PAPPAGALLO

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Remembering Mike Doyle

"The community has lost a quiet giant"

By Paul Anthony Arco



Mike and Nora Doyle enjoying a glass of wine in 2018.

Throughout Mike Doyle's storied journalism career, he wrote dozens of articles about community events, places he visited – he even covered the Chicago Bears Super Bowl journey in the mid-1980s.

But of all the things he wrote about, he loved writing stories about ordinary people. "Everyone has a story," he said.

That included Mike himself, who died July 31, after a sudden illness. He was 76.

Mike spent 25 years as a professional journalist with the Rockford Register Star, writing features and columns as well as serving as the Bears beat writer. He wrote a column highlighting the people of Boone County. He also found time to work as an adjunct professor at Rock Valley College, where he was the adviser to the college's student newspaper, The Valley Forge.

Following his newspaper career, Mike spent 15 years teaching journalism at Belvidere and Belvidere North High Schools, where he was the adviser for award-winning yearbooks and newspaper publications. Mike was named the Illinois Journalism Teacher of the Year in 2014.

"I was fortunate to work with many promising young journalists," said Mike, who wrote several books, including two perspectives on the Belvidere tornado that devastated the Belvidere community in 1967.

One of those students was Andie Behling, who credited Doyle with helping her develop a passion for writing. She is now the editor of Madison Magazine in Madison, Wis.

"Mr. Doyle helped me build a journalistic foundation that has led to a 10-year career as a writer and editor," she said. "There are lessons he taught me that I still recall on a regular basis in my work. We had a special bond that lasted into high school and into adulthood. I can't explain how meaningful it's been for me to have someone like him in my corner for so much of my life."

Daughter Amanda Denning described her father as loving and loyal.

"I knew he was a favorite teacher to many students but the impact he had has been unreal to me," she said. "Hearing

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Mike and Nora with their five grandchildren in 2017.

A Legacy of Leadership: Mike Maffioli to be Inducted Into GRIAA Hall of Fame

By Karla Clark

For Mike Maffioli, being Italian American isn't just a heritage—it's a calling. Born and raised in Rockford, Illinois, Mike will be inducted into the Greater Rockford Italian American Association's (GRIAA) Hall of Fame on October 4, 2025 at the Venetian Club. At just 40 years old, he's one of the youngest people to be nominated for this honor, and he wears that distinction with both pride and humility.



Mike Maffioli

"It's very humbling—especially since I've known and admired so many of the people already in the Hall of Fame," Mike said. Among them are some familiar names in the Hall of Fame—his father, Paul Maffioli, and his uncle Lewis Maffioli. Hs aunt Nancy (Maffioli) Hand was recognized by GRIAA in 2022 for volunteering at Festa Italiana. They all left their mark on the Italian American community in Rockford. Soon, Mike's name will join theirs—a powerful symbol of a legacy passed down through generations.

Mike represents the 4th generation of Maffiolis in Rockford. His ancestors—five brothers and two sisters—were the first documented Italian immigrant family to settle in the city. They arrived in the 1877 from northern Italy, entering the U.S. through a southern port in Louisiana. Stonemasons by trade, they helped build the Rockford and Belvidere communities, leaving behind more than just memories—their craftsmanship still stands in stone and mortar.

Mike's roots run deep. His sense of responsibility to honor his family's legacy shows in everything he does—from his career in the trades as a union electrician and especially through his work with GRIAA. For the past five years, he has served as chairperson, but his involvement goes back much further. Since 2010, Mike has been part of the Festa Italiana executive committee, helping organize Rockford's largest celebration of Italian heritage.

"Festa is more than just a summer fair," Mike explained. "It's a way to bring our community together, to celebrate who we are and where we come from."

His relationship with the Festa goes back decades. As a child, Mike could be found tagging along after his father, absorbing everything about the event—from the food and music to the camaraderie. "When my brother Mark and I were kids, we looked forward to it all year. Our parents even used it as a threat—'Be good or you won't go to Festa!' It was better than Christmas!"

Now, as a husband and father, Mike shares that tradition with his own family. He and his wife, Dawn, of 15 years bring their four children—Mikayla (20), Maximus (14), Leonidas (9), and Giacomo (4)—to Festa every summer. And the legacy continues. "My son Leo, he's 9 now, and I can see he's picked up the spirit of Festa already," Mike said with a smile.

