



# **Al Dente: A History of Food in Italy (Foods and Nations)**

*Fabio Parasecoli*

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Over the last three decades Italian cuisine has gained in status as well as fame. High-end Italian restaurants are now listed among the most prestigious establishments in major cities worldwide, and television shows and magazines are full of Italian recipes.

What is all the fuss about? How did Italian food become what it is today? Why does it speak to so many all over the world? Where does the apparently endless variety of local and regional cuisines come from? In *Al Dente*, food historian Fabio Parasecoli answers these and many other questions while surveying the fascinating story of Italian food.

The author shows that for centuries, Italians fought against food scarcity, wars, invasions and an environment that was often not very favourable to agriculture. With limited access to meat, dairy and fats, they developed foodways that depended on grains, pulses and vegetables. It was only after the 'economic miracle' of the late 1950s that the majority of the Italian population was able to afford a more diverse and abundant diet, albeit by making compromises in their traditional ways of life and culinary habits. New packaging and conservation techniques, industrial mass production and more sophisticated systems of transportation and distribution brought profound changes in the way Italians ate and thought about food. At the same time, the rest of the world became aware that the practices adopted by Italians in the past constitute a model for healthy eating. The cuisine's reputation has been growing exponentially ever since.

For anyone who's enjoyed the recipes of Anna Del Conte or Marcella Hazan, or who just loves pasta, *Al Dente* provides the multilayered background to what is arguably the world's favourite cuisine.

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