



Litr 268R: Italian Cultural History: Food & Wine

John Felice Rome Center

Spring 2025

Tuesdays & Thursdays | 5.15-6.30pm

Office hours: Thursdays 4.00-5.00pm

Instructor: Elisa Ascione, PhD

Email: eascione@luc.edu

Tastings fee: \$100

All dates are subject to change based on availability at off-site locations

Course Description

In this course, we will explore the history of food and wine in Italy as a gateway to understanding Italian culture. By examining the factors that have shaped Italian food and taste, the variations in eating habits of different socio-economic classes, and the essential role played by food in constructing Italian identities, we will shed light on fundamental patterns in Italian history and society.

Through a mix of discussions, readings, primary source analyses, workshops, and excursions, we will investigate Italian food and culture from antiquity to the present. We will explore how food traditions and local foods are maintained and transformed over time and space, how culinary knowledge is used to mark cultural belonging and differences, and how food is a site of cultural transmission but also of dissent and resistance. Topics include food as cultural heritage, food and migration, the Mediterranean diet, and sustainable diets. After the completion of this course, students will have developed a critical understanding of food history, an interdisciplinary approach to the study of Italian culture and society, and a framework for analyzing Italian cultural history.

Please note: Food and wine tastings are served in very small quantities during class for didactic purposes only. Although students are expected to learn about the history and culture of wine and foods, they are not expected to participate in any of the tastings for successful completion of the course. Please let the instructor know in advance if you have any dietary needs or food allergies.

Learning Outcomes

On completion of the course, students should be able to:

- Analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view regarding culinary history.
- Gather and interpret information from first-hand sources and scholarly material.
- Work with non-traditional historical texts
- Develop a more sophisticated understanding of Italian history through the country's gastronomy.
- Identify how food and drink has shaped Italy today.

Sakai:

All course materials will be located on Sakai which can be accessed at <https://sakai.luc.edu>

Sakai is a web-based learning management system. You will be able to access it from any computer connected to the internet. Instructional guides and video tutorials for using Sakai are available at:

<http://www.luc.edu/itrs/sakai/sakai-student-tutorials.shtml>

Course content, including syllabi, reading material etc. will be available online.

Students should check Sakai often for announcements, assignments, and other course content.

Student Support Resources:

- ITS Service Desk: helpdesk@luc.edu
- Library Subject Specialists: <http://libraries.luc.edu/specialists>
- Student Accessibility Center: sac@luc.edu
- Writing Center: <http://www.luc.edu/writing/>

Attendance Policy

In accordance with the JFRC mission to promote a higher level of academic rigor, all courses adhere to the following absence policy. Prompt attendance, preparation and active participation in course discussions are expected from every student.

This course meets twice a week, thus a total of two unexcused absences will be permitted. Unexcused absences beyond these will result in 1% lowering of the final course grade, for every absence after the "approved limit".

Academic Integrity:

Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest, and responsible manner. Academic integrity is a guiding principle for all academic activity at Loyola University Chicago, and all members of the University community are expected to act in accordance with this principle.

Failing to meet the following academic integrity standards is a serious violation of personal honesty and the academic ideals that bind the University into a learning community. These standards apply to both individual and group assignments. Individuals working in a group may be held responsible if one of the group members has violated one or more of these standards.

1. Students may not plagiarize; the use of AI is considered plagiarism too and treated as such.
2. Students may not submit the same work for credit for more than one assignment (known as self-plagiarism).
3. Students may not fabricate data.
4. Students may not collude.
5. Students may not cheat.
6. Students may not facilitate academic misconduct.

Follow this link for more details about these standards, sanctions, and academic misconduct procedures: (https://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml)

Bias Reporting and Title IX:

It is unacceptable and a violation of university policy to harass, discriminate against or abuse any person because of his or her race, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, age or any other characteristic protected by applicable law. Such behavior threatens to destroy the

environment of tolerance and mutual respect that must prevail for this university to fulfill its educational and health care mission. For this reason, every incident of harassment, discrimination or abuse undermines the aspirations and attacks the ideals of our community. The university qualifies these incidents as incidents of bias.

