book *The Forme of Cury*, in 1390. A prototype appears for the first time in Italian in 1465 as *Maccaroni alla Romana*, and today is simply known as *pasta al burro*, buttered pasta. It is, in effect, tagliatelle noodles with butter and cheese. The mystical aspect, its central selling point, derives exclusively from the way it is mixed tableside on a platter by an adroit, trained waiter. Mozzetti asserts that the *mantecatura* (the effectuation of creaminess) achieved through the distinct manual technique employed to mix the butter and cheese with the hot pasta on a plate is sufficient to make this dish one that must be experienced *in situ*, or in one of the café style locations that he plans to franchise throughout the world now that he has obtained an official brand.

Eating *in situ* must remain sacred for the heritage economy to flourish, the exportation of the Roman gastronomic package is also essential to the expansion and continued mythologizing of the local (Hall and Sharples, 2011, p.10). The export, however, can only be a stopgap. The belief that the genuine article must be consumed in its place of origin is paramount. (5) Making use of a current buzzword, Mozzetti calls all other products bearing the name Alfredo 'fakes' and relies on the idea that appropriation signifies bastardization. In Rome, along the main tourist arteries, a few other eateries serve the dish without the sideshow, which Mozzetti says defeats its entire *raison d'être*. Staging is part and parcel to the replication of the dish, although he does not use that term. Mozzetti's claim to authority and authenticity are largely buttressed by the international popularity of the sauce and the restaurant's association with celebrities, first and foremost being Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks who are said to have popularized the dish in the US after enjoying it in Rome on their honeymoon (6). As a performance piece, this dish surpasses the participatory tableside engagement

described above, and moves into the passive realm of entertainment (Gilmore and Pine, 1999, p.3). When the object is diversion and oblivion, theatrical forms of authenticity are welcomed (Cohen, 1988, p.377). As the representative proprietor of an international favorite, Mozzetti is unsurprisingly committed to the notion that traditions must not be altered. However, he recognizes the need to maintain his standing amongst the competition, for which he includes three original dishes on his menu. Otherwise, he adheres to the dictates of the template.

The power of reviews to shape authenticity

Myriad restaurants, osterias, and trattorias replicate the template with little regard to seasonality or individuality, locked into a hyper-authentic mode referred to as *staged authenticity*. Theorists contend that any reproduction of history is by its very nature staged and attempts to produce authenticity defy their own purpose by the self-conscious effort. By insisting upon the ultimate authentic experience, tourists participate in the set-up for staged authenticity and lock food service providers into supplying it (MacCannell, 1973, p.596).

There is an assumption that unsophisticated tourists would reject staged authenticity if they had the cultural acumen to distinguish it from 'real' authenticity (Cohen, 1988, p.374). However, many seek the experience they have seen on television and/or on social media and are not seeking the elusive, off the beaten track osteria frequented by locals. For them, it does not matter if it is contrived, so long as it is done well, indeed, they expect fakery (Lindholm, 2008, p.43). 'The standard is no longer real versus phony, but the relative merits of the imitation. What makes the good ones better is their improvement on reality' (Huxtable, 1997).

The matter becomes complex when critical adjudication systems and ranking mechanisms come into play. They not only influence offerings but also impact traditions and the defining of authentic products – authenticity being a modern value and not an absolute (Cohen, 1988, p.373). No degree of authoritative authenticity or quality will compensate for food that does not appeal to modern tastes, sensibilities, and boundaries of experimentation. The irony of historic authenticity is that while 'the culinary tourist anticipates a change in the foodways experience for the sake of experiencing that change, not merely to satisfy hunger', (Long, 2004, p.21) the food they have travelled to eat *in situ* must conform to modern standards of palatability across a range of cultural origins and reflect established notions of historicity.

This leads to made-to-measure products and experiences. Over time, the glorified or romanticized manner in which locally constructed lore is fed to the external public gets reabsorbed into the way traditions are perceived and passed on by both the locals and professional critics (Cohen, 1988, p.380). Thus, the talk becomes the walk.

Amateur critique platforms, most notably Trip Advisor allow the public to exorcise their 'impartial' assessments (7). Yet, there is a certain irony in the power of 'others' speaking about their experience of 'otherness' to other 'others' to shape local traditions. Contrary to Bourdieu's theory, taste in this scenario is not decided by those who have internalized a high volume of cultural capital (1984, p.387), but by a broad spectrum of voices, whose validation derives from the fact that they have no corruptible investment or elitist standards.

Evaluations from the critical democracy suggesting improvements on reality elicit different reactions from Roman chefs. More than one used the word 'evil', calling it a plague to restaurateurs, 'useful only to know if the bathroom was dirty or if a waiter threw a chair at a customer'. One chef interviewed is currently involved in a class action suit against TA for defamation. Another found it a mere annoyance: 'Once you have a reputation, customers should trust what you have and the way you have prepared it without special requests. Then they can be assured of good service'. Hassen and Payero scrupulously read all the reviews, studying them carefully to inform their methods and choices. Cicolini and Tonioni read them as well, but with a grain of salt.

'Top Ten' rankings appear regularly, particularly as local inserts in national newspapers, much to the aggravation/joy of Roman chefs. Of all of the ranking systems, this is the one that the interviewed chefs vied for most due to its placement in the local news and the talk it generates on a regular basis. Some experienced the lists as a scheduled public shaming, while placers posted immediately on their social media platforms. Curious enterprising chefs open to learning, like Payero and Pennestri, use this information to visit other restaurants to see how competitors are plating authenticity and the *Made in Rome* brand.

