

New twist in dual citizenship process

Italian ministry's rule change will affect many applicants

By Frank A. Perrecone



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

My nearly four-year journey to obtain dual citizenship with Italy continues. In my last *Pappagallo* article, I shared the milestone of submitting my application for Italian citizenship, along with supporting documents, to the Italian Consulate in Chicago. Shortly after my consular appointment on July 30, 2024, I supplemented my application with a missing document, fully expecting a decision within two years. That was the process – until last fall, when the Italian Ministry of Interior introduced a new interpretation of citizenship laws, dramatically altering the path for many applicants.

A new interpretation of citizenship laws

The ministry's reinterpretation has significantly impacted first-, second-, and third-generation Italian-Americans seeking citizenship by descent. For many, applications submitted to Italian consulates or municipalities are now deemed ineligible. It all depends on the age of the child of the naturalized U.S. citizen.

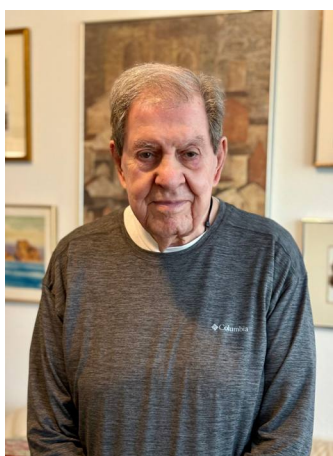
"[I]f your Italian-born ancestor acquired foreign citizenship while their child (the next in line) was a minor, you will no longer be able to submit your application to an Italian Consulate or Italian municipality," Marco Permian wrote on the website italiancitizenshipassistance.com. However, however, Permian notes that Italian courts may offer a path forward for those affected by the "minor age" issue.

In my case, my Italian-born grandfather naturalized as a U.S. citizen while my mother, born in the U.S., was still a minor. Under the new interpretation, the Chicago Consulate is required to reject my

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The Carnevale in Acireale near Catania is one of the oldest in Sicily with six parades of allegorical floats. Story and more photos on Page Two



Sam Guerrera



Ted Bacino

Bravo Pappagallo!

Two former Rockfordians are generous in donations, praise

Sam Guerrera and Ted Bacino have a lot in common: both are Rockford natives who grew up in Italian-American homes; both live in retirement in California following successful careers; and both have been supportive of the *Pappagallo* newsletter.

See Page Three for stories on each of their contributions.



Crazy colors and a circus-like vibe can be found on the streets of Venice during Carnevale

Prepare to celebrate: It's *Carnevale* time

By Mike Doyle

Venice is a very special place to be on Shrove Tuesday, the day before the start of Lent. It is here where *Carnevale* began in 1162 with a celebration of the Venice republic's victory over the Patriarch of Aquileia, a nearby bitter rival located east of Venice. As a result, Venetians gathered in St. Mark's Square to dance and celebrate their victory.

"During *Carnevale*, the whole city of Venice is alive," said Ted Bacino, Rockford native and GRIAA Hall of Famer who lived in the northeast Italian city for several years. "There are parties all over, and you go to the St. Mark Square where there is a whole lot of celebrating going on."

Other well-known *Carnevale* celebrations take place in Viareggio in Tuscany and Ivrea in Piedmont. However, smaller and more local gatherings are held in smaller cities in Italy, including Ferrentino near Rome and Aragona in Sicily, ancestral homes of many of Rockford's Italian-American families. In the 1990s, Rockford got in on the act when several *Carnevals* were held with guests wearing masks, dining on specially prepared Italian food and dancing the night away at a gala event.

Beginning in the 12th century, *Carnevale* gained a foothold in Venice and grew in popularity and participation through the 16th century. In time, Venetians began to wear masks to hide identities and allow people of all social classes to take part in the fun. *Carnevale* began to decline in the 18th century and disappeared after 1798, the year the Austrians took control of Venice and



Elaborate costumes such as these are commonly found during Carnevale in Venice.



A pastor organized a parade for school children in Aragona, Sicily, to celebrate Carnevale in 2024.

banned mask wearing. The over-the-top partying all but ended in the 1930s when Benito Mussolini banned all celebrations.

However, in 1979 a group of Venetian artists

banded together to bring back *Carnevale* to resurrect the tradition as well as boost tourism. They encouraged mask-wearing and the event grew in popularity and began to take hold in other places in Italy and the world. Today, an estimated three million people attend *Carnevale* in Venice.

The *Carnevale* season this year runs from February 22 to March 4, the eve of the start of Lent and its 40 days of fasting and penitence. In the past, the run-up to Lent meant a feast of abundance and binge-eating rich foods, including meat, right up to the last minute on Shrove Tuesday. *Carnevale* is said to have been derived from *carne* and *vale*, Latin for "farewell to meat." In Venice, the real celebration will start the weekend of March 1-2 and reach its zenith on Shrove Tuesday or Mardi Gras.

"In the Time of Casanova" is the theme of Venice's 2025 *Carnevale* and those attending can expect to find residents and others masked and dressed in dignified costumes that are colorful and intricate in detail. These celebrants join in parades, pose for tourist photos and take to the streets and canals, which are filled with color, concerts, shows and flea markets.

"Oh my! What they must pay for the costumes they wear on that day. I really miss it," said Ted Bacino, who said the mask

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Sam Guerrero makes large donation to *Pappagallo*

By Mike Doyle

In 1971, Sam Guerrero left his hometown of Rockford to move to Minnesota. Following retirement, the former vice-president of the Valspar Corporation moved to Santa Rosa, California. Despite the increasing distances from his birthplace, he remained close to his family and kept up with the local news of his Italian heritage by reading the *Pappagallo*.

Over the last 11 years, Sam has offered us story ideas, two of which became feature articles. In addition, he has contributed financially to the *Pappagallo* as a sponsor. In mid-2024, he reached out to this editor and offered to make an undisclosed donation. After meeting with him and his niece and continuing correspondence via emails, Sam made the largest donation yet to the *Pappagallo* -- \$5,000, which means the newsletter, which is mailed without charge to readers, will be financially stable for at least five years.

Asked about the dynamics behind such a large donation, Sam said, "Essentially, as an Italian-American, I have always been proud of my Italian heritage and any publication or organization that fosters the continuation of our culture in America for our children and their children is something I want to support. The *Pappagallo* is a critical part of that because it covers Italian issues in America and talks of history and recipes and other aspects that are important to Italian-Americans.

"And, I think, that at my age of 95, I wanted to do something while I was still able to. You are welcome to use it as you wish, and, I also hope that might encourage somebody else to do that in the future."

