

Pellegrino Artusi: the man who 'invented' Italian cuisine



Italian cuisine is recognized worldwide as one of the most delicious and influential on the planet, but have you ever wondered how it was shaped and defined?

Many credit this feat to one man: Pellegrino Artusi, author of the iconic book “La Scienza in Cucina e L’Arte di Mangiar Bene” (The Science in the Kitchen and the Art of Eating Well), which was first published in 1891.

At the time of publication of this revolutionary book, Italy was going through a period of uncertain culinary identity.

The Italian nation had been unified just two decades earlier, and the diversity of regional cultures, dialects, and culinary traditions was still deeply rooted.

It was against this backdrop that Artusi, a retired businessman who made a fortune in the textile trade, decided to leave his mark on Italian cuisine.

Who was Pellegrino Artusi

Artusi was not a professional chef, but rather a lover of good food and an enthusiast of culinary research. With his passion for recipes, he has compiled an impressive collection over the years.

His friends encouraged him to share his discoveries with the world, suggesting he write a book. At 71 years old, Artusi embraced this challenge with determination, even when no publisher showed interest in the project.

He invested out of his own pocket to publish the first edition of his book.

The result was an immediate success. “La Scienza in Cucina e L’Arte di Mangiar Bene” it wasn’t just a cookbook; it was a work that symbolized the rise of Italian cuisine as a distinct national identity. But what made this book so popular?

Several factors contributed to the popularity of Artusi and his masterpiece. First, the historical moment played a crucial role. The unification of Italy had recently occurred, and the country was struggling to define its culture and cuisine.

Artusi wrote his book in Italian, the language that had been taught in schools as the national language after unification. Furthermore, the recipes in her book had varied origins, representing the diverse flavors of all of Italy.

This allowed readers to identify with the recipes and, at the same time, explore new regional dishes.

Professional Life

The rise of the Italian middle class and improving economic conditions also played an important role. More people could read and had the desire to enjoy good food.

Artusi did not write for professional chefs; he adopted accessible language that appealed to mainstream readers.

A notable characteristic of Artusi was his curiosity and openness to foreign influences. In his book, he included recipes that were not originally Italian, such as Middle Eastern couscous.

He even thanked Jewish friends for introducing him to the flavors of eggplant and fennel, ingredients that are now considered essential in Italian cuisine.

Artusi’s legacy lives on. When he passed away in 1911, his book had been updated to include more than *900 recipes*.

Pellegrino Artusi’s work transcended the kitchen; it has become a symbol of Italian culinary identity and a window into the diversity and richness of the cuisine of a unified yet diverse



country.

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