

Il Pennato

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Two Lists of Memorable Items by Allea Martin | 2 |
| Team Tuttofare by Bobby Wuertz | 3 |
| Taking Spannocchia Recipes to a Manhattan Kitchen by Eleanor Friedman | 4 |
| Connecting the (Food) Dots by Heather Blish | 5 |
| I Ricordi che Avrò per Sempre by Julia Ronald | 6 |
| Dear Faraway Friend by Maggie Smith | 9 |
| By Cohen Brown | 12 |
| Last Thoughts by Paul Smith | 14 |



Apportioning Passion

By Katie Phelan, Education Director

I had really wanted to title this piece *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, but I think that would count as plagiarism and if there's one group I don't want on my case...

Anyway, *Apportioning Passion* it is. However, with all the poncey douchebaggery it requires to use words like 'intersubjectivity' and 'symbiosis', I'd like to mention both intersubjectivity and symbiosis.

Spannocchia is a humble place. Here, there is what has always been; simple food, hard work and nature – there is no aggrandisement of the mundane. And yet, everything I see, and almost everyone I've met, embodies the beauty and substance of something greater. As a result, Spannoccchia – its people and the place – has become a locus for all sorts of goodness and passion. Which brings me, surprisingly quickly, to symbiosis.

This Autumn, I proudly introduced Bobby, Paolo, Eleanor, Cohen, Julia, Allea, Maggie and Heather to the people who have taken a long term lease on my heart; people like Valeria and Jeff, Daniela and Riccio, Helena and Dante, Andrea Battino and Maria De Dominicis – none of whom I would have met had it not been for Spannoccchia. Their passion, coupled with the interns' humility and boundless interest, was all the proof I needed that each was worthy of the other. There is a world of truth and beauty in symbiosis and everything gets better if you can perpetuate it.

One day in October, the interns and I sat at Helena's garden table listening to her speak about wine and the rationale behind biodynamic vinification methods. What could have been tedious was at once transcendent. This was intersubjectivity at its acme. We just sat and drank and listened, and everything to everyone of us was good.

And that's how it goes; commensality and conviviality, small victories and inimitable happiness.

Thanks kids.





Team Tuttofare

By Bobby Wuertz

Team Tuttofare defined the word *team*. Now, there were other teams at Spannocchia like team Animali, team Orto, and the not-to-be-forgotten lone soldier, team GSI. Do not think that these teams were not amazing and were boring and dull. Actually, they were the opposite. They were exciting and very passionate. The reason why team Tuttofare was supreme was because of a little event that went something like this:

It was a dark stormy night at Spannocchia and everyone was inside the villa eating dinner and drinking their wine. This night was not just any night; while everyone was inside, the flying pigs of Pig Hill were up to no good and the evil ninja donkeys had taken over the Spannocchia tower! Julia had left the villa to head back to Pulcinelli and, of course, was carrying her Julia glass with her Julia pour. She was even singing her favorite Jack Johnson song "Banana Pancakes" when out of the sky swooped in the flying pigs and attacked her! She could not escape the pigs and they picked her up and flew her to the top of Pig Hill. They were holding her hostage for 1 million truffles! Julia was done-for, unless 1 million truffles were found or the rest of team Tuttofare would have to come to the rescue!

Paolo and Roberto could not take on the whole Cinta Nation by themselves, so they had to join forces to strengthen their attack. They had to join forces with the evil ninja donkeys that had taken over the tower! There was only one way to get them to join forces and that was to take out the master evil ninja donkey. Paolo went first to confront the donkeys and ask them the most puzzling question to any Italian donkey - Paolo asked; "If you were a Mexican donkey would you be a burro or an ass?" The donkeys were so puzzled that it gave Roberto enough time to scale the tower and jump on the back of the master ninja donkey and put him in the choke hold. It was a struggle, but finally the master donkey declared defeat by saying "uncle". Now that the ninja donkeys were on the same side as team Tuttofare it was time to save Julia! Cinta Nation was no match for team Tuttofare and the ninja donkeys. The ninjas moved faster than a speeding bullet and were as silent as a cold, still winter night. Paolo and Roberto were able to reach Julia with ease and they only needed to spear tackle the head Cinta guard. They returned safely to Pulcinelli and, after a long negotiation, a truce was made with Cinta Nation. Once peace was made the ninja donkeys were allowed to go home and everything was back to normal at Spannocchia.



Pagina 4

Taking Spannocchia Recipes to a Manhattan Kitchen

By Eleanor Friedman

At Spannocchia I spent my time more or less equally divided between working with the animals in the fields and making salumi with Riccio in the transformation room. When I returned home, I wanted, in some manner, to continue what I had been doing whilst in Tuscany.

