Two Cheeses of Emilia-Romagna and Tensions over National Identity in Italy

by

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Introduction: The King and the Court Jester

“It will be spaghetti, I swear to you, that unifies Italy.”-Attributed to Giuseppe Garibaldi

If Parmigiano-Reggiano is the king of Italian cheeses, Raviggiolo would only be allowed into court as the jester. Raviggiolo and Parmigiano-Reggiano are both primarily milk, starter bacteria, rennet, and salt, but they are in many ways opposites. Parmigiano-Reggiano must age at least 12 months while Raviggiolo can be eaten the same day it is produced. Parmigiano-Reggiano is made in huge hard wheels that are approximately the weight of an eight-year-old child while Raviggiolo is formed into soft and small circles. Parmigiano-Reggiano is a symbol of Italian cultural heritage known worldwide while Raviggiolo dell’Appennino Tosco-Romagnolo, its full title, is barely known 50 kilometers beyond its mountain place of origin. Parmigiano-Reggiano and Raviggiolo stand at different extremes of a spectrum of food culture in Emilia-Romagna based on economic and ethnic protection, legal commodification, price, and prestige.

Cheese is culture thrice over. It is culture first because it is the chemical breakdown of milk by bacteria, or fermentation. It is culture second because it is the application of human technology and ideas to a naturally occurring food item. Cheese came into being out of a need to preserve seasonal milk surpluses with fermentation. It is culture third because cheese’s status as a living food refers both to the fact that it contains active bacteria and that humans communicate their cultural

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3 Will Studd, Cheese slices (Prahran, Vic.: Hardie Grant, 2007) 14.
identity by consuming and producing it based on economic, nutritional and symbolic values.  

Parmigiano-Reggiano and Raviggiolo are associated with the central Italian region in which they are produced, Emilia-Romagna. [See Appendix Fig. 1] In a country renowned for its gastronomic diversity and quality, Emilia-Romagna has only Piemonte as a competitor for having the most internationally well-regarded culinary tradition.  

Emilia-Romagna is not only one of the most educated, rich, and agriculturally successful regions of Italy, but also creates the majority of food products thought of as “iconic Italian,” such as Aceto balsamico di Modena, prosciutto di Parma, and tortellini.  

Emilia-Romagna’s geography contributes to its agricultural success. The region borders the Po River to the north, the Adriatic Sea to the east, and the peaks of the Appennini to the south. The space between the Po River and the Appennini, known as the Padano, boasts the largest expanse of fertile farmland in the country. The region divides into nine provinces: Bologna, Ferrara, Forlì Cesena, Modena, Parma, Piacenza, Ravenna, Reggio nell’Emilia, and Rimini. [See Appendix Fig. 2]  

Emilia-Romagna consists of two distinct zones, Emilia and Romagna, joined in name and on official maps as a unified region during the process of the unification of the Italian Peninsula, the Risorgimento, in 1860. No one can seem to agree where to draw the line between the two zones, but it probably lies somewhere east of the

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4 Montanari, Food is Culture xii.
7 I will refer to the nationally created territorial divisions of Emilia-Romagna as provinces and areas within that space as territory.
city of Bologna. Like much of Italy, Emilia-Romagna changed hands many times in history and had Etruscans, Greeks, and Gauls for occupants. The region has been a crossroads of northern Italian trade since the Romans, linking Genoa and Venice to the markets of the East and West. Emilia derives its name from the Via Emilia, a Roman road that connected Rome to the north through Piacenza and Rimini, bringing different cultures, traditions, and food practices to the region. A superhighway now parallels the pathway. Bologna, Forlì, Modena, Reggio, Parma, and Piacenza were built along the Via Emilia at points where trade routes crossed the road from the Appennini while to the west Ravenna became the western capitol of the Byzantine Empire, poised on the road from Rome to Venice, and Ferrara connected Florence and Bologna with Venice.  

Romagna joined the Papal States in the 16th century during the conquests of Cesare Borgia, the warring son of Pope Alexander VI. Ironically, his sister, the maligned Lucrezia Borgia, married into the Este family of Ferrara, who along with the Parman Farnese family, controlled Emilia. This situation continued, with the exception that the Pope forced the Este family to Modena after taking control of Ferrara, until the intermarriage of European nobility transferred the last of the Este family to Austria. Emilia changed hands a few more times, most notably during the Napoleonic campaign, before settling piece by piece into an Italy putatively united in 1870. Romagna soon followed, after a brief return to Papal territory.

Today, Emilia-Romagna concentrates in urban centers like Bologna and disperses in isolated farming communities slowly disappearing under the pressures of

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9 Ibid. 6.
immigration and lack of economic opportunity. Emilia-Romagna occupies the forefront of an important and widespread national discussion about challenging industrial food systems in favor of local, sustainable, organic, and more humane farming practices. This dialogue about food’s future imagines a national Italian identity, as articulated by Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities.*

Italy has long struggled for self-definition. The concepts of “Italy” and “Italians” did not exist until their imagining by a small group of nationalists who then pushed for the creation of a kingdom of Italy. Italy was one of the last Western European countries to become an independent nation. Owing to this late unification, regional differences are socially, politically, and economically enormous. Italy joined the European Economic Community, now the European Union, in 1952, but the introduction of the euro in 2002, coupled with globalization, has forced the country to confront its economic, political, and social systems as the tensions between Italianness and Europeanness become more pronounced. Immigration, declining birthrates, globalization, and a depressed global economy exacerbate such instability. This upheaval heightens a desire to maintain Italian traditions not only for the sake of stability but as counterpoints to the country’s reputation as the most problematic nation in Western Europe.

Italians consider their identity and their food to be inextricable. In the 21st century, the performance of eating, discussing, growing, and cooking food is

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13 Ibid. x.
conceived following Anderson, as “the echoed physical realization,” of the imaginarily united people of Italy.\textsuperscript{14} As Helstosky observes, food has been considered a “national resource to be managed,” since state intervention and politics altered the diet of Italian citizens.\textsuperscript{15} In the 1920s, the Fascist government forced the Mediterranean diet on the population in the name of economic autarky and nutrition, helping to realize Mussolini’s goal of creating a homogenous national culture.\textsuperscript{16} Food shapes Italian perceptions of their shared identity, fostering group connectivity as the representative symbol of \textit{Italianità}, or Italianness.\textsuperscript{17}

The Italian preoccupation with the country’s eating habits has evolved from addressing the malnutrition and starvation that marked the country’s gastronomic heritage until the 20\textsuperscript{th} century to fighting against industrialization and homogenization perceived as Americanization in the production of food.\textsuperscript{18} Italy resists McDonald’s more than any other European Country.\textsuperscript{19} Ironically, the peasant cooking and regionalization once derided in the country is now considered “the jealously guarded patrimony of all Italians.”\textsuperscript{20} Italy is dealing with an absurd situation whereby the more that Italian food develops a global presence, the more that the very industrialization and globalization that led to the consumption of pizza and pasta on every continent is being fought internally as a threat against real national cuisine. When organizations

\textsuperscript{14} Anderson, \textit{Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism} 145.
\textsuperscript{18} Helstosky, \textit{Garlic and Oil: Politics and Food in Italy} 5.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid. 158.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid. 156.
like Slow Food protest Coca-Cola and genetically modified foodstuffs, it is a battle over what systems of power will define the country in the 21st century.21

In Italian, *piegare* denotes *to fold*. When preceded by an ‘s’, it becomes “*spiegare,*” *to explain,* or more literally, *to unfold,* or *unfolding.* In this paper I fold together many things: two cheeses, food and culture, Italian identity as it is perceived, personal observation and analysis, interviews and archives, and my interest in Emilia-Romagna with an examination that interrogates Italian food discourses mirrored internationally. To this end, I will examine a current conversation about Italian identity through the story, market success, and cultural iconography of Parmigiano-Reggiano and Raviggiolo. These two cheeses reveal how the values of authenticity, tradition, nobility, and above all else Italianness play out in the current Italian food discussion. Cultural issues of food definition may tie in to preoccupations about national pride and homogenization as the fight to protect biodiversity and local taste grows in Italy.

21 Ibid. 7.
A Noble Mountain of Cheese: Parmigiano-Reggiano

“Parmigiano-Reggiano is to cheese what the double bass is to string instruments.”  
Attributed to Alberto Savinio

An Italian Treasure

The most famous mention of Parmigiano-Reggiano occurs in Boccaccio’s Decameron when in the third novella of the eighth day the storyteller shares a tale about the Basque land of Bengodi, a mythical place of good times. There stands, “una montagna tutta di formaggio parmigiano grattugiato, sopra la quale stavan genti che niuna altra cosa facevano che far maccheroni e raviuoli e cuocergli in brodo di capponi” (a mountain made of grated parmigiano cheese, on which there were people that did not do anything but make maccheroni and ravioli, and cook them in capon broth). This 14th century quote shows Parmigiano-Reggiano’s long-standing association with richness and plenty beyond the confines of the Italian peninsula. The connection of one of Italy’s most respected literary works with one of its most respected food products is serendipitous, connecting a modern food industry to historical values and traditions.

Parmigiano-Reggiano is Italy’s “emblematic cheese.” In the popular culinary conception of Italian food as a heaping plate of pasta smothered in red sauce, Parmigiano-Reggiano is always grated on top. Nearly every food historian, cookbook author, and television chef declares Parmigiano-Reggiano “one of Italy’s most

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25 Sardo, Surrusca and Rubino, Italian Cheese: two hundred and ninety-three traditional types: a guide to its discovery and appreciation 278.
precious treasures." It is available throughout Italy and constitutes 15% of all cheese made in the country. A Coldiretti (the Italian farmer’s union) survey found Parmigiano-Reggiano the food most often stolen from Italian supermarkets. These results highlight Parmigiano-Reggiano’s prestige, high price, and seeming indispensability in Italy.

Like most of Italian history, Parmigiano-Reggiano can be traced back to the Church. Parmigiano-Reggiano may be the relative of an Etruscan ewe’s milk cheese, but its existence is credited to a 12th century monk. Benedictine and Cistercian monks cultivated the land of Parma and Reggio dell’Emilia specializing in raising cattle and cheesemaking. Parmigiano-Reggiano’s distinctive appearance and taste remain relatively similar to the cheese identified with the city of Parma in the 14th century. The cheese is made in the provinces of Reggio dell’Emilia, Parma, Modena, and Bologna in the region of Emilia-Romagna and in the province of Mantova in the region of Lombardia. [See Appendix Fig. 3] Nevertheless, cheese guides, including that of Slow Food, classify it as a specialty of Emilia-Romagna.

