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## **Cultural Habits in the World of Food: Italy vs USA**

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## Abstract

Food culture is a complex reflection of national identity and temperament, history, geography, and immigration patterns, among other factors. Italian and American food culture differ significantly, such that the desire to experience Italian food culture is often a deliberate focus for visiting American tourists. This thesis explores the complex relationship between food and culture, and how it manifests in the United States and Italy. The findings are based on a review of the existing literature. Key differences in the approach to food and to eating between the two countries are highlighted by contrasting attitudes and behaviors towards food quality vs quantity, the popularity of fad diets, the structure of meals and time spent around the dining table, the attraction of novelty vs tradition, the influence of globalization, and the role of the built environment (infrastructure). Differences in restaurant culture focus on contrasting management practices, the role of convenience, the meaning of service, and how payment and tipping practices differ for servers in Italy versus the United States.

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It is not down in any map; true places never are.

Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*.

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## 1. Introduction

The study of food and culture involves the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, history, and economics. The term culture refers to the set of values, knowledge, language, rituals, habits, lifestyles, attitudes, beliefs, folklore, rules and customs that identify a particular group of people at a specific point in time (Sibal, 2018). However, defining the word culture has been highly debated amongst anthropologists. The first significant definition came from Edward Tylor, the founder of cultural anthropology, in 1871. He defined culture as a “complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.” More recently, definitions of culture have become more pragmatic. American anthropologist, Clifford Geertz, suggests that culture is “a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols (Prinz, 2011). Food is an essential component of people’s lives and reflects cultural identity. Food traditions vary widely throughout the world, as people from various backgrounds eat different foods. For example, Halal and Kosher diets are two popular eating patterns based on Islamic and Jewish laws, respectively. Many Middle Eastern populations, including Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and Palestine, only consume halal foods. Halal foods are those consumed by Muslims who choose to follow a dietary regimen dictated by the teachings of their holy book, the Quran. Kosher foods are consumed by observant Jews who choose to follow dietary restrictions set forth in their sacred book, the Torah. A Kosher diet divides foods into three categories: meat (fleishig), dairy products (milchig), and pareve, which refers to foodstuffs that do not contain meat or dairy. Kosher diet rules prohibit the consumption of meat and dairy foods at the same meal. Whereas Halal diets forbid foods containing blood, alcohol and foods prepared with it, as well as pork, most reptiles, birds of prey, and carnivorous animals (Healthline, 2021).

Moreover, eating habits and patterns may differ even among people with close cultural backgrounds. For example, families deviate from their own daily routines on holidays, when traveling, or when hosting guests. Men and women eat differently, as well as people of different ages. However, the majority of people in the world associate food and the sharing of food with hospitality and friendship. Food culture is related to tradition and nostalgia, with the rhetorical repertoire of aesthetics, identity, and uniqueness. Undoubtedly, there is a relationship between culture and food. This contributes to our cultures and environments (Sibal, 2018).

Food culture differs significantly between Italy and the US, and experiencing the respective differences is often a deliberate focus for travelers. Many Americans take trips to Italy to experience “la dolce vita,” where one can take a relaxing stroll through a charming village along cobblestone

streets after an enjoyable meal with loved ones. Time seems to move more slowly in Italy, providing the world with an antidote to the fast lifestyle that many in post-industrial societies resent, yet find irresistible. Similarly, many Italians travel to America specifically to experience the hustle and bustle that the USA is so famous for.

This thesis attempts to describe major differences between Italian and American food cultures. Differences in attitude and behavior towards food are illustrated by contrasting different approaches to the question of quality vs quantity, the popularity of fad diets, the structure of meals and time spent around the dining table, the attraction of novelty vs tradition, the influence of globalization, and the role of the built environment (infrastructure). Differences in restaurant culture focus on management practices, the role of convenience, the meaning and importance of service, and how payment and tipping practices differ.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Attitudes and Behaviors Towards Food

#### 2.1.1 Quality vs Quantity

For centuries, populations around the Mediterranean, including Italy, struggled with food scarcity, wars, invasions, and an environment that was often not very favorable to agriculture. Access to meat, dairy and fats was limited, so a variety of grains, legumes, and vegetables were incorporated into the diet, based on regional, cultural, and sociopolitical considerations. The late 1950's ushered in the country's so-called "economic miracle" and the majority of the Italian population - including the poor – saw a change in the ability to enjoy a more diverse and bountiful diet, which caused traditional ways of life and food habits to shift. As these pivotal changes affected the diet in Italy and elsewhere in southern Europe, the rest of the world started to discover that the practices the Mediterranean populations employed to reduce hunger in fact, represented a healthy dietary paradigm (Parasecoli, 2014). The Mediterranean Diet (MD) incorporates principles that relate to food quality and quantity and provide a model for thinking about these aspects of food. Though not as widely followed as before, the Italian guidelines for healthy eating are based on this famous dietary model, which successfully combines health and well-being with sensory satisfaction (CREA, 2018).

The Mediterranean diet has more to offer than nutritional health, as it also reflects a cultural approach to eating. What then is the Mediterranean diet? The Mediterranean Diet is a dietary model that embodies specific knowledge, practices and traditions ranging from landscape to table, including the crops, harvesting, fishing, conservation, processing, preparation of food, that the Mediterranean people, namely the Italians, have always recognized as an integral part of their cultural heritage (Vitiello et al., 2016).

The MD consists of the following dietary factors: high consumption of seasonal plant foods, mainly being fruits and vegetables, cereals, whole grains, pulses, nuts and seeds; olive oil as a main source of fat, moderates amounts of cheese and yogurt; low amounts of red meat and moderate quantities of fish; along with a moderate amount of red wine at mealtime. The MD is characterized by a high intake of antioxidants such as beta-carotene, vitamins B, C, and E, folic acid, polyphenols, and other phytochemicals. The original study done in the 1970's, "Seven Countries Study" conducted by Keys et al. was the first to establish that the traditional Mediterranean dietary pattern was associated with a reduction in overall mortality as well as cardiovascular disease risk factors (Vitiello et al., 2016). The knowledge obtained from this study has since led scientists to conduct more research and to generate strong evidence indicating that adherence to the MD can reduce the risk of several chronic diseases, such as Parkinson's or Alzheimer's disease. The diet and physical activity that the MD promotes represent two key elements in preventing cognitive decline related to dementia, as well as reducing

the incidence of depression, while increasing quality of life. Moreover, studies have investigated the effects of the MD and have shown it is linked to reduced rates of obesity, as well as reduced cancer mortality rates, mainly breast, colorectal, gastric, respiratory tract, and oral cancers (Serra-Mejam et al., 2012).

The Mediterranean Diet Pyramid (Figure 2.1) was developed as a model to encourage broader adoption of the MD. In 2009, during the third CIISCAM (International University Centre of Studies on Mediterranean Food Cultures) Conference, a consensus was reached to revise the Mediterranean Diet Pyramid to include not only functional health benefits related to consumption of a balanced quantity of different foods, but also socio-cultural and environmental aspects of eating (Vitiello et al., 2016).

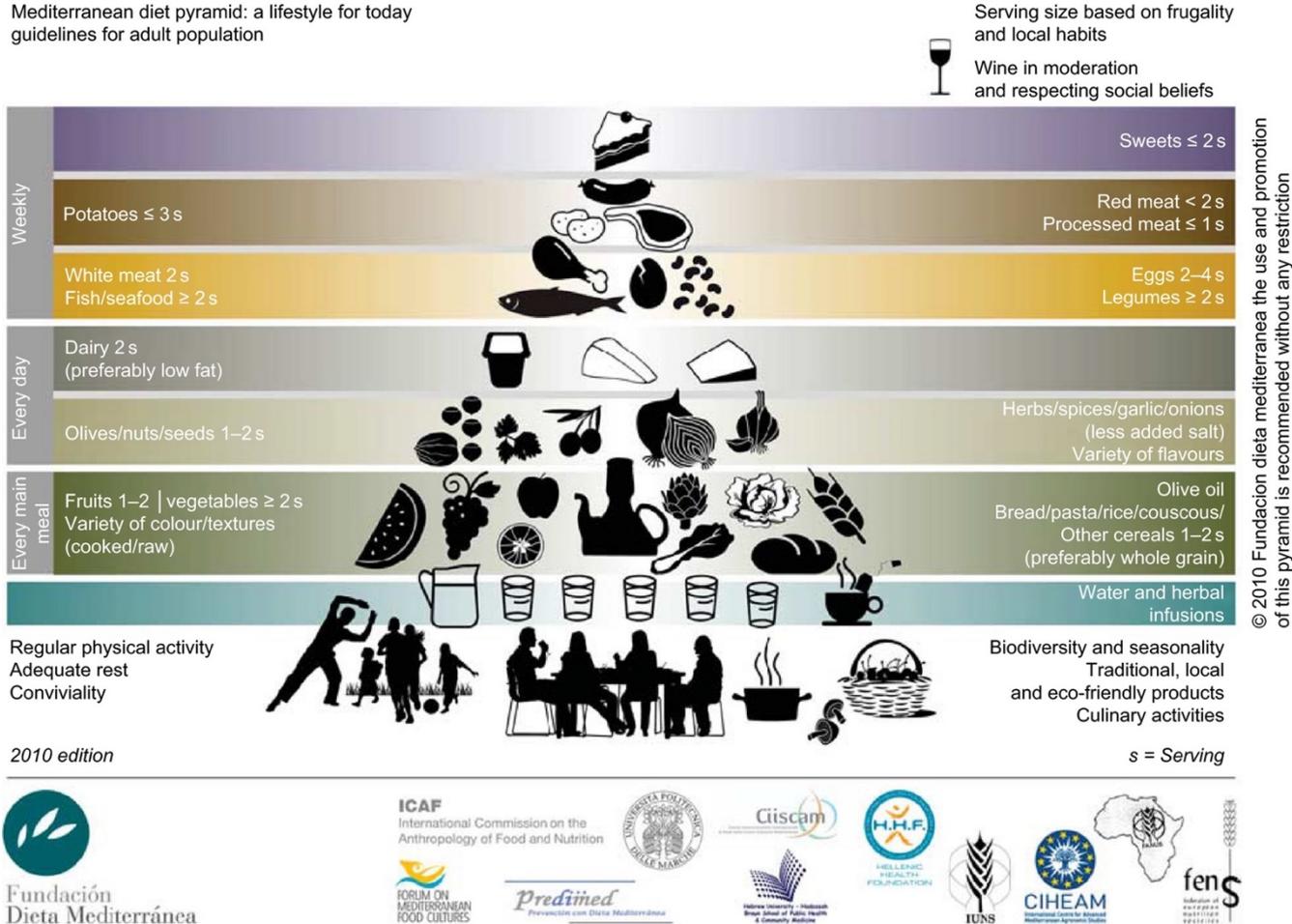


Figure 2.1: The New Modern Mediterranean Diet Italian Pyramid (Zelber-Sagi et al., 2017)

The new revised MD recommends prioritizing some food groups over others, and to pay attention to the methods of selection, cooking, and consumption of foods. In order to reap the full benefits of the Mediterranean diet, it is necessary to adopt a healthy lifestyle and to preserve cultural components. The following essential concepts summarize these elements (Serra-Mejam et al., 2012).

*Moderation:* For public health reasons and in order to combat obesity, portion size should be frugal and moderate to adapt to the decreased energy needs of urban and modern lifestyles (Serra-Mejam et al., 2012).

*Conviviality:* Beyond dietary considerations, the feature of conviviality is crucial for the meal's social and cultural worth. A sense of community and social support are enhanced when one cooks and shares a meal in the company of friends and family (Serra-Mejam et al., 2012).

*Culinary activities:* Traditional, seasonal, and local food products that promote biodiversity and eco-friendliness, as well as foods that are minimally processed, are elements presented at the bottom of the pyramid to demonstrate how the revised modern MD is a model for both sustainability and nutritional value (Serra-Mejam et al., 2012).

*Physical activity:* A minimum of thirty minutes of physical activity per day is a basic component of the MD which balances energy intake, healthy weight maintenance, amongst many other health benefits (Serra-Mejam et al., 2012).

