

GUALTIERO MARCHESI

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# A world full of flavours, music and colours



Articles by

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## Introduction

From his first *stage* at the Hotel Kulm in St. Moritz to his experiences of nouvelle cuisine in France – particularly in Roanne with the Troisgros brothers, legends of French cooking – while picking up a rare knowledge of Italian regional cuisines on the way, Gualtiero Marchesi was the most versatile and unpredictable questioner of an established knowledge base, armed with a white chef's uniform and professional qualifications. Even today, his ghost still crosses the floors of the kitchens and dining rooms, inspiring his former students with new ideas and new dishes and fuelling a desire in the passionate readers of his works and recipes to have him by their side and look at food itself in a completely new way.

To those who knew him, he seemed a cautious and unpredictable character, equally capable of quoting Seneca at the drop of a toque and of avoiding any allusion to his own recipes, odd but influential in how he reinvented cooking: not only his own – starting in 1980 with *La mia nuova grande cucina italiana* – but also that practised in modest locales, in trattorias, with a lesser-known book, *La cucina regionale italiana*. It is in this latter work that flashes of genius wrestle with tradition, and a Marchesi can dare to present a dish of orecchiette, broccoletti and foie gras in Milan, in Apulia, elsewhere. Gualtiero seems to teach us that rules must result from study, not the other way round. This is before he opens cookery up to the full spectrum of the arts, combining it not only with painting and sculpture but also with intangible fields of knowledge such as music. Music, for him, meant the piano, which he studied and later abandoned in favour of the kitchen; music was his wife Antonietta – his teacher – and his children and grandchildren who had not wanted to follow in his footsteps and who, at a grand dinner at the Grand Hotel Tremezzo (on Lake Como), would be summoned to play during the break following the meal.

But for a chef – a great chef – the first bite is definitely with the eye. His family may have come from Pavia, but he was a true man of Milan – and he left us his risotto. *Rice, gold and saffron* astonishes the diner with the blackness of the plate around the outside and the two contrasting yellows inside, that of the saffron and the edible gold. However, this astonishment soon gives way to growing curiosity as the customer studies the rice and its thickness, that rice that their fork will slowly dismember in chunks. But there is another *Rice, gold and saffron*, captured in a photograph, and it is an image that has become an icon that no fork and no eye can break down. This, said Marchesi, was the creation not of a chef but of an artist.

However, it is hard to reduce Marchesi to the mere pictures of his dishes, because he taught his wisdom in his kitchens and welcomed young people from all backgrounds, showing them the art of cooking and bringing on a new wave of artists with the freedom to express themselves. Yet the names of his students are not those of a “school”, with all the discipline and authority that implies, but of a new generation geared towards the free affirmation, always individual, of a craft, with results that were most diverse and unique. Equally, his role at ALMA, the cookery school in Colorno, near Parma, was that of a tutelary deity rather than a rector.

Although he is no longer with us, it was his clear will and determination that led to the establishment of his foundation in via Bonvesin de la Riva, the street in which he opened his restaurant. The kitchen, an object of both study and remembrance, has a precisely defined place there, attracting students from all over the world, leading chefs and colleagues.

**Alberto Capatti**

*President of the Gualtiero Marchesi Foundation*

Pages I and II:  
Gualtiero Marchesi  
in the dining room  
of L'Albereta,  
the restaurant  
in Erbusco, in  
Franciacorta, in the  
province of Brescia.  
The photograph  
on p. I was taken in  
2006 and that  
on p. II in 2007.



## The life of Gualtiero Marchesi and Italian cuisine

by Alberto Capatti\*



Left:  
The Maestro with his famous  
*Riso, oro e zafferano*, Milan, c. 1988.

This page:  
Gualtiero Marchesi,  
*Carn'è pesce*, a composition based  
on beef fillet and sea bass fillet  
accompanied by three sauces, 2009.

His life story, his emotional and family life, his “total cuisine”, his philosophy and practice, and even the gastronomic code he offered his students and readers – at the end of a long career, Gualtiero put it all down in writing. *Marchesi si nasce questa è la mia storia*, which he published in 2010 at the age of 80, sets the record straight about his early life, his time in France and the opening of his restaurant in Milan’s via Bonvesin de la Riva. He was assisted by Carlo Valli, a professor of marketing and communications. Why tell his story? Because a chef known all around the world has to refute insinuations and gossip by putting his life down in writing up to the point he opened Il Marchesino in the former Biffi Scala restaurant in 2008. This marked his return to Milan, in a building famous for music and renowned for its food.

The Marchesi family had opened L’Albergo del Mercato in via Bezzecca 80 years previously, transforming it into somewhere the fruit and vegetable sellers who worked in the large open space nearby could get refreshment. Hailing originally from Pavia, the family had sunk their money into a field that would allow the young Gualtiero to choose a future, moulding himself in the process. After five years of war, which they spent back close to their roots, the family reopened the Albergo. Seeing that their son was attracted more by the restaurant industry than the Feltrinelli Institute, they “dispatched” him to the famous Hotel Kulm in St. Moritz for a stage. This was followed



by two years in Lucerne, where he attended business school, learning French and German, and a year in a hotel school to take courses in cooking and front of house. On his return, he worked in the family restaurant, serving simple hot and cold meals during the day and operating a full restaurant service in the evenings. Marchesi began to study the dishes he was serving and embarked on a journey of research, one that was clearly limited by the nature of the locale and the culture of its clientele.

He took piano lessons and ended up marrying his teacher, Antonietta Cassisa. He gave up the instrument to devote himself exclusively to cookery. Milan boasted many specialities of its own plus, in some city-centre restaurants, French dishes, while at L’Albergo del Mercato Gualtiero was serving *Fillet alla Rossini*. In 1966, “the Mercato closed. It had to. The local council, which owned the building, did not want to renew the lease.” For Gualtiero, this was an opportunity to re-evaluate his future. So he set off travelling, starting in Paris, the centre of world cookery, with a stage in an iconic restaurant: the “Ledoyen”. He travelled through France in reverse, starting in the capital – then in turmoil (this was 1968) – before moving onto the provinces, first Dijon and then Roanne, with the Troisgros brothers. A few years later, their three-star restaurant would go on to be regarded as one of the centres of nouvelle cuisine. His return to Milan was shaped by this new light that France, or more accurately Roanne, had shone into European kitchens, with new, revolutionary rules: “the fresh produce of the day”, hence “more simplicity in preparation” and, obviously, the banishment of excessively elaborate sauces. He began the exhausting search for premises

In front of the entrance to his parents’ restaurant L’Albergo Mercato, Milan, 1952.

Top: Gualtiero Marchesi (back row, far right) with his fellow students at hotel school in Lucerne, 1950.

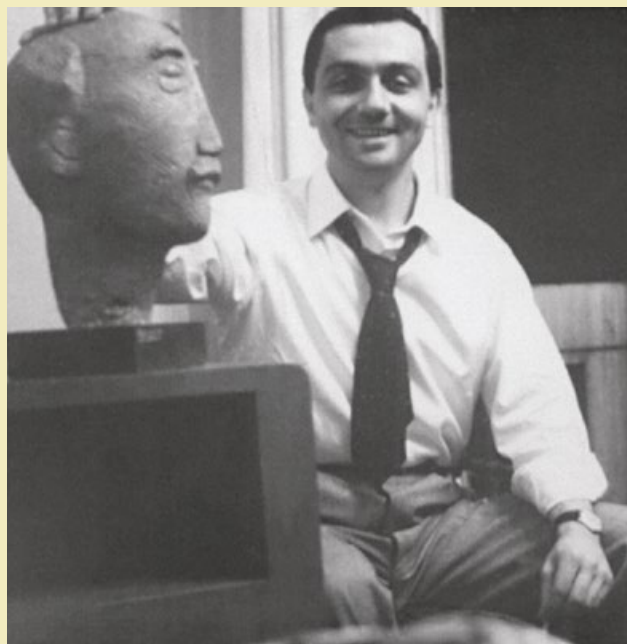




Sitting next to  
*L'asceta*, a work  
by sculptor  
Aldo Calvi, 1963.

Bottom:  
He married the  
pianist Antonietta  
Cassisa on  
16 August 1962.

together with his friend Medagliani, who was a dealer in hotel supplies, a promoter of books – particularly Borriani's *Cucina pratica* in its three editions of 1938, 1953 and 1960 – and his sponsor. A suitable location was found in the shape of a “pizzeria called Okay” in via Bonvesin de la Riva, not far from where the family restaurant used to be. From the tables to the lights, from the kitchens to the fridges – everything would be scrutinised in detail, following a holistic understanding of cooking that took in every single aspect, from the shape and colour of the plates and bowls to the tables and the lighting, and in 1977 the new restaurant opened its doors. It would take just a few years to create the iconic dishes of Marchesi's cuisine: his *Rice, gold and saffron*, the *Open raviolo*, the *Cuttlefish in its own ink* – and the Michelin stars came flooding in. The idea of eating the colours, the brightness of a dish, had never been seen before, and Gualtiero opened up a new path, arousing curiosity, educating the customer, and promoting this new Italian cuisine. To support this movement, in 1980 Rizzoli published *La mia nuova grande cucina italiana*, which opened with a recipe for *Bouquet garni*. Four years later, the work would be translated into French by the editor Robert Laffont as *La cuisine italienne réinventée*. Rather than being a political act in order to present a repeatable model that could be sold everywhere, reinventing Italian cuisine was primarily a matter of studying ingredients, pots and pans, and heat sources in great depth, giving each a tangible presence in the form of an edible object that, in turn, called for a specific plate or bowl, white or coloured, and a specific lamp above the table, and the inquisitive or enraptured



face of the customer. With these riddles – edible gold in a Milan-style risotto, carving open a raviolo to reveal its secrets – Marchesi forged a method that brings chef and customer together in a game of role-play, reserving the role of the artist for himself. The dish presented to a special audience, a handful of Milan-based journalists who came to his restaurant to meet him and listen to him, would be amongst the simplest: a *cassoeula* served on a large green cabbage leaf, a creation of unrivalled beauty.

A game of the arts, Marchesi's cuisine proved fascinating to a Milan where food culture was flourishing once again, in 1982, thanks to *La Gola*. This monthly magazine was designed and edited by Gianni Sassi, who had made innovation his stated aim and collaborated with all kinds of people – not journalists, but writers who were determined to find things out and had an eye for the unusual. Fashion and design were beginning to influence the approach being taken to cooking, and in 1983 Luigi Veronelli founded and ran the journal *L'etichetta*. The dishes from via Bonvesin de la Riva appeared as a new artistic language destined to revolutionise the distance between the diner and their meal. This involved both industry and marketing, a keen-eyed practitioner of which was Luca Vercelloni. Together with Marchesi, he would go on to publish *La tavola imbandita. Storia estetica della cucina* (Laterza) in 2001. This work traced a common thread from the



Renaissance banquet to the Maestro's *Lobster with cream of peppers*, introducing a historical key to allow the dish to be "read" and burnishing an Italian heritage that could easily hold its own against its French counterpart. Fields less familiar to star-laden judges thus came to enrich what was a culinary avant-garde, which found itself embracing not only painting and music but also marketing and history. Whereas previously, Marchesi's customers had brought their own culture into the dining room, now it was a matter of inventing a "total cuisine" – not only as Gualtiero had intended it, in his own restaurant, but in a Milan where food occupied the minds of all kinds of people and deserved to be reflected on in an interdisciplinary fashion.

The steps that Marchesi took, unpredictable as they were, remained true to his



The brigade of the restaurant in Milan's via Bonvesin de la Riva in 1977, the year it opened. Behind Marchesi is Giuseppe Vaccarini, World Champion Sommelier of 1978.

Right: With sommelier Luca Zanini in the wine cellar of the restaurant in Erbusco, 2002.

vision of cookery. In 1989, *La cucina regionale italiana* was published by Mondadori. It proved a surprise for those people who had imagined looking at a bowl of *Rice, gold and saffron* ready to be served and instead found a *Risotto alla Milanese* without the gold leaf but with the rice spread out in a layer on the plate. Then, browsing the chapters dedicated to the various regions, they come up against *Bucatini all'amatriciana* introduced as follows: "I like this very much. Robust and full of flavour, it is the ideal dish to enjoy with friends at the end of a joyful evening." Better still is the *Spaghetti carbonara*, where, as a true man of

Milan, he suggests: "You could substitute the guanciale for pancetta", before swiftly repenting and adding: "of course, but it wouldn't be the same". With *La cucina regionale italiana*, Marchesi enters people's homes, converses with cooks, and recommends the best thing to do – with a healthy pinch of caution. The star chef could allow himself to play different roles, to abandon via Bonvesin de la Riva for the home of a friend, to help them and then sit down at the table with them. Marchesi saw an Italy in which home cooking was a prestigious element of its heritage and only in appearance represented the antithesis of his own creative and artistic cuisine. So, he decided to appropriate it for himself by playing with the very names of the ingredients and serving an *Orecchiette*, *broccoletti* and foie gras where the foie gras is duck liver cooked in a pot until crispy. His friend Troisgros would not have found it hard to accept the meaning: "Ah! These Italians..."

The team had now grown quite a bit, and by the mid-1980s ran to 24 employees, 12 in the kitchen and 12 front of house. Management grew ever more difficult in the 1990s. In 1992, the outbreak of the *Tangentopoli* scandal prompted Marchesi to consider "a different future" and abandon via Bonvesin de la Riva. What restaurants merited a special trip, a visit from a gourmet from Milan? In Canneto sull'Oglio, it was Nadia Santini's Il Pescatore (awarded three Michelin stars in 1996). In the opposite corner, in Ameglia near La Spezia, sat Angelo Paracucchi's





Right:  
Gualtiero Marchesi,  
*Ossobuco*  
in gremolata  
con risotto alla  
milanese, 2008.

Left:  
*Omaggio a Gualtiero*  
Marchesi, dish  
created by Pietro  
Leemann, 2010.

