

# San Rocco Giornale

December 2019

## 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!

### 91st Anniversary Gala

Saturday, April 25, 2020

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)

**Details soon**

### 91st Annual St. Rocco Feast

August 7-8-9 2020

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".

### 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!

## Believe it or not!

Blame St. Francis of Assisi, who is credited with staging the first nativity scene in 1223. The only historical account we have of Francis' nativity scene comes from *The Life of St. Francis of Assisi* by St. Bonaventure, a Franciscan monk who was born five years before Francis' death.

According to Bonaventure's biography, St. Francis got permission from Pope Honorius III to set up a manger with hay and two live animals—an ox and an ass—in a cave in the Italian village of Greccio. He then invited the villagers to come gaze upon the scene while he preached about "the babe of Bethlehem." (Francis was supposedly so overcome by emotion that he couldn't say "Jesus.") Bonaventure also claims that the hay used by Francis miraculously acquired the power to cure local cattle of diseases.

The scene was powerful for all present and emphasized the poverty into which Christ was born. It was truly "Franciscan" in every sense of the word.

The idea caught on quickly. and in 1291 the first Franciscan pope (Nicholas IV) commissioned statues to create the first permanent Nativity scene in the Roman Basilica of St. Mary Major. Ever since, Nativity scenes in all shapes and sizes have been created throughout the world and they are one of the most popular Christmas traditions.



## World's Largest Christmas Tree!

The 'world's largest Christmas tree' is lit up each year on the slopes of Monte Ingino, overlooking the mediaeval town of Gubbio in the Umbrian region of central Italy. Each year the town illuminates its magical Christmas tree with more than 700 lights in an annual lighting ceremony which dates back to 1981.