I am fortunate enough to work at a restaurant in Manhattan that sources much of its ingredients from its own farms outside of the city. It's this particular business structure that allows me to spend time in both the kitchen and the field. After a few phone calls, I was also able to secure a stint in *our* transformation room - the restaurant I work at also produces salumi. I have been slated to begin externing there in the Spring. However, I got antsy waiting for this opportunity so when a friend procured eleven pounds of venison from our restaurant's kitchen (it would otherwise have gone to waste due to closure for the holidays), we got stuck in. We secured casings, fat, a meat grinder and a sausage stuffer... the result was venison salsicce. Our home recipe is as follows:

Venison Salsicce (makes about 50 sausages, depending on the size of your links!)

11 pounds of venison, in strips

5 pounds of fat back (from pork), in slices

.5 oz pepper

.5 oz garlic, pureed with roughly 1/8 cup water

6.25 oz salt

bung casings, a handful

special equipment: Kitchen Aid meat grinder with sausage stuffer attachment



1) Clean casings by soaking in water. Change water often until the water runs clear. Run slightly warm water through each casing.

2) Starting with some slices of fat, grind the meat and fat together. Alternate between adding slices of fat and strips of venison to the grinder. Make sure the fat is cold enough so that it doesn't emulsify when ground, otherwise you'll get a tacky, fatty mouth feel in your cooked product.

3) Season the mixture with salt, pepper and garlic. If the mixture is becoming too soft, refrigerate for a little while.

4) Stuff the sausages. Place casings one at a time on the sausage stuffer. Stuff, making sure there are no air bubbles.

5) Spike the sausage. (We created a device for this by placing pins through a spatula, and then sterilizing it.)

6) Tie off sausage, either by twisting into desired length links, or tying off with butchers knots.

7) Sear sausage and enjoy!



Connecting the (Food) Dots

By Heather Blish

I felt like a bit of a cheat sweeping in for the Fall, harvesting all those gorgeous, fully-grown vegetables. After all, I didn't spend the Spring season lugging loads of manure and compost to prepare the soil, nor was I there in the hot summer months laboring away with the upkeep and the planting. Even so, Maggie, my fellow orto'er and I, did put in some quality hours with the zappas, hoes, and pitchforks, and of course, lots of time on the good old hands and knees pulling up those treacherous Tuscan weeds. It's a lot of work. Walking into the villa with a crate full of squash, leeks, or carrots, it was staggering to think about how many hands and hours went into that final product.

Mushroom hunting is no walk in the park either. My appreciation for walking into a market and grabbing a sack full of some variety of wild mushrooms has skyrocketed. After returning quite a few times from a stroll through the woods and presenting my pile of mushroom booty to Graziella's shaking head, and consequently tossing them back into the forest, I decided it would be best to stick to the cultivated veggies. Those mushroom foragers certainly have a great deal of patience - combing the ground with their sticks, carefully and slowly filling their baskets.

Maggie and I spent one afternoon pulling corn, which had been drying on the stalks, and consequently three or four more afternoons rubbing the dried corn against each other to remove the kernels. Another morning, we put the kernels through the grinder three times, and then sifted it to get fine polenta flour. It was exciting when it was finally served at dinner later that week, and then when the leftovers appeared in our fridge. However, despite re-creating it for lunch and me chowing down on it for breakfast, we inevitably had to toss some in the slop bucket. Nothing has tormented me so! I had gained an even closer connection to my food. *Savor that polenta ya lucky, food-inhaling pigs.*

We, the interns, have all boasted that Spannocchia's prosciutto is the best in all the land. And we all have also spent two group projects moving the cinta's beds and fences around. Picture two long days of hammering in fence posts, shoveling gravel, clipping rusty barbwire, and lugging hay bales. Clearly it is important for the old land to recover, but the real motive is ensuring these cinta get plenty of chestnuts and acorns, or snacks on snacks. I'm convinced that with their gourmet diet and rotational homes that these are the most coddled pigs in existence. And while you might have been sweating up a storm, or fighting some aching muscles from heaving the hole digger, or cursing the dull forbice, you just have to realize that all of this is just part of the process in producing that tasty salumi plate you were swooning over the night before. It's all just a drop in the pond for getting that cinta delicious.



After eight days of combing olive trees and risking my limbs by balancing on some skimpy branch to reach just one more handful of plump olives, I have to admit, I was a little less liberal with the olive oil pours come dinner time. Also, I've never spent so much time packing my suitcase with the centerpiece being a large bottle of "olio nuovo" followed by a dozen of my softest and plushiest shirts and sweaters, oh-so-carefully wound around it. And when brought home and shared with the parents, I demanded they lick their plates even if it's freshness and spiciness was causing them to cough up a storm.

