

Paolo Gentiloni and Maurizio Martina

“A Week in which to promote Made in Italy cuisine”

(Il Sole 24 Ore)

A legacy from Expo Milano 2015 that the Government is bringing forward is the «Food Act» project, which includes the protocol of understanding signed last March to promote Italian high-quality cuisine abroad. Thanks to this, we have created for the first time a team that puts together institutions, companies, chambers of commerce, the world of sports, cultural associations and those who work directly with food and wine: great chefs and sommeliers who have become our Ambassadors of Taste, driven by the awareness that “cookery is culture”. Thus, pooling together all these different experiences, gave rise to the idea of organising the first Week of Italian Cuisine in the World which, from 21 to 27 November will stage 1,300 events dedicated to Italian cuisine and the excellence of our food and wine in 105 Countries around the world. Events will span from the United States to China, from Japan to Brazil, through Canada, Russia and the United Arab Emirates, but will also reach out to the smallest African Countries. Italy’s diplomatic network will coordinate a long and well-defined menu of initiatives: conferences on food, food certification, protecting the value of the Mediterranean diet, design and photography exhibitions, screenings of thematic films and documentaries, contests and awards, and information and training activities to disseminate the culture of high-quality cuisine with demos by Italian chefs of international fame. The common denominator of this agenda of events is: promoting and valorising Brand Italy and enhancing the quality level of our cuisine abroad through our *savoir faire* with food and wine and, finally, through the use of original Italian products. It is important to recall that the agrofood export sector is worth almost 37 billion euros a year and that it is performing even better thanks to the Plan to Internationalise Made-in-Italy Products which is being promoted by the Ministry of Agricultural Policies and the Ministry of Economic Development.

The Week of Italian Cuisine, which is being presented at Rome’s Villa Madama today, will be repeated every year so as to become one of the cornerstones of the integrated promotion of Brand Italy (“Sistema Italia”), an aspect increasingly featured in the Foreign Ministry’s initiatives. It is a way of doing promotion that networks and gives value to all the ingredients of being Italian and the Italian way of life: from art to music, from the cinema to the language, from fashion to design, from science to business, by strengthening that set of intangible factors that are so closely intertwined with the Country’s image and renown and that make up Brand Italy. Among the more than 1,000 initiatives that will be organised abroad, special notice should be taken of the activities focused on the municipalities that were hit by the earthquake of 24 August, with the presence of Amatrice in Lithuania and Latvia, thanks to the efforts of our Embassies. It is an important signal in relaunching the local economies of the municipalities struck by the quake, which will receive numerous concrete signs of solidarity in the events to be staged around the world: in Spain, Germany, Canada, United States, Saudi Arabia and Senegal.

The First Week of Italian Cuisine will narrate the value of a diet rooted in our culture and in the quality of life. It is no wonder that the Mediterranean diet was recognised by UNESCO as part of the intangible cultural heritage of humanity. We not only intend to present the best of our food and wine productions abroad but also offer training by our Culinary Academies with a view to also attract young talents abroad and boost our high-quality culinary tourism. We are aware of the need to continuously innovate but are proud of our history and culture and, in this case, especially our culinary culture.