In 2014, Sam suggested a story idea about an event that had been lost for decades. What unfolded was the tale about how Mrs. Velia Marinelli happened upon a group of Italian POWs in downtown Rockford. She related the story to Sam's mother, Mrs. Josephine Guerrero, who, with four others, met with the commandant of the POW camp in Savanna, Illinois. They suggested that these Italian soldiers spend a day with Italian families willing to open their home to displaced men from their homeland. The story appeared in the Spring 2014 issue and was one of the most popular pieces to date.

Sam returned to our pages in the Fall of 2021 with a story he wrote about how he, his wife Ava and Swiss friends renovated a 400-year-old farm house in Tuscany. They purchased the house, located 18 kilometers from Sienna, in 1990 and, after three years of work, shared the home with their friends until 2009 when it was sold. The property was then turned into an *agriturismo*.

He views *Pappagallo* as a publication that brings people together. "It is something that I share with people in Rockford or people anywhere of Italian extraction," he said. "I share it with friends.

"The *Pappagallo* does an excellent job of describing various aspects of Italian culture and its influence on America as well as telling of current events in Italy and the Rockford area. I enjoy the magazine and thank you for your hard work in heading it up. My Italian heritage has always been a part of me, and I treasure an effort that supports it."

Ted Bacino: *Pappagallo* is a 'fantastic publication!'

By Mike Doyle

Ted Bacino's on-line bio describes him as having a "wild career" as a newspaper reporter, writer, high school and college teacher, holder of a high state office and a vice-president of a chain of banks. Most of us in Rockford know him as a successful producer of dozens of musicals from Boylan High School to Starlight Theatre, the New American Theatre and three colleges. Because of his professional successes and significant impact on the local Italian-American community, he was named to GRIAA's Hall of Fame in 2003.

With such credentials, one could imagine how the *Pappagallo* editors felt when last spring he wrote in an email: "The *Pappagallo* is a work of art." He amplified that opinion in a call to his home in Palm Springs, California. "It gets a lot of discussion around the country," he said. "That publication is a gem, a fantastic publication, it's not just the recipes and the news about people. It's got a following now. When I talk to people, especially from Rockford, a lot of it centers on it. I hear, 'Did you see the latest *Pappagallo*?' "

Ted noted how the twice-yearly publication has become sleeker, yet easy to read because of the wide variety of stories and photos that are appealing to its Italian-American audience.

"It has a beautiful look, very professional," he said, noting his background in publishing and writing, including reporting for the *Northern Star* at Northern Illinois University and the *Rockford Morning Star*. He also wrote on the history of Italian people in Rockford for the "We, The People of Winnebago County," published as part of the county's bicentennial celebration in 1976.

Ted is one of many *Pappagallo* readers who have supported the publication with donations. He continues that support with a half-page ad in this issue that appears on Page Five, promoting his book, "The Shakespeare Conspiracy: The Story of the Greatest Literary Deception of All Time." Using historical facts, the book tells of the mysterious connection between two of England's greatest dramatists – Christopher Marlow and William Shakespeare.

"It's a book that I wrote about 10 years ago, but I decided to publicize it now," he said. "An editor in London has made it into a play that has played off-Broadway and in other cities."

Pappagallo sponsor list

We are fortunate to have such loyal and supportive readers, and we thank you for your financial support. These readers made recent donations:

Leonard Amari
William Mautino

Paul Toldo
Charles Valentine



dual citizenship ... Continued from Page 1

application — even though it was already filed and in progress.

When I learned about this unexpected directive, I felt as if the Italian authorities had moved the goalposts after I had already kicked the ball. But, as an attorney, I understand that laws, and their interpretations, can change. Instead of dwelling on this setback, I began exploring Plan B: pursuing citizenship through the Italian courts.

Shifting to the courts

As many readers know, I enlisted the help of Italian Citizenship Assistance (ICA) to navigate the complex process. Based on my circumstances, ICA advised me to withdraw my application from the Italian Consulate and request the return of my original documents. Once this is complete, I will need to obtain a “tax code” from the consulate to initiate the judicial process. ICA will then coordinate with an Italian lawyer to file my citizenship case in Palermo.

Since I previously paid ICA \$7,500 under the original service agreement, the agreement will now be converted to a lawsuit package. ICA will cover the attorney fees, while I will be responsible for court costs and incidentals, which are estimated to total approximately \$1,500.

While success is not guaranteed, Italian law generally ensures children of Italian-born ancestors retain Italian citizenship if the ancestor was naturalized in a foreign country on or after 1912, his children born abroad automatically acquired citizenship of that foreign country and, importantly, the foreign-born children were born before their father's naturalization. In 1992, Italian law permitted dual citizenship.

While there is no guarantee of success, the Italian courts are not bound by the Ministry of Interior's new interpretation of citizenship laws, offering a glimmer of hope.

If the Chicago Consulate returns my original documents, they will be used in the court case. If not, I will need to request certified replacements, including my birth certificate, marriage and divorce records, and my grandfather's naturalization documents. These records will also require Illinois Secretary of State apostilles, certificates that verify the authenticity of a public document for use in another country. Additionally, ICA has requested my grandfather's naturalization records from U.S. Customs and Immigration Services, a process that can take up to a year.

Although navigating immigration laws can be frustrating and complex, the principle of dual Italian citizenship is straightforward in my case. When my mother was born in the U.S. in 1931, she automatically inherited Italian citizenship from my grandfather under



Frank Perrecone reviews his dual citizenship documents at the Chicago Italian Consulate's citizenship window last summer.

jure sanguinis—the right of blood—because he did not become a naturalized U.S. citizen until 1935. This lineage continued when my mother, an Italian citizen by descent, passed her citizenship to me at my birth in 1956. Essentially, citizenship by right of blood involves asking the Italian government to officially recognize this uninterrupted familial connection to Italian citizenship.

A long road ahead

In my spring *Pappagallo* article, I advised readers that pursuing Italian citizenship requires a commitment to the long haul. At that time, I believed my application was complete, and that I was simply awaiting approval. Now, due to the ministry's reinterpretation of the law, I find myself essentially starting over.

Join the discussion

For those interested in obtaining Italian citizenship, Carla Mueller and I will discuss the process at *Festa Italiana* on Friday, August 1, 2025, in the Cultural Tent. In the meantime, I encourage *Pappagallo* readers to go to ICA's website to find many in-depth articles on Italian dual citizenship.

Carnevale ... Continued from Page 2

industry in Venice is a “very big deal. There are a lot of really good artists and there are thousands of shops selling masks.”