So, what I'm getting at here with the veggies, mushrooms, polenta, prosciutto, and olives is that by spending three months at Spannocchia, I came to appreciate and understand how much time, effort and care goes into the production of food. It's not something you can fully understand until you spend some time working on a farm. The bounty that is presented to us in grocery stores and the rise in eating out has severed that connection. Everyone should lend a hand in some sort of food production for some stint in their lives, otherwise we'll all be big cheats cruising down the aisles without a thought in the world as to how much work went into all that sustenance that's starting to pile high in our grocery carts.



Pagina 6

I Ricordi che Avrò per Sempre

By Julia Ronald

It's been nearly a month since I left Spannocchia. As I sit in front of my computer with a glass of wine, I wonder: where to begin? Also, it's five o'clock: where are my fellow interns? Why are we not sitting out on the Pulc bench eating snacks-on-snacks? Old habits...

I thought that distance from Spannocchia would allow me several luxuries of which I had been deprived during my three months' time: cleanliness, for one; and space, the kind I had hoped would allow me to sit, reflect, and process my time as an intern. Though multiple showers finally ridded me of my "vendemmia hands," the thousands of miles have provided the space, but not the clarity of mind. In trying to explain to my friends and family just exactly what I did in Tuscany, I feel almost at a loss for words; the laundry list of activities I recount ("one day at Spannocchia...") do not do the experience justice. So I say that it was the best three months, ever, and bust out the pictures and videos in the hopes that the images can somehow convey the intensity, insanity, and all around amazing-ness of the experience. I've found that it's easy to idealize an experience well after it's happened: you seem only to remember the highs and conveniently forget the lows so that all you're left with are utterly romantic, yet not entirely accurate, stories to tell.

This is not the case with my Spannocchia experience. I still struggle to coherently recreate our three months because we really had one once-in-a-lifetime experience after another. We worked hard to be sure, but even after long days I always felt fortunate and grateful to be doing what we were doing. I'm only left with wonderful memories because the experience was just that, and then some.



I remember meeting (almost) all of my fellow interns in Siena the day before we were to go to Spannocchia and being overwhelmed with the excitement of meeting seven new people – Cohen, the intellectual-come-butcher; Eleanor, the vegetable-crazed Manhattaner; Bobby, the all-American jock/cotton-farmer; Maggie, the always energetic athlete-cartographer; Paul, the Southern gentleman-philosopher; Allea, the jetlagged but proud Portlander; and Heather, the fun-loving carrot. These were merely my first impressions of my fellow interns, the people that I would be living and working with every day for the next three months. I remember acknowledging that fact, and recognizing how important it would be for us to connect. Putting eight strangers together in such a tight-knit community is definitely a crapshoot, and I can thankfully say that we won. Though we came from different backgrounds, our interests and passions not only converged but developed and thrived on the farm. Heather, Paolo, Eleanor, Bobby, Maggie, Cohen, Allea, Katie, and Chris: you made my Spannocchia experience.

I remember learning the ropes and the property the first couple weeks. I learned how to clean a pool (while Bobby and Paul laughed from a distance), Cohen and Eleanor learned how to herd escaped Cintas on a moment's notice, Allea controlled the guests, and Maggie and Heather arrived in the Orto, ready to plant and harvest. We all were starting to get acclimated in the wonderful new place (and former horse stable) that would be our home.





I wish I could say that once we settled in at Pulcinelli and became accustomed to our work schedule, our days became “normal” and the fantasy of life under the Tuscan sun (pardon the cliché, it was bound to happen at some point) transformed into the reality of stacking and unstacking legna, hacking away at blackberry brambles, and cleaning out broken composters (all undesirable tasks, to be sure, but I still miss the satisfaction of admiring a clean stone wall and a neat



pile of legna. The composter, though, I could do without). But in truth, the time passed by all too quickly. The autumn days were filled with harvesting grapes or olives, field trips to artisanal producers of wine, cheese, and pasta, enjoying snacks and wine before our mandatory “wine on the terrace” half hour - which prefaced a four course dinner - and foraging for mushrooms (especially giallarelli) and vainly trying to hunt cinghiali with home-made slingshots. I awoke nearly every morning thinking, “wow, this is my life. Also, I probably shouldn’t have had that last glass of wine last night...”

An internship at Spannocchia is the sort of thing that has to be experienced to be truly understood. So many people, both guests from the States and Italy, would ask us, “what made you want to come to Italy and do physical labour without getting paid?” For me it was always an absurd question; the people, the work, and the place all contributed to an experience that left me richer as an individual, full of a wealth that cannot be measured by conventional means. Plus, we all left a little bit fatter. But I think that falls into the “richer as individuals” category.