Bottom:  
In front of the  
entrance  
to the restaurant  
Gualtiero Marchesi  
in Erbusco, 2011.

triumphant Locanda dell'Angelo. Not keen on travelling so far, he drove to L'Albergo del Sole in Maleo near Lodi. The restaurant was run by Franco Colombani, "a leading light of the Italian hospitality industry" according to the *Guida de l'Espresso* 1992. Marchesi's move to Franciacorta saw a new destination added to his list, L'Albereta in Erbusco. The guides would not always offer resounding enthusiasm, however, and in 1999 the Accademia Italiana della Cucina



would write: "Business restaurant, located in a *relais* hotel, with meeting rooms, swimming pool, park and panoramic views." Although the move from Milan to Erbusco, funded by the businessman Vittorio Moretti, was not an obvious one, the countryside, the vines and the peace and quiet provided a new theatre for Gualtiero's soul. However, as nothing could be taken for granted where he was concerned, he would continue to think about anything and everything in Franciacorta too, even about pairing wine with food, and thinking about dishes accompanied only by water would always form part of his critical thinking.

Back in Milan, some of his students had already struck out on their own. One, Pietro Leemann, from Locarno, opened Joia, the vegetarian restaurant that can still be visited today by anyone wanting to meet Marchesi's band of disciples. Pietro would go on to worship the Maestro, photographing him and giving him the floor again, in 2016, to present his bilingual Italian/English book *I cuochi*, which included a recipe for pea cream with hazelnut pesto and truffle foam named *A tribute to Gualtiero Marchesi*. Another, Carlo Cracco, spent his first three years at L'Albereta before moving to Piobesi d'Alba in the Piedmont region, where



he ran Le Clivie. He returned to Milan in 2001, lured by Peck, the brainchild of the Stoppani brothers, chef at the Ristorante Cracco Peck. He too decided to take a fresh look at risotto, and contributed a recipe – specifically, for *Saffron risotto with grilled marrow* – to *Sapori in movimento*, published by Giunti in 2006. Here, the gold leaf is replaced by the marrow placed in the middle of the plate, and everything is circular. The third apprentice in our list is Andrea Berton, chef at the restaurant Trussardi alla Scala in 2005, a stone's throw from Biffi that would later become Il Marchesino. In such close proximity, and not only in the kitchens, it is hard to imagine them in a square where the town hall and the opera house face each other and where a school of art and thought of equal standing showcases its creations.

Marchesi's students took the most diverse paths, crowned by years of service under the aegis of the Maestro.



One person returning to Erbusco to work was Paolo Lopriore. This spurred Marchesi on to renew his dedication and study, and the pair created dishes such as *The red and the black*, raw tomato and squid ink sauces to serve with monkfish. An echo of the name of a Stendhal novel, *Le rouge et le noir*, hung strangely in the air. The restaurant offered four tasting menus that hinted at some well-trodden gastronomic paths: the pasta menu, the vegetarian menu, the traditional menu, the creative menu. Plus a cheese menu, each stored in a special fridge at its own specific temperature and humidity. With this meeting of total and traditional cuisine, there was no slowing of the pace of reflection on each dish and its context. Although small, Erbusco had a small theatre to host journalists and an audience for an event. Gualtiero played there, before going off travelling several times to Japan, bringing not only his own dishes but also an avant-garde understanding of Italian cuisine developed not to satiate but to consolidate a heritage that would crown him as the great innovator. The Gualtiero Marchesi Foundation also followed in this

vein and, after a life spent teaching in a restaurant kitchen, Gualtiero was invited to be the president of ALMA, the new major international school of Italian cuisine established in the Ducal Palace of Colorno.

By now a legend, he allowed himself freedoms that would have been unimaginable 20 years earlier, lending his voice to the health inspector in the Italian version of Disney's *Ratatouille* and designing two burgers for McDonald's – "Adagio" and "Vivace" – which would subsequently go on sale. In fact, Gualtiero had been making sandwiches for companies since the 1960s, with one particularly successful one including buttered bread, tuna belly, pickled onions and anchovy fillets. But something was nagging at him. He gave it some thought and dictated some hitherto unpublished pages of his life. For his friends, in 2011 he would publish *Mia moglie Antonietta*, about the woman who had taught him the piano, who had been "abandoned" with two daughters by a husband who wanted to find a new path, a kitchen in France, and to whom he repeated, now an old man: "Thank you, my love, for giving me your life and two



With his brigade  
in the kitchen,  
Erbusco, 2002.



At Il Marchesino during shooting for the film *Gualtiero Marchesi. The Great Italian*, 2016.

daughters like this.” Amongst the most surprising events was the one that happened in Erbusco. At L’Albereta in Franciacorta, he had found a solid base from which to master the present and the past, thanks to the hospitality and help of the winemaker Moretti and, simply because he regarded himself critically as “the Maestro” and saw the success of his own students, he gave back his three Michelin stars.

The unexpected event would be his return to Milan, to a restaurant housed within La Scala that had once been Biffi Scala. “In the course of a year, at ‘Il Marchesino’ I christened new dishes such as *Meat meets fish*, a composition based on beef fillet and sea bass fillet accompanied by three sauces – one mayonnaise with mustard, the second tomato and the third a salsa verde,” he would go on to recount in his biography, dreaming about a whole army of “Marchesini”, particularly one in Venice, that romantic city of the arts. Food and music, complete with the pleasure of listening to “a previously unheard version of *La Gagarella del Biffi Scala* performed by some exceptional musicians: myself and Stefano, alias ‘Elio’ from the band Elio e le Storie Tese”. After via Bonvesin de la Riva and L’Albereta, this was not a fleeting return, but a whole new life, youth in old age. He was ready to tackle this rediscovered path, with the unimaginable premises it offered. And, to round it all off, a book: *La cucina italiana. Il Grande Ricettario*, published by De Agostini in 2015, including recipes by the Accademia Gualtiero Marchesi and Fabiano Guatterri.

After his death in 2017 it was gifted to the foundation that he set up and that bears his name. Gualtiero thus continues to inspire modern styles of cooking thanks to his students, who are injecting new ideas into an Italian culture whose centre lies in Milan, in the same via Bonvesin de la Riva, in a restaurant inside the Grand Hotel Tremezzo, and whose influence is felt all over the world. Before him, food and music, images and art, had never come together before, either in homes or in restaurants, and a repository of recipes and events has now been preserved for the future, to be enriched with his memory. Collections will emerge, like the one recently published by the foundation entitled *Italia-Francia*; likewise exhibitions bearing his face and including his utensils and his dishes and iconic creations like *Rice, gold and saffron*, which for 50 years has been returning to our eyes and disappearing into our mouths. Though it seems almost unbelievable that a genius should be born in L’Albergo Mercato, we feel him reborn in us, as we attempt to study his life in the full understanding that Italian cuisine is never the same thing twice. I too, an Artusi scholar and historian of the present day, go searching for ideas and illumination by listening to his voice that inspires me with simple words – rice, ravioli, squid – complete with riddles, *Meat meets fish*, always with a new approach and unimaginable without his omnipresence. This biographical account of mine is now putting me somewhat to the test, so I will bring it to a close by leaving it to others, my readers, to provide a conclusion.

**\* Alberto Capatti**

*Food historian*





# The best way to teach is by example

by Enrico Dandolo\*



Left:  
With his brigade in the kitchen  
at L'Albereta, Erbusco, 2002.

This page:  
In the kitchen at Il Marchesino,  
Milan, 2010.



It is said that we live in an economic reality based on knowledge.

Knowing or not knowing can be the difference between finding a secure career and working precariously, without any specific qualifications.

The kitchen is a great place of learning, where obedience, discipline and a sense of sacrifice are people's daily bread. However, it can also be a terrible place of learning if all of this is not embraced with passion as something that genuinely affects us and helps us express our best side.

Thus it depends on the student and, of course, on the teacher; on the former's ability to absorb and process information and on the latter's ability to exude authority.

Marchesi would often say that, when he was young, he kept on asking a question until he got a full answer, until he knew why it was he was doing something. If no-one replied, it meant that they did not know either and were merely passively replicating an action.

Curiosity is fundamental. It marks the genesis of knowledge, it fuels discovery and, once you have mastered the tools of the trade, it helps you keep pace with the times, retaining your sense of awe at the world as you grow older.

Without curiosity there is no wonder, and your work is nothing but a depersonalised humdrum grind. Marchesi was asked many times where he got his inspiration for a dish from, and his answer was always the same: inspiration is everywhere. A situation, a person, a phrase, a mountain, a memory, a scent, a painting or a sculpture may be the spark that sets it off, but there will be no fire, no inspiration, unless you open your mind to receiving it.

Feeding this sense of openness requires you to be curious and expand your knowledge. Curiosity and culture go hand in hand.

Chefs need to read, travel, visit exhibitions and go to concerts just like anyone else who has something to think about and something to say.

The metaphor of music, which the Maestro often applied to his philosophy of cooking, fits perfectly.

Like musicians, chefs can also be grouped into two categories: the performers and the composers. A good performer, someone

who knows the score/recipe inside out, is naturally worthy of appreciation, because the chef sets out to cook well, to respect their raw materials as sacred and to know their techniques inside out.

Composers are few, and artists are rare. Yet even these paths can be pursued successfully with study and dedication. It was this that prompted Gualtiero Marchesi to open the Academy that bore his name, in via Bonvesin de la Riva.

He had been crowned *Maestro di cuochi* – a master among chefs – and this had burdened him with a great responsibility that he could shirk no longer. As it happens, a whole generation of chefs have emerged from his kitchens, most of whom have enjoyed great success.

However, these are not Marchesi clones – far from it, in fact. The good teacher teaches by putting themselves in the firing line, pointing out what direction to go in, giving their student free reign, pulling them up if necessary, but without ever humiliating them.

The miracle happens when, suddenly, having come through test after test, the student realises that none of their time has been wasted and they can do what they truly want to.

Marchesi was never ungenerous with his teaching or possessive with his knowledge. Every time he found himself teaching and explaining what cooking was, he discovered that this was the most interesting way to learn something new.

In what sense? In the sense that explaining helps you better understand what is in your head, and maybe even change your

With Enrico Dandolo at the opening of the Accademia Gualtiero Marchesi, Milan, 2004; behind them, the sculptor Aldo Spoldi (centre) and the pianist Antonio Ballista (right).





mind, by listening to questions from interested and inquisitive students.

His thoughts can be condensed into one phrase that he was very fond of repeating: "The best way to teach is by example."

Occasionally, he would notice that one of the ingredients for a dish had not been prepared quite perfectly and would immediately go to the chef de partie responsible for that particular detail to find out why. The fault almost invariably lay with one of their assistants, who lacked the necessary skills, and Marchesi would inquire, "But did you show them how? Were you standing next to them while they were preparing it?" In other words, he attempted to instil in all members of the brigade the need to share their knowledge and, vice versa, to ask a senior chef if they were unsure how to do something. It is important to devote yourself to young people in order to bring out the talent that lies in all of them and find the key to unlock it. At this point, I think it is only right to reproduce in full a text that Marchesi wrote in the 1980s, which perfectly encapsulates his mindset (from *Oltre il fornello*, Rizzoli, Milan, 1986 new edition 2009).

*"My advice for young chefs is to take an interest in anything that could enrich their knowledge. It is what is in our memory that teaches us how to react to external stimuli, by creating new ones and shaping our opinions. And it is precisely during this period of learning when our cultural background is being formed, inside us and almost unbeknownst to us, that the time comes for us to choose the right direction. In our case, this will be to study the sacred texts of the great chefs who have laid the foundations of cooking and to learn to read their recipes, dissect them in all their meaning, discuss them and analyse them, in order to understand what precise detail determines the originality of a new idea. The recipe to be studied must therefore be read and reread because, even if you reread it a thousand times, there will always be something new to understand that may send you off on a hunt for another way to experiment, a new method for making the dish, or to create something different and more refined.*

*Yet it is also true to say that, when we are young, we have not yet tried all the flavours,*

*aromas and tastes that will develop within us as we gain experience and practice.*

*As with music, however, not everyone needs to be a good composer in order to make good music; all you need are excellent performers in order to achieve an entirely creditable end result. Nevertheless, we need to constantly enrich our store of knowledge by taking a continuous interest in all that life is. The way in which we acquire culture can be compared to the river that rises in the mountains as a trick-*



*le and is swelled by tributaries in its race to the sea. Thus history, philosophy, art, geography, and whatever other source that contributes to culture (as tributaries do to our river), all shape our personality and encourage it to express itself freely, thus defining all aspects of our way of life.*

*If all of this goes towards forging the personality of the individual, it is also true that the territory and its microclimate leave a significant imprint as well. Both shape the character of each of us, depending on where in the world we were born. I come from Lombardy and am fed by the microclimate of my region. Anyone requiring proof need only think of a phenomenon that we will all have experienced, namely the bottle of good wine brought home from a faraway place or country. Exquisite in its original setting, the wine becomes unrecognisable when opened far from its homeland and in a different microclimate. Rather than it being the wine that changes in the short time the bottle is opened, it is actually our relationship between the microclimate in the new region and that where the wine was*

A portrait from 1990; the colours of the napkins echo the seven brushstrokes that made up his logo.