Parmigiano-Reggiano earns its global reputation for consistent quality from a laborious and exacting process of production. The cheese is made almost entirely by hand and Parmigiano-Reggiano casari must train 15-20 years to receive an official Consorzio del Formaggio Parmigiano-Reggiano (henceforth referred to as the

26 Studd, Cheese slices 246.
27 Ibid.
Consorzio) license. Parmigiano-Reggiano is impossible without the intervention of many different types of cheese specialists who must carefully coordinate the making, maturation, and quality testing of the cheese. Approximately 600 small caseifici produce an average of twenty or fewer wheels of Parmigiano-Reggiano per day. Parmigiano-Reggiano’s market presence is inordinate to its non-industrialized production methods, something that casari have struggled with when increasing the scale of production.

The Consorzio takes measures to guarantee that Parmigiano-Reggiano maintains its terroir, a French term denoting a particular quality that derives from the geography, bacteria, soil, etc. of a particular region, upon which the cheese’s flavor reputation stands. The Consorzio strictly regulates the milk used to make Parmigiano-Reggiano for local provenance and quality and mandates feeding cows on local fresh grasses and hay in large open barns. Silage, fermented feed, and other types of cow fodder that prevail in industrialized agriculture are banned for their tendency to contaminate cheese with bacteria. A casaro collects milks from the cows twice and day and stores the milk in copper cauldrons until the fat separates. The fattier milk is used to make mascarpone and butter while the lower fat milk becomes Parmigiano-Reggiano. Instead of commercial cultures, the starter cultures used to instigate the milk’s fermentation are collected from the previous day’s batch of cheese and calf rennet is used as a coagulant instead of modern substitutes. In 1984, the Consorzio

31 Studd, Cheese slices 244.
32 Ibid. 246.
33 Ibid.
34 Studd, Eastment and Robinson, Cheese slices Volume 1.
35 Studd, Cheese slices 247.
36 Studd, Eastment and Robinson, Cheese slices Volume 1.
37 Ibid.
expanded Parmigiano-Reggiano’s period of production from the traditional April-November to year-round to meet demand for the cheese.\textsuperscript{38}

Contemporary Parmigiano-Reggiano production balances mechanization with human touch.\textsuperscript{39} Both milk dividing machines and strong \textit{casari} manipulating curds into massive balls using wooden paddles create the cheese.\textsuperscript{40} The image of practiced artisans crafting Parmigiano-Reggiano a lauded aspect of the Consorzio. Many labor-saving shortcuts are omitted for fear of diminishing the quality of the cheese. For instance, it is prohibited to use too large a size of road tanker to transport the milk for fear of diminishing the cheese’s excellence.\textsuperscript{41} Special instruments are dedicated to the Parmigiano-Reggiano making process, like a \textit{spino}, resembling a cavernous whisk with its spokes turned outwards.\textsuperscript{42} The cheese is formed in copper cauldrons that echo its future distinctive honey color.

\textbf{Imitation is the Highest Form of Flattery}

Parmigiano-Reggiano’s fame grew because of its durability.\textsuperscript{43} The cheese’s hardness allows it to stay fresh for up to five years, though after three years it can be quite dry.\textsuperscript{44} This tenacity facilitated Parmigiano-Reggiano’s transportation by mule over the Appennini, spreading its fame beyond Italy and onto the tables of the upper class of Western Europe.\textsuperscript{45} Parmigiano-Reggiano’s easily distinguishable appearance aids its renown. At 85 lbs, the wheels of cheese are immense and heavy, making it

\textsuperscript{38} Studd, \textit{Cheese slices} 247.
\textsuperscript{39} Studd, Eastment and Robinson, \textit{Cheese slices, Volume 1}.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{43} Rebora, \textit{Culture of the Fork: A Brief History of Food in Europe} 38.
\textsuperscript{45} Rebora, \textit{Culture of the Fork: A Brief History of Food in Europe} 37.
easy to pick Parmigiano-Reggiano out from other cheeses in a display. The cheese is also known for its high nutritional value. It is lower in fat and higher in calcium and protein relative to other cheeses.46

Perhaps the most valuable indicators of Parmigiano-Reggiano’s fame are its numerous imitators. Parmigiano-Reggiano is so sought after that even the American food giant Kraft manufactures an imitation, a shredded “parmesan” with almost none of the ingredients that make cheese a changing, variable, and live food. Parmigiano-Reggiano is often confused for another hard cow’s milk grating cheese from Northern Italy, Grana Padano. The name Parmesan obscures the differences between the two.47 Both are technically grana cheese, or hard grating cheeses that have a grainy texture, but they differ in preparation technique, length of maturation, and size of area of production. Parmigiano-Reggiano has a more restricted area of production and its wheels are floated in salted water for 20-30 days and aged at least a year, leading to a higher market price and, some say, better quality taste.48 To someone not educated in Italian cheeses, Grana Padano and Parmigiano-Reggiano appear, and even taste, identical. Both are presented in round wheels marked by the dotted name of their consorzio and both are commonly grated over pasta.

Indeed Grana Padano is Parmigiano-Reggiano’s biggest competitor in the marketplace. Grana Padano’s own consortium, Il Consorzio per la Tutela del Formaggio Grana Padano, gained DOC recognition in 1955 “to prevent confusion

46 Studd, Cheese slices 248.
with other types of cheese being sold as Parmesan.”\textsuperscript{49} Though the Consorzio per la Tutela del Formaggio Grana Padano grades and controls their cheese’s maturation like that of the Consorzio del Formaggio Parmigiano-Reggiano, Grana Padano’s scale of production leads to a less dependable cheese.\textsuperscript{50} Australian cheese expert Will Studd writes that, “the best Grana Padano cheeses are as good as an average Parmigiano Reggiano but generally they are around the same price.”\textsuperscript{51} Though Grana Padano sells more, Parmigiano-Reggiano is considered “the benchmark” for judging grana cheeses.\textsuperscript{52}

The Cheese and the Consorzio

Parmigiano-Reggiano’s reputation for quality in the last 100 years is due to the efforts of the Consorzio del Formaggio Parmigiano-Reggiano. The Consorzio oversees a complicated and “strict system of self-regulation to assure the quality of every single cheese its members produce,” with “an enduring respect for tradition and quality.”\textsuperscript{53} The necessity of cooperation to produce Parmigiano-Reggiano led to the Consorzio del Formaggio Parmigiano-Reggiano. Parmigiano-Reggiano uses up to 1000 litres of milk in a single wheel, requiring entire village associations or regional cooperatives to make production feasible.\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{50} Studd, Cheese slices 252.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid. 246.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{54} Maguelonne Toussaint-Samat, A History of Food (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Reference, 1993) 117.
including cooperative dairies since the start of the 20th century. In 2006, there were about 5,000 dairy farmers, 10% of all dairy farmers in Italy, and 500 dairy possessors, 26% of the Italian total, making Parmigiano-Reggiano.

These communal structures facilitated the Chamber of Commerce of Reggio Emilia proposing of a trade union between producers and traders of Parmigiano-Reggiano “to authenticate the origin of the product to be exported,” in 1901 and a joint marketing strategy in 1909. In 1934, the producers and dairy cooperatives of Parmigiano-Reggiano established the Consorzio Volontario Interprovinciale del Grana Tipico. That consorzio introduced the brand name Parmigiano-Reggiano, previously known as Grana Parmigiano Reggiano, and worked to defend the trade-name, promote, and define the area of production for the cheese. Consolidating force and creating boundaries were themes of Italian culture in the 1930s. The Fascist war in Ethiopia also commenced in 1934, revisiting the embarrassing defeat at Adowa in 1896 with a show of Italian autocratic force.

The Argentine imitation cheese Reggianito hastened the Consorzio’s establishment of Parmigiano-Reggiano regulations after World War I. The diminutive “ito” refers to the cheese’s size; it is only a 15 lb. wheel. According to www.igourmet.com, which sells a version of Reggianito internationally, the cheese comes from Italian immigrant communities in Argentina who wanted to replicate

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55 Stefano Boccaletti Filippo Arfini, Corrado Giacomini, Daniele Moro, Paolo Sckokai, Case study: Parmigiano Reggiano (European Commission for Sustainability in Agriculture, Food, and Health, 2006).
56 Ibid., 7-8.
57 Ibid., 10.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
Parmigiano-Reggiano in their new country. In 1954, the Consorzio Volontario Interprovinciale del Grana Tipico became the Consorzio del Formaggio Parmigiano-Reggiano and pushed for Parmigiano-Reggiano’s inclusion in legislation protecting national cheeses.

The modern role of the Consorzio continues to be regulating and standardizing Parmigiano-Reggiano production, but it has also become litigating against competitors and presenting a standardized series of values and images with the cheese. The Consorzio self-defines its tasks as “the defense and protection of the Designation of Origin [and] the facilitation of trade and consumption by promoting every initiative aimed at safeguarding the typicality and unique features,” of Parmigiano-Reggiano.

Every wheel of cheese that can be legally called Parmigiano-Reggiano is inscribed with four different markers by the Consorzio to verify quality and production process. The first mark is the matrix of dots that spell out the name of the cheese around the rind, made by imprinting young and soft Parmigiano-Reggiano wheels in a plastic sleeve within a steel hoop. [See Appendix Fig. 4] This also records the producer’s registration number and the year and month of the cheese’s production. Since January 2002, every cheese also carries an oval green label made out of casein with a “unique alphanumeric identification code.” After the cheese passes a test for external appearance and internal structure, performed by a

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61 Filippo Arfini, Case study: Parmigiano Reggiano.
62 Where from?
63 Studd, Cheese slices 248.
64 Sardo, Surrusca and Rubino, Italian Cheese: two hundred and ninety-three traditional types: a guide to its discovery and appreciation 278.
65 Ibid.
stagionatore at a maturation facility, it receives the Consorzio’s fire-branded logo, denoting quality.\(^{66}\) [See Appendix Fig. 5] Finally, a wax seal is applied to the wheel to indicate the length of the cheese’s maturation with red signifying 18 months, silver 22 months, and gold over 30 months.\(^{67}\) [See Appendix Fig. 6]

Together these markers are a mechanized ritual of labeling, claiming, and distinguishing the cheese’s genealogy, making an organic foodstuff a gastronomic commodity. The numerous ways that the Consorzio marks Parmigiano-Reggiano creates something akin to a royal pedigree, verifying the identity and authenticity of the cheese. The alphanumeric code is particularly striking as an example of the Consorzio adopting the practice of industrial manufacturers stamping their products with serial numbers as identification on a semi-artisanal food product.

