

Calendar

Reel Bologna

Italian Film with Food

The idea was born because some people got hungry. Many of the USD students who took Susan Briziarelli's Italian cinema class last semester came directly from work without having had dinner. When they started bringing food into the classroom for the two-hour sessions, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m., Briziarelli decided to formalize the trend.

"I thought we could make the food relevant to the film and make it a series," the associate professor of Italian said by phone from her home in Point Loma. If she repeats the minicourse at

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USD, she can incorporate the food component at the beginning. That's what she

did when she transported the idea to the Italian Community Center of San Diego, in Little Italy, and inaugurated a dinner-and-a-movie program.

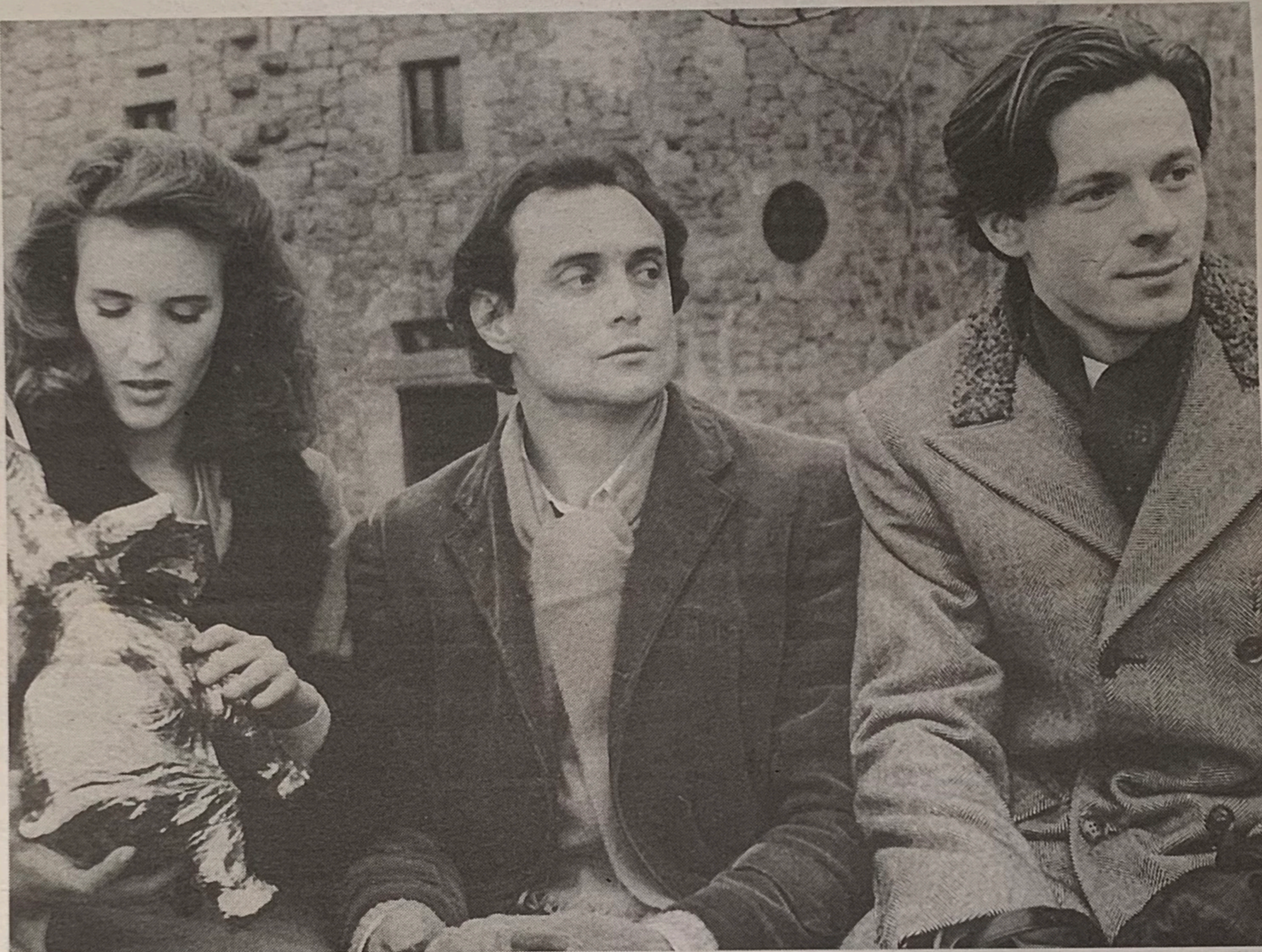
October's choice was *Il Giardino dei Finzi-Contini* — or *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, for those without Italian language skills. For November, it was *Il Gattopardo* — or *The Leopard*. This month, the finale is *Storia di Ragazzi e Ragazze* — *The Story of Boys and Girls*.