Carnevale in Ferentino, Rockford's Sister City, was celebrated last year at *Piazza Callepero* on the Sunday and Tuesday before Ash Wednesday. On Sunday, there were carnival floats and a parade of school children dressed in costumes. Many were masked. The festivities continued on Tuesday with more floats, mimes and trampolinists and colorfully dressed celebrants young and old were sprayed with bubbles and confetti.



Carnevale masks with elongated beaks are symbolic of what doctors wore during times of plague. The beaks held flowers and herbs meant to prevent diseases.

Aragona, located northwest of Agrigento in southern Sicily, also celebrated *Carnevale* with a children's parade last year featuring themed floats and costumes. “We also eat frittatas, meatballs, pork products and *chiacchiere* for dessert,” said Jo Spoto, former Rockford resident who lives in Aragona. *Chiacchiere* are fried strips of dough that are dusted in powdered sugar that are commonly served during *Carnevale* in Italy.

Rockford's link to *Carnevale* dates to the mid-1990s when it was staged on the Saturday night before Ash Wednesday.

“It was fun and well attended,” said GRIAA board director Bea Ricotta. “We had a dinner dance, silent auction and a specially baked cake. We crowned a king and a queen, who wore capes. People brought their own masks, and we had masks for sale.”

At the time, the event was a fund-raiser for what became GRIAA. “I would love to see it come back,” Bea said.



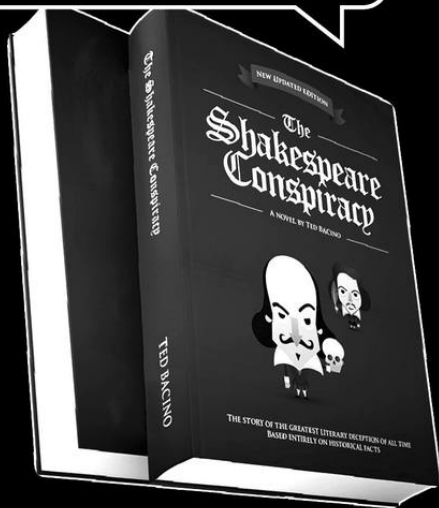
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The Caitlin Clark effect

By Paul Anthony Arco

There are professional athletes,
and then there is Caitlin Clark.

Easily one of the brightest stars
in sports today, Clark is, without
question, the face of women's
basketball. In fact, baby-faced
Clark, who plays guard for the
Indiana Fever in the WNBA, was
named Time magazine's Athlete of
the Year in 2024.



Caitlin Clark
Source: WNBA

Need more proof? Just look at the numbers. In college, Clark
was involved in the three most-watched televised games in
women's college basketball history.

In her first season in the WNBA, Clark fever only grew.
Her No. 22 jersey is the top selling jersey in the league. The
Fever social media pages are the most followed of any team.
Additionally, WNBA ticket sales and TV ratings exploded this past
season. In fact, 23 WNBA games drew more than one million
viewers last season. Clark played in 20 of them.

It's not a stretch to say that Clark has transcended the game of
basketball thanks to star power not seen since the Michael Jordan era.

While her success at the college and professional ranks is
well documented, many fans might not know about her Sicilian
roots on her mother's side of the family (Nizzi).

When she appeared at the "2024 Massachusetts Conference
for Women" last December, Clark shared that coming from an
Italian family, she had to play tough against the older competition,
who was often bigger, more physical and talented than Clark.

"I always had to find a way to hold my own," said Clark at the
time. "Whether it was older cousins, whether it was the boys I was
playing with, whether I was playing other big girls, whatever it was."

Clark rose to fame in college basketball at the University of
Iowa. That's where she became the all-time leading scorer (male
or female) in NCAA basketball history, finishing with 3,951 career
points. She made history by becoming the first player to record
consecutive 40-point triple-doubles in NCAA tournament play,
leading the Hawkeyes to their first national championship game
appearance in 2023. While in college, Clark also played summer
exhibition games in Italy.

After wrapping up her four-year career at Iowa, Clark was the
No. 1 pick in the WNBA draft. In her rookie season with the Fever,
Clark overcame a slow start to set a WNBA record for most assists
in a single season with 337. She drilled 122 three-pointers, just
missing the league's all-time single-season record of 128.

She also averaged 25.5 points per game, the highest average
by a WNBA rookie. It was no surprise that Clark was named Rookie
of the Year and earned a spot on the All-WNBA First Team.

WNBA legend Diana Taurasi is impressed with Clark so far. "It's
amazing. What Caitlin's been able to do in her short career so far has
been nothing short of remarkable," she said. "The one thing that I
really love about her ... she's put the work in. Even throughout her
short WNBA career, it's been a lot of pressure, a lot of things

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'JAMA-MAMA'

Dr. Catherine DeAngelis conquered gender barriers to follow her dream

By Karla Clark

Catherine DeAngelis was born in 1940 to a family of hard-working Italian immigrants in a rural coal-mining town in northeastern Pennsylvania. Every year, the youngest of eight would ask Santa for a doctor's kit.

Every year she would receive a nurse's kit. It wasn't until her father transformed one of these gifts into a doctor's kit that her dream truly began to take shape. Her father's unwavering belief in her capabilities fueled her confidence and determination to pursue her dream of becoming a doctor.



Dr. Catherine DeAngelis

DeAngelis, who became the first woman and pediatrician to become the editor and chief of the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* but her journey into medicine was far from easy. The path that began with a three-year nursing degree was marked by systemic prejudice and personal trials, including a dramatic encounter with Chechen hostage-takers during one of her global medical missions, almost bleeding to death in Wisconsin, and getting hit by a city bus while living in Chicago.

She worked in the library at the University of Pittsburgh to put herself through medical school, earning her MD in 1969. She completed her residency in pediatrics at Johns Hopkins and then obtained a masters of public health from Harvard.

Her first faculty position was at the Columbia College of Physicians. Eventually she returned to Johns Hopkins to head the general pediatrics and adolescent medicine division. In 1984, she was promoted to full professor, only the twelfth woman to attain this distinction in the school's history.

Throughout her career, DeAngelis fought for equal opportunities for women in medicine, becoming a trailblazer in a male-dominated field. Her experiences laid the foundation for her memoir, *Pursuing Equity in Medicine: One Woman's Journey*, where she highlights the persistent gender inequities in healthcare.

At Johns Hopkins she mentored female associate professors, with the goal of helping them to get promoted to full professors. With her help, by 1999, fifty-eight women were promoted. DeAngelis was also instrumental in fighting for pay equity for the female professors. "I grew up a poor Italian American. We knew how to make deals—but they had to be honest deals," she said of her negotiating skills.

