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www.OregonTuscans.com



DECK THE HALL WITH FOOD DEC. 20

Our gathering this month emphasizes conviviality, the spirit of the season ... and FOOD! It's our annual holiday potluck, on **Sunday, Dec. 20 at 3:30pm at Carvlin Hall**, 2406 SE 16th Av. in Portland.

Being Italian, we're not too big on lots of premeditated organization. A little catering chaos can be a fun thing. So, bring what you want for the potluck table ... just *not* dessert. (We have sweets covered.) Figure this will be dinner, so something substantial would be appreciated.

If you want to drink something beyond coffee and tea, feel free to BYOB. We'll eat, drink and be merry ... and sing merrily. Music to eat by will be provided by members of the club and some young friends. And we'll cap it all off with some Christmas carols.



OUR SKEPTICAL
WITCH DECIDES
TO BAKE SOME
COOKIES FOR
THE NEW BABY
KING ...
JUST IN CASE.

ON JAN. 10, IT'S *LA BEFANA'S* TURN

This issue of *La Lettera Toscana* actually covers not only December, but January as well. As such, this is the time to tell you about *Festa della Befana* which will take place on **Jan. 10 at 2:30pm at Carvlin Hall**.

Throughout this issue of the newsletter, we share illustrations from *The Legend of Old Befana*. This is children's author and artist Tomie dePaola's retelling of the Italian folktale about an old woman, the Three Kings and the – and *her* – Epiphany. This is the version of the *Befana* tale that will be read to the children who attend our
(see **BEFANA**, page 3)

NEXT MTG:

SUN., DEC. 20, 3:30PM

CARVLIN HALL

FESTA DELLA BEFANA

JAN. 10, 2:30PM

DAL PRESIDENTE

A FESTIVAL OF WORDS

BY JIMMIE MOGLIA
PRESIDENT



As the Year End festivities approach, there will be many who will raise a glass in good company and say “*Cin Cin*.” Some Americans say so, notably, in the company of Italians – the assumption being that the exclamation may have Italian origins.

Actually *Cin Cin* is the Italian translation of an English formula, Ch'ing Ch'ing. Which, in turn, comes from the Chinese, meaning (in Italian) *prego, prego*, or rather “you welcome, you welcome.”

For *prego* in Italian has three meanings – (1) “I am praying” or, (2) “Repeat please”, if uttered with an interrogative tone, or (3) “You're welcome” as a response to “Thank you.”

(see **PREGO**, page 2)

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THE THREE KINGS
SEARCH FOR THE
BABY JESUS...
AND KEEP
LA BEFANA FROM
HER SWEEPING.
SHE IS *NOT* PLEASED.

PREGO AND ITS VARIOUS MEANINGS SPAWN A “SCHOOL DREAM” (OR IS IT A NIGHTMARE?) FOR JIMMY

(continued from page 1)

Which reminds me of an Italian professor of thermodynamics in Genova, famous for his severity, for a cuttingly ironic sense of humor, and for the immense pessimism he felt toward the brightness of most of his students.

When this writer undertook his exam, at one point the professor mumbled something. It was unclear whether it was a comment or a question. On my saying “*Prego?*” in the second meaning of the word (i.e. “Repeat please”), the professor chose to interpret it in the first meaning (i.e. “I am praying”). Whereupon he said, “Pray, pray, if you believe that prayer may make up for what you don’t know.”

Returning to the culinary festivities, we may remember why “liver” in Italian is *fegato* (accent on the ‘e’). In the Romans’ perception of gastroenterology, the liver and the word defining it, have an interesting story.

The Italian *fegato* derives from the Latin *ficatum*, that is “liver spiced with figs,” a delicacy for those Italian ancestors. In time, they realized that excessively indulging with *ficatum*, caused the liver to swell and cause pain. Undecided on how to call the organ, they chose to name it after the food that made them aware of its presence, through discomfort. Something to keep in mind, when uncertain whether to indulge in one more helping (of *ficatum* or other).