Furthermore, the Mediterranean Diet shares some underlying principles with a concept born in Piedmont, Italy called “Slow Food.” The Slow Food philosophy envisions “living in a world in which everyone can access and enjoy food that is good for them, the people who grow it, and for the planet.” The approach is built on three interlinked principles: good, clean, and fair (Slow Food, 2015).

- Good: quality, flavorful, and healthy food
- Clean: sustainable production
- Fair: affordable prices for consumers with fair working conditions and pay for producers (Slow Food, 2015).

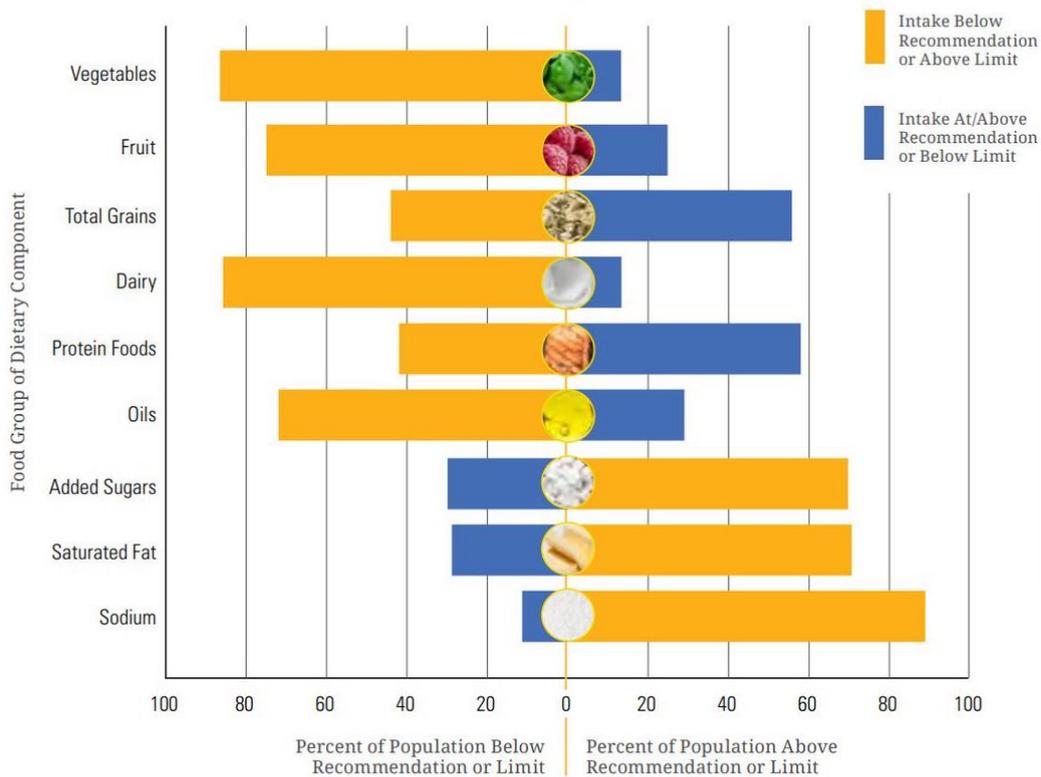
The Slow Food Movement was created in the late 1980's by a small but influential group of Italian intellectuals, activists, and professionals who produced a provocative manifesto after sharing the sense that mass production and globalization were threatening not only the quality and safety of Italian food, but local eating habits and traditions as well (Counihan et al., 2013). Their aim was to defend regional traditions, quality food, and a slow pace of life.

In the United States, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) jointly issue a document called the Dietary Guidelines every five years to provide dietary and nutritional guidance. It is well established that the high incidence of preventable chronic diseases in the U.S., e.g., cardiovascular disease and cancer, is linked in large part to poor eating behaviors. Substantial evidence proves that healthy eating patterns in conjunction with physical activity can help achieve and maintain good health and reduce the risk of chronic diseases. Thus, the Dietary Guidelines for Americans were designed for professionals to help individuals over the age of

two years to consume nutritional meals and to engage in healthy physical activity. The Dietary Guidelines must be updated scientifically every five years. The implementation of the 2020- 2025 Dietary Guidelines is the current standard intended to aid in the promotion of health and the prevention of chronic disease in the United States (PennState PRO Wellness, 2020). The focus of the guidelines is to promote overall healthy eating patterns where meals include vegetables, fruits, grains, dairy, protein, and oils – all to be eaten within a suitable calorie level with limited amounts of saturated fats, added sugars, and sodium. The guidelines present the Healthy U.S. Style Eating Pattern, and a Healthy Mediterranean-Style Eating Pattern as examples of how to implement the recommendations. The Healthy U.S. Style Eating pattern represents healthy eating by utilizing the types and proportions of foods that Americans generally consume, but in nutrient dense forms and amounts aimed to meet nutritional demands while not exceeding calorie requirements (USDA, 2020). The Healthy Mediterranean-Style Eating Pattern also demonstrates healthy eating and was designed by adapting the Healthy U.S. Eating Pattern to accurately represent eating patterns that have been associated with positive health outcomes in Mediterranean-Style diet research. It differs from the Healthy U.S.-Style Pattern in that it incorporates consuming more fruits and fish and less dairy (USDA, 2020).

However, research shows the typical eating habits of many Americans do not correspond to the provided Dietary Guidelines when contrasted to the Healthy U.S.-Style Pattern, as indicated in Figure 2.2.

## Dietary Intakes Compared to Recommendations. Percent of the U.S. Population Ages 1 Year & Older Who Are Below, At, or Above Each Dietary Goal or Limit



**NOTE:** The center (0) line is the goal or limit. For most, those represented by the orange sections of the bars, shifting toward the center line will improve their eating pattern.

**DATA SOURCES:** What We Eat in America, NHANES 2007-2010 for average intakes by age-sex group. Healthy U.S.-Style Food Patterns, which vary based on age, sex, and activity level, for recommended intakes and limits.

Figure 2.2: Current Eating Patterns in the United States (USDA, 2015)

Figure 2.2 shows that about 75% of the population in the U.S. have a low intake of vegetables, fruits, dairy and oils. More than 50% of Americans are meeting or exceeding the total grain and protein recommendations, and are exceeding the suggested amounts of added sugars, saturated fats, and sodium, ultimately leading to an over-consumption of calories.

This increase in calorie intake can be attributed in part to how food is consumed. For example, buffet-style eating is far more common in the U.S. than in Italy where buffets are generally restricted to hotels that cater to foreign tourists. A very popular “Italian” food chain in the U.S., Olive Garden, serves a dish called “Tour of Italy” which is a plate of “homemade lasagna, lightly breaded chicken parmigiana, and creamy fettucine alfredo.” It is an “all you can eat buffet” menu on just one plate, and contains about 1,450 calories, 33 grams of saturated fat, and 3,830 milligrams of sodium (Reavis, 2015). The norm for Americans at mealtime is for all the dishes to be on the table and to be eaten at once, especially for holidays such as Thanksgiving. Frequently, the quantity exceeds what can be put

on a single table, so multiple tables are needed. Now it becomes a Thanksgiving buffet. Normally, the guests at the dinner table will load up the main dish, turkey, along with all of the side dishes available such as mashed potatoes, green bean casserole, gravy, and bread all on one plate (Reavis, 2015). Italians typically do not eat in such a manner. Traditionally, individual smaller portions are served sequentially, as will be discussed later.

Another method Italians use to protect the quality of their food is through the use of legal channels, e.g., labeling certifications. The Italian government implemented the use of geographical indications based on special legislation adopted by the European Union (Parasecoli, 2014) aimed to encourage diverse agricultural production, to protect product names from misuse and counterfeiting, and to inform consumers about the specific characteristics of products in the marketplace (Italian Trade Agency, 2021). The need for Italy to guarantee product authenticity was recognized in the mid-1900's following the "economic miracle" when Italian food products began to gain worldwide popularity, especially in the USA. The market was overwhelmed with low quality imitations, e.g., olive oils, cheeses, and wine, sold claiming to be the high-quality products they mimicked. Italy has since worked with the European Union to develop legal certifications with labels that are earned only when producers adhere to a strict set of guidelines overseen by the government to protect the culinary reputation of these food products (Eataly, 2015). The certifications give consumers an immediate guarantee that the product is trustworthy. The labels provide geographical indications that include acronyms such as PDO (DOP in Italian), PGI (IGP in Italian), and TSG (STG in Italian). The three letters in each acronym indicate to the consumer where the product is made, by whom, and with what ingredients (Eataly, 2015) as described below.

Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), is a certification awarded to products of excellence that have the strongest links to the place where they were made. More specifically, all of the raw ingredients must come from the region of origin, and every part of the production, processing and preparation must also take place in the same specific region. In the case of wine, this means that the grapes must be exclusively from the geographical area where the wine is produced (European Commission, 2018). PGI stands for Protected Geographical Indication and is less stringent than PDO, as at least only one of the stages of production, processing or preparation must take place in the region.



EU logo for DOP (*Denominazione d'Origine Protetta* or PDO, Protected Designation of Origin) products; (right) EU logo for IGP (*Indicazione Geografica Protetta* or PDO, Protected Geographical Indication) products.

Figure 2.3: EU Logos for PDO and PGI

Traditional Specialty Guaranteed (TSG) highlights the traditional aspects, such as the methods of production or its composition, without being linked to a specific geographical area (European Commission, 2018).

Currently in Italy, only mozzarella and pizza makers have received TSG denominations. There are only three types of pizza that are considered to be truly Neapolitan according to the TSG regulation:

Marinara - consisting only of tomato, oregano, garlic and olive oil.

Margherita – tomato, mozzarella, basil and olive oil.

Margherita extra – which includes fresh cherry tomatoes on the Margherita pizza.

The dish's ingredients, techniques, and sensory components are exceptionally codified (Parasecoli, 2014).



Figure 2.4: EU logo for TSG (SGT in Italian)

The European Union's system of geographical indicators is based on a classification system devised by France in 1855 to classify wine producers in the Bordeaux region. However, this appellation system originated in Portugal nearly one hundred years before France and was established by the first minister King José I in 1758 in the Douro River Valley, where grapes are grown to produce and assure the highest quality Port (Wheeler & Opello Jr., 2010). In 1963, the Italian government followed the French example to regulate and protect their wine sector and issued a law that introduced DOC

(controlled denomination of origin, in Italian - Denominazione d'Origine Controllata) and DOCG (denomination of controlled and guaranteed origin, in Italian- Denominazione d'Origine Controllata e Garantita). A DOCG wine has higher and more rigid standards than the DOC regulations. The reduced yields imposed by the DOCG rules is one of the most significant differences. The output restrictions are likely to have had a greater impact on wine quality than any other element in the rules, which also demand in-depth chemical analyses for all DOCG wines. The first DOC wine, Vernaccia di San Gimignano in Tuscany, was declared in 1966, while the first DOCG wine, Brunello di Montalcino in Tuscany was declared in 1980 (Parasecoli, 2014).

In 1992, in accordance with European Union laws, a third category was created: the IGT (Typical Geographic Indication, Indicazione Geografica Tipica). The IGT standards mandate the use of authorized grape varieties, with the majority requiring the use of only one type or in a ratio of at least 85% to other approved grapes. The IGT wines are identified with certain regions, the majority of which are larger than the zones defined in the DOCG and DOC regulations. The IGT denomination denotes a wide selection of wines of acceptable quality at very competitive prices. This allowed many regional wines to obtain an elevated status above regular table wine (vino da tavola in Italian), which can come from and be bottled anywhere in Italy, or even be sold in bulk (Parasecoli, 2014).