*produced, which causes us to perceive its unchanged taste differently.*

*And another piece of advice: do not waste time looking at the photograph of the plated-up dish in order to try and copy it, because you are likely to make a bad one. Taking a look will condition you to act in a certain way, while reading the original recipe carefully will give your creativity free reign and will unconsciously present you with a thousand other variations if you have trusted your imagination. Learning is not a net in which to entangle yourself. Rather, learning about something's inner workings frees the imagination, unleashes ideas, brings new things into being and harnesses the valuable assets that you have built up by reading and reflecting, thus giving tangible expression to your skills that have matured over time.*

*This is how the artist will translate these virtual visions into his creations, and this is how the "golden" recipe will be born in the mind of the young chef, of which he or she will be proud. I often find myself thinking that, in our country, there is no "passing of the baton" whatsoever from the older to the younger generations of chefs. We have also tasked untrained teachers, still in their twenties or thereabouts, with giving professional training to the new legions of aspiring chefs. What can someone know about cooking who lacks the experience that the true masters have acquired at the expense of their sacrifices and goodwill in their*

*long years spent labouring over a hot stove?*

*Only those who have been able to work constructively in the "workshop" of one or more teachers with immense proven experience and total command of their culinary knowledge have managed to break through. The proof of all this lies in the fact that the slim band of chefs emerging today have gained their experience working in my restaurant as well as in those run by highly esteemed colleagues of mine, increasing their cultural knowledge and enriching it with valuable practical tips learnt at the coalface.*

*Only in this way, by "touring" various kitchens that respect the high quality of the "product", have they been able to become highly experienced and the new symbols of a modern and inventive cuisine. In the pursuit of quality, it is the chef who must teach the customer how to eat.*

*The situation may well be slightly better in France in this regard, because its food culture has been definitively shaped by the efforts of the most famous chefs, those who professed an almost religious veneration for the great classical cuisine in the great French hotels.*

*The new generation of leading French chefs have thus been trained at the school of these great hotels, but many were born into a family that was already devoted to the restaurant business. Think Paul Bocuse, who followed in the footsteps of his father and uncle, or the Troisgros brothers, who have done the same.*



With Pierre Troisgros and his son Michel during the *Identità golose* conference, Milan, 2007.

With Yannick Alléno  
at the Ledoyen  
restaurant,  
Paris, 2016.



*And it is this family in particular that I love to cite as an example of continuity in tradition, of modernising without letting it get in the way of what you are doing. Michel Troisgros, son of Pierre, has successfully taken on board all the vast experience of his father and his uncle Jean, who themselves had already embraced all the craft that they learnt from their own father, thus laying the foundations for his majestic evolution of what was already a perfect cuisine. Michel has also modernised the restaurant several times, as his predecessors in the family had done before him, to adapt it to the needs of the time, in a process of never-ending change.*

*In the kitchen, meanwhile, he has devoted himself to following that great tradition that he carries with him, choosing solutions that do not go against tradition but are nevertheless in step with the rhythm of modern life, as Escoffier said back in 1902.*

*We have not seen many similar stories our side of the border. The best ones are often self-taught, because there is no top school in Italy to train the most skilled. The “most skilled” remain the only “most skilled” chefs around, without any possibility of training up new ones. But this does nothing to grow a country and its professions.*

*In Spain, Ferran Adrià has literally turned Spanish cooking on its head. Instead of creating a completely new cuisine, however, he has “invented”, in quite a novel step, a “chemical”*

*cuisine, based solely and structurally on new ways of handling substances. Though this has caused a lot of surprise, it has already fulfilled its cultural purpose due to its distancing from real cooking and remains merely an “old” novelty.*

*Speaking of chemistry, this stands in stark contrast to the nice definition of the chef by the great Ernesto Illy, who called them the “chemist of intuition”. And it is this “intuitive chemistry” that allows them to avoid burning their pans and overcooking their meat. The professional cook is the person who knows how to do things right, by virtue of their intelligence.*

*In this respect, cooking has become ever lighter, in the hunt for simplicity, to shine a spotlight on the quality of the ingredients. The techniques of sous-vide and low-temperature cooking, both recent developments, were chosen precisely in order to achieve this goal. In fact, the first time I heard about low-temperature cooking, I was stunned, but then I realised on reflection that this method was essentially the same as ageing or maturation. Cooking food for eight, ten or twelve hours, can be regarded as a valid substitute for ageing or maturation, as it guarantees the same results.*

*This “new philosophy” in cooking has brought us ever closer to art and to the truth. It is an observation that ultimately signifies that art is the pathway to truth. And when I talk about the purity of a product, I am referring to my concept of *meno cucina* – “less cooking” – with*





*which I wanted to do justice to the great quality of my product with the right preparation and enhanced presentation.*

*If I take a look at my cookbook, which was published in 1980, with recipes devised between 1978 and 1979, so 30 years ago, I can see that the dishes that I invented and that were considered unconventional at the time were not fantasy dishes at all but creations firmly rooted in tradition: all I did was to overhaul their composition, their preparation and their presentation, plus the combinations and sequences put together in the menus. And, above all, I introduced the new and unique concept of contrast, which later turned out to be a truth to be pursued and developed further.*

*Yet it remains so difficult to pass these concepts on to those who, unlike me, have not experienced the whole journey that led me to that point. The French had thrown themselves into the artificiality of sauces (that “magical” element that allowed you to “rejuvenate” a whole host of foods) when kitchens were not equipped with all the preservation technology that they are now. A banquet staged in a grand hotel required everything to be prepared at the last second, however many guests there were! These days, companies specialising in banqueting – even the premium-quality ones – get everything ready well in advance, relying on the latest technology and, undoubtedly, the maximum degree of safety and security that*

*modern preservation systems afford them. This makes it possible to put on banquets for 1,000 or 2,000 people virtually overnight, without any stress or problems.*

*Ultimately, the conclusion to be drawn is that such a rapid shift from the grand cuisine of the past to the one currently being requested by the customer did not give young people the chance to partake of or benefit from the experience of older hands, who, unlike them, had lived through all the phases of cooking’s gradual evolution and the change that this brought to how the new society ate in a process of continuous existential transformation. But if some young or not-so-young person has managed to gain extensive experience “touring” some of the leading kitchens still run by great masters and has had the chance and ability to take advantage of these precious opportunities, they will undoubtedly have acquired all the qualities they need to be counted amongst the great chefs of the future.”*

Training, therefore, is the most important aspect for developing Italian cuisine, both at home and abroad.

Unfortunately, we have never seriously addressed the professional training that chefs are given. In the 1970s and 1980s, the hotels “forged” some skilled professionals; we need think only of the Istituto Alberghiero di Stresa or Carlo Porta in Milan, or the institutes in Como, San Pellegrino, and so on. Then, as economic resources grew scarcer, the training grew less and less effective. In 2004, Marchesi joined the efforts to set up ALMA, whose mission was to transform young people fresh out of hotel school into professional chefs. However, that project faltered at the first step. Marchesi’s idea was that, after a year of technical and

Working in the dining room of the restaurant in Erbusco, 2010.

Right: With his sons-in-law, Enrico Dandolo and Michel Magada, in the Ducal Palace of Colorno in the province of Parma, 2010.



The Master in his Academy during a "Monograph" lesson for professional chefs, Milan, 2016; in the foreground, busy slicing a kidney, the Academy's executive chef Antonio Ghilardi and, on Marchesi's right, Osvaldo Presazzi, executive chef at the Terrazza Gualtiero Marchesi in Tremezzo in the province of Como.



practical training, the students would go back to their studies armed with greater awareness. This second part of the project never saw the light of day, however, and today these students believe that, after five months in college and the same in an apprenticeship, they have become chefs de cuisine. In 2014, Marchesi then founded the Accademia Gualtiero Marchesi with the goal of changing chefs' mindsets: rather than being an end in itself, cooking was a means of expressing an artistic thought. Achieving this aim requires years of work and intellectual exploration, which has to keep on going in parallel. And those who seek greater awareness and solid cultural foundations underpinning their cooking must have the opportunity of continuing their studies on a fully fledged university course in food science. This is the mission that Marchesi bestowed on the foundation that he created, through the work being done by his academy.

The training pathway envisaged by Marchesi starts with a course called "The chefs of the future", reserved for the best recent graduates from the hotel schools, to teach them the fundamentals of cooking and give them the awareness they need to join a great restaurant. After nine months of study and work, the students will have understood what it means to be a chef and will decide whether to continue on to a university course or dedicate themselves

entirely to their work, guided by a chef who will become their teacher.

Needless to say, before they are able to express themselves freely, they will have to embark on an assiduous study of cooking techniques, tradition and produce; or, to put it even more concisely, excellence and what is necessary. This latter comprises a fundamental knowledge of the raw materials used and their transformation and a mastery of technique. It is indeed true, as the composer Béla Bartók said, that "improvisation presupposes a knowledge of the subject matter".

Excellence, according to Marchesi, is the ability to transform cooking into an art form: "Cooking is in itself a science; it's the chef's job to turn it into an art."

**\*Enrico Dandolo**

*General Secretary of the Gualtiero*

*Marchesi Foundation*

*Chairman of the Gualtiero Marchesi Group*







# My first real teacher

by Andrea Berton\*



Left:  
Andrea Berton in his restaurant,  
Milan, 2000.

This page:  
Andrea Berton, *Gamberi rossi di Sicilia crudi  
e cotti, amaranto croccante, olio extravergine  
e sorbetto alla barbabietola*, 2014.

Besides being a great chef by virtue of his undisputed professional qualities, Gualtiero Marchesi was, above all, my first real teacher.

Once I had finished my studies, I decided to launch my career in the best Italian restaurant of the 1990s, so I started working in his, in via Bonvesin de la Riva in Milan. I came across Gualtiero quite by chance: one day, I found a magazine in my house. On the front cover was a picture of a chef in a toque, and my interest was piqued straight away, even though, at the time, I had no idea it was Gualtiero Marchesi. I met him for the first time when I went for an interview with his chef de cuisine, and he came across to me as a very altruistic person – so altruistic, in fact, that he agreed there and then to give me a chance. From that point on, I immediately understood how greatly he valued young people.

For me, Gualtiero Marchesi was a generous teacher, with whom I enjoyed a professional connection for eight years, during which he passed his culinary culture and

his knowledge on to me. Standing next to him, I had the feeling that I was finally beginning to do something significant. He made me fully understand the value of the work I was doing. Back then, working as a chef was undervalued and often regarded as just a stopgap, but my experience with Gualtiero completely transformed my view of the profession. He enabled me to see it through new eyes, in a nobler guise, as an essential activity that required knowledge, study, concentration and unstinting research.

He taught me some immensely valuable lessons that have remained with me to this day, one of the most important of which was to make me aware of the value of your raw materials. Marchesi wanted to enhance the produce, not destroy it, as was the fashion in those days. He was already one step ahead: he saw ingredients as the source of success, as a basic element to be enhanced and then served to the customer. With him, I learnt to create high-quality, original dishes characterised by simplicity. He picked



These pages:  
With Andrea Berton  
at Castello  
San Salvatore  
in Susegana  
in the province of  
Treviso, 2004.



classic recipes and made them fundamental; he revamped tradition in order to lighten it, but his innovation was always geared towards preserving distinctiveness.

In a way, he used cooking as a language, which made him a highly effective ambassador for our country, communicating the excellence of Italian gastronomy to the rest of the world.

If we have got where we are today, and if Italian cuisine has set the benchmark for other countries over the past 30 years, it is certainly due in no small part to the work of Gualtiero Marchesi. Through his craft, he successfully dispelled the simplistic notion that associated our cuisine solely with “food like mamma makes”. He was a revolutionary, an artist in his field, who left an indelible mark. He planted the seed from which has grown the sophisticated culture of Italian cuisine.

Having worked with the Maestro for several years, including four as his executive chef, I got to know him intimately, and my respect for him only grew, as did my gratitude for having allowed me to enter his world.

One thing I remember particularly affectionately was how, at the end of service, he would call me into his office and start telling me anecdotes from his life, his stories, his extensive culture with its links to art and music. As well as a passion for cooking, we also shared an interest in art. His infinite knowledge of the subject always

encouraged me to delve deeper into this immensely fascinating world. For me, these were moments of great learning that lasted until two in the morning and gave me some unique, priceless life experiences. Gualtiero used to say that “the best way to teach is by example”, and it is this idea that has always guided me.

Unlike chefs from other countries, he had the courage to venture a step forward by doing in Italy what no one else had done before. In the past, some foreign chefs had come to our country to try, and fail, to stamp a new identity on Italian cooking, to describe it using a new emphasis. Gualtiero Marchesi was uncompromising in this respect, determined and prepared, and this is precisely why he succeeded in his mission: to transform and revolutionise Italian cuisine. I feel extremely lucky to have been able to interweave my professional path with his.

Thank you, Maestro.

**\*Andrea Berton**

*Chef, Ristorante Berton, Milan*





## An intellectual in the kitchen

by Carlo Cracco\*



Left:  
Chef Carlo Cracco in his restaurant  
in Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II, Milan, 2019.

This page:  
Carlo Cracco, *Tuorlo d'uovo marinato  
e verdure all'agro*, 2012.

The first time I heard about Gualtiero Marchesi was from an article in the newspaper. In the 1980s, information was not as detailed as it is today. The Internet existed, but not many people used it. He was said to be highly skilled, but stating that a chef had been awarded three stars didn't mean all that much. I had an idea of him in my head, which I later discovered to be fairly accurate, that of a great innovator; an undisputed genius. In the 1970s and 1980s, cooking and the restaurant business didn't enjoy the same standing as they do today. He was the first person to instigate a step change and turbocharge the evolution of the figure of the chef, which essentially he created.

In 1985, I was in my twenties and had just finished hotel school. I'd read about him and his "culinary revolution", so I was desperate to go and eat at his restaurant in via Bonvesin de la Riva in Milan. But how could I? I didn't have a great deal of money, but I thought that my sister Annalisa, who already had a job and could pay the bill, could come with me. So off we went, and what I clearly remember was how good and original the fish soup was: not a "hotchpotch" of overcooked fish, but with the clear broth (another novelty) served on one plate and the fish, whole, on another. Once they arrived at the table, they would be arranged

elegantly on the plate containing the broth. We continued with the *Open raviolo* and the *Noisettes of roe deer*, all exquisite. At the end, Marchesi came to say goodbye, and I was so bowled over with excitement that my sister took the opportunity to tell him that I wanted to go and work with him. He invited me to write to him, which I did several times, and in 1986 I joined his brigade. Working with him allowed me to fully understand his exceptional talent: he was the first person to push the boundaries of the restaurant industry and obtain three Michelin stars, the first to go on TV, to publish books, to offer advice and to embrace design and art. He was the first to propose ready meals, an idea that I don't think would work nowadays. It proved a great success back then because, for the first time, a chef was signing his name on some frozen food, so people felt that they could eat a dish prepared by a culinary expert in the comfort of their own homes. Marchesi was also the first person to open a shop selling "branded" products in via San Giovanni sul Muro, which was well received by the public.

