

# The Italian Way of Eating Round the World : Italian-sounding, Counterfeit, and Original Products

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## **The Italian Way of Eating Round the World: Italian-sounding, Counterfeit, and Original Products**

世界各地的意式食品：言过其实的、仿造的以及正宗的意大利食物

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### **ABSTRACT**

Food customs are an expression of the identity and traditions that form and grow stronger in a particular area over time. Nevertheless, they suffer non-stop comparison and hybridization with other cultures and practices, a result of commercial exchange and temporary or permanent migration processes. Food (as well as the practices and rituals involved) is in all respects a ‘social fact’. For this reason it can become a ‘fashion’ that fixes and orients consumption styles, creating behaviours that decree a gap between upper and lower classes. The market for these goods could be called a ‘market of distinction’, saturated with modern products, or ‘status goods’.

During the centuries, a double process has occurred: first, the coding and preservation of products we define as ‘typical’, meaning closely linked to their territory (*terroir*) of origin; and second, the constant hybridization of products and tastes on the wave of ever stronger globalization.

In the last two decades, globalization has deepened, and large countries such as India and China are entering the international markets of consumption and tourism. All this has given the food market a sudden acceleration. Certainly, this evolution is not unheard of. Analogous processes have been seen the past, characterized by constant innovation in and hybridization of tastes and food practices. However, none of these processes matches the scale and speed of the changes that have occurred in the last 20 years.

Thus, in both developed and emerging countries we have witnessed growth in the desire to consume foods and drinks associated with the food and wine culture and identity of certain countries that trendsetters (and the upper classes they inspire) consider particularly ‘elegant’. The phenomenon is a very strong ‘desire of Europe’, particularly focused on the food and wine traditions of two countries: France and Italy.

This chapter discusses how the Italian way of eating has spread in the world, with particularly attention to an Asian case study of Japan, China, and Korea. The chapter distinguishes between original, counterfeit, and Italian-sounding products (products made abroad but sold using a 'sign' recalling Italy: a name, the flag, a typical Italian image, etc.), and considers the changes to local food identities as a result of the foreign foodstuffs. In addition to general reflections, the chapter presents some concrete examples, such as Balsamic vinegar of Modena, Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, and Prosciutto di Parma (Parma ham).

## 摘要

饮食习惯是身份和传统的体现。随着时间的推移，在某一特殊的地区，这种身份和传统会逐渐形成并日益强大，由于商业交流和临时或永久的迁徙，它们还会与其他文化和习俗不断融合。不仅如此，饮食（及其涉及的习俗和仪式）在各个方面都是一种“社会事实”。因此，它可以成为一种“时尚”，可以决定和引导消费风格，可以创造区分上下层阶级间差距的消费行为。我们可以把这种商品市场称为“区分市场”，充满了时兴的产品，也就是“地位商品”。

最近几个世纪，发生着一个双向过程：（1）编写和保存我们对“典型性”的定义，那意味着一个与地区紧密相关的食物；（2）食物和口味的不断融合，日益深化的“全球化”浪潮。

过去的二十年里，全球化不断发展，大国加入了（或正在进入）国际消费和旅游业市场。这些都突然加速了饮食市场的形成。这种进化并非闻所未闻，历史上也有过类似的过程，并以口味和食品的创新、融合为特点。然而，最近二三十年的变化，其规模和速度前所未有，现在是“大全球化”的时代。

我们见证了发达国家和新兴国家对消费食品和饮料需求的增长，这些饮食属于这些国家的葡萄酒和食品文化和特征，国家饮食文化的趋势制定者（和他们鼓动的上层阶级）认为“非常优雅”。这形成了十分强烈的“欧洲热”，特别是对法国和意大利葡萄酒和食品传统的追捧。

本文对意式饮食在世界范围内的传播方式作了一些评论，并优先考虑了亚洲的案例研究：日本、中国和韩国。本文指出了正宗的、假冒的和言过其实的意大利产品（在国外生产，但出售时都使用一个能使人记注意大利的“标志”：一个名字、意大利国旗、一个意大利的典型形象等）之间的不同；也介绍了一些作者对当地食品标识变化的想法，而这些食品是利用外国粮食生产的。除了以上基本的分析，本文还将介绍一些例子，如香醋，巴马干酪和帕尔马火腿。

## EATING FAKE ITALIAN FOOD WITH OBAMA

On Friday, 21 October 2016, US President Barack Obama invited Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi to the White House for the final state dinner of his eight-year presidency. The chef was the renowned Mario Batali, of Italian origin. Yet, unbelievably, a total of three 'fake' Italian products were served: two wines and one cheese. The first fake wine was a Vermentino 'Santa Ynez' 2015 Palmina<sup>1)</sup> and the other a Sangiovese 'Napa' 2012 Villa Ragazzi.<sup>2)</sup> Both are made in

California and, no doubt, very good. Nevertheless, they apply important Italian names to wines that are not too expensive and ‘made in the USA’. The salad course at the state dinner was ‘Warm Butternut Squash Salad with Frisee and Pecorino of New York’.<sup>3)</sup> Pecorino is, of course, an Italian cheese.

If even celebrity chefs use ‘fake Italia’ in their menus for important Italian guests, something is clearly not quite right. Further, even a politician with the diplomatic skill of Obama failed to realize that the White House tribute to the Italian Prime Minister could have been construed as an insult. Finally, the menu revealed a huge cultural difference between Europeans and Americans in how they see the link between product and area, a difficulty that has also arisen in the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) negotiations.<sup>4)</sup>

### **THE TASTE OF PLACE: FOOD HABITS, TRADITION, AND SOCIAL IDENTITY**

Food habits express the identity and traditions that gradually form and are consolidated in a specific place based on the raw materials available. Over time these habits tend to be codified, ensuring that the taste of a foodstuff or a recipe becomes the taste of the place in general.

