

Made man

by Giovanni Corrao

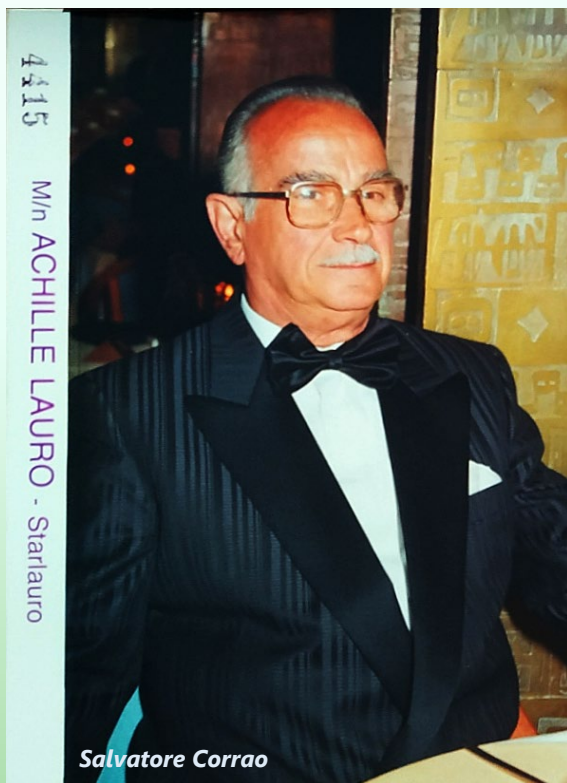
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Both of them are islanders, but they have a different relationship with the sea.

Sardinians, situated in the middle of the Mediterranean, have always considered the roughly 220-kilometer stretch of sea that separates them from the mainland as a significant obstacle. It has been a costly and inconvenient necessity to rely on boats for transporting goods and for tedious journeys with cars in tow.

On the other hand, the Stretto di Messina, rich in fish as it is, has historically been considered a valuable asset for Sicilians, primarily due to the short distance required to cross from one shore to the other. It takes about 30 minutes for a fun panoramic mini-cruise, during which passengers can savor the famous "*pasta with sardines in the Messina style*" complete with tomato sauce. Some are even capable of swimming across it. Historically, it is even said that a bridge of boats was used in Roman times for the transit of elephants! Who knows...

Perhaps that's why my parents, Santina and Totò, true Sicilians, despite spending part of their lives in Cagliari, have always loved sailing. It was a delightful pastime to brighten their later years of life, taking advantage of their well-deserved retirement.



Salvatore Corrao

Due to their passions, such as gala dinners, elegant attire, dancing, fishing, and the sea, they have often been aboard Italian cruise ships that typically entertain tourists around the world.



Santina Lentini

Among these adventurous excursions, a particularly memorable one was the journey on the blue ship, the "*Achille Lauro*", the finest cruise ship of its time, now famous for the unfortunate incident that took place. It's worth noting that the ship was seized by a group of armed Palestinian terrorists who boarded in October 1985, taking passengers hostage and killing one of them. This event was followed by an unpleasant incident that occurred at the Sicilian military airbase in Sigonella when, in their efforts to deal with the captured hijackers, Italian Carabinieri and elite units from the U.S. Delta Force found themselves facing each other with weapons drawn.



Santina and Totò

Fortunately, my parents were not on board during that dramatic situation, but they had the opportunity to admire the splendor of its salons on another occasion. It was when the *Achille Lauro* offered a cruise that also included a stop in the port of New York. It was their chance to visit their overseas cousins, Nino and Maria, and reciprocate the visits they had made to Italy from time to time out of respect for the sense of nostalgia experienced by Italian immigrants.

Maria Crisafulli and my mother Santina Lentini, both originally from Giardini, were very close. Before marrying her cousin, Antonino Zanghì, Maria lived in a house along Corso Umberto, right next to the church of Maria Santissima della Raccomandata. When they came to visit us in our home in Rome in 1968, I, a sixteen-year-old boy at the time, examined them closely, to the point where I remember them most for their typical Italian-American speech from black-and-white movies and for owning the first Polaroid camera I had ever seen.

It was a time when the "*Americans*" were looked upon with respect and admiration, almost as if they were the best and the wealthiest in the world.