Dr. D., also known as the "JAMA-MAMA," attributes her decades of success to what she calls the four T's of leadership: Tough-mindedness, Tenacity, a Thick Skin, and a Tender Heart. Known for her sense of humor—at 85 she still sends and receives

Editor's note: Once again in celebration of March as Women's History Month, Pages 5, 6 and 7 of the *Pappagallo* feature an American woman of Italian heritage who has had historically significant and noteworthy accomplishments.

emails filled with jokes—she was able to marry her serious and playful sides. At the JAMA offices in Chicago, she would blast out the "William Tell Overture," and she and her colleagues would tromp around on imaginary horses for a little fun.

DeAngelis has authored or edited 13 books and published 250 peer-reviewed articles. In 2020, during the pandemic, she wrote a medical mystery novel—*Angel or Devil's Advocate*. She has been awarded seven honorary doctorate degrees and has received numerous awards for humanitarianism and medical excellence.

Dr. Catherine DeAngelis's story is one of courage, resilience, and unwavering commitment to justice. Her journey — from a little Italian-American girl with a doctor's kit to an accomplished physician, educator, and advocate — offers invaluable lessons for anyone striving to make a difference.

Karla Clark joins *Pappagallo* staff

On this page is the first story written for the *Pappagallo* by popular local author and artist Karla Clark, who has agreed to become a regular contributor. The editors welcome her and look forward to future stories. Karla received an award for Special Recognition in Literature and Arts by the Greater Rockford Italian American Association at its Hall of Fame and Special Recognition dinner in October, 2024.

She joins a staff that includes Mike Doyle, editor, and assistant editors Frank Perrecone, Paul Anthony Arco and Isaac Guerrero.

Clark... Continued from Page 5

thrown at her and she keeps showing up and she keeps getting better every single game. So, her future is super bright."

As Clark prepares for her second professional season with Indiana, she's staying busy thanks to her charitable work.

As part of celebrating her 23rd birthday this past January, Clark donated 22,000 new children's books to children in Iowa and Indiana through a partnership with Scholastic and her Caitlin Clark Foundation.

"I remember picking out the books from the Scholastic flyer and how empowering that was for me as a child, and how motivated I was to read," Clark said in a news release announcing the donation. "I want to help kids have the same experience, to develop their reading skills and open their imaginations to dream big."

Just like Clark did.



Admiral Lisa Franchetti

1st Female Chief of Naval Operations

By Isaac Guerrero

Admiral Lisa Franchetti had no idea she'd become a trailblazer for the U.S. Navy – not to mention for women and for Italian-Americans everywhere – when she became the first female Chief of Naval Operations in November 2023.

Franchetti, a native of Rochester, New York, commissioned in 1985 through the NROTC program at Northwestern University, where she received a Bachelor of Science in Journalism.

"I joined the Navy for free college, for books, and a chance to be part of a team," she told the U.S. Navy in a news release. "It was going to be for four years and then I'd go on and find something else to do. What I stayed for was the team, I stayed for the mission, I stayed for what we get to do for our nation every day as part of great teams."

Franchetti has served in the Navy 40 years and was among the first wave of women who were able to serve on board a Navy combatant ship after Congress repealed a law in 1993 that barred them from doing so, according to the *Kansas City Star*. She previously led the U.S. Naval Forces in Korea and served as the Navy's second in command before assuming the top role on Nov. 2, 2023.

It was a double-historic moment when the U.S. Senate confirmed President Biden's nominee. As the first female Chief of Naval Operations, Franchetti also became the first woman to serve in a permanent role on the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Sen. Roger Marshall, a Kansas Republican, was the only senator to vote against Franchetti's nomination. Marshall later issued a statement asserting that President Biden nominated Franchetti not because of her qualifications nor her competence, but "because of this administration's obsession with diversity and inclusion."

Franchetti is a highly decorated officer, having been awarded the Defense Distinguished Service Medal, Distinguished Service Medal, Defense Superior Service Medal (two awards), Legion of Merit (five awards), Meritorious Service Medal (six awards), Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal (four awards), and the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal (two awards).

Franchetti isn't the only woman climbing her way to leadership roles within the U.S. Navy. In 2022, at age 51, Amy Bauernschmidt became the only woman among commanders of the 11 aircraft carriers in the US fleet. She also became the only woman ever to command a US aircraft carrier, the biggest and



Navy Admiral Lisa Franchetti
Source: navy.mil

among the most powerful Navy warships at sea.

Bauernschmidt commands the USS Abraham Lincoln, a 97,000-ton, 1,092-foot aircraft carrier with about 5,000 people aboard and accommodating more than 60 aircraft, including F-35C stealth fighters, the most sophisticated warplanes in naval aviation.

In a speech honoring the 75th anniversary of the desegregation of the military in 2023, Biden said the diversity of the military is its strength.

"The Navy is obviously really embracing women because of their capabilities and I think it's very important," said Belvidere Navy veteran Bob LaMay, who serves as Commander of USS Rockford Navy Club Ship 1 in Rockford. "Women are no different than men. They're just as capable as men are. And I will say that women do think on things harder than men. And that's good for the Navy. It's good for the military."

LaMay said that women comprise most of the Auxiliary membership at the Rockford Navy Club, which is the nation's oldest – it was founded in 1922 – and among the largest with roughly 350 members. Women make up most of the bar staff at the 2324 Charles Street club, and LaMay said they indeed run a tight ship. Moreover, he said, the Auxiliary boasts countless mothers, sisters, wives and daughters who – often behind the scenes and without recognition – keep the club's engines running and its flags flying high.

GRIAA seeks Hall of Fame, Special Recognition nominations

The Greater Rockford Italian American Association is seeking men and women who have shown a tremendous amount of dedication and leadership for consideration for the Greater Rockford Italian American Hall of Fame and Special Recognition. Inductees are nominated by community members and selected by GRIAA's Hall of Fame and Special Recognition Committee. Nominees should be persons of Italian heritage who, through their exemplary lives, have made significant contributions to the community in and through the arts, sciences, government, business, industry, athletics, and volunteer, civic and philanthropic activities or any other appropriate category. Such contributions should reflect a notable community impact and the highest standards and ideals. The primary difference between Hall of Fame and Special Recognition consideration is described below:

Hall of Fame criteria – The nominee should have made a significant overall impact to the Italian-American community.

Special Recognition criteria – The impact of the nominee in the Italian-American community is significant but more specialized, such as in athletics, business or the arts.

