Spaghetti – *Never on Sunday...well, almost never*: Structure and Rules in an Endocuisine

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Cuisine as a Structured, Rule-Based System

The goal of this paper is to demonstrate not simply the existence of rules in cuisine but further that such rules can be quite complex in that they operate across multiple subsystems of hierarchical organization within what we might call a culinary grammar.

Essential in recognizing this kind of culinary grammatical complexity is the more fundamental recognition that cuisine is a cultural domain which all cultural communities possess, and that it is parallel to other cultural domains such as language, music, religion, etc. From this, it follows that like those other cultural domains, cuisine is not merely to be conceived of as a set of ingredients and dishes, as is commonly done, but rather that cuisine has – in addition to the observable manifestations of food-related activities and concrete objects, analogous to *parole* in linguistics – a mental aspect, analogous to *langue* in linguistics, that is, a body of knowledge, rules, beliefs, preferences, etc. which are the wellspring of the culinary behaviour and products we can experience through our senses. My universal definition of cuisine, stripped of its common elite associations, is as follows: a cuisine is 1) the body of knowledge, beliefs, rules, preferences, etc. which regulate and guide the culinary behaviour or 'foodways' of a given community, and 2) the manifestation of these mental representations in the activities of food production, preparation, presentation and consumption and in the foodstuffs, dishes, and meals consumed by that community.[1]

Socio-Culinary Behaviour and a Discourse-Based Typology of Cuisines

If the parallels between cuisine and other cultural domains hold, it also follows that this body of culinary mental representations must be, to at least some degree, organized, and further that it must have a social aspect, insofar as cultural behaviour is shared within a cultural community, and thus, moreover, it must be acquired by new participants in the community, especially children, through implicit and explicit instruction and personal experience of the community's foodways. Of course, culinary knowledge is not necessarily all learned in childhood, though in a great many societies, indeed, the vast majority of societies until recent times, the preponderance of culinary knowledge was acquired, in effect, around the family hearth.

In the modern world and most especially in wealthy societies, however, the old manner of acquisition of culinary knowledge in proximate and personal culinary discourse is increasingly challenged in its centrality by ready access to new culinary knowledge; knowledge of foreign cuisines from around the world and of individual professional innovations is accessed by means of myriad modes of culinary discourse with persons and institutions that are largely impersonal: restaurant dining and tourism, cookbooks and internet sources, etc., and this expanded culinary knowledge is supported by a vast system of globalized trade in foodstuffs and the associated advertising/marketing, which itself constitutes a major branch of culinary discourse. In the past, access to the knowledge of foreign foodways and access to non-local foodstuffs was largely limited to the elite echelons of society, and in less wealthy countries today that is still the case, though in today's wealthy lands this access to the cuisines and foods of other cultures reaches ever further down the social scale and in some places, such as the United States, this development has been in progress for a long time. These observations led me to propose in Buccini 2016 a typology of cuisines based on their prevalent modes of culinary discourse. I draw a distinction between on the one hand *endocuisines*, in which culinary discourse is primarily or exclusively personal and proximate – family and allied families, village or neighbourhood – and on the other hand *exocuisines*, in which most or all members of the community in question are open to and engage routinely in non-proximate, impersonal culinary discourse. Nonetheless, even in an exocuisine, the most fundamental aspects of cuisine necessarily still rely on proximate and familial discourse for the basic enculturation of children; it is normally other, less deeply entrenched elements of the cuisine that are most open to expansion and/or restructuring based on culinary knowledge obtained through exoculinary discourse.

