



Francine Segan to Host Two Conferences on Italian Cuisine in Washington, D.C.

Emily Hayes (March 20, 2015)



Francine Segan is a noted public speaker and food historian, and hosts the series "Americans in Love with Italy" produced by i-ItalyTV. An expert on culinary traditions, Segan will be speaking about transformations in Italian gastronomy and the history of chocolate.

Two conferences on Italian cuisine are to take place in Washington, D.C. on Thursday and Friday. These events were organized by the Italian embassy to precede the Expo opening in Milan on May 1, the theme of which is "Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life."

The host of the two conferences in the [Library of Congress](#) [2] is none other than i-Italy's own Francine Segan. She is a noted public speaker and food historian, and hosts the series "Americans in Love with Italy" produced by **i-ItalyTV**.

An expert on Italy's culinary traditions, Segan will be speaking about transformations in



Italian gastronomy on Thursday. What makes Italian food great is its ability to easily absorb new influences while retaining old traditions. Segan has authored six books on Italian gastronomy, including her most recent two: *Pasta Modern: New and Inspired Recipes from Italy* (2013), and *Dolci: Italy's Sweets* (2011). Francine Segan also writes for several magazines, such as *Epicurious*, *Saveur* and *Gastronomica*.

On Friday at the Italian embassy, Segan will talk about the history of chocolate, from the time of Christopher Columbus to recent products from places such as Modica, Sicily, along with various dishes and specialties from all over Italy.

Christopher Columbus is said to be the first European to bring back cocoa beans from his fourth visit to the "New World" between 1502 and 1504. However, it was Columbus's fellow explorer, Don Hernán Cortés, who understood the value of the cocoa beans.

It was not until an Italian traveller, [Francesco Carletti](#) [3], visited Central America and learned how the Indians prepared the cocoa beans and made the chocolate drink that chocolate was well established in Italy in 1606.

Today, in the town of Modica resting on Sicily's southern coast, it is still possible to taste the rich history of chocolate. Sicily was introduced to many different foods from Spanish dominions because the island had to adapt to Spanish rule in the 15th and 16th centuries.

Despite a terrible earthquake that shook Modica in 1693, the tradition of using bitter chocolate in savory cuisine survived. 20th century Sicilian writer [Leonardo Sciascia](#) [4] declared that "Modican chocolate is unparalleled in savor, such that tasting it is like reaching the archetype, the absolute, and that chocolate produced elsewhere, even the most celebrated, is an adulteration, a corruption of the original."

Italy's ambassador to the United States, [Claudio Bisogniero](#) [5], stated that the conferences "will provide an excellent window for Milan Expo 2015, the largest event ever organized worldwide on nutrition."

Expo Milano 2015 will last until October 31 and include the participation of over 140 countries.

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