Figure 2.5: Classification pyramid of Italian wines framed in the EU regulatory context (Italianowine, 2017)

How are matters related to food quality and quantity thought about in the U.S.? First, the U.S. does not follow a similar model of protection for geographical indications with the exception of two wine regions that are protected by the European Union with PGI status, the first being Napa Valley Vintners, and the second, Willamette Valley Wineries Association, (Archer, 2021). Major national markets such as the United States, Canada, South Africa, and Australia are dedicated to a system of privately owned trademarks instead, which are seen as a manifestation of entrepreneurial freedom and a guarantee for investment and creativity. The U.S. almost always uses the trademark model, which has three main marks commonly used to protect agricultural goods. The first category, the trademark, requires use of a mark in interstate commerce in order to obtain a U.S. trademark

registration (CLARK.LAW, 2021). Trademarks are typically used to protect brand names, such as Coca-Cola, but are rarely used for basic foodstuffs because the goods are frequently untraceable. The second category is a Collective Mark and is used to certify goods from the geographical region identified by the term. The Collective Mark is registered with the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) by an association or collective group that oversees and controls the mark's quality. The difference between a Collective Mark and Trademark is that the former cannot be applied for by a single enterprise (Parasecoli, 2014).

Last, rather than being owned by the producers, Certification Marks are owned by a certifying entity. The certifier establishes the standards that users must meet, but no one is barred from using the certification mark as long as the product's characteristics are compliant. An example of a Certification Mark is Florida Citrus, which is owned by the State of Florida's Department of Citrus (Parasecoli, 2014).



Figure 2.6: Examples of Certification Marks used in the U.S. for sustainable wines

Despite the fact that certification marks only certify a product's origin, consumers generally regard geographical indications (GIs) as a guarantee of high quality and reputation. Moreover, food producers are conscious of the benefits that GIs provide, such as how they boost the value of their products, gain protection from competitors who sell similar products under the same name, and create entry barriers for producers who lack the resources to comply with the intricate regulations (Parasecoli, 2014).

### 2.1.2 Fad Diets vs Moderation

A fad diet can be defined as a diet plan promoted as the best, easiest, and quickest way to lose weight. Many of these diets eliminate food groups that contain essential nutrients for maintaining good health. These types of diets are often endorsed by celebrities or influencers via social media. They may include low carbohydrate, high fat, or high protein diets. Removing important sources of ingredients such as grains, along with eliminating certain foods at specific times of the day, are often emphasized. Although some of these diets may be suggested under certain circumstances, many of them are likely to be deficient in key nutrients such as dietary fiber and carbohydrates, as well as certain vitamins, minerals, and beneficial phytochemicals. A lack of these nutrients may lead to major health problems. The five food groups defined by the American Dietary Guidelines (2020-2025) are: fruits, vegetables, grains, protein foods, and dairy products that are allowed by these diets are either far above or far below those recommended by major health organizations such as the American Heart Association, American Diabetes Association, and Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics — as well as the surgeon general and the United States Department of Agriculture (Cleveland Clinic, 2020).

Americans are notorious for their obsession with fad diets. Such diets frequently recommend strict adherence to guidelines about what to eat and what not to eat that are not validated by research and have historically vilified protein, carbohydrates, or fat (Schroeder, 2018). Ketogenic (keto diet) and high-fat diets were adopted to the greatest extent in the United States in 2019 compared to 2018 (Statista, 2020). Dietitians have been highly critical of very restrictive diets such as the keto diet, which drastically reduces normal carbohydrate intake, forcing the body to burn fat. Extreme diets like the keto diet mimic starvation in the body and risk serious alteration of metabolism. Experts say it is natural to become fixated on what you cannot have, rather than nourishing your body, when you unnecessarily demonize certain foods or macronutrients. Thus, adopting a very low-carbohydrate diet or severe calorie restriction may change ones' relationship with food in negative ways. These types of dietary restrictions tend to fuel an unhealthy relationship with food and can promote binge eating, for example. Registered nutritionists recommend an allowance of all foods in moderation and emphasize foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes, instead of hard and fast exclusions. Fad diets are unsustainable as they do not focus on lifestyle modification which is necessary to maintain long-term weight loss. Instead, dietitians recommend regular exercise and consumption of a wide range of unprocessed or minimally processed foods in moderation, a key factor in the Mediterranean Diet (Schroeder, 2018).

The issue for a large majority of Americans is how to resist the constant impulse to consume, rather than how to acquire enough food or how to eat well. It is estimated that at least one in every

five Americans is 10% or more overweight, which is usually the consequence of succumbing to impulse and overeating. Moreover, between 10 and 20 million Americans are dieting at any given time, either because they are overweight or "feel fat" compared to ongoing trends that are usually portrayed in the media (Counihan et al., 2013). In turn, collective anxiety-driven and fear-based eating disorders have played a big part in wellness culture in the U.S., in which celebrities and social media influencers are able to falsely convince many people that legumes are inflammatory, and diets made up of 80% fat are healthy (Freuman, 2019).

Although cheese and cured meats are low-carbohydrate staples that are prominent in Italian food culture, the majority of Italians do not have the same preoccupation with fad diets as Americans. This is mostly due to a longstanding and traditional food culture in Italy, which makes dietary decisions far less complicated and stressful. Italian cuisine is famous for being the land of pasta, but other traditional grain-based foods such as polenta, farro, and spelt-based risottos are widely offered on regional restaurant menus. Nevertheless, Italians are not immune to developing metabolic diseases like obesity and Type 2 diabetes, but statistically they develop these conditions at far lower rates than Americans, despite their high acceptance of foods they are increasingly told to fear. The obesity rate in the U.S. in 2017 was 36% compared to 19.9% in Italy. The prevalence of Type 2 diabetes among Italian adults was 4.8% in 2017 which was less than half of the 10.8% of adults in the U.S. (Freuman, 2019). In addition, a 2018 study published in *Nutrition & Diabetes* analyzed dietary patterns of 32,119 Italian participants during a 12-year period. The researchers determined that following the Mediterranean Diet is associated with less weight gain and a reduced increase in waist size and was ranked #1 in "Best Diets Overall" from a panel of health professionals who evaluated a total of 39 diets. This is due to the fact that the MD is an eating pattern and not a fad diet. This means individuals must regulate their calorie intake as they shape their Mediterranean meals in order to lose or maintain weight and find ways to stay active (U.S. News & World Report, 2021).

### 2.1.3 Meal Structure and Timing

The importance of sit-down meals over on-the-go dining is widely emphasized in Italian food culture. In Italy, there is a time and a place for eating, and it is not in the car, while walking down the street, or while working at your desk. These habits are far too common for Americans (Freuman, 2019). In addition, travelers to Italy should be prepared to modify their eating schedule. According to Spoon University, mealtime is about two hours later in Italy than America. Italians eat lunch around one or two p.m., and dinner around eight or nine p.m., whereas in America lunch happens around eleven a.m. or noon, and dinner is around six or seven p.m. Italians tend to have long lunches and dinners sitting and socializing at the table all together, in a very relaxing and slow-paced environment. In addition to the timing, the meal structure and portion sizes, are much different than in the U.S. The portions are neither tiny nor massive. For example, if you order ravioli at a restaurant in Italy, you can anticipate about four raviolis on your plate. However, the size of each ravioli is typically larger than those offered in the United States, and it is not the main course, but rather one of the first (Booth, 2018).

Different dishes are blended properly in separate meals in Italy because Italians prefer not to mix foods on one plate so that the flavors of each item do not intrude on the other. Thus, the dishes that comprise a meal are served in a distinct order (Reavis, 2015).

A current example of the meal structure in an Italian setting is as follows:

- **Aperitivo**, a word derived from the Latin word aperire, which means “to open” and in this context it is meant to “open the stomach” before dining. Traditionally, aperitivo is a carbonated alcoholic beverage such as an Aperol spritz, or a glass of Prosecco, served alongside some light bites such as olives, nuts, cheese and crisps (Eataly, 2019).
- **Antipasto**, or appetizer is a light but usually cold starter before the first course.
- Common examples of antipasti include cured meats such as prosciutto, salami, or sometimes marinated fish served with bread.
- **Il Primo**, or the first course, is a hot and heavier course than the antipasto, yet still moderate in size. The typical elements in this course are usually pasta, rice (risotto), or soup.
- The “primo” offers simple ingredients with a full range of flavors, textures, and color.
- **Il Secondo** piatto, or the second plate, is a serving of meat or fish alongside one or two vegetables and is generally not served with sauce so that the meat can be judged by the quality rather than the dressing.
- **Contorno**, is a side dish served on a separate plate, that commonly accompanies the meat or fish in the second plate. They are typically small portions of locally grown vegetables such as roasted peppers, potatoes, eggplant, spinach, or squash that balance the flavor and texture in the courses.

- ***Insalata***, (salad) can be omitted if the contorno contains many leafy vegetables, but it is almost always served with oil and vinegar with the intention to cleanse the palate.
- Ready-made salad dressings are not used.
- ***Dolce e frutta***, or dessert and fruit, is fresh fruit of the season. The typical desserts on the dinner menu include tiramisu, various types of cake, or gelato.
- ***Caffè***, is coffee and follows dessert on its own rather than as a beverage that accompanies food. Italians almost never have milky coffees like a cappuccino after meals, or after breakfast for that matter. Instead, a small yet intense cup of coffee is served such as an espresso, to be drunk quickly while it is hot.
- ***Digestivo*** is a fruity or herbal Italian liquor such as grappa, amaro, or limoncello that is served at the end of long meals as it is meant to aid digestion (Harper et al., 2009).

Nonetheless, unless it is a special occasion, Italians rarely order an aperitivo, antipasto, primo, secondo, contorno, dolce, and digestivo all in one meal. Instead, they will usually have an appetizer and secondo, or just a primo and a salad followed by fruit or dessert. This applies to both dining out and meals eaten at home. Furthermore, eating leftovers is not common in Italy as the food is made to be eaten immediately as it arrives on the table, exactly how the chef envisions it without any modifications to the temperature or form. The servings in each course tend to be moderate so that the diner does not overeat or have anything left over (Reavis, 2015).

This is contrary to the typical American meal pattern, which was initially based on European practices in which the entire family would partake in meals which occurred three times a day. The standard meals were breakfast, dinner, and supper. This began to change in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century when the Industrial Revolution shifted the work schedules of American men which made it difficult for them to return home at midday for lunch, formally called dinner. Dinner was then moved to evenings and became the most important meal of the day as it was easier for families to dine together at a more leisurely pace. The midday meal came to be called lunch and evolved into a smaller and frequently rushed meal. American workers often took sandwiches or salads that were thrown together in a tin pail or brown paper bag that became popular quick staples as lunch away from home. After World War II, the American meal pattern changed again as snacking became increasingly more common, and the traditional three meals a day started to diminish in significance (Carroll, 2013).

Despite the changes in the names of the meals, timing, and number of participating family members, meals in the U.S. still follow the same typical pattern of breakfast, lunch, and dinner. The everyday pressures of daily life, work, and school have eliminated the expectation that all family members will necessarily participate in all meals. It is difficult to characterize a typical meal structure

across families in the USA due to the variations in family constituents in different households, and continuous changes in meal structure and content. The meal structure in the U.S. tends to vary amongst families, but the foods commonly eaten at breakfast include cereals, breads, bagels, muffins, eggs, fruit, milk, and coffee. A study conducted in 2005 found that 77% of the U.S. population ate lunch, with the most common lunch foods being sandwiches and salads and the most popular choice of beverage being soft drinks, juice, and coffee. The most popular dinner choices in America consists of sandwiches, chicken or beef dishes, and Italian food, such as pasta (Meiselman, 2009).

The majority of American adults have increased their consumption of sugary, high sodium, and high fat foods over the last several decades. Research shows young adults in particular perceive time constraints to be a main influencing factor of their dietary patterns. The notion of time scarcity affects several aspects of meal structure, including meal organization, preparation, and context. As a result, individuals feel forced to eat meals while doing other things, such as working, driving, or limiting social engagement at dinner. Foods that young adults perceive to be accessible for eating on the go are frequently found at fast-food establishments and are high in fat (Larson et al., 2009). American lifestyles are mostly dictated by work and daily chores, which often infringe on the quality, timing, and duration of meals. The American food industry has adapted and created tempting products that pose as a remedy to the stress busy schedules may create. The traditional family dinner that was once so prominent in the American lifestyle has become less important. The obstacles of work in addition to the plethora of accessible food businesses and pre-packaged products, have made eating on the go, and away from others, a feature of modern American life (Carroll, 2013).