The vast majority of food scholars in the wealthy Anglophone lands, even if they were originally enculturated in an endocuisine, are habitual participants in the surrounding exocuisine, and, indeed, their work as scholars is itself a form of non-proximate, impersonal culinary discourse that often involves the study of foodways that are to a degree 'foreign' to them in time or cultural space. I believe that our immersion in exoculinary foodways has had as a result a strong tendency for the field as a whole to be blind to the very real differences between culinary behaviour in the two types of cuisine. More specifically, I believe that the nature of endocuisines has been relatively little examined and poorly understood: in effect, many food scholars project inappropriately the dynamics of exocuisines onto endocuisines, assuming absurdly that, for example, culinary hybridity is a feature of all culinary cultures. I also believe that the inclination of some to reject the utility or even existence of culinary grammar, of its rule-based and hierarchical structure, is a consequence of their exoculinary orientation, for there is a key difference of the locus of complexity in the two kinds of cuisine: in an endocuisine, the culinary grammar itself can often show a high degree of complexity which underpins the behaviour of an entire cultural community, whereas in an exocuisine, the analogous, generationally-transferred grammar tends to be more limited to its fundamental aspects, and the real complexity

lies more in the variety of culinary influences embraced within the community and the socio-culinary dynamics which obtain there.

Spaghetti in the Mainstream American Exocuisine

To illustrate this difference of locus of complexity in the two types of cuisine I would like to focus on the treatment of spaghetti in an exocuisine, namely Mainstream American Cuisine (MAC), and in an endocuisine, namely an Italian regional cuisine, that of Campania, in which I was enculturated as a child in a conservative Italian-American context and know intimately also through proximate ties to family and friends in Campania itself.

MAC is the exocuisine *par excellence*, which is to say that, though it possesses a core grammar that is generationally transferred largely through proximate and personal food discourse, this core grammar is increasingly limited to more fundamental aspects of culinary behaviour, as the role played by non-proximate, impersonal food discourse continually increases.[2] Through this constant engagement in exoculinary food discourse, the variety of foodstuffs, dishes, and styles of cookery included in American foodways grows ever broader, but in this process the communal aspect at that level recedes in importance and culinary choices become more and more expressions of the individual. In effect, whereas food choices in an endocuisine generally conform to relatively complex rules of the culinary grammar, the weakening of communal consensus coincides with a weakening of grammatical structure. In its place, however, there arises new complexity at the socio-culinary level, with regard to the negotiation of ideological preferences, ethnic influences, differing levels of exoculinary knowledge, socio-economic tensions, and other factors.

If we consider the place of spaghetti in MAC we can see this shift. As part of the endoculinary core, spaghetti – though a relatively recent borrowing from the Italian-American ethno-cuisine – appears as a staple ingredient and is the basis of a number of broadly enjoyed composed dishes, such as spaghetti with 'spaghetti sauce' or 'meat sauce' and, of course, one of the most famous American pseudo-Italian dishes, 'spaghetti and meatballs'.[3] But within MAC one would be hard pressed to find any rule that regulates when it is that one might properly eat spaghetti or any of the popular composed spaghetti dishes, nor is that the case with other forms of pasta; indeed, for most Americans, except those who consciously imitate Italian practices learned through exoculinary discourse, pasta types are largely seen as essentially interchangeable.

The socio-culinary divisions within mainstream American society between people with differing levels of culinary knowledge of Italian cuisine is striking: at the grammatical core, spaghetti preparations are wholly adapted to the fundamental rules of American culinary grammar, with regard both to the aesthetics of the dishes and to the manner of serving them, with the spaghetti or other pasta commonly being effectively a starchy side dish, something which pasta never is in Italian cookery.

For those engaged more deeply in exoculinary discourse, with partial knowledge of Italian foodways, there is a striving toward 'authenticity', which in turn has given rise

to an opinion widespread among some socio-culinary groups that those old American standard pasta dishes and, by faulty thinking, actual Italian-American pasta dishes are 'bastardized', 'inauthentic', and inferior to what they believe to be (and sometimes are) preparations that are closer in composition to what Italians cook. Favoured are 'novel' Italian dishes which contrast with older stereotypical American misconceptions of what Italians' food is like. These newly 'discovered' dishes then often enough become food fads; one thinks of, starting back in the 1970s or 80s, *pasta con pesto alla genovese,* thence *all'amatriciana* and *spaghetti alla carbonara* and on to the latest pasta fad, *spaghetti cacio e pepe.* Deeper knowledge of how these dishes are made in Italy and access to costly ingredients such as *guanciale,* imported *pecorino,* and *pasta di Gragnano* is cultural capital which renders spaghetti and pasta in general a sort of battleground for culinary competition. Yet, these dishes, which are now more or less widely consumed in the United States, are not integrated into a culinary grammar but rather into a socio-culinary landscape, and they can hardly be said to bear much cultural meaning outside the realms of personal gustatory satisfaction and the socio-culinary competition in sophistication.