One of those late June mornings, I had to play host to our American cousins, an unforgettable opportunity since my mother, a math and physics teacher, couldn't be there for school tests, and my father had to preside over an important meeting at the Ministry of Transport regarding the initial concepts for connecting Sicily and Calabria. He was the engineer responsible for the railway systems in Southern Italy at the time, and it was his duty to provide input on these design concepts, some of which were truly driven by boundless imagination.

A few days before, he had taken me to his large office in Croce Rossa square in Rome to show me the initial proposals for bridges and tunnels for crossing the Strait of Messina. «*It will be challenging to unite Sicily and Calabria in a short time with such an expensive infrastructure*», he told me «*but if it were to happen, it must be a bridge, a grand structure that is clearly visible to all*».

And while that morning, cousin Maria was busy in the Corrao household kitchen, Nino took me aside to share details of his adventurous life, spent searching for work as a young man, then working as an international chef on cruise ships, and eventually becoming the owner of a famous restaurant in New York. It was ranked fifth for international cuisine, but first by far for wines!

I was there with my mouth agape, in disbelief, listening to every word, episode after episode, recipe after recipe. Yes, because it was he who first told me that you cook octopus with a cork floating in boiling water.

As he spoke, I only had feelings of admiration for the man who had made it on his own, and I wondered if I would ever manage to go to America one day!

Then, when my parents returned, we all sat down to eat scampi, which Nino had desired because, according to him, they were unavailable in the seas of the lands discovered by Christopher Columbus.

I couldn't tell you about the magical encounter overseas, but I can imagine it. Starting with the passage of the Achille Lauro across the majestic Statue of Liberty, a remarkable creation by Gustave Eiffel, the man behind Paris's iconic emblem: it's as if you can almost hear the exclamations of amazement from the cruise passengers, mixed with signs of approval for the marvelous human talent. And then, wandering around to admire the grandeur of the skyscrapers of the New York metropolis and the long, broad streets perpendicular to each other, placed there to signify the rationality that guided the northerly Americans, less inclined toward Italian machinations.

The two cousins must have found a way to reminisce about their childhood spent in Giardini when people used to peek at them from behind slightly ajar windows while, occasionally, they would secretly go for a swim in the sea, even if they were wearing full-covering swimsuits.



Maria Crisafulli

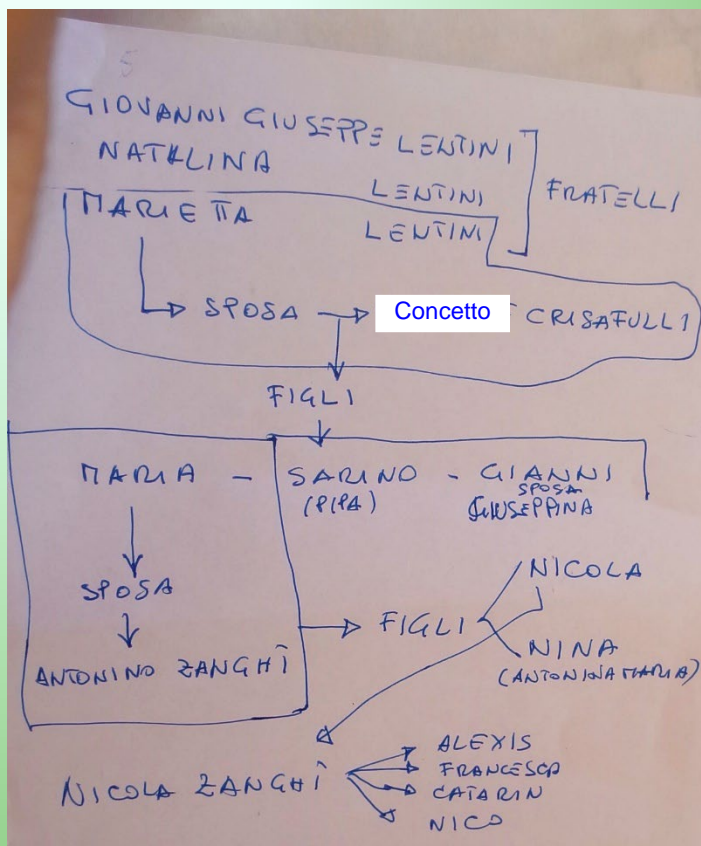
However, we have the opportunity to see them all together at a restaurant table in New York, thanks to a photograph that shows them smiling and relaxed while eating, I believe, overcooked pasta with jam, hot dogs, and hamburgers... hahaha... quite a departure from Italian cuisine!