In order to uphold our mission of being Chicago's Jesuit Catholic University-- a diverse community seeking God in all things and working to expand knowledge in the service of humanity through learning, justice and faith, any incident(s) of bias must be reported and appropriately addressed. Therefore, the Bias Response (BR) Team was created to assist members of the Loyola University Chicago community in bringing incidents of bias to the attention of the university. If you believe you are subject to such bias, you should notify the Bias Response Team at this link:

<http://webapps.luc.edu/biasreporting/>

Notice of Reporting Obligations for Responsible Campus Partners

As an instructor, I am a Responsible Campus Partner ("RCP") under Loyola's [Comprehensive Policy and Procedures for Addressing Discrimination, Sexual Misconduct, and Retaliation](#) (available at www.luc.edu/equity). While my goal is for you to be able to engage fully and authentically with our course material through class discussions and written work, I also want to be transparent that as a RCP, I must notify the [Office for Equity & Compliance](#) ("OEC")/Title IX Coordinator when I have any information about conduct that reasonably may constitute Title IX Sex-Based Discrimination. Title IX Sex-Based Discrimination includes any of the following conduct, when the conduct was within the University's education program or activity.

Assessment Components

- Class Participation (10%)
- Midterm Exam (25%)
- Food as Heritage: A Personal Recipe Essay (20%)
- Trionfale Market Paper (20%)
- Final Exam (25%)

Class Participation (10%)

For spirited discussion, we will need your active attention and participation. Class participation grades are not automatic. They are based on oral contributions to the collective learning experience of the class. Participation means active engagement in the course: being consistently prepared for class (having carefully read that day's assignments), asking questions, responding to questions, offering your own insights and opinions, and responding to others.

Food as Heritage: A Personal Recipe Essay (20%) — Interview a family member and ask them for a recipe that is important for them and/or for your family. Alternatively, find a recipe that's important for you. Tell the story of this recipe, reflecting on the meaning that it has for you or your family, and how this relates to your cultural background. Reflect on how food and food habits contribute to the development and transmission of cultural practices and knowledge. Bear in mind the following questions as you prepare the interview questionnaire: What does this recipe signify for the person interviewed? What memories are connected to this recipe? In your paper, you should link the personal stories around this recipe to broader cultural themes (i.e: how food relates to family structures, to gender, to the changing

history of certain products, etc.). How do food practices contribute to the construction of personal and collective identities?

In the paper include:

- 1) An introduction referencing selected and relevant topics discussed in class
- 2) A description of the person that you interviewed, including a relevant picture from the family member and the recipe (if available). Pictures should be included at the end of the paper (after page 6)
- 3) An analysis of the main themes emerging from the interview
- 4) Quotes of at least **three relevant** peer-reviewed papers or academic books
- 5) A brief history of the recipe (if available)
- 6) A conclusion
- 7) 5 pages, size 11 font, 1.5 line spacing.
- 8) Chicago-style source citations author-date. Sources are briefly cited in the text, in parentheses, by author's last name and year of publication. Each in-text citation matches up with an entry in a reference list, where full bibliographic information is provided.

https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-2.html

Trionfale Market Paper (20%) Visit the Trionfale Market independently in the morning in groups of two and three as assigned by the instructor. The market is open Mon-Sat from 8.00AM to 12.30PM. It can be reached by bus 913 with a 15-minute ride. Have a tour and stay at the market for at least one hour. Participate in shopping and eating, ask questions to one vendor, take notes, and write up your observations and insights as soon as possible after the visit¹. Bring a pen and notebook or something else to take notes with. While visiting the market, do the following:

1. Observe and describe the general setting of the market.
2. Observe the types of foods: Are they fresh or processed? from how many ethnic traditions? cost? quality? locally produced? imported?
3. Write down the cost of a few items and compare them later with the prices of the same items at a supermarket. Make sure you compare the prices of the same quantities and types of goods.
4. Observe the clientele, vendors, and social interactions. Note their age, race/ ethnicity, and gender. Is the population diverse? Do people from diverse groups interact with one another?
5. Experiment with a food you've never tried before and research it online! What is it? What did you learn from eating it?
6. Choose one producer that you find interesting and: describe more in-depth the food they sell, engage with the seller, ask questions about the history of their business and the food they sell. Include three to five pictures at the end of the paper (**including one in which you and the market are visible**).

Write a paper on your visit and on what you learned and observed, answering the following question "*Describe the ways in which the Trionfale Market promotes a community-building system of food production and consumption.*"

¹ (Adapted from Counihan, Carole. "Ethnography of Farmers' Markets: Studying Culture, Place, and Food Democracy" (2015) in *Teaching Food and Culture*, edited by Candice Lowe Swift and Richard Wilk, Left Coast Press, pp. 113–128.)

The paper should be **four to five pages**, 1.5-spaced, in 11-point font. Refer to key ideas of Rachel Black's *Porta Palazzo* chapter and two other peer-reviewed academic books/articles on the social and cultural functions of food markets.

