

# LEXICAL CHOICES AND CHANGES IN ITALIAN DINING MENUS IN MELBOURNE

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The post-World War II need to populate (*populate or perish*), mainly due to labour shortages and an insufficient birth rate, led Australia to establish a series of arrangements seeking large-scale one-way migration from several European countries, including Italy. Although most Italian emigrants would not benefit from government-subsidised passage (Cresciani, 1988), between 1947 and 1976 over 270,000 people left Italy to become the largest non-English-speaking migrant group in Australia (Castles, 1994; Cavaleri, 1997). The Italian areas most affected by this emigration to Australia were also those with a more difficult social and economic context (lack of jobs and services) in the north (Friuli-Venezia Giulia and Veneto) and the center-south (Calabria, Sicily, Abruzzo and Campania). In some cases there was an emptying out of entire Italian villages, which then reconstituted themselves in Australia's major cities (mainly Sydney, Adelaide and particularly Melbourne). Thus the first locally established Italian community groups were also born, through social and residential congregation, seeking work by word of mouth, and sustained by the shared desire to maintain their traditions and customs. Within this context food certainly played, and continues to play, an important role: the need to prepare Italian dishes led to demand for typically Italian ingredients such as Italian-style bread, pasta, coffee, tomato sauce, and olive oil, which entered and then became more generally available in markets and grocery stores (cfr. Helstosky, 2004). At the same time, the increasing availability of Italian food items was also linked to the opening and presence of Italian restaurants and bars, especially in areas with high Italian populations.

## 2. SOME BACKGROUND ON THE ITALIAN MIGRANT COMMUNITY AND ITS GEOGRAPHICAL AND LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE IN MELBOURNE

### 2.1. *Lygon street and the Italian community in Melbourne*

The arrival of new migratory flows often brings with it the settlement of specific parts of the city and the modification of these spaces by newly arrived communities. In the case of Italians in Melbourne, reference is most often made to Lygon Street, which connects the post-war Italian suburbs of Carlton, Carlton North and Brunswick and is also located close to neighbouring Fitzroy. In particular, as the Anglo-Irish and Jewish residents who preceded the Italians in Carlton increasingly moved out of the suburb during the '50s (Mayne, Zygmuntowicz, 2004), it was in this neighbourhood that the best-known Little Italy in Australia was formed and then publicly acknowledged as such (by the 1960s every

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third or fourth house in Carlton-North Carlton was occupied by an Italian family, cfr. Lancaster Jones, 1964). It was composed of working class Italians and their families, such as the Viggianesi from Basilicata in Carlton and the Aeolian Sicilians in Carlton North and Brunswick, who became a point of reference for the stream of arriving villagers, as communities worked together to help relatives and friends find accommodation and work (Jupp, 2001; Dal Borgo, 2006). Employment was concentrated in the construction industry, factories, and markets. Over time many Italian-run small businesses (e.g., fruiterers, tailors, barbers, shoemakers, photographers) were also established, particularly along Lygon Street where Italian businesses increased from 14 to 47 between 1945 and 1960 (Lancaster Jones, 1964; Markus, Taft, 2015). In the mid-1960s in Carlton, which thus became a ‘home away from home’ for the Italian community, it was possible to read Italian newspapers in Italian bars, see an Italian film in the cinema, meet in an Italian club or café to play cards. Italian emigration brought with it and fostered the growth of “café culture” in Melbourne, with Italians being the first to open espresso bars in the city (Roach, 2024). Some now historic establishments also came into existence during those years: University Café (1952) run by the Milani family, the grocery store King & Godfree (1952) by the Valmorbida family, Toto’s Pizza House (1961) by Salvatore Della Bruna, the coffee business Grinders (1962) by Giancarlo Giusti, the café Brunetti (1967), Universal Restaurant (1969), and Donnini’s Restaurant (1979)<sup>3</sup>. The distinctly Italian characterization of Lygon Street and surrounding suburbs should be noted despite the fact that other ethnic groups also lived in the same neighborhoods including Greek, Jewish, and Lebanese communities. Activities typical of the Italian tradition (strolling, drinking coffee, playing cards) found a point of reference in Lygon Street, especially in Carlton, leading also to the establishment of the annual *Festa Italiana* street festival in 1978 and which continues today. The physical concentration of Italians as local residents was however only temporary: by the 1970s the Italian population of Carlton in particular began to move further out to larger and better quality housing in the newer, more spacious residential areas of Melbourne to the north. In turn Carlton has since that time also been subject to significant gentrification and demographic diversification (Hajek *et al.*, 2023). That said, this neighbourhood remains an important reference point for the Italo-Australian community still today, in which the landscape has evolved further.