**Wait and See**

The Consorzio protects the reputation of Parmigiano-Reggiano by marking the quality and origin of the cheese, litigating against imitators, and associating the cheese with the values of nobility and classiness through marketing campaigns. The Consorzio’s standardization of the cheese-making process is matched by their homogenization of a set of values associated with the advertising of Parmigiano-Reggiano. The Consorzio utilizes a vocabulary of protection to describe their

\(^{66}\) Studd 251, SF Italian Cheese 279  
relationship to the cheese. They exist “tutelare il Parmigiano-Reggiano dalle sue imitazioni” (to safeguard Parmigiano-Reggiano from its imitators).68

The Consorzio operates as a not-for-profit, but commands the economic power to present annual marketing campaigns and publish books on Parmigiano-Reggiano. At the Salone del Gusto 2008, the Consorzio distributed the Guida all’analisi sensoriale (Guide to Sensorial Analysis) which outlines the Procedura di Assaggio (Taste Procedure) recommended to best appreciate the cheese. [See Appendix Fig. 7] The Procedura is a nine-step process that involves visual, olfactory, gustatory, and tactile examinations of Parmigiano-Reggiano, which include rolling a sample of the cheese around in the mouth and evaluating its after-taste to understand its complex flavor structure.69

Slow Food stages the biennial food extravaganza Salone del Gusto in Torino, Italy in conjunction with the regional government of Piemonte and the city of Torino. [See Appendix Fig. 8] The Laboratori del Gusto (Taste Workshops) are one of many activities at a fair meant to make eaters “co-producers”, or informed consumers about the production and producers of their food, making them active supporters in the agricultural process. The workshops are billed as food educational sessions where, “si fanno confronti, domande, si assagga, si tocca, si valuta...tenendo sempre presente che il buon cibo e il buon vino sono anzi tutto un piacere, che deve essere anche reso dotto” (one compares, asks, tastes, touches, evaluates...always keeping in mind that

69 Anna Garavaldi, Parmigiano Reggiano Guida all’analisi sensoriale (Reggio Emilia: Consorzio del Formaggio Parmigiano-Reggiano, 2008) 39-45.
good food and good wine are above all else a pleasure that needs to be learned). The idea that the pleasure of food must be learned informs the entire Salone del Gusto, including the Laboratorio del Gusto Aspetta e Vedrai (Wait and See) held on the last day of the fair as a primer on appreciating Parmigiano-Reggiano at four stages of maturation.

Aspetta e Vedrai provided an education on analyzing the sensorial qualities of Parmigiano-Reggiano. A panel of officials from the Consorzio and wine companies led the event. At every seating there was a plate arranged with four slices of Parmigiano-Reggiano aged 25, 29, 38, and 87 months respectively. To the right of the cheese plate were four initially empty wine glasses, to be paired with the differently aged cheeses, a glass of sparkling water, and a basket of hard round bread. In the course of the hour-long workshop, Parmigiano-Reggiano slivers at different stages of ageing were described as fruity, extreme, displaying animal tones, and containing umami, a Japanese phrase that is used to describe the taste of “filling” glutamates, among hundreds of other adjectives culminating in a description of the oldest cheese as, “un evento in se” (an event in itself).

The ceremonial instructions on how to properly savor Parmigiano-Reggiano contained in the Guida all’analisi sensoriale and performed at Aspetta e Vedrai, demonstrate how taste is not just a natural biological function. As the Italian food scholar Massimo Montanari writes, “taste is not in fact subjective and

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72 Garavaldi, Parmigiano Reggiano Guida all’analisi sensoriale.
incommunicable, but rather collective and eminently communicative.” The Consorzio’s sensorial awareness program is presented as the sole legitimate and discerning way to experience Parmigiano-Reggiano, training consumers to not only enjoy the cheese but on how to do so. This gastronomic education, beyond carrying the classist taint of privileging an expensive foodstuff and the information to experience it fully, provides the audience a rhetoric of taste quality that reinforces the place of Parmigiano-Reggiano in the identity of Italy and Emilia-Romagna.

Nobility and Mother’s Milk

Appreciation of Parmigiano-Reggiano’s taste is reinforced each time the cheese’s gustatory qualities are evaluated in an official setting, but it is also learned through the marketing that pairs a set of values with the globally marketed and distributed cheese. On a worksheet given to the participants at Aspetta e Vedrai for notetaking about the wines and cheeses presented, Parmigiano-Reggiano is described as, “un formaggio che non teme lo scorrere del tempo, che anzi, spesso, lo nobilita” (a cheese that is not afraid of the passage of time, but in fact ennobles it).74 These dual themes of nobility and timelessness are the values most commonly presented in describing the cheese. The large body of advertising, including posters, pamphlets, and pens, reinforce the association of these values with Parmigiano-Reggiano, while simultaneously raising the cheese’s status as an important Italian food due to the very existence of so much advertising. [See Appendix Fig. 9]

Nobility as a concept has a mixed history in Italy. Vittorio Emanuele II was crowned king of the kingdom of Italy in 1870, legitimating the nationalist movement

73 Montanari, Food is Culture 62.
74 Aspetta e vedrai...
with his lineage in the French royal house of Savoia (Savoy). The kingship reigned in Italy until 1946, when the newly formed Repubblica Italiana passed a national referendum exiling the Savoia family for collaborating with Mussolini.\textsuperscript{75} In 2001, the government lifted the ban, allowing the royal family to return as part of an attempt to keep the government from disbanding due to opposition from a royalist faction.\textsuperscript{76} The fact that the conception of Italian royalty has changed from dangerous Fascist collaborators to a nearly kitschy perception of a defunct royal line, epitomized by Prince Emanuele Filiberto winning a televised dancing contest in 2009, shows how nobility has recently become removed from historical reality to become a type of nostalgia in the Italian imagination.

Valorizing Parmigiano-Reggiano for its nobility demonstrates a desire to imagine an Italian situation different from the current social reality. Nobility denotes a system of governance that is not the current republic, nor the EU coalition, but a pre-democratic institution, locating the monarchy as a pan-Italian force at the country’s unification. Nobility also implies a historical timeframe that predates industrialization and globalization, a system of stratification that features a class of rural workers and a smaller class of educated nobles able to truly appreciate quality agricultural products.\textsuperscript{77} This forwards Parmigiano-Reggiano as a status symbol of the upper classes, available only on a limited scale to the poor.\textsuperscript{78} Nobility stands in opposition to contemporary Italian economic and political instability, highlighting the

\textsuperscript{75} Bruce Johnston, "Italian royal family prepares to return from exile," \textit{Sunday Telegraph} February 11, 2001.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{77} Rita Mattioli, personal interview, 30 October 2008.
\textsuperscript{78} Rebora, \textit{Culture of the Fork: A Brief History of Food in Europe} 37.
aspects of Italian society that remain global markers of discerning taste while the country struggles.

Much of the praise for Parmigiano-Reggiano also draws on historically blind and nostalgic Italian cultural images. In the Introduction to the *Slow Food Guide to Italian Cheeses*, Piero Sardo writes that, “For Italians, grana-type cheese is like mother. It is the first great love of our lives.”79 This quote links the cheese to a living stereotype of Italian culture, the self-abnegating *mamma*. The reference also recalls the irredentist poet D’Annuzio’s tying of the rhetoric of nationalism to the feminized geography of Italy as *Madre-Patria*.80 This female gendering of Parmigiano-Reggiano stands in contrast to its masculinization as patriarchal nobility.

The website of the Consorzio reveals the money and careful structuring that have gone into advertising the cheese, presenting Parmigiano-Reggiano’s history as an unbroken link to the “genuine” past. The English language version of the website describes it as having a “perfect typicality that has remained unchanged until the present day.”81 The Consorzio website positions the makers of Parmigiano-Reggiano against Americanization and industrialization. *Casari* are described as preserving Parmigiano-Reggiano by not “surrendering to the temptation of simplifying functions and activities, not even today when everything is technology and automation.”82 Widespread mechanization stands in contrasts to risk and “matured experiences.”83

82 Ibid.
83 Ibid.
The positioning of the Consorzio against industrialization draws upon the Italian cultural propensity to set “its cultural traditions against “virgin” America,” articulated by Antonio Gramsci in *The Prison Notebooks.*84 Parmigiano-Reggiano is described as an “inimitable,” nearly divine foodstuff.85 The devotion of the non-mechanized *casari* is rewarded “but like in all creative works, *God's help* has a play in it,” re-affirming the traditional link between Italian production and the Church.86

The Consorzio children’s website exemplifies the tension between industrialization and preservation of “Emilia-Romagnan” values in the marketing of Parmigiano-Reggiano.87 The games and information on the site juxtapose the competing desire to tie the cheese to place, production, and historical conventions and keep Parmigiano-Reggiano a desirable global commodity. The website opens with an image of a mouse flying over the countryside on a wheel of Parmigiano-Reggiano with a cow holding onto its tail and a handsome, brawny farmer holding onto the cow’s tail and his hat. [See Appendix Fig. 10] The screen reads, “Dal cuore della terra Emiliana” (From the heart of the Emilian land).88 On the Italian version of the website, clicking on the cow explains that the site introduces people to the “Re dei Formaggi,” which on the English website is translated as the “God of cheese.” In a section devoted to the production of Parmigiano-Reggiano, the mouse states, “non si fabbrica, si fa,” (You don’t produce it, you make it).89 This statement insists on the human and artisanal nature of the cheese, ironically immersed in a site that utilizes

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85 *Parmigiano-Reggiano*, Otto secoli di nobiltà, Le origini.
86 Ibid. Original emphasis
87 *Parmigiano-Reggiano*.
88 Ibid.
89 Ibid.
the format of a children’s website of games and information initiated by American industrialized food companies. The children’s website also features a game entitled *Emilian Rhythm* where the player make a song about cheese using basic elements of American hip-hop. [See Appendix Fig. 11] The Consorzio tries to market Parmigiano-Reggiano as an Italian product to adults but knows that Italian youths idolize American culture. So thorough and widespread is this marketing that it has become similar to the franchising of American industrial food products.