Mike first chaired the Festa in 2013, and again in 2024—this time alongside his dad. "It was a full circle moment," he said. This year, however, was a little different. Due to surgery, Mike had to stay mostly in one spot at his tent. "Normally I'd be running around like crazy, doing a million different things," he said. "But the committee stepped up so much that I felt unneeded—in the best way possible."

And what a year it was. With three days of sunshine, perfect temperatures, and no rain, the 2025 Festa marked its 46th anniversary with what many say was one of the best events in recent memory.

But Mike isn't resting on tradition. He's thinking about the future—and the next generation. "One of my goals is to bring

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The Maffiolis: Mike, Jack, Dawn, Leo, Mikayla, Max, Ann, Paul, Levi, Carly, Beau, and Mark.

Mike Maffioli ... *Continued from Page 2*



Mike and Dawn Maffioli

younger people into the fold," he said. "We have something so special here, but I worry that some people are missing out. We have to make sure this doesn't stop with us."

That sense of duty, of stepping up without seeking the spotlight, is something Mike credits to his father. "We never considered ourselves 'leaders,'" he said. "But my dad always taught us—if you're willing to jump in and do the work, others will follow."

As GRIAA celebrates Festa's 46th year and prepares to welcome a new inductee into its Hall of Fame, the Rockford Italian American community also celebrates something else: the continuation of a remarkable family legacy. Congratulations to Mike Maffioli—your ancestors would be proud.



Mike and his dad, Paul Maffioli

Viva La Famiglia: The LaSala Legacy of Love and Volunteering

By Karla Clark

The LaSala family will receive the Special Recognition award on October 4, 2025 for their decades of dedicated volunteering at Rockford's beloved Festa Italiana—and they couldn't be more honored. For them, the recognition is not just a celebration of service, but a tribute to their deep Italian roots, love of community, and the enduring legacy of a man whose spirit still guides them: Alex LaSala Sr.

Alex Sr., or "Nunu" to his grandchildren, embodied the values that continue to shape the LaSala family today. "My Nunu loved having the family together," says granddaughter Michele Fosberg, Chairperson of the 2023 Festa. "We gathered for every birthday and holiday—really, any excuse to be together. He taught us to have fun and love each other unconditionally." A proud Italian-American, Alex Sr. shared colorful stories of growing up in Rockford, had a deep love for the city, and seemed to have countless "best friends."

He was involved with the very first Festa Italiana through his membership at St. Anthony of Padua Church, where many of the original organizers were close friends. Year after year, he showed up as a tireless volunteer and enthusiastic fan—especially when it came to the Italian entertainment. "Even when he was sick in his last year," Michele recalls, "he made sure we all still went to Festa together."

That sense of commitment was passed down like a treasured recipe. Volunteering became a natural extension of family life. Alex Sr.'s wife, Emma, now 97, remains the heart of the family, having raised five children—Adele, Bernadette, Frank, Alex Jr., and Mary K—with the same devotion to faith, family, and community.

As Festa grew over the decades, so did the LaSala family's role in making it happen. Frank and Alex Jr. joined the Executive Committee at the encouragement of their cousin Paul Maffioli, and soon after, their wives, Teri and Judy, rolled up their sleeves to help run the Pizza Tent and Zucchini Tent. Mary K became co-chair of the Zucchini Tent and continues to lead it today, working side by side with Michele, her sister Jessica Phillips, and Jessica's husband Danny Phillips.

"Festa has always been a full family affair," Michele says. "My parents Frank and Teri made sure it was on our calendar, part of our culture." She and her sister even danced in the Amici Italiana troupe more than 30 years ago.

Continued on Page 5

Mike Doyle ... *Continued from Page 1*

about how he inspired other writers and journalists has been incredible."

After retiring, Mike was recruited by Gene and Shirley Fedeli to join the GRIAA board as a director and member of the Pappagallo committee in 2012. He became an editor of Pappagallo in 2013.

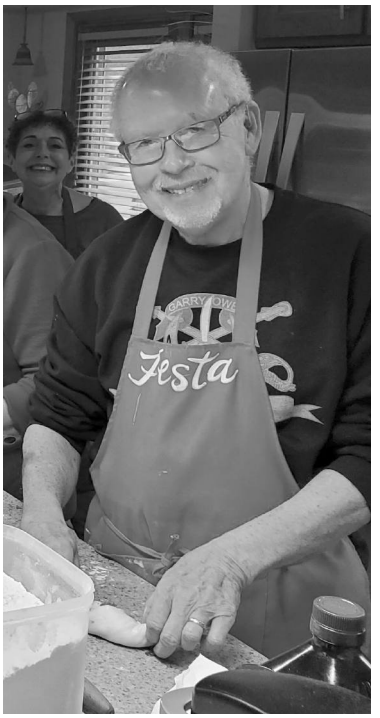
Under his leadership, Pappagallo went from a black and white publication to a partial color publication. To help offset rising print and mail costs, Mike created an optional electronic version of Pappagallo, and he pursued advertising as another way to help with the cost of printing.