Spaghetti in Italian Endocuisines

In a cultural community with a traditional endocuisine, personal gustatory satisfaction is also important, and members of such a community make culinary choices accordingly, yet the choices that face them are channelled or focused within the framework of the communally-shared culinary grammar. Thus, rather than being felt to be an unwelcome constraint, adherence to the rules of that grammar is felt by most – albeit normally at a subconscious level – to be natural, voluntary behaviour, and, if for some reason they are made conscious of this adherence to rules through questioning, they feel it simply to be an expression of their cultural identity: in effect, the response is 'this is how we eat' where 'we' is typically a reference to a localized cultural community – *Napoletani, Sessani, Genovesi,* etc.

This channelling or focusing of culinary choices according to culinary grammatical rules, as mentioned earlier, is largely absent in America's exocuisine, as reflected, for example, in the instructional food discourse with so much emphasis on how to adapt and streamline recipes to make it possible to enjoy dishes such as lasagne or a pseudo-Bolognese style ragù on a workday evening. For someone enculturated in an Italian endocuisine, these takes on traditional Italian dishes are quite bizarre and even, in a certain sense, offensive: from the Italian perspective, one wonders – why would one even want to eat lasagne, a supremely festive dish laden with cultural significance, on an unremarkable workday evening? Of course, the reason is simply that for Americans lasagne or a Bolognese-style ragù is not laden with cultural significance and associations; rather, they are tasty things to eat which have at most personal or familial significance, and, though one might eat them on a festive occasion, one might also eat them on a worknight.

In these examples, we see festive Italian dishes taken outside their cultural context and transformed into everyday foods for Americans, which brings us back obliquely to the title of this paper – *spaghetti: never on Sunday, well, almost never* – which refers to the

fact that, for me and a great many other people whose cuisine is an Italian endocuisine, spaghetti is rarely eaten on Sundays. From an outsider's perspective this may seem at first blush a peculiar convention, but if we consider how this ingredient is embedded in multiple hierarchically arranged subsystems of Italian culinary grammar, we see a fine example of both 'deep structure' and the rules which interconnect these subsystems to produce a kind of grammatical complexity that typifies endocuisines.

In Italian regional cuisines, here exemplified by that of Campania, spaghetti can never really be considered in isolation: there spaghetti exists as one option among a great many in the culinary class of pasta, which itself has a particular and idiosyncratic status that pasta does not have in most other cuisines, including ones where pasta is regularly consumed. This special status is reflected in the fact that it is always eaten either as a *piatto unico* (one-dish meal) or more commonly in a complex meal, where it constitutes a separate course; in Campania and elsewhere in Italy, pasta is never eaten or thought of as a side dish. Already in the Middle Ages and surely much earlier on, the variety of dough types and shapes of hand-made pasta is striking and over time, especially after the development of industrial means to manufacture pasta, the number of pasta types available are very numerous and this important part of Italian cuisine is one which has inspired a great deal of culinary creativity.

For an Italian then, spaghetti is not merely one kind of pasta but rather takes its place in a very complex system of kinds and shapes. In the top half of Table 1, we note the broadest categories and mark them as being plus or minus 'festive', a key feature in Italian cuisine. In the lower half, we show some of the most common types of the

TABLE 1. SPAGHETTI IN ITALIAN CUISINE(S): SYSTEM OF PASTA TYPES (WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO CAMPANIAN CUISINE)

Nature of Dough	***Primary Shape Categories***
• pasta fresca (+festive)	• pasta lunga (±festive)
• pasta secca (±festive)	• pasta corta (±festive)
	• pasta ripiena (+festive)
	• pastina/pasta menutola (–festive)