Nomination forms are available at the GRIAA website, www.griaa.org. Nominations are due July 15. It is not necessary to indicate on the nomination form which category for which you are nominating the group or individual. The committee will make that determination on the information provided.



Stay in the Italian countryside

Agriturismos: An authentic way to add local flavor to your trip

By Mike Doyle

When planning a trip to Italy, where to stay is one of the most important decisions, right up there with when to go, what to visit and what to bring. Most tourists opt for hotels, and the guidebooks advise that you establish your expectations, ranging from low-priced hostels to five-star destinations. If you don't mind sharing your room with a back-packing student in a hostel or prefer a bountiful breakfast on a hotel terrace overlooking Florence, the choice is yours.

However, there is one commonly overlooked accommodation alternative that allows visitors to see Italy away from the cities and in the countryside that opens up a pastoral vacation experience – the *agriturismo* (a combination of agriculture and tourism). *Agriturismos* are found all over Italy where guests book rooms in what is best described as farm house resorts. You literally stay in the farm house or adjacent rooms.



Sign for Agriturismo Tenuta San Michele in Santa Venerina, Sicily

An *agriturismo* will usually serve guests food from its own kitchen that was prepared from ingredients produced on the farm or procured from local merchants. Some allow guests to participate in the activities happening on the farm, such as picking vegetables, milking cows, riding horses or making cheese.

"It's a wonderful way to experience Italy," said Sam Guerrero, who owned a country home 18 miles from Siena in Tuscany that was converted into an *agriturismo*.

"People certainly ask about them, especially if they want a more authentic type of experience," said former Rockford resident Rosanne Zammuto Cofoid who operates La Dolce Via Travel, which specializes in Italy vacations.

The *agriturismo* idea in Italy began in the mid-20th century as a way to alter the push-pull dynamic of rural people to urban centers by revitalizing struggling small farms. This allowed farmers to host guests on their land and offer a unique rural experience while providing additional income. In 1985, the Italian government officially defined and legalized "*agriturismos*," enabling the renovation of abandoned rural buildings and estates to be used as tourist accommodations, thus preserving agricultural and rural communities. The concept of combining on-site, farm-related

recreation and tourism is similar to dude ranches in the American West, which began in the 1880s.

Similar to deciding which level of hotel comfort one desires, *agriturismos* offer a range of amenities. "Some are true to the roots of actually cleaning the animals, but, for the most part, they are sophisticated as it is more like a country stay on a working property," Rosanne said. "It's not like you are sleeping on straw beds. People (who book them) are those who want to engage with locals in more authentic ways that in hotels."

Deena Cipolla Guptil stayed in *agriturismos* when she and her sisters visited Italy and Sicily in 2023. One stay was at the Principe, located a couple of miles outside of Aragona, Sicily, and is owned by the town's mayor. "There are four or five bedrooms," she said. "Our rooms were nice and well-appointed. We had breakfast there each morning. The restaurant is open to the public, so there were various group celebrations while we were there – baptisms and birthday parties. The food was very good with lots of options."

One way to describe an *agriturismo* is an Italian version of the bed-and-breakfast. But they generally offer dinner, which usually



Agriturismo Ponte Calatrasi in Roccamena, Sicily



Mt. Etna provides the background for a suite at Agriturismo Tenuta San Michele.

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Agriturismo ... Continued from Page 8

features a bountiful *antipasti*, followed by a pasta and a meat dish and dessert. Many also have built-in pools, and, because they are located in the countryside, plenty of places to walk among fruit trees native vegetation, observe livestock or sometimes just enjoy the landscape.

Deena's family also stayed south of Naples at *Agriturismo Spina Rossa* in Acquavella. "The rooms were very nice and opened up to a small patio," she said. "The views were stunning, and there were lemon and other fruit trees everywhere."

Sisters Joan and Colleen Gullo of Rockford, who have traveled extensively in Italy, wanted a change from upscale hotels in cities. Joan said they read about *agriturismos* in a travel book and decided to try it several years ago. "We wanted more of a country-side kind of place," she said. "We stayed near Aragona (Sicily) at a former villa that had a horse stable." On the same trip, the sisters stayed at the *Villa Raina* in Gangi in northern Sicily. "It was not very new or modern, but we loved it," she said. "It was located near a trail stop for hikers, and we met people from Tasmania." Also, she said it was a farm with livestock. She said, "As soon as you got out of the driveway, there were goats and sheep right there. We really loved it."

One of the requirements to obtain governmental designation as an *agriturismo* is for the farm or manor to have a practical purpose. Guests at *Ponte Calatrasi* in Roccamena can watch how ricotta is made; *Tenuta San Michelle* in Santa Venerina is located on the slopes of Mt. Etna on the Murgo Winery grounds.

Perhaps the best word to describe the *agriturismo* experience overall is rustic – from the rough-hewn beams in guest rooms and cobblestone walks to the authenticity of the owners. It is common



Fresh ricotta being made by cheesemaker at Agriturismo Ponte Calatrasi.

to find Italian the only language spoken, which Deena found true in both of their stays. If visitors can't find a person who can translate, phone apps work as well.

Two other things should be checked out – whether the place has rooms on different floors – and what they accept in payment. Deena and her sisters had to climb stairs to get to their rooms on two of their stays. "No ADA regulations here – and no elevators," she said. Also, she said, one place did not accept credit cards. (One way to avoid this problem is to pay in advance.)

There are about 20,000 *agriturismos* in Italy, most of them on the "boot," and, generally, cheaper than hotels, \$82-\$154 a night compared to \$108-\$202 for hotels. "They are more reasonable than hotels, but they don't come with all the bells and whistles," Rosanne said.

The final thing to consider is location: you will not find them in cities. "They are definitely on a farm or working estate, and not in a place where you can hop on a bus or take a train," Rosanne said. Before booking one, you have to determine how you're going to get there and that requires a car rental or booking a driver for that part of the stay.

"Sicily does not have great train service, so you are relying on yourself," she said. But if you can arrange transportation ... "So much of Sicily is rural, and *agriturismos* are very much in tuned with what Sicily is. So, for those looking for that real connection, I think it's fantastic."

Sources: Agriturismo.it, walksofitaly.com, Wikipedia.org., tripsavvy.com

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Remote Sicilian beach is world's 2nd most beautiful



The beach at Spiaggia dei Congili is one of the most beautiful in the world.

There is not a whole lot to see on Lampedusa, a Sicilian island that is actually closer to Africa. Located 170 miles southwest of Licata, Sicily, and 70 from Tunisia, it is the largest of the Pelagie Islands even though it is only seven miles long and two miles wide.