Appropriately, it's about a 20-course banquet, everything from soup, pasta, bread, and game, along with all the sauces. Set in a farmhouse outside of Bologna in 1936, it's centered around the preparation and then the eating of an elaborate dinner that's intended to celebrate a young couple's engagement. The marriage will eventually unite a simple farming family with a well-to-do middle-class family. "So there are all these sub-issues of social and economic class, and city-versus-country," said Briziarelli. "These contrasts are exacerbated in the food preparation, then forgotten in the meal. The table brings everybody together."

Bologna, in the north of Italy, southeast of Milan, is known as the origin of several gustatory pleasures, including tortellini, which are shown being made in the movie. Little hat-shaped stuffed pasta, tortellini are filled with a variety of ingredients, usually meat and cheese.

"Tortellini is so time-consuming to make; we'll serve tagliatelle instead," said Briziarelli. "Handmade, of course."

Tagliatelle, another signature Bolognese creation, is pasta cut from sheets into narrow ribbons. How narrow? A quarter-inch. Is that narrower than fettuccine? Yes. Fettuccine



From *Storia di Ragazzi e Ragazze* — *The Story of Boys and Girls*

is three-eighths. It's a significant one-eighth to food-fussy Italians.

The tagliatelle will be served with ragù. Briziarelli wants it to be clear that this ragù isn't the same as the meat sauce that comes in the jar from the company named Ragu (without the accent).

Bologna is famous for cold cuts, especially the one that is its namesake. But, again, the Bolognese bologna is not to be confused with the bastardized American version, bologna. "We're going to try to locate the real bologna," Briziarelli said. "You have to get the right brand or it doesn't taste right. We hope to find it at Mona Lisa in Little Italy."

They'll also locate the "right" Bolognese rolls. "Each city has its own kind of bread," said Briziarelli, who was born in Chicago but spent some years in Milan. "The rolls look like tiny ciabatta." People who buy artisan breads these days know what ciabatta is. The translation is "old shoe" because that's what it resembles.

And for dessert? *Torta di riso* — a rice cake.

Briziarelli doesn't do the cooking;

she leaves that to the two people who teach the cooking classes at the community center: Emanuela Patroncini and Barbara Carra.

Carra is a native of Florence. Patroncini is from Ferrara, where the fictional Finzi-Continis, an aristocratic Jewish family, lived at the outbreak of World War II. For that evening's program, they made a dish featuring zucca — or winter squash. For *The Leopard*, set in Sicily toward the end of the 19th Century, the centerpiece of the meal was a timballo.

"A timballo is molded," said Briziarelli. "It has a dough crust, and inside, it's macaroni with a sauce that's made with different meats — sausage and chicken liver." The stars of *The Leopard*, including Burt Lancaster, who plays the Prince (and whose Italian is, jarringly, dubbed), eat a timballo, too.

The theme of *The Leopard*, based on the novel by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa (1896–1957), is Italy's unification. "Lampedusa was one of the last members of a noble family, so it's partly about his own family and their struggle with the transition from the

old life to the new and getting used to the changes." There is a famous, paradoxical sentence from the novel and the movie. A nephew of the Lancaster character says, "But don't you understand, uncle, things must change if we want them to stay the same."

The subtitled *Finzi-Continis* drew a full house, 20 people. "In fact, we turned a couple of people away." For *The Leopard*, there were only a dozen takers — "First, I think, because it was a three-hour movie, and second, because there were no subtitles," said Briziarelli, who admitted, "That was a tough one."

Subtitles will be on the screen for *The Story of Boys and Girls*.

— Jeanne Schinto

Dinner and a Movie:
Storia di Ragazzi e Ragazze
Friday, December 5, 6:30 p.m.
Italian Community Center
of San Diego
1669 Columbia Street, Little Italy
\$18 per person (includes dinner)
619-237-0601 or
www.icc-sd.org

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