



WELCOME TO OUR

Newsletter

we're so glad you're here!

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Non Tanto Tempo Fa.....

In un'epoca in cui il semplice fatto di frequentare le lezioni era già un privilegio, Colantoni ideò un sistema di trasporto per portare i piccoli a scuola. Non si trattava di un lusso, ma di un ponte verso un futuro migliore. Quello che oggi conosciamo come "scuolabus" probabilmente nacque da quella iniziativa pionieristica.

La celebre fotografia scattata da Di Ianni immortalò quel momento: non solo una carrozza con bambini, ma un simbolo di progresso e di speranza. Ogni tragitto era più di un viaggio; era una dichiarazione di principi. Giovanni Colantoni non trasportava semplicemente alunni, trasportava sogni.

La sua idea semina i semi di un profondo cambiamento sociale: dimostro che l'istruzione non doveva dipendere dalla distanza, né dalle condizioni della strada, ma dalla volontà di imparare. E con ciò, lascio alla storia un'eredità che, più di un secolo dopo, è ancora viva ogni mattina quando uno scuolabus apre le sue porte.

Translation

In an era in which simply attending classes was already a privilege, Colantoni devised a transportation system to bring children to school. It was not a luxury, but a bridge toward a better future. What we know today as the “school bus” probably originated from that pioneering initiative.

The famous photograph taken by Di Ianni captured that moment: not just a carriage full of children, but a symbol of progress and hope. Every trip was more than a journey; it was a declaration of principles. Giovanni Colantoni was not simply transporting students—he was transporting dreams.

His idea planted the seeds of a profound social change: it showed that education should not depend on distance, nor on the condition of the road, but on the willingness to learn. And with that, he left history a legacy that more than a century later, is still alive every morning when a school bus opens its doors.



Per qualcuno è solo un tempo passato. Però! Per tanti di noi è la realtà vissuta di un tempo non tanto lontano.

For some, it is only a time gone by. But for many of us, it is the lived reality of a time not so long ago.

Upcoming Events

MEMBER MEETING

Date: April 29th 2026

Time: 7:00 PM

Location: The Elks Lodge
12 Primrose Drive
Orlando FL 32803



Please join us for our next Member Meeting.
Agenda and details to follow.

Please let us know if you will be attending as seating is limited.

Upcoming Events

CLUB PICNIC



DATE: May 2nd, 2026

LOCATION: 201 LAKEVIEW DRIVE
KISSIMMEE FL 34741

TURTLE PAVILION

TIME: 10:00 AM TO 5:00 PM

Hotdogs, Hamburgers and drinks will be provided by the Club.

Please bring a side dish or dessert to share

Please consider bringing your own lawn chair as seating is limited. Please note alcohol is not permitted in the park.

Please RSVP by 4/15/26 to
italianamericanclubofcfl@gmail.com or
call 407-509-4802

Upcoming Events

LAKELAND FESTIVAL IS COMING!

Save the Date for our very first Lakeland Festival!!

November 7, 2026 5:00 PM – 10:00 PM

THE ITALIAN AMERICAN CLUB of CENTRAL FLORIDA
presents

ITALIAN FESTIVAL

UNDER THE STARS

S Kentucky Street • Downtown Lakeland, FL
Saturday, November 7, 2026
5:00 PM – 10:00 PM

Food • Craft Vendors • Live Music

PIZZA
GELATO

THE ITALIAN AMERICAN CLUB of CENTRAL FLORIDA
EST. 2024

THE ITALIAN CONNECTION

www.italianamericanclubofcfl.com

Carnevale!

Thank you to all the members who attended our Carnevale celebration in February. It was wonderful to see so many people come together to enjoy the festive atmosphere, great company, and amazing food. Your participation made the event truly special, and we appreciate everyone who joined us to make it such a memorable occasion. We look forward to seeing you at our upcoming events!

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**For additional photos
please use the addresses
below!**



Groveland Festival

Thank you to all the members who attended our First Groveland Festival. It was wonderful to see so many people attend. Your participation made the event truly special, and we appreciate everyone who joined us to make it such a memorable occasion. We look forward to seeing you at our upcoming events!