The cultural commodification of Parmigiano-Reggiano is focalized in the Museo del Parmigiano-Reggiano in Soragna, in the province of Parma. The masthead of the museum’s website states, “L’arte antica della simplicità. L’amore per la genuinità” (The ancient art of simplicity. Love of the authentic).90 [See Appendix Fig. 12] This museum motto creates a link with perceived ancient values and the pursuit of the “authentic,” over the “inauthentic” and complicated industrial. The museum displays Parmigiano-Reggiano production artifacts from the second half of the 19\(^{th}\) century to the first half of the 20\(^{th}\). The layout of the museum is based on a royal family’s *caseificio* and takes the visitor through the cheese’s production, culminating in the Consorzio del Formaggio Parmigiano-Reggiano and marketing.

Creating a museum for a food product is a legitimating process of cultural reclamation. Museums claim ancestry and delineate territory. Anderson writes about how there exists in museums a “popular nationalist enthusiasm, and a systematic, even Machiavellian, instilling of nationalist ideology.”91 The museum’s website also acknowledges the growth of the agriturismo and food tourism sector in terms of size

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91 Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism 163.
and economic importance. When a food is tied to the economic success of a region, it tends to become valuable economically, and its prestige linked to the area of origin. This valorizes a presentation of Italian gastronomic culture as simple, ancient, and genuine, masking the more complicated reality that turnips and chestnuts, the food of poverty, are as “Emilia-Romagnan” as Parmigiano-Reggiano. The Museo del Parmigiano-Reggiano is a part of a group of Parman Food Museums that also includes the Museo del Pomodoro, the Museo del Prosciutto di Parma, and the Museo del Salame, showing how important a selective presentation of Italian food values is to the country’s tourism industry.

The commemorative book published by the Consorzio Parmigiano Reggiano: A Symbol of Culture and Civilization clearly shows the values of nobility and grandeur imposed on Parmigiano-Reggiano. The book presents a history of the cheese filled with language that insists on authenticity and value. The most overt instance of this is in the Introduction, written by Paolo Delmonte, who ambiguously states that if Parmigiano-Reggiano were “not one hundred per cent authentic it would not be Parmigiano-Reggiano.” Parmigiano-Reggiano is “a passion that is handed down from generation to generation and kept alive by the pride of belonging to a Élite group, the aristocracy of the makers of the most prestigious cheese in the world.” In the quote, nobility is applied to the casari themselves, positioning them as entrenched protectors of tradition. Though informative, the book is distracted from its aims by florid language. A 30-page folio of photos from the regions where the cheese is made

92 Dickie, Delizia!: the epic history of the Italians and their food 138.
94 Ibid.
tellingly include no sign of modernity but a Fiat car out of focus in a picture of an old man on a bicycle under an arch in the Bentivoglio palace of Reggio Emilia.  

This is an ironic juxtaposition of the pre- eminent symbol of Italian industrialization and modernism with the ancient architecture of nobility.

Though one of the factors used to legitimate Parmigiano-Reggiano’s nobility is that current cheese-making practices resemble those of the 14th century, Consorzio producers mainly use the same milking cow as industrial agriculture. What is usually underplayed or left out in the sanctioned materials of the Consorzio is how the breed of cow traditionally milked to make Parmigiano-Reggiano, Razza Reggiana, has been replaced by the Holstein-Friesian. The dominance of Holstein-Friesians in milk production endangers traditional cheeses tied to particular region breeds, lessening agricultural biodiversity. They are the most commonly used milking cow in the world because of the large volume of milk they produce per hectare and because they give cheese “a more compact structure and longer ageing potential.” This demonstrates the limitations of the ability or desire of the Consorzio to truly control production of an “authentic” Parmigiano-Reggiano while remaining economically solvent in a global food system.

**Trade-Names and Regulation**

The Consorzio del Formaggio Parmigiano-Reggiano self-regulates to ensure the quality and image of each cheese produced, but it is Italian and European law that

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95 Ibid. 64.  
96 Studd, Cheese slices 246.  
97 Ibid. 39.  
98 Ibid.
protects Parmigiano-Reggiano’s trade-name.\textsuperscript{99} In 1955 the Italian Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry met with \textit{casari} to discuss protecting the trade-names of well known Italian cheeses, leading to the creation of Denominazione d’Origine Controllata (Denomination of Controlled Origins), or DOC regulations. Parmigiano-Reggiano gained the DOC designation in that year.\textsuperscript{100} DOC status protects the trade names of the cheeses so that imitations, i.e., cheeses made in a similar manner but in a different region and with milk originating from a different source than the agreed upon location, must be sold under a different name.\textsuperscript{101} DOC status is a guarantee of origin, not a guarantee of quality; ensuring that is left to individual regulatory consortiums.\textsuperscript{102} The DOC mark on a wheel of Parmigiano-Reggiano guarantees that the cheese was made in the designated provinces of Lombardia and Emilia-Romagna, that the milk was produced in those regions, and that it was produced with the particular methods that denote Parmigiano-Reggiano. Similar systems of protection exist in France (AOC), Spain (DO), and Switzerland (Swiss AOC).\textsuperscript{103}

National recognition of the DOC system in the 1960s responded to the new economic importance of the Italian market.\textsuperscript{104} Italy’s post-war Economic Miracle popularized market regulation of well-known Italian cheeses. From 1958-1963, a post-Fascist Italian Repubblica experienced its highest growth rates to that point and a 6.3% increase in Gross Domestic Product.\textsuperscript{105} Until the mid-1950s, Italy was undeveloped and unindustrialized in comparison with its western European

\textsuperscript{99} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{100} Parasecoli, \textit{Food Culture in Italy} 37.
\textsuperscript{101} Studd, \textit{Cheese slices} 122.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid. 123-5.
\textsuperscript{104} Studd, \textit{Cheese slices} 246.
neighbors. This boom helped push Italy to the “forefront of European economic integration,” but also increased the disparities between northern and southern Italy and industrial and traditional producers.

Because only cheeses supported by organized councils could apply for DOC status, this trade-mark protection mirrors the benefits and drawbacks of the Economic Miracle, making financial success and survival much more difficult to achieve for producers of less well-known and/or respected cheeses. Those cheeses without well-organized consortiums able to self-regulation, and by extension self-define, were unable to get the prestige and economic advantage of DOC status, exacerbating the divide between “name” cheeses and leading to the disappearance or near-disappearance of many cheeses. DOC status conferred an advantage when Italy entered the EU, allowing designated cheeses to establish themselves in the European market.

On July 14, 1992, the European Union established “the protection of geographical indications and designations,” creating the Protected Designation of Origin (PDO). Council Regulation N. 2081/92 states that Designation of Origin means the region or place where a specific foodstuff originates and that area’s unique quality or characteristics “and the production, processing and preparation of which take place in the defined geographical area.”

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107 Ibid. 216.
108 Filippo Arfini, Case study: Parmigiano Reggiano, 7.
110 Sardo, Surrusca and Rubino, Italian Cheese: two hundred and ninety-three traditional types: a guide to its discovery and appreciation 48.
The PDO system continues the privileging of certain types of organized food councils over others on a European scale. The PDO system protects the name and reputation of food products, but like the DOC system, is only available to those food products with pre-existing bodies to regulate and oversee an item’s origin. Those countries which already had national food regulation systems were able to dominate the PDO designations. This privileged Italy’s agricultural biodiversity so that all 31 Italian DOC cheeses were included. Italy registered 123 products under the PDO regulation, 20% of the total, and France registered 131. In contrast, Denmark was able to register only one PDO product, the asparagus type Lammefjordsasparge, which is representative not only of the small size of the country, but that the nation’s food-making traditions may not have had systems amenable to E.U. legislation. The PDO regulation system is partly responsible for a rash of spin-off products from northern EU countries like Germany based on the more famous products from southern countries. This was especially true with cured meat and cheese.

The European Union’s PDO process privileges a conception of European food as locally specialized, furthering biodiversity, and well-regulated, subsuming national cuisines to European bureaucracy. The language of the European Union’s Agricultural Product Quality Policy underplays the role that quality foodstuffs previously played as national pride products in service of a new conception of Europeanness. The PDO system introduced by the European Union in 1992 added

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111 Studd, Cheese slices 125.
113 Parasecoli, Food Culture in Italy 39.
114 Development, European Union agricultural product quality policy.
115 Parasecoli, Food Culture in Italy 38-9.
value to “high-quality products from a demarcated geographical area” and promoted European biodiversity in agricultural production by “acknowledging the value of rare or disappearing resources,” but has hurt foodstuffs both given and denied PDO status with the strictness of the regulation.\textsuperscript{116} The PDO system has also been controversial for which version of “traditional” and “authentic” foods are awarded the trade-mark of products.\textsuperscript{117} The policy’s statement labels the production of “high-end quality products” in the agricultural sector something in which “Europe excels,” but may cause more bureaucratic problems for those very products upon which Europe’s culinary reputation is built.\textsuperscript{118}

\textbf{Battle and Bailout}

Since receiving PDO designation in 1992, the Consorzio del Formaggio Parmigiano-Reggiano has been fighting against imitators within Europe and abroad. The PDO designation gives the Consorzio del Formaggio Parmigiano-Reggiano legal power in other European countries, including recognition as the only cheese that can be called Parmesan in the EU.\textsuperscript{119} The Consorzio may now has the support of the EU for international litigation, including a case against Wisconsin producers using the name “parmigiano.”\textsuperscript{120} In February 2008, the European Court of Justice ruled that German producers could not sell cheese under the title of “Parmesan,” as it is an “evocation” of a protected brand.\textsuperscript{121} Parmigiano-Reggiano is one of few PDO

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid. 38.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid. 39.
\textsuperscript{118} Development, \textit{European Union agricultural product quality policy}.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{120} Parasecoli, \textit{Food Culture in Italy} 39.
products that “can be considered a mass market product rather than a niche product,” and has been one of the most publicly litigious.\textsuperscript{122}

The Consorzio is having some success in legally combating imitators and trade-name infringers, but producers of Parmigiano-Reggiano are struggling financially. The price of the cheese is “below the survival threshold.”\textsuperscript{123} Other emblematic Italian cheeses like Mozzarella di bufala Campania, Asiago, and Pecorino Romano share this fate.\textsuperscript{124} Parmigiano-Reggiano producers operate at a loss and must undersell the cheese. One producer reported loosing 400,000 euros in fiscal 2008.\textsuperscript{125} The Italian government bought 100,000 wheels of Parmigiano-Reggiano in December 2008 to bail out that industry, donating the cheese to charity with EU funds meant to feed the needy.\textsuperscript{126} Struggling producers of Grana Padano also received the 100,000 wheel bail out, costing the Italian government 50,000,000 euros in total.