#### 2.1.4 Globalization: Novelty vs Tradition

Food choice in humans is determined by the interaction of biological, physiological, and socio-cultural elements and is subject to change over a lifetime. The development of dietary likes and dislikes are shaped by a variety of factors, including genetic heritage, child-raising methods, learning, perception, and culture. Food preferences are generally based on what is available and acceptable in terms of edibility (Monteleone, 2017). The selection and acceptance of foods are also associated with food exposure which is influenced by education, occupation, and income. More extensive food exposure often promotes greater interest in dining out and a higher degree of knowledge of diverse cultures and food traditions. Some food dislikes can be attributed to food neophobia, which is described as a reluctance to eat or to avoid novel foods. Individuals exposed to different cultures are less likely to be neophobic. According to recent research, the frequency with which ethnic food is consumed is strongly related to levels of food neophobia and degrees of openness to other cultures. The incidence of food neophobia increases with age, while an openness to diverse cultures decreases with age. Food neophobia appears to be a major predictor of a willingness to explore non-traditional or ethnic foods, as receptivity to diverse cultures seems to influence the acceptance of and willingness to try novel foods (Mascarello, 2020).

However, food neophobia levels in individuals tends to be influenced by globalization and its many facets of human activity, such as food production and consumption. Definitions of globalization vary but is often defined as “a process of increasing global economic integration through the flow of products and services, capital, technology, and labor” (Mak et al., 2012). Human mobility such as immigration and tourism have a substantial impact on food globalization. Globalization is widely acknowledged to expand diversity and a greater availability of food and culinary knowledge. It takes a certain degree of "risk" to be receptive to new or unfamiliar foods and eating habits. Globalization may temper the perceived risks. People can now choose from a wider range of gastronomic options thanks to modern globalization, which satisfies the craving for culinary novelty. Food choice studies show increased exposure to new foods may lead to a higher liking for those foods, as familiarity grows with repeated exposure. Greater interest in eating foreign foods can be attributed to increased exposure to the wider variety of foreign foods and goods that globalization brings which satisfies consumers cravings for novelty. On the other hand, globalization has resulted in significant changes in food production and habits which has led to fears that cultural imperialism and “McDonaldization” may lead to a homogenization that threatens the strong link between food and culture, particularly for Italians. The fear of losing their local gastronomic identity, on the other hand, contradicts earlier research that suggests globalization might help revive local food products and character. Individuals across different societies are more conscious of their “global existence,” yet they still desire to identify themselves in novel ways, notably via food habits (Mak et al., 2012).

The entry of ethnic foods into the Italian food market has increased in recent years but has been slow compared to other western countries likely due to a strong tradition of regional cuisine. However, Italy appears to be evolving in this regard. An increase in dining out, take-out and street foods, demand for food diversity, and more food experimentation, especially among younger generations is evident. The onset of this transition is linked to a variety of factors, including market globalization, an increasing population of immigrants, and tourism. Many social, political, and economic changes have facilitated a significant increase in immigration to Italy in recent decades, promoting the expansion of economic operations in the food sector that are closely tied to the immigrants' countries of origin (Mascarello, 2020).

Ethnic restaurants in Italy are a relatively new phenomena that began in major metropolitan areas but is now expanding to smaller villages. With the exception of immigrants from surrounding North African and Middle Eastern countries, relatively few other immigrants chose Italy as a new home until the 1980's when a major influx of Chinese immigrants signaled the start of significant global migration from other countries too: South Asia, South America, and several African countries, particularly those with ties to Italy's colonial past. The fall of the Berlin Wall resulted in a large influx of Eastern Europeans to Italy as well (Parasecoli, 2014). As a result, ethnic food sales have increased by 93% since 2007 due to the increase in foreign entrepreneurs in the food sector. The rise of ethnic food availability has not only introduced new flavors and ingredients, but also represents the food cultures and customs of other nations whose presence has been increasing in Italy. However, the progression of ethnic food choices has been delayed in Italy compared to other western countries (Mascarello, 2020). Prior to the 1990's, immigrant communities in Italy were not large enough to support ethnic eateries, except those in major metropolitan cities such as Milan, Turin, and Rome. Ethnic stalls and businesses selling foreign food products are now becoming more visible, with Chinese food businesses being the most common. The Chinese community is fairly large and has learned how to market their food to the Italian public. They reasoned that few Italians are familiar with authentic Chinese cuisine, so they altered their cuisine to appeal to the typical Italian palate. Chinese restaurants in Italy modified their traditional structure of meals to the Italian structure by including their foods on the menu as appetizers, primi, secondi, and contorni. This has worked well for both Italians and the Chinese communities as Italy has welcomed a novel cuisine presented in a familiar traditional structure. The status quo is being challenged by a new generation of trendy restaurants, typically owned and operated by Italians, that offer fusion food in a modern setting with a focus on décor, music, and alcoholic beverages. These chic restaurants appeal to an entirely different clientele who tend to be more affluent and style conscious, whereas Chinese restaurants are the ideal option for individuals on a budget. Italian chefs are experimenting with incorporating unconventional ingredients and techniques into their recipes. Young culinary professionals explore diverse eateries and travel frequently to learn about other foreign cuisines. They

also build global networks with likeminded professionals in the restaurant industry, attend conferences, and swap recipes and insights. Foodies and the media are taking notice of these trends, fostering forms of gastronomic flair that were previously rare. Nevertheless, no amount of knowledge of foreign eating habits appears to diminish the pride that most Italians have towards their own culinary culture (Parasecoli, 2014).

The evolution of food culture in a given country is determined by the amount of time the country spent as an agricultural society and how long the transition took to become an industrialized society. The United States is a nation that industrialized rapidly, where food culture developed within the setting of an efficient economy, while in Italy, industrialization was slower due to a longer agricultural phase. Less industrialized countries with longer agricultural histories and lower levels of food production cope with food shortages by creating different methods of food preparation with a variety of ingredients (Kwon, 2017). The United States has replicated American cultural traditions via globalization, which has brought sociologists to argue that the world is experiencing Americanization, rather than globalization due to the global expansion of influential dominance America has through a monopoly of the media via films, music, and television, along with a significant presence of American companies across the world (Hassi & Storti, 2012). However strong North American culture may seem, many Americans are constantly on the search for novel sensations, especially through ethnic cuisine. They fuel the tremendous growth of the food-tourism business and dine out at new restaurants frequently in order to experience foreign food firsthand. This is a significant economic drive that encourages food neophilia, or the desire to try new flavors, and drives down levels of food neophobia in the population (Wilk, 2008).

Ethnic cuisine in the United States dates back to the 18th century when foreign populations began to migrate to the country. Millions of immigrants from England, Ireland, Germany, and Scandinavia entered the U.S. between 1815 to 1860, following with 25 million more immigrants originating from central, southern, and eastern Europe between 1865 to 1914. Since then, ethnic restaurants have become more and more popular in the United States (Lee et al., 2013). This is due in part to the value American consumers place on novelty. According to the National Restaurant Association, 80% of consumers in the U.S. eat ethnic food at least once a month, one third of consumers have tried a new cuisine in the last year, and two thirds of the population consume a broader range of ethnic foods than in the previous five years. Italian, Mexican, Chinese, and Japanese cuisines are among the most frequently consumed ethnic foods in the United States (National Restaurant Association, 2015). The ethnic restaurant sector in the U.S. has benefitted greatly from the country's diverse population and increased international tourism (Lee et al., 2013). A June Pew

Research Center survey showed that 71% of American adults have traveled abroad (Silver, 2021). Thus, the increasingly positive attitudes consumers have towards novel foods may be attributed to the popularity and presence ethnic eateries have in the United States, which is influenced by growing foreign trade, globalization, tourism, and the thirst for adventure (Lee et al., 2013).

### 2.1.5 Influence of Infrastructure in Cities

Obesity is a major health and social issue that has reached epidemic proportions (Townshend, 2006) and is caused to a large degree by a lack of physical activity and poor dietary choices. The built environment, defined as man-made places and spaces such as buildings, parks, and transit systems (Kaklauskas & Gudauskas, 2016), influences obesity rates through characteristics such as fast-food restaurant density and neighborhood walkability, as well as individual lifestyle factors (e.g., eating habits, levels of physical activity). Many modern societies have become "obesogenic," a term used to characterize unhealthy behaviors such as poor eating habits and sedentary conduct, due to a lack of pedestrian-oriented urban planning. (Lake, 2018). The obesogenic environment has been defined as "the sum of influences that the surroundings, opportunities, or conditions of life have on promoting obesity in individuals or populations" (Townshend, 2006). Medical therapy approaches, informative and educational programs focused on rebalancing these relevant elements have been created in order to reduce excess weight gain, but the obesity epidemic has yet to be stopped (Schneider et al., 2016).

The U.S. has the 12<sup>th</sup> highest obesity ranking in the world, with 36.2% of the population being obese, (World Population Review, 2021) and approximately 65% considered overweight (Sallis et al., 2016). The prevalence of overweight and obesity is the largest rising health threat in the United States as it is continuously rising across all age, gender, race, and education groupings (Ewing et al., 2006). Obesity and being overweight are linked to a variety of diseases and concerning health conditions, including hypertension, osteoarthritis, type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease, and stroke, and the resulting disorders have a considerable influence on the U.S. health-care system. Obesity is fundamentally the product of complex interplay between genetic, behavioral, and environmental variables. In addition to genetic pre-disposition and individual habits (eating and physical activity), being overweight is linked to variables in the built environment such as residential location, resources, walkability, land-use, sprawl, and transportation (Li et al., 2009). The design of urban infrastructures has played a crucial part in the lack of physical activity, which is linked to numerous non-communicable diseases (Sallis et al., 2016). People in communities that encourage walking with interconnected neighborhoods that link retail shops, services, eateries, public transportation, and parks, are more physically active than those living in less walkable areas (Sallis et al., 2016). Interest in built environments that promote physical activity are growing in attempt to combat the obesity epidemic and its health repercussions, (Ewing et al., 2006) as studies from the USA found that walkable neighborhoods positively moderate the balance between individuals eating and physical habits and their weight (Gebel et al., 2010). However, walkable communities may seem out of reach to residents of many American cities. But why, and what a does walkable city mean, anyway? The "walkability" of a community is defined by how accessible a neighborhood is to foot traffic. According to Walk Score,

a website that rates city walkability, the average score of 141 American cities was 48 out of 100, as opposed to European towns such as Padua, Italy which scores a very walkable 99 out of 100. Only a handful of cities in the United States, such as Chicago, New York City, and a few others, qualify as highly walkable. For example, Chicago and Houston are two major American metropolitan cities that have almost the same quantity of bars, restaurants, and cafes, but a Chicagoan can walk to an average of five of them in five minutes, whereas a Houston resident will only find 0.5 by foot in the same amount of time. Individuals living in New York County, the most compact and walkable city in America with a walk score of 96 out of 100, walked 80 minutes more per month and weighed almost three kilograms less than those living in Geauga County, Ohio, an American town with a walk score of 2 out of 100. The majority of cities in the United States have low walkability because historically, American towns were built using single-use zoning regulations. Residences, markets, and offices were separated by blocks or even communities, making it difficult for individuals to go from one type of “use zone” to another (The Climate Reality Project, 2021).

In the United States, the distinction between older traditional neighborhoods and more modern vehicle-dependent ones is clear. Traditional neighborhoods have higher levels of residential density and street connectivity, using the grid plan for example, and have local shops, homes and services mixed together (land-use mix). Furthermore, walkways are perceived as attractive and safe, with the near-constant presence of people encouraging more walking and cycling. This traditional, or complete community design is a major contrast to its modern suburban complement, which is spread out, with little to no local shops or services mixed with housing. The development is generally disconnected with poor sidewalks, cul-de-sac layouts, and monotonous views (Townshend, 2006). The majority of cities in the United States feature sprawling suburban neighborhoods, and are simply built for cars, not walking. Daily requirements are not satisfied in the neighborhood, as they are usually provided at big megastores or strip malls along-side a traffic congested highway. Vehicles are necessary in order to shop, worship, or visit a restaurant, bar, park, or library (Leyden, 2003). The infrastructure is auto oriented as they lack sidewalks which forces people to drive to a place to exercise or go for a walk, instead of being people oriented like most European towns, where pedestrians find walkways to be welcome, safe, and accessible. Buildings, sidewalks, and other elements are all designed to accommodate people rather than automobiles, as shown in Figure 2.7 (America Walks, 2020).