The surrounding space includes important cultural institutions and landmarks such as the social welfare organization, CO.AS.IT. (*Comitato Assistenza agli Italiani*, Italian Assistance Committee), the Dante Alighieri Society, the Italian Museum, and the Italian-style Piazza, all of which help maintain an Italian identity in the area around and along Lygon Street (Hajek *et al.*, 2023). Various post-2000 waves of renewed migration from Italy (Baldassar, Pyke, 2014) to Melbourne have also produced a reaffirmation and regeneration of Italianness through the emergence of newer establishments (bars, restaurants, osterias, pizzerias) where the Italian product is not only associated with an experience of *italianità* but also of Australian cultural heritage. As a result, we see a mixing of old and new businesses, such as the more well-established TiAmo, and Brunetti, alongside more recent arrivals, DOC and Pidapipò, that emphasize their Italianness in the presentation of their business and products. Moreover, the opening of new businesses, such as DOC in particular (but also a number of others), has led not only to a conspicuous and increasingly ingredient-specific use of Italian terms but also to a visible and audible presence of young Italian-speaking staff from Italy (often on so-called working holiday visas).

<sup>3</sup> The documentary “Lygon Street: Si Parla Italiano” released in 2013 shows the story of many Italian bars and restaurants in the area during the ’60s.

## 2.2. *The specialization of Italian lexicon in the food and dining sector*

In a linguistic space such as Australia where despite the official celebration of cultural and linguistic diversity, the dominance of English is largely unchallenged (Rubino, 2010; Hajek, Slaughter, 2014), languages (in this case Italian) other than the dominant language can be used to convey specific messages that can be associated with the enjoyment of an authentic and familiar experience and as an attempt to regain possession of meanings that would otherwise be lost (Bagna, Machetti, 2012; Hajek *et al.*, 2023). Referring to food, the cultural contents that are associated with the experience of eating and drinking are structured in the form of the words chosen to effectively communicate these experiences (Bombi, 2014) and which refer to a perception of different aspects of Italianness such as high quality of life, well-being, and creativity (Bagna, Machetti, 2012). Previous studies have already documented the wide presence of Italianisms associated with food and restaurant lexicon abroad (among others: Bagna, Machetti, 2012; Gallina, 2016; Coluzzi, 2017; Causa, 2023; Bagna, 2024). A second element to consider concerns the use of Italian dialect: for example, as noted by Iannaccaro, Guerini (2021), there is a clear functional specialization of dialect, a particular use of which seems to be reserved for the signs of commercial establishments in the food sector, particularly bars, pizzerias and restaurants. The use of dialect and regionalisms has already been studied by various scholars from the perspective of reappropriation of identity, including culinary (Telmon, 2002; Gorla, 2012; Scaglione, 2017; Alfonzetti, 2021; Barco, Tronci, 2021). This study also serves, at least in part, as a continuation of the work by Hajek, Giannelli (2002), aiming to provide a more recent analysis of the Italian lexicon used in the restaurant industry in Melbourne.

## 2.3. *Research question and hypotheses*

The city of Melbourne represents an interesting case study for understanding the state of the Italian lexicon abroad because it has a very long history of Italian migration that has allowed the lexicon (particularly restaurant and food-related) to develop and evolve. Therefore, the objective of this study is to analyse lexical choices in Italian by referring to the context of the restaurant industry, particularly menus and restaurant signs. Our hypothesis is that alongside the terminology that has now entered the vocabulary for some products connoted as typically Italian (e.g. mozzarella, pizza, tiramisù), there is a conscious choice in the use of more specific terms such as placenames, hyponyms and regionalisms and dialectalisms with the objective of describing and thus enhancing the named product. It seems to us that the use of Italian alone is no longer sufficient to convey a message of authenticity and to foster a positive product experience. Instead, there is an increasing tendency to add, through more specifically selected terms, information (often geographical in nature) about the product that makes it and its consumption truly unique.<sup>4</sup>