Of course, when I went to work for him, I had to start from scratch because I had studied "tradition", which, although an essential grounding as far as he was



With the brigade from his restaurant in via Bonvesin de la Riva, Milan, 1990. Readers will recognise Carlo Cracco and Davide Oldani, amongst others.





concerned, I still had to put to one side. Gualtiero was an intellectual in the kitchen, with a perfect command of French and German. Being extraordinarily cultured, he was neither a simple chef nor a “pan burner”; he was the son of restaurant owners, of course, but he had studied in Switzerland and gained professional experience abroad. His path took him a different way to his parents, even though he would eventually return to the kitchen.

He believed 100% in what he was doing. If a customer wanted a bowl of pasta, he would bring them three pieces of maccheroni: on the one hand, he was being daring, because he was only offering the customer three pieces of maccheroni; on the other, he risked never seeing them again, because he might be told: “I’m sorry, but what would it cost you to give me six? I’d be OK with six.” And he would reply: “No, you’ll eat three. If you want to, great; otherwise, off you go.” His broad and poetic vision prevented him from understanding that our work also serves a commercial purpose: it is a daily attempt to make a sale; we are neither philosophers nor researchers. So, if you’re polite, people will come in, eat up and pay up; if you aren’t, they won’t come in and you’ll close. I would often provoke him by asking him that very question: “And if nobody comes, who pays the bill?” And he, ever phlegmatic, would reply: “We’ll find someone who’ll pay” and, in actual fact, we would always find someone to help out.

I can’t say that Gualtiero and I became friends, not least because of the clear age difference; however, we were united by a deep relationship of mutual respect that had built up over the years, even though I

have always retained my own, extremely personal culinary philosophy. Sometimes he disagreed with me, but he listened to me because he trusted me. He observed the approach and mindset of his pupils, amongst whom he had one particular favourite: Paolo Lopriore, who was just like him; I, on the other hand, was a bit of a “contrarian”: I never agreed with him, I would try and suggest alternatives and cajole him into “looking beyond”. My aim was always to evolve, but taking a different approach to some of my colleagues.

When he came to Paris in 1990, where I was working, he asked me: “Are you coming back home?” (to Milan). I replied: “But Davide (Oldani) has already said yes. What’s the point of there being two of us?” He added: “It’d make me happy, but I understand.” I told him: “Let’s do it like this. Davide will come back for now, not least because I’ve got to stay in Paris until December (back then, when you gave someone your word, you had to keep it) and after that we’ll see.” He told



me he could pull some strings and get me back sooner, but I preferred to complete what I’d set out to do in the allotted time and achieve my goal, which was to become a third chef in Paris. So Oldani remained in Milan, but in 1991 the restaurant in via Bonvesin de la Riva closed. At this point, having come back from France, I decided to go and work at Pinchiorri, a prestigious enoteca in Florence, which wasted no time in winning three Michelin stars. Marchesi was very impressed with my work at Pinchiorri and suggested opening “L’Albereta”, at Erbusco in Franciacorta. I stayed there for four years, after which I admitted to him that I wanted to strike out on my own.

With Carlo Cracco, Ernst Knam and Brendan Becht at an event in Geneva, 1990.

Right: With Andrea Berton, Davide Oldani and Carlo Cracco at the premiere of the film *Gualtiero Marchesi. The Great Italian* at the Cannes Film Festival, 2017.

Thus, in 1996, I opened a little restaurant called “Le Clivie” in Piobesi d’Alba, near Cuneo, where I really had to start from scratch: there were three of us in the kitchen and two front of house.

And then there were a lot of times, including on TV, where we held very differing opinions. In 1983 and 1984, he appeared as a chef on the programme *Che fai, mangi?* on RaiDue, but viewers weren’t quite ready for something like that and the language it used didn’t suit its audience, so the programme wasn’t well received. It wasn’t that Marchesi wasn’t capable, but what he wanted to do didn’t have any appeal. I only took part once. Davide (Oldani) always went because I didn’t like it, I was embarrassed. After that, I definitely conquered that feeling of embarrassment, that shyness. I defeated it by tackling it head on. When I started to go on TV myself (in 2011), Marchesi told me that it was commercial stuff... I replied that TV was commercial. You can’t come up with something boring to go out at 8 in the evening, because nobody will watch it. *MasterChef* was the first programme to lift the lid on cooking on TV. From that moment on, it all kicked off and people fell in love with it as they learnt that cooking was not just something you do to fill you up. I took part in a few other programmes before *MasterChef*, including some with Pippo Baudo, but I made people laugh, I felt like a clown. When I started doing it

myself, I obviously had to add in the entertainment, because that’s what TV is, but we also began to talk about cooking in different terms. If a child asks me for a selfie today, it’s because of the show. Marchesi found it hard to make compromises, as he also had a very hostile relationship with journalists. If he felt that they weren’t suitable people to be talking to, he’d find some excuse or other to leave the table and they’d never see him nor hair of him again.

Marchesi was undoubtedly a visionary, a great dreamer, and he taught me what I consider to be his most important lesson: a sense of cleanliness and sophistication, minimalism, a focus on the dish and its constituent elements. Elegance had to be perfect – that was his hallmark. He employed a lot of creativity, but he also managed to make everything very elegant and refined... sometimes too much so, because, as he himself said, he had lost “that heavy Italian soul”. The Sicilian ratatouille that his wife Antonietta cooked was completely different from the one he made; she was tradition, he was modernity: she was the stomach, he was the head. Marchesi loved going to the trattoria to fling off his “head” and devote himself wholeheartedly to his “stomach”. I like to go where I’m well looked after, where people don’t bother me, where I can find some good wines. Unlike Marchesi but thanks to him, I love wine. I still have some bottles from his old cellar,



During filming  
for *Hell's Kitchen*  
*Italia*, 2016.



Carlo Cracco on one of the balconies at his restaurant in the Galleria, Milan, 2019.

which he gave me for my birthday one year. I used to spend a lot of money on wine, and he would ask me why. I would tell him: “Because I like it”, and he suggested “a good frizzantino”. “No,” I said, “Marchesi, this wine is for quenching your thirst. Wine is terroir, is technique, just like cooking.”

I remember that one of his dreams was to open a restaurant in the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II. After he'd won all kinds of accolades, this marked an important ambition for him. After all, the Galleria arcade is known as the “drawing room of Milan”, and there was (and is) no more prestigious spot in the city. At that time, there was only the “Savini” that he'd have liked to buy, but he didn't manage it. When he heard about my restaurant opening, he came to see me and, straight out, asked: “Are you mad?” I replied that this was maybe the third time he'd said that to me, and he added: “You never stop,” and I said: “Why should I?” I came to Milan when I was 20. I'm not from the city, but I think that opening something in the Galleria is the dream of every child and every adult who wants to leave a tangible mark on the city, something that goes above and beyond what they are as a person. He was very happy for me; he told me that I'd done it, showing once again his immense generosity and a satisfaction that was entirely sincere, like that of a father proud of his children's achievements.

**\*Carlo Cracco**

*Chef, Ristorante Cracco, Milan*





## A tribute to Gualtiero Marchesi (also the name of one of my dishes)

by Pietro Leemann\*



Left:  
Pietro Leemann in his restaurant, Joia,  
Milan, 2018.

This page:  
Pietro Leemann,  
*Omaggio a Gualtiero Marchesi*,  
2010.

It was the illustrious and charismatic Ticinese chef Angelo Conti Rossini (1923–1993) who helped me launch my career. He found me a job as an apprentice at the “Bianchi” restaurant in Lugano, where they made dishes drawn from the venerable Italian tradition. My three years of training went by quickly; I had learnt the basics and, more than anything else, was passionate about high-quality cuisine.

After gaining this initial experience, I was 19 years old and had a great desire to learn, so Angelo put me in touch with the Corviglia restaurant in St. Moritz. Here, I completed an intense season, which taught me the basics of classic French cuisine, as codified by Auguste Escoffier (1846–1935).

I was then given the opportunity to work for a summer season at the “Hotel Excelsior” in Montreux (this was in 1981), before my “big jump”: the great Rossini had heard that Frédy Girardet (born 1936), considered one of the best chefs of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was looking for a chef for his brigade. The “Hotel de Ville” in Crissier in the Swiss canton of Vaud was regarded as one of the best restaurants in Europe. People took things seriously there, and it would mark a major step on my personal career ladder. I threw myself head first into what I saw as a fantastic adventure. I discovered a very high level of professionalism there: every day, a plane from Paris would land in Geneva, bringing us the fish of the day from the big market in Rungis, and we would go out into the farmers’ fields to pick spinach and select the best cardoons. A brigade of 25 chefs, led by the famous Jean Michel Colin, prepared dishes that bordered on perfection. It was like living on another planet. I felt that we were laying the foundations for the future and that I was a lucky member of a chosen few. It wasn’t easy, and mistakes weren’t allowed; you could only learn without compromising, always giving your best and “flying high”.

I was lost. That thirst for knowledge, that passion for the culture of food, the fact that I would never be able to do things by halves ever again, had taken hold of me and would never let me go.

I read so many books, all on different subjects. I was interested in nutrition, in philosophy, in religion, in art. Like a sponge, I soaked



up a great many ideas that began to open my mind. I was intrigued by new movements such as nouvelle cuisine. Cooking, in Switzerland as in other countries, was turning the page after more than a century of stagnation, and Girardet’s was a shining example of this. Even during my “explorations”, I was thinking about what my next step would be until, one day, I read an article, published I think in the magazine *La Cucina Italiana*, which mentioned a rising star: Gualtiero Marchesi. My great-grandfather was an engineer and worked in Milan, where my grandfather was born. My father came from Venice. Italy was a fascinating place that held a great attraction for me. You often find that your wishes come true, almost as if fate is busily working away to put everything in place. Jean Michel Colin, who wanted to open a delicatessen and knew a great deal about fine Italian design, decided to spend some time there to pick out some stylish objects and containers. But he needed an interpreter. Wasn’t this a great opportunity for me? During our trip, I told him all about Marchesi and his glorious achievements, packing his head full of ideas, to the point that we decided to go and taste his cooking. I remember our first meeting as if it were yesterday: “Il Ristorante” (“The Restaurant”), as it was known at the time, was located in a basement at the bottom of an elegant spiral staircase. We turned up around 7 in the evening without a reservation. Alas, there was no room, even though we had explained who we were and where we were from. They told us to wait until Marchesi arrived, as he would undoubtedly be pleased to meet us.



The restaurant was a marked contrast to the one in Crissier, which was soberly Swiss; on the walls, modern art by great painters such as Pomodoro, Baj and del Pezzo; on the large tables, spotless white tablecloths that fell almost to the floor; stylish armchairs to sit on, tapered glasses, designer cutlery, exquisite lamps, sculptures as table centrepieces instead of the customary rose. Every little detail had been carefully thought out. It was like we were in a museum.

Then he arrived, descending the stairs in a somewhat regal manner. I had recognised him from the photos in the newspapers, those that turn people into “characters”, showing them in a particular situation, adopting a certain posed look or clutching an object of great symbolic significance. Well, I must admit to being excited to be in his presence; my legs even trembled a little. There was something magnetic about his personality. Why was he so successful? Why was he an artist?

Gualtiero Marchesi was keen to meet us, as the Girardet ‘myth’ had also spread as far as Italy and, then as now, chefs looking for new sources of inspiration had chosen to imitate his dishes.

Adopting an inquisitorial tone, he began to fire questions at us in perfect French, which he had learned at school and, as I later learned, while working with Michel Troisgros. He wanted to know what dishes we were making, why they were put together as they were, what their aesthetic purpose was, how they tied in with local culture.

Not one question about the methods, the organisation, the produce and the techniques that were at the heart of our cooking. For us, quality meant transformation in the best possible way, precision at every step, well-rounded and seductive flavour. So we told him how this perfect mechanism worked, one worthy of the best precision watches – Swiss, of course.

He appeared to have little to say about Girardet’s reasons for mixing savoy cabbage with langoustines and caviar or red mullet with saffron and rosemary. Each recipe was enriched with the famous double cream from Gruyère, which we got through in 50-litre cans.

“A perfectly prepared dish, with every aspect seen to, needs nothing else,” we argued timidly.

Then he talked to us about rhythm and music, about form and content, about proportions and golden ratios, about the history of Italian cuisine and its current status, at the time so permeated by French cooking. He wanted to spark a revolution, to restore the glory days of the Italian tradition, where style and genius were present in every field, from fashion to design to science – in the kitchen, however, they had lain dormant for a long time. His was a new way of thinking that drew on different fields and created some bold pairings: Vivaldi with Marco Gavio Apicio, Dante Alighieri and Eugenio Montale with Maestro Martino, a great Renaissance chef born in the second or third decade of the 15<sup>th</sup> century in the Blenio Valley, then part of the Duchy of Milan. It’s a small world!

I had done a lot of reading and thinking over the years, so I could more or less follow his explanations. Above all, though, I realised that I had a lot to learn and that his restaurant would be the right place to continue my study. However, my head was spinning and I felt pleasantly light-headed. How could you find all those values in the kitchen? How far I still had to go.

Jean Michel, by contrast, was overjoyed. He was looking around a little sneakily, just as he did when he was intrigued by so many new things. He was asking questions about this and that, enjoying the scene of beauty before him.

Unfortunately, not a single table had become free while we had been talking, so we ended our meeting with a coffee, made



With Pietro Leemann and his brigade during shooting for the film *Gualtiero Marchesi. The Great Italian*, 2016.



Pietro Leemann at the Milan Triennale during shooting for the film Gualtiero Marchesi. The Great Italian, 2016.

Bottom:  
Enrico Dandolo and Pietro Leemann at the film premiere, Cinema Odeon, Milan, 19 March 2018.

by Marchesi's own extraordinary hands. It was the best coffee I have ever had, either before or since.