I learned many things during my time at Spannocchia, some of which are lessons that I will carry with me forever; others are probably only applicable at Spannocchia, but are valuable nonetheless for the laughs:

- Don't mess with Team Tuttofare. Ever. Just ask Allea – her alliance with Team Orto during the Vendemmia was probably the biggest mistake she ever made. Heather's grape juice-stained pants are proof. (Note to future interns: while *muffa* destroys grapes, it also creates "smoke-bombs", without which you cannot win a Vendemmia war. Though you may initially deem them off-limits WMDS, a full day of taking Angelo's less-than-clear instructions about which particular grapes to harvest will teach you otherwise. Anything goes. As Cohen so often said, "it's like 'Nam out there.") Also, Team Tutto-fare has a chant. I don't think anyone else could say that.
- Beware of the Team Tuttofare Triangulation. No matter where Bobby, Paolo, and I positioned ourselves in a room, one of us could always catch the glimpse of another, and the slightest smirk was contagious. No vaguely sexual comment could fall under our radar, to the point where it was nearly impossible to have a conversation. It was just too hard. Yeah, that's what she said.
- Listen the first time Angelo explains how to use "la pompa." It will spare you several embarrassing mornings of moving the grape juice in the opposite direction. And seriously, you must control the tube by sticking it between your legs. That's what he said.
- Know the difference between hay and straw, so when you're cleaning out a maggot-infested composter, you do it right the first time and don't have to ignore Randall when he points out that you've done it entirely wrong.
- Treat yourself to a legitimate wine glass, as well as a healthy pour of Spannocchia's finest. Feel free to pretentiously swirl your vino more than is necessary.
- Establish guidelines by which you can judge a person's trustworthiness. Take, for example, Cohen's golden three: do you drink? do you smoke? do you like olives? Perfect, I might as well entrust you with my deepest secrets.
- Get creative with conversation starters, particularly during harvest time. Otherwise you'll end up debating the merits of a permanent "camouflage face" against those of wearing the same outfit every day for the rest of your life. Are you confused? Yeah, so were we.
- The Common Closet is the ultimate resource for Halloween costumes. You may even find an alter-ego or two in there.
- Though you may be convinced otherwise, the Italians are not actually fattening up the interns for slaughter. I can confidently say that I was the first to reach slaughterweight, and even I somehow made it back home safely with my newly acquired prosciutto-thighs and lardo intact.

What else will I take with me from Spannocchia? I've never laughed so hard, been inspired so much by the people I met and worked with, ate (and drank) so well, and just loved what I was doing every day and being a part of something that was bigger than myself. I'll always have the memories of three months spent in good company in a beautiful place: Angelo's singing and Bob's thumbs up; Carmen's small but consistent glasses of wine; Graziella's soft hands and wisdom; Riccio's Riccio-ness; Giulio's Cinta call; Randall and Francesca's kindness and generosity; Chris' little-boy ear-to-ear grin; Cohen's ability to intelligently debate the ethics of eating animals one minute, and then practice light saber moves with a giant stick the next; Eleanor's pig ears and balls feasts; Maggie's "ohmygodohmygod!" intensity; Allea's spunk; Heather's random but hilarious comments (seriously, Tutto-Farts-a-Lot?); Bobby's lexicon (BOOM BABY! Nice moves! My man! This guy knows how to party!); Paolo's insightful questions (which he never once answered,) and Katie, and the way she knows everything and always took care of us.

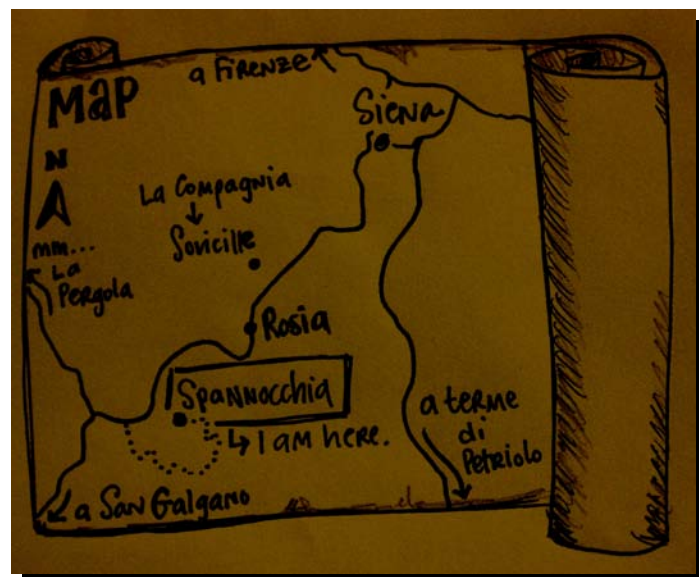
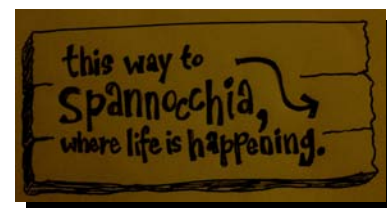
I'll miss all these things and more. Porca maiale, I already do.