Pasta Secca Lunga

+festive, e.g.:	*–festive, e.g.:*
• fettuccine	• spaghetti/vermicelli (spaghettoni, spaghettini, capellini)
• fusilli lunghi napoletani	
• fusilli lunghi bucati	• linguine
• tripoline	• bucatini/perciatelli
• mafaldine/manfredi	

+festive: normally eaten only in superordinary contexts
–festive: normally eaten only in ordinary or extraordinary contexts

class of *pasta lunga secca*, dried long pasta, used in Campania, and list them under two columns, with those on the left being felt to be relatively more festive and thus often eaten on special occasions, while those on the right are felt to be, in effect, more ordinary and generally less appropriate for festive occasions. Now, in planning a meal, it is more common to have the condiment in mind or the condiment and the appropriate type of pasta that traditionally goes with it, but it is not inconceivable that one might think first of a type of pasta and then consider the condiment. In so doing, however, one's choice will automatically, even subconsciously, be channelled along certain paths.

Outside Italy, exoculinary discourse has taught many people that in Italian cuisines the pairing of pasta types and condiments is an important consideration, and it certainly is, though pairings are also subject to a degree of variation along multiple parameters, i.e. regional, subregional, familial. Nonetheless, there is broad agreement at even the national level that certain pairings are optimal, some possible, and some simply wrong. The rules for proper pairing are complex, in that they involve multiple factors, including centrally aesthetic issues based on the interaction of 'mouth-feel' of pasta and condiment, and these aesthetic judgements find ready expression in improvised dishes made by Italians. There are, of course, also pairings that are best explained simply as the result of tradition. Exceptions to the rules certainly exist but confirm the validity of the rules, in that members of a given Italian culinary community sense that these exceptions are odd, be they objectionable or pleasingly novel.

Earlier we noted that some types of pasta are festive and others not-festive; most classes of pasta include both kinds, though, for example, in modern times fresh pasta has become almost exclusively festive in nature, as dried pasta is so readily available and time for making pasta by hand is limited. In contrast, the myriad delightful small forms of *pastina* (*orzo, stelline,* etc.), used primarily in soups, are essentially all non-festive. This observation calls to mind the absolute centrality of the culinary calendar in traditional Italian cookery and, while certain aspects of the old calendar are now breaking down, this overarching communal schedule of when to eat what and what to eat when remains in force for most Italian families. By my analysis, shown in Table 2, we can distinguish between five

TABLE 2. THE ITALIAN CULINARY CALENDAR: TYPES OF DAYS

- celebratory feast days with fixed menu, e.g., Easter*
- celebratory feast days with variable menu, e.g., New Year's Day**
- solemn feast days with fixed menu, e.g., Christmas Eve*
- solemn days with variable menu
- ordinary days (see Table 4)

* i.e., certain traditional dishes must be served; other appropriate dishes may also appear.

** here also personal celebrations (baptisms, weddings, graduations, etc.), which generally have variable menus, though in some cases there may be some foods consumed which have occasion-specific symbolic values.

kinds of days across the year with regard especially to the principal meal of the day. Of particular interest here is the role of what I call *solemn days*, which are holidays paired with abstinence from meat or in a few cases strict abstinence from all animal products.[4]

The interconnectedness of calendar and foodways extends, however, well beyond yearly celebratory and solemn feast days, with a sort of recapitulation in every week, in which each Sunday must be treated as a culinary celebration, and, at least among conservative families, Wednesdays and especially Fridays are normally solemn days of abstinence; see Table 3. For culturally conservative Italians, myself included, this culinary rhythm to the week is extremely deeply ingrained, and, given the relationships of pasta types to condiments and the strictures regarding the kinds of foods appropriate

TABLE 3. THE ITALIAN CULINARY CALENDAR: WEEKLY PATTERN & MEAL TYPES

Weekly Pattern
- Sunday is a celebratory feast day with variable menu
- Wednesday and Friday are solemn days (meatless)
- Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday* are ordinary days (meat allowed but not festive)

* Saturday, being part of the weekend, often differs from other ordinary days with special dishes (including for Italian-Americans non-Italian dishes) consumed.