Precisely one year later, possibly even to the day, I joined his brigade. I was strong and confident in my abilities: two years at the "Hotel de Ville" had moulded and tempered me. I soon found myself in his good books. Maybe he valued my thirst for knowledge, my passion for what is good and right, my determination.

In hindsight, I think it was more a meeting of two souls. I remember spending afternoons and evenings after service together, planning the new menu and talking about other things. About our adventures and our desires, about the East – a magnet for both of us – about some art exhibition or other that I absolutely had to visit. He was a volcano of creativity, with new ideas bubbling endlessly to the surface. He was able to talk for hours, and I was able to take in what he said and open myself up to previously unimaginable ideas. He used to say: "The chef of today must broaden their horizons, as only by doing so will they be able to contribute to the evolution of society" and "Good cooking talks to the past and the present; great cooking projects itself forward into the future."

Not just a chef, not just a researcher, but a veritable *maitre à penser* – what immense good fortune for me.

I wanted to keep on working with him forever, but the demon of knowledge refused to leave me in peace and so, after one of the best years of my life, I decided to go to Japan. Thanks to him, I had become a

different young man, more confident in my abilities and with a more open mind; yes, cooking could indeed extend "beyond the stove", which is also how the title of one of his extraordinary cookbooks translates into English. I felt a desire to complete our mission, that of discovering the Land of the Rising Sun, which we had explored during our afternoons of thrilling excitement.

Our friendship lasted a lifetime, just like the Pindar inside us. Finally, I too was able to add to his knowledge by showing him the amazing culture of the East. A few years after I'd come back, we even travelled to Tokyo together. How nice it was to take him here and there, discovering the great fish market in the city, eating in that portside bistro, so simple yet so original. Or sipping sake in that elegant restaurant, sitting on the floor and aching from the great pain in my legs.

His cooking and his soul are always intertwined with mine, distant yet close by.

**\*Pietro Leemann**

*Chef, Founder of "Ristorante Joia", Milan*









## The eclectic language of food

by Davide Paolini\*



Left:  
Jackson Pollock,  
*Reflection of the Big Dipper*,  
oil on canvas, 1945.

This page:  
Gualtiero Marchesi,  
*Dadolata di salmone con le sue uova*,  
*asparagi e salsa allo yoghurt*, 2001.





Strange though it may seem, in Italy – and particularly amongst the intelligentsia – the art of cooking is viewed with a certain detachment, with unease, as if it did not contain even a fragment of culture.

However, reality shows us that the variability of culinary systems always depends largely on the variability of cultural systems: if we do not eat everything that is biologically edible, then it is because “everything that is biologically edible is not culturally edible” (Claude Fischler, French sociologist).

Thus, if food has to be “good to think” in order to be “good to eat”, then it is not so much food that gives us nourishment but ideas, imagery and meanings created by our culture.

Food possesses a specific form of language, a system of signs that go beyond our nutritional needs and sensory pleasure.

This is the only way to interpret the various movements that have emerged over time, such as *nouvelle cuisine* in France, fusion cuisine in Australia, the Spanish deconstruction movement, Nordic cuisine in Denmark and the *nuova grande cucina italiana* of Gualtiero Marchesi.

What role does the chef play in a system like this? A role not dissimilar to that of the miller, the protagonist in Carlo Ginzburg’s study *The Cheese and the Worms*, set in the 16th century, who becomes a device for telling the story of his era.

In the same way, in our own era of fusion between culinary cultures, the chef becomes a mirror reflecting habits, customs, traditions and regions.

Not only does the elitist knowledge society deny that culture has its origins in the kitchen, it also ignores the “intellectual” role of the chef, which Gualtiero Marchesi claimed in a sense – and with good reason.

We are not talking about an intellectual who grew up in a research laboratory or at a university desk and who, fed up with everyday life, chose gastronomy to fill the gap in his daily routine. Rather, here is a character who grew up in the kitchen of his family’s *trattoria*, where, in addition to *soffritti* and sauces, he breathed in the aromas of material culture.

As well as being the spearhead of the *nuova grande cucina italiana* – the new great Italian cuisine – he was also part of a cultural

landscape in line with the spirit of the age and the artistic moment of his time. Only in this way, perhaps, can we fully understand Marchesi as a man.

A cook and not a chef, as he himself always maintained, because “show cooking” has transformed the simple cook into a celebrity chef – someone who is capable of producing vibrantly coloured, architecturally complex dishes, perfect for photographing and commenting on with likes and smileys on your smartphone, but who is less bothered about goodness and harmony.

“The chef who does nothing but slavishly repeat what tradition has taught him,” said Marchesi in an interview with *Sole 24 Ore* on 2 September 1984, “would be ignoring his natural vocation as a ‘craftsman of taste’.”

Marchesi’s embodiment of the “chef as craftsman” has a precise meaning that brings craftsmanship closer to art, but perhaps he is not so presumptuous as to state this explicitly. Then again, he questions the chef who mass-produces their dishes or slavishly replicates someone else’s recipe, often without acknowledging its creator.

In this regard, the mythical distinction he makes between the “chef as interpreter” and the “chef as composer” has become famous and much-discussed. It is a clear comparison drawn from the world of music, an art he much admired, almost as if to signify his sense of belonging to those who create something new without, however, wishing to scorn those who perform traditional cooking “scores” with great intelligence. According to Marchesi:

“The chef is never the mere executor of a lifeless cuisine, but the sensitive interpreter of the heritage that they inherit from the past and that they enrich with their own experience and original talent. Just like music, cooking also requires a score and a performer: when a recipe is followed, there will always be the more or less distinct personality of the person who ‘performs’ it, i.e. who brings it to life, making it their own. In that sense, there is no doubt that cooking has always been resolutely and flourishingly new.”



Now, Marchesi does not actually refer to himself as an artist or chef; rather, he calls himself a “craftsman of taste”. The word’s etymology hides the secret of someone whose mission it is to create objects and ornaments by crafting them with a particular technical skill combined with the quest for beauty.

With this awareness, Marchesi the cook does not follow the ephemeral trend of the years that characterised nouvelle cuisine, the return to tradition and fusion cuisine, because he has always loved experimentation, the embracing of other cultures that would set him apart from the prevailing school of thought at different moments through time.

Although there is no denying his affiliation with nouvelle cuisine in his Milanese years, at his first restaurant in via Bonvesin de la Riva, his thinking on the subject has never been in doubt:

“Nouvelle cuisine is not the realm of improvisation and obscurity, where the beginner climbs straight into the pulpit and gives free rein to his imagination. Somebody, perhaps, thought one day that they spotted an echo of the self-styled futurist cuisine, in which every whim was welcome and every combination allowed (indeed, the more bizarre, the more worthy, as long as it generated amazement).”

Rather than progressing through compromise, his culinary story developed by finding inspiration for new techniques in collages, a method only open to those who have the courage to question themselves at every moment, confident of possessing a remarkable quality, that technique learnt around Europe in the great kitchens of the French chefs, where knowing how to do everything is fundamental.

“Culinary eccentricities are fleeting, and a cuisine built on them is neither new nor old, but simply ill-judged and therefore undoubtedly bad.

Nouvelle cuisine is the cuisine of balance, of flavours, and it demands an iron-willed professional culture, without which no kind of cooking could ever exist.

Its birthplace, France, bears particular testimony to this. Far from repudiating the lessons of classical cookery, nouvelle cuisine actually represents its most profound assimilation: the fruit of a slow process of maturation crafted by professionals of the highest order.”

He often recounted that he had travelled around Europe, burning his fingers on the stoves of the most famous chefs, especially in Roanne, with the legendary Troisgros brothers, the very founders of nouvelle cuisine.

It was these thoughts and beliefs that meant that nobody in Italy shared his ability to turn their kitchen into a creative workshop, where ingredients, flavours and knowledge are mixed and apportioned to achieve a fusion between content and its container.

In the family restaurant, there thus began the adventure of a man who finally put Italian cooking on the map through an avant-garde approach that found both love and criticism in his own country.

The most common and most trivial accusations came from people who had never eaten in his restaurant: “You don’t get much to eat, the meat is still bleeding and you spend a lot.”

The chef as artist or the chef as craftsman? These two philosophies met and intermingled; those who knew him saw that they were two aspects of the same personality in a natural coexistence.

Harmony above all things: harmony of forms, harmony of atmospheres, harmony of flavours. What makes each of his creations surprising is that everything is orchestrated so sublimely that every sense is stimulated yet knowledge is not short-changed. You could sense the original and ever-inspired style of his dishes as soon as you walked through his restaurant door, because art was everywhere – on the walls above the tables and on the serving plates themselves.

These were precise, bold choices that, in Italy, could be understood as an elitist sense of desire but that were actually the manifesto for a style that would go on to characterise his work forever.

The world of art passed through these rooms because Marchesi himself created



art, collages that have always been felt and remain vibrant in the combinations of colours, in the sublimation of forms, in the dance of three-dimensionality: a kaleidoscope that also led others to get involved in these new “cells” of knowledge.

A few examples are worth mentioning: specifically, those dishes that make reference to internationally renowned artists such as Kandinsky, Balla, Arp, Warhol, Burri, Fontana, Manzoni and Pollock.

A series of genuine masterpieces of gastronomy, inspired primarily by the works of two friends and customers with whom Marchesi loved to spend a pleasant evening after his restaurant closed for the night: Piero Manzoni, the famed creator of the



Achromes, and Lucio Fontana, the inventor of spatialism.

Paying tribute to the latter, the Maestro created a dish that went on to enjoy remarkable success, *The red and the black*, which he described thus:

“Inspired by works of art that make a striking impression in two colours, the creation I am proposing is made up of two pieces of monkfish soaked in squid ink and fried.

I then prepared a tomato sauce whipped with oil and flavoured with spices. The sauce was spread out on the plate to act as a background, a reddened sky, closed off by a horizon, also drawn in squid ink. On this boundary between earth and sky, I placed the pieces of monkfish, like enigmatic Burrian presences, archetypal volume forms that are at once solid and floating.

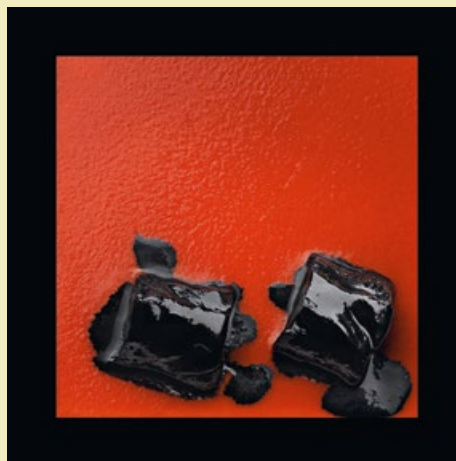
Red and black, with white appearing



impetuously and unexpectedly when the diner's knife cuts open the most candid heart of these presences.”

Manzoni's Achromes (white surfaces covered with gesso or impregnated with kaolin) are criss-crossed with horizontal and vertical lines, marked by wrinkles and grooves. Marchesi wanted to pay homage to his friend's work with his Achromes of sea bass: fish fillets cut on the diagonal and arranged one next to the other, a deliberate exhibition, while taking care to cook them in their skin and serve them crispy.

Kandinsky's extraordinary *White Oval*, a work composed of strong, contrasting colours, where the call of the tradition of the earth, of nature in all its richness, complexity and nobility, iridescent like the abrupt changes of colour and shape, is “Marchesified” with simple, natural elements: the yellow of the squash and the green of the mustard accompanying the skewer of chicken



Top right:  
Piero Manzoni,  
*Achrome*, kaolin on  
canvas, 1958-59.  
Private collection.

Gualtiero Marchesi,  
*Achromes di  
branzino – Omaggio  
a Piero Manzoni*,  
2006.

Below:  
Gualtiero Marchesi,  
*Il rosso e il nero*  
– *Omaggio a Lucio  
Fontana*, 2011.

livers; the orange of the prawn, the pink of the raw scallop with ginger, the brown of the almonds encasing the cheese, the black of the eel, the white of the egg in the snow. In Balla's work *Il motivo per stoffa*, the play of bright colours mixes with geometry, creating a sense of dynamism and rhythm, with soft, fluid lines to achieve the objective of amalgamation. Marchesi's interpretation produces a "painting" of snails and black truffles that find their place in a dish of rice mixed with garlic butter, creating a chromaticism of contrasts.

Marchesi's *Four pastas*, meanwhile, pays tribute to Andy Warhol. Inspired by the artist's four silkscreen prints dedicated to Marilyn Monroe (*The Shot Marilyns*), it



Perhaps Gualtiero Marchesi's most famous creation is *Rice, gold and saffron*. However, it is not inspired by any particular artist, because it is itself a painting, on which the whole of the culinary world subsequently came to gaze.

The most extraordinary "review" of this creation came from an artist, Emilio Tadini. One evening, when presented with this gastronomic masterpiece, he paused before tasting it to exclaim: "I'm struck by the contrast between the two yellows, between the dazzling light of the gold and the restrained, profound light of the rice coloured by the saffron."

Marchesi's cooking has always paid great attention to preserving flavours, balance, healthiness and ethicality and, over time, has succeeded in interpreting the evolution of taste. Thus it cannot but be defined as "contemporary".

**\*Davide Paolini**

*Journalist and gastronaut*



uses four different pasta shapes: short and squat *paccheri*, *fusilli*, *pastini* and *spaghetti*. On the plate, however, the fork and spoon dominate; as well as reinforcing the composition, both are also placed on a silver platter, almost as if to represent the container within its contents.

The culinary inspiration drawn from Jean Arp's work *Configuration MAM* can only be one thing: colour. Green, white and orange enclosed in shapes, ready to dart out, are translated by the "chef as artist" into a base of *salsa verde*, a fluid surface onto which is placed a long leek cut in half; on the edge, meanwhile, a circle of black truffle underneath a slice of white egg.

Another example of pure art is *Dripped fish*, conceived with Jackson Pollock's technique of "action painting" in mind. The dish is made up of a canvas of mayonnaise, squid and clams, tomato, parsley chlorophyll and squid ink; as you eat, the composition takes shape.