## 3. METHODOLOGY

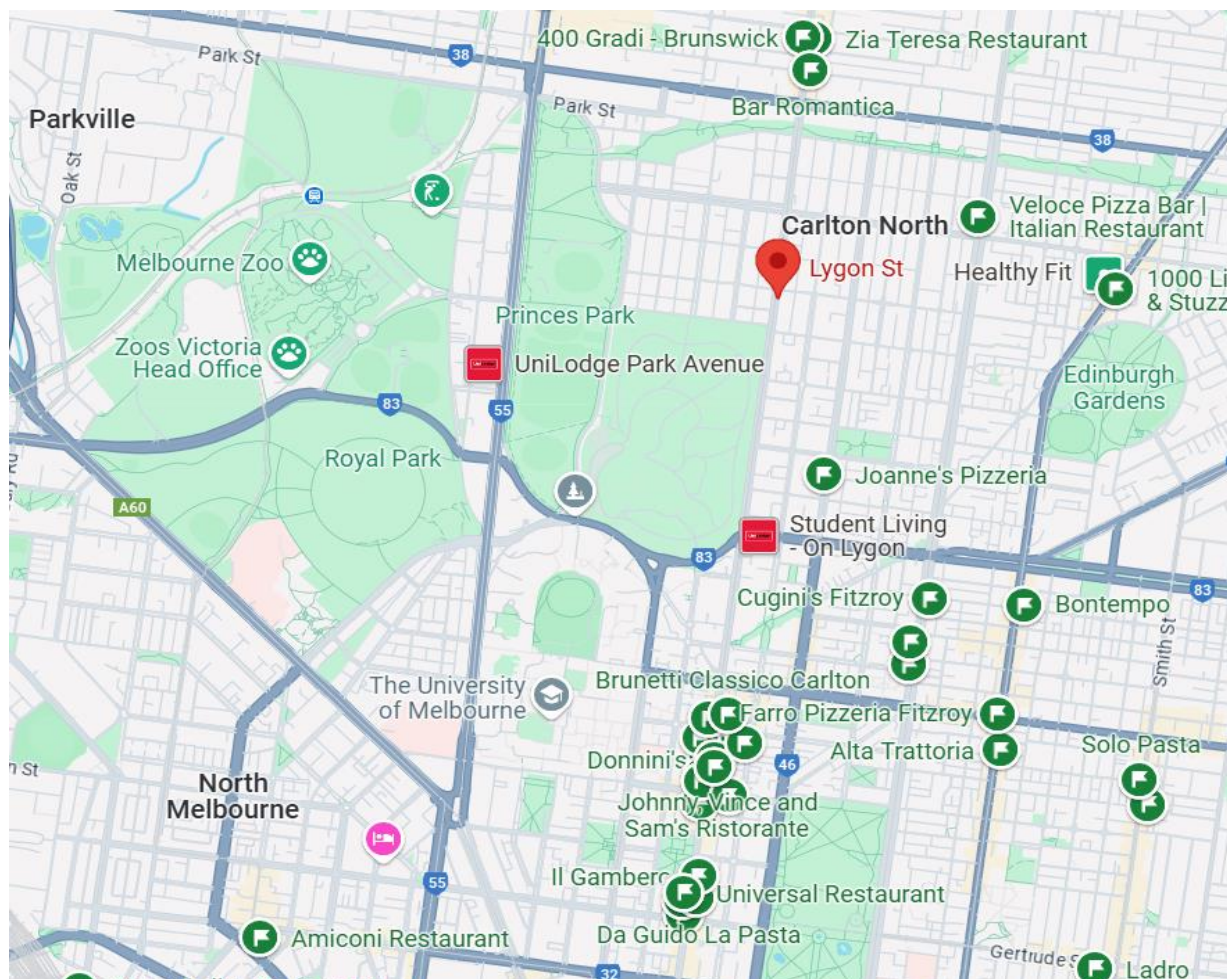
### 3.1. *Data collection*

The data collection was carried out in two phases: firstly, the signs and menus of eateries along Lygon Street and the surrounding historically Italian neighbourhoods

<sup>4</sup> See, instead, Marcato (2011) for the overuse of the term *Italian* in the culinary lexicon of North America.

(Carlton, Brunswick and Fitzroy) were identified and photographed. Subsequently, additional Italian food business present in Melbourne were identified and added to the corpus, giving a total of 100 establishments (restaurants, pizzerias, bars and osterias) that were analysed. For each venue we considered the menu (print and/or online), and additional descriptions (often used to contextualize and tell the story of the venue).

Picture 1. *Zoom-in on a portion of the Italian premises considered along or near Lygon Street*



### 3.2. Data analysis

From the photos and menus (pdf), 67,943 words were then extracted and grouped successively according to frequency for a total of 6,501 final words analysed. There is a ratio of 1:3 for Italian vs. English nouns (1,003 Italian and 3,068 English) and around 1:2 for adjectives (315 Italian and 726 English); there are also 106 words of foreign origin (see later) and other parts of speech (abbreviations, determiners, conjunctions, verbs, adverbs). However, items with the same name in Italian and English (e.g. avocado, banana, lime, mango) were excluded. The top 20 most frequent nouns in the corpus include: tomato, sauce, mozzarella, cheese, garlic, chicken, pizza, basil, parmesan, olives, latte, fior (di latte), onion, chilli, salad, cream, mushrooms, pasta, lemon, and prosciutto. We present below the catalogued terms based on the following classification:

- a) General vocabulary;
- b) Regional dishes and products;
- c) Types of pasta;
- d) Adjectives;
- e) Placenames;
- f) Borrowing from other languages;
- g) Spelling variation;
- h) Other considerations related to the menus.