Figure 2.7: People-Oriented Street vs. Auto-Oriented Street (America Walks, 2020)

The mismatch can be attributed to the design of the majority of American urban areas that revolve around car travel. Experts agree, however, that walkable communities are healthier for the environment, the economy, and our health (The Climate Reality Project, 2021). Obesity and diabetes are lower in highly walkable neighborhoods as more physical activity is easily incorporated in peoples' daily lives. Towns that provide convenient access to public transportation, as well as cultural and recreational activities, enhance happiness. Walkable urban infrastructure does not only make it easier for people to get from place to place, but it also reinforces a sense of community and counters loneliness. Travelling by foot frequently allows for more interaction with neighbors and fosters civic participation. Building these social and communal networks inspire trust and reciprocity among residents and is referred to as social capital (Leyden, 2003). Theoretically, walkable communities should increase social capital by allowing residents to interact, whether it be intentional or unintentional. Running into neighbors spontaneously and having short albeit sometimes trivial conversations, or even waving hello might serve to foster feelings of connection and trust between residents and where they live. These chance encounters might happen in the neighborhood shops, parks, or on the sidewalk. Such relationships provide many people with a comforting and pleasant sense of familiarity. In contrast, most modern suburban neighborhoods encourage little social interaction. Social engagement typically only happens upon invitation, rather than an accidental encounter. This is due to the fact that many suburban developers value privacy and vehicle dependency so much that sidewalks are not significant enough to build. In addition, local shops, bars, cafes, and sometimes even schools and parks are absent since zoning regulations have made them unlawful in these subdivisions. Therefore, the majority of modern vehicle-dependent neighborhoods

are not built to promote social engagement, and the way communities are designed has an impact on social capital, and as a result, physical and mental health (Leyden, 2003). Purchasing a property in a community that reflects the mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly paradigm has grown increasingly challenging over the previous several decades. Many Americans are forced to live in a vehicle-oriented suburb due to a lack of affordable mixed-use neighborhoods in their cities since developers mostly create car-dependent subdivisions. Municipal zoning codes and other public policy that evidently advocate for independent car transportation, minimize public transportation, and forbid mix-use neighborhoods are the norm in the United States. To reverse this trend, a political shift regarding land-use and public transportation regulations are required (Leyden, 2003).

On the contrary, for city inhabitants residing in Italy, strolling from point A to point B is a way of life (The Climate Reality Project, 2021). This is evidenced by the 19.9% rate of obesity in the population which is notably lower than in the United States (World Population Review, 2021). An essential reason for this is because community designs that promote walking and social capital in general are typically found in older cities (Leyden, 2003). The majority of European cities have a history that can be traced back to several centuries, if not millennia. Moreover, the World Health Organization's Regional Office for Europe initiated the "Healthy Cities" Project in 1987, which takes a comprehensive approach to healthy urban environments. The initiative argues that healthy cities are those in which physical and social conditions are constantly enhanced and community resources are developed to enable individuals to reach their full potential (Townshend, 2006). The population density of European cities differs substantially from that of most other parts of the world. Europe is distinguished by the fact that the majority of its urban population (65%) live in cities with fewer than 500,000 inhabitants, and nearly 95% live in towns with less than 5 million inhabitants. Cities in Italy, which are included in the WHO European Region are rather compact and in a favorable position for encouraging physical activity such as walking and cycling, in order to get from place to place. While European cities such as those in Italy, face many of the same basic difficulties as cities around the world as described in the Sustainable Development Goals, they differ in terms of population size and population density. When it comes to establishing possibilities for more physical activity in cities, these two criteria are critical. Smaller cities can promote physical travel as an appealing and convenient alternative to vehicular transportation. The percentage of pedestrian travel in Europe is generally high, as walking accounts as 40% of the total mode choice in 25 European cities, the bulk of which are in Southern Europe. This is more difficult in larger-scale megacities, as making round trips by foot or bicycle is often not feasible. In the case of these larger cities, any cycling strategy will almost certainly necessitate mixed-mode commuting, comprising, for example a link between metro stations and bike hubs. The streets in European cities are designed for safe and pleasant walking, stopping, standing and

sitting. Pedestrians are able to pause and relax on benches or bollards, and while sitting does not constitute physical activity, it provides a social atmosphere and an informal type of community surveillance. This type of street is likely to feel safer and more enjoyable to go down than those with limited chances for social interaction. The architecture of the buildings along the street also contribute to a pleasant and appealing pedestrian environment (WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2017).

A variety of factors, ranging from culture to personal tastes, impact food choices and eating habits. The relationship between our food choices, the local architecture, and the environment we in which we make these decisions influences consumption behavior. The physical infrastructure in cities influence our eating habits, and as a result how we moderate our energy, weight gain, and obesity (Lake, 2018).

## 2.2 Restaurant Culture/Practices

### 2.2.1 Management Practices

It is often assumed that most cooking and eating takes place at home, but in fact, half of every dollar spent on food is prepared outside of the home. Restaurants are no longer a necessity for travelers or a special occasion, as they are now the answer to the age-old question, “What’s for dinner?” (or for lunch). Restaurants feature many of the most interesting aspects of social and cultural life in our modern society. Restaurants bring practically all of the economic aspects studied by cultural anthropologists – forms of transaction, modalities of production, and the symbolism of consuming – under one roof (Beriss & Sutton, 2007).

Since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, scholars have linked restaurants to the rising importance of the public in the western hemisphere as a new arena for stimulating discourse and identifying differentiation. Restaurants, and the individuals who work behind the scenes to turn the raw into the cooked have created new ways to enjoy and think about food. It is commonly considered that restaurant food reflects a culinary tradition, and the operations reflect and provide insights about the transformation of the larger society in which they are based (Beriss & Sutton, 2007).

Italian food culture places importance on sit down meals over grazing in any given place or time. As a result, most restaurants in Italy have set hours of operation and are open for lunch only from noon until roughly 3:00pm (Freuman, 2019). Most eating establishments do not begin seating customers until 12:30pm, since most of the staff eat lunch at noon. Italians typically have lunch between 12:30 to 2:30pm (Reavis, 2015). If the opportunity to eat out during that time is missed, the alternatives are generally confined to the supermarket or a random take-away pizzeria, as the majority of eateries will deny new customers after 2:30pm. Local customs, both overt and covert, enforce the culture of a proper midday lunch. Many different businesses in Italy close between 1:30 and 3:00pm to provide staff with a suitable lunch break (Freuman, 2019). Dinner differs as Italians eat later the further you travel south. Tuscans typically do not eat before 8pm, Romans at 9pm, and Neapolitans rarely dine before 10pm. As a result, restaurants do not start serving dinner anywhere in Italy before 7:30pm (Reavis, 2015).

Many eating establishments in Italy are locally owned and operated by families. This is due to the perception of restaurant owners seeing autonomy and providing high quality food as interconnected. They believe both would suffer if they hire outside help because non-family would lack incentive to provide the same level of service as family members, or would depart soon after receiving the valuable training due to a lack of family loyalty. Employees would also require the substantial social security contributions mandated by Italian law. Families effectively convert their

labor into capital by refusing both borrowed financial resources and outside labor, and instead work longer hours. Long hours reduce time spent on leisure and socializing, allowing for more capital accumulation. Rather than dispersing their collected wealth, the family keeps it under their control. Some families in the restaurant industry maintain high quality by continuously searching for small producers to buy from, instead of choosing commercial ones. These time-consuming efforts that value quality over cost are only possible because family labor is effectively underpaid; profits are unequally distributed, and hours worked are excessive by Italian standards. One senior and one junior chef, a kitchen helper, and two servers would be expected at a "typical" Italian restaurant that hires outside staff that serves above-average meals with the same number of covers, or diners. In a standard restaurant with non-familial employment, total staff hours would be about 40 per day, or roughly 240 per week. However, many family-owned and operated establishments prefer to sacrifice leisure time and potential earnings in order to maintain high quality (Beriss & Sutton, 2007).

Although trade schools and culinary institutes such as the Italian Culinary Institute for Foreigners (ICIF) exist in Italy and may provide training for those who want to work in the restaurant industry as a manager, sommelier, or server, many servers are either self-taught or learned from family members in the business. In addition, server training in Italy for alcoholic beverages is not conducted regularly nor required by a national licensing system as it is in the United States (WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2012).

As more people choose to eat out or take prepared food home, the number of food-service establishments in the United States has increased dramatically, from 155,000 since the early 1970s to nearly over 1 million now (Lynn, 2011). The restaurant sector in the United States is a multibillion-dollar industry that generated \$659 billion in 2020, which was \$240 billion less than forecasted due to Covid-19 (National Restaurant Association, 2021). Despite the problems posed by the coronavirus (COVID-19) epidemic, the restaurant business has grown steadily over the last few decades. Restaurants have become an important aspect of many people's daily lives in the United States both personally and professionally, as millions of Americans depend on the hospitality sector for employment (Lock, 2021).

The hours of operation in the USA differ based on the type of food-service establishment. Most quick-service restaurants are open for lunch, dinner, and late-night crowds. They typically open at 10:30 or 11am and close between 9 and 11pm. Some national fast-food restaurants and businesses serve breakfast as early as 6am. On weekends, some remain open until well beyond midnight, and others stay open 24 hours a day. Fine dining restaurants typically solely offer dinner and only open from 5pm to 10pm. However, most full-service restaurants are open six or seven days a week for both lunch and dinner. The restaurants that only open six days a week are normally closed on Sundays or

Mondays. Casual-dining establishments often serve lunch and dinner. These restaurants open at 11am and stay open late, particularly on weekends, to cater to the post-dinner crowd. They usually close at 10 or 11pm on weekdays and may stay open until midnight or later on Fridays and Saturdays (Lynn, 2011).

The number of personnel required is determined by the sort of restaurant being managed. In general, in the United States, the head chef or cook is the first person to arrive each day to guarantee that the food is ready for the day. The manager, on the other hand, is the most important employee since he is in charge of managing all duties because most restaurant owners in the United States are absent the majority of the time. A manager's responsibilities are broad, since they are responsible for opening and closing the restaurant, purchasing food and beverages, opening and closing the POS, tracking inventory, training and managing workers, and a variety of other tasks. Aside from these obligations, the manager must reflect the restaurant's style and spirit (Lynn, 2011). The total team in a typical full-service restaurant open for both lunch dinner consists of both front of house and back of house staff. The back of house staff consists of three cooks – two full time and one part time, as well as two part-time dishwashers to cover lunch and dinner shifts. The front of house team includes anyone that may come into contact with customers, such as servers, bartenders, hostesses, bussers, and managers. The manager runs the restaurant, while hosts greets and seats customers, servers and bartenders take orders and provide quality service, and bussers clean the tables (Walker, 2008).

The steps of service in the U.S. restaurant industry are defined differently and more detailed compared to Italy. Servers in America are trained to greet guests, take orders and use suggestive selling to boost sales, and check in with customers frequently to ensure customer liking - all while being neat, clean, fast, and organized. Implementing a comprehensive training program is critical due to a high turnover rate. Trainers must certainly be qualified and have prior experience. The most skilled servers are frequently utilized to train new employees. These types of trainings are typically done on the job and may contain study material. Some restaurants may even require new employees to take a written test that evaluates the abilities they learned during the training process (Walker, 2008).

Servers and bartenders in several states must also be trained in alcohol service if the establishment is licensed to serve alcohol. This regulation is applicable to all “dram shops”, defined as a commercial establishment that sells alcoholic beverages – including bars, taverns, and restaurants (Wex Definitions Team, 2021). A dram shop rule, or dram shop law, is a civil liability statute that holds a dram shop liable for the harmful acts of its intoxicated customers when the establishment acts negligently in serving the intoxicated customer alcohol and the customer causes harm (usually to a third-party victim) as a result of his or her intoxication (examples include drunk driving accidents and bar fights). Dram shop laws impose liability on establishments for serving alcohol to a patron who is obviously inebriated, or under the legal drinking age (Wex Definitions Team, 2021). Eleven states have

laws that require server training, while ten have legislation that establish volunteer programs. Server training legislation creates programs to educate bartenders, other alcohol servers, store clerks, and permit holders about responsible serving methods. Many state regulations outline the essential components of a server training course. Course providers are generally required by state law to be certified. In states that mandate server training, the penalty for failing to ensure that personnel complete a server training course promptly after being recruited is permit suspension or revocation. States that create voluntary programs establish incentives for program participants (Duffy, 2003).