Meal Types
- ordinary: neither celebratory nor solemn
- superordinary: celebratory and solemn meals
- extraordinary: standing outside the normal schedule of meals, e.g., *la spaghettata*

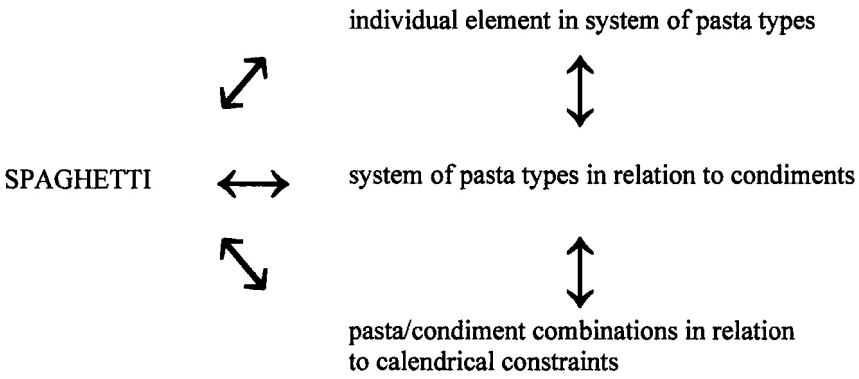
to the different types of days – celebratory and solemn holidays and the weekly pattern – one finds in Campanian and more generally Italian traditional cuisines hierarchical systematicity with rule-driven interfaces. These systemic constraints on the use of a simple food such as spaghetti can be summarized as shown in Table 4.

As mentioned above, in the MAC, the choice to eat spaghetti at a given meal is hardly constrained by communally established grammatical rules; individual or familial preferences, often influenced by mass culinary media, are the governing constraints. One constraint analogous to what we find in Italian cuisine is, however, that it would generally be eccentric and transgressive to suggest that spaghetti be served as a principal dish on Thanksgiving Day: even as a side dish it would strike most or all Americans as very much out of place.[5]

Dicette Pulecenella: nu maccarune vale ciento vermecielle[6]

The special status of Sunday generally and particularly with regard to food is hardly historically unique to Italians but rather natural to all Christian societies related to the

TABLE 4. SPAGHETTI IN ITALIAN (CAMPANIAN) CUISINE



day's religiously mandated relief from work, and in most places the schedule of a midday meal following communal church service played or plays a role in rendering that meal relatively outstanding. In recent times, however, travellers' remarks on southern Italy and Mainstream Americans' comments on the behaviour of southern Italian immigrant families give the impression that at least by the nineteenth or early twentieth century there was a noteworthy gap between the emphasis placed on family meals generally and Sunday meals in particular by Italians and Anglo-American observers.

Multiple factors have contributed to the sacrosanct nature of the Sunday midday meal for southern Italians and their culturally conservative cousins in the US beyond those broadly obtaining across Christendom. Central among them is the place of muscle meats in their cuisine, which itself is tied to the interplay of environmental and socio-economic conditions and further the interplay of these fundamental conditions with cultural inclinations which have themselves both shaped and been shaped by the environment and socio-economic conditions. In this setting, the consumption of muscle meats has been limited in southern Italian cuisines, standing in a balance with the more readily available garden vegetables, greens and legumes, offal and preserved meats and fish, and grain-derived staples and, in some areas, fresh fish and seafood; this balance in idealized form underlies the notion of the 'Mediterranean diet' for Mainstream America and northern Europe. The Italian weekly-menu schedule reflects this food system no less than it does religious symbolism, and within this grand scheme the natural place for muscle meats is Sunday: though the southern Italian elite and upper bourgeoisie could enjoy meat more frequently, for much of the rest of the population muscle meats were – if they could be afforded at all – the quintessential centrepiece of celebratory and dominical meals. For both gastronomic reasons and, for those of limited means, out of economic exigencies, the flavour of costly meat could in effect be stretched through preparations that yielded substantial sauces which then could be used to dress pasta. This union of *maccarune e carne* has thus become deeply entrenched in popular southern Italian foodways as the default festive food.[7]

