

Celebrating the Italian-American Connection

Written by Ginny Grimsley

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During International Creativity Month, Researcher Salutes Contributions

The population of the United States is defined by diversity, and one of the brightest pieces in this mosaic is the Italoamericani community, says author and business consultant Lou Quattro.

“All cultures bring valuable gifts to the table, but the Italian/Sicilian people and culture are especially clever and creative,” says Quattro, who was born in Italy and work for 10 years, with Sicilians in property development in Italy, where he learned many nuances and insights into the island’s culture and history. He authored “I Siciliani (The Sicilians),” www.louquattro.com .

International Creativity Month is celebrated in January – a reminder for all of us about how essential it is to be innovative if we want to be successful. A great example is the Sicilians, who are very right-brained in their approach to life. They’ve had to be resourceful because of their rough history, in which various rulers – Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Normans, French and Spanish at one time or another conquered and controlled them. Some of the conquerors were particularly cruel and brutal imposing new taxes, languages, cultures and religions.

“Necessity is the Mother of Invention” was never truer than in Sicilia (Sicily) throughout the ages. I think creativity is firmly set in their DNA.”

The list of modern creative celebrities alone is impressive: Martin Scorsese, Frank Sinatra, Al Pacino, Sylvester Stallone, Sal Mineo, Cyndi Lauper and Frank Zappa, to name just a few, he says.

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Quattro reviews the major contributions of Italian-Americans. Not coincidentally, many hail from southern regions where there is less opportunity, hence, more need for creative resourcefulness:

- **Food:** Sicilians have come up with dozens of different dishes just for potatoes! Because the majority of the island's population have lived as peasants for centuries, they have been forced to devise creative ways to prepare accessible foods. Recipes such as bruschetta pair basic yet highly complementary ingredients for unfettered goodness. Of course, the legacy of Italy's food can be found everywhere today, from America's relatively recent love affair with espresso to cooking essentials like olive oil, garlic and wine, to our favourite easy meal, pizza.

- **Family values:** Go to an Italian-American friend's home for dinner and you're sure to experience what it's like to be part of a big, tight-knit family. With more than 17 million Italian-Americans, making up 6 percent of the U.S. population, you likely have an Italian friend in your circle. Tight family bonds carry over from the old country, along with a devotion to the Roman Catholic Church.

- **New World pioneers:** While America was settled by the English, it was Italian explorers Christopher Columbus, Amerigo Vespucci and Giovanni da Verrazzano who cleared the way for Europeans to explore the New World. Later generations of Italians, artisans and craftsmen, created the familiar landscape of our capital; they were brought to Washington, D.C., to help build America's most important national monuments.

- **American folklore – the mafia:** Southern Italians were generally not treated well in their mother country, and, initially, there were not a well-treated minority in America. This fuelled the old Sicilian tradition of La Cosa Nostra – the mafia – in Italian-American communities. While many are weary of this stereotype, the mob has become an integral part of Americana, and the country's young but rich history.

- **Iconic Americans:** Joe DiMaggio, Frank Sinatra and Madonna were among the unofficial American royalty in the 20th century for their talent and charisma. Other Italian-American history makers include Nobel Prize winner Enrico Fermi for his work in physics, New York mayors Rudy Giuliani and Fiorello LaGuardia, Justices Samuel Alito and Antonin Scalia and former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, among many others.

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About Lou Quattro

Born in Italy and raised in Canada, Lou Quattro is a business strategist specializing in helping, privately owned ad agencies or communications firms. He spent 25 years in the advertising agency/communications business at McKim Advertising and BBDO Canada, a worldwide organization, as CFO and COO. Quattro also has extensive training in psychotherapy and is a professional accountant. He moved to Tuscany to write and to reconnect with his roots in 2002. He is currently based in Canada, helping independently owned agencies who share values like, employee ownership, creativity, transparency and ethical behavior.