Back to drinking. Before you raise your glass and say “*Cin Cin*” you may propose a toast to someone’s health. In Italian this is a *brindisi* (accent on the first ‘i’). (Nothing to do with the name of the city in the region of Puglia.) It came to the Italian language via Spain, where it was imported from Germany in the 1500, when the sun never set on the Spanish empire, including much of Europe.

The German *bring dir’s* means “I bring to you”, meaning “I bring to you the glass to drink.” (*bringdir* → *bringdis* → *brindisi*).

Finally, we cannot omit the *panettone*. There are various versions of its etymology. The most fanciful is from the Milanese dialect, *Pan de Toni* (Bread by Toni). In this version, Toni, servant of Ludovico Sforza, duke of Milan (1452-1508), inadvertently burned the dessert prepared for the Christmas banquet. Whereupon he used his own yeast and mixed it with eggs, flour, candied fruit, raisins and sugar. Pleased with the result, the Duke would have named the dessert after the skillful servant: *Pandetoni* → *pandetun* → *panetun* (Milanese) → *panettone* (Italian).

More likely the name derives from a mid-Middle-Ages tradition, when bakers were allowed (at Christmas only), to bake bread with wheat (a precious commodity), for their best customers. This restriction, according to available chronicles was enforced at least until 1395.

The first Milanese-Italian dictionary, printed in 1606, refers to the holiday *Panettone* as *panaton de danedaa* where “*danedaa*” is of obscure etymology.

Nevertheless we can safely attribute to Milan the origin of this Italian tradition, now completely globalized.

In theme with the above subject, on **Dec. 20**, we will hold our Christmas Potluck – an occasion to celebrate the festivities, cheer (*Cin Cin*) in good company and (maybe), meditate that the “inaudible and noiseless foot of time” has walked with us for another year.

YOU'RE DUE!

"In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes." So, said founding father Benjamin Franklin. One of our club's founding mothers ... well, she was a charter member of the OregonTuscans, current treasurer Audrey Perino, adds, "And in this club, there's a third certainty – especially at this time of year – *dues!*"

It is that time of year ... when you're replacing the calendar on the wall, the club is replacing the operating capital in its treasury. Dues are \$25 for singles and \$35 for couples for the next 12 months.

Annual dues help pay for coffee and tea at meetings, food at barbecues, printing, mailings and our Website. In addition, dues help cover the cost of rental space. You don't think Carvlin Hall is free, do you? And dues help pay for liquor licenses for events like our holiday potluck, because there's no such thing as a free drink ... even if you BYOB!



Dues also help pay for January's *Festa della Befana* and pay down the cost to you of large scale events, like next spring's 20th anniversary Tuscan Association celebration.

BEFANA BOOK IS THE CENTERPIECE OF THE PARTY

(continued from page 1)

Jan. 10 celebration. If you'd like your own copy (it makes a great gift), it's available in paperback from amazon.com and Powell's Books.

This year, the Vancouver chapter of the Sons of Italy is joining the Tuscan Association and *Amici d'Italia* in organizing the event. Welcome board, Sons!

Children ages 3 – 10 should be registered ahead of time for the event, which includes food, a magician, gifts and the reading of *The Legend of Old Befana*. To register a child, grandchild or young friend, please contact Kerry-Lynne Demarinis Brown at 503.287.3255 or difamigliabari@outlook.com. The event is limited to 50 kids.

Volunteers on Jan. 10 and cookie bakers are needed to make *Festa della Befana* a success. Please contact Kerry-Lynne if you can help out.



Audrey will gladly accept your dues at the Dec. 20 holiday potluck, or mail a check made out to "Tuscan Association of Oregon" to 37 SW Canby St., Portland, OR 97219. Don't leave a lump of coal in Audrey's stocking – leave a little "green" instead, for the good of the club!