The infrequency of spaghetti on the Italian Sunday table is thus to be seen not as the result of some direct prohibitionary rule but rather as arising through a confluence of rules existing at different levels of the culinary grammar. First, spaghetti/vermecielle, one of the first shapes of pasta made commercially and ultimately by industrial means, stood at the vanguard of the popularization of dried pasta and became strongly associated with a variety of relatively cheap and quickly-made condiments; with time, spaghetti became an increasingly beloved but quotidian and non-festive food and thus less suitable for a celebratory table, where *maccarune* – either freshly made or as fancy store-bought shapes – came to occupy the opposing position in the ±festive relation. Second, contributing further to this development were surely also the more elusive but real aesthetic issues which underpin Italian notions governing pairings of pasta shapes/types with condiments.

In this second regard, one notes also that, in addition to very quick, inexpensive condiments, spaghetti has also become strongly associated with a variety of seafood-based condiments and in the event that one wishes to eat seafood in place of the more usual Sunday meat-oriented dinner, it would not be strange for spaghetti to appear in an appropriate pairing, though even so, one might be inclined to substitute a fancier, more festive form of long pasta. Nonetheless, a spaghetti-condiment pairing with fresh seafood can certainly be sufficiently festive to satisfy expectations.

Concluding Remarks on Rules and Culinary Grammar

As we have seen, the use of a seemingly simple ingredient such as spaghetti, considered from the perspective of the endocuisine in which it is a firmly entrenched native food, is subject to complex rules. Within Italian cuisines, spaghetti stands as one element in an elaborate system of pasta types and shapes, and its pairing with different kinds of condiments is further regulated by rules – some more clearly aesthetic, some more purely tradition-bound – and the inclusion of a spaghetti dish as a first course is then subject to the all-pervasive Italian culinary calendar. At this level of the meal, unconsidered here but also important are further factors which influence the choice of a primo – *pasta asciutta*? or a soup? or perhaps rice or polenta? – and the relationship of primo to secondo. Yet another set of rules – some rigid, some loose – concerns the use of grated cheese to finish pasta/condiment pairings.

The sort of rule-based systematicity founded in a community's shared culinary grammar which governs the use of pasta in Italian cuisine(s) is without doubt hardly unique. Indeed, other sections of Italy's endocuisines can be similarly analyzed and parallels to what we have discussed here are to be found in other endocuisines: for example, one might so analyze the complex of *masa de maíz* foods in the traditional foodways of Mexico.

This complexity of traditional, community-shared endocuisines is beautiful in itself, but that beauty is one that will always elude those who see those cuisines only as sources for individual dishes and cultural capital.

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Notes

1 The theoretical underpinning of this paper was originally published in Buccini 2016 but first presented in Copenhagen, 2014; the latter paper, focusing on Italian-American foodways, was only published much later, namely in 2021a.

2 In the United States, the shift from traditional culinary cultures to a national exocuisine has been both precocious and extreme, beginning already in the nineteenth century as a result of a set of complex social, economic, and cultural factors which space does not allow us to discuss here. This national exocuisine grows out of an essentially Anglo-Saxon culinary tradition, which has harmonized to a degree regional American influences, some of which were drawn from other culinarily-allied, northern European cultures, notably German, Scots, and Dutch. Though superficially much transformed through its incorporation of ingredients and dishes absorbed through contacts with non-Anglo-Saxon/non-northern European and especially immigrant cultural communities – one thinks here first and foremost of the Italians, Mexicans, and Chinese – MAC has throughout maintained its deepest grammatical structure, such as basic taste preferences, general aesthetics, meal formats, etc. Since World War II, with greater affluence, globalization of foodstuffs, more fragmentation of families, greater interethnic marriage, mass tourism, the explosive expansion of mass media, and the pervasiveness of advertising, the process has only accelerated within the States while also taking hold in other countries.