This process codifies both recipes (procedures to transform raw materials into foods with certain tastes) and manufacturing techniques (skills and knowledge that enable food ‘professionals’ — cheesemakers, butchers, winemakers, chefs, etc. — to know and teach the correct sequence of procedures). Recipes are thus the final output of a multi-form process of chemical transformation of products. Techniques, namely *savoir faire* or skill, are the intermediate processes that achieve a certain output.

Thus, techniques are linked to a specific place as well as products and tastes. The food habits of a place, however, undergo continuous hybridization with other cultures, practices, and tastes, primarily as a result of trade and migration processes. Two basic consequences result. First, products and ‘typical’ preparations of a certain place make a name for themselves in areas and food cultures far distant from their origin. This is how the reputation of a product is inextricably linked to a place over centuries. Examples include hams such as Prosciutto di Parma and Prosciutto di San Daniele; Mortadella di Bologna; truffles of Alba and Périgord; Balsamic Vinegar of Modena; and pasta of Gragnano. Second, continuous hybridization of tastes and flavours occurs. Over time, recipes mutate in response to changes in taste, health awareness, or social factors that orient consumer choice in particular directions. This happens because food, its practices and rituals, is a ‘social fact’ that follows ‘fashions’ in consumption. These fashions define the ‘market of distinction’ for products that confer social status.

In the prior two decades of increasing globalization, emerging countries such as China, India, post-Soviet Russia, and Brazil<sup>5)</sup> have entered the international consumer and tourism markets. This phenomenon is not new, but it has accelerated

sharply in the last 20 to 30 years. In countries such as these, the emerging middle classes increasingly consume foods and drinks associated with the culture and identity of countries deemed ‘elegant’ and trendy. A strong ‘desire for Europe’ is present, particularly focused on France and Italy.

This chapter presents observations on ‘made in Eataly’ and Italian-sounding foods, reflecting on the reasons for consuming foods intertwined with memory and tradition — in other words, foods that might be called ‘made in history’.

## **MADE IN HISTORY: CONSUMING TRADITION**

Rather than simply foods, human beings often eat symbols, tales, and fictions. Consumers can be enchanted by the sign system of a particular food. Biting into food or sipping a beverage, we feel we are biting into or sipping history. We imagine that we are living in the past, with its medieval castles, knights and liverymen, jousts, fights and princesses — it is a story probably filmed in black and white.

We are often consumers of past times. We eat tradition and we consume memory. Walter Benjamin’s discussion of Proust’s famous Madeleine (Benjamin 1973) reminds us how ‘implicit memory’ can leap into the present from the back-up of our past. From this perspective, typical foods are significant because they are primarily bought not for their taste but for other reasons. These might be desire to own a fashionable item, or to show off to guests a mark of distinction and moving with the times. All these features converge on typical products and thus on products labelled ‘made in’ somewhere.

The concept of ‘typicality’ first appeared in pre-industrial times to differentiate product origin in expanding markets, and thus to classify products based on taste and quality. Over time, purchase of foods bearing the ‘typical characteristics’ of a *terroir*<sup>6)</sup> came to confer prestige and distinction. Although society, production systems, and distribution have all evolved, this desire still plays a key role in consumer behaviour today. In other words, typical food products are status goods, and have as such become true social markers. Having them confers social distinction.

Typical products are consumed for their intrinsic taste, but they are also the result of consumer decisions made for symbolic reasons. In many cases, typical products evoke a specific cultural identity acquired through consumption. In other cases, they are elements of ‘food fashion’. In still others, industrial typical products allow lower social classes to imitate upper-middle-class consumption patterns. These can be conceptualized as ‘avatar’ products, and they play a key role in reputation building.<sup>7)</sup>

## **THE GLAMOUR OF VINTAGE PRODUCTS**

Why are consumers attracted by ‘traditional products’, sometimes called ‘vintage

products’? It is certainly because humans have an innate capacity to use signs and symbols, and thus tend to attribute values of taste and quality to food. It is in fact culture which discriminates between and gives value to different foods. Food products are the outcome of attribution of meanings and values which are emotional and symbolic as well as rational (Magagnoli 2018a).

From a marketing perspective, quality derives from the symbols of a product as well its intrinsic quality. History and culture can enhance typicality. The reputation of an area is closely linked to sales of the product associated with it.<sup>8)</sup> This relationship was clear in Europe as early as the Late Middle Ages, in which reputation was a collective good of the local manufacturing system. Reputation is a true external economy and bestows competitive advantage (Magagnoli 2011, 2015a). The cornerstone of the link is the idea that typical products are made according to secular skills and traditional methods, know-how, and traditional recipes handed down from generation to generation. In reality, of course, this is all invention, illusion, and storytelling. The ‘history’ is a fairy tale. All typical product stories are at least half made up, and probably not even half true. ‘As far as we knew [...] all the stories [about the origins of drinks] were fake’.<sup>9)</sup>

### **BUILDING TRADITION: MYTH AND REALITY**

All aspects of a typical product recall tradition. Images, colours, symbols, names, packaging, advertising, and so on can be associated with tradition, with the magical places of childhood, or with even further distant times in which peaceful and friendly village life revolved around the countryside and its customs. This explains the consumer’s ‘fatal attraction’ for typical products, or for historical products modified by technical evolution but still ‘faithful’ to tradition (Magagnoli 2005, 2018b). Tradition is the bastion that guarantees authenticity. Faithfulness to tradition implies preserving, protecting, and reproducing the best practices of the past. It implies protesting against the degeneration of modern life, which forsakes the positive values of the ‘good old days’ (Franchi 2013).

This is clearly an operation based on myth. After all, social and economic evolution has changed human life. The environment and manufacturing have altered; crops and animals have been selected and crossbred; production techniques have modernized, with a largely positive impact on product health and safety. Consumption and lifestyle patterns are very different from those of the past. In short, the combination of elements that represent the typical product tradition no longer exist. They can only be used as a symbolic anchorage, or as a method of ‘typicality’ storytelling.