Santina, Totò, Nino e Maria, at a restaurant in New York

If we are fortunate enough to have a genealogical reconstruction, it is because Nicola and I, one of Nino and Maria's children, have somehow stayed in touch, and a couple of years ago, in the waters of Isola Bella in Taormina, we spent time reconstructing our closest family connections.

So, I discovered that the sequence of this family tree began with my grandfather Pippo (Giovanni Giuseppe) and one of his sisters, Marietta. As can be seen on the side, Santina and Maria were daughters of siblings, thus first-degree cousins.



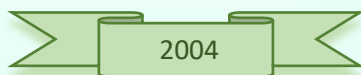
I don't like to dwell on writing to avoid boredom. However, while searching through old photos, I decided to share one because it made every effort to be noticed: in it, my grandfather Pippo, the one on the far right, is present, and next to him is Maria Crisafulli, with her brother Gianni and his wife Giuseppina by her side (I hope I'm not mistaken!).



Gianni, Giuseppina, Maria e Pippo.

wraparound cylinder allowed the perforated stem to draw in a certain amount of air capable of cooling the smoke, making it less harmful. Even Bing Crosby, the famous singer and actor, had endorsed the item, which unfortunately did not achieve significant commercial success.

Nonetheless, it is worth noting once again the Italian talent and inventiveness on this occasion.



I'm a purebred Sicilian myself, so what's wrong if every opportunity is a good one to take a little trip to Sicily? In June 2004, it was my brother-in-law Alvisè, a policeman with a passion for cycling, who gave me the opportunity. His name is so well-known in cycling circles that there's no need to add the last name Montisci!



And so, here are two entire families setting off in a couple of cars to disembark on the Island of the Sun. Setting off is perhaps an overstatement, as the first part of the journey involves the Cagliari to Palermo crossing on the somewhat quirky ships of Tirrenia, where we find ways to make the evening enjoyable by chatting and wandering on the decks.

Dinner in the self-service area broke the monotony, along with some laughter and the necessary admonitions to the two restless little girls, Valentina and Laura. Then, everyone to bed in the cabins, hoping for the sea's mercy.

I've always noticed a strange phenomenon on the Tirrenia ships. You depart from Cagliari, and on the ship, it seems like everyone speaks perfect Italian with the typical Sardinian accent, the one that tends to double consonants, just like Cossiga. You wake up the next morning while the ship is still rounding the island of Ustica, and, incredibly, unmistakable Sicilian pronunciation takes over. It's as if the ship were a living creature that adapts to its surroundings.

Moreover, as you approach the port of Palermo, admiring the steep limestone foothills that stretch from Mount Pellegrino toward Falcone-Borsellino Airport, you realize it's not just any Sicilian dialect, but the one spoken in the capital, characterized by the richness of its words and some distinctive terms. For example, the difference between "*cuminu*" and "*ciciulena*" the names for the seeds used to make Mafalda, the excellent local bread, flavorful and exclusive, comes to mind.



a Tirrenia ship upon arriving at the port of Palermo



while I eat bread and spleen from Porta Carbone in Palermo

As we are docking at the port of Palermo, admiring the city that stretches before us, I recall my mother Santina's appreciation for these places, which she considered pleasant for the opportunity to do some honest shopping. But I already have my gaze directed to the left, toward Porta Carbone, where a magnificent "*spleen sandwich*" awaits me for breakfast. You might say that spleen and lung flavored with lard and lemon aren't exactly suitable for the early morning, but pleasure comes at a price!

The mafia isn't visible, but it's felt. We're talking about a city that not only gave birth to my father, Salvatore Corrao, but also hosted nobles and gentlemen from every era and various cultural backgrounds. In the contrast between the ancient and the decadent, along the alleys of the historic center, lies the cancer that corrodes assets and hinders normal development. Only the optimism of the Sicilians manages to overcome the despair of merchants and artisans, who are regularly extorted.

Most of us, or almost all, are indulging in the succulent Palermitan sandwich. Only Alvisè, my brother-in-law, refuses. But his wife Roberta and my wife Donatella, sisters of the heart, need no persuasion: the day is off to a good start! The three little "carusi", Laura, Valentina, and Marco, or since we're in Palermo, I should say "picciotti," hop into the cars to embark on their adventure. The journey includes a first stop in Trapani and Erice for Alvisè's cycling competition, followed by a course towards Giardini Naxos.