The complex relationship between white regional and mainstream cuisines and African American culinary traditions and the role of Indigenous peoples in the development of colonial-period regional cuisines are also beyond the scope of this paper.

3 The American notion of 'spaghetti sauce' has no analogue in Italian cookery, where there is no default way to dress spaghetti. American 'spaghetti sauce' is highly variable but always includes some form of tomato as a principal component. In Italy, different forms of tomato, different seasonings, further additions, all yield conceptually distinct condiments, and, while dressing pasta generally and spaghetti specifically with tomato-based condiments is obviously very common, it is also the case that spaghetti (and other pastas) are eaten very frequently with condiments which do not include any tomato, and this is true no less in southern Italy as elsewhere.

With regard to my calling *spaghetti and meatballs* a 'pseudo-Italian' dish, I do so having never encountered this combination of spaghetti and large meatballs served together on one plate in a genuinely Italian-American context, i.e. among Italian Americans who have maintained to any significant degree their family's regional Italian traditions (culinary, linguistic, etc.). The dish is clearly an adaption for MAC expectations.

Note, however, that repeated claims of Anglophone food writers and even (northern) Italian commentators that the dish is profoundly un-Italian are borne of the usual ignorance of southern Italian foodways, where pasta and meatballs are very commonly brought together on festive occasions. When this union is made, however, the meatballs are always quite small (*polpettine*) in accordance with the governing grammatical rules regarding the relationship between pasta and condiment. Note too that such pasta and polpettine dishes involve in some places long, string-like shapes, but then always as special kinds (fresh or fancy dried pastas, e.g., the Abruzzese *maccheroni alla chitarra*, Pugliese *sagne torte*, etc.). In Campania, polpettine typically occur as part of the condiment in baked dishes (*lasagna alla napoletana, maccheroni al forno*). These dishes with polpettine are inherently festive and so their combination with dried spaghetti would be peculiar and objectional to many with a genuinely southern Italian *Kochgefühl*. However, it is quite conceivable that an Italian family might have a meal on an ordinary day comprised of a *primo* based on spaghetti and a *secondo* of meatballs *in umido* or

otherwise. For further discussion, see Buccini 2021b.

4 See further Buccini 2012.

5 For most Americans, no pasta dish is associated with the traditional Thanksgiving feast, in which starchy side dishes are already well represented by mashed potatoes, a bread-based stuffing or 'dressing', and very often also sweet potatoes prepared in one way or another. There is, however, a regional (South-eastern) and related ethnic (African American) tradition of including baked *macaroni and cheese* as a side to the roasted turkey. This dish itself is part of English and thence Anglo-American culinary practice, albeit ultimately borrowed (and reborrowed) via French cookery from the Italian.

That an overtly Italianate spaghetti or pasta dish would be absent from Mainstream Thanksgiving tables makes good sense, given the connexion of this holiday meal to notions (however inaccurate they be) of what early colonists and Native Americans ate at their early celebrations. For Italian Americans by contrast, the grafting of Italian festive traditions onto the American Thanksgiving meal is no less natural, but here too one sees adherence to Italian culinary grammatical rules. The Italian-American take on Thanksgiving has generally been to offer a Mainstream-style dinner but to augment it with an extensive *antipasto* course (*salumi*, Italian cheeses, pickled and fried vegetables) and a hearty, festive pasta course, usually baked, e.g. lasagna, stuffed shells, etc., in families of Campanian origin. At a Thanksgiving dinner in a first-generation Pugliese home in Chicago to which I was invited, the pasta-*primo* involved two stages: first *orecchiette* dressed with a meat *sugo* followed according to Italian convention by the meats from the *sugo* (meatballs, sausage, *braciole*) and bread, all this following an elaborate antipasto and preceding a complete turkey dinner.

6 A formulaic Neapolitan saying – 'Pulecenella said: 'one macaroni is worth a hundred spaghetti.' Pulecenella, *commedia dell'arte* and puppet theatre character, symbolizes the Neapolitan-area's non-elite population; a complex figure, he is seemingly always hungry and, when possible, a voracious consumer of pasta.

7 See further Buccini 2023: 72ff.

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