

ISSUE OCTOBER 2024



# T S A A Newsletter

## *Ferragosto in Sicily*



*Left: La Vara di Messina*

*Article by Carlo Corallo*

The term Ferragosto is derived from the Latin “Feriae di Agosto” meaning “August holidays.”

The 15th August in Italy is known as “Ferragosto,” and everything stops, depopulates and most businesses and services close to celebrate the start of the summer holidays and the festivities.

The origins of Ferragosto date back to Roman Empire as the festivities celebrated the completion of agricultural activities and a time to indulge in leisure and relaxation.

The advent of Christianity reformulated the pagan calendar superimposing liturgical celebration of the new creed. Hence the date was chosen to celebrate the Immaculate Virgin Mary, materially received into Heaven. That is, the Assumption of Our Lady.

There are many legends and traditions linked to the popular folklore for Ferragosto, including celebration of the Vara in Messina and Randazzo. On the 15th August, Messina celebrates one of the most important folklore events in all of Italy. It is called the procession of the Vara.

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The Vara is a large pyramidal “machine” symbolising the Assumption into heaven of the Virgin Mary. The lower part is the tomb of the Madonna surrounded by the Apostles.

Above it there are multiple layers of angels with the figure of Jesus Christ at the top, holding the Alma Mater in the palm of his right hand. The entire structure is made of papier-mache’ and wood and rests on two large steel runners. (Not sure what happens when the weather is inclement)?

The Vara di Messina is huge! It is 13.5 m high, about the height of a 4-storey house, and weighs 8 tons. Over a thousand blue and white faithful, called “capicorda, vogatori e timonieri,” sing hymns to the Holy Virgin Mary and drag the machine on its iron slides along wet roads.

Randazzo also celebrates the feast of “Vara” but just to outdo Messina, they have a 20m high ancient cart, symbolising the 3 mysteries of the Madonna, (Dormition, Assumption & Coronation. Randazzo’s Vara is mechanised and features young children representing religious characters, strapped to the structure right to the top!

Again, the “machine” is assisted by hundreds of faithful through pulling it using 2 ropes, through the streets of the town.

Why Randazzo you may ask? Well, it dates back to the XV1 Century when Charles V was in Randazzo.

After a blessing of the Archbishop and Mass, the lengthy ropes in both Randazzo and Messina, are divided into small pieces and distributed among the faithful.



Above: La Vara di Randazzo

## Travel Night

### *Dreaming of Sicily. 30th May*

Article by Jo Bellofiore

Over 50 members and friends enjoyed a very informative presentation by Dr Christopher Gribbin. Christopher is an Adjunct Lecturer at La Trobe University and has previously lectured in Classics at Melbourne and Monash Universities.

He is also a tour leader for various cultural tours organized by Australians Studying Abroad and for this event, he focused his presentation on 6 ancient sites that are symbolic of Sicily’s once domination by various groups such as the Romans, the Greeks, and the Normans.

Participants were given an insight into key historical events that shaped the island’s culture and Dr Christopher Gribbin took us on a journey to explore 6 fascinating places that tell the story of the Sicily in the ancient world, from the settlement of the west by Phoenicians from Carthage in the 11th century BC, to the great cities and sanctuaries created by Greek colonists, and the legacy left by the Romans who controlled Sicily until 468AD.

The group also enjoyed delicious Sicilian Street Food – arancini and sfincie - prepared by Bottom of the Boot catering.

References:

[www.asatours.com.au](http://www.asatours.com.au); <https://www.facebook.com/bottomoftheboot.ssf/>



# "Sapori Di Sicilia"

## Dinner and Sicilian Wine Tasting

### 18 July



*Article by Deanna Zammit*

Several weeks have passed since the TSAA Dinner and Wine Tasting Event however the flavours of the food and wine still linger. It was truly a delightful evening.

The TSAA fully booked Lucille Bistro & Wine Bar, and Silvio Sgarioto, the co-owner, whose father hails from Sicily, curated a menu that perfectly captured the essence of Sicilian family dinners.

The shared plates evoked memories of dining with Nonna and the family, making for a warm, intimate experience. We started with sharing Antipasto Platters, Calamari Fritta followed by shared platters of Casarecce with Sicilian Caponata of Eggplant and Zucchini and Fusilli with slowly cooked Lamb Shoulder finished with shaved Parmesan. Dessert was a lovely combination of Tiramisu and Sicilian Cannoli.

Each course was paired with a carefully selected Sicilian wine, handpicked by renowned wine expert Ken John. Ken's choices primarily featured wines from the Nicosia region of Sicily. Nestled in the shadow of Mount Etna, this area's rich volcanic soil contributes to a distinctive range of red and white wines celebrated for their minerality and bold "volcanic" personality.