Valentina and Laura
in Trapani

It's quite unnecessary to describe the places now; you can go on the internet and find everything, images, photos, anecdotes. But every trip has its special moments, and even this one we're talking about couldn't avoid them. We all still remember the moment of disbelief when Alvis's car got stuck in a narrow alley in Erice, so tight that it didn't allow for a normal turn.

And then: where do we put those brioches filled with Sicilian ice cream? And the scents, the flavors, the smell of oregano in the hills, the views from Erice, the islands in front of Trapani, the cable car!

The days passed quickly because Alvis had pleasant topics to entertain our evenings spent in the small gardens of Trapani, a city paradoxically described by its mayor as "*where the mafia doesn't exist*". His stories drew from his previous work as an anti-drug agent in law enforcement, which had given him a special eye for recognizing suspicious movements.

Without ever revealing the actions he actually carried out in service, such as long stakeouts to track drug movements, the passing of packages from one person to another, and even reaching the top echelons of drug organizations, as seen in movies, he made us understand that it was a profession requiring a lot of patience, tenacity, dedication, and the invaluable assistance of police dogs' instincts.

After the cycling races in Trapani, the group set off on another journey, heading for the sea in Taormina. The trip was interesting and enjoyable. We had a stop at Mount Etna with its lunar landscape, where we dined in a mountain restaurant, and then continued on to more days of carefree relaxation, basking in the early summer sun and visiting places of historical civilizations, steeped in ancient cultures. Sicily might not have equally beautiful beaches as Sardinia, but it's rich in history, having absorbed the ways, customs, and traditions of the civilizations that have successively ruled over the largest island in the Mediterranean.

A 350-kilometer drive was enough to reach Giardini Naxos and stay in my mother's houses, facing the sea, in front of the Saja del Maraone harbor.



Saja sea, in Giardini Naxos

A strong scent of the sea informs us that we've arrived in the bay of Giardini Naxos. Everyone takes possession of their accommodations. Donatella and Roberta set to work for an energetic general cleaning: these were two apartments that were inhabited throughout the year.

I greet the neighbors, and they inform me that the parking spaces in the street below are for the exclusive use of homeowners. To get the "pass" and be able to park, since I'm entitled to it, I need to go to the designated office of the local municipal police down the road after the harbor, in the Recanati neighborhood. For now, I've parked the cars in front of Piero's house, in the Taormina area, about a five-minute walk away.

The next morning, after having breakfast with the inevitable coffee granita with whipped cream accompanied by a brioche, I immediately went to the municipal police to get the pass.

«Good morning» I introduce myself *«my mother owns two apartments in Giardini, in the Saja district, and I've come kindly to request the pass to park my car on the waterfront»*.

«Oh, dear sir, I'm sorry to inform you, but we're unable to provide you with the document. We don't have any more available permits, and we don't even have any more signs» was the response of the regretful office staff. I tried to inquire about the reasons and how it happened, but I wasn't given any hope or any way to insist. I decided to put it aside for now and explore it further with some childhood friends.



the crabs from Maraone cooked properly

I spent the morning in a bad mood, and to shake it off, I went to collect "hairy crabs" on the rocks of Maraone.

They're not bad at all when cooked with a tomato sauce and linguine (*my mother used to say that you don't need sauce with fish, and that you need just a little tomato, not overcooked*): you can taste the flavour of the seafood and the scent of the seawater together.

After finishing eating, I perched on the balcony to see if any familiar faces, childhood friends, or someone who could explain how to obtain the parking pass and bypass the obstacles would pass by. After all, we are in Sicily, right? But no familiar face came into view.

I decided to go upstairs to see Mrs. Teresa and ask how they had obtained their pass.

«Gianfranco, what a pleasure, come on in». "I know, I have two names," I repeated to myself once again, one given to me as a child by my mother, Gianfranco, and one assigned to me by my father for dynastic reasons: was I or was I not the first grandchild of two grandparents named Giovanni? And in Sicily, this tradition of naming still persists.

After putting aside the pleasantries, I got down to business: "Dear lady, how can one get the parking pass to park down here? I went to the Municipal Police this morning, and, long story short, they didn't want to give it to me."

