

The Food and the Italian Communities in the United States: 1890-1940

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Abstract

The research aims to study the relations between food and Italian communities in the United States from 1890 to 1940. The main purpose is to reconstruct the economic, social and cultural relations established in the age of the great Italian migration. The research main focuses on the dynamics that allowed the transatlantic circulation of commodities and people, thanks to the organization of import-export networks. The distribution of the Italian food was sustained not only by the economic institution born in the most important Little Italies (such as the Italian Chamber of Commerce of New York, Chicago and San Francisco) but also by the ethnic and familiar networks that, often, were connected to a little town or a specific geographical area in Italy. These networks and the cultural elaborations during these fifty years made possible a unified food culture of an imagined community. The Italian-american entrepreneurs used the stereotypes built outside the migrant community that depicted Italians as passionate about food, music, art and socially structured around family. They put on a mix of a black Italy (the images of Mediterranean sensuality and primitivism) and white Italy (the images of Rome, the Opera and the Renaissance).

Last issue, the so-called *americani*, people who went back to Italy. They often encountered a lot of difficulties to re-assimilate in the communities of the Motherland after some years spent in the United States.