Dear Faraway Friend

By Maggie Smith

Dear Faraway Friend,

As I took this stationary out to write you a letter, I found some post-its that I don't remember packing. On every sticky piece of paper are the words of Henry David Thoreau: Love your life. I tend to write lists or reminders on post-its for myself, in order to map out a plan for things I'd like to accomplish any given day. So I find myself amused that I must have thought I'd need Thoreau reminding me to love my life here at Spannocchia, or that I'd even be writing to-do lists in the first place. His words actually now bring to mind some John Lennon lyrics I've always been fond of. Amongst many other kernels of wisdom, Lennon sang that "life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans." I realize as I write this, that I wake up every morning here with very little mapped out beyond showing up at the wall at 8am, where the Spannocchia work day begins. Every day, from there, is a curve ball-filled with new experiences, chances to learn, opportunities to teach, adventures to seize. If not a plan, I know I at least have a smile on my face and a purpose in my heart. Every day I'm flying by the seat of my Carhartt pants--life is fresh, it's invigorating, and I can't stop loving it.



Though I wish you could be here to see our garden grow, to taste the fruits of the labor of many caring hands, and to meet the individuals that make this place what it is, I'll do my best to paint a picture with tidbits of my life this past week.

Monday was my twin brother's last day visiting Spannocchia. He ventured to the monastery and the castle while I cleaned asparagus beds, and just before the sun set we climbed together to the top of Spannocchia's tower. From such great heights, elements of the nearby landscape are put into context. I hadn't been up since our first week here, when my eyes had yet to make sense of everything they met. This time, I felt completely at home in the shoes of a guide, weaving stories of personal experience into the fabric of the surrounding rooftops and terrain. As I directed Jeff's calmly captivated gaze to the vivid yellow and red vines across the valley below, it felt like yesterday that I'd plopped a juicy fig into my mouth, hopped on a trusty bike and cruised down the familiar curves of the driveway to harvest grapes for the first time ever. But the changing colors revealed the passage of time--yet another vendemmia at Spannocchia had come and gone. The moments in life that Jeff and I share these days tend to be few and far between; I loved sharing Spannocchia with him.

Tuesday was an early start, and a memorable one at that. I went with Riccio and Julia to the abattoir with four pigs before sunrise, and spent a couple of hours in the afternoon tackling the ever-important duty of peeling garlic in the transformation room. Such a task is not nearly as mundane as it might sound when your eyes are busy feasting on the swift, yet focused, finesse of confident hands working knife magic in front of you. I must have become a bit too mesmerized, because the butcher Pierro came over, lifted up my basket of garlic and asked, "Solo questo?" Only this? We need more now! He reached for a small knife like mine and pitched in--apparently Pierro never peels the garlic. Not so sure that Pierro loved me so much that afternoon, but I do know that I've loved every chance I've had to help out in the transformation room.