From Stone and Struggle to Splendor: The Story of Matera

Perched high above a rocky ravine in the southern Italian region of Basilicata lies one of the most extraordinary cities in the world: Matera. At first glance, it appears almost biblical — a cascade of pale stone homes stacked upon one another, carved directly into the mountainside. At night, when golden lights flicker across the ravine, it feels less like a modern city and more like a vision from another era. Matera is not simply old. It is ancient, among the oldest continuously inhabited settlements on earth. For thousands of years, people carved homes, chapels, stairways, and cisterns into the soft limestone cliffs. These cave districts, known collectively as the Sassi di Matera, form a breathtaking labyrinth of dwellings that date back over 9,000 years. But Matera's story is not just one of antiquity. It is a story of endurance, hardship, migration, and rebirth, themes that resonate deeply with many Italian American families.

For centuries, families lived in modest cave homes, often sharing small spaces with animals. Ingenious water collection systems captured rainwater in underground cisterns, allowing the community to survive in a harsh and arid environment. Churches were carved into rock and adorned with medieval frescoes. Life was difficult but deeply communal.

By the early 20th century, however, conditions in the Sassi had deteriorated. Poverty, malaria, and overcrowding plagued the population. In the 1940s, writer and political activist Carlo Levi described the desperate living conditions in his memoir, *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, bringing national attention to the plight of southern Italy.

Many families from Basilicata — including those from Matera — made the painful decision to leave for America. Like millions of southern Italians, they sought opportunity and dignity abroad, carrying with them dialects, recipes, traditions, and faith that would shape Italian American communities for generations.

In 1952, the Italian government intervened and relocated thousands of Matera's residents to newly built housing. The ancient caves were abandoned. The Sassi, once vibrant with life, stood empty and crumbling. Matera became known as "la vergogna d'Italia" — the shame of Italy.

What could have remained a forgotten relic instead became one of Europe's most remarkable stories of renewal. Beginning in the 1980s, restoration efforts slowly transformed the abandoned caves into homes, hotels, restaurants, and cultural spaces. Rather than erasing its past, Matera embraced it. In 1993, the Sassi were designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site, recognizing their extraordinary historical value.

Then, in 2019, Matera achieved a stunning milestone: it was named European Capital of Culture. The same city once labeled a national embarrassment became an international symbol of resilience and cultural pride. Today, visitors wander through stone alleyways that feel unchanged by time. Boutique hotels are carved into ancient caves. Restaurants serve traditional Lucanian dishes beneath vaulted rock ceilings. Musicians perform in rock-hewn churches whose acoustics have echoed for centuries.

Matera's dramatic landscape has captivated filmmakers as well. Its stark beauty made it a perfect stand-in for biblical Jerusalem in *The Passion of the Christ*, and its winding streets later appeared in the James Bond film *No Time to Die*. Yet no camera fully captures the feeling of standing on the edge of the ravine at sunset, watching the city glow.

Why Matera's Story Matters

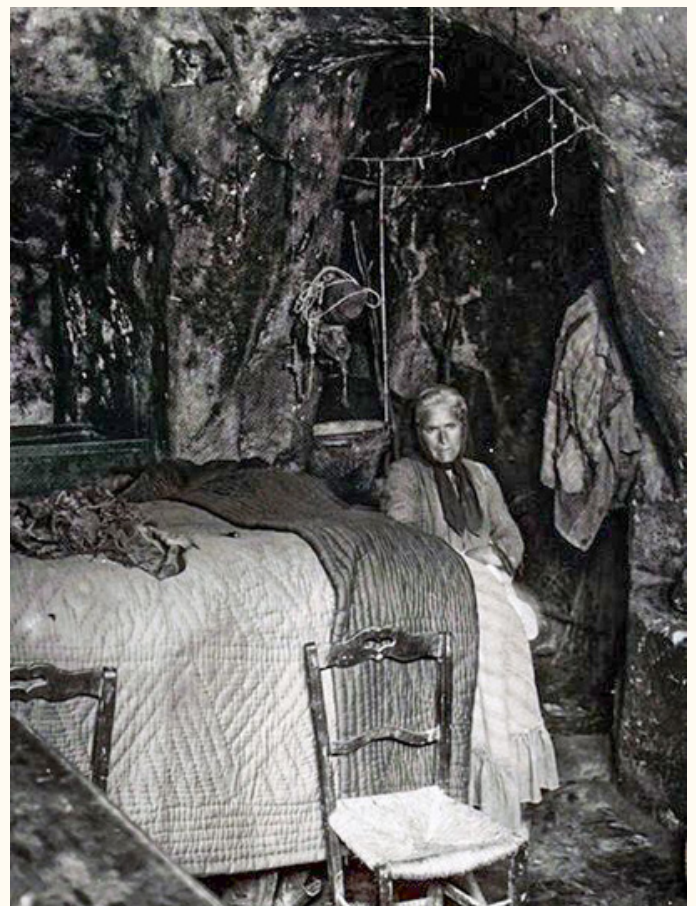
For Italian Americans, Matera is more than a travel destination. It represents a chapter of southern Italy's story that mirrors the immigrant journey, hardship endured, dignity reclaimed, heritage preserved.