### *General vocabulary*

Ingredient names include<sup>5</sup>:

- **basic ingredients:**

aceto, avena, bevande, bibite, buccia, burro, cacao, caffè, carne, cioccolata, farina, fetta, fiasco, formaggio, frutta, granella, latte, latticini, maionese, miele, mostarda, nettare, olio, oliva, origano, ortaggio, pane, pangrattato, panna, pasta, pepe, riso, sale, salsa, salsine, seme, senape, sfilatino, sfoglia, sottaceto, tartufo, tuorlo, uova, verdura, vino, zucchero;

- **names of fruits, vegetables and legumes:**

aglio, agretti, agrumi, ananas, arancia, asparagi, barbabietola, basilico, bieta, broccoli, capperi, carciofo, carota, cavolfiore, cavolo, ciliegie, cipolla, (pomodoro) datterino, fagioli, fagiolini, farro, fava, fichi, fico, finocchio, foglia, fragola, friarelli (or friarielli), frutto, funghi, insalata, lattuga, lenticchie, limone, mandarino, mandorla, mela, mela cotogna, melanzana, menta, mirtillo, misticanza, nocciola, noci, ortica, orzo, patate, peperoncino, peperoni, pera, pinoli, piselli, pistacchio, pomodori, pomodorino, pompelmo, porcini, porro, prezzemolo, radicchio, rapa, rosmarino, rucola, sanguinella, sarde, sardine, sedano, spinaci, spugnola, trombette, zafferano, zucca, zucchine;

- **meat and sausages:**

affettati, agnello, anatra, animelle, arrosto, battuta, bistecca, bresaola, bue, canguro, capocollo, capra, capretto, cinghiale, coniglio, coppa, costata, costine, costoletta, cotechino, cotoletta, creste, culatello, culatta, fegatini, filetto, galletto, gallo, girello, guancia, guanciale, lardo, lingua, lonza, maiale, maialino, manzo, midollo, mortadella, ossobuco, pancetta, pancia, petto, pollastro, pollo, porchetta, prosciutto, quaglia, salame, salsiccia, salumi, scaloppine, speck, spezzatino, suino, tagliata, vitello;

- **fish, shellfish and crustaceans:**

acciughe, alici, aragosta, baccalà, bottarga, calamaretti, capesante, caviale, cicale di mare, cozze, frutti di mare, gamberetti, gamberi, gamberoni, granchio, ostriche, polpo, salmone, scampi, seppia, tonno, trota, vongole;

- **cheeses and dairy products:**

burrata, cacio, caciocavallo, cacioricotta/ricotta salata, fior di latte, gorgonzola, grana, mascarpone, mozzarella, pecorino, provola, provolone, ricotta, robiola, scamorza, stracchino, straciatella, toma, tomino;

<sup>5</sup> Both singular and plural forms can be found.

- **beverages:**  
acqua, amaro, ammazzacaffè, aranciata, birra, cappuccino, chinotto, digestivi, espresso, grappa, grappino, limonata, liquore, sidro;
- **desserts:**  
affogato, biscotti, bomboloni, ciambelle, crostatina, gelati, granita, pannacotta, praline, semifreddo, sorbetto, tiramisù, torta, zabaglione, zeppole;
- **dishes or specific prepared food items:**  
bruschetta, calzone, caramello, carpaccio, ciabatta, colatura (di alici), crema, crespelle, crochè, crocchette, crostini, focaccia, fonduta, frittata, guazzetto, marmellata, minestrone, passata, patatine, pesto, pinzimonio, pizza, pizze, polpette, polpettone, purea, ragù, risotto, salmoriglio, stufato, sugo, tartina, terrina, tortino, vellutata, zuppa;
- **tools:**  
argenteria, casserola, coltello, griglia, forno, padella, piatto, pinze, tagliere;
- **types of dishes or courses:**  
antipasto, assaggi, colazione, contorno, degustazione, dolce, formula, primi<sup>6</sup>, pranzo, proposte, scelta, secondi, selezione, spuntini, supplemento;
- **food-related places and professions:**  
badia, casa, cascina, caseificio, cava, cucina, enoteca, fattoria, frantoio, macellaio, masseria, mugnaia, orto, ovile, pasticceria, pastificio, pizzeria, podere, poggio, produttori, ristorante, tenuta, terrazze, trattoria, vigna, vigneti, vineria;
- **reference to persons:**  
cacciatore, casalinga, nonna, nonnarella, paesano, pescatore;
- **terms related to food and catering:**  
allergeni, appetito, aroma, certificati, condimento, consorzio, denominazione, di stagione, glutine, ingredienti, opzioni, origine, pausa pranzo, prodotti, ricette, riserva, sapore, scarpetta, spolverata, strati.