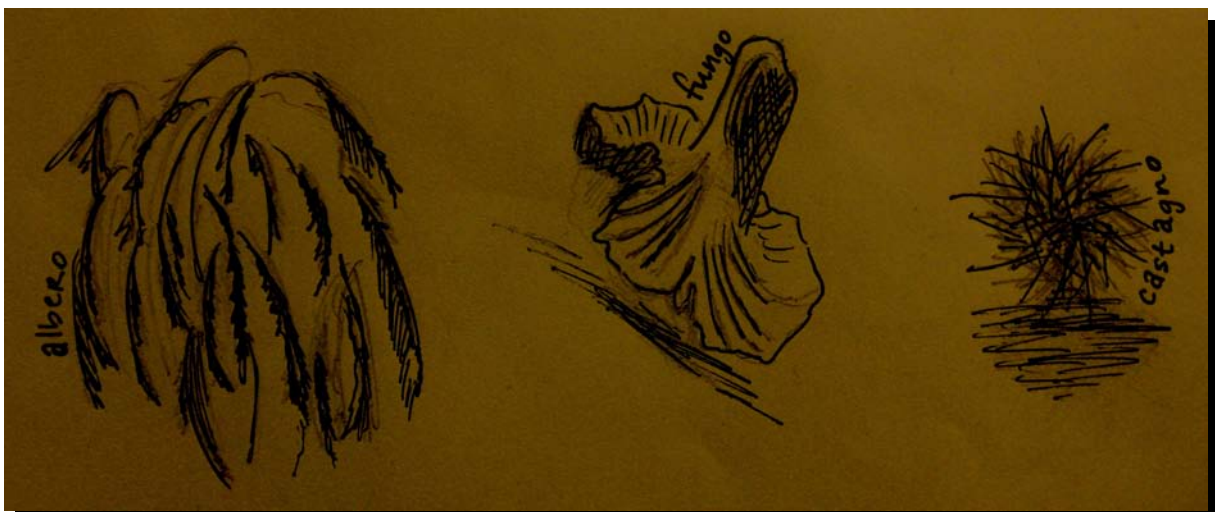


Wednesday I felt frustrated, but grateful at the same time. Frustrated that the birds had enjoyed bites out of almost every ear on almost every stalk in two long rows of corn--devouring some entirely. Grateful of the work that Carmen and other interns had put into preparing the crop for harvest, and of the birds for politely leaving us some cobs to collect. I'd say we walked away with around 300 ears of corn. I've estimated that the average harvested ear had 12 rows, each with around 25 kernels. Now, if we say that the birds polished off about a fourth of the kernels on each ear, that gives us approximately 67,500 hard-as-a-rock kernels that Heather, Venetia and I manually loosened by grinding two cobs together over the past few days. Polenta is on the menu for dinner early next week, and I can't wait to proudly tell the intern or guest next to me the story of where the cornmeal came from and how it ended up on their plate.

As I stepped down to the lowest terrace of the orto (vegetable garden) on Thursday morning, compost bucket in hand, I was reminded of the marvel I felt the very first time I walked down those stairs. Ducking beneath the branches of the willow tree, I parted them with one hand on my way out and again imagined myself being transported to another place in another time. Willow leaves grazed my face as I turned to look up at the villa--the view of Spannocchia's tower from the lower terrace of the garden is my favorite. It flows from the bell on the tower, so seeped in history, to the tall stone wall where capers grow, down to the fragrant basil beds and the persimmon tree on the first terrace, the giving fig tree and beds of radicchio in the next, and the vibrant flowers and cardoons growing in the lowest terrace. I'm going to miss this workplace one day, but for now I'll gladly step into my office through the low hanging leaves of the willow tree.

While walking around the perimeter of a field on Friday, Giulio pointed out a few Mazza di Tamburo. He's a mushroom fanatic, skilled at identifying edible varieties. Last week he revealed a secret Chanterelle spot to Eleanor and myself. Being an amateur forager, I accidentally stepped on one of the biggest 'shrooms of the patch with my bright red clogs, which I suddenly realized as I looked down to see myself standing in a sea of gold. Nonetheless, we returned with wide smiles and a brimming bag. Evening walks through the woods have since taken on a new focus--my foraging interest has been sparked! The chestnuts are falling from the trees now too, so I often arrive at the Pulcinelli doorstep with hands full of one fruit of the forest or another.

I awoke yesterday morning to the sound of a dog outside my window. I hopped out of bed and peered down to see a white ball of fluff scratching its back on the dirt, legs in the air and mouth smiling wide in complete satisfaction. Oh, the simple pleasures of dog life! Frodo sits on our doorstep most days, waiting for a friendly passerby to scratch his stomach or shake his hand. In the afternoon, I accompanied Eleanor as she mustered the courage to ride Nera for the first time. I'm honestly quite frightened by horses, so I was hesitant to help out. But as I observed the ease, confidence and love with which Eleanor conducted herself around this powerful creature, it made the favor well worth the while. I'm always amazed and impressed with the opportunity to watch people in their element, where they're most comfortable and truly passionate.





It's Sunday evening now. Spannocchia is quiet, and so is our house, Pulcinelli. Only Julia, Eleanor and Molly and I are here--everyone else is traveling for the weekend. We spent the majority of the morning making ravioli with Carmen, the wise and gentle woman I work with in the gardens. Her generosity overflowed into our home as she popped a bottle of Prosecco that Riccio had brought back from the Veneto, and the canister of olio nuovo she bought at the market yesterday. The olive oil was bright green, and perfectly peppery on the crostini we enjoyed together. Riccio showed up late, but with tasty salsicce, sopresatta and burrasto to share. Both Carmen and Riccio seem to have a firm grasp on the concept of life being much more beautiful, delicious, and enjoyable when shared with others. So many people here do. After the eating had ceased, we wrapped up the pleasant afternoon--and a great week at that--with a few songs by Riccio on the guitar, spreading the infectious camaraderie that music tends to inspire. Together, we'd all flown by the seat of our pants and it had turned out to be a great day.

I hope this letter finds you well, with a smile on your face as you imagine life here at Spannocchia, and a purpose in your heart as you set off to continue with the rest of your day--knowing that while an ocean stands between us, I'm thinking of you and missing you dearly.