In this storytelling, the typical product is linked to the myth of origin, which becomes a guarantee of quality. The typical product takes on the symbolism of the place of origin with all the intangible attributes relating to its history (and knowledge, traditions, habits, and practices), giving the product value. The anchorage to a place strengthens product identity by giving it an origin and

linking it to skills and customs handed down over the centuries. Perpetuating these skills and customs guarantees product authenticity.

References to authenticity and tradition offer protection against the uncertainties of industrial food, which has no place of origin.<sup>10)</sup> The typical product introduces references to communitarian and ecological values into industrial manufacturing, setting consumers' minds at ease and orienting their consumption choices.

The fortunes of a typical product are built on tradition and memory, and the references to pre-industrial nature are frequently leveraged as well. History is constructed in this way. Consumers are convinced that tradition guarantees authenticity and naturalness, and that a typical product will embody all these virtues. To be successful, however, the product must evoke the right images of a distant past: a castle, a farmyard with animals, peasants, harvest, a big dining table, old-fashioned food. This is the anchorage to the myth of past that gives meaning and value to the typical product. Typical products thus cling to an invented tradition that strengthens their identity to gain a competitive advantage on the market.

### **ITALIAN-SOUNDING PRODUCTS: LEGAL OR ILLEGAL?**

Export figures show that in 2017, food products truly made in Italy were valued at about 40 billion euros a year and accounted for about 9% of all exports.<sup>11)</sup> In spite of the ongoing international crisis, the figures continue to grow annually by about 5% or 6%. In comparison, the worldwide value of food products falsely claiming some sort of Italian origin was about 60 billion euros. This sum is three times the value of genuine Italian products and represents about 70% of the cost of interest on public debt paid each year by the Italian state. Round the world, for every can of tomato sauce, packet of pasta, and bottle of olive oil made in Italy, there are three other Italian-sounding products actually made in other countries. The phenomenon of large overseas market shares being covered by products using a false Italian identity in their marketing is huge, and, as will be discussed, has many paradoxical aspects. Various types of fakes exist, which exploit images, names, and brands that "sound" Italian and are perceived by consumers as such.

Among the different types of 'copying' and 'faking' is the illegal counterfeiting of names and labels, whereby a copy product fraudulently assumes the identity of an original product. This is a serious crime affecting both manufacturers and consumers. Poor quality in counterfeit products can endanger consumer health; sometimes these products are actually toxic. In many cases, counterfeiting involves *agromafie*, or organized crime (Eurispes 2011). However, other forms of copying exist that in many cases are not against the law. This is the case of Italian-sounding (IS) products. IS products are widespread all round the world and have enormous turnover. Of the 60 billion euros attributed to 'Italian fakes', IS products account for about 54 billion euros.

**Table 1** Exports of ‘made in Eataly’, counterfeit, and Italian-sounding products (in billion euros, 2012 data)

	Made in Eataly	Counterfeit and Italian-sounding	% Made in Eataly
Europe	16	26	38.1%
North America	4	24	14.3%
Other countries	5	10	33.3%
Total	25	60	29.4%

Source: Author elaborations on data from the Italian ICE and Federalimentare.

The IS phenomenon is based on selling the consumer a product associated with a ‘typical’ element of Italy, regardless of its quality, taste, or place of production. The element can be the product name, as in the case of Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, or it can be the brand name, as in the case of ‘Da Vinci’ and ‘Gattuso’ sauces, which exploit the reputations of the great Renaissance inventor and the famous football player of the 2000s, respectively. Other brands use colours or pictures on the label or packaging that make explicit reference to Italy, like the green, white, and red of the Italian flag or the easily-recognizable Gulf of Naples and Vesuvius.<sup>12)</sup>

IS products have spread all over world markets, with some important differences (Table 1). In Europe, IS products are valued at 26 billion euro, compared with 16 billion euro for original Italian products. In North America, they are worth 24 billion, compared with four billion for originals. In the US and Canada, 97% of pasta sauces, 94% of pickles, and 76% of canned tomatoes are imitations of genuine Italian products. The North American market is therefore the most critical for counterfeiting of products ‘made in Italy’: only one in six so-called Italian products is really made in the country.

The Italian food sector is worth around 130 billion euro annually, so IS products are an economically significant phenomenon. Manufacturers claim that IS products steal important market share from products actually made in Italy, and that they lose out to products that are Italian only in name due to marketing alone. This is true, but on the other hand, could indicate that products made in Italy have enormous growth potential thanks to the reputation of Italian food around the world.

In recent years, despite the economic crisis, exports of Italian food have risen by 20%, growing 7.4% in 2015 alone. During the same period, exports of IS products did not rise. Authentic ‘made in Italy’ products have gained market share previously taken up by copies. The situation is complicated, but it suggests that true Italian food may be able expand its market share by informing and educating the tastes of the consumer.<sup>13)</sup>

The ‘false made in Italy’ phenomenon is also influenced by politics. From 2013 to 2015, for example, the trade embargo with Russia resulted in a hit of almost 4 billion euros for Italian products, with expectation of further losses in

2016.<sup>14)</sup> Russian consumption plummeted, as suddenly it was impossible to buy Italian food. Agricultural exports were heavily affected by almost half a billion euros. In this situation, demand was met by counterfeit products that had Italian names but were strictly made in Russia. The village of Dubrovskoe, for example, which is 60 kilometres from Moscow, makes products like Gorgonzola and 'Russkiy Parmesan'. This case is emblematic of an industry helped by protectionism. Big Russian retail chains sell mozzarella, ricotta, mascarpone, and Robiola, all of which is made in Russia, under Italian names. They sell IS sausage and pizza. The embargo also allowed other countries to export fake Italian products to Russia. Many counterfeit cheeses come from Argentina and Brazil, as well as from Belarus and Switzerland.<sup>15)</sup>

We now focus on IS products and their attempt to exploit the competitive advantage gained by real Italian products thanks to their quality and market position. It would be interesting to find, for example, that fraud involving products made in Italy occurred in the past as well, and could thus be considered a persistent dynamic. The phenomenon may be an effect of globalization or inherent in production and distribution, and as such embedded in market dynamics.