Interestingly, we note the frequent use of diminutives for ingredient names (broccoletti, broccolini, bufalina, burratina, calamaretti, ciabattina, lattughino, mortazza, mozzarelline, rucolino) and dishes (calzoncino, grappino, polpettine, tortina, zeppoline).

Table 1 shows the frequencies of some typical Italian products in Italian and English. A few immediate observations can be made about these: one of the quintessential Italian terms, mozzarella (745 tokens), is directly collocated with cheese in only 93 cases. There is, on the other hand, frequent use of the term *fior di latte*, a specific type of mozzarella, in 367 cases. This is preceded by mozzarella in 49 cases. Oil appears 285 times, including 136 with olives first and 29 times in the abbreviation EVO (extra virgin oil). *Olio*, on the other hand, appears only 25 times. Some terms appear with similar frequencies in Italian and English (prosciutto vs ham, gelato vs ice cream) than others (pomodoro<sup>7</sup> vs tomato, caffè vs coffee). It is also interesting that words like cheesecake (18 entries) are used as loans in Italian (cheesecake al pistacchio).

<sup>6</sup> In menus both *primi* (pl.) and *paste* (pl.) are used.

<sup>7</sup> Note that tomato is preceded by San Marzano in 130 occurrences (see later).

Table 1. *Frequencies of some Italian products in English and Italian of the corpus analysed*

term (En)	frequency	term (It)	frequency
mozzarella cheese	93	fior di latte	367
olive oil	136	olio	25
ice cream	75	gelato	71
ham	208	prosciutto	224
tomato	941	pomodoro	107
coffee	84	caffè	12

The creation of new words is also present (tipomisù, nutellamisù, pistacchiotella, covaccino, bombolini) (cfr. Vedovelli, 2005).

### *Regional dishes and products*

There are many terms used in Italian or dialect of typical regional Italian dishes or products, here listed by region.

*Abruzzo*: caggionetti, incasciati, ventricina (also Molise);

*Calabria*: nduja, soppressa, soppressata;

*Campania*: delizia al limone, gnocchi alla sorrentina, montanarine, pacchetelle, (zucchine) a scapece;

*Emilia Romagna*: aceto balsamico, crescione, gnocco fritto, parmigiano reggiano, piadina, squacquerone, tigelle, torta tenerina;

*Friuli-Venezia Giulia*: montasio (also *Veneto*), orzotto;

*Lazio*: amatriciana, carbonara, gricia, maritozzi, pecorino romano, saltimbocca alla romana;

*Liguria*: barbagiuan;

*Lombardia*: cotoletta/ossobuco/risotto alla milanese, gremolada, panettone, sbrisolona;

*Piemonte*: bagna cauda, gianduiotto, giardiniera, grissini, insalata russa, salsa verde, vitello tonnato (alla piemontese);

*Puglia*: frisella, impegata di cozze alla tarantina, panzerotto, puccia, pomodori scattarisciati;

*Sardegna*: pane carasau, fregola;

*Sicilia*: arancino/a<sup>8</sup>, cannoli, caponata, cassata, cipollina, sfinci/sfincione, parmigiana, pesto trapanese;

*Toscana*: cantucci, corzetti, finocchiona, pappa al pomodoro, ricciarelli, schiacciata, vincotto;

*Valle d'Aosta*: fontina, vitello alla valdostana;

*Veneto*: cicchetti, risi e bisi, sardelle in saor (alla veneta), sgroppino.

And generally in the north (baci, canestrelli, polenta, veneziane, Taleggio) and central-south (ciambotta, panzanella). A placename is often used alongside the term (see later).

<sup>8</sup> There is extensive use of *arancini* (88) vs *arancine* (1) and *arancino* (1).

### *Types of pasta*

One aspect related to the regionality of dishes also concerns the specific names of Italian pasta and the corpus presents several hyponyms. The most frequently appearing include cannelloni, cappellacci, cappelletti, casarecce (and caserecce), (spaghetti alla) chitarra, conchiglie, conchiglione, fagottini, farfalle, fettuccine, fusilli, garganelle, gnocchetti, gnocchi, incasciati, lasagne, linguine, maccaroncini, maccheroni, mafalde, mafaldine, mezzemaniche, pappardelle, penne, pipe (rigate), ravioli, ravioloni, reginette, rigatoni, sorpresine, spaghetti, spaghettini, spaghettoni, strozzapreti, tagliolini, tortelli, tortelloni, trenette, and ziti. But we also find some pasta names more typical of specific regions such as agnolotti (del plin), tajarin (*Piemonte*), pansotti (*Liguria*), tagliatelle, tortellini (*Emilia Romagna*), gnudi (*Toscana*), bucatini, tonnarelli (*Lazio*), calamarata, paccheri (*Campania*), cavatelli, orecchiette (*Puglia*), culurgiones (*Sardegna*).<sup>9</sup>