In 2016, Mike joined Frank Perrecone as editor of GRIAA's book, Immigration Histories of Rockford Italian Families, a project that was started by the Fedelis. The book was published in 2017 followed by a second edition in 2019 with additional immigration stories. The book includes 120 stories of Rockford Italian families who came to the United States and eventually settled in Rockford.

Over the years, Mike also wrote several stories and photographed many local Italian American events and was the editor for the Festa magazine.

Mike was inducted into the Greater Rockford Italian American Association Hall of Fame in 2021.

"In Mike, GRIAA had a professional journalist who generously volunteered his time and talent for the benefit of the Rockford area Italian-American community," said Perrecone. "We both had a passion for all things Italian, but Mike had the journalistic skills to write a broad range of stories readers found interesting and informative."



Mike in kitchen making one of his family's Italian specialty.

For Mike, his Italian heritage began in the kitchen where many of his ancestor's favorite recipes were created. "My Irish-German father, Russ Doyle, made my sister and I aware of our Italian roots from my earliest memories," Mike said.

Mike's mother, Mary LaRosa Doyle, came from a family of 10. His Nano Salvatore and Nana Gerlanda Falzone LaRosa lived on Montague Street, the hub of most family activities for three generations. And the family gatherings were always a cause for celebration. Mike was the oldest of 27 cousins.

"It was important to keep our families' traditions alive," he said. "Those Sunday dinners were always an amazing experience. It didn't matter how many people were coming. The important thing is to keep the tradition going."

After college, Mike spent two years in the army before returning to Rockford, where he met his future bride, Nora. The couple were married for 52 years and have two daughters, Amanda and Emily, and five grandchildren.

In addition to his writing, Mike was a Festa Italiana volunteer since the mid-1990s, helping with everything from working in the wine tent to serving as the cookie baker. In addition, he was a member of St. Anthony Holy Name Society and volunteered at St. Joseph Altar at St. Anthony's.

"My dad gave 100% to everything he did in life," Amanda said. "He could balance it all. It was his destiny to be the way he was."

Perrecone said Mike's impact was immeasurable.

"The volunteers who worked with Mike on GRIAA-related matters lost a friend," he said. "The Rockford area Italian-American community lost a quiet giant."

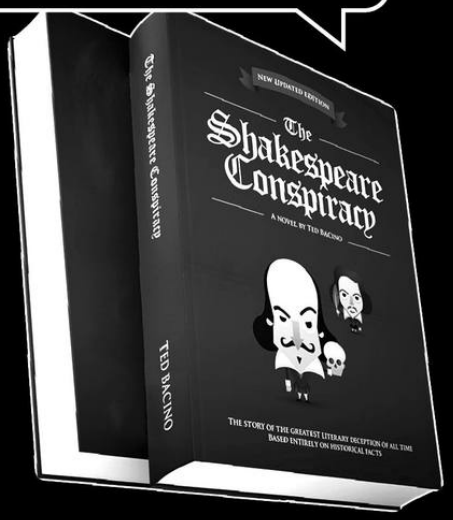


At their 50th wedding anniversary in 2023, Mike and Nora (center) joined by their family, (right) daughter Emily, son-in-law Chris Cork, (left) son-in-law Mike Denning and daughter Amanda. From left to right, grandchildren Will Denning, Sam Denning, Jack Denning, Micah Cork and Molly Cork.

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The LaSala Legacy... *Continued from Page 3*

Today, the family's commitment remains strong. "My aunt Mary K, my sister Jessica and her husband Danny, and I all help lead the Zucchini Tent, but truly the entire extended family pitches in," Michele shares. "All of our kids and cousins volunteer throughout the weekend—whether it's serving food, setting up, tearing down, or playing bocce. You name it, someone in our family is doing it."

Serving as the Chairperson of the 2023 Festa Italiana was especially meaningful for Michele. "It was an incredible full-circle moment," she says. "To carry on the tradition my family started more than 40 years ago was something I'll always cherish."