What it does have is the second most beautiful beach in the world, according to Trip Advisor's 2024 listing. It is *Spiaggia dei Congili*, reached only via a steep, half-mile descent on the *Capo Ponente* trail and is without amenities.

The beach features a long stretch of pristine white sand surrounded by an unspoiled landscape. Its white cliffs and turquoise waters make it unique. In fact, Loggerhead sea turtles lay their eggs on the beach. There is no beach bar or sun beds. Visitors also have to obtain a permit to access the beach to prevent overcrowding. Comments on Trip Advisor wax eloquently from "heaven on earth" to "beautiful pristine beach."

Lampedusa is accessible by ferry or air from Sicily. (FYI: The most beautiful beach in the world is *Praia da Falesia* in Portugal).

Sources: [tripadvisor.com](https://www.tripadvisor.com); [ferryhopper.com](https://www.ferryhopper.com)

2025 Spring, Summer Festivals in Italy

February (*Febbraio*)

13-16 – *Ciocclentino*, National Chocolate Festival, Terni

14-March 4 – *Carnevale*, Venice

May (*Maggio*)

7-10 – *Caleclimaggio*, Celebration of Spring, Assisi

16-20 – *Infiorate di Noto*, Flower Festival, Noto

June (*Giugno*)

1-2 – *Le Infiores di Spello*, Adorned with Flowers Festival, Spello, Umbria

July (*Luglio*)

2–Palio Horse Races, Siena

11-13 – Unicorn Festival, Vinci

Some Italian quotes ...

"God gave us families so we wouldn't have to argue with strangers."

"I'm Italian. I don't mince words. I mince garlic."

"The trouble with Italian foods is that three days later, you're hungry again."

"You know you're Italian when two members of your family aren't speaking because of an argument from 1985."

"I'm Italian. I don't have an inside voice."

"I have only two things in mind; the other is spaghetti."

"Stop telling me to be calm; I'm Italian. We don't do calm."

GRIAA Scholarship opportunities

For the past 45 years, the Greater Rockford Italian American Association has provided more than \$805,000 in scholarships, which are presented annually to area Italian-American families to defray the cost of a parochial education from K-12. For information, visit www.griaa.org, then go to the Scholarship Committee, which is chaired by Ben Todaro, Frank Valentine and Mike Maffioli to view application information.

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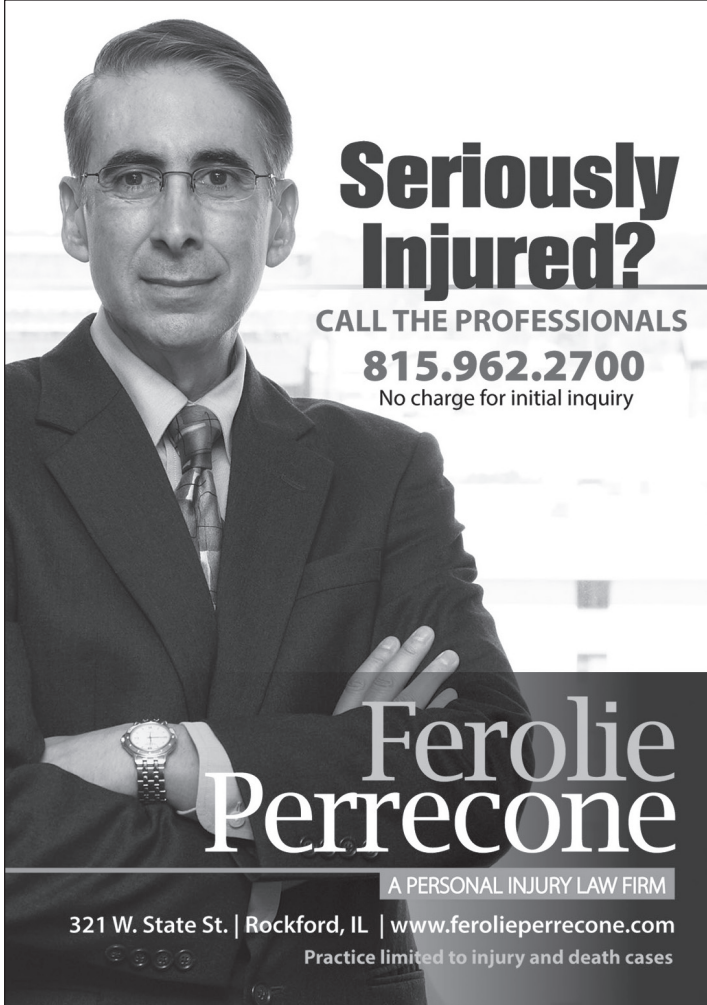


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Recipes for St. Joseph's Day, Easter

The first four recipes on these pages are linked to holidays we celebrate in the spring. With St. Joseph's Day fast approaching, we have three items that are normally found at St. Joseph Altars – the golden nuggets of *Pignolati*, almond-laced *Cabaita* and a typical *frittata* or *froschia*. That is followed by a Sicilian cheese-and-pasta combination *Ta'ano*, which is often prepared for Easter. *Mangia!*

Pignolati

1 dozen eggs
Pinch of salt
2 pounds flour
1 tablespoon baking powder

1 tablespoon sugar
Cooking oil
1 cup sugar
½ cup honey

Beat eggs with salt and add flour mixture (flour, baking powder, sugar). Mix and knead well into large ball. Allow to rest for 15-20 minutes, then roll small amount of dough into logs about the width of a fat pencil. Cut into small pieces and, dropping pieces individually, fry in oil. Drain well in colander then place pieces in large grocery bag, with a piece of paper towel at the bottom. Roll close and allow for oil to drain away. Repeat this for at least one more day,



Norma and Tom Conti, Rosie Scalise Sheridan and Tom Creamer cook the Pignolati nuggets in honey and sugar at St. Anthony of Padua's kitchen in 2024

using new grocery bag. Once well drained, cook 1 cup sugar and ½ cup honey in heavy sauce pan until sugar is melted and mixture comes to a "hard ball" stage when dropped into a glass of water. Add a small amount of the pieces to the pan and stir constantly until all are coated. Add more *pignolati* as mixture will take. This will be repeated at least three more times with new mixture of sugar and honey. There should be little excess mixture left in the pan. Quickly pour pieces onto a sheet of non-stick aluminum foil

that is secured to countertop or table. Using a fork cooled in a glass of ice water, separate the pieces into a small mound of 4-5. Add nonpareils if desired. Then squeeze each mound by hand until firm. Allow to cool. Caution: sugar mixture will be hot; have ice water handy to cool fingers.