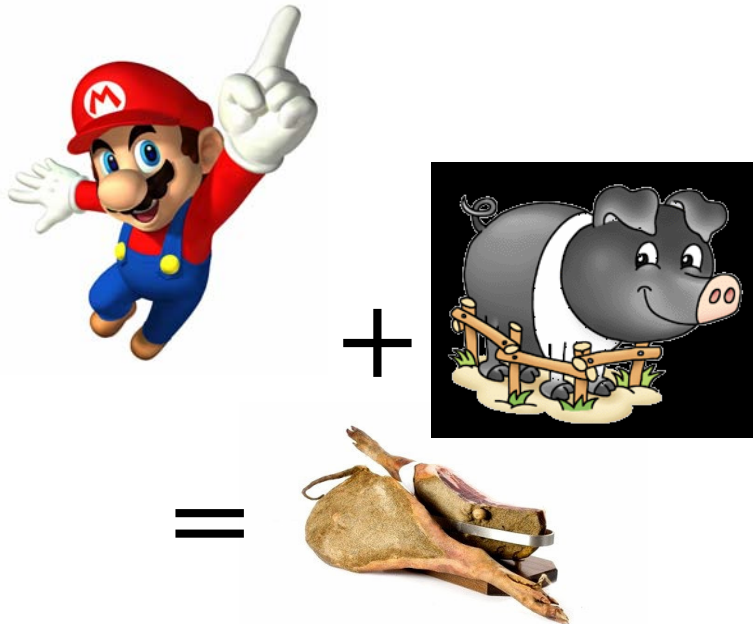
Con affetto,
Maggie



On Video Games and Chasing Pigs

By Cohen Brown

Right, left, down, up, A, B, select, start. Enter this button sequence at the title screen for the NES game Super Contra and you receive ten lives for a two-player game.¹ Super C, as it is otherwise known, is an early 1990's Nintendo game that pits you, and optionally another player, against alien hordes that have invaded earth. With Arnold Schwarzenegger-like agility and a myriad of weapons you are well-equipped to save planet earth, but you will likely need the ten extra men—at least I always did.



Growing up I played a lot of video games. Not a lot, a lot, but enough. I would usually preorder the latest RPG, wear the t-shirt I got for preordering, and occasionally skip school to battle dragons, machinas, and maniacal, pixilated little men.² Little did I know then, and contrary to what my parents and an ever increasing number of ludite academics would have us believe, these weren't just antisocial life skills I was developing, but first rate animal husbandry skills. Seriously, it's true.

It took me chasing pigs in Tuscany to realize it, but video games have inspired me to understand space in a different way. If you think about it, all video games emphasize the significance of space.³ Take any Super Mario game for example; your objective is to run, jump, stomp, and fly through a series of obstacles and badies. Essentially, you are attempting to navigate space in the most fluid way possible lest you get 'shrunk', fall in a hole, or become the prey of man-eating plants.⁴ The idea/objective of any video game is, at a base level, to move through space (in this case, predesigned levels with a start and end point) unobstructed.

Of all the games I played in my youth, including my extended youth, strategy games most influenced my tactics for pig wrangling. What strategy games offer is a top down view of the entire environment. In strategy games, often times you are able to see the entire landscape, if not the entire world map. It is, after all, the only way for you (the commander of the virtual empire) to deploy troops, harvest crops, and extract resources. It is also the only way to do battle with enemies.

At it highest, and dweebiest form, strategy games are a flourish of calculated maneuvers and tactics exercised over a virtual terrain of possibilities.⁵ In such a world practicing flanking maneuvers and pincer attacks are the only way to

¹ For single player omit 'select' when entering the code.

² RPG= Role Playing Game

³ By 'space' I don't mean outer space, but geographical space filled up with landscapes and ecosystems, cities and buildings, trees and people, *cinta senese*, salumi, etc.

⁴ Getting shrunk refers to being reduced to a mini Mario; that is, Mario *before* he eats a large mushroom contained in the golden question-marked boxes.

⁵ Read this sentence again, aloud, slightly faster, and with a nasally voice to get the full effect.



to ensure victory over the enemy. To succeed in such tactics, however, it is necessary to both understand the environment (read space) and anticipate enemy movements. None of this is unlike managing pigs. When the wily *cinta* escape and you need herd them back into their pen, you first read the terrain, then you check the pigs, all before you move. Not because you intend to battle them as if they are Saruman's Uruk-hai and you are defending Helm's deep, but because you would like to see them home in their piggy beds fattening up and on the fast track to prosciutto. Move too quickly and see them scatter and flee. Miscalculate how close is too close and risk riding a pig backwards. Herding pigs, as much as commanding virtual troops, requires an acute sense of space.