Entrée was paired with Nicosia Lenza Di Munti Etna Bianco DOC and main course with two wines; Nicosia Sabbie di Sutta Cerasuolo di Vittoria DOCG and Nicosia Passuluna Terre Siciliane Rosso DOC. Finally, as a special treat Ken chose a delightful Limoncello made from Sicilian lemons called Lazzaroni Limoncino.

Ken provided in-depth descriptions of each beverage, followed by an engaging question-and-answer session that captivated the audience.

The evening was a tremendous success. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the wines, and several dozen bottles were ordered by the attendees. The sold-out event highlighted just how popular the dinner and tasting were, and based on this success, TSAA is considering hosting another Sicilian wine tasting dinner in 2025. It was a night to remember, filled with the warmth and flavours of Sicily, and we look forward to more such celebrations in the future.





# St. Ali Film Festival

## "Comandante"



*Article written by Deanna Zammit*

TSAA recently attended the ST. Ali Italian Film Festival at the brand-new Penny Lane complex, Palace Cinemas in Moonee Ponds. Rosa Vocale from TSAA organised a private screening of the film, which played to a full house.

The afternoon began on a sweet note with a cannolo and a glass of Prosecco, setting the perfect mood for an engaging cinematic experience.

Comandante, selected to open the 2023 Venice Film Festival, is set during the early days of World War II (September and October 1940). Inspired by true events, the film centres on the life of Salvatore Todaro, the commanding "Comandante," played brilliantly by Pierfrancesco Favino. Todaro, born in Messina, Sicily, in 1908, took part in the Battle of the Atlantic, commanding the Italian Royal Navy submarine Cappellini in October 1940.

What sets Comandante apart from other war films is its portrayal of Todaro, a man of principle who, despite commanding a powerful war machine—equipped with torpedoes and machine guns—displays a profound sense of humanity. Unlike the typical "military macho" figures often seen in war movies, Todaro's moral compass leads him to defy orders, risking both his life and his crew's.

The film's key moment comes when the Cappellini encounters a Belgian merchant ship carrying British war supplies in the middle of a dark Atlantic night. After a brief but intense battle, Todaro makes a history-defying decision: he rescues 26 Belgian survivors from lifeboats, towing them to safety despite the immense risk. This act of wartime compassion is captured in one of the film's most gripping sequences, making Comandante more than just a war film—it's a study in the complexities of wartime ethics and heroism.

One of the film's standout elements is its meticulous set design, including a full-scale reconstruction of a submarine. This attention to detail did not go unnoticed, as the film won the Best Set Design award at the 2023 Venice Film Festival and earned nominations for Best Cinematography and Best Actor.

Overall, Comandante delivers a tense, heart-pounding tale of courage and moral conflict, making it a fantastic choice for the festival. It was a lovely way to spend a Sunday afternoon, and all who attended thoroughly enjoyed the experience.



# Scaccia di Spinaci

*Scaccia ragusana- consists of bread-based pastry filled with any (or all) of the following: -tomatoes, vegetables, cheese, olives.....*



## Ingredients - Pastry:

- 3.75 cups of plain flour plus some for kneading
- 2 packets (15 gram) dried yeast
- 1 cup of warm water
- 2 TBS olive oil
- 2 teaspoons of salt
- 2 teaspoons of sugar

## Ingredients - Filling:

- 2 bunches or more of spinach- blanched and finely chopped
- Mozzarella or any cheese (cube)
- Anchovies, finely chopped
- 1 cup of black olives, chopped
- Chilli flakes or fresh chillies (optional)
- Salt and Pepper
- Olive oil- to make a tasty filling
- Spring onions- finely sliced

Recipe of Giovanni Corallo, adapted by Mafalda Corallo. Compiled by Carmela Corallo

## Method:

*Place the flour in a large bowl.*

*Mix in the sugar and salt- mix well so the salt doesn't come into contact with the yeast.*

*Disperse the yeast in the warm water and add to the dry ingredients, with the olive oil, mix well until it all comes together; If the dough is too dry add more water.*

*Tip onto a floured surface and knead well until you can form a smooth ball.*

*Tip into a plastic bowl, rub the surfaces with oil, cover with a tea towel and place in a warm spot and leave to rise for about 2 hours- or until it has doubled in size.*

*Divide the dough into 4 balls and knead to form the desired shape (square, round or rectangle).*

*Place the spinach filling in the centre and create a sort of jumbo turnover!*

*Brush the top with olive oil and bake in a hot oven (180 degrees fan forced) until golden.*

# TSAA Book Review

## *"The Triumph of the Lions"*

### *written by Stefania Auci*

Book review written by Maria Corallo

"The Triumph Of The Lions" is the second book in the trilogy about the magnificent Florio Family of Sicily.