«Why didn't you ask me first?» the professor replied, making it clear that I still had a lot to learn about typical Sicilian logic.

«Here's what you do: tomorrow morning, you go back to them and tell them that Don Ciccio sent you» she added, while my face couldn't hide a certain bewilderment.

Greetings and kisses, and I returned to the lower floor, perplexed. Is the lady still trustworthy? And what if I go tomorrow and say that Don Ciccio sent me, and everyone starts laughing? What kind of impression will I make? I go back to the balcony, maybe someone I know will pass by! But nothing, no familiar face passed by those parts. We decide to go up to Taormina.



**Gianfranco, Laura, Donatella, Marco,
Roberta and Valentina**

But my doubt remained intact. So much so that the next morning, I put on a nice hat and donned a pair of sunglasses with very dark lenses to reappear at the Municipal Police office without being recognized.

However, they said, «You're here again?».

I hoped my face didn't show any embarrassment. Fortunately, I thought, I hadn't brought family or friends with me; otherwise, I would have risked being teased for the rest of my life. I decided to go all in, "it's now or never," I told myself.

Do I say it or not? «Don Ciccio sent me» it was done, and all that was left was to await the consequences of that statement.

«Why didn't you tell me yesterday morning? You could have saved yourself another walk».

When I finally had the coveted parking pass in my hands, I realized I had been away from my island for too long.

From Giardini to Taormina, you can walk up the Villagonia staircase, a shortcut with long steps that makes you dream. It feels like you're in an airplane, while you admire the beauty of those steep hills sloping down to the blue bay of the sea. The eyes never tire of looking, while the legs, as you climb, may have a different opinion.

We visit the Greco-Roman Theater, eat Sicilian cannoli with crushed pistachios, and stroll along the Corso. Everything is beautiful in Taormina, a town full of picturesque views, greenery, boutiques, adorned with flowers and the ever-present scenic landscapes, with Mount Etna in the background.



la baia di Giardini Naxos vista dallo scurzaturi di

I returned seemingly triumphant from the others, having obtained the desired pass, but deeply perplexed inside. Who on earth was this Don Ciccio?

I went upstairs, thanked and asked, but received no answer. Sicilian mysteries, I told myself.

However, for someone like me, accustomed to thinking and understanding, the matter didn't sit well. I decided to sleep on it, without giving up a nice slice of "pizza Messina" that evening, the one with thick dough, cherry tomatoes, and escarole, with some bits of anchovy here and there.

I didn't sleep as peacefully I hoped; in fact, that name "Don Ciccio" had been bouncing around in my synapses all night. In the early morning, it was the rising sun between the rock at Croce and Capo Taormina that suddenly illuminated me: it was a name I had already heard!



Valentina and Laura being carried piggyback by Marco and Gianfranco

I waited for the right moment and went up again.

«Gianfranco, what a pleasure, come in, come in».

«Tell me, dear lady, do you know this Don Ciccio?»

«Why do you care?» she asserted, leaning back in her armchair to increase the distance between us.

«I have the feeling I've heard that name from one of my relatives, but I was only sixteen at the time» I tried to justify myself.

«Then you're talking about your grandfather» she candidly added, «this morning you told them about his nephew».

I had talked to them about his nephew! And an incredible, almost forgotten, story suddenly came to mind.



Antonino Zanghì, a handsome young man from Giardini, had recently graduated from school with excellent results, demonstrating a remarkable capacity for learning. Going to university wasn't even considered at the time; it was too expensive and far away. His only option was to search for an honest job, preferably one that suited his versatile talents.

The recently ended war had left misery and destruction everywhere, and finding a decent job during that period was no easy task. Nino, a well-mannered individual, started inquiring all around, quietly expressing his willingness to do anything, even to relocate far away. He had not yet officially courted a girl, despite secretly harboring strong feelings for his cousin, Maria Crisafulli.

One morning, he was approached by a young stranger with a wide-brimmed Borsalino hat. It was the luxurious two-toned shoes at his feet that caught Nino's attention first, although he also judged the finely tailored pinstriped suit he wore to be of great sophistication.

«There is an important person who wants to speak with you» the elegant man said as he slowly smoked a cigarette through a holder. His narrow, squinted eyes suggested that the reaction was more important than the answer.