### *Adjectives*

Among the many adjectives in our corpus, it is worth noting those referring to:

- **placenames:**  
calabrese, cetarese, ferrarese, ligure, lucana, mantovana, napoletana, pantesco, piemontese, romagnolo, romano, sardo, siciliano, taggiasche, tirolese, toscano, trevisana, umbra, valdostana, valpadana, veneto, veneziana, veronese;
- **placenames with a precise culinary meaning:**  
(alla) amatriciana, (olive) ascolane, (ragù) bolognese, (insalata/torta) caprese, (alla) fiorentina, fiorentina, genovese, Nerano, (cotoletta alla) milanese, (pizza) napoletana, Norma, (gnocchi) alla sorrentina, (impepata alla) tarantina, (pesto) trapanese, (alla) veneta;
- **type of preparation:**  
abbrustolita, affumicato, ai ferri, alla cacciatore, arrostita, caramellata, condito, crudaiaola, essiccata, filata, fritti, gratinati, grigliati, imbevuto, imbottite, in umido, mantecato, marinate, panato, pastellate, pizzaiola, punta di coltello, ripieni, saltati, scottati, tostato, trifolati;
- **phrasal forms:**  
alla acqua pazza, allo scoglio, (aceto) balsamico, in agrodolce, al cartoccio, al nero di seppia, al verde, alla pescatora, mare monti, (crema) pasticceria.

### *Placenames*

In addition to the names of regions (Abruzzo, Basilicata/Lucania, Campania, Emilia Romagna, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Lazio, Lombardia, Sardegna, Puglia (and Salento), Piemonte, Sicilia, Toscana) and cities (Aosta, Asti, Genova, Latina, Milano, Modena, Napoli, Oristano, Palermo, Roma, Torino, Treviso, Venezia, Vibo Valentia), more specific place names are mentioned in reference to the particular locations especially associated with the product: Amalfi, Arborio, Asiago, Bronte, Canale, Capri, Carella, (bella di) Cerignola, Colonnata, Conegliano, Cremona, Etna, Garda, Ischia, Itria, Langhe, Majella, Malvasia, Mantovana, Maranello, Martina Franca, Mazara, Moncenisio, Montalcino, Montasio, Montevecchio, Nerano, Nocellara del Belice, Norcia, Ortona, Pantelleria, Portobello, Roccella, San Daniele, San Marzano, Saracco, Scalia, Sorrento, Spilinga, Susa, Tropea, Vigevano, Zibello. We find a similar pattern for grape varieties

<sup>9</sup> See also Gamba (2004).



(Avola, Barbera, Brunello, Chianti, Cortese, Fiano, Malvasia, Montepulciano, Primitivo, Sangiovese, Sangiovetto, Saronno, Susumaniello, Tufo, Valpolicella, Vermentino).

Placenames are often used to enhance the value of the product (crudo di Parma, capocollo di Martina Franca, lardo di Colonnata, prosciutto San Daniele, pomodoro San Marzano, formaggio Monte Veronese), together with the use of the abbreviations DOC (Denominazione di Origine Controllata) DOP (Denominazione di Origine Protetta) and DOCG (Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita). Effort is also made to explain abbreviations and their worth (see Picture 2 below).

Picture 2. *Guidance on the meaning of acronyms D.O.C. and D.O.P. in a menu*

**D.O.C.:** A phrase used by various agricultural government bodies that set and oversee the standards of some Italian foods, most significantly cheese and wine.

**D.O.P.:** A mark awarded by the EU and stands for Denominazione di Origine Protetta (Protected Designation of Origin). It is a brand of legal protection - usually by law - to those foods whose peculiar characteristics depend mainly or exclusively from the territory in which they are produced.

The adjectival use of regional names is also sometimes present in English: *ligure*<sup>10</sup> (1 occurrence) vs *Ligurian* (6), *piemontese* (4) vs *Piedmontese* (1), *veneto* (11) vs *Venetian* (1), *toscano* (6) vs *Tuscan(y)* (18), *calabrese* (54) vs *Calabrian* (9), *siciliano/Sicilia* (26) vs *Sicilian/Sicily* (52).