Top right:  
Jackson Pollock at  
work, New York,  
1950.

Gualtiero Marchesi,  
*Dripped di pesce –  
Omaggio a Jackson  
Pollock*, 2004.







## A “Renaissance” artist

by Antonio Ballista\*



Left:

At the piano in the 16<sup>th</sup>-century Villa Margon,  
now owned by the Lunelli family,  
during shooting for his film, Trento, 2016.

This page:

Portrait of Gualtiero Marchesi  
on stage at La Scala, Milan, 2015.

In the Società Umanitaria's Sala degli Affreschi for the concert given by the Dandolo Marchesi grandchildren, Milan, 2016.

2003 was an important year for my musical wanderings into the most unconventional repertoires, culminating in my forming an eccentric crossover trio of two pianos and a saxophone. The trio was called “Fata Morgana”, which is also a special form of mirage. We played a kind of music that had no competition on the mainstream concert scene, which also called for a completely new way of listening. These characteristics seemed to have been sought out on purpose in order to deliberately impede the trio's progress amongst Italy's concert institutions, which were mainly wrapped up in the political correctness of museum initiatives.

The ideal location for Fata Morgana's Milan debut could only be the Blue Note. Given its uniqueness compared with traditional classical music venues, I could safely bet that I wouldn't meet even one of the regulars there who usually attended my concerts. And yet, as soon as I stepped onto the stage, I spotted a former Conservatoire classmate of mine in the front row, Antonietta Cassisa – an outstanding pianist with whom I had sometimes played duets in my younger days. Next to her was a gentleman I didn't know, someone with whom Antonietta was being very familiar. I could never have imagined that this gentleman would become a close friend of mine from that point on. He was none other than Gualtiero Marchesi, a legendary figure for me and my family, and Antonietta Cassisa was his wife. The fact that Marchesi had chosen to visit that place for that concert defined his type of eclectic listener: not only a great fan of classical music but also extremely curious

about “alternative” music too. In the many conversations that followed our initial encounter, I came to realise that Gualtiero was indeed a very particular listener. Although he hadn't specifically had a musical education, his observations revealed a keen instinct for capturing the essence of the pieces he had heard. I'd like to mention just one example that highlights the subtlety of his musical perception. At La Scala, my wife and I found ourselves sharing a box with him and his wife when we went to see Stravinsky's opera *The Rake's Progress*. At the end of the first act, Gualtiero said to me: “Listen, why do they call Stravinsky a neoclassical composer? If you ask me, this music is just so damn original. I can't see anything from the past in it.” In just a few words, Gualtiero had torpedoed one of the most widespread and, in my view, most unfounded clichés amongst the official criticism levelled at this great composer. If Gualtiero had been able to express himself in more technical terms, he would have said: although there are undoubtedly composers in the first part of the 20th century who echo styles of the past, Stravinsky is not one of them. Unlike the “neoclassicists”, Stravinsky's “references” are not points of departure, but fertile misinterpretations that open the door to ever-innovative approaches.

Besides music, another of Gualtiero's great passions was philosophy. He used to write out the philosophical ideas that made the biggest impression on him (do you remember Montaigne doing the same thing on the walls of his tower?) and quote them sometimes, always with levity, in his conversation. Of all the philosophers, perhaps his favourite was Seneca, although his way of life did not always align with the ethics of his philosophy. The amiability with which Gualtiero entertained his friends revealed a very friendly personality, rejecting any little trait that could potentially allude to the fame bestowed on him. However, I would like to tell another story that shows his indifference to any kind of formality. My whole family had been invited to his restaurant in Erbusco. My daughter was quick to advise my wife and me to behave in a manner worthy of the class of restaurant and refrain from giving each other



From left to right:  
Antonietta Cassisa  
Marchesi, Riccardo  
Muti, Gualtiero  
Marchesi and  
Cristina Mazzavillani  
Muti, 1990s.

little tastes of our food, as sometimes happens when one is presented with some truly special dishes. During dinner, each of us was served something different, and, when Gualtiero came to say goodbye, he took one look at the table and exclaimed: "What's this? Didn't you all taste my gold risotto? But that's a great shame." And he refused to leave us until we had all tried one of the Maestro's greatest creations.

As well as a delight for the palate, his gastronomic inventions were also a feast for the eyes, because the imagination and rigour with which they were constructed made them into genuine works of art. To a musician like me, the way certain dishes were composed was even suggestive of musical programmes. How can one fail to be amazed by the variety of solutions presented in some of his menus? Here are a few examples that, by analogy, could be included in a musical programme. They are either contrasts of very different flavours or combinations of flavours in harmony with one another in search of a subtle and extremely refined variety in homogeneity. Or a kaleidoscope of tiny courses or, conversely, a limited number of dishes alternating as a few variations on a theme. But also a succession of simple recipes interwoven with sophisticated ones, with each enhancing the other's flavours. And, to finish, a quasi-Haydnian idea of constant surprise, one that would have made the lucky diners say: "I'd never have expected this dish after that one." And all in the same menu...!

Gualtiero was truly an all-round artist (it is perhaps no coincidence that his two daughters are outstanding in their respective fields, music and the visual arts), so it's natural for me to compare him to the Renaissance masters, who must have received a complete cultural education.

But there is one aspect of Gualtiero's legacy that I feel is the most important of all: his almost sacred respect for food, which he viewed as a priceless gift of creation. Think of the Last Supper in the Gospels: "This is my body." I was astonished when I saw him eating because of how ritualistic his gestures were; he seemed to share the view of the philosopher Spinoza, with whom I am sure he was familiar, that God



is in everything and, therefore, also in food. Every time I watched Gualtiero eat, I had the impression that he thought this too. Once introduced into his mouth, the food would pause there for a few seconds to be savoured, almost as if to strip away its most hidden components in a kind of extremely private ritual greeting. I confess that I was struck by this observation and have since learned to focus on what I am eating. I will never forget the image of Gualtiero as an exemplar of that "attention" that Simone Weil saw as the most important quality in a human being.

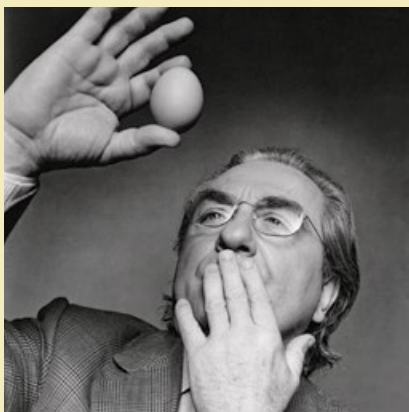
**\*Antonio Ballista**  
*Pianist*





## Cookery and forms

by Salvatore Veca\*



Left:  
Focused on plating  
up in the kitchen at Il Marchesino,  
Milan, 2010.

This page:  
The Master rememberin his grandfathe checking  
the freshness of an egg, 1990s.

My friendship with Gualtiero Marchesi was brief but unique: we shared a large number of beliefs that, although unspoken, allowed us to chat as if we went back many years. We met by chance, at a public event. It was 2012, and we had been invited to an extensive debate on the thorny issue of reopening Milan's canals. We were in a big theatre. The speakers followed one another up onto the stage, and I remember listening with great interest to the Maestro's speech, which was incisive, heartfelt and, above all, *simple*. Then it was my turn. I said my few words and went back to my seat.

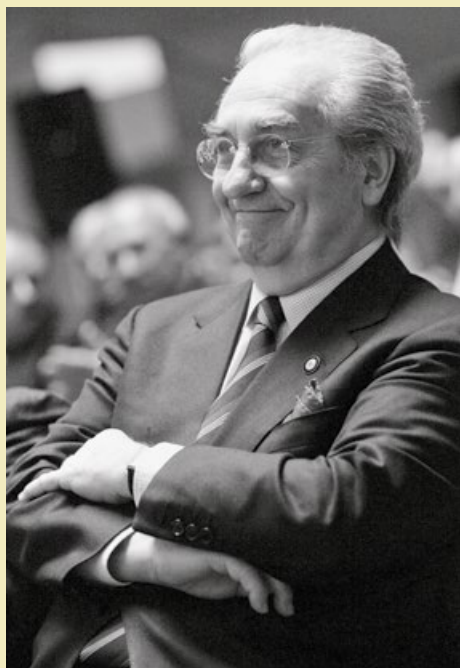
I remember scanning the faces of the people behind me and immediately spotting Gualtiero, who was sitting in the row behind me. I immediately said hello, and we hit it off straight away. He began to joke about his age, claiming that he was only a young person "in a different sense". But he said it very delicately and with a certain amount of irony. Thus we began talking, until we were interrupted – and rightly so, as we were disturbing at least two rows of seats.

During that first encounter, I was struck by the *simplicity* and *lightness* of Gualtiero Marchesi's words. It was a simplicity that was partly natural and partly hard-earned, quested for, mastered. It was his way of interacting with others and opening up to them in order to convey his way of seeing things and what was important to him. Gualtiero was a keen observer of people and

things. When he entered a room, he seemed to try to frame his environment – the arrangement of objects, the furniture, the colours, the context – with a kind of inner camera. And he did it discreetly. Still with a certain lightness. He sometimes came across as someone lost in faraway thoughts. I was struck by this trait of his on several occasions: when he was invited, together



with his son-in-law and principal collaborator Enrico Dandolo, to the Fondazione Campus in Lucca. Amongst other things, this foundation offers bachelor's and master's degrees in tourism subjects in partnership with the universities of Pisa, Pavia and Lugano. We were talking in the library, and I became aware of Marchesi's keen interest in how young people were educated. Or when, a few years later, we invited him to give the opening speech to mark the new academic year at Campus. I remember that, the night before, we went for dinner in a nice restaurant in Lucca. When the Maestro entered the restaurant, which was run by one of his many students, and, in particular, when he entered the kitchens with all the staff lined up to greet him, we were witness to a kind of ceremony of great *simplicity* and, at the same time, silent *solemnity*. There were some young people in the brigade who looked like they were in the presence of one of their favourite celebrities. The kitchens over which the Maestro exercised his watchful yet discreet gaze exuded respect, esteem and gratitude for the man who had profoundly innovated and transformed Italian cooking in the last century, setting it apart from its international counterparts. And he had taken diligent care to train a whole generation of pupils who would go on to



Top:  
With Salvatore Veca during the ceremony marking the start of the 14<sup>th</sup> academic year at the Fondazione Campus, Lucca, 2016.

During a ceremony at Castello di Felino in the hills around Parma, 2009.



achieve great and significant things.

In the library at Fondazione Campus, we talked a great deal about training young people; we exchanged ideas, details of our own experience, examples of good practice. Gualtiero told me about his educational project, which, I must confess, made me think a little of Plato's Academy – after all, philosophy is my day job. Marchesi's idea was to follow a path more or less of "initiation", which would lead from the culture and practice of the "chef" to a personal development built around the arts, from the visual arts to music.

The notion struck me and, intrigued, I asked him why he had chosen this sort of artistic "ascent" in the students' education. Gualtiero explained it to me in a few words and with his characteristic simplicity. The important point is that there exists an implicit connection between cooking on the one hand and creating art on the other. Not only in that the work of the "cook" (it is no coincidence that I am using the simple, everyday term that Marchesi preferred) is undoubtedly an art – or can become one – but also in the sense that cooking is an

activity that forms part of a wider range of activities that find their full expression in the languages of art. For this reason, Gualtiero said, young people's education had to gradually reach a state of knowledge and mastery of the artistic experience in the variety of its many languages.

Indeed, it is sufficient to consider the close link between the visual arts and the morphology of the plate, its use of colours, its shape in relation to other shapes, and its context. This fundamental consideration explains why, when Marchesi was promoting his foundation, it was only natural that its Scientific Committee should include artists, painters and musicians as well as philosophers and scholars from fields other than cookery. The foundation was established by Gualtiero Marchesi and his family where art – and music in particular – were at home; specifically, in March 2010, this was in the legendary via Bonvesin de la Riva in Milan. And it is no coincidence, as I mentioned, that the foundation originally envisaged an Artistic and Scientific Committee made up of leading personalities from various fields, with particular



Gualtiero Marchesi,  
*Quattro paste*, 2006.



reference to the arts and their languages. Marchesi firmly believed that a chef should “think”. And although the ingredients of their thinking were undoubtedly drawn from their practical experience and their tradition, they had to be integrated with the various forms of art. This was the pathway to achieving maximum simplicity in the art of cooking. This achieved the highest value when it innovated by making use of fragments and pieces from the mosaic of tradition. Thus Marchesi saw the chef’s *recipe* as being like a score for a musician. Although the Maestro was fairly reserved and understated in explaining his views on the relationship between cooking and art, I think we can venture a conjecture. So, continuing our conversation with him, let us now clarify the nature of that conjecture. I believe that, from an abstract point of view such as that of a philosopher, the dominant

theme of Marchesi’s reflections and his creativity was that of *form* in all its various meanings. The relationship between the work of the inventor in the kitchen and that of the painter, sculptor or composer is forged by the simple fact that, in each case, there is no form that does not emerge from variations and combination-style relationships with other forms. I could almost say that, when he was absorbed in something and chasing after his trains of thought, Marchesi entered the world of forms, searched for their connections, their history, their interdependence, the transformations that gave rise to unexpected changes. In those cases, the landscape of forms was perhaps the landscape of his mind. The virtues of “*the good, the simple and the beautiful*” were ideally suited to his world of forms. And it was thanks to the background of forms that the inventor of the recipe or the score was not to be thought of as a creator *ex nihilo* of the *new* but as a DIY enthusiast who, armed with forms they had inherited and a sense of the past, invented the future in a process of creation – in the kitchen just like in the workshop or studio. My conjecture also takes account of the style of Marchesi, who liked to quote Paul Klee’s views on the subject (“I am my style”). Above all, this explains the reasons for Marchesi’s fundamental interest in the education and training of young people – young students, who can sometimes become disciples in the course of time. The

Top:  
Putting the final  
touches to  
one of his dishes  
at Il Marchesino,  
Milan, 2010.