Use Chicago-style source citations author-date. Sources are briefly cited in the text in parentheses, by author's last name and year of publication. Each in-text citation matches up with an entry in a reference list, where full bibliographic information is provided.

https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-2.html

Mid Term (25%) and Final Exam (25%)

These exams consist of multiple choice and short answers, bringing together the various concepts/topics you have studied. No alternative exam dates will be offered.

Grading

94-100: A

90-93: A-

87-89: B+

84-86: B

80-83: B-

77-79: C+

74-76: C

70-73: C-

67-69: D+

60-66: D

59 or lower: F

Late or Missed Assignments

Late or missed assignments will not be accepted for grading without the authorization of the instructor at least 24 hours before the deadline. After authorization, late work will incur a 3% percent deduction for every day work is late.

As per the JFRC academic policies, students who miss any scheduled exam or quiz, including a final exam at the assigned hours will not be permitted to sit for a make-up examination without the approval of the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. Permission is given rarely and only for grave reasons; travel is not considered a grave reason. Make-up exams will only be given for documented absences.

Accessibility Accommodations

Students registered with the Student Accessibility Center (SAC) (<http://www.luc.edu/sac>) requiring academic accommodations should contact the Office of the Dean at the John Felice Rome Center, the first week of classes.

WEEK 1

Tuesday, January 21: Introduction to the Study of Italian Cultural History: Food and Wine

Thursday, January 23: Bio-Cultural Perspectives on Food and Nutrition

Fischler, C. (1988) 'Food, Self and identity', *Social Science Information*, n. 27, pp. 275-292.

WEEK 2

Tuesday, January 28: The Food in Ancient Rome I

Corbier, M. (1999) 'The Broad Bean and the Moray: Social Hierarchies and Food in Rome', in Montanari, M. and Flandrin, J.-L. (eds) *Food: A Culinary History from Antiquity to the Present*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, pp. 128–140.

Kaufman, C., K. (2006) 'Ancient Rome', in *Cooking in Ancient Civilizations*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, pp. 121–131.

Thursday, January 30: The Food in Ancient Rome II

Apicius, *De Re Coquinaria*, selected recipes
Petronius Arbiter, "The Dinner of Trimalchio", *The Satyricon*

WEEK 3

Tuesday, February 4: Introduction to wine

Documentary and discussion questions: "**Somm: In the Bottle**". The history, politics, and pleasures of wine through ten bottles.

<https://www.kanopy.com/en/product/somm-bottle>

Thursday, February 6: Medieval Food

Montanari, M. (1999) 'Romans, Barbarians, Christians & Production Structures and Food Systems in the Early Middle Ages', in Montanari, M. and Flandrin, J.-L. (eds), Sonnenfeld, A. (tran.) *Food: A Culinary History from Antiquity to the Present*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, pp. 165–177.

Extracts from St. Benedict's Rule.

Reminder! On week 5 the transcription of the interview for "*Food as Heritage: A Personal Recipe Essay*" is due in paper in class (Pass/Fail 5% of the total grade). Schedule your interview as soon as possible!

WEEK 4

Tuesday, February 11: The Invention of Pasta

Dickie, J. (2008) 'Palermo, 1154: Pasta and the Planisphere', in *Delizia! The Epic History of the Italians and Their Food*. New York, NY: Free Press, pp. 13-30

Thursday, February 13: Renaissance Food: The Humoral Theory and the Great Chain of Being

Grieco, A., J. (1999) 'Food and Social Classes in Late Medieval and Renaissance Italy', in Montanari, M. and Flandrin, J.-L. (eds), Sonnenfeld, A. (tran.) *Food: A Culinary History from Antiquity to the Present*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, pp. 302–312.

The Wedding of Ercole d'Este

WEEK 5

Tuesday, February 18: No class today. Food & wine practicum make-up class TBD.

Thursday, February 20: The History of Wine

<https://www.sapiens.org/archaeology/evolution-wine/>

The transcription of the interview for “*Food as Heritage: A Personal Recipe Essay*” is due in paper in class (Pass/Fail - 5% of the total grade)

WEEK 6**Tuesday, February 25: Terroir: Fact or Fiction?**

D’Agata, I. (2019) *Italy’s Native Wine Grape Terroirs*, University of California Press, pp. 7-26

Thursday, February 27: Alcohol as Embodied Material Culture

Dietler, M. (2019) «Alcohol as Embodied Material Culture: Anthropological Reflections on the Deep Entanglement of Humans and Alcohol». In *Alcohol and Humans*, di Michael Dietler, 115–29. Oxford University Press, 2019.

WEEK 7

Tuesday, March 4: Midterm Review. Bring your notes to review for the exam!