There exists real danger that with the onset of a global economic depression many, if not most, Parmigiano-Reggiano producers will go out of business. Parmigiano-Reggiano’s current market struggle further highlights the fact that the cheese remains a product predominately made by small, family-owned businesses. Parmigiano-Reggiano is also facing problems with an industrial system that does not aid a fragmented, family produced product. These smaller groups have little leverage in negotiating with wholesalers or the desired price of consumers.\textsuperscript{127} Nearly 20,000 workers are involved in the Parmigiano-Reggiano industry; a third currently face

\textsuperscript{122} Filippo Arfini, \textit{Case study: Parmigiano Reggiano}.
\textsuperscript{123} Sardo, Surrusca and Rubino, \textit{Italian Cheese: two hundred and ninety-three traditional types: a guide to its discovery and appreciation} 8.
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid. 6.
\textsuperscript{125} Davide Berretta, "Hard Times for Parmigiano Makers Have Italy Ponying up the Cheddar," \textit{Wall Street Journal} December 10, 2008.
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid.
The market price of the cheese continues to drop as milk and energy costs rise. Parmigiano-Reggiano’s survival may depend on exportation; currently 22% of the cheese is sold outside of the country as Parmigiano-Reggiano competes not only with its own distribution but that of Grana Padano. As Paolo Sckokai, professor of agricultural economics at Università Cattolica, says of the cheese, “We have this phenomenal product...and it’s worth nothing.”

Parmigiano-Reggiano’s current economic struggle may relate to new gastronomic awareness in Italy that views the cheese as industrial in relation to artisan raw milk cheeses, in spite of the the Consorzio’s efforts to characterize the nobility and hand-crafted nature of Parmigiano-Reggiano. Parmigiano-Reggiano, the cheese of the *Decameron*, is experiencing a trajectory from economic success to struggle that mirrors that of the Italian peninsula, which went from the market viability of the Economic Miracle to the economic and political instability of the 21st century. A backlash is forming against the widespread advertising of the Consorzio, and presumably against how this tactic is perceived as American industrial capitalism. In the next section I will address the near extinction and then market success of Raviggiolo dell’Appennino Tosco-Romagnolo, which exemplifies the recent vogue for mountain-crafted cheeses that is threatening Parmigiano-Reggiano’s future as a viable global commodity.

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128 "Agricultural Products: European Court of Justice Ruling Protects Parmesan."
130 Berretta, "Hard Times for Parmigiano Makers Have Italy Ponying up the Cheddar," 1.
131 Ibid.
132 Sardo, Surrusca and Rubino, *Italian Cheese: two hundred and ninety-three traditional types: a guide to its discovery and appreciation*. 
Il Topolino dei Formaggi: Raviggiolo dell’Appennino Tosco-Romagnolo

“Se uno ha la forma della Ferrari dei formaggi, l’altro é la Cinquecento, il Topolino dei formaggi. (If one has the form of the Ferrari of cheese, the other is the Cinquecento, the Topolino of cheeses.).”

Culinary Unification

In La scienza in cucina e l’arte di mangiar bene, the legendary Emilia-Romagna codifier of culinary traditions Pellegrino Artusi suggests as an alternative to the Ricotta filling in Cappelletti all’uso di Romagna “oppure metà ricotta e metà cacio raviggiolo, grammi 180” (or instead half ricotta and half raviggiolo cheese, 180 grams). The recipe continues with a warning that “[A] un mangiatore discreto bastano due dozzine” (To a discerning eater, two dozen are sufficient), of the pasta

La scienza in cucina e l’arte di mangiar bene, first published in 1891, applied the recent political unification of Italy to the culinary habits of the various regions, in the words of Benedict Anderson, imagining an Italian identity through gastronomy. It was the first cooking guide written in Italian intended for the home chef at a time when European cookbooks were written for professionals serving noble families and almost uniformly featured a French focus. The book addressed the developing middle class and those who spoke only the language of national identity. Artusi’s combination of recipe collection, anecdotes, and opinions codifies local culture for the new nation, but the author does not simply collect local traditions but often

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134 Pellegrino Artusi and Piero Camporesi, La scienza in cucina e l’arte di mangiar bene, I millenni (Torino: G. Einaudi, 2001) 44.
135 Ibid.
136 Montanari, Food is Culture 78.
137 Artusi, Science in the Kitchen and the Art of Eating Well.
138 Ibid.
creates, imagines, and modifies traditions to fit his conception of regional cuisine.\textsuperscript{139} Many of the recipes are impossible to replicate, but as Piero Camporesi writes, Artusi’s project of Italian culinary unification worked better than the project of linguistic unification championed by the author Alessandro Manzoni.\textsuperscript{140}

The only collection of Italian food traditions that might mirror Artusi’s 117 years later is Slow Food’s Salone del Gusto. This international food fair continues a process of inventing an Italian national narrative through world fairs started in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{141} The booth featuring the Slow Food Raviggiolo dell’Appennino Tosco-Romagnolo Presidium, the organization’s system of economic and marketing support for endangered foodstuffs, was embedded deeply within the cavernous exhibition space of the Fiat complex at the 2008 Salone del Gusto.\textsuperscript{142} That a fair dedicated to local food occurs in the factory that housed FIAT, the symbol of Italian industrialization, is deliciously ironic.\textsuperscript{143} The FIAT company was the largest employer in Torino through the 1980’s.\textsuperscript{144} Around its enormous factory grew the neighborhood of Lingotto, still a working-class and immigrant district.\textsuperscript{145} Today the original factory houses exhibitions, including the Salone del Gusto, and the church of Italian gastronomic capitalism Eataly, a humongous gathering of food stores and restaurants.

\textsuperscript{139} Montanari, \textit{Food is Culture} 78.
\textsuperscript{140} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{141} Cristina Della Coletta, \textit{World’s Fairs Italian Style: The Great Exhibitions in Turin and Their Narratives, 1860-1915}, Toronto Italian studies (Toronto ; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2006).
\textsuperscript{142} For the sake of clarity, future references to Raviggiolo dell’Appenino Tosco-Romagnolo may be shortened to Raviggiolo. References to any other variations of Raviggiolo-type cheese will be noted.
\textsuperscript{143} Ginsborg, \textit{A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics, 1943-1988} 17.
\textsuperscript{144} Di Scala, \textit{Italy: From revolution to Republic, 1700 to the Present} 373.
Gabrielle Locatelli, the president of the Razza Bovina Romagnola Presidium and author of a pamphlet on Raviggiolo, manned the Raviggiolo Presidium booth. Locatelli comes from the mountain community of Acquacheta in the Forlì Cesena province in the Tosco-Romagnolo Appennini mountain chain. Acquacheta lies on the border of the Parco Nazionale Foreste Casentinesi. I interviewed Signore Locatelli about Raviggiolo and the culture of food in Emilia-Romagna on the last day of the Salone Del Gusto, October 27, 2008. Locatelli’s paralleled Raviggiolo with the Italian automotive industry, revealing a previous way that economic success was measured in Italy. Ferrari, despite their cinematic prominence as a rich male symbol, are a rarity in Italy. The Topolino, the nickname of the Cinquecento, an affordable and small middle-class car, introduced the mobility of automotive culture to Italy. The Topolino allowed citizens the mobility to visit new places on the peninsula, helping to achieve an imagined cultural and geographical homogeneity wished for during the Risorgiment. Locatelli’s reference to Raviggiolo as the Topolino was meant to highlight the cheese’s less flashy nature, but the invocation of the Topolino elides over that car’s role in downplaying the very Italian regionalization for which Raviggiolo is now celebrated.

Curds and Ferns

146 Michela Blengetti, La Razza Bovina Romagnola (Comunità Montana Acquacheta, Comunità Montana dell'Appenino Forlivese, L’Altra Romagna, Regione Emilia-Romagna, Unione Europea Iniziativa Comuniataria Leader+).
147 Gabriele Locatelli, Il Raviggiolo (Comunità Montana Acquacheta, Comunità Montana dell'Appenino Forlivese, L’Altra Romagna, Regione Emilia-Romagna, Unione Europea Iniziativa Comuniataria Leader+).
149 Stanley T. Williams, L'Italia in Topolino (MCF, 1993).
Raviggiolo is surprisingly squishy and plain. Soft, mushy, and white, it oozes milky water even when wrapped with ferns. Raviggiolo does not look distinguished on a plate, but does look fresh and of natural provenance. The cheese is milky, cloud-like, and sweet without being chalky. [See Appendix Fig. 14] Few people know of the cheese outside Forlì Cesena.

Considering that twenty-five years ago hardly any casari were crafting Raviggiolo in the valleys of the province of Forlì Cesena, it is remarkable that the cheese was available at Torino’s Salone del Gusto. Raviggiolo is easily perishable and fragile, making it difficult to transport beyond the borders of the province even by car. It sours after five days and must consequently be produced in the colder months between October and March.150

Raviggiolo is produced quickly and easily. At 5:30 am, the farmer feeds the cows and milks them, processing the milk into Raviggiolo directly afterwards to maintain the liquid at the animal’s body temperature.151 In Romagna, the cheese was traditionally made with the milk of Pezzata Rossa cows, but it is unclear whether this remains the breed predominately used in Raviggiolo production.152 Because the milk to make Raviggiolo is not pasteurized, it is referred to as raw milk. The curds of the milk are left intact and are not milled.153 Rennet is added to the curds, salt is added to the top, and the curds are drained.154 The curds are then wrapped in the ferns native to the region, which are tightened around the whey to give the cheese a particular shape.