The families who left Basilicata generations ago might scarcely recognize today's Matera, vibrant and celebrated. Yet they would recognize its spirit. It is the same spirit that crossed the Atlantic: resilient, resourceful, rooted in tradition.

Matera reminds us that history is not something left behind. It lives in stone walls, in family names, in recipes passed down at Sunday dinner tables, and in stories told across generations.

From cave dwellings carved by historic hands to a modern cultural capital admired by the world, Matera stands as proof that even places once forgotten can rise again luminous, proud, and enduring.

A resident inside a cave dwelling in Matera's Sassi in the early 20th century — a powerful glimpse into daily life in the ancient troglodyte neighborhoods before the mid-century relocation.





The Sassi District at Dusk
Golden evening light illuminates the historic Sassi di Matera, where generations of families once lived in cave dwellings carved from rock. dell'Anfitea

Rock-Hewn Churches

Hidden among the caves are ancient rupestrian churches, their interiors adorned with medieval frescoes that reflect centuries of faith and devotion.



The Ravine and Surrounding Landscape. The dramatic Gravina canyon frames Matera's skyline, reminding visitors of the rugged terrain that shaped both its architecture and its resilient people.

Looking for a new Recipe?

🍷 Cialleda Materana (Lucanian Bread Salad)

This dish was born out of necessity. In the cave homes of the Sassi di Matera, nothing was wasted — especially not bread. The famous local bread, Pane di Matera, is made with durum wheat and baked in wood-fired ovens. Its thick crust and dense crumb allow it to last for days, making it perfect for reuse. When bread grew stale, it became cialleda.

🌿 Ingredients (Traditional Summer Version)

- 4–5 thick slices stale Italian bread (preferably rustic, crusty bread)
- 2–3 ripe tomatoes, chopped
- 1 small red onion, thinly sliced
- Fresh cucumber slices (optional but common)
- Fresh basil or wild oregano
- Extra-virgin olive oil (generous drizzle)
- Red wine vinegar (to taste)
- Salt
- Optional: fresh mozzarella or local pecorino cheese

🌿 Instructions

1. Lightly soak the stale bread in cool water for a few seconds, then gently squeeze out excess water. (It should be softened, not mushy.)
 2. Break the bread into large rustic pieces.
 3. Add tomatoes, onion, cucumber, and herbs.
 4. Drizzle generously with olive oil and a splash of vinegar.
 5. Season with salt and toss gently.
 6. Let rest for 10–15 minutes to allow flavors to blend.
- Serve at room temperature.



NEW IAC ITEMS AVAILABLE TO PURCHASE



Wine Glasses
\$11 Each or 6 for \$55



Coffee Mugs
\$10 Each or 3 for \$25



Espresso Cups
\$9.50 Each or 6 for \$50



Key Chains
\$5 Each

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WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

This club is truly “*your*” club, and we wholeheartedly encourage your active participation and generous sponsorships. We are always eager to hear your ideas for future events, as your input is invaluable in shaping our community. Exciting committees will be formed in the coming weeks, and we are actively seeking enthusiastic volunteers to join us in making our vision a reality. Whether you have a specific skill to share or simply a desire to contribute, we welcome your involvement in strengthening the Italian American Club of Central Florida.

We Need You!

JOIN OUR EVENT COMMITTEE

We are looking for passionate members to join our Event Committee and help bring the spirit of Italy to life within our club. Whether you have a knack for planning small or large scale events, a talent for sourcing the best authentic catering, or simply a desire to help decorate and organize our socials, we would love to have your input. By joining the committee, you'll play a vital role in preserving our heritage through memorable gatherings, from traditional feasts to contemporary celebrations. If you're ready to share your ideas and a little bit of your time to help our community thrive, please reach out to us at our next meeting or reply to this message.

(407-509-4802) or email us at: italianamericanclubofcfl@gmail.com