As always, the LaSalas start their Festa weekend with their own special tradition: the night-before setup party. "We all come out to help set up our tent, bag semenza seeds, and toast with my aunt's famous Alabama Slammer shots," Michele laughs. "It's the calm before the storm, and a time to share old stories and get excited for what's ahead."

Through the years, the family has collected plenty of memories—funny, emotional, and meaningful. But the most powerful moments are the ones when generations come together in service, laughter, and pride. "It's a feeling of continuity," Michele says. "Like our Nunu is right there with us."

Emma LaSala, matriarch and living legend of the family, continues to inspire. "She taught us everything," Michele says. "Faith, food, and family. Her kitchen has always been the center of our world." Her joy in seeing her children and grandchildren carry on the family's legacy is evident, and her presence continues to be a guiding light.

The LaSala family celebrates their Italian heritage all year round, from Easter taganu to Nana's homemade cookies, from gathering for birthdays to celebrating life's everyday joys together.

GRIAA's special recognition is more than an honor—it's a testament to the values Alex and Emma instilled in their children and grandchildren: hard work, hospitality, and service without expectation.

"We're deeply humbled by this recognition," Michele says. "Viva la famiglia. Viva la tradizione. Viva Festa Italiana."

Photographs on page 6

Special Recognition Honorees





Mary K LaSala, Michele Fosberg, Nick Fosberg

Frank LaSala and Michele Fosberg



Michele Fosberg and Nick Fosberg



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2025 Hall of Fame and Special Recognition Award Banquet

Saturday, October 4, 2025

Venetian Club, 2180 Elmwood Rd. Rockford Please

join us to honor our 2025 inductees:

Hall of Fame Inductee: Michael Maffioli

Special Recognition: The LaSala Family – Volunteerism

We encourage all Hall of Fame members to attend and be recognized.

Please visit www.GRIAA.org **to print your reservation form or**
Email Michele Fandel at: atthetropics11@yahoo.com

Reservations are required

***Table Sponsors are available for $100**
Please email kkcantele22@gmail.com

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Please join us for the 2025 Columbus Day Mass

Sunday, October 5

10:30 a.m. at St. Anthony's Church
1010 Ferguson St., Rockford, IL

All members of the Hall of Fame, Past Inductees and their families, are invited to be a part of the entrance procession at Mass. Please arrive at 10:15 a.m.

My Journey Toward Italian Citizenship: A Turning Point in the Law

By Frank Perrecone

This marks my sixth Pappagallo article chronicling my journey to obtain Italian citizenship by descent. What began as a personal quest has now taken on new urgency and meaning in light of sweeping changes to Italian law.

On May 23, 2025, Italy enacted a far-reaching immigration reform law that effectively bars most first, second, and third generation Italian Americans from claiming citizenship through ancestry. The new statute imposes stringent restrictions on eligibility and has dramatically altered the path forward for many descendants of Italian emigrants.

As explained by Marco Permunian, an Italian attorney who specializes in citizenship and immigration law, applicants born outside of Italy can now be recognized as Italian citizens by descent if their parent or grandparent is solely an Italian citizen or was at the time of the ancestor's death. The new law expressly excludes those seeking recognition through a great-grandparent.

There is, however, a critical exception. Individuals who submitted their citizenship applications to a properly designated Italian consulate, municipality, or court before March 27, 2025, are subject to the prior, more permissive law.

Additional pathways for recognition through descent still exist, and are detailed in Attorney Permunian's article, A Decree-Law No. 36/2025: Conversion into Law, available under the News & Articles section of the Italian Citizenship Assistance (ICA) website.

Approximately four years ago, I retained ICA to guide me through the intricate and often bewildering process of acquiring dual citizenship. ICA has re-reviewed my case and believes that I qualify under the above exception to the new law, meaning the earlier, more favorable standards should still apply. My citizenship application was submitted to the Chicago Italian consulate on July 31, 2024. They have recommended that I proceed by filing a judicial petition in Palermo, Sicily.

Since my last Pappagallo update, I have taken several important steps to position my case for court filing. At my request, the original documents I submitted during my consulate appointment were returned to me for use in the lawsuit. My Italian attorney secured a Codice Fiscale Italy's version of a tax identification code on my behalf. This document is a prerequisite for filing a legal action to be recognized as an Italian citizen in Italy. His fee was $100 for this service.