### 2.2.2 Convenience

If you ask the average American, "What do you value in life,?" chances are convenience will not be on the list. In fact, convenience is highly valued in the United States, as well as one of the most critical environmental ideals. A convenience, according to the dictionary, is something that promotes comfort or minimizes labor. It helps you save time at work or elsewhere. It is a convenience when individuals stop at "convenience stores" to buy gas for their automobiles, food through a drive-thru, and processed and packaged goods for quick and convenient consumption. Pre-sliced cheese and bread, for example, were created to save time and effort for individuals who do not want to slice it themselves, but these pre-sliced foods frequently contain preservatives to keep it from spoiling. When most Americans are offered the option of choosing between quality and convenience, they almost always choose convenience.

Convenience is linked to two other American values: busyness and speed. Americans are obsessed with being busy, as the expression implies, "an idle mind is the devil's factory" did not come from nowhere. To compensate for the lengthy hours imposed by American corporations, hours must be cut elsewhere—which is where convenience comes into play. Speed allows us to accomplish more in less time, even if the quality of our experience suffers. Americans rush to many fast-food chains, for example, because of time constraints imposed by employers or advertisements promising to relieve stress. When one drives through a fast-food restaurant—or even eats in one—the speed of the meal is a sign of its' convenience, not its' quality. Most of the time, the quality of the cuisine is forfeited due to time constraints. Rather than taking the time to enjoy a meal in good company, Americans usually consume their food in a rush. In fact, studies discovered that 19% of American meals are "conveniently" consumed in the car (Farrell, 2010). Americans have been losing their hold on the family dinner custom, in part because societal conditions have made gathering in the evening over homemade meals increasingly difficult. Work, social, and television scheduling demands have proven significant impediments, as has the expansion of fast-food venues and low-cost packaged conveniences that have made eating — often away from the company of others—a feature of modern American life.

A wide range of foods that are found to be particularly convenient for grabbing on the move and savoring are classified as snack food, and they have earned an unfavorable reputation. Snack food earned the nickname "junk food" some decades ago when Americans began to consider high-calorie snacks eaten between (and occasionally instead of) meals as health hazards. However, the food business and the majority of customers were unfazed, and their taste buds continued to crave fast food and packaged snacks, regardless of the health consequences or the impact on the traditional family meal (Carroll, 2013).

Americans consume a significant amount of food prepared away from home, whether at restaurants, as takeout, packaged snack foods, or frozen meals made to be thrown into a microwave oven and have come to rely on these foods more heavily than ever before. Americans spent more than 25% of their food dollars on these conveniences in the 1970s, and by the mid-1990s, that figure had increased to 40%. Today, the cost of meals and snacks cooked away from home accounts for half of the total amount Americans spend on food. Not surprisingly, a higher proportion of calories and fat are obtained from these foods than before. Foods prepared outside the home accounted for 18% of daily calorie consumption in the 1970s, but by the mid-1990s, they had increased to 34% (Carroll, 2013). McDonald's "You Deserve a Break Today" ad campaign, which became popular in the 1980s, is as much a reflection of Americans' attitudes toward eating dishes cooked outside the home as it is a prescription to indulge in them. Americans enjoy eating meals produced outside of home because it is easy, tastes good, and serves as a soothing, well-deserved reward after a long and exhausting day at work. However, there is one more critical thing to consider: the cost. For many people, the expense of eating meals cooked away from home is comparable to the cost of making dinner from scratch. Foods made outside of the home have not become less expensive, but the difference has grown inconsequential, especially when time is factored into the equation rather than just money. Time is money, and saving an hour or two from grocery shopping, chopping vegetables, and washing dishes allows for one to get ahead at work. Restaurants have evolved into extensions of family dining rooms as the cost of industrially prepared foods has approached the cost of cooking from scratch, and as devoting leisure time to paid labor has evolved into an economic requirement. Eating out has replaced eating at home. Americans still cook from scratch at home, gather with their families around the dinner table in the evening, and catch up between bites—just not as much as they used to. Today, fewer families have dinner together on a regular basis than they did in the mid-twentieth century. Only about half of American families with children dine together four or more evenings per week, and about 25% of American families with children sit down at the table no more than three nights per week. Despite the fact that many young adults in the U.S. eat with others, a considerable number of them do not. In a survey on young-adult eating habits, more than a third of those who took part said they didn't have enough time to sit down and enjoy a proper meal with others, instead they ate alone and on the go (Carroll, 2013).

Off-premises dining is dominated by fast-food restaurants (operations that prepare meals quickly), followed by carryout eateries (operations that target the off-premises diner either in part or exclusively). Full-service restaurants, on the other hand, are expanding their takeout options. A rising number of restaurants are allowing customers to place their orders over the phone with a description of their vehicle, and then have the meal delivered to them in a designated parking spot. What drives people to buy prepared foods to eat elsewhere? They are typically in a rush and want simple access,

quick service, and affordable costs (Lynn, 2011). Since the early 1970s, fast-food has penetrated every corner of American life. Fast food is now available at restaurants and drive-throughs, stadiums, airports, malls, schools, cruise ships, trains, Wal-Marts, gas stations, and even hospital cafeterias. In 1970, Americans spent around \$6 billion on fast food; by 2000, they had spent more than \$110 billion. Americans now spend more money on fast food than on higher education, personal computers, computer software, cars, movies, books, videos, and recorded music combined. The entire process of purchasing fast food has become so normal and routine, that it is now taken for granted. The convenience of the fast-food sector has helped to revolutionize not only the American diet, but also the landscape, economics, workforce, and popular culture (Schlosser, 2001).

On the other side of the spectrum is Italy, with a huge restaurant industry. The Italian Federation of Public Establishments, also known as FIPE, have recorded over 330,000 eateries in Italy, bringing in almost \$100 billion in revenue annually. FIPE does not record its data by restaurant type, but a walk around any town in Italy will reveal that U.S. fast food chains are definitely included in that total (Lyman, 2021).

2021 marked the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Italy opening the first McDonald's, near the famous Spanish Steps in Rome. With 615 spots nationwide, the company is by far Italy's largest fast-food import. However, this number is still lower than the number of locations elsewhere in Europe. The United Kingdom, which has almost the same population as Italy, has more than double the number of McDonald's outlets. In France, which has a similar population and a similar gastronomic culture, there are over 1,500 McDonald's establishments. Fast-food chains from the United States have had a lackluster track record in breaking into the Italian market. Burger King, for example, launched in Italy in 1999 but currently maintains only 220 stores in a country of 60 million people, making it the country's second-largest American fast-food brand. Italy has 50 KFC franchisees, 17 Subway outlets, and 34 Domino's pizza shops. Dunkin' Donuts initially opened its doors in Italy in 1999. Its' previous location, near the touristy location the Trevi Fountain, closed less than four years later. Marketing American-style sweets, pizza, and sandwiches is by no mean a simple feat. However, selling coffee to a country full of caffè-crazed consumers seemed like a safer bet, at least that is what the world's largest coffeehouse, Starbucks, thought (Lyman, 2021). It took many years until Italy accepted and opened its' first Starbucks location in 2018 because the idea of American-style takeaway coffee is not consistent with traditional Italian culture. According to the BBC, Italians do not consume coffee in the same way that many Americans do. They consume little cups of espresso or cappuccino while standing up at a bar (you have to pay more to sit down and drink espresso). Italians do not wander around with to-go coffee cups in their hands as Americans do. However, some cafes in touristy parts of Italy serve American-style coffee, such as normal cups of coffee rather than just espresso (Booth, 2018). Nevertheless, Starbucks opened its' first location in Italy in 2018, a Starbucks Reserve Roastery in Milan

that serves as both a business symbol and a historical declaration of the company's prodigal return to the city that spawned its brand. Starbucks now has over 28,000 outlets in 78 countries, generating over \$22 billion in revenue in 2017. It is the second most valuable brand in the fast-food business, with its green-and-white emblem worth \$44.5 billion. However, there is a good explanation why Starbucks was not present in Italy throughout its 47-year history prior to 2018. Italians have a unique approach to coffee, and American corporations attempting to modify Italian coffee culture are met with hostility. It is critical to understand the differences between American and Italian coffee culture, as well as how the latter is intertwined with national identity and ideals. In many cases, Italians drink coffee not only for the caffeine fix, but also for the socialization opportunities it provides. Starbucks is meant to serve clients swiftly and effectively due to the enormous volume of business, but in Italy, you go to a cafe for leisure and lengthy, meandering chats with the local barista. Outside concepts such as iced coffee have found their way into the culture, with Italy adding its own twist with creations such as the "shakerado." When visiting Florence, you may be asked if you want a regular or "jumbo" cappuccino. As a result, America's supersize culture has taken hold, even in a city as traditional as Florence (Wang, 2018).

Over the years, many American fast-food restaurants have struggled to find the right formula to meet the changing requirements of Italians. These foreigners don't usually arrive in the country with the media spotlight that Starbucks did in Milan. According to fast-food trends study, there is no single cause that may explain why, but it is evident that after decades of effort and a lot of money spent, Italians do not embrace American fast food the way people in many other countries do (Lyman, 2021). The success of enterprises that specialize on high-end products, rural and artisanal manufacturing, local customs, and healthy food should not overshadow other types of consumption. Spizzico Pizza, Mr Focaccia, and Sedici Piadina are examples of Italian franchises that have embraced the fast-food model and applied it to Italian specialties, allowing them to serve food at relatively inexpensive costs. Various types of public eateries have gained popularity, particularly among younger generations. Pizzerias provide a low-cost classic meal in a relaxed setting. Pizza can also be delivered or purchased from takeaway outlets that sell by the weight or by the piece. Convenience has emerged into a major selling point. Some grocery stores and supermarkets prepare ready-made cuisine for take-out, but home deliveries are still extremely rare (Parasecoli, 2014).

### 2.2.3 Service

The food service sector includes all operations, services, and business processes involved in preparing and providing meals to individuals eating out. This includes restaurants of all varieties, from fine dining to fast food. In the restaurant industry, service refers to the level of assistance provided by staff members to facilitate the diner's purchase. It also encompasses a slew of efforts made by restaurants to provide a positive customer experience for their patrons. Now more than ever, what American customers want to order when dining out is superb service. This is all too often not on the menu. However, with growing competition, poor service will no longer be accepted in American restaurants. Excellent service adds enormous value to the dining experience, and most guests are willing to pay for it (Walker, 2008).

Today, various sorts of food and beverage enterprises exist, each tailored to meet a certain purpose. These many forms of operations are meant to meet people's requirements at the time, rather than the type of people they are. For example, a person may be a corporate customer during the week but a family member on weekends; they may want a quick lunch on one occasion, a snack while traveling on another, and a supper with the family on another. In addition, the same person may want to plan a wedding or another significant celebration. Customer satisfaction is the major goal of food and beverage operations (Cousins et al., 2014).

Customers may be looking to satisfy the following needs:

*Physiological:* For example, the desire to satisfy one's hunger or quench one's thirst, or the requirement for particular foods such as diabetic or vegetarian cuisine.

*Economic:* The desire for good value; prompt, efficient service; and an accessible location.

*Social:* Attending a gathering to meet new people; going out to socialize with friends or colleagues.

*Psychological:* As a result of advertising and promotion, there is a demand for self-esteem enhancement, fulfillment of lifestyle goals, and a need for variety.

*Convenience:* As a result of being unable to return home (shoppers, laborers) or attending another event (movie, theater); a desire for someone else to perform the work; the physical difficulty of catering at home special occasions such as weddings, parties, etc.

Customers may wish to meet some or all of these requirements (Cousins et al., 2014).