Another related question is how far IS products can be considered illegal 'counterfeiting', and thus countered by exclusively legal means. IS products tend to remind consumers of Italy with a name, a flag, or a landscape, but they do not explicitly claim to be 'made in Italy'. The issue is complicated by the fact that IS products use product categories (e.g., Parmesan, the international name for Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese) that belong to Italy. Italian producers feel victimized by this and denounce the phenomenon as illegal consumer fraud.

However, from the consumer perspective, there are other implications. The first concerns their reasons for buying IS products, their information level, and their 'good faith'. The second relates to market segmentation and the different price ranges of original, IS, and counterfeit products, in descending order. The final implication concerns 'taste', which even in the age of sensory globalization is still linked to local traditions.<sup>16)</sup>

As far as consumer information is concerned, there may well be thousands of consumers in France who think they are buying a typical Italian product when they purchase Zapetti ravioli. Not all, though; a quick look at the label shows that this is a pre-cooked French product.<sup>17)</sup> The information provided to the consumer is faultless, but the host who serves his or her guests with 'ravioli bolognaise' can nevertheless satisfy a desire to share Italian food with them and a desire for exoticism and distinction by consuming the IS product. What about the consumer who doesn't read the label or is misled? This is a sensitive issue because often the consumer has access to all the formal elements necessary to make a decision, but lacks the ability to decode the information.

With respect to market segmentation, we note that on the Amazon website, half a kilogram of quality Italian industrial pasta (De Cecco) costs slightly less than three euros.<sup>18)</sup> This is about three times the price of the same product in Italy,

and much more than other, lower-quality brands produced outside Italy. The question is whether the pasta market is segmented by price; this in fact appears to be the case, given that the market in Italy shows the same trend (Torazza 2006). It is entirely predictable that the market for pasta outside Italy, where it is consumed much less, would be segmented by price. Quality Italian products dominate this market, with Barilla and Pasta Zara covering 30%<sup>19)</sup>, and lower-quality but cheaper IS products meet residual demand. Looking at this trend, it appears that the only way to remove market share from IS products is to educate consumers that — at least in this case — more expensive products really are of higher quality.

This is in fact the story of Pasta Barilla in the US. For the last decade, Barilla has engaged 100 top chefs to ‘convince’ consumers that the true Italian Way of Eating entails knowledge of Italian music, painting, and history, and Pasta Barilla has become the leading brand in the US.

The final implication of IS products from the consumer perspective is the distinction between an Italian and an ‘Italian-sounding’ product. The differences between different food cultures are sometimes only a question of ‘accent’, as in the case of Mediterranean cuisine. In other cases, the differences grow to include basic components (bitter-sweet; sour-salty), and even further to include the sequence of courses and combinations of colour and taste. In recent years, Italian food has won over many consumers from distant food cultures. In just a few years, for example, supermarkets in the large Chinese towns have filled with European products, including Italian foods or local products passed off as Italian. Wealthy Chinese middle classes have ‘adopted’ European food habits, drinking French wines<sup>20)</sup> and eating Italian food (Mam and Berger 2012).

However, the socio-cultural desire to show off social status through European consumption behaviours is one thing; being able to distinguish between several hundred red wines from Bordeaux or different varieties of Italian cheese is quite another. It is yet another thing again to have an honest preference for a genuine European wine or cheese rather than an equally prestigious IS product that tastes very similar to the original (Busato 2011: 29–30). In short, it is identity rather than taste that guides consumer choice, and this means that an IS product with a hybridized taste is often preferred over the original.

It is important to note in passing that selling IS products is different from selling products with a counterfeit Italian identity (Casillo 2001: 96–100). This is true fraud, widespread and very lucrative, which occurs mainly when products are illegally imported into Italy. These can be fish from the Pacific Ocean sold as Mediterranean catch; meat, ham, and butter sold as Italian; and olive oil of various provenance sold as Italian Extra-Virgin.

## **COUNTERFEITING, FRAUD, AND IMITATION**

There are various types of counterfeiting. The falsification of manufacturing goods in general gives a product a new identity, usually that of a higher-quality or better-

known product (Casillo 1998: 696). The product gains this new identity either during manufacturing or sale, with the aim to gain higher profits or a new market for products that might not otherwise attract consumers. Given the scale of the issue, a study centre on the phenomenon was established at the University of Salerno in Italy (the centre was recently closed for bureaucratic reasons). The centre director, Salvatore Casillo, explained that 'usurping product identity' can be done in two ways, often simultaneously (Casillo 2001: 23). First, the falsification uses 'materials, ingredients, and/or processes which differ from those permitted or laid down by market regulations and thus consumer expectations' (Casillo 1998: 696); the product assumes a market identity not its own, and the consumer is misled. Second, the product brand is falsified through packaging and design etc. to imitate that of another product, again misleading the consumer (Casillo 1998: 697).

Counterfeiting is an age-old practice in manufacturing and trade, and it has only increased with technological development. There are numerous types of counterfeiting according to the type of product and counterfeiter ability, as well as the level of possibly unstated complicity by the seller and the buyer in particular.

These factors combine in different ways, and counterfeit products range widely according to market and consumer ability to identify them. In fact, not all counterfeit products are produced in clandestine sweatshops. Some require sophisticated equipment and machinery that may actually be owned by a producer who also makes the product for an official producer. In this case counterfeits are of good quality, but in other cases, inferior products may be made by less technically advanced producers. A large market share is thus covered by falsified products targeting different needs.