Asparagus Omelet (*Asparagi in Frittata*)

1 pound fresh asparagus, cut up
5 eggs
Salt and pepper to taste
½ pound Ricotta cheese
¼ cup olive oil

Wash and dry asparagus and cut into one-inch pieces. Cook in small amount of salted water until done and set aside. Beat eggs, Ricotta cheese, salt and pepper until well blended. Add strained cooked asparagus. Heat oil in ovenproof skillet. Pour egg and asparagus mixture into pan with hot oil. Lower heat to medium and cook for 10 minutes. Loosen side with a spatula. Remove skillet from flame and place under broiler for 5-10 minutes until golden brown. Remove from flame. To assure the *frittata* is loosened, shake pan or slide a spatula under and around it. Place a large dish over pan and turn *frittata* over onto dish.

Source: Mrs. Cesa Provenzano, St. Anthony of Padua Altar and Rosary Society Italian Cookbook

Italian Almond Candy (*Cubaita*)



1 ½ pounds shelled almonds, roasted and allowed to cool
½ cup granulated sugar
½ cup honey
Grated rind from 1 orange
¼ teaspoon cinnamon

Prepare a cutting board or marble candy slab. Mix and dissolve sugar, honey, orange rind and cinnamon in a two-quart sauce pan and bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Test the syrup by dropping a little in a cup of cold water. If the syrup forms a ball, and, as mixture continues to cook, add almonds until all are completely coated and appear tacky. When mixture is ready, sprinkle a little cold water on the surface and pour mixture on it. Working quickly, arrange in desired shapes – logs, crosses, eggs, clusters or hearts. Be careful not to burn your hands. Have a cold, damp cloth or cold water ready. Moisten hands with cold water to avoid sticking. Once formed, allow *Cubaita* to set, then use imagination to decorate them with silk flowers, ribbons, candy sprinkles, etc. To store, place on a grease aluminum foil sheet and allow to dry.

Source: Teresa Tarara Spoto, Susie Tarara Mangiaracina, Joanne Tarara, Sarah Tarara



Ta'ano (Traditional dish at Easter)

2 pounds ground meat made into meatballs
 1 pound pasta – with opening about the size of a quarter
 2 pounds Tuma cheese, sliced
 ½ pound grated Romano cheese
 3 dozen eggs
 ½ to 1 cup chicken broth with a pinch of saffron
 ½ cup parsley, finely chopped
 Salt and pepper to taste
 4-6 slices of day-old bread

Cook meatballs in preferred style – oven baked, lightly browned, fried in skillet or cooked in sugo. Keep in mind each of these methods will give you a different flavor. If cooking in sugo, they must be drained thoroughly. Beat eggs with parsley, salt and pepper, then add grated cheese. Parboil pasta using a tablespoon of oil in water to prevent pasta from sticking together when drained. Stuff pasta shells with meatball pieces.

To assemble: grease Pyrex bowl or large deep dish casserole and line with greased aluminum foil. Dip slices of bread into egg mixture to form bottom layer. Then add a layer of Tuma cheese, a layer of stuffed pasta with cooked meatball meat, then pour a little of the beaten egg mixture. Repeat process: layer of Tuma, layer of stuffed pasta, beaten egg mixture. Top layer should be covered with slices of Tuma. Pour chicken soup over the top. Bake at 350 degrees for 1 ½ hours. Do not overcook or under cook. Baking time depends on your oven.

*Source: Teresa Tarara Spoto, Susie Tarara Mangiarcina,
 Joanne Tarara, Sarah Tarara*

Italian Vegetable Soup *Zuppa di Verdure*

¼ cup olive oil	1 teaspoon Kosher salt
2 tablespoons butter	½ teaspoon black pepper
2 large carrots, diced	6 cups low sodium chicken
1 medium onion, diced	broth
4 stalks celery, diced	28-ounce can crushed
2 cups potato, peeled and diced	tomatoes
1 cup green beans, cut into	Parmesan cheese rind
bite-sized pieces	15-ounce can cannellini beans,
2 medium zucchini	drained and rinsed
2 cups green cabbage,	½ cup parsley, chopped
shredded	Grated Parmesan for serving

In a large pot or Dutch oven, heat oil and butter over medium heat. Add diced onion, carrots and celery. Cook until vegetables just start to become tender, about three minutes. Add potatoes and cook, stirring occasionally, for another five minutes, then add zucchini and green beans and cook for three minutes. Add cabbage, salt and pepper and cook an additional five minutes. Then add chicken broth, tomatoes and juice and Parmesan rind. Bring soup to a boil, then reduce to a low simmer. Cover pot and allow soup to simmer, stirring occasionally, for about 90 minutes. Once soup has cooked add beans and cook for another 30 minutes (soup should be thick). Remove cheese rind, add salt and pepper to taste and stir in parsley. Serve with Parmesan cheese.

Source: thisitaliankitchen.com

Italian Roasted Chicken and Potatoes

3 tablespoons Italian seasoning
 Salt and pepper to taste
 4 chicken leg quarters (leg and thigh)
 6 medium potatoes, peeled and quartered
 3 garlic cloves peeled
 Juice and zest of half a lemon
 ½ cup olive oil
 Parsley, chopped

Cut a few slices into chicken pieces to absorb spices and help it cook, place in bowl. Sprinkle 1 tablespoon of the Italian seasoning and 1/8 cup olive oil. Rub all onto chicken pieces. In another bowl, place cut potatoes, 1 tablespoon Italian seasonings and 1/8 cup olive oil. Toss and coat each piece of potato. Place potatoes on outer edge of large roasting pan, then place chicken in the middle, skin side up. Also place garlic in the middle. Bake in 425-degree oven for 40 minutes. If desired, remove chicken and potatoes and place on a platter. In small bowl, mash garlic and add parsley, lemon juice, zest and remaining tablespoon of Italian seasoning. Serve sauce with chicken and potatoes.

Italian Hash

2 pounds Italian Sausage
 1 large green pepper, diced
 1 large onion diced
 1 cup frozen hash brown potatoes
 1 carton frozen chopped spinach, drained well
 1 cup milk
 ½ cup Parmesan cheese, grated
 6 eggs, beaten
 Salt and pepper to taste

Brown sausage until pinkness is gone. Remove from pan, retaining grease. Add onion and pepper to pan and cook until softened. Add hash brown potatoes and mix well. Add salt and pepper. Cook and drain spinach well; add to onion-pepper mix and cook five more minutes. Stir to mix well. Add sausage to vegetable mix and add ¼ cup Parmesan cheese, mix well. Pour all into 9-inch square pan, 2 inches high. Beat eggs and mix in milk and pour over meat mixture. Sprinkle remaining Parmesan cheese over all. Bake at 375 degrees for 45 minutes.

