



# Italian Cuisine becomes UNESCO Heritage: what it really means and why it's a value for Made in Italy

*Italian Gastronomy / Italian Culture*

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Italian cuisine has officially been added to UNESCO's List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

A historic recognition that does not celebrate a specific dish or recipe, but an entire gastronomic culture made of knowledge, gestures, traditions, and community.

For Made in Italy, for agri-food companies, and for those who promote the internationalization of Italian excellence, this milestone opens new economic, cultural, and international opportunities for growth and visibility.

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## **A heritage made of people, traditions, and territory**

According to UNESCO, Italian cuisine is a living cultural practice that includes:

- the preparation and sharing of food,
- the rituals of family meals,
- the seasonality of ingredients,
- the transmission of knowledge from generation to generation,
- the deep bond between territories and communities.

It is an intangible heritage that unites, tells stories, preserves identity, and celebrates regional diversity.

From fresh pasta in Emilia to Alpine cheeses, from extra-virgin olive oil to Christmas desserts, every product is part of a collective ritual that defines Italian identity.

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## **Why this is a historic recognition**

It is the first time that an entire national cuisine is added to UNESCO's intangible heritage list.

Previously, only specific elements had been recognized, such as:

- the Art of Neapolitan Pizzaiuolo,
- the Mediterranean Diet,
- Sardinian Tenore Singing or the Opera dei Pupi.

The recognition of Italian cuisine instead embraces the entire gastronomic system, all regions, all communities, and their unique way of preparing, living, and sharing food.

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## **For Italian companies: what are the advantages?**

This recognition is not merely symbolic.

It brings concrete benefits to the Italian agri-food system and to all those working to promote it worldwide.

### **1. Greater International Visibility**

UNESCO enhances the power of Made in Italy, strengthens the reputation of Italian products, and further distinguishes them in the global market.

Companies can highlight this value in their storytelling and communication.

## **2. Boost to Food Tourism**

According to several analyses, this recognition could increase tourism flows by up to 8% in the coming years, generating millions of additional overnight stays.

Italian regions will be able to promote itineraries, culinary experiences, and events tied to traditional food culture.

## **3. Support for Producers and Artisans**

Small producers, family-run businesses, and artisanal workshops will benefit from the growing attention toward authenticity and quality.

Demand for regional and traditional products is expected to increase.

## **4. Promotion of Culinary Identity**

This recognition supports food education projects, cultural initiatives, and programs that protect Italian biodiversity — from ancient grains to local vegetables.

## **5. A Tool Against Counterfeiting**

By increasing global awareness of real Italian cuisine, this recognition strengthens the fight against “Italian sounding,” supporting authentic, certified Italian products.

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## **What does *not* change with UNESCO recognition**

A few points should be clarified:

- no new rules or obligations are introduced for specific dishes,
- UNESCO does not provide direct funding,
- restaurants cannot automatically call themselves “UNESCO”,
- no automatic certifications or labels are granted.

The value is cultural, educational, and promotional — a powerful tool to narrate and protect Italian food traditions.

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## **A new opportunity for those bringing Italian quality abroad**

For all Italian companies looking to expand internationally, this recognition represents an extraordinary boost:

- it reinforces communication around product quality and authenticity,
- it highlights the bond between cuisine, territory, and culture,
- it increases global interest in Italian gastronomy,
- it opens new doors for collaborations, promotions, and storytelling.

Italy does not just export products: it exports a food culture.

And today this culture has finally been acknowledged as World Heritage.

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