Nino pondered all possibilities and didn't get his hopes up. However, as he had come to understand, opportunities must be seized without hesitation. So, after a brief moment of reflection, he responded with a simple nod, bowing his head slightly and slowly.

«Be at the Taormina railway station this Sunday morning, sharp at ten» without adding anything else. He waited for another nod of agreement from Nino, then turned on his heels and walked away with a soft tip-tap.

On the one hand, the meeting pleased Nino, who was now willing to do almost anything to secure employment. However, he couldn't help but feel uncomfortable with the messenger's brusque manner. Nonetheless, he decided that he wouldn't miss the appointment for anything in the world.

Furthermore, the incident had given him the courage to approach his cousin Maria, a highly intelligent woman from whom he could seek valuable advice. And who knows, maybe he could also find some strands of hope for a possible future of love between them.

Nino dressed his best on the Sunday of the appointment and arrived well ahead of time in front of the artistic Taormina Station, adorned with towers and battlements reminiscent of the castle of Villagonia, built at the beginning of the 16th century by the noble De Spuches family and demolished to expand the railway station.

A Fiat Topolino suddenly pulled up in front of the station's main entrance, and the well-dressed young man from the invitation a few days earlier stepped out. Nino got in on the other side, and without exchanging any greetings, they drove off in the direction of Catania, taking an almost immediate right turn onto Via dei Sette Mulini, following along the Sirina stream.

For some reason, when the car came to a stop, Nino expected to be confronted by armed guards. However, there was no need for them. Don Ciccio was a well-liked and respected person, a true made man from another era. The villa he lived in had a broad panoramic balcony, and the exposed stonework closely resembled the lava from Mount Etna.

Don Ciccio's deep and probing gaze was one not easily forgotten, and the light reflected off his white linen suit seemed to surround him with an aura of mystic mystery.

«*Take a seat, Nino*» he ordered with a gesture of politeness but a tone that indicated he wasn't accustomed to being disobeyed.

Nino managed to respond with a courteous greeting but was clearly very emotional.

«*I heard that you're willing to work even far from home*» Don Ciccio said in Italian, hinting at his expectations for the young man.

Nino responded with a simple nod, while his eyes roamed inquisitively.

«*Would you like some almond wine?*» Without waiting for an answer, Don Ciccio turned to his collaborator and said, «*Tano, please, bring a bottle of Castelmola wine, chilled, and a couple of glasses*».

After sipping the unique almond-flavored nectar, Don Ciccio presented the job offer: «*You'll be working as a cook on a cruise ship*».

In essence, Nino would start in Palermo a few days later on an impressive vessel, with career prospects, and it didn't matter that he didn't know the languages; he would learn them quickly.

«*That's all?*» exclaimed the aspiring cook, in perfect Italian. "But how" he thought, "and I was expecting who knows what illicit proposal..."

«*Tano will accompany you by train and then by taxi to the port of Palermo. Just prepare your suitcases; you don't need to think about anything else*». And with that, the man in white dismissed the young man to return to his reading.

As Tano drove the enthusiastic Nino back to Giardini in the Topolino, he didn't forget to provide him with the necessary operational instructions.

The first person to learn of this was, of course, Maria, who, not surprisingly, saw her cousin's job opportunity as a good omen. Admiring his courage, she began to look at him with different, more languid and communicative eyes—an action that Nino didn't miss.

When Nino got off the taxi a few days later at the port of Palermo, the majestic appearance of a cruise ship with three smokestacks made him forget the long and tiring journey on the third-class steam train, where he sat on hard wooden benches. The great adventure was about to begin. He took his suitcases and, happier than ever, turned to Tano to bid farewell, not forgetting to deliver respectful greetings from Don Ciccio, the man who had shaped his destiny.

As Nino was about to board the gangway that would take him on board, Tano called out loudly, «*Nino, Nino, I almost forgot!*» he yelled, pulling a well-wrapped box from his briefcase, complete with a crisscrossed ribbon and red bow.

«*Don Ciccio gave me this*» he said in a hushed tone «*it contains marzipan fruit*».

Nino's uncertain expression prompted Tano to clarify: «*these are little fruit-shaped marzipan sweets for a relative of his in America*». He added: «*when you arrive in New York, you'll disembark from the gangway, someone will approach you, and you give it to them*».