We now focus on the relationship between counterfeiting and IS goods. IS products do not assume an existing brand, but they exploit the appeal of a reputation implied by sounds, colours, or images recalling a product made in Italy. The question is particularly difficult because the product communication is deliberately ambiguous and plays on a combination of basically true and untrue elements. It uses the reputation of Italian food and wine, a big competitive strength for Italian producers, and turns it into a weakness. The question is whether it is possible to protect Italian food from IS products through legislation and sanctions alone, or whether the battle must be waged on the consumer side.

Even the strictest legislation cannot help consumers appreciate the 'true' taste of a product. True Italian products can only regain market share from IS products by way of marketing campaigns that encourage consumers to learn for themselves how to differentiate between a true product and an imitation. In fact, the imitation is probably only accepted in cases where the original is unknown.

## **A BRIEF HISTORY OF COUNTERFEITING**

The history of fraud and counterfeiting has been little investigated thus, but offers

clear potential as a field of study. It yields useful indications in terms of manufacturing production and sales distribution, and more generally on how the market functioned both pre- and post-industrialization. One of the few existing studies, by Béaur, Bonin, and Lemercier, offers extremely interesting observations in its introduction (Béaur, Bonin, and Lemercier 2006: 9–16; Wilson 2008).

The first observation is that counterfeiting was long inherent in production processes and trade, and was not exclusively caused by industrialization, though it became more widespread as a result of greater use of machinery and more rapid innovation. Precisely this long history poses the question of whether the mechanisms of counterfeiting alter with the structure, size, and organization of markets.

The second observation is that falsification impact producers and consumers to produce market distortion.<sup>21)</sup> This leads to the question of market regulation and instruments used by institutions and producer organizations and associations to protect themselves and consumers from fraud. In pre-industrial times there were guilds; today there are consortia and lengthy deliberations leading to various designation markers and brand enhancement strategies. These aspects are all phases in the history of protecting products from imitation. Producers must be able to protect their investment in innovation, and consumers must be guaranteed the authenticity, safety, and quality of goods on the market. However, it is also clear that individual and collective behaviours, sometimes institutionally directed, attempt to circumvent constraints in certain economic interests.

Counterfeiting and fraud have a well-established presence in history, illustrated by two particularly important sources. Medieval church doctrine makes frequent mention of fraud, and along with frequent denunciation of usury and illicit professions such as prostitution,<sup>22)</sup> it explicitly denounces fraud by traders and artisans. That it was extremely widespread and a subject of public debate can also be seen by its mention in St. Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* (Tommaso d'Aquino 2009; Dal Sasso and Coggi 1989). St. Thomas Aquinas, also known as Doctor Angelicus, stated that discrepancy between goods sold and the 'type' they are sold as, or fraud in quantity or quality, is illicit and sinful when the seller acts deliberately. Either way, the seller is obliged to compensate the buyer, even when the product has hidden defects. In this, St. Thomas Aquinas was actually anticipating modern legislation on consumer protection (Tommaso d'Aquino 2009: 3710).

Apart from the punishments prescribed, it is notable that a Father of the Church felt the need to discuss the subject of fraud in detail in his main theological work. Subsequently, other theologians addressed the subject, suggesting that there was probably a great deal of uncertainty in the urban and trade recovery markets of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, with widespread hoaxes and swindling.

Alfred Marshall, a founder of modern economic thought, makes similar observations. In his 1889 *Principles of Economics*, Marshall wrote that 'Adulteration and fraud in trade were rampant in the middle ages to an extent that

is very astonishing' (Marshall 1953: 9, cited in Casillo 2001: 30). It is true that cases of fraud and adulteration remain numerous in Europe today, despite the stringent regulations and severe punishments. In Castillo's view, these tend to be instruments of repression, which become increasingly strict and are ineffective precisely for this reason (Casillo 2001: 30–31).

Fraud and counterfeiting are clearly long-term phenomena, but as noted, became increasingly frequent in the 19<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>23)</sup> when trade volumes increased (Pavese 2006: 311 ss.). Counterfeiting became more frequent in food as mass production began from the industrial age onwards (Tannahill 1987: 333). In some cases, the food industry itself began to alter the authentic nature of products to meet rising demand (Casillo 2001: 32).

### **COUNTERFEITING, INNOVATION, AND 'SELF-COUNTERFEITING' OF TYPICAL PRODUCTS**

In addition to counterfeiting and IS products, it is necessary to examine the relationship between typical food products made in the traditional manner and those made industrially. We now focus on products and producers that coexist in the same consortia, but differ in terms of production techniques and taste characteristics, despite apparently shared quality standards and identity.

The difference between 'artisanal' and 'industrial' typical products appeared with the rise of the modern food processing industry. The industry began to use the concept of typicality, combining tradition, nostalgia, and exoticism, as leverage in marketing. This phenomenon was particularly marked in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, when large universal exhibitions began to increase demand for exotic foods and food started to become an important component of national identity (Magagnoli 2015b).

The concept of typicality appeared in pre-industrial times and developed over a long period (Ferrières 2013). Early on, purchase and consumption of foods linked to the 'typical characteristics' of a particular area conferred prestige on those who could afford to show such products on their table (Capatti and Montanari 1999; Rebora 1998). Even today, typical food products meet the need for something to eat, although they are much more than food. In fact, because typical food products became markers of social distinction over time and thus conferred distinction, they were consumed not just for their taste but often as a result of essentially irrational decisions made on the basis of symbolic factors, as with many other fashion products (Franchi 2009; Franchi and Schianchi 2009). Even in many modern cases, typical products evoke a specific cultural identity that can be acquired through consumption. In other cases, they symbolize food fashion, enabling consumers to present themselves as distinguished through ostentation of a trendsetting product. In other periods, typical products also gave lower middle classes the means to imitate the consumer behaviour of the upper-middle class,<sup>24)</sup> providing the illusion of middle-class behaviour for those could

not afford it.