Placeholder plate  
for evening service  
designed by  
his artist daughter  
Paola, 2005.



chef who “thinks” needs a process of education that allows them to gradually develop their skills of reflection, imagination and ideas. Even the most daring test of the imagination is not born in a vacuum but takes its cue and its energy from the experience of serious, rigorous learning. This is because, as I have mentioned, Gualtiero never saw innovation as being separate from tradition or from the hand-to-hand combat in which the inventor engages with the mosaic of their inherited past. On pain of ephemeral foolishness. As Marchesi writes in one of his many notes,



believed that we would be right to give the name “works” to dishes created out of a project. Thus we are able to formulate some philosophical conjectures of the kind that I have about the crucial role that forms play in Marchesi’s culture and practice. This is because, in reality, we still want to hear his voice continuing the dialogue that we believe is uninterrupted. Maybe what we can do is reflect on and reconstruct Marchesi’s story as a gastronomic inventor – not for the mere sake of the museum or the archive, which also has its value, but to persevere in a practice or, better still, a set of practices enlightened by thought, the arts and a process of reflection.

I think that Gualtiero Marchesi would be happy with this and would agree to go along with us on the journey, even in difficult times. And especially in changing times. The times, they are a-changing, to quote Bob Dylan, and *omnia mutantur*, to quote Pythagoras in the grand finale of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*.

**\*Salvatore Veca**  
*Philosopher*

“Good cooking is the result of both invention and tradition, both in perfect balance. In that sense, there is no such thing as a nouvelle cuisine; there are only free and creative ones. Because a cuisine that was only invention, a quest for originality and novelty at all costs, would soon descend into eccentricity, and a cuisine that wanted to be 100% traditional would be monotonous and boring, i.e. satiated.”

When special people like Gualtiero Marchesi leave us, they also leave their footprints on our memories, which means they remain our travelling companions and conversation partners even as time goes on. Deep down, the Maestro was convinced that cooking was “a work of art”, and he





# Marchesi's economic contribution to the restaurant industry

by Lino Enrico Stoppani\*



Left:  
The restaurant Teatro alla Scala.  
Il Marchesino, Milan, 2008.

This page:  
At Il Marchesino, Milan, 2014.



Right:  
In front of the  
camera during  
shooting for his film,  
Milan, 2016.

Bottom:  
With his friend  
Eugenio Medagliani,  
Milan, 2016.

Today, 90 years after Gualtiero Marchesi was born, the Italian restaurant industry is recognised as a key component of two sectors that play a strategic role in our country's economy and identity: tourism and agrifood. For the former, Italian cuisine is a very attractive factor, being the second most popular reason foreign tourists visit the country and the main reason they come back. For the latter, besides being a natural commercial outlet for our excellent produce – more than EUR 20 billion worth of which is bought each year – the restaurant industry is also an exceptional showcase for promoting and adding value to all food made in Italy. It currently contributes EUR 86 billion in sales all by itself, including EUR 40 billion in value added, and employs more than a million people. This helps to make agrifood one of the four main drivers of Italian exports, along with the automotive, clothing and furniture industries.

Although our country has enjoyed this position for many years, it was particularly in the 1980s that the sector received a major boost. This was thanks to the movement driven by great chefs, who conferred new meaning on the restaurant industry, translating the French culinary movement of *nouvelle cuisine* into Italian, introducing a new approach to traditional cooking – from the ingredients to the techniques used to prepare and present the dishes – and giving a new status of originality and identity to the chefs. The undisputed key figure in this process was none other than Gualtiero Marchesi, the “Maestro” of Italian cuisine, an icon and an example of what would go on to become the figure of the chef in Italy.

I was lucky enough to meet Gualtiero many



years ago, and from that point on two common interests linked our stories together. Firstly, we were joined by an organisational bond, because FIPE – Confcommercio, which I chair, could boast Marchesi as its spearhead. Gualtiero, for his part, found in our agency not only a pillar of support but also like-minded individuals with the same attitude to sharing as him. In addition, few believed as much as he did in the value of teaching, and the association served as a sounding board for a model of work and dedication in which he believed so much. Secondly, there is also a more personal link between my story and his: during the years in which my family were in charge of “Peck” (1970–2010), our dialogue with Gualtiero was both fruitful and enlightening. Although we were “corporate neighbours” in Milan, we were also, and in particular, cut from identical cloth in terms of our quest for quality, the compass and engine of our businesses, that was also capable of giving due recognition to the gastronomic excellence of our country.

In this sense, Gualtiero Marchesi was without parallel. The first restaurant owner in Italy to be awarded three stars by the prestigious Michelin Guide in 1985, he was also the first to criticise its scoring system, quitting it with much fuss in 2008. Marchesi was also a pioneer of diversification, freeing himself from the textbook idea of the restaurant and varying his formats. This proved a smart choice, not least as it enabled him to sustain a model of haute cuisine marked by an extremely ambitious cost structure. As a communicator, he was ahead of his time: besides numerous cookbooks, magazine columns, consultancy assignments, commercial agreements and commercials, he also entered the collective imagination as the first chef who





With Paul Bocuse  
(left) and Alain  
Ducasse (right),  
Tuscany, 2004.

managed to break down the barrier between cooking and television, enabling the profession to be communicated to the masses.

Yet Marchesi was also a revolutionary in terms of what he cooked. He was a man on a mission to re-imagine our cuisine by modernising it and adapting it to the changing needs of customers. Before he came along, Italian cuisine was essentially a collection of great regional cooking styles. After him, nothing has ever been the same: consider the modernity of flavours, the development of recipes, the professionalism of service, the meticulously organised tasks in the kitchens, the details in the *mise en place* of the table, the cooking techniques, the study of wine pairing.

If we therefore ask ourselves what Gualtiero Marchesi's contribution has been to the Italian economy and restaurant industry – assuming it is even possible to capture his genius in just a few lines – then three words come to mind: chef, entrepreneur, maestro.

Indeed, it was Marchesi who enabled the Italian cook to call themselves a “chef”, with the aspiration of a status and a sense of professionalism that would have been barely imaginable even just a few years previously. By placing the chef front and centre, both in the dining room and in the mass media, he put forward a model of “total cuisine” that took his creativity far beyond the confines of the kitchens, celebrating aesthetics without neglecting substance. This is why Marchesi was not only a great chef but also a great entrepreneur, who applied different business models and drove the growth of the entire hospitality industry supply chain. He was also the first person to draw attention to the issue of

“copyright” and “intellectual property” to protect his landmark dishes, including the iconic *Rice, gold and saffron*. This was to prove an unfinished battle that perhaps deserved more success, not least in combating counterfeit food products or the phenomenon of “Italian-sounding” food, which has exploded with globalisation. Finally, as everyone knows, Marchesi was the Maestro, an epithet that both celebrated his incomparable art and revealed another element of his extraordinary legacy: the ability to teach. Dean of ALMA, the Italian School of Culinary Arts, and forefather of a very long line of famous international names that have passed through his kitchens, Gualtiero Marchesi trained whole generations of young cooks who went on to become chefs and often entrepreneurs.

Commenting on the culinary dualism between Italy and France, Paul Bocuse, the figurehead of great French cuisine, who died just a few days after Gualtiero, once said that “it would be all over for French cuisine once Italian chefs had recognised the significance of the wealth of recipes and produce at their fingertips.” That may be an exaggeration, but there is no doubt that Italian cuisine succeeded in taking flight when, taking this wealth of recipes and produce as a starting point, it wove a majestic collective culinary narrative with some extraordinary individuals as main characters. Chief amongst them was the unforgettable Gualtiero Marchesi. It is impossible not to think about him with a sense of nostalgia, but maybe also with a sense of hope nurtured by his incomparable legacy. Alternatively, as Bocuse himself wrote in Gualtiero's birthday card every year: “The best is yet to come.”



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Casinos and Entertainment  
Vice Chairman of Banca Popolare  
di Sondrio



## The unforgettable memory of papà Gualtiero

Interview with Simona Marchesi\*



Left:  
At Villa Margon  
during shooting for his film,  
Trento, 2016.

This page:  
The Maestro conducting his family  
orchestra in the banqueting suite at L'Albereta,  
Erbusco, 1998.



*This interview was also intended to include Gualtiero's second-eldest daughter, Paola, a painter, sculptor and violinist. However, she preferred (as her father had taught her) to remain true to her character, being shy and more reserved. She chose to keep close to her chest feelings and emotions experienced with a father who she had too often had to share. Their relationship was one of "shared feeling"; two kindred spirits who continue to talk to each other, in private.*



*When did you realise you were the daughter of the great Gualtiero Marchesi?*

Over time, and consciously when I was older; when my sister and I were little, he had not yet become "Gualtiero Marchesi". From the moment I was born until I turned 14, it was his time of preparation: studying, practising and gaining experience in France. He was swept up by success after the age of 47, when he began to earn his stars after opening his own restaurant. Every time one was awarded, it was an occasion for great pride and celebration for him, and therefore also for us.

*What kind of a father was he?*

He wasn't always there when we were children; he did some stages in France, he travelled a lot to achieve his ambitions; he wasn't the traditional dad for us, someone who comes home every evening and spends time with his family. When he was around, however, he'd spend the whole weekend taking us around with him to savour and learn about the traditions of Tuscany and Umbria, regions that also gave him inspiration for his culinary research. Weekends were dedicated to us and to discovering new places in Italy or abroad.

*Can you tell me one good and one bad thing about your father?*

I'll start with his virtues, because, like him, I don't like to see the imperfections in people. His approach was all about understanding. His greatest virtue as far as I am concerned was his extraordinary open-mindedness, which allowed me and the people who worked with him to make their own choices and always to express their own ideas and passions. It was this breadth of vision that meant he could be so farsighted and create such innovative cuisine. In 1998, for instance, he opened a shop in via San Pietro all'Orto, near via Montenapoleone, which he called "Cultura in cucina". He began to prepare vacuum-packed dishes there, pre-empting their arrival on the market by 20 years. He was also extremely proactive and an excellent listener. One potential flaw, though I don't see it as such, was selfishness – an attitude often seen in artists, in great people who create and do big things. However, his own particular selfishness was less about himself and more about his business, whose development he never stopped thinking about.

*Did he pass on any of his passions to you? If so, which ones?*

Definitely his love of art, a great source of inspiration and cultural and spiritual enrichment. My passion for music, which he loved so much, mainly came from my mother, who got me involved (I'm a harpist), but also my children, all three of whom are outstanding musicians. But I chose my own path myself. He never put any pressure on me, unlike my mother, who wanted me and my sister to have a future that was closely linked to music.



Family music-making, Milan, 1979.

Right: With his daughter Simona in Bangkok for a culinary event, 2005.

*How did your mother influence your father's career choices? What did he see her as? A guide? A muse?*

His inspiration! She was his piano teacher, but also a muse and a support – an irreplaceable support. Only recently, we came across a box full of letters from France, where he worked for years, addressed to my mother, who he always saw as a key point of reference for himself. He needed to be brought back down to earth every now and again.

*How did he spend his free time?*

He would look for beauty everywhere. He loved exhibitions, concerts and the theatre. He was an inquisitive man who sought inspiration in every corner of the world through art in order to reproduce it in his dishes. Or perhaps it's better to say that his dishes were the creative expression of his innermost thoughts imbued with the beauty he sought and found in the sublimation of matter.

*What values did he pass onto you?*

Humility, tenacity, respect for one's own abilities and talents, the quest for simplicity as well as a sense of taste and love of beauty. Doing your work with a lot of passion and dedication, the spirit of sacrifice, not really being concerned with money or with material things in general.

*Did you ever work with him?*

Yes, I was in the dining room and front of house; I was a bit in awe of the kitchen. I was very young at the time. After he'd opened the restaurant in via Bonvesin de la Riva, I was always there in the evenings, while my sister Paola worked in the pastry shop and the kitchen.

*What's your favourite dish from amongst your father's creations?*

Definitely the *Open raviolo* because of how soft everything is. It's a dish of great balance, almost magical.

*What did he love to eat?*

He adored his *Cold spaghetti with caviar*, but also simple things, like mozzarella or ice cream. There was a time when balls of mozzarella seemed to be "disappearing" from the restaurant kitchen without anyone actually

using them up. We had the idea of putting in a hidden camera and realised that the "mozzarella thief" was none other than him. We then put padlocks on the fridges, but he cleverly got round the problem by going to the supplier directly and having some put aside for "personal use".

*How did his signature dish Rice, gold and saffron come about?*

It was born quite by chance, like some of his other creations: the nephew of a man who owned a factory producing edible gold leaf was turning 60 in 1981 and asked my father if he wanted the leaf to make something out of it. He was then struck by an idea and invented the risotto. The Open raviolo, one of his most replicated dishes in the world, also came about by chance: some customers asked him if he could put on some cookery classes for their wives. To accommodate their wishes, he decided to set Saturday mornings aside for lessons for these ladies. One of them told him that, at a wedding breakfast, the ravioli that had been served had all split open. How could this unfortunate incident be avoided? This gave him the idea of making an open raviolo, in which important ingredients such as scallops (subsequently complemented by sole, not least because it was cheaper) are placed whole and served with a butter and ginger sauce. Who in the 1980s used or knew about ginger, which is so popular now? Nobody.