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150 Sardo, Surrusca and Rubino, Italian Cheese: two hundred and ninety-three traditional types: a guide to its discovery and appreciation 283.
152 Petrini Carlo, "De gustibus disputandum est e' tornato il Raviggiolo..." La Stampa September 4, 2005 2005.
153 Ibid.
154 Tosco-Romagnolo Apennine Raviggiolo Presidium.
The ferns used by a specific caseificio are gathered on the casaro’s property and then sterilized in boiling water and left to dry, underscoring the cheese’s autochthonous nature. Raviggiolo typically measures about 2-4 cm in height and 15-25 cm in width. Alle dieci e mezza è pronta il raviggiolo” (At 10:30 am the Raviggiolo is ready) for the casari to bring the cheese to market the day after production. Raviggiolo does not mature, so it can be immediately eaten or sold.

Other variations of Italian Raviggiolo exist but their spelling and provenance differ from that of Forlì Cesena’s. The most well known is from Toscana, but there are also variations from Napoli, Umbria, and Marche made with either goat’s milk or a mixture of goat and ewe’s milk. Raviggiolo di Pecora, a version of the cheese from Toscana, is made with ewe’s milk and has a smooth cylindrical appearance. The Raviggiolo dell’Appennino Tosco-Romagnolo Presidium differentiates itself from other producers of Raviggiolo in the Forlì Cesena province by making their cheese exclusively with cow’s milk.

Raviggiolo dell’Appennino Tosco-Romagnolo has been made in Italy for over five hundred years and probably originated in the areas where variations of it are most frequently found: Toscana and Umbria. The first recorded occurrence of the cheese is 1515, when the Community Magistrate of Bibbiena, in the region of Toscana,
gifted the cheese in a fern-filled basket to Pope Leo X. After the Renaissance, the cheese started a slow process of decline; its disappearance was lamented in the early 1800’s. In the 20th century, anti-raw milk legislation exacerbated Raviggiolo’s endangerment, forcing any production of the cheese to be surreptitious or familial.

The Sterile Hand of Hygiene

According to Slow Food, the decline of Raviggiolo is due to “un assurdo fervore iperigienista” (an absurd hyper-hygienic fervor); anti-raw milk cheese legislation. Raw milk is not pasteurized, a process by which milk is heated to destroy the pathogenic microorganisms that pose a potential danger to human health, including E. coli. Raw milk can be a real danger. In the 20th century, it caused many cases of tuberculosis and brucellosis in America. In France in the 1990’s, at least ten people died from Listeria infection contracted by eating un-aged raw milk French cheese.

The American Food and Drug Administration (FDA) pushed for an international ban on raw milk cheese. In 1947, the FDA ruled that raw milk cheeses needed at least 60 days ageing, killing the majority of the most dangerous pathogens.

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162 Sardo, Surrusca and Rubino, Italian Cheese: two hundred and ninety-three traditional types: a guide to its discovery and appreciation 283.
164 Carlo, "De gustibus disputandum est e' tornato il Raviggiolo..."
165 Ibid.
166 Studd, Cheese slices 78.
169 Ibid.: 2.
after the waiting period. Raviggiolo’s quick spoilage made it impossible for it to survive the legal ageing period.

Pasteurization destroys harmful bacteria but it also destroys the natural flora that gives cheese its particular flavor. The enzymes responsible for breaking down fats and proteins during aging are killed in pasteurization, dulling flavor and aroma. The pasteurized milk used by most industrial cheese-making groups is less tasty and must be artificially stimulated to coagulate. Raw milk supporters argue that the FDA policy is actually more harmful than allowing the production of raw milk cheeses because unpasteurized cheeses are “easier to digest and better at fending off contaminants.” The benign microorganisms present in raw milk cheeses fight off pathogenic bacteria and protect against contamination. Even when made with raw milk, cheese is relatively safe compared to many other types of food and “cheese-borne illnesses are extremely rare.” Ironically, the majority of recent cheese-related health scares “have arisen from poor control over the pasteurization process or contamination after pasteurization.”

Slow Food’s depiction of anti-raw milk legislation as the culprit for Raviggiolo’s decline doesn’t address other factors in the cheese’s disappearance like changing markers of gastronomic distinction in Italy. Nearly all existing modern documents and sources about Raviggiolo derive from Slow Food, making it difficult to know if this fixation on anti-raw milk legislation is oversight or deliberate

170 Studd, Cheese slices 78.
171 Kaufelt and Thorpe, Murray's Cheese Handbook 16-17
172 Ibid. 16.
174 Studd, Cheese slices 79.
175 Bilger, "Raw Faith," 1-5.
176 Studd, Cheese slices 65.
forgetting. Depopulation of rural areas, internal immigration, and a devaluation of
traditional processes have all contributed to the disappearance of traditional rural
foodstuffs in Italy. Organizations like Slow Food don’t acknowledge that until the
1980’s in Italy, humble cheeses like Raviggiolo were often snubbed in favor of
cheeses with a more individualized, mature flavor like Parmigiano-Reggiano.

A Culture, A Heritage, A Cherished Landscape

The debate over raw milk cheesemaking has grown into more than a
preoccupation with the livelihood of artisanal casari and public health. Some Western
European countries view raw milk cheese as not only a tradition and inseparable part
of national heritage but as a right worth defending. As it is stated in the
internationally distributed Slow Food Manifesto in defence of raw milk cheese, “It is a
culture, a heritage, and a cherished landscape.” [See Appendix Fig. 15] This is
especially true of France and Italy where “unaged raw milk cheese is considered a
birthright.”

The language employed by Slow Food to defend raw milk cheese production
uses the same adjectives of heritage, national pride, and tradition presented by the
Consorzio del Formaggio Parmigiano-Reggiano to market Parmigiano-Reggiano. For
instance, raw milk cheese is, “more than a wonderful food, it is a deeply embedded
expression of our finest traditions.” Without directly naming a group of persons, this
sentence sets apart a group of informed gastronomic preservers, the “our,” who

177 Sardo, Surrusca and Rubino, Italian Cheese: two hundred and ninety-three traditional types: a guide
to its discovery and appreciation 9.
179 Sardo, Surrusca and Rubino, Italian Cheese: two hundred and ninety-three traditional types: a guide
to its discovery and appreciation 9.
believe in these values. In this manifesto, Slow Food constructs a community of supporting traditional products which stand at odds to Americanization and industrialization. Raw milk cheese is furthermore, “both an art and a way of life...And it is under threat of extinction!”180 The measures taken to control raw milk meant to stop death and disease are referred to as “the sterile hand of global hygiene controls.”181 The manifesto explicitly links raw milk cheese production to “the health and stability of our rural communities.”182

When viewed in the history of contemporary Italy, the use of a manifesto to protect the “ancient” is truly perturbing and ironic. The manifestos of Garibaldi, calling for the unification by force of Italy, focus on innovation and youth. Those of the Italian Futurists, celebrating a centenary this year, are about dynamism and destroying the old order. The Slow Food manifesto is probably best compared with that of the Italian Fascist movement of the 1920’s because it sets up an historically impossible connection between new and old values and traditions of a reclaimed culture. The manifesto ends in a warning: “Be aware-that once the knowledge, skills and commitment of this culture have been lost, they can never be regained.”183 Raw milk cheese production is now conceived of not as a process but as a culture, and it is becoming an economic boom to the Appennini.

**Endangered Foods and the Common Exotic**

Carlo Petrini’s article in *La Stampa* on Raviggiolo dell’Appennino Tosco Romagnolo from 2005, attributes the revival of Raviggiolo to mountain communities

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180 Ibid. Original emphasis
181 Ibid.
182 Ibid.
183 Ibid. Original emphasis
wanting to make the cheese “a symbol of gastronomic excellence,” gradually raising awareness of the product.”

Locatelli insists that Slow Food’s assistance of Raviggiolo casari was crucial. The Slow Food Raviggiolo Presidium is part of a campaign by Slow Food Italia to preserve the cheeses of Italian mountain communities.

Before it was an organized movement of advocacy and protection, Slow Food started as a pasta-throwing protest against the opening of a McDonald’s near the Piazza di Spagna in Rome in 1986. The group adopted the snail for its logo and released a manifesto in 1987 stating their dedication, “to the politics and pleasures of “slowness” and its opposition to the “fast life.”

The European Union’s implementation of food safety legislation in the 1980’s prodded the group to protect the artisanal producers whose craft was threatened by the laws. The headquarters of Slow Food are in Petrini’s hometown of Bra, Italy where it has become something of a food empire, publishing books, magazines, guides, and coordinating major international food campaigns. In her essay Slow Food and the Politics of Pork Fat, Alison Leitch correlates the rise of Slow Food to the decline of the institutions that dominated Italian life in the 20th century including labor unions and the Catholic Church.

The motto of Slow Food (in its international, Italian, and American iterations) is, “Buono, Pulito, Guisto” (Good, Clean, Fair). There is no elaboration of this on either the international or Italian websites. Who would want food that lacked the

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184 Carlo, "De gustibus disputandum est e' tornato il Raviggiolo...."
186 Ibid.
qualities described by these three adjectives? So broad as to be nearly meaningless, the motto can be subjectively interpreted. Maybe Good is moral, Clean is pesticide free, and Fair means humane treatment of animals. Or Good is tasty, Clean is non-GMO, and Fair means properly compensated workers. “Good” is a value-judgment that suggests superiority while Clean uncomfortably recalls historical discussions of racial purity and “choice.” The ambiguity of the motto gives Slow Food the space to re-order and re-articulate their priorities at will in the fight against industrialized food.

Slow Food created the Presidia system as part of the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity to make people aware of the existence and nature of endangered foods. Like the Denominazione d’Origine Controllata and Protected Designation of Origin systems, creating problems of exclusion and cultivation of the “authentic” purveyors of a culinary tradition. Presidium means “garrison fortress,” adding a menacing air to Slow Food’s translation of the Italian verb presidiare as to protect and to reinforce. It has been noted with other products, including lardo di Colonnata, that Slow Food’s very decision to recognize a product and make it economically viable can lead to more imitators and therefore additional competition. Italy supports 177 Slow Food Presidia in every region of the country. The Raviggiolo dell’Appennino Tosco-Romagnolo Presidium was established in 2002 to protect the cheese and distinguish it from its relative in Toscana.