However much herding pigs is about understanding the space they inhabit, success also relies, of course, on the knowledge of the nature of the pig itself. Let us, therefore, offer some insight into the ancient and powerful, black and white menace, the *cinta senese*. Semi-wild and rather weighty, the *cinta senese* is Siena's most revered porcine friend. They roam more or less freely in the full oak woods of the Siena province. Eating acorns, chestnuts and whatever truffles they are able to root, the *cinta* take nearly two years to reach slaughter weight. Consider the streetwise Berta, a two-year-old sow, who at 400 pounds can be a serious challenge to contain. If Berta were a Mario kart character, likely she would be female version of Donkey Kong, for what she lacks in acceleration she makes up for in weight. Or what about the humanized Babar moving seamlessly from pen to pen, like a star-powered Mario charging indomitably through a cluster of Spiny Koopas? The *cinta* character and skill set, you see, is as varied as the thickness of their white belts. They can be fast or plodding, persistent or lazy, aggressive or tranquil, yet they are all above all wily—something any potential animal intern would do well to keep in mind.

Video games, I understand, are not the natural departure point for pig farming. The *cinta senese* are not enemies to be battled or kept under guard, and certainly, they are not 3D computer generated holograms designed for recreational interaction. The *cinta* are animals, warm and live. They are both clever and powerful and they demand our respect. If we were to ask Joel Salatin, Michael Pollan's hero in the *Omnivore's Dilemma*, what do video games have to do with farming, he would likely respond not a god-damned thing. And he would be right, at least for himself. But that doesn't mean that Mario Bros and Tetris can't be appropriated by the next generation of would be farmers—especially those of us caught up in the counter flow of traffic from the urban to the rural.



FALL 2010 INTERNS

FRONT ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT:

Paul (Paolo) Smith, Tuttofare
 Heater (Carrot) Blish, Orto
 Julia (Juuuuuulia) Ronald, Tuttofare
 Eleanor (Eleanora) Friedman, Animali
 Cohen (Canadia) Brown, Animali

BACK ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT:

Katie (Ed. Director) Phelan
 Allea (PORTLAND ROCKS) Martin, GSI
 Bobby (Yum) Wuertz, Tuttofare
 Maggie (OHMYGOD) Smith, Orto

Last Thoughts by Paul Smith

As I look back on my time at Spannocchia, I have realized that I do not have a journal entry, profound thought on a paper napkin, or a funny anecdote (ok maybe I have some of those). But, I guess, I will attempt to provide some sort of topical journal entry touching on the personal highlights of my time at Spannocchia.

Eating and Drinking

I have to say, our group of interns knew how to these two things well. I am not referring to simple excesses, but to doing it legitimately well. Eating and drinking products of the local land and hands was such a central part of our internship program. Whether it be cooking extravagant meals on the weekends, to visiting artisanal, natural winemakers, to satisfying our gastronomic urges wherever we traveled, our group literally 'ate it up.' On our first night in Siena, before we headed over to the farm, the interns (sans the 'mysterious other girl') partook in an epic meal. Coming off vegetarianism whilst in Italy, I was presented with 5 animals on one meal: wild boar, chicken pate, beef livers, rabbit, and a whole selection of salumi. Suffice it to say that theme of eating our way through a place was a common theme in our three months, and it truly was such an enlightening way to be a part of the land and people.

Working

I told friends before I left I wanted to work while I was over in Italy. Not just work, but woorrk. I have been a student of ever-popularized sustainable food movements and foodways, and I was tired of reading and listening and wanted to be a part of a farming operation in a very tangible way. During some of the long days of stacking wood and stacking wood and stacking wood, my masochist wish came true. But seriously, there was a truly wonderful ebb and flow within the program of work and educational (aka eating) activities. There were times when we were harvesting grapes and olives when we just looked at each other and were like, "Is this really happening? Harvesting in Tuscany with the sun on our back? Are you serious?"

People

The folks in our program and the people living and working at Spannocchia made my experience what it was. I seriously could not ask for better people to work, laugh, eat and travel with. With an impressive arsenal of inside jokes as well as more intentional food and agriculture-focused conversation, we never had a dull moment over the three months. We all came from different backgrounds and brought our own perspective on food cultures and the ethics of eating. Let's just say that goodbyes were tough; and when goodbyes are hard, you know you had pretty spectacular experience.

Thanks to all at Spannocchia for this experience! I can't wait 'til the next time I can swing by!

Mission Statement

The Internship Program is dedicated to enriching the lives of young people by providing them with a unique educational experience on a community oriented farm in Tuscany, Italy. Tenuta di Spannocchia's 1100-acre pastoral estate serves as an active model for responsible stewardship through collective effort.

Località Spannocchia
 53012 Chiusdino (SI)
 Italia
 Tel: (01139) 0577 752 61
 Fax: (01139) 0577 752 624
 E-mail: internships@spannocchia.org
 www.spannocchia.org
 www.spannocchia.com

Special thanks to the Fall 2010 interns for allowing me to use their photographs in this edition of the Pennato! xxx