Nino read the name of the pastry shop, "Cacciola," and signified that he was familiar with it, raising his right thumb and heading up the gangway. Once on board, he was led to his small private cabin, which had a porthole that opened directly onto the sea. He looked around and carefully placed the box of Sicilian marzipan fruits in the locker.

And it was thanks to the ship that Nino discovered the world, different cultures, languages, and quickly learned the secrets of international cuisine.

His mild character and natural charm allowed him to be well-liked and make friends with many members of the ship.

His excellent skills in preparing seafood made him the trusted chef of the ship's captain after a few weeks.



And although there were opportunities to get to know some sweet and gentle young women, his heart beat always and only for his beloved Maria, who, in turn, spent her time embroidering in front of the window overlooking the sea, waiting for her sailor's return.

Young Nino, on the other hand, dreamt of his future and saved a substantial sum of money each month, as room and board were provided for in his contract. During port stops, he didn't spend more than necessary on gifts and souvenirs for his friends and family upon his return.

Every now and then, he was plagued by bouts of homesickness, and the desire to see Giardini with his family, friends, and, above all, sweet Maria left him in low spirits. But he would tell himself, "*I work in the kitchen where I don't have much time to wander in thought*" as one must stay alert and focused on the preparations at hand.

During the occasional stopovers in Italian ports, health inspectors would visit to check the kitchen's sanitary conditions. They never had any complaints as the team of chefs and cleaning staff had become experts, and reproaches were rare. The Financial Police also conducted checks, mostly out of duty rather than meticulousness.

Needless to say, his dearest friends on the ship were two Sicilian cooks, Alfio Buda and Nico Mezzafava, who hailed from towns not far from Giardini. He would confide his love for Maria to them from time to time, and thankfully, with them, he continued to speak in the purest Sicilian dialect, so as not to forget his roots.

Everything went smoothly for many years. The experience he had gained had matured the no-longer-young Nino to the point where he decided to buy an engagement ring for Maria at a good price in the duty-free zone in the Canary Islands.

But one day, while he was on duty in the kitchen with his two friends, Alfio and Nico, ready to set sail from the port of Naples, the second officer came to the service entrance and warned them about the imminent arrival of financial police officers with drug-sniffing dogs.

The sudden rushes of Alfio and Nico to their quarters startled Nino, who continued to fillet a sea bass for a moment. Then a doubt began to make him more nervous, until he too decided. He dashed to his cabin, quickly opened the cupboard, tore apart the pastry shop's paper, and opened the box!

What he saw was definitely not the delicious Sicilian sweets he had always believed. He threw everything into the tiny sink, cut the plastic wrapper with a pocket knife, and turned the water on full blast to quickly disperse the contents.

He lit the cardboard box and what remained of the cellophane with a lighter. Then he washed his hands multiple times with soap and vinegar and hurried back to his work station, swearing that this would be his last work trip on a cruise ship. And so he did.

He returned to Giardini and asked for Maria's hand in marriage, marrying her the following month. After the wedding, they moved to New York and, with dedication and hard work, achieved unimagineable success in the field of gastronomy.

His customers were so wealthy that they didn't pay when leaving his restaurant. They just left their business cards with the address to which Nino sent the invoice, which was then paid at their convenience through an international bank transfer.

Don Ciccio was sorry about what happened, especially because his contacts in Naples were unable to prevent that ill-advised and unexpected drug-sniffing dog inspection.



**When WhatsApp didn't exist yet, communication was done through letters
this one, arriving from the USA in 1969 is addressed to Pippo Lentini**



Nicola Zanghi and Gianfranco in Giardini Naxos



lady Teresa



the ice cream-filled brioches



Santina, Nino, Maria and Totò in New York

IT RESTAURANT ZANGHI
Glen Cove

Nino and Nicola Zanghi changed the way Long Islanders viewed Italian-continental restaurants. From the early 1960s until 1991, by which time it was named Nicola's, their place stood out for Northern Italian, French and New American choices, traditional and inventive. Whole striped bass Provençale, lobster with Pernod, veal with morels, vitello tonnato, navarin of swordfish, duck with rhubarb and dried cherries, and game underscored the approach, as did the house-made pastries.



Other than the setting, the stories are true.
 Oh, I almost forgot. One day, Nino received a package from Italy. He opened it and found Sicilian marzipan sweets inside, along with a witty note:
 "Thank you for everything; a warm hug, Don Ciccio".