*buon
 appetito !*



St. Joseph Altar tradition returns at 4 churches, 1 home

For those looking forward to St. Joseph Day, there will be one home and four church altars in the Rockford area. Originally celebrated in Sicilian homes, altars were created to ask for intercession during troubled times or to give thanks for petitions answered.

Sicilian immigrants to Rockford brought the tradition of altars or tables came to Rockford in the early part of 20th century. In 1945, more than 20 St. Joseph Altars were erected in South Rockford homes, many likely asking for sons to return safely from World War II.

Over the years, the number of home altars began to decline. As a result, in the late 1960s St. Anthony of Padua created a parish altar, which is the longest-running church altar. A legion of volunteers comes together to create this altar as well as altars at three other Rockford Roman Catholic churches – St. Bernadette, St. Bridget and Holy Family.



Volunteers at St. Bernadette make the traditional Pasta con Sarde sauce for the church's St. Joseph Altar in 2024.

A home altar tradition returns every two years at Rosie Scalise Sheridan's home on 7020 Clikeman Road. This year's altar will be celebrated on March 19, which is St. Joseph's Day. Her altar can be viewed on Tuesday, March 18, from 5-7 p.m., and a traditional meal will be served Wednesday, March 19, from noon to 6 p.m. The traditional meal consists of St. Joseph Pasta (*Pasta con Sarde*), a piece of *frittata*, blessed bread and sweets and baked goods.

The times and dates of the four church altars are:

- St. Anthony of Padua, 1010 Ferguson Street. The altar will be blessed after the 4:30 p.m. Mass, Saturday, March 15; open to the public, noon-3 p.m., Sunday, March 16, for traditional meal.
- St. Bernadette, 2400 Bell Avenue. Altar viewing will take place, Saturday, March 15, from 5:30-7 p.m. A traditional meal will be served, Sunday, March 16, from noon-3 p.m., with carry-outs available.
- Holy Family, 4401 Highcrest Road. Altar viewing will take place, Saturday, March 15 and Sunday, March 16 after all Masses..
- St. Bridget, 604 Clifford Avenue, Loves Park. Altar viewing will take place, Saturday, March 22, from 4-6 p.m. and Sunday, March 23, from 7:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. for traditional meal, carry-outs only.

See Page 12 for Pignolatti recipe

Ethnic Heritage Museum plans Carnevale mask-making workshop

The Italian Gallery of the Ethnic Heritage Museum will be celebrating *Carnevale*, the traditional celebration of the days before the start of the Lenten season. The most enduring symbol of *Carnevale* is the mask, which gained popularity in the Middle Ages as a custom that allowed Venetians to enjoy the event regardless of their social status.

The gallery will have their collections of masks on display and will hold a craft-making workshop. For date and time, check the museum's website: ehm1129@comcast.com.

The museum is located in the Heritage Museum Park, an historical campus that connects it with the Graham-Ginestra House Museum in South Rockford. Built in 1857, the Greek Revival, Italianate architectural-style dwelling was owned by two prominent families – Freeman Graham, Sr., and Leo Ginestra.

In February, the home will become a "House of Mourning," in honor of Freeman Graham, who died in an upstairs bedroom in 1896. His casket was placed in the home's parlor and casket and mirrors were draped with black fabric as was the custom of the day. The "House of Mourning" will be open Sundays from 2-4 p.m., February 2 to March 9.

The museum is located at 1129 South Main Street. For information, call 815-962-7402.

Amici Italiani troupes ready to dance

The *Amici Italiani* Adult and Youth Dance Troupes are looking forward to the 2025 season and are hopeful of adding new dancers. GRIAA sponsors both troupes – adults, 14-years-old and older, and youth, 13 and younger. For information, call Bea Giammarese Ricotta at 815-520-1010 for the adult troupe and Pauline Urso at 815-218-0063 for the youth troupe.

In other news, the adult troupe staged performances at Spectrum School and the Verdi Club in December, 2024.

Festa Italiana set August 1-3

The 46th annual *Festa Italiana*, sponsored by the Greater Rockford Italian American Association, will be held August 1-3, 2025, at 4000 St. Francis Drive. The *Festa* is Rockford's oldest annual festival and is the second-longest of its kind in the U.S.

Fun, food and family provide the foundation for the three-day event, which features great Italian food and pastries, continuous entertainment, an Italian Cultural Tent, bocce tournaments, children's crafts, souvenirs and much more. *Festa Italiana* is staffed solely by volunteers. One of its primary purposes is to raise funds for annual scholarships for local Italian-American families to defray the cost of a Catholic school education. To date, the *Festa* has raised nearly \$805,000 for scholarships.

For information, check out GRIAA on Facebook or log onto www.festaitaliana.rockford.com.



Photo highlights from fall, winter events



GRIAA Hall of Fame Special Recognition recipients Karla Clark (top far left) and Paul Perrone (top near left) speak prior to their Special Recognition awards at the annual Hall of Fame Dinner, October 12, 2024, at the Venetian Club.

(Clockwise from top right), the families of Paul Perrone and Karla Clark; at the dinner. Recipients and former award winners gather after the Columbus Day Mass at St. Anthony of Padua's Memory Garden, October 13, 2024.



St. Ambrogio Society's Tom Wise (above) serves pasta at RISCA's Taste of Italy, November 3, 2024, at the Venetian Club. (At middle right) Ava Getty helps her Nana and RISCA President Dina Getty with announcements at the Taste of Italy. (At bottom right) GRIAA and Festa Italiana's display in the annual Festival of Lights at Sinnissippi Park.



Greater Rockford Italian American Association – GRIAA

PAPPAGALLO

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A majestically attractive olive tree in the courtyard of the Ponte Calatrasi Agriturismo in Roccamena, Sicily. Story, photos on agriturismos on Pages 8 and 9.

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Spring, Summer 2025 Calendar

March

15-16 – St. Joseph Altars at St. Anthony, St. Bernadette and Holy Family churches, Rockford;

19 – St. Joseph Altar at home of Rosie Scalise Sheridan

22-23 – St. Joseph Altar at St. Bridget Church

August

1-3 – 46th annual *Festa Italiana*, 4000 St. Francis Drive, Rockford

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