#### *Borrowings from other languages*

Of course Italian is not the only language found alongside English. The corpus also contains a hundred foreign items not of Italian origin, many well-known to Italians as well as food connoisseurs everywhere. They are mainly of:

- French origin (*à la minute, entrée, roquette, noir, sauvignon, gourmet, purée, blanc, rose, champagne, chardonnay, tartare, confit, mayonnaise, croustons, bisque, cabernet, béchamel, croquette, coulis, rosé, merlot, omelette(s), cointreau, mousse, brie, crème, tapenade, cuisine, ganache, gratin, trufe, café, crêpe, domaine, hollandaise, rosti, soufflé, baguette, champignon, consommé, croissant, fraîche, fromagerie, grenache, patisserie, profiteroles, bavaroise, beurre, charcuterie, citronette, cré, cuvée, feuilletée, michelle, noisette, pierre, reserve, sauvignon, sauce, valerie, vieille, vins*);
- Spanish (*chorizo, tortilla, guacamole, margarita, jalapeño, queso, guindilla, patatas, serrano, rosado, sangria, paella, sierra, bueno, vallformosa, veganita, Kahlúa, tequila*);
- Japanese (*wagyu, yuzu, miso, gyoza, tempura, hiramasa, panko*);
- Greek (*kalamata, tzatziki, souvlaki, pita, saganaki, halloumi*);
- German (*schnitzel, spatzle*);
- Jewish (*kosher*);
- Korean (*kimchi*);
- Portuguese (*curaçao, peri*).

<sup>10</sup> All declined forms are counted.

### *Spelling variations*

Finally, spelling variations is also often present, possibly due to dialectal and/or English influence (de)gemination, (de)voicing, vowel change:

- (de)gemination (affogatto, arrabiata, aranciatta, buratta, buffala, capriciosa, cappricciosa, foccacia, pangratatto, parmiggiano, pepperonata, piaciutto, quatro formagi, riccota, salatta, salsicia, sambucca, scotatto, tallegio);
- spelling (alio, bruscetta, bushetta, fungi, gnocci, marsano, mossarella, pistaccio, porchini, kalabrese, raghu);
- (de)voicing (affumigato, corgonzola, spagliato, formacio, marcherita);
- wrong or omitted accent (baba, baccala, caffè, tiramisu, ragu, caffè, tiramisú);
- vowel change (arincini, coteletta, crispella, mecchiato, melenzane, napole, sugu, selsiccia, napoletana, porcine, spaghetete, volcaneno);
- gender or number agreement (calabresa, scaloppini, semolina);
- clear typographical errors (tramisù, mozzarellla, pizzeria, toscana);
- (non-)use of preposition (pesce di giorno, risotto di giorno, insalata finocchio, bacio di pantesco).

### *Other considerations related to the menus*

The use of Italian and English is typically mixed, not only when the Italian word involves a precise reference to originality and tradition, but even when the word is in increasingly common use in English. An example is the menu in Picture 3 where we find in the description of dishes and ingredients the use of Italian words (e.g. radicchio, baccalà, vino rosso, risotto, gnocchetti, tramezzini, focaccia, cotechino) mixed with English terms (tuna, shallot, peas, tomato). To this regional Italian is also added (cicchetti, cucina veneta, risi e bisi, sardines in saor), alongside the use of borrowings from French (paté, terrines) and mixed use of plural adjectival agreement with the head noun (calamari fritti, eggplant fritte<sup>11</sup>).

Picture 3. *Screenshot of a restaurant menu*

#### **CICCHETTI**

- Focaccia, Olive Oil 3ea
- Oyster, Red Wine Vinegar 6
- Olives & Pickles 12
- Sardine in Saor, Saffron, Pine Nut, Sultana 22
- Pickled Radicchio, Crostini, Walnut Cream 24
- Tramezzini, Baccala, Paprika 20
- Seppie, Cuttlefish, Ink, Polenta Fritto 20
- Paté, Chicken Liver, Pancetta, Mushroom Paté, Rye 22
- Pork & Veal Terrine, Pistachio, Carrot Mostarda 26
- Capesante, Scallop, Almond & Herb Crust 12ea
- Calamari Fritti, Zucchini, Saffron Mayo 30
- Eggplant Fritte, Smoked Aioli 20
- Tuna Crocchette 20

<sup>11</sup> In the case of eggplant fritte, we may have underlying agreement with melanzane fritte.

### CUCINA VENETA

- Polpette in Sugo, Meatballs, Tomato, Scamorza 28
- Eggplant, Goat Cheese, Mint, Pine Nuts 25
- Clams, Cinzano Bianco, Salsa Verde, Chickpeas 32
- Cauliflower, Monte Veronese, Almond 25
- Gnocchetti Tirolese, Salumi, Parmigiano 28
- Bigoli Duck Ragu Veronese, Mushroom 30
- Risi e Bisi, Risotto, Peas, Pancetta 28
- Spatchcock, Shallot, Radicchio 38
- Cotechino, Braised Lentils, Vino Rosso 38

Another typical aspect is the use of Italian words that evoke a reference to Italian food and culinary authenticity and tradition (*nonna, buon appetito, quanta fame hai?*).