As the reasons for eating out change, so do the types of operations that may be acceptable at the time. Various establishments provide different service in terms of menu size and price, as well as varying service levels. The available options may be limited or extensive. It is critical to note that the exact reasons for a customer's choice, rather than the food and beverage service itself, will often decide the customer's satisfaction (or dissatisfaction). For example, consider the social desire to go out with friends: if one person does not show up or behaves in an unfavorable manner, the client may be unsatisfied with the meal. Customers will be unsatisfied if they are unable to satisfy their needs. For

example, the consumer may be disappointed with unhelpful employees, crowded conditions, or a lack of available choices. The food and beverage operators are responsible for these aspects. However, the causes for the customer's dissatisfaction may occasionally be beyond the operation's control, such as location, weather, other customers, or transportation issues (Cousins et al., 2014).

Many institutions and industry groups provide advanced training for seasoned servers focus on understated marketing methods and the minute details that distinguish acceptable service from great service. The National Restaurant Association, as well as educational institutions such as Cornell's Center for Hospitality Research, produce research papers that provide insight into diners' attitudes and preferences on a regular basis. Keeping up with the newest research can help restaurants and their servers build a reputation for providing outstanding service (Ducker, 2012).

In the restaurant business in the United States, financial success is determined in part by how quickly and skillfully a server can turn over, or "flip" a table. "Flipping tables" is restaurant jargon for serving a group, delivering the check, and moving them out so the next party may be seated. The quicker and more efficiently a server flips a table, the more parties they can serve which increases restaurant productivity and income. The only exception in the U.S. where flipping tables is not practiced are in high-end restaurants where only fine dining is offered. In these establishments where the clients are inclined and expected to spend a good amount of money, it is more beneficial to focus on boosting the average check size rather than increasing the table turnover rate. Therefore, servers will make more money by letting them stay as long as they desire (TouchBistro, 2021). In order to still generate higher revenue without turning tables over at a high rate, a technique called "upselling" is used. Upselling is when waitstaff suggest menu items that have high profit margins so that the profits for the restaurant, and gratuity the server can obtain, is at the maximum potential. The foods and beverages, and especially the wines offered in fine dining establishments are typically very expensive and often result in making the tab so high that the minimum of 20% gratuity (but usually more in high-end establishments) offered will be enough to sustain the servers' earnings for the night. However, a key requirement for upselling effectively is to have well-trained servers who know which menu items are profitable, as well as their taste profiles, and suggest them without annoying the customer (Forketers, 2016).

As for the rest of the restaurant industry, efficiency is essential. When margins are tight, success is determined by how fast and efficiently you can perform. When restaurant managers are looking for new employees or servers are looking for work, they must be efficient and effective. Wasting time with a "camper" (customers who stay at a table after their meal is finished) does not help them succeed. Managers may suggest, "You need to flip tables faster." They may also say, "How long does it take to flip a table?" In other establishments, this is referred to as a table turn or turning over a table.

Whatever you call it, the concept is the same. To be successful, you must be able to flip tables quickly (Fliptable, 2020).

The Italian Culinary Institute for Foreigners (ICIF) in the Piedmont region of Italy has developed the Course for Restaurant Dining Service, a two-month full-immersion professional course divided into six days of theoretical and practical lessons at the Institute, with seven weeks of practical training at medium-high level Italian restaurants chosen by the Institute. The educational program provides professionals of the food and wine sector (for both Italians and foreigners) with the opportunity to study the best professional service practices that are fundamental in the industry, as well as to become specialists in receiving services management, general management, entertainment, and customer service from industry leaders. The service training program consists of intense courses Monday through Saturday such as: (ICIF, 2019)

*Classification of the Hospitality Industry* – the breakdown and classification of hotels, restaurants, and bars in Italy.

*Commercial Restaurant Service* – How to open a restaurant, hotel catering, traditional catering, and fast catering.

*Banquet and Buffet Catering* – The history of banquets and catering, types of banquets, organizing a banquet, how to service a buffet and decorating the table layout, along with the equipment used in banquets and buffets.

*The Working Environments within Restaurant Dining Rooms* – such as the dining hall, kitchen, office, storage room, and wine cellar.

*The Dining Room Brigade* – the professional profiles of the staff and other professional figures.

*Setting the Table* – how to place the tablecloth and utensils on tables of all shapes and sizes.

*Service at the Table* – ways of servicing the table and clearing the table.

*Serving the Customer in the Best Way* – demonstrated by the teacher followed by hands on practice by the students.

*Hospitality and Professionalism* – Ethics and rules along with how to maintain professional behavior and communication while working in the dining room. Rules of Etiquette while seating tables, customer welcoming techniques, including verbal and non-verbal communication.

*Various Menus* – how to give the customer suggestions when ordering and manage any special needs.

*Restaurant Dining Service* – Italian style, French style (direct and indirect), Russian style, English style, and self-service.

*Classification and Beverage Service* – Sit down aperitivo (aromatized wines, sparkling wines, fortified wines, etc.) wines, liquors and the distillates at the table.

*Classification of Wines Regulations in Italy* – DOC, DOCG, IGT, VDT

*Techniques of Food and Wine Pairing* – calculating calories in wines, various types of food and wine pairings – both positive and negative pairings (ICIF, 2019).

Although institutions in Italy offer these types of trainings for professionals in the restaurant industry, the majority of servers receive their training through first-hand experience on the job while learning from servers with seniority, or from the owners and managers themselves. Anecdotally, in conversations with local servers in Padua, the same message rang true that servers are trained when starting the position on site. Typically, a 2-3 week training is given to new servers in a group setting with the general manager, servers with seniority, and sometimes a sommelier. Demonstrations on how to recommend and offer pairings, along with serving wine and various types of foods on the menu are provided, followed by customer/server role play to test the knowledge they received.

Furthermore, servers do not push customers out of the restaurant by “flipping tables” as done in the United States (Personal Communication with servers in Padua, 2021).

In Italy, when the customers are ready to pay and leave, they walk to the register and receive their check there and is almost never brought to the table in effort to turn the table, because the server does not get paid based on gratuity (Personal Communication with servers in Padua, 2021).

#### 2.2.4 Payment/Gratuity

The roots of the word "tip" is unknown, with some claiming it was one of the earliest acronyms, standing for "To Insure Prompt Service," and was derived from the Latin word "stips," meaning "gift" (Beriss & Sutton, 2007). One frequently cited genesis of the practice is that it may have begun as a form of bribery to assure prompt and effective service for customers to contribute with the use of boxes branded "To Insure Promptness," which was then abbreviated as "TIP" (Hoas & Bigler, 2012). Tipping is thought to have arrived in America with the traveling nobility and then spread lower class by class and withstood a series of revolts once it arrived in the states. From 1905 through 1919, a big group of traveling salesmen formed the Anti-Tipping Society of America and succeeded in having tipping prohibited in various states. However, these anti-tipping regulations were later found unconstitutional (Parrett, 2003).

The exchange of a tip between a customer and a server appears quite simple and innocent at first appearance. It is perceived as appropriate when seen as an expression of appreciation for a positive service experience. However, it is not as straightforward as it seems, as restaurant tipping is a perplexing phenomenon (McAdams & von Massow, 2016). Tipping is an intriguing economic behavior, not only because it is common and practical, but also because it is an expense that consumers have the option to avoid. Tipping is not legally mandatory, despite what societal conventions dictate. Furthermore, because gratuities are not offered until after services have been rendered, they are not required to obtain good service in infrequently patronized venues. As a result, many economists consider tipping to be "puzzling" or "apparently illogical" behavior (Lynn, 2006).

On any given day, approximately 10% of the U.S. population eats at sit-down/family restaurants. After finishing their meals, the majority of restaurant patrons give a voluntary gift of money (or tip) to the waiter who served them. These gratuities, which total over \$40 billion each year (as of 2009), are a significant source of money for the millions of servers in the United States. In fact, because tax withholding consumes all of a servers' hourly income, tips almost always equal 100% of their take-home pay (Lynn, 2006). Servers in most restaurants are usually paid minimum wage (which is lower than the standard minimum wage in the U.S.) due to being tipped employees that earn a significant amount of their income from tips. Moreover, waitstaff typically share their tips with busboys who clear the tables at their stations. In fact, several restaurants require servers to pay out the bus people allocated to their sections 10% of their tips (Lynn, 2011). Gratuity in restaurants account for a sizable portion of the US economy. In 1999 and 2000, full-service restaurant revenues were roughly \$121 billion and \$134 billion, respectively (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). If a 15% tipping standard is assumed, then American waiters and waitresses earned approximately \$18 billion and \$20 billion in tip money in 1999 and 2000, respectively. However, restaurant gratuity in the U.S. varies greatly

depending on the occasion, dining party, server, and venue (Parrett, 2003). Tipping restaurant servers a minimum of 15-20% of the total check is customary, so it is evident that gratuity amounts are positively related to the bill size (Lynn, 2006). The 15% restaurant tip (which has gradually increased to 20% in certain parts of the U.S.) is so expected that leaving less is viewed as a sign of poor service. While some studies demonstrate that service quality is not the key cause for good tips, they also state that employers should not view tip quantity as the primary indicator of client satisfaction (Brown, 2007). Tipping at any given table or for any given meal may be influenced by bill size, frequency of clientele, staff service reviews, party size, number of items ordered, alcohol consumption, food ratings, restaurant style, server gender, server appearance, customer gender, time of week when meal is retained, and the interaction of any or all of these variables (Hoas & Bigler, 2012).

Although tipping is prevalent in the U.S., is it not universally appreciated. Many Americans have been opposed to the practice and have attempted to put an end to it for over a century. Despite the fact that tipping is currently permitted in the United States, one national study found that 24% of the U.S. adults believe it is unfair to customers, while another found that 34% of U.S. adults wish they were not expected to tip (Lynn, 2006). A discussion regarding restaurant service in the U.S. have brought about topics of increasing the minimum wage for servers to \$15 per hour. This debate has people on both sides of the issue. To compensate, some restaurateurs have begun paying employees \$15 per hour and raised menu pricing. This is achieved by having employees who multi-task, and result in having the advantage that employees become more engaged with their work and do not quit, which means training new hires is not a constant concern (Walker, 2008). Some restaurants have even abandoned tipping entirely, favoring the European practice of a flat service charge (McAdams & von Massow, 2016). In 2021, the Vice President of Public Affairs for the National Restaurant Association released a statement to formally introduce the "Raise the Wage Act," legislation that would raise the federal minimum wage from \$7.25 per hour to \$15 per hour over five years and eliminate the tip credit for servers. The abolition of the tip credit will reduce the take-home pay of thousands of tipped employees who earn far more than the proposed minimum hourly rate. These experienced servers in the hospitality industry often make between \$19 and \$25 per hour, or more (depending on the restaurant type) and have stated repeatedly that they support a tipped minimum wage (National Restaurant Association, 2021). Definitive benefits cited by economists are plentiful but can all be traced back to five main consequences of tipping: (1) tipping reduces micro-managing and incentivizes server effort, (2) tipping provides a non-litigious manner of addressing difficulties that occur from inadequacies in service delivery, and (3) tipping draws skilled servers to the restaurant industry. Tipping also motivates servers to: (a) rush customers in order to flip tables efficiently, (b) provide customers with complimentary food or drink items if an opportunity arises that necessitates it, (c) minimize time or effort on groups perceived as poor tippers, and (d) avoid taxes by under-reporting

their tip incomes. More crucially, tipping rules place undesirable societal pressure on consumers to part with money they would rather keep (Lynn, 2006).

Tipping dissatisfaction is not limited to the United States. Tipping has mostly been supplanted by automated service charges in Europe and is actually against the law to tip in Argentina and Vietnam. This negative sentiment begs the question of whether leaving gratuity improves or degrades societal welfare and, as a result, whether it should be legal or prohibited. Although not as widespread as in the United States, tipping occurs to a lesser extent in European countries including Belgium, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden (Hooas & Bigler, 2012).

