

Ogni limite ha una pazienza

Marina Melchionda (January 31, 2010)



The new McItaly burger is the result of a partnership between the Italian government and McDonald's. I can't tolerate it, and this is why

It was a quite Saturday afternoon and I was laying on my bed writing an article when I heard a "tuc" on the computer. It was my sister contacting me on Facebook. While I was chatting with her, I scrolled the "news feed" and there it was: the director of i-Italy had just posted on her wall the SAD news that McDonald's just came out with a new sandwich... McItaly!!!

Now... I can't even describe my reaction. As an Italian-American who lives in New York since 2008, I can proudly say that in these two years I had a lunch at Mc Donald's (restaurant??) only once. And that's only because I was "forced" by a friend of mine who does nothing but eat junk food. And



actually I do eat garbage too sometimes, but Mc Donald's stuff just disgusts me. In fact on that day I had a salad...

Let me ask you a question: how can you find pleasure in a ¼ inch hamburger topped with tons of sauces of all different kinds that completely cover its flavor? (if it has one). Why do people have a BicMac and drink Chocolate Milkshake in the same meal??? Now you could tell me that I have been "spoiled" by Italian cuisine and that I am too picky. Well, let me tell you: thank God!

Sometimes I feel like the Italian government is testing my patience. As a journalist, when I write about Italian food, I try to explain to my American readers why the Italian/Mediterranean diet should be considered the best in the world: it is simple, tasty and HEALTHY. I WAS proud of how the government was supporting the "Made in Italy" as a synonymous of tradition, genuineness and taste. Now the Italian Minister Luca Zaia comes along and says that Mcltaly is the fruit of a collaboration between the [Ministry of Agriculture](#) [2] and McDonald's. Argh! (Remember that Mr. Zaia is the same person that wants to ban "foreign" food from Italian cities to "protect" Italian cuisine from "foreign influences"...).

[As The Guardian reports](#) [3], the reasons why he promoted such a partnership is "to give an imprint of Italian flavors to our youngsters". Are you kidding me?! You are telling me that serving junk-Italian food will help young people to rediscover the tastes of Italy? Does he really believe that an hamburger made with National meat will be any testier than an American one? Or that a milkshake made with Italian milk will have less cholesterol and fats?

Besides the fact that I feel teased, at this point I need to make three considerations:

1) Why the government didn't support such an initiative with Arabian, African, or Middle-Eastern restaurants instead of forcing them to close? Why can a Mc Donald's sandwich be prepared with Italian products, and a Kebab can't?

2) A recent survey financed by the European Union has shown that 2 Italian kids out of 10 are overweight. We are talking about the 21,2% of the entire population of Italian children between the age of 2 and 6, the highest percentage in the Union. Given the situation, a campaign like "McDonald's speaks Italian" is AT LEAST inappropriate.

3) The world of cinema has come out with a bunch of movies denouncing how dangerous McDonald's food is for our diet. Besides the American "Supersize Me" - that already scared me quite a bit - in Italy we had "[Focaccia Blues](#) [4]", the story of a small focaccia store in the Apulia region that forced a nearby McDonald's to close. The film was a hymn to Italian and regional culinary traditions, a reminder that "Italians eat in dialect", and a GREAT success of public. The shop in the small town of Altamura was the David who defeated Goliath, it was local food vs globalized fast food. And he won with the "weapon of unbeatable taste". Now, who asked the government do defeat David???

Now, let's look at Mcltaly from another point of view, the economic one. The Guardian lists the ingredients of this new sandwich: "artichoke spread, Asiago cheese and lettuce, all produced in Italy including the hamburger meat and the bread". Mr. Zola claimed that one of the reasons why he supported the project was to help the "National agriculture industry to come out of the crisis". In other words, Italian farmers can't sell enough products because of the concurrency of lower-priced fruits and veggies coming from abroad. So the deal is: "Mr. McDonald's, you buy our products and transform them in junk food. Don't worry, a bunch of kids will eat Mcltaly and you'll make good profits. And our farmers too". The health issue was out of the contract. Calling this "a myopic policy" is the list.

I can't help it but ask myself why the government didn't look for the support of the [Slow Food](#) [5] movement to "give an imprint of Italian flavors to our youngsters" and to "support the agriculture sector". Founded in 1989 by Carlo Petrini, the international movement is committed to educate young generations, and people in general, to the culture of good food. The initiatives they organize to reach children, teen-agers, and young adults, are countless, and they are doing much. It represents the "revenge" of Italian traditional eating habits against the spread of fast foods in the country. Their principles have inspired several restaurateurs to relaunch in a modern key old traditional local dishes.

In Naples, as an example, there is a tiny shop called “A Merenna” (the snack) On the door there is a huge “M”, very similar to the McDonald’s one, and a smaller sticker placed in the middle of the shop window indicating that it is a “Slow food eatery”.

They serve sandwiches with grilled sausages and mushrooms or broccoli, Neapolitan salami, rice balls, and pizza... of course. Their prices are just a little higher than McDonalds’, but the quality of the products is incomparable. I bet they wouldn’t disdain a cooperation with the government to buy the ingredients they need from Italian farmers...

[Matthew Fort](#) [6], who wrote the piece for The Guardian was just as “unhappy” as I am. So were some representatives of the opposition in the Italian Parliament. Their criticism induced the Minister to write to the editor of The Guardian.

YOU MUST READ THIS:

The left wing, with its loudspeakers, persist in baying at the Moon, finding themselves further away from the real problems and fenced in their own sterile moral orthodoxy, which impairs any kind of development and hinders a clear vision of reality (...) With regret, we are forced to deliver bad news to this kind of left: Stalin is dead. And we can safely bet he never set foot in a McDonald's”

Of course, it is not health that we are talking about; it is not about what is best for the citizens. All Mr. Zaia could say is that Matthew Fort and those politicians’ objections mirrored a “leftist sterile moral orthodoxy”. Once again, “evil opposition” is sabotaging the “good initiatives” of the government.

Well, let me tell you something, Mr. Zaia: I am not a communist, but I will never eat a McItaly, just as Stalin wouldn’t.

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[2] <http://www.politicheagricole.it>

[3] <http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/wordofmouth/2010/jan/28/mcdonalds-launch-mcitaly-burger>

[4] <http://www.focacciablues.it>

[5] <http://www.slowfood.it>

[6] <http://www.guardian.co.uk/profile/matthewfort>