This type of product is in fact the real link between real and perceived typicality of industrially made, mass-produced products with lower production costs that make them affordable to large segments of consumers. The main feature of these typical products, which illustrate a type of counterfeiting or 'self-counterfeiting' (Ceccarelli, Grandi, and Magagnoli 2013) is the difference between the typical nature of product in terms of ingredients, recipe, and so on, and the representation of that typical nature. Although mass-produced, the product's narrative can indicate that it is the fruit of a certain area's ancient tradition. Product information can be 'constructed' on the signs and symbols of tradition, which in reality may have vanished (Ceccarelli, Grandi, and Magagnoli 2010). The product thus no longer exists in its original dimension, but still represents distinction (Bourdieu 1983), and can still 'seduce' (Baudrillard 1976) the consumer in the dizzying multiplication of sign-values. In lieu of true typicality, there is at least a symbolic representation of it. Such products are often 're-invented' (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1987) by the industrial process, yet still possess the signs and values of the 'real' typical product.

There is a real, systemic necessity for self-counterfeiting in every production system, and 'avatar' products come into being as a direct response to the rules on designation. Local labelling systems in fact lead to circumstances in which typical products can be only produced in limited amounts, given that the production system is constrained by the area. There is a clear conflict between growing the market with the consequent growth in demand, and the limitations on production capacity imposed by the regulations binding producers. The only solution is to make products not bound by legislation on designation, but which still use the symbols of typical product identity. Initially, the 'Appellation Contrôlée' labelling system established at the advent of internationalization provided consumer guarantees, 'protected' products, and was useful in marketing. But the same process gave rise to avatar products: those that make use of the typical elements in a 'parallel product' to be sold on in an increasingly segmented and fragmented market. These products meet higher demand and make higher profits at the same time.

Traditional Balsamic Vinegar of Modena is a clear example of the process (Magagnoli 2005). Balsamic vinegar is one of the best-known Italian agri-food products around the world, and it is a symbol of the coexistence of artisan producers and mass producers. On the one hand, the traditional vinegar is made according to time-honoured methods, aged for tens of years; on the other, industrial methods are used, along with a series of condiments that have nothing balsamic about them except the name. The coexistence of these two typologies of product is what makes the system successful (Magagnoli and Veratti 2017).

## COUNTERFEITING AND INNOVATION

The case of balsamic vinegar raises another extremely important question regarding the boundary between counterfeiting and innovation. Superficially, counterfeiting is illegal and subject to sanction and punishment,<sup>25)</sup> whereas innovation is inherent in competition. In production and product promotion, innovation offers competitive advantages in terms of cost, quality, or ability to attract consumers. In truth, the boundary is much less distinct. The history of textile products from the Middle Ages to the 19<sup>th</sup> century is a constant story of ‘quality wars’ (Béaur, Bonin, and Lemerrier 2006: 11) fought by numerous ‘counterfeiters’ and leading to perpetual modifications in the product. These ranged from changes in raw materials<sup>26)</sup> to changes in techniques, organization, and production organization and regulations. Moreover, as existing research emphasises, counterfeiting is always difficult to pin down and define (Montenach 2006: 516; Abad 2006: 540). It almost always entails conflict as the outcome of combining collectively accepted rules, norms, and practices that aim to reduce uncertainty in relationships between customer and producer or purchaser and seller (Vernus 2006: 492).

The history of intellectual property rights moreover shows that fraudsters are often innovators (Vernus 2006: 492), but here again the boundary can be blurred. It is often unclear how counterfeiting should be classified in the case of patent infringement. In Buzzi’s view, it is fraudulent and damaging (Buzzi 2006: 681). In Galvez-Behar’s, the ‘inventor’ requires protection from patent infringement (Galvez-Behar 2006: 697). But of course, the same context can be seen from the perspective of the consumer, who is happy to pay less for an equivalent product. Counterfeiters themselves may claim to be working against an existing monopoly. In some cases, counterfeiting is even thought to be ‘virtuous’ in helping to spread innovation and redistribute knowledge (Beltran 2006: 735).

## COUNTERFEITING ON OR OFF THE MARKET

Fraud, counterfeiting, and product copying thus appears to be linked to the slowness of artisanal production processes. Counterfeiting is in fact a short cut to producing larger amounts more quickly, replacing an original product subject to strict supervision and constraints. In a way, productivity is increased through counterfeiting, even though quality is simultaneously lowered, which can result in complaints from traders and purchasers.

Fraud, copying, and counterfeiting are frequent enough to be an integral part of the market. Under the *Ancien Régime*, there was a custom of selling lower-quality products at official prices controlled by the authorities. It was also common to adulterate grain or to sell chicken as capon and coloured moss as saffron (Montenach 2006: 528–531). Further examples of prevailing fraud were selling poor-quality female beef as good-quality beef; oysters from England as

coming from Marennnes; and farm-bred rabbit as wild (Abad 2002: 213; 525; 712). Counterfeiting therefore needs to be seen as part of the economic game. In pre-industrial times, it brought flexibility to a permanently uncertain situation, and more importantly provided solutions to meet the varied and changing basic needs and desire for non-essentials of a mixed population.

If counterfeiting is a market activity, this implies that it is conducted by official market players who know how it works and can cope with norms and regulations. It is, in fact, usually the work of sophisticated operators with access to information, who know how to juggle rules in the interstices of supervision and control by authorities (Montenach 2006: 538). In short, counterfeiters are usually professionals with good knowledge of markets, product positioning, and consumer tastes.