*Did he ever ask you to design your own dish?*

*If so, did he put it in one of his menus?*

He never asked me, but I did make him some suggestions, which he took on board by taking them to "Il Marchesino". It has



In the kitchen  
at Il Marchesino,  
Milan, 2013.







to be said that he also “pilfered” ideas from my mother, from Sicilian cooking. Of course, he didn’t just recreate the dishes 1:1 but simplified them according to his own criteria. What he saw as “too much” he took away. Nowadays, chefs “build” a dish based on a drawing, as if they are supposed to create an impressive work of architecture, but he never did that. Whenever inspiration struck, he’d call the chef and tell them what he had in mind (from the 1990s onwards, he was no longer labouring over the stove himself, but supervising and coming up with ideas). He could already taste this new dish in his mouth; once it was ready, he would try it and, if any of the flavours weren’t exactly as he’d imagined, he’d interrogate the chef about what they’d done and, if he found a misstep, he’d say that there’d been a problem with the “transfer of information”. For him, a dish had to emerge with the same aesthetic value as a work of art; after all, he’d wanted to study painting at the Accademia di Brera, but after the war his parents were only able to tell him to pick a job he wanted to do in their restaurant. In those days, you just had to roll up your sleeves. At the beginning, he didn’t really have any clear ideas. In Lucerne, for instance, he trained in the dining room, not the kitchen, and, even when he went to Kulm in St. Moritz, he worked front of house.

*Was your father very interested in design as well?*

Yes, he was one of the first people to have Castiglioni lamps on the tables as well as using paintings and sculptures as centre-pieces. The restaurant was to be evaluated from every angle, not only for its cooking (which was perhaps not right at the top in his scale of values). The concept of design was deeply ingrained in him. In the 1980s, he launched a collaboration with Alessi called “Cintura d’Orione” [“Orion’s Belt”], where he got some great chefs – many of them French – involved in designing an ideal range of pots and pans that could be used in the kitchen. For this range, he designed a spaghetti pot and a few other things with the aim of prioritising functionality over aesthetic appeal (an aim he defended staunchly in his dealings with the Alessi family). He saw designing lines of plates or cutlery as a response to a real need rather than a marketing operation to further promote his own name. He designed several glasses: one, for sparkling water, was tall and narrow, which preserved the fizziness for longer, the other, for still water, was shorter and wider. He also created a line of wine glasses. He had something of a “love-hate” relationship with wine, as he couldn’t stand the fact that it sometimes dominated the food on the plate. When he saw that diners were too focused on their wine, what would he do? A few seconds before the food

Left:  
The stylish table  
setting for evening  
service at the  
Marchesi restaurant.  
Hand-blown glasses  
from Murano with  
24 carat gold and  
Paola Marchesi’s  
placeholder plate on  
a black tablecloth.

Right:  
Sitting in his  
restaurant, Milan,  
1984.



came out, he'd ask the waiters to remove the wine glasses from the tables. The customers were dumbfounded. The maitre d' brought out their plates and, a moment later, told the diners that all the attention they'd been paying to the wine should now be redirected towards their food.

*Did he like talking to customers? How did he find them?*

He loved to observe them and sometimes to intervene in their decision-making. I'll give you an example: one typical Lombard dish was and still is *riso al salto* (yellow risotto left over from the previous day sautéed in a pan), which my father was crazy about and wanted to be perfect. People from Milan usually ask for grated cheese and pepper to round off the dish. As far as he was concerned, this request was unacceptable, not to mention incomprehensible. So, in order not to come across as rude, he prepared a cheese serving dish containing puffed rice, which was tasty and crunchy but didn't alter the flavour of the rice. The waiter brought out the serving dish and the customer, naturally, pointed out that there wasn't any cheese in it; then he would arrive and, with a certain *savoir faire*, would explain that the cheese had been measured out to make the dish taste just right. If something absolutely had to be added, then it could be some puffed rice... essentially, it was a kind of "sop" to the customer, but the dish remained as he intended it.

*Did he use to compare himself with his fellow restaurateurs?*

Definitely. Together with some restaurateur friends, he founded the association "Le Soste" in 1982, which still exists to this day and brings together the best restaurants in Italy. His great idea was to create a system together with his colleagues, who he used to meet now and again to discuss ideas and initiatives for top-quality Italian food and wine. These meetings provided another forum for him to share his thoughts and his vision. How did he deal with criticism of his work? Being criticised by people he considered incompetent annoyed him greatly. Most journalists aren't born with a sense of food culture but come either from football (such as Gianni Brera) or crime reporting (like

Edoardo Raspelli, with whom he would go on to quarrel). In particular, he couldn't stand those critics who tried to get him on their side, such as the editor of that most famous guide, who wanted to share his ideas with him during a meeting. My father, however, took his leave, insisting that he didn't want to be pressured in any way or to be "influenced" in his choices. Thus, in 2008, he asked all the guides to stop giving scores (stars, marks or toques) to his restaurant, which caused a great stir. He wanted to be free to express himself. By contrast, he had a lot of time for those journalists who wanted to understand what "drove" his kitchen and how he got his ideas.

*Gualtiero Marchesi was undoubtedly an artist, but he was also an entrepreneur. What kind of relationship did he have with money, and how did he manage it?*

I'd say he wasn't an entrepreneur in the slightest! He had a unique relationship with money, the sole purpose of which was to turn his ideas into reality. If he found the shape of a plate or bowl irresistible and just perfect for a certain dish, he wouldn't even ask how much it cost and would order at least 50 of them. His sister, my aunt, also told us that, from a very young age, he used to have his clothes and shoes tailor-made (which was very expensive, as it is now). He had a well-defined aesthetic taste, which he applied to anything and everything, never asking how much he was going to spend. Honestly, I don't know how he survived, although I must say that the presence of my husband Enrico (director of all his companies) helped and protected



Lost in thought  
beside Enrico  
Dandolo, Castello  
di Felino, province  
of Parma, 2009.

him a great deal, saving him from losing everything on more than one occasion. He was a hard person to “manage”, particularly in the last few years.

*Today’s image of the chef, shaped not least by many TV programmes, is one of a demanding “general” with a short fuse. What was your father like in the kitchen?*

Honestly, I never went into the kitchen itself, because sometimes you could cut the air with a knife. Everyone was in the zone, and even the slightest distraction could have got in the way of a successful service. But he was a lover of concord, a bit like me, and he didn’t like shouting or fighting. He had no time for disrespect and couldn’t stand vulgarity.



*With that in mind, what was his opinion of TV cookery programmes?*

Above all else, TV is fiction. The MasterChef production team had invited him to chair its judging panel. Being an inquisitive man, he got them to explain everything in detail. Finally, he asked who would be cooking and, therefore, who he would have to judge. When he found out that they were amateurs, he refused, explaining that cooking was a serious matter, not entertainment. So he called Carlo who, as well as being a consummate professional, met all the criteria, and the rest is history. Between 2015 and 2016, he agreed to take part in a Canale 5 show called *Il pranzo della*

*domenica*, which featured young chefs who already had some experience in the kitchen and wanted to develop. That programme was much more in line with his ideas.

*Nowadays, if someone wants to taste Gualtiero Marchesi’s cooking – his original cooking – where should they go?*

They should go to “La Terrazza Gualtiero Marchesi”, in the “Grand Hotel Tremezzo” on Lake Como, which my father had picked as the ideal place to move his great restaurant. He had worked together with the “Grand Hotel” since 2010 and its wonderful location, with a terrace overlooking the lake, made him fall head over heels in love with it. He designed the kitchen himself, hoping that the owners would agree to stump up a very substantial investment, but one that was necessary to allow him to move the “Ristorante Gualtiero Marchesi” there. Forty years of cooking come together at the “Terrazza” and demonstrate a timeless creativity: the menu includes some dishes dating from 1978 and some created after 2015 – all coexisting in perfect harmony, characterised by simplicity, lightness and naturalness, “ingredients” that are key to appreciating the goodness and uniqueness of a dish for the contemporary customer, who is more aware and better prepared than in the past

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Vice President of the  
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**edited by Alessandra Dolci**

**in collaboration with Andrea Romano.**

At Il Marchesino  
with the TV producer  
Riccardo Pasini  
and his “alter ego”,  
created by Libero  
Gozzini, Milan, 2016.





## The Gualtierio Marchesi Foundation

The Gualtierio Marchesi Foundation opened its doors on 19 March 2010, the Maestro's 80th birthday. It is based at via Bonvesin de la Riva 5, where he had his first restaurant. Commemorating and recreating the work of its founding father, it sets out to gather documents from menus to recipes, publish research and testimonies, delve into the life of the man and those who revolutionised cooking through biographies and albums, and release collections that bring together reflections on the entire food pyramid. At the base of this pyramid stands large-scale production and industry and, moving gradually upwards, high-quality ingredients, home and restaurant cooking, then professionals from all sectors, from marketing to packaging and design, and finally, almost at the top, professional chefs and their creations. The very tip of the pyramid is reserved for a cuisine that combines image, art and music. This vision, inherited from Gualtierio, prioritises all-round research. Art, in the dual sense of craftsmanship and creativity, plays a leading role here, requiring the study of a past as extensive as the life of the Maestro and of a present whose story needs to be told and written down.

### Villa Mylius in Varese, the starting point for a new journey



Villa Mylius will serve as the new home of the Marchesi Foundation. Currently being restored, this historic building was donated by the Babini-Cattaneo family to the City of Varese, with the caveat that it host cultural activities. The city council see the foundation as the organisation best placed to make the most of the building's artistic legacy with a view to harnessing its potential for raising the region's profile by involving the most famous brand in one of the most important and world-renowned sectors: the brand of Gualtierio Marchesi. Specifically, the project plans to combine and coordinate haute cuisine (through the Accademia Gualtierio Marchesi) with the arts sector (music and visual arts, with AMA) within its dedicated spaces as well as creating a wide-ranging cultural programme underpinned by three pillars: cookery, art and taste education. Villa Mylius will also offer the opportunity to launch the Accademia Gualtierio Marchesi's full advanced training programme for professional chefs thanks to a Master's course limited to 20 participants, who will need to pass a theoretical and practical examination before being admitted.

Left:  
In front of his  
Academy in via  
Bonvesin de la Riva,  
Milan, 2014

Top:  
Villa Mylius in  
Varese. Work began  
in January 2021 on  
restoring the villa  
that is to become  
the new home of the  
Gualtierio Marchesi  
Foundation.

Right:  
Enrico Dandolo and  
Simona Marchesi  
during the speech  
opening the  
Accademia Gualtierio  
Marchesi, Milan,  
2004.





## A lifetime of awards

1985

his restaurant becomes the first in Italy ever to be awarded three stars by the Michelin Guide;

1986

he is awarded the title of *Cavaliere della Repubblica* and receives the *Ambrogino d'Oro*, the highest honour conferred by the city of Milan;

1989

he becomes the first Italian to receive the international *Personnalité de l'année* award for gastronomy;

1990

he is awarded the honour of *Chevalier dans l'ordre des Arts et des Lettres* by French Minister of Culture and Communication Jack Lang;

1991

italian President Francesco Cossiga awards him the title of *Commendatore*;

1998

he receives the prestigious *Premio Artusi*;

1999

the region of Lombardy awards him the *Lombardo d'Oro* seal, which is reserved for the

most prominent figures from the region who have made their mark in Italy and around the world;

2000-2002

he is named President of Euro-Toques International, a Brussels-based association that represents nearly 3,000 top European chefs;

2000

he receives the Paul Harris Award, named after the founder of Rotary International, the world's most prestigious international philanthropy association; he would also go on to win the prize again in 2007;

2001

he is awarded an honorary degree in food science from the Universitas Sancti Cyrilli in Rome;

2002

the Académie Internationale de la Gastronomie awards him the prestigious *Grand Prix "Mémoire et Gratitude"*;

2003

he is named Honorary President of Euro-Toques International;

2005

he is presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award in Los Angeles alongside Luciano Pavarotti, in recognition of their roles as international ambassadors for Italy;

2008

he receives the Lifetime Achievement 2008 award at the San Pellegrino World's 50 Best Restaurant Awards; in the same year, he decides that he no longer wishes to be judged by any guides, returning his Michelin stars;

2009

He receives the Golden Apron in Madrid, and the weekly *Metropoli* magazine (a supplement

With Ambassador Giovanni Caracciolo di Vietri and Corrado Augias at an event dedicated to music and cooking. Italian Embassy, Paris, 2012.



of the daily newspaper *El Mundo*) awards him its International Lifetime Achievement Award; in May of the same year, the Italian Ministry of Tourism names him Honorary Chairman of the Interministerial Committee for the Promotion of Wine and Food Tourism in recognition of his role as an international ambassador for Italian cuisine;

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#### 2011

he becomes the first person in Italy to be awarded a gold medal by the Ministry of Tourism for his work as an international ambassador for Italian cuisine;

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#### 2012

in July, the President of the Province of Milan presents him with the *Isimbardi della Riconoscenza* prize, awarded to Milanese citizens who have done outstanding work for the benefit of the community; in October, the University of Parma confers on him an honorary degree in food sciences; in December, the Centro Studi Grande Milano awards him the *Grandi Guglie della Grande Milano* prize, presented each year to individuals who have been outstanding in their field and helped to enhance Milan and its economic, scientific, social, cultural and artistic landscape;

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#### 2013

in January, he receives the prestigious *Premio Nonino*; in October, the influential association Les Grandes Tables du Monde

presents him with its Honorary Prize during an evening event held in his honour and, in the same month, he is appointed to the Altagamma International Honorary Council; the Altagamma Foundation brings together Italian companies that operate at the premium end of the market, stand out from the crowd thanks to their innovation, quality, service, design and prestige, and showcase Italian culture and style through their business management and products;

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#### 2015

to mark his 85<sup>th</sup> birthday, the Mayor of Milan, Giuliano Pisapia, presents him with the “Seal of the City”; in New York, he receives the GEI Award, which is reserved for Italian figures who have helped to increase the value of Italy abroad; he is appointed “Chef Ambassador” for Expo 2015, and the Accademia Italiana della Cucina, a cultural association founded by Orio Vergani in Milan in 1953, makes him a member of the Centro Studi Franco Marengi;

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#### 2017

in May, a documentary film of his life entitled “Marchesi: The Great Italian” premieres at the Cannes Film Festival. The film will go on to have its world premiere on 16 October in New York during the conference of “Les Grandes Tables du Monde”; on 12 October, he receives the Italy-USA Foundation’s America Award, which is presented every year to individuals of undisputed renown and absolute excellence in their field of interest and activity.

He was awarded an honorary degree in food sciences from the University of Parma, 2012.





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