Further, national variances in tipping are a cause of confusion for many international tourists when travelling to countries such as Italy, where tipping restaurant servers is not standard practice (Lynn, 2006). Servers in Italy are paid a livable salary, and tips do not make up the majority of their income. Gratuity given after a meal is thus only a bonus for service above the norm. Instead, the word “servizio incluso” may sometimes appear on the bill in many restaurants, particularly those in touristy areas. This indicates a 10-15% service charge has already been applied to the total, leaving the entire amount on the check as the total amount owed without the need to pay gratuity, and typically added to the bill of a party of eight people or more. The word “coperto” on the bill refers to a separate cover price for services such as bread, olives, and place settings that are automatically allocated to table at the beginning of the meal. Each individual at the table that orders any menu item is charged coperto of anywhere between 1-3 euros (Blonde, 2019). In any case, restaurant tipping is almost always considered unnecessary in Italy, but if one chooses to leave a tip, or “mancia” (in Italian) for the server, 6-7% of the check total is sufficient and highly appreciated (U.S. Naval Support Activity Naples, Italy, no date).

## 3. Discussion

### 3.1 Attitudes and Behaviors Towards Food

As previously declared in the Quality vs Quantity subchapter of the literature review, the traditional Mediterranean Diet is the legacy of millennia of exchanges within the Mediterranean basin region. Italian food culture based on the Mediterranean Diet is currently under threat from major factors such as: 1) fast-food American food culture based on meat, refined grains, potatoes, ice cream, candies, and sugary beverages; and 2) promotion of high-protein diets, some of which are also recommended by doctors and nutritional specialists, as a tool for weight loss or maintenance, with a significant influence on health (Serra-Mejam et al., 2012). A shift in lifestyle has also occurred in recent decades. Traditional eating habits in the U.S. are characterized by a large intake of refined carbohydrates, added sugars, fats, and animal-source meals, as broadly described. Overweight and obesity, as well as a number of other nutrition-related cardio-metabolic disorders including energy imbalance, have resulted from a shift in how we eat and drink. The current perception of the MD is primarily focused on its functional health benefit, which is related to the consumption of a balanced quantity of different foods. However, the Mediterranean lifestyle includes not only dietary factors, but also socio-cultural and environmental aspects, which are located at the bottom of the pyramid. The Mediterranean pyramid is heavily reliant on the socio-cultural factors, particularly tradition. Traditions are a collection of knowledge and practices passed down through generations, including agricultural production practices (crop and animal) and all food preparation and consumption procedures (Vitiello et al., 2016). Furthermore, Italy uses the European Union's model for protection to safeguard their goods with geographical indication certifications, whereas the U.S. utilizes the trademark model, which is much more limited in its scope of protection, especially for foodstuffs (Parasecoli, 2014).

The "all you can eat buffet" American style of eating is uncommon in Italy, but is becoming increasingly common, and is a prime illustration of how the value of quantity is beginning to take precedence over the importance of quality. Italians generally eat meals created from seasonal and locally grown ingredients. This is the foundation for the high quality of Italian food. Each region of Italy produces its unique foods, and recipes have been handed down for generations. As a result, Italians typically eat in season and use local resources, thus, the quality of the ingredients is consistently higher across the country. Tomatoes do not travel hundreds of miles to arrive half green and tasteless in Italian stores, unlike produce sold in the United States. Most tomatoes and other types of produce chosen for a given recipe, arrive in season, vine-ripened and sweet (Reavis, 2015). These contributing factors are highlighted in the new Italian Mediterranean Diet Pyramid and appear to contribute to higher food quality for Italians compared to Americans.

Eating habits are shifting in the age of individualization. A growing tendency favors snacking and quick meals at the expense of shared family meals. However, meals continue to be an important social institution that shapes our daily lives. In practice, it appears that the transformation has not been as dramatic as expected. Nonetheless, we live in a constant state of flux: our eating habits are always evolving, adapting to the opportunities and constraints of modern life. Current eating habits in both the United States and Italy display evidence of both sharing and individuality. We need to nourish our bodies at times, and we want to sustain our social bonds at other times. A meal is seen as a gift for some people, but a need for others, which appears to be a reason why the food habits in the U.S. and Italy vary (Meiselman, 2009).

In comparison to other Western countries, the fast-food culture has yet to take hold in Italy. The Italian way of eating is still recognizable, despite overwhelming indications of a shift in meal structure and patterns which do not depend as heavily on work hours as it does for many Americans. The Italian meal pattern consists mainly of breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Breakfast is less important than lunch or dinner in terms of energy intake and conviviality. Depending on a variety of societal variables, the latter two can serve as the day's primary meals. Snack consumption, on the other hand, is increasing, with the younger generation leading the way. This inclination leads to a breakdown of the typical meal pattern and a move toward more frequent intake of light and often cold meals during the day, with a single big meal. The primary daily meal is frequently associated with the concept of family meal, which entails the presence of most family members and is structured. For example, the meal structure for dinner is spread over at least two courses, which allows for slower eating, more socializing in between courses, and a more relaxing setting while dining amongst loved ones. Recent studies, on the other hand, show a decline in family meals. However, regional culinary traditions are firmly embedded in Italian society and may serve as a stabilizing factor (Meiselman, 2009).

As for the majority of the American population, the presumption that they eat the way they do because that's how they have always done it is intrinsically wrong; this was never the case for dinner, lunch, or breakfast. In fact, it cannot be true for lunch because lunch did not exist at one point. In a world where business was conducted away from home and home-cooked midday feasts were no longer consistent with growing patterns of vocation and trade, the modern noontime meal was established in the mid- to late 19<sup>th</sup> century as a mechanism for keeping the working body productive. Lunch time continues to be characterized by inexpensive, and quickly-prepared meals enjoyed with a watchful eye on the clock and often away from home. Hot soup is served from microwavable to-go cups or sandwiches from paper bags not only because they are practical and convenient, but also because these items best accommodated the changing lifestyles of the American society a century ago (Carroll, 2013).

There is little question that cultural influences and shifts occur as a result of contact with other cultures. However, this influence and shift do not imply cultural standardization or convergence toward a global cultural model based on the American or European models. In an increasingly globalized world influenced by economic globalization, the preservation of cultural diversity fuels contradictory and contentious reactions. For example, while the changes and potential losses imposed by globalization on local and traditional cultures, especially those extending to cultural diversity, may be hurtful and destructive, they may also lead to new opportunities (Hassi & Storti, 2012).

When we analyze the popularity of ethnic cuisines and the number of ethnic restaurants in the United States, it is clear that consumer attitudes toward ethnic foods have become more positive. Italy is experiencing a similar increase in the popularity of novel foods in recent years, albeit at a slower rate than the United States. Previous research has identified possible explanations: increased international trade, globalization, migration, and tourism, psychological factors (desire for healthier diets, various flavors, and adventure), and sociocultural aspects linked to changes in lifestyle and values (Lee et al., 2013).

In terms of the impact of the physical infrastructure on cultural dietary habits, research suggests that more integrated approaches to implementation should be employed to promote physical activity. In other words, while walking, cycling, and playing more is beneficial, it is also critical to make cities more appealing places to spend time in and to encourage people to explore and experience the city (WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2017).

Automobiles currently dominate American streets and lifestyle, but this does not have to be the case. A small investment is all that is needed to improve walkability in American cities. The ability to eat, work, learn, shop, and relax without ever having to drive can be achieved. Unfortunately, political, economic, and zoning considerations frequently stymie efforts to promote walkability (The Climate Reality Project, 2017). Most towns in the United States consist of large tracts of residential neighborhoods without integrated business districts which does not encourage walkability. This in turn tends to reduce social interactions while increasing the risk of obesity, and a variety of associated health problems (Leyden, 2003).

As a comparison, the prevalence of obesity and cardiovascular disease is lower in Italy than in the United States, due in part to the high walkability of Italian cities. The fact that Italian cities are substantially older than cities in the United States, and were designed for walking rather than driving, contributes significantly to Italian culture: how Italians socialize, dine, and live. To promote walkability in the United States, efforts should focus on limiting suburban sprawl and encouraging mixed-use developments (e.g., residential and commercial). While it is true that open space is a limited in some

areas, many public spaces can be redesigned to meet a variety of requirements and objectives that may lead to an overall healthier quality of life (Climate Reality Project, 2017).

### 3.2 Restaurant Culture/Practices

As more individuals choose to dine out or purchase take-out, the number of food-service establishments in the United States has grown considerably, from 155,000 in the early 1970s to over one million currently. This indicates that eating out and buying take-out are no longer considered luxuries; rather, they have become the norm (Lynn, 2011). It is widely assumed that restaurant food reflects a culinary history; consequently, the operations tend to reflect and provide insights about the development of the greater society in which they are found (Beriss & Sutton, 2007). In the case of Italy, restaurant operating hours are normally from 12-3pm for lunch and 7-10pm for dinner, rather than all day as in the case of restaurants in the United States.

Foreigners overseas have embraced American culinary symbols as icons of American culture: the soft drink, the hot dog, sweetened protein bars, and the packaged snack. America exported not only these meals and their iconic pictures, but also some of the country's eating rituals. The modern fast lunch is an American innovation, and snacking—that rebellious and indulgent, childlike behavior—is widely mimicked overseas as an expression of American prosperity and freedom (Carroll, 2013). Therefore, it is no surprise that Americans value convenient eating, at whatever time of day one desires while working, playing, sitting or walking. In contrast, snacking in Italy is much less widespread. Typically, when Italians eat, regardless of whether it be a full meal or a bite, they are seated and tend to be less distracted with competing activities (Reavis, 2015).

Restaurant owners in the United States seek to employ servers who can provide good service, which entails creating a friendly and welcoming environment, being attentive to customers, and, most importantly, being efficient - all while maximizing profits for both the restaurant and the server, which usually results in higher tips. Except in the case of fine-dining establishments, the most common strategy utilized by waiters in the United States to generate a profit is "turning or flipping tables," which is a way to get customers in and out of the restaurant in a timely fashion. However, restaurants do not want to appear as though they are rushing people through their meals, therefore they provide significant training to servers in the art of gracefully expediting meals. Servers in low-to--mid range restaurants must be productive in order to maximize tips and turning tables can be exhausting for both the server and the customer, as neither the customer nor the server likes to be rushed. This is not the case with fine-dining establishments, where customers expect to pay a premium for a luxurious and relaxing setting. Many of the dishes in these establishments are served sequentially, in courses, similar to how restaurants in Italy operate. The distinction is that it makes no difference whether the establishment in Italy is high- or low-end. Servers are paid a livable wage and do not rely solely on tips for their income.

The National Restaurant Association is opposed to gratuity being eliminated. Restaurants, employees, and customers all prefer tipping. If the tipping is abolished, many restaurants will stop tipping, raise prices to compensate for higher salaries, and transition to an hourly wage-only system. Tipped employees would most certainly earn less than they do now. Hospitality and flexibility are characteristics of the restaurant sector, which explains why over 90% of American consumers enjoy dining out. Tipping is one of the reasons why so many people select restaurants as a first job, a side job to supplement their income, a job while attending school, a second opportunity, or a career (National Restaurant Association, 2021).

When investigating the differences in how restaurant service is performed in the United States and Italy, one question that emerges is if, given the choice, would Italian servers prefer to be paid only in tips rather than a conventional salary in order to earn more money? However, this will almost certainly result in a significant change in the peaceful and enjoyable atmosphere that dining out in Italy affords. As a result, the question of whether people in these two cultures value peace of mind or money arises. And this is what I have gathered from my research: what matters most to the vast majority of people in Italy and the United States.

## 4. Concluding Remarks

We live in a food environment that has been shaped by culture and history, but as history has shown, it has also been molded by business. If business is important in understanding why we ate the way we did in the past, it is even more important in understanding how we eat today and will likely eat in the future. All we have to do is glance around to see evidence of this. Billboards, television commercials, convenience stores, vending machines, drive-through and fast-food restaurants, and even automobile cup holders—all of these visual and material elements of our world make food easily accessible and serve as messages encouraging us to consume. Our food environment influences our consumption patterns, yet we often fail to recognize it. Similarly, history has had a deep, everlasting effect on our behavior, yet we fail to recognize its crucial role on the way we eat. Meals have changed throughout history, and they differ from one culture to the next. If the adage "We are what we eat," is true, it must also be true that we are how we eat. How we eat in the future will reflect who we are today, and our eating habits today will shape who we will be tomorrow. Our knives and forks may prove to be more powerful cultural tools than previously imagined.

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