My supporting documentation has now been professionally translated into Italian at a cost of about $400. These translated records have been submitted to a Giudice di Pace (Justice of the Peace) in Italy. The translator must appear in person before this official to swear, under oath, that each translation is a faithful and accurate rendering. This certification process is mandatory before filing the lawsuit. The Justice of the Peace charges per document, and in my case, I paid about $400 for this service. Alternatively, I could have used a private notary public to expedite the process in 3 to 4 weeks but at a significantly higher cost of about $1,625. I opted for the longer route, which involves a wait time of five to six months, in order to reduce expenses.

Once the certifications are complete, my Italian attorney provided at no additional cost by ICA will file the citizenship petition in court. To date, I have spent roughly $9,000 on this journey and anticipate at least another $1,000 in remaining costs.

Sadly, for many others, the door to dual Italian-American citizenship has now closed. The new law effectively ends this opportunity for the vast majority of first- and second-generation descendants unless they began the application process before March 27, 2025. For those who did, hope remains. And for me, the journey continues.



An Italian passport, one of the goals of obtaining Italian dual-citizenship



Sicily Featured at Festa Italiana's Cultural Tent

By Frank Perrecone

The region of Italy that was featured in the Cultural Tent during this year's Festa Italiana was Sicily. Sicilian cities and villages were highlighted, along with cannoli and spingi cooking demonstrations with tastings. Other programing included a discussion of new laws effecting Italian citizenship and genealogy research. Rosie Scalisi-Sheridan, tent co-chair, designed and staged the displays.

As part of the cultural experience, Sicilian families were asked to write on strips of paper their last names and hometowns their ancestors emigrated from. Each participating family was then asked to pin the paper on the large map of Sicily, which stood at the entrance of the tent.

A glance at the below Sicily map shows that most Rockford Sicilians have ancestral roots stemming from the western half of the island. Although not a scientific sampling, most Rockford Sicilians trace their roots to Sambuca, followed by Aragona and Roccamena.



Sicily map



Bernie Piccirilli Marinelli and Anna Abate Reader making sfingi.



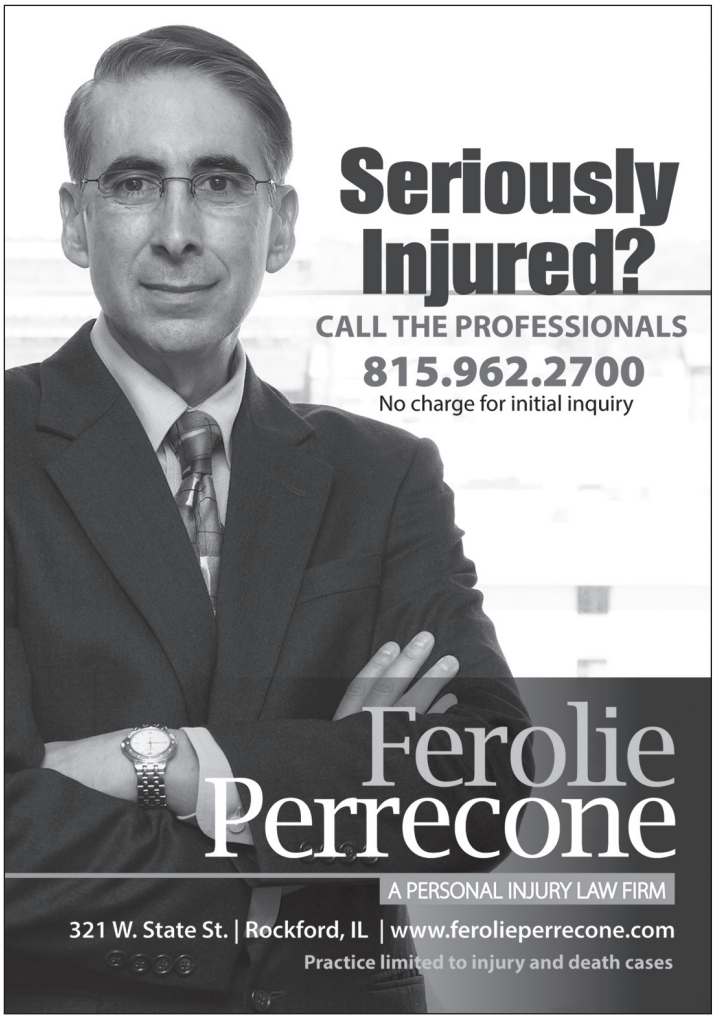
Polly Matranga Happach and Lorri Parker after making cannoli pose with tent co-chair Rosie Scalisi-Sheridan.