188 Leitch, "Slow Food and the Policts of Pork Fat: Italian Food and European Identity."
190 Locatelli, Il Raviggiolo
According to Locatelli, Slow Food accorded small agricultural producers like the Raviggiolo *casari* market visibility, and therefore product desirability.\(^{191}\) The laws of food regulation pose difficulties for small producers, who don’t have the economic means to compete with large industrial agricultural corporations.\(^{192}\) Slow Food helps smaller producers acquire the means of regulation. The philosophy of the Slow Food Presidia system, “é legato al fatto che il prodotto può sostenersi solamente in momento in cui c’è un mercato che lo richiede”(is tied to the fact that the product can sustain itself only in the moment that the market desires it).\(^{193}\) Slow Food does not directly give money to the Presidia.\(^{194}\) What Slow Food does is “comunicare che c’è un prodotto da salvare” (to communicate that there’s a product to save)\(^{195}\)

When the Raviggiolo Presidium started in 2002, not one agricultural producer was ordained by regulation to make the cheese. It was “un prodotto clandestino che rischiava di scomparire” (a clandestine product in danger of disappearing).\(^{196}\) Slow Food’s financial support allowed Raviggiolo producers to afford to study the cheese and discover that it contains an antibiotic strain that protects it from being a sanitation danger, excusing it from anti-raw milk legislation.\(^{197}\) For *casari*, regulation is survival and today there are five workshops legally producing Raviggiolo in Forlì Cesena.

Leitch theorizes that by valorizing the traditional techniques of producers Carlo Petrini, president and founder of Slow Food, rhetorically distances his organization from accusations of elitism. Slow Food’s Presidia intervention envisions

\(^{191}\) Gabrielle Locatelli, personal interview, 27 October 2008.
\(^{192}\) Ibid.
\(^{193}\) Ibid.
\(^{194}\) Ibid.
\(^{195}\) Ibid.
\(^{196}\) Ibid.
\(^{197}\) Ibid.
the traditional food producer, “not as a backward-thinking conservative standing in
the way of progress, but rather, as a quintessential modern subject, a holder par
excellence of national heritage.” In the New Yorker article Renaissance Pears, the
medieval fruit conserver Isabella Della Ragione explains that her reluctance to
become involved with Slow Food is because, “[T]hey really only exist to promote
themselves.” Protecting endangered foods enables Italians to deflect cultural
homogenization and guilt over past support of industrial values.

Many criticisms can be made about Slow Food, but hearing Locatelli discuss
how that organization gave Forlì Cesena prestige and livelihood is worth celebrating.
Since the initiation of the Slow Food Presidium, the Raviggiolo casari are enjoying
great financial success. Locatelli said that the product is doing so well that if the value
of his grain crops dropped, he and other Raviggiolo producers could live off the
cheese’s profits.

Ironically, the very elements that caused Raviggiolo to become a localized
product, (namely, poor durability and an extremely short period of freshness before
perishing,) have become an economic boost for the region. “[H]a il vantaggio che chi
vuole mangiarlo viene nel territorio. Quindi, genera un economia indiretta” (It has the
advantage that who wants to eat it has to come to the area. Therefore, it generates an
indirect economy). Italians informed about Raviggiolo from visiting the booth at
the Salone del Gusto may visit Forlì Cesena to dine at a restaurant, and stay a night.

“E quindi è stato un prodotto, una progetta estremamente interessante per noi”

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198 Leitch, "Slow Food and the Politics of Pork Fat: Italian Food and European Identity," 388.
201 Ibid.
therefore it’s been a product, a project extremely interesting for us). An almost-forgotten cheese is now the sweetheart of the province of Forli Cesena’s tourism board.

**Un marchio di qualità italiano**

Today Raviggiolo is a celebrated symbol of the gastronomic excellence of the mountain communities of Forli Cesena and the possibility of economic survival in the rural and isolated regions of Italy. It has been an economic boon to the zones associated with the Raviggiolo Presidium: the Comunità Montana Acquacheta, the Comunità Montana Dell’Appennino Forlivese, the Comunità Montana Appennino Cesenate, and the Parco Nazionale delle Foreste Casentinesi, Monte Falterona e Campigna in the province of Forli Cesena. The tourism board of Forli Cesena now claims the birthplace of Raviggiolo in the village of Santa Sofia, within the province, and lists the cheese on a guide to local culinary specialties.

Raviggiolo’s economic importance can be discerned from the cheese’s developing advertising presence and its inclusion in discussions about heritage food. On the Provincia di Forlì Cesena webpage, a browser for Romagnan cuisine assists “all those readers who are tired of ready-made food and wish to rediscover the rich flavours of a humble yet genuine cuisine,” locate Raviggiolo. The tourism agency of the region of Emilia Romagna lists “Chestnut Flour “Polenta” with Bacon and

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202 Ibid.
203 Locatelli, *Il Raviggiolo*
204 Cesena, *Sapori tipici in provincia di Forlì Cesena.*
205 Ibid.
Sausage, served with Raviggiolo Cheese” as a typical dish. The Parco Nazionale delle Foreste Casentinesi printed a guide to *I Sapori del Parco* with the assistance of Slow Food and Legambiente, an Italian environmental organization. The cover of the pamphlet shows different products typical of the region, included Raviggiolo wrapped in ferns, fading into sepia tones. [See Appendix Fig. 16]

The success of Raviggiolo shows that supporting local cheesemaking has true potential for economic revitalization in Italian mountain communities. Though the Tosco-Romagnolo Appennini section of Romagna is less agriculturally and economically developed than the rest of Emilia-Romagna, the area is currently experiencing rapid growth in the tourism industry as people travel to Forlì Cesena for “new living trends based on health and well-being.” This is especially important in an area that has undergone continuous depopulation since World War II. Cooperation between producers, governing bodies, and the hospitality industry has led to increased sales and rural economic confidence so that casari are able to find the funds to set up authorized laboratories, allowing them to compete with industrial cheese manufacturers in being regulated. Petrini notes that Raviggiolo’s recent success demonstrates that by celebrating traditional small-scale products of quality, “it is possible to keep the mountains alive and give new hope to small communities in the Appennini.”

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209 Carlo, "De gustibus disputandum est e' tornato il Raviggiolo..."
210 Ibid.
211 Ibid.
number of people making the cheese. Signor Locatelli estimated that there are about ten producers of Raviggiolo in the region of Forlì Cesena, including those non-Presidium producers.

Raviggiolo’s recent economic success led to its certification as a Prodotti Agroalimentari Tradizionali (PAT), the latest Italian experiment in gastronomic regulation. According to the tourism board of the province of Forlì Cesena, PAT is “un Marchio di Qualità Italiano,” (an Italian Marker of Quality) used to recognize agricultural products with homogenous methods of production, conservation, and maturation. As Parasecoli writes, this Raviggiolo legislation express a longing for a sense of community and connection with long-lasting traditions amid fear of social upheaval. PAT regulation is an Italian and not a European indicator of value, a national response to those cheeses that do not qualify for PDO status. The PAT marker distinguishes Raviggiolo nationally as its easily replicated nature and lack of a self-regulating body make it impossible for the cheese to gain PDO recognition. Though Raviggiolo has been in Italy for over 500 years, like Parmigiano-Reggiano, the current EU legislative structures to will not protect it in the marketplace.

The European Union is indirectly supporting Raviggiolo through Altra Romagna, an agency started as part of the European Union program Leader+ to advance rural development. In Italy, Leader+ reinforced already existing formal and informal structures supporting the rural economy. Altra Romagna aims conserve natural resources “whilst preserving the social and economic system which

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213 Parasecoli, Food Culture in Italy xii.
214 Ibid. 100.
215 Agriculture-Rural Development-Leader+-Member State files.
incorporates the fundamental values of our [rural] society.” 216 To this end, Altra Romagna valorizes “patrimonio culturale e naturale,” (cultural and natural patrimony), realize the full potential of the region’s economy by creating new jobs, and improve the area’s organizing capacity. 217 Reclamation of patrimony, a masculine indicator of heritage like Parmigiano-Reggiano’s nobility, is strengthened by its success in bolstering Forlì Cesena’s economy.

At the Salone del Gusto, the Raviggiolo Presidium distributed a pamphlet about Raviggiolo sponsored by the Comunità Montana Acquacheta, the Comunità Montana dell’Appennino Forlivese, L’Altra Romagna, the region of Emilia-Romagna, and the EU’s Leader+ Initiative. [See Appendix Fig. 17] The alliance of these organizations that bring together communities, regions, and the EU shows how the cheese has become a point of economic collaboration. Inside the pamphlet is an official logo that is different for producers within the Parco Nazionale Foreste Casentinesi and outside of it. 218 The cover of the pamphlet shows a Raviggiolo seated on a white plate surrounded by ferns and branches, but in contrast to the rural simplicity presented by the cover photo is a *Scheda descrittiva del Formaggio* (Descriptive card of the Cheese) inside the pamphlet. Though not the sensorial analysis forwarded by the Consorzio del Formaggio Parmigiano-Reggiano, this description does define the flavor of Raviggiolo as “mediamente inteso” (moderately intense). 219 Every pamphlet leaves a space for the *casaro* to write in their name and remind the eater that, “il Raviggiolo che mangi è di...” (the Raviggiolo that

216 Ibid.
218 Locatelli, Il Raviggiolo
219 Locatelli, Il Raviggiolo
you are eating is from...) tying the product to the producer.\textsuperscript{220} This feature of the pamphlet emphasizes the autochthonous nature of Raviggiolo. In less than ten years, Raviggiolo has gone from near-extinction to implementing a marketing strategy reminiscent of the most prominent Italian cheeses. Though the standards for deciding which cheeses best exemplify Italian quality is changing, the method of recognizing and marketing these values remains the familiar capitalism of tourism and advertising.

\textsuperscript{220} Locatelli, \textit{Il Raviggiolo}
Chi non è Parmigiano-Reggiano sarà Raviggiolo

The body of Raviggiolo dell’Appennino Tosco-Romagnolo, soft and impressionable, can be read as a symbol of how that cheese is being rediscovered and reclaimed by the Slow Food community, which projects onto its form future rural economic possibility and a discussion of Italian authenticity. Like the ferns that form its shape, Raviggiolo is being imprinted with a desire to imagine a conception of true Italy as local, rural, and anti-industrialized. The hard rind of Parmigiano-Reggiano, with its surface already covered with the markings of the Consorzio del Formaggio Parmigiano-Reggiano and the European Union, is having difficulty conforming to this backlash against global food production. Raviggiolo’s autochthonous nature is challenging Parmigiano-Reggiano’s globally exported terroir for Italian prestige.