In the case of textiles from the Low Countries, counterfeiting (Abraham-Thisse 2006: 456) affected reputation badly. But it was not only the textile trade that suffered: fraud, counterfeiting, and unfair or misleading competition could harm the reputation of the place as a whole. This is a risk whether the fault lies inside the system or with producers elsewhere using the 'place brand' to sell counterfeits.<sup>27)</sup> It can cause enormous damage to an entire production system and the producers and sellers who play by its rules.

Fraud, counterfeiting, and unfair or misleading competition can in fact constitute free-riding, which lowers market certainty and market trust in the products of a place. The effect is not always negative, however; in some cases fraud and counterfeiting provide an incentive for innovation and efficacy in the production system. From this perspective, copies and counterfeiting are no longer necessarily illegal or morally wrong. We might even go so far as to say that they can drive economic progress, in that they open up new opportunities where none existed before. It should be possible to conceive of counterfeiting as 'virtuous' in the development and growth of industry and trade. The idea that IS products offer and extend opportunities for Italian producers is a challenge to current thinking, but it is a potentially powerful idea.

### **'ITALIAN-SOUNDING' PRODUCTS**

IS products are very successful around the world, especially among consumers who can afford to pay a premium for a 'fashionable' product. The appeal of the Italian Way of Eating has in fact spread worldwide, and not only in recent years. An early example is pizza, which was globalized many years ago, and today has many variations in the US and elsewhere that are distinctly odd to Italians. Various other Italian typical products have spread around the globe. Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese is a classic example. It is probably the only truly globalized cheese, and the most frequently copied in the world. The US produces numerous imitations, some of which are high quality, and some of which are so far from the original that they are more like caricatures than competitors.

The problem is more complicated than it may seem, given that in the US the term 'Parmesan' does not indicate a product with a specific relationship to a place of origin; rather it refers to a type of product or commodity. The same is true of the term 'Pecorino', which explains why Obama's chef served 'Pecorino of New York'. The example of Balsamic Vinegar of Modena also applies. The range in quality of products sold under the name 'balsamic vinegar' worldwide is almost endless. At the top is the 'true' Traditional Balsamic Vinegar of Modena, of which about 6,000–7,000 litres are made a year, with an end price of at least 100 euro per tiny bottle (100 cc). This particular type of vinegar is not produced with wine, but with boiled grape must, aged for at least 25 years in special barrels of decreasing size. Every year the vinegar is transferred from one barrel to another. The must is topped up in the largest barrel and small quantities of balsamic vinegar are taken from the smallest.

Because only a very small quantity is produced, very few people in the world who have experienced the real Traditional Balsamic Vinegar of Modena. Nevertheless, almost everyone is familiar with industrial Balsamic Vinegar of Modena, which has an annual production of about 60–70 million litres in the province of origin. Obviously, there are great differences in quality, taste, and smell. On many supermarket shelves in Italy and around the world, alongside higher quality products costing about twenty or thirty euros, there are also very cheap bottles of wine vinegar coloured with caramel. Finally there are the 'copies' made abroad, which have nothing at all to do with Italian vinegar, but use the adjective 'balsamic' in their name.

Similar are the 'fake' Italian restaurants in other countries round the world, where dishes have an Italian name but a non-Italian taste: Russian, American, Chinese, Norwegian, and so on. Here too it is the name of Italy that prevails rather than the genuine taste of food, and here too part of the reason is the absence of clear points of reference.

Food, store-bought or eaten at a restaurant, becomes a substitute for travel to far-away Italy. In consumers' minds, it replaces a trip to what is beautiful and good. We appreciate the sense of these things, even if the cheese isn't really Italian, thanks to colours that evoke the beauty of Italy, its countryside and coast, and the goodness of the Mediterranean diet. We have seen how the myth of tradition is built and how symbols become the true markers of the quality of the products we consume. The Italian Way of Eating has an excellent reputation worldwide, and it is hardly surprising that Italian products are subject to unfair competition.

Legal and customs protections are obviously important, but they are extremely complex and in any case insufficient. More effective would be to educate consumer palates so that people all over the world become more aware of the genuine taste of 'true' Italian products, a good taste associated with the high quality and authenticity of Italian food.

Obviously, this is not an easy thing: who should educate consumer tastes?

Producers alone could surely never take on this task: it is too expensive and dispersive. The activity must therefore be realized jointly by public institutions (i.e., the Ministry of economic development and the Italian Cultural Institutes that operate in more than 80 foreign countries) and the organizations between firms.

Such a course is probably the only real antidote to the phenomenon of IS products, and the only way to grasp the opportunity presented by this unfair competition.

## NOTES

- 1) <http://www.palminawines.com/assets/client/File/2014%20Vermentino%20Tasting%20Notes.pdf> (accessed: 8 June 2017).
- 2) <http://villaragazziwine.com/wines-currently-available.html> (accessed: 8 June 2017).
- 3) The official menu even used the Italian wording ‘Pecorino di New York’.
- 4) Conference, *Intellectual Property Rights for Geographical Indications: What Is at Stake in the TTIP?*, University of Parma, Italy, 14–15 April 2015.
- 5) Population figures: China 1,384,731,000; India 1,332,846,000; Russia 143,433; Brazil 210,232. From <http://popolazione.population.city/> (accessed: 19 November 2016).
- 6) See Ferrières 2013 and Trubeck 2008 for the concept of *terroir*.
- 7) For Avatar products and the ‘democratization’ of luxury products, see Ceccarelli, Grandi, and Magagnoli 2013; Grandi and Magagnoli 2013.
- 8) This was shown in the case of *mozzarella di bufala* when its area of origin, Campania, hit the headlines in a waste scandal. See Franchi, Gualtieri and Ziliani 2009.
- 9) David Wondrich, quoted in Chad Parkhill, ‘Shake it till you make it: how a classic cocktail conned itself into history’, in *The Guardian*, 14 November 2016: <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2016/nov/14/shake-it-till-you-make-it-how-a-classic-cocktail-conned-itself-into-history> (accessed: 16 June 2017).
- 10) An example of invention of a place of origin for an industrial product is the ‘Mulino Bianco’ used by the large Italian firm Barilla from the 1970s onwards as a ‘home’ for its biscuits. The original water mill was the Mulino delle Pile in Val d’Orcia, near the Abbey of San Galgano in Tuscany. The mill only became white, however, when Barilla told the story.
- 11) These and the following statistics are elaborated by Coldiretti (<https://www.coldiretti.it/>) on ISTAT and Ministry of Economic Development data.
- 12) For the key role of packaging in supplying the consumer with information and emotive content about the product, see Deliza and MacFie 2001. The article contains many points relevant to the capacity of IS products to form consumer taste and impact on purchasing trends. See also Anceschi and Bucchetti 1998.
- 13) An important example is the Academia Barilla, which has promoted the Italian Way of Eating in the US since the late 1990s. The Academia involves top-range restaurants in Italian food evenings, aimed mainly at wealthier Americans, and uses products often above the level of quality required by manufacturer guidelines for protected products. The process aims to educate American palates, but also to show chefs and punters that eating ‘original’ products is only part of the process. Real Italian style involves a holistic approach to Italian culture: music, painting, and art. With its Academia, Barilla has dominated the commodity market for pasta, and over time the effects are trickling down to the lower classes and gaining added value. Figures for sales of IS products on the US market in fact suggest that