Thursday, March 6: Midterm Exam

Spring Break: March 7-16**WEEK 8****Tuesday, March 18: The Columbian Exchange**

Archer, K.L. (2011) ‘Columbian Exchange’ in Brosnan, K.A., *Encyclopedia of American Environmental History*. New York: Facts On File, pp. 301-303.

Montanari, M. (2013) ‘Preservation and Renewal of Alimentary Identities’, in *Italian Identity in the Kitchen, or Food and the Nation*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 33-40.

Thursday, March 20: The Risorgimento and Food: Unity Through a Cookbook

Dickie, J. (2008) “Florence, 1891: Pellegrino Artusi” in *Delizia! The Epic History of the Italians and Their Food*. New York, NY: Free Press.

Artusi and the Science of Cooking, selected recipes

WEEK 9**Tuesday, March 25: The “Natural Wine” Movement**

Buranyi, S. (2018) “Has Wine Gone Mad?”, *The Guardian*, 15 May 2018

Deadline for “*Food as Heritage: A Personal Recipe Essay*” (upload it in Word on Sakai by 11.30PM)

Thursday, March 27: Wine and sustainability

Baiano, A. (2021) «An Overview on Sustainability in the Wine Production Chain». *Beverages* 7, n. 1: 15

Reminder! On week 12 the printed transcriptions of the main observations with the pictures of the “Trionfale Market Paper” (Pass/Fail 5% of the total grade) is due in class. Go to the market as soon as possible!

WEEK 10**Tuesday, April 1: The Futurist Cookbook**

Helstosky, C. (2003). “Recipe For The Nation: Reading Italian History Through La Scienza In Cucina And La Cucina Futurista”. *Food and Foodways* 11, fasc. 2–3, 113–40.

The Futurist Cookbook - excerpts

Thursday, April 3: Italian Migrations, diasporic cuisines, “gastro-nationalism”:

Di Giovine, M. A. (2010). “La Vigilia Italo-Americana: Revitalizing the Italian American Family through the Christmas Eve ‘Feast of the Seven Fishes’.” *Food and Foodways* 18 (4): 181–208.

WEEK 11**Tuesday, April 8: Documentary screening and class discussion “Food on the go”. Food and diasporic identities****Thursday, April 10: Migrant agricultural workers in contemporary Italy**

Perrotta, D. «Agricultural Day Laborers in Southern Italy: Forms of Mobility and Resistance». *South Atlantic Quarterly* 114, fasc. 1 (1 gennaio 2015): 195–203.

Guidi, Caterina Francesca, e Fabio Berti. «Labor exploitation in the Italian agricultural sector: the case of vulnerable migrants in Tuscany». *Frontiers in Sociology* 8 (4 ottobre 2023): 1234873.

WEEK 12**Tuesday, April 15: Food Activism: The Slow Food Movement 1**

Andrews, G. (2008) *The Slow Food Story: Politics and Pleasure*. London: Pluto Press, pp. 3-28

Browse products protected by the Ark of Taste in the US and in Italy: be ready to talk about one product in class for each section

Counihan, Carole. «Food Activism and Language in a Slow Food Italy Restaurant Menu». *Gastronomica* 21, fasc. 4 (1 novembre 2021): 76–87.

US: <https://www.fondazioneSlowFood.com/en/nazioni-arca/united-states-en/>

Italy: <https://www.fondazioneSlowFood.com/en/nazioni-arca/italy-en/>

Tuesday, April 17: The Ethnographic Study of Markets

Black, R. (2012) *Porta Palazzo: The Anthropology of an Italian Market*. 1st ed. Contemporary Ethnography. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, pp. ix-24

Bring to class the printed transcriptions of the main observations with the pictures of the “Trionfale

Market Paper” (pass/fail - 5% of the total grade)

Easter Break: 18 –21 April

WEEK 13

Tuesday, April 22: Food as cultural heritage: The Mediterranean Diet between Myth and Reality

Serra-Majem and Medina (2014) in Preedy, V. R. “The Mediterranean Diet as Intangible and Sustainable Food Culture”, e R. R. Watson, (eds.) *The Mediterranean Diet: An Evidence-Based Approach*. Boston, MA: Academic Press, pp.37-57

Moro, E. (2016) “The Mediterranean Diet from Ancel Keys to the UNESCO Cultural Heritage. A Pattern of Sustainable Development between Myth and Reality”. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 223, pp. 655–61.

Thursday, April 24: Final Exam Review.

Tue 29 April: Deadline for Trionfale Market Paper (upload it in Word on Sakai by 11.30pm)

WEEK 14: FINAL EXAM WEEK

April 28- May 1: TBD