

# San Rocco Giornale

January 2016

## Viva, Viva La Befana!

This is the story about a holiday that we, as Italian-Americans know as "Little Christmas" and is celebrated on January 6.

**La Befana**, at the center of this story is the benevolent old woman with magical powers who brings gifts to the children of Italy on the eve of the Epiphany.

The name *Befana* is derived from the word *epifania*, the Italian name for the religious festival of the Epiphany.

In the weeks preceding Epiphany, the children of Italy are busy writing notes to *Befana* telling her the presents they would most like to receive. Of course they are on their best behavior because they know that *Befana* will leave a lump of coal, instead of sweets and toys, for badly behaved children.

This story takes place at the time of the birth of Baby Jesus, the Christ Child. *La Befana* is an old woman who lives in a house in the hills of Italy.

*Befana* spends her days sweeping and baking. One night, *Befana* notices a bright light in the sky, and she thinks nothing of it and goes back to her work of sweeping and baking. Later, a glorious caravan, led by Three Wise Men stop and ask *Befana* for directions to Bethlehem and invite *Befana* to join them in their search for the Christ Child. *Befana* is too busy and knows nothing of this far-away place nor the birth of a special baby. After the caravan disappeared over the hills, *Befana* changed her mind and wanted to visit this special child. So she placed some baked goods and gifts for the child in a sack, took her broom to help the new mother clean and raced out after the caravan in search of the Baby Jesus. *Befana* soon became lost, and angels appeared from the bright light, the magic star in the sky to give flight to *Befana* on her broom - after all this was a night of miracles.

She searched and searched for the Baby Jesus. *Befana* still searches, even today, even after all these centuries.

And so, every year on the eve of the Epiphany, January 6, whenever *Befana* comes to a house where there is a child, she drops in to see if it might be the child she seeks. It never is, but *Befana* leaves a gift anyway.

For *Befana* has come to realize, over the years that in a way the Christ Child can be found in all children.

*Just remember, La Befana is watching you!* If you are good, *La Befana* will bring you a nice gift; if you are bad you will get a lump of coal!

What will you receive from *La Befana*???

Interested in the story of *La Befana*? There is a book with beautiful illustrations entitled "The Legend of Old Befana" by the renowned children's author, Tomie dePaola. It is available in most book stores and is a great gift for young and old alike.



## Save the Dates!

### 87<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Banquet

Saturday, April 30, 2016

Anthony's in Malden

Join us for an evening of fun, food, and friendship. Entertainment provided by:

*Sea Breeze*

[www.stephensavio.com](http://www.stephensavio.com)

Special Appearance by Local comedian

*Dave Russo*

*Details soon*

### 87<sup>th</sup> Annual St. Rocco Feast

August 12-13-14 2016

Pearl St Malden

Check out our website, complete details will be available soon:

[www.saintroccofeast.org](http://www.saintroccofeast.org)

Facebook: StRoccoMalden

## It's all about Food.....

### Does the name "Panettone" derive from *Pan de Toni*?

According to tradition, Toni, lowly scullion at the service of Ludovico il Moro, was the inventor of one of the most typical sweet of the Italian tradition. On Christmas Eve, the chef of the Sforza burned the cake prepared for the feast. Toni decided to offer the mother yeast that he had kept aside for himself for Christmas. He kneaded it several times with flour, eggs, sugar, raisins and candied fruit, until obtaining a soft and leavened dough. The result was a great success and Ludovico il Moro called it Pan de Toni to honor its inventor.



Another version of the Panettone story can be found in a children's book written by Tomie de Paola entitled, "Tony's Bread".

I had the pleasure of meeting Tomie last month, a fun person, true to his Italian Heritage and the author of "Strega Nona" and many other children's books.



If you are strolling through the North End in Boston, stop in to a new book store **I Am Books**, the country's first Italian American bookstore, opened in Boston's North End at 189 North Street across from the Paul Revere House.

**I Am Books** sells primarily fiction and non-fiction by Italian and Italian American authors, as well as books on food, cooking, travel and history. The store features a children's section, with learning material, games and toys as well as books. This is where I met Tomie de Paola.

Check out their Facebook Page:  **I AM BOOKS**  
AN ITALIAN AMERICAN CULTURAL HUB

Stop by, you won't be disappointed!

## La Festa di San Silvestro and Il Capodanno

December 31-January 1



### Cotechino e Lenticchie

The evening begins with a traditional dish, "cotechino e lenticchie." *Cotechino* is a delicious, savory, fresh pork sausage, typically sold either partially pre-cooked or raw. The meat itself consists of "lo **zampone**," the actual hoof of the pig, and is a symbol of abundance and bountifulness as represented by the meat's high fat content, richness, and flavor.

**Lenticchie** (lentils) are believed to bring good luck and prosperity in the coming year to those who eat them on New Year's Eve. These tiny oval-shaped legumes, reminiscent of gold coins, represent the money that one will earn in the coming year. Needless to say, the more you eat, the better off you'll be financially! Enjoy!

### New Year's Fun- Italian Style

The New Year is also celebrated with *spumante* or *prosecco*, Italian sparkling wine. New Years parties, whether public or private, will often last until sunrise in order to watch the first sunrise of the newborn year.

### Banish past bad luck—and old pans

Traditionally, here's how Italians, particularly in southern Italy, have launched their celebrations on New Year's Eve: by throwing old pots, pans, clothes, appliances, even furniture out the window. Really! It's meant to symbolize "letting go" of past unhappiness to prepare yourself for the future. Although most Italians have abandoned the tradition, do watch your head on the streets of Naples on New Year's Eve!

Oh, one more thing, **don't forget to wear your red underwear** to ring in the New Year! They say it'll bring you luck in the coming year.

**Buon Anno a Tutti!**  
**Happy New Year Everyone!**