L'ANGOLO ITALIANO



DI CARLO ILIO MANNOCCI

Siamo giunti a quel periodo dell'anno durante il quale celebriamo la venuta del Salvatore, la fine di un altro anno e l'inizio del 2016. Il 2016 sarà un anno particolare e speciale per i soci dell'Associazione Toscana dell'Oregon.

Infatti celebreremo il 20mo Anniversario di Fondazione dell'associazione. Per coloro che nella primavera del 1996 si riunirono per la prima volta e gettarono le fondamenta di questa dinamica associazione sarà una data particolare, piena di orgoglio e di gioia per il traguardo raggiunto.

L'associazione presenterà un programma speciale che sarà annunciato a suo tempo. Nel frattempo invio ai soci e simpatizzanti gli più belli per un Buon Natale e un Felice Anno Nuovo!

2016 EVENTS INCLUDE A SICILY TALK, AN ITALY SHOW-AND-TELL AND WE TURN 20

BY KEN KANE

Our Feb. 14 meeting will include a presentation on Sicily by a guest speaker. Details on that gathering will be provided in the February issue of *La Lettera Toscana*. And it looks like April will be a special meeting for us (see box below).

But it's time to start thinking about our March 20 meeting. And that means *you!* Because many, if not all, of us will be presenters that day.

Chances are many, if not all, of you have visited the old country. Maybe lately. Maybe years ago. Here is what I am asking you to do: take 30 minutes or an hour *in the next two months* to go through some of your snapshots from Italian trips gone by. Pick out up to three of your favorites. Not 30. Not 10. Three. (Couples, you can pick three each if you like.)

ABBAZIA DI SANT'ANTIMO NEAR MONTALCINO IN TUSCANY.
A SPECIAL PLACE FOR ME. AUDREY AND I ATTENDED A MEDIEVAL-TYPE SERVICE THERE IN 2005. WITH MONKS CHANTING, CANDLES BURNING AND SHAFTS OF SUNLIGHT FILTERING INTO THE CHAPEL.
WHAT'S YOUR SPECIAL ITALIAN PHOTO?



next few weeks. If they are prints, you can mail them to Ken Kane, 37 SW Canby St., Portland, OR 97219, or hand them to me at the Dec. 20 or Feb. 14 meetings. I promise to return them. Whether they are digital or prints, make sure you tell me where you took each photo and when.

Then, I'll make like that nerd in your high school drama class: the A/V kid. I will arrange the photos into a slideshow for our March 20 meeting. I promise to use at least one of your photos, and hopefully two or all three. (But I promise not to include 11 photos of the Leaning Tower ... or a dozen of *David!*)

When one of your photos comes up, the floor is yours. Tell us what makes it special for you. You don't have to talk at length – you know what they say about a picture being worth 1,000 words! But tell us why you chose it or what the picture means to you.

This is grown-up show-and-tell, Italian style ... and I think it'll be fun.

They can be landscapes. They can be tourist attractions. They can be family. Or people you pass by. Street scenes. Food. Weddings. *Macellerie*. Ferrari. Buildings. *Pieces* of buildings – did you happen upon a neat window box or doorknob or rusty gate? There are no rules here. So long as it's a favorite image of yours.

Then think about *why* these photos are your favorites. What makes them special? Are they artsy? Do they trigger fond memories? Are they pretty? Are they gritty? Why does each photo make you sigh, or laugh, or bring a twinkle or tear to your eye?

If they are digital (for example, .jpg files), e-mail them to me at ken@woodbloom.com at your leisure over the

Planning will be underway shortly for the 20th anniversary celebration of the Tuscan Association sometime this spring. Although a date has not been officially set yet, signs seem to point toward the third Sunday in April. So, you may want to pencil in April 17 on your calendar. Stay tuned for more information in the next *La Lettera Toscana*.



LA BEFANA NEVER FOUND THE CHRIST CHILD THAT FIRST NIGHT. SO, HER SEARCH CONTINUES EACH JANUARY. SHE LEAVES COOKIES FOR EVERY CHILD SHE VISITS AND SWEEPS THE ROOM BEFORE SHE MOVES ON.