The recent valorization of endangered artisanal raw milk cheeses has produced a backlash against prominent Italian cheeses. Though Slow Food refers to Parmigiano-Reggiano as a great cheese, they have scorn for the Consorzio’s marketing and a bias against the heft of that cheese’s presence. As appreciation grows for raw milk cheeses, the interest in large-scale produced cheeses like Parmigiano-Reggiano lessens.\textsuperscript{221} Even though Parmigiano-Reggiano is a raw milk cheese made by hundreds of casari, its market success and perceived status as the dominant cheese hurts it in Italy’s newly rural and local focused gastronomic community.\textsuperscript{222} Despite many regulations against mechanizing the Parmigiano-Reggiano production process, the cheese is confusingly labeled an industrial cheese, as opposed to a traditionally produced cheese, because of its strict regulation and utilization of a few machines in

\textsuperscript{221} Sardo, Surrusca and Rubino, Italian Cheese: two hundred and ninety-three traditional types: a guide to its discovery and appreciation 6.

\textsuperscript{222} Ibid.
the production process. The new awareness of artisan cheeses in Italy is even changing Parmigiano-Reggiano; there is an increased demand for the artisan variation of Parmigiano-Reggiano, Parmigiano-Reggiano delle Vacche Rosse, made with the milk of the endangered Razza Reggiana cow.

A proverb from Renaissance Toscana discussing the fatality of destiny states, “Chi non è marzolino sarà raviggiuolo” (Who isn’t marzolino will be raviggiolo). This means that if you are not one thing than you will be another, expressed using Raviggiolo and the ewe’s milk cheese Marzolino from Toscana. A modern update more fitting to Emilia-Romagna would be, “Chi non è Parmigiano-Reggiano sarà Raviggiolo,” for indeed the concurrent fortune of the two cheeses is surprising. Parmigiano-Reggiano’s place as king of Italian cheeses is being usurped by shifting valuation of national food products, promoting Raviggiolo from court jester to a future prominence that remains to be seen.

A conversation about Italian national identity filtered through the Emilia-Romagnan dairy industry would be incomplete without mentioning its most well-known product: ultra-long conservation milk. As a gesture towards closing this paper on imagining Italian national pride and identity through cheese, I will briefly outline other issues of identity in the dairy industry of Emilia-Romagna. Parmalat, based in Parma, is the powerful Italian dairy company responsible for ultra-high-temperature processing, or UHT, milk. UHT milk is intensely pasteurized to kill the

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223 Ibid. 24.  
226 Sardo, Surrusca and Rubino, Italian Cheese: two hundred and ninety-three traditional types: a guide to its discovery and appreciation 292.  
microorganisms that cause spoilage, allowing the milk to be stored at room
temperature for up to nine months.\textsuperscript{228} The prominence of this extremity of
industrialized food convenience shows how far mechanization reaches into the now-
globalized food industry of Emilia-Romagna.

In March 2008, the founder and former chairman of Parmalat, Calisto Tanzi,
was put on trial for hiding $16.93 billion of the company’s debt, causing Parmalat to
declare bankruptcy in 2003.\textsuperscript{229} In December 2008, Tanzi was sentenced to ten years
in prison for market-rigging the biggest corporate crash in Europe, larger than
America’s Enron scandal.\textsuperscript{230} The collapse of Parmalat meant that over 100,000
private investors lost their savings.\textsuperscript{231} Coupled with the governmental bailout of
Parmigiano-Reggiano, “lo crack Parmalat,” as the scandal is referred to in Italy,
shows the economic side of the dairy industry and its fragility. These corporate
scandals worsen Italy’s reputation as an economic liability, but also broadcast that the
country’s food culture is not just Slow Food protected products.

Italy is not the only Western European country experiencing a rekindled in
perceived national culinary traditions at a time of increased European integration and
economic upheaval.\textsuperscript{232} In February 2008, French Prime Minister Nicolas Sarkozy
asserted that French cuisine should be listed as a UNESCO world treasure.\textsuperscript{233} The
statement responded to a campaign by French chefs who consider French cuisine

\textsuperscript{228} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{229} "Criminal Trial Over Bankruptcy of Parmalat Commences," \textit{Wall Street Journal} March 17, 2008.
\textsuperscript{230} John Hooper, "Parmalat founder gets 10 years' prison for market rigging," \textit{The Guardian} December 19,
2008.
\textsuperscript{231} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{232} Parasecoli, \textit{Food Culture in Italy} 36.
\textsuperscript{233} Charles Bremner, "Nicolas Sarkozy loses his cool over French food," \textit{The Times} February 25, 2008.
“under threat from modern life and the global food industry.”\textsuperscript{234} Italian farmers countered Sarkozy’s declaration, insisting that their national cuisine should be listed as Italy now has more PDO products than France has listed with the European Union.\textsuperscript{235} Currently France has 28 cheeses with PDO certification and Italy has 22.\textsuperscript{236} As the EU becomes more integrated, food may gain more importance as a national heritage battleground. The European Union’s Protected Designation of Origins system has the potential to be a foods “arms race” in an attempt for countries to show national cultural dominance through the new framework of European cooperation. The very system of food reorganization meant to bolster pan-European cooperation could become the tool by which countries compete for dominant cultural identity within the EU.

\textsuperscript{234} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{235} Andrew Bounds, "Italy tastes victory in fight for Parmesan rights," \textit{The Financial Times} (2008).
\textsuperscript{236} Development, \textit{European Union agricultural product quality policy}.
Glossary

**Casaro**: Cheesemaker (pl. casari)

**Caseificio**: A cheese-making factory or farm

**Curd**: The protein solids in the cheesemaking process

**Pasteurization**: The process of heating milk to destroy microorganisms

**Rennet**: Traditionally extracted from the lining of the fourth stomach of calves, is used to coagulate milk into cheese

**Spino**: A special whisk-like instrument used to make Parmigiano-Reggiano

**Stagionatore**: A cheese maturation specialist who oversees the ripening and selection of cheese housed in maturation cellars (pl. stagionatori)

**Starter Culture**: Bacteria that initiation the process of fermentation, occurring naturally or with chemical reproduction

**Tecnico di Formaggio**: Cheese technicians, including *stagionatori*

**Whey**: The liquid in the cheesemaking process
Appendix

Figure 1

The region of Emilia-Romagna highlighted in red on the map of Italy. (Ahoerstemeier and Noyes)

Figure 2

The provinces of Emilia-Romagna. (Rarelibra)
Parmigiano-Reggiano’s heart-shaped area of production. (Bonilauri et al.)

An official stagionatore of the Consorzio del Formaggio Parmigiano-Reggiano in a Parmigiano-Reggiano maturation cellar. Visible on the wheel is the imprinted name of the cheese. (Garavaldi 13)
The fire-branded logo of the Consorzio del Formaggio Parmigiano-Reggiano. (Bonilauri et al.)

Figure 5

The bollini, or wax seals, used to indicate a wheel of Parmigiano-Reggiano’s length of maturation. (Garavaldi)

Figure 6
The front cover of the Consorzio del Formaggio Parmigiano-Reggian’s *Guida all’analisi sensoriale* (Garavaldi).

Map of the Salone del Gusto 2008. (Salone Internazionale del Gusto)
Figure 9

The *Parametri Sensoriali del Parmigiano-Reggiano* (Sensorial Parameters of Parmigiano-Reggiano) poster of the Consorzio del Formaggio Parmigiano-Reggiano. The closeness of the photograph makes the cheese seem like a landscape, re-enforcing the product’s tie to its place of production. (Parmigiano-Reggiano. Paramateri Sensoriali del Parmigiano-Reggiano)

Figure 10

The opening page of the children’s website of the Consorzio del Formaggio Parmigiano-Reggiano. The farmer at right holds a *spino*.
The Emilian rhythm game from the children’s website of the Consorzio del Formaggio Parmigiano-Reggiano. The orange blurb says: *Are you a Parmigiano-Reggiano rapper? Participate and find out!* The green text says: *Emilian Hip Hop rhythm of the cheesemaker.* ("Parmigiano-Reggiano")

![Figure 11](image)

The masthead of the website of the Museo del Parmigiano Reggiano. ("Museo del Parmigiano-Reggiano")
The logo of the European Union’s Protected Designation of Origin marker. ("Parmigiano-Reggiano")

Raviggiolo dell’Appennino Tosco-Romagnolo, as displayed at the Raviggiolo Presidia booth at the Salone del Gusto 2008. (Author’s own)
Slow Food Manifesto in defence of raw-milk cheese
(Sardo, Surrusca and Rubino)

Raw-milk cheese is more than a wonderful food, it is a deeply embedded expression of our finest traditions. It is both an art and a way of life. It is a culture, a heritage and a cherished landscape. And it is under threat of extinction! Under threat because the values it expresses are in opposition to the sanitation and homogenisation of mass produced foods.

We call on all food-loving citizens of the world to respond now to the defense of the unpasteurised cheese tradition. A defence of a food that has for hundreds of years inspired, given pleasure and provided sustenance but is now being insidiously undermined by the sterile hand of global hygiene controls.

We call for an end to all discriminatory regulations from EU, WTO, Food and Drug Administration and other government Institutions that needlessly restrict citizens’ freedom of choice to purchase these foods, and threaten to destroy the livelihood of the artisanal craftsmen who produce them.

We deplore attempts by regulatory authorities to impose unattainable standards of productions, in the name of protecting human health.

We believe that such impositions will have the adverse effect of that intended. The bacteriological health of our unpasteurised dairy products is destroyed by overzealous sterilization procedures. So will the health of human beings be destroyed through a diet of sterile food. Without any challenge, our immune system will fail and our medication become ineffective. Moreover the unique flavor and aroma of the cheese are conserved by non-pasteurisation.

We therefore call upon those have it in their power to safeguard the diversity and complexity of our regional foods and the health and stability of our rural communities to act now and ensure a flexible, fair and appropriate regulatory framework; sensible controls and a positive disposition concerning the future.

Be aware—that once the knowledge, skills and commitment of this culture have been lost, they can never be regained.
The Sapori del Parco (Tastes of the Park) pamphlet put out by the Foreste Casentinesi national park. Raviggiolo is faded at top right. (Greco)
Figure 17

The Raviggiolo pamphlet handed out by the Raviggiolo dell’Appennino Tosco-Romagnolo Slow Food Presidia at the Salone del Gusto 2008. (Locatelli)
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