- in future it may be possible for real Italian products to regain some of the market share currently covered by 'false' products (Gonizzi and Zenti 2013).
- 14) Italian exports fell from 10.8 billion in 2013 to 7.1 billion in 2015.
  - 15) 'War and cheese', *The Economist*, 7 April 2016 (<http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21696571-hand-and-where-european-cheese-banned-one-man-dares-make-his-own-war-and-cheese>); Andrew Roth, 'Please pass the Russian Parmesan: Cheesemakers celebrate sanctions, and hope they continue', *The Washington Post*, 11 October 2016 ([https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/please-pass-the-russian-parmesan-cheesemakers-celebrate-sanctions-and-hope-they-continue/2016/10/07/049907b1-bd72-4c6f-89c9-73d9ca695c06\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.a4b27aee0753](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/please-pass-the-russian-parmesan-cheesemakers-celebrate-sanctions-and-hope-they-continue/2016/10/07/049907b1-bd72-4c6f-89c9-73d9ca695c06_story.html?utm_term=.a4b27aee0753)); both accessed 9 June 2017.
  - 16) As a multinational chain, McDonald's, for example, adapts its menus to local custom. McDonald's has been criticized as 'a corrupter of youthful palates, standardizing taste between different countries [...], scourge of culinary traditions all-round the world', but in Italy, it sells burgers with *Parmigiano Reggiano*, *insalata caprese*, and *torta della nonna*; in Japan, *ebi filet-O* with shrimp and a green tea milkshake; in France, *salade Niçoise* and *le petit moutarde*; in Hong Kong, a rice burger; and in Costa Rica, *gallo pinto* (rice and beans). See De Maria 2008.
  - 17) <http://www.zapetti.fr/> (accessed: 19 November 2016).
  - 18) [https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B001M072X0/ref=pd\\_sim\\_325\\_1](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B001M072X0/ref=pd_sim_325_1) (accessed: 19 November 2016).
  - 19) Zara Pasta is an example. Zara is the main competitor in international markets, but hardly present in the Italian market. Currently it sells about 10% of output in Italy, but for many years this figure was under 5%, showing a commercial strategy focused on exports (Comelli 2005: 6). See also the company website: <http://www.pastazara.it/> (accessed: 22 December 2012).
  - 20) To meet huge demand in the Chinese market without giving rise to a price hike on already expensive red wine, and without giving Chinese counterfeiters the opportunity to muscle in, Château Lafite-Rothschild began producing wine at Penglai in Shandong Province. The site was selected after a long search for soil and climate similar to those of Bordeaux (Jadeluca 2012).
  - 21) The introduction opens with the following quotation from Alan Greenspan, Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System 1987–2006: 'Thus, our market system depends critically on trust—trust in the word of our colleagues and trust in the word of those with whom we do business. Falsification and fraud are highly destructive to free-market capitalism and, more broadly, to the underpinnings of our society' (Greenspan 2002).
  - 22) For example, Blessed Jordon of Pisa in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century preached that trade had become theft, deception of one's neighbour, and worse than usury. He openly criticized commercial fraud, usury, and illegal trade such as male and female prostitution and jesting, as well as excessive luxury and squandering, which were widespread in cities like Florence and Pisa. See Delcorno 2001.
  - 23) See Scholliers 2007 and Hierholzer 2007 for a discussion of cases of food fraud that led to decisive institutional reaction in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
  - 24) The example of William Morris & Co. illustrates this clearly. In late 19<sup>th</sup>-century England, William Morris furnishings were fashionable among the Victorian upper-middle class. They became an element of distinction and social belonging, and poorer quality replications were widely purchased by lower classes who wished to copy their 'superiors' (Harvey, Press, and Maclean 2011).
  - 25) 'La contrefaçon demeure la seule et unique notion juridiquement définie, par les lois

nationales comme par règles internationales, et couvre l'ensemble des droits de propriété intellectuelle. Elle sanctionne toute atteinte irrégulière à une création de l'esprit valablement protégée' ('Counterfeiting is the only concept legally defined by both national legislation and international regulations, and covers all intellectual property rights. It punishes any unlawful breach of intellectual property rights'; de Bouchony 2006: 3-4).

- 26) See Abraham-Thisse 2006: 435-448 for the various types of counterfeits in textile making in the Low Countries in the Late Middle Ages.
- 27) See Cazals 2006: 458-460 for the damage done by fraud and counterfeiting to *place* (*la place* in French), defined as a pool of competing firms with elements of cooperation.

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