YouTube commentary is another popular forum for public criticism. A video on the Italian culinary series *Italia Squisita* (2018a) featuring a demonstration of the *mantecatura* procedure of fettucini Alfredo, unleashed an onslaught of critical commentary ranging from derisory to patently cruel. Mozzetti organized a follow-up video (2018b) in which a panel made up of himself, his head chef and waiter, and his grandfather critiqued (lashed out at) YouTube videos of pretenders making fettucini Alfredo, flagrantly denigrating them for adding cream, shrimp, parsley, or any other unorthodox ingredient in a demonstration of his authority.

Conclusion

While catering to the demands of the market is logical, the advent of the template menu disrupts the flow of culinary evolution and stymies creativity within the gastronomic arts. If the past can only be staged, what is authenticity in the Roman restaurant? Perhaps the answer lies in reorienting the focal point from creation to creator, that is, from the object

to the producer. Working to balance originality with traditional elements brings together craft, knowledge and authorship. When originality emanates from the genuine in oneself and is exercised with authority, tradition can be expressed, interpreted, and personalized without dishonoring the past or corrupting the future and contribute naturally to the ongoing evolution of a cuisine. The merits of recreating historical dishes are not at issue here. It is a noble pursuit that will hopefully expand and continue to evoke curiosity as part of the culture of a locale. The concern is the limitations constructed within the realm of the culinary arts when history and traditions become rigidly defined products. Without authoritative chefs who are willing and able to risk challenging the status quo, template menu items will become nothing more than petrification of traditional conceptions and chefs, museum curators.

Appendix 1: The 'raditional' Roman template menu itemized

The following list of dishes provides a look inside the basic contents the Roman template menu. Despite Rome's long and convoluted culinary history, there is a limited number of select dishes that have been reified as the menu hallmarks of *la cucina romana*, most of them evolved from 19th century foodways (8).

Heading up the list is the internationally renowned *pasta alla carbonara*, ironically, the dish most lacking in historical pedigree (Moyer-Nocchi, 2019, p.171–3). However, such is the fame of this non-traditional tradition that International Carbonara Day was created to commemorate it (Cozella, 2020; Marcolini, 2017). As exemplified by this dish, Rome as a gastronomic destination is not the search for 'lite' or 'healthful', but hearty, flavorful, guilty-pleasure dishes. The *primi piatti* (first courses) continue with: *la gricia* (simple sauce of rendered cured pork jowl), *la matriciana* (same but in a tomato base), *cacio e pepe* (cheese and pepper in an unctuous base), and alternates such as *pasta al pomodoro e basilico*, *rigatoni con la pagliata* (a tomato base sauce with chunks of the milk-filled intestine of suckling lambs or calves), and *gnocchi alla romana* (semolina cakes baked with butter and cheese).

Secondi, the meat course, features: *abbacchio al forno con patate* (roasted lamb), *coppiette* (fried meatballs in tomato sauce), *saltimbocca alla romana* (scaloped beef sautéed in butter topped with prosciutto and sage), and *pollo alla romana*. Hardcore traditionalists will have a range of *quinto quarto* - offal dishes that are increasing in popularity: *coda alla vaccinara* (stewed oxtail), fried sweetbreads, *tripe alla romana*, *la coratella* (mixed stewed sheep offal). The idea, taste, and mouthfeel of latter present a challenge to today's palate, a sort of 'eating outside of the lunchbox', a cultural badge of courage. It is the 'adventure' part of the venture abroad, 'a statement of rebellion against the status quo' (Long, 2004, p.21).

The standard menu sides are: *carciofi alla giudia* (deep-fried artichokes), *carciofi alla romana* (braised

artichokes), broccoli and zucchini *romanesco*, *misticanza* (field greens), deep-fried zucchini flowers, and *puntarelle* (Catalonian chicory salad). *Suppli*, fried filled oblong rice balls, *pinsa* and Roman pizza overlap with the discussion here but follow a different trajectory.

Other menu items tend to be part of the national template: international favorites like spaghetti with clam sauce, spaghetti bolognese, spaghetti and meatballs, and noodles with porcini. Meat items include the exasperatingly ubiquitous *tagliata* – sliced steak (which took off throughout Italy in response to restrictions resulting from mad cow disease), various scaloppini, and grilled tuna. Side dish standards are mixed grilled vegetables and roasted potatoes found on nearly every restaurant menu in Italy.

This menu is the critical mass of the *Made in Rome* template, a strategic economic resource trading in both material culture and ephemeral experiences.

Notes

1. In 1956, film director Mario Soldati began a 12-episode series of enogastronomic documentaries addressing the of fleeting Italian foodways: *Alla ricerca dei cibi genuini - Viaggio nella valle del Po* (In Search of Genuine Food – Travels in the Po Valley). It drew attention to the issue on a national scale.
2. Nabil Hassen, representing Salumeria Roscioli, had spent a week with Arcangelo Dandini to learn the basics of Roman cuisine when he assumed his position as head chef. Although Hassen won the first international competition in Rome, Dandini generally takes precedence in any press coverage.
3. A year after writing that, Trattoria Pennestri now ranks as one of the top restaurants in Rome.
4. On the contrary, restaurant menus have influenced the choices people make in the home, but only as occasion foods.
5. One year after my interview with Mozzetti he released a jarred version of the Alfredo sauce allowing him to corner a market that had hitherto alluded him in his plea for authenticity. <https://www.gamberorosso.it/notizie/la-salsa-alfredo-arriva-a-casa-in-barattolo-idea-del-mitico-ristorante-romano-delle-fettuccine/>.
6. In addition to the famous gift of the gold fork and spoon, one bearing Mary Pickford's name and the other Douglas Fairbanks, it is mentioned in Sinclair Lewis's *Babbit* (1922). The walls of the restaurant are encrusted with VIP photos – mostly Americans.
7. One of the early slogans was 'Get the truth and go!'
8. The delineation here is not defined by single ingredients, but dishes with names.

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