Picture 4. Screenshot of a restaurant menu



The choice of Italian words is in a few cases accompanied by an English translation, with an educational function (cfr. Bagna, 2024). Picture 5 is an example of this. In other cases, information may be added on how to pronounce the word alongside a description of the dish (Picture 6).

Picture 5. Screenshot of a restaurant menu



Picture 6. Screenshot of a restaurant menu



More interesting is the choice, in some cases, to provide an explanation of dishes as well as geographical product information. Picture 7 below is part of a menu offered by DOC which provides detailed information about the product (parts of the animal, ingredients used, preparation) alongside specific geographical references (Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Emilia Romagna).

Picture 7. *Screenshot of a restaurant menu.*

D.O.C. SELECTED SALUMI		
<b>SAN DANIELE PROSCIUTTO (FRIULI-VENEZIA GIULIA)</b> Haunch of pig that has been seasoned with salt, pepper and a little garlic, incomparable taste due to favourable climate and a healthy diet in pigs, essentially cured ham	<b>GUANCIALE</b> Unsmoked Italian bacon prepared with pig's jowl or cheeks (guancia, Italian for cheek), rubbed with salt, ground black pepper or red pepper and cured for 3 weeks, its flavour is stronger than other pork products, such as pancetta and its texture is more delicate	<b>SALAME</b> A long life sausage and meat from the best lean pork and a spicy mixture also of diced bacon, salt, peppercorn and red wine, cured between 3 and 6 months in natural pigs gut
<b>PROSCIUTTO DI PARMA (EMILIA-ROMAGNA)</b> Cured haunch of pig, seasoned with salt, pepper and a little garlic, a DOC controlled product, monitored by a special consortium	<b>COPPA</b> A delicacy made from the muscular part	<b>LARDO DI COLONNATA</b> Essentially bacon fat regarded as poor man's fare but now a delicacy, it is stored in a dish rubbed with salt, pepper, garlic, rosemary, cloves, etc and left covered in a

There is often also a section on restaurants' websites that recounts the associated family history, to affirm the authenticity of the product and reconnect with Italian tradition. In many cases, reference is made to the neighbourhood (Lygon Street) and the year the business was opened (even when it is more recent), the names of the people who founded it and their history of emigration from Italy. Picture 8 below shows part of the website section giving information about the opening of the University Café.

Picture 8. *Screenshot of a restaurant menu*

## History

**The Donnini family has had a culinary presence in Melbourne for over 60 years.**

Fernando and Elena Donnini along with their extended family opened the University Cafe on Lygon St in 1952.

Expansion was inevitable and Melbourne's first fresh pasta outlets were opened in five locations around Melbourne. Life-long friends now own and operate the DONNINI'S Pasta franchise.

In 1985 the family opened a modern

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this contribution is to give a detailed overview of the lexical denotation and presentation of Italian dining in and around Lygon Street, Carlton, Melbourne's Little Italy. A number of observations emerge from our data. In the first instance, there is an overwhelming presence of Italian culinary lexicon as part of Melbourne's food and cultural heritage, often mixed in with other culinary linguistic traditions (e.g. French). Linked to the use of a very wide range of Italian terms is the frequent mention by different establishments to the tradition and history of those who founded them. Such efforts represent not only a reference to Italian food but also an attempt to keep the Italian migrant and culinary history of the city alive. That said, the use of Italian lexicon is not unproblematic: errors are commonplace. A second point concerns newer establishments, such as DOC, that are seen as particular ambassadors of the authenticity of Italian food and wine products by using not only Italian terms on their menus but also by enriching them with geographic references and hyponyms in a way that is meant to bring out the

Italian culinary experience. This is in line with a change already present in some regions of Italy that sees the juxtaposition of dialectal and regional culinary terms with a more accurate and authentic description of the product (cfr. Gorla, 2012). In the case of Australia, such matters are even more interesting because it involves references to specific Italian regional elements within a context far away from Italy but where the Italian language has played different roles over time – first as a language of emigration, then as a heritage language, and today once again as a spoken first language among more recently arrived Italians. Moreover, Australian diners do not need to understand the meaning of each lexical term, but their visual presence on menus (sometimes also supported by explicit textual explanations) plays an important role in reinforcing the Italianness of their dining experience. Finally, the large number of written Italian terms present on menus can also be seen to have positive indirect implications: their presence can enhance conversations between customers and staff about a specific dish, its preparation, ingredients and its origin. In this regard, it would be interesting, in a future study, to evaluate how the Italian terminology we have identified is perceived and understood by non-Italian-speaking customers.

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