Steve Salvato performing Italian genealogy research.



Frank Perrecone and Carla Mueller discussing new law effecting Italian citizenship.



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GRIAA October Events

The Italians. They came to America carrying suitcases, trunks - hopes and dreams and, yes, sometimes, garlic. They thought life in America would be easy. Simple. The land of milk and honey. But reality proved more complex. Italian immigrants faced hardships -- language barriers, difficulty finding work and housing, separation from loved ones and prejudice.

Yet through resilience and determination, the Italian immigrants and their descendants not only survived, they thrived. Today, we celebrate their legacy and lasting contributions to arts, science and culture. This October, join GRIAA in honoring their journey and achievements.

October 4, 2025

GRIAA's Hall of Fame and Special Recognition Banquet: Join us as we recognize outstanding members of our community: Hall of Fame Inductee - Michael Maffioli. Special Recognition for Volunteerism- The LaSala Family.

Location: Venetian Club, 2180 Elmwood Rd, Rockford, IL 61103

October 5, 2025

GRIAA's Columbus Day Mass: Columbus Day Mass: Our Annual Mass celebrating the history of Columbus and all of our Hall of Fame and Special Recognition Honorees. All past and present honorees are encouraged to attend. To be held at St. Anthony of Padua Church, 1010 Ferguson St., Rockford IL 61102 at 10:30 a.m..

October 10, 2025

Artale & Company Italian Wine Tasting: Sample 24 Italian wines. Experience the rich flavors of Italian wines – taste the warmth of the Italian sun in every sip.

Date/Time: Friday, October 20, 205 from 5:30 – 8:00 p.m.
Location: Artale & Co., 6876 Spring Creek Rd, Rockford IL 61114
Cost: $20.00 per person

October 24, 2025

Prisoners in Paradise Screening: This award-winning documentary tells the powerful story of over 51,000 Italian prisoners of war held in the United States during World War II

Time: 6:30 p.m.

Location: Nordlof Theater. 118 N. Main St. Rockford IL 61101 Presented in collaboration with the Rockford Public Library. Also, supported by Midway Village's Camp Grant Exhibit highlighting the over 400,000 prisoners of war held at Camp Grant.

Throughout the month of October

Rockford Public Library – 118 N. Main St. Rockford, IL 61101. Explore the Italian displays featured throughout the library including a St. Joseph's Day Altar.
Library hours: Mon-Thurs. 9:00 a.m.–8:00 p.m. / Fri.–Sat. 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. / Closed Sunday

Details updated on WWW.GRIAA.com and Facebook. Questions? Call 815/520-1010 after 5:00 p.m.

Spaghetti Ai Sapori Dell'Orto

14-16 oz. spaghetti or gnocchi

4 cups ripe cherry tomatoes, each cut into 4 pieces

4 cloves garlic, chopped fine

6 spoonfuls of good olive oil

Handful of shelled walnuts

8-10 fresh basil leaves

4 spoonfuls grated Parmesan cheese

A touch of black pepper

Put a little oil in a cold frying pan. Add the chopped garlic. Turn on fire on stove and cook garlic until oil is warmed. Little bubbles will come up and as soon as this happens, turn the stove off. You don't want the garlic to burn.

Chop the walnuts into big pieces. Take half of them and put them in the pan. Crush the rest using a rolling pin or a glass bottle. This will give you a walnut pulp which will make your seasoning richer and tastier.

Add the cut tomatoes, basil, crushed walnuts, and salt and pepper to taste to the garlic oil. Cook until the tomato, when touched with a wooden spoon, has become soft.

Meanwhile, bring a pot of water to a boil. Add 2 teaspoons of salt. Add the spaghetti or gnocchi and cover the pot with the lid and cook until it comes to a boil. Remove the lid and continue cooking until the pasta is "al dente", then drain the water.

Add cooked spaghetti or gnocchi to tomato sauce and toss to mix. Sprinkle with freshly grated Parmesan cheese and serve.

Makes 4 servings

Recipe adapted from Brus-Ketta and Other Truths About Tuscan Cooking by Giuseppina Pizzolato



Jody Perrecone at Cucina con Giuseppina cooking class in May near Certaldo in Tuscany.

buon appetito !

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Sicily map at cultural tent entrance. Story, photos about Festa Italiana's cultural tent on page 9

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