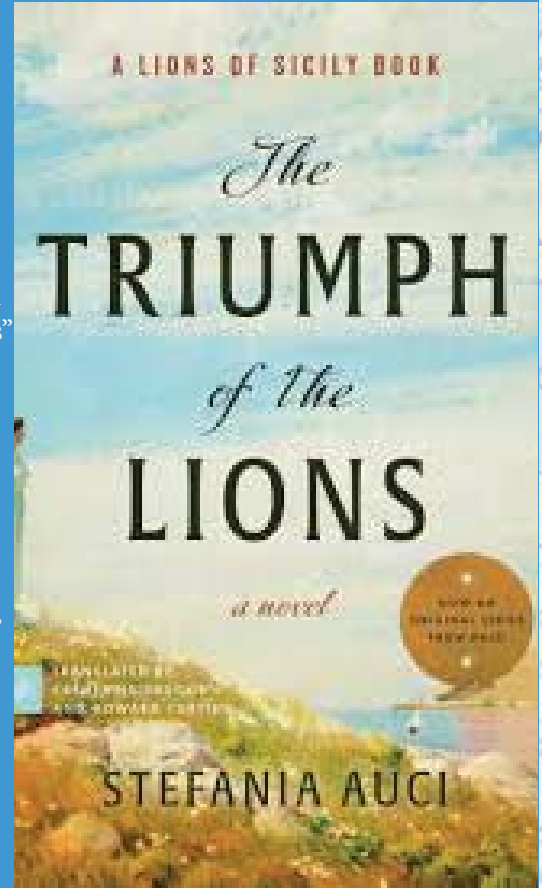
This historical novel is masterfully written by Stefania Auci, born in Trapani and educated in Palermo. Her breakout novel, "The Florios Of Sicily" sold over a million copies and was released in 35 countries. The sequel, "The Triumph of the Lions" was released in 2021 and has won the prestigious Premio Bancarella. The sequel - "The Triumph of the Lions" - was released in 2021 and won the prestigious Premio Bancarella.

Known as the "Lions of Sicily", the Florios have finally arrived! Covering the period 1868 to 1893, Auci covers the continued expansion of the Florios' empire which now includes; shipping, mining, fishing, manufacturing and winemaking. Now under the direction of Ignazio, his devotion to the business overrules all his other interests including abandoning his only one true love. His subsequent marriage to Giovanna, a member of a minor noble family means that the Florio family has now risen in class and status. They are in turn admired, honoured and feared.

The actions of their son, Ignazziddu and his beautiful wife Franca, leads to a compelling ending which no doubt will be resolved in the last book, "The Fall Of The Florios."

Although the political manoeuvring, strategic politics and business dealings all feature strongly in the story, it is the interpersonal narratives and family dramas that carry the plot. The novel closely mirrors true events, and a detailed historical background is provided at the end.

Our TSAA Book Group is looking forward to reading the final book in the Trilogy, "The Fall Of The Florios"!



## Immigration Stories - Update!

*"Ordinary People, Extraordinary Stories"*

*Stories of Stamina, Perseverance, tenacity, Family and Love*

by Carlo Corallo

The stories we have to date are wonderful.

They are all different but all share qualities of passion, honesty and pride.

The TSAA publications will differ from others as we will include each manuscript as written by you!

Please submit your draft stories and we can discuss.

Workshop #2 will a great opportunity to discuss what you have written or propose to write.

Believe it! It is difficult to start but once you do, it's difficult to stop!

Come to the workshop and discuss. Otherwise feel free to contact any of the numbers below:

Carlo Corallo 0413 445 571 (Anytime)

David Seymour 0423 634 067 (A/H)

Carmela Corallo 0402 124 937





# Sicilian Proverbs

This one was frequently quoted by my bachelor uncle who didn't want to be told what to do!

*“Acqua, consiglio e sale a chi non te ne chiede non darne.”*

Which means that, in some cases, before interfering, it might be best to wait until asked.

Acqua, cunsigghiu  
e sali a cu 'unn  
'addumanna 'un  
ci nni dari.



*“Cu prima nun pensa all'urtimu suspira”*

This proverb asks you to think well before doing something-when you act impulsively you may well pay the price for the unwanted consequences.

*“Nuddu si pigghia si un si rassumigghia”*

I suppose you could say “Birds of a feather stick together!”

## TSAA Committee for 2024

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