**FOCUS**

**10 BECAUSE PASTA JUST KEEPS GAINING POPULARITY ALL OVER THE WORLD**

In 1998, the very first World Pasta Day was held in Naples. A day dedicated to this delicious, healthy, nutritious, accessible and sustainable food, celebrating its history and sharing hopes for its future as a leader on the global food market. Over the past 24 years, the world's perception of pasta and carbohydrates has changed. Here are 10 stories that highlight the increasingly global dimension of pasta and how it can feed the planet in a healthy, tasty and sustainable way.

1. **Worldwide pasta production has almost doubled –** In only 20 years, production has increased from 9.1 million tons to almost 17 million tons. According to data by the IPO (International Pasta Organisation), 40 countries produce more than 20,000 tons. And of course, Italy is still leading this market: 1 out of 4 pasta dishes eaten all over the world is made with Italian pasta.
2. **The number of countries consuming more than 1 kg of pasta per capita per year has almost doubled (then 30, now 54) –** Consumption per capita in Italy is 23 kg, compared to Tunisia’s 17 kg, ranked second on the leader board. Followed closely by Venezuela (15 kg), Greece (12.2 kg), Peru (9.9 kg) Chile (9.6 kg), United States (8.8 kg), Turkey (8.7 kg), Iran (8.5 kg), France (8.3 kg) and Germany (7.9 kg).
3. **Compared to 1996, the world is eating more and more Italian pasta, the best in the world –** According to Unione Italiana Food, target countries have increased (today almost 200, +42%) and the export quota has more than doubled, from 740 thousand to over 2 million tons, 61% of total production. Germany, the UK, France, the USA and Japan remain the most receptive countries to Italian pasta.
4. **In 2010, UNESCO declared the Mediterranean Diet to be an Intangible Heritage of Humanity –** And as part of this diet, pasta holds a strong position of choice. As a healthy, balanced and sustainable dietary model, based mainly on foods of plant origin and their varied and balanced consumption, several scientific studies have shown that pasta can help prevent major chronic illnesses such as cardiovascular conditions, diabetes, bulimia, obesity, and cancer. Over the years, thanks also to pleas by nutritionists and health authorities for a healthier and more conscious diet, the affordability and simplicity of dried pasta have become an incentive to consume.
5. **Product innovation has ensured that absolutely everyone can enjoy a plate of pasta –** As if hundreds of formats weren’t enough, pasta makers are responding to new global consumer demands by focusing on innovation and diversification of supply: wholewheat, gluten free, organic, fortified, legume flours, superfoods, ancient grains, etc.
6. **It is an increasingly sustainable dish –** The most important innovation is not visible on your plate. In recent years, thanks to improved processes and cultivation contracts focusing on sustainability and good agricultural practices, pasta makers have significantly reduced water consumption and CO2eq emissionslinked to pasta production. This food has an extremely low environmental impact (with an ecological footprint of 1 m² overall per portion). What’s more, it plays an important role in reducing waste, thanks to an array of hearty, delicious recipes that take advantage of leftovers. Finally, whether in cardboard or plastic, its packaging materials are 100% recyclable.
7. **A staple in restaurants around the world –** Once upon a time, there was Gualtiero Marchesi and his visionary “pasta salad”. Today, a generation of chefs looking to the future with an eye to simplicity, authenticity and Mediterranean tradition have found pasta to be the ideal point of contact between different cuisines and lands, free from cultural or religious limitations.
8. **In 2006, the UN of Pasta was born –** Or rather, the IPO, International Pasta Organisation, whose mission is to tell the world about the benefits, including nutritional, of a pasta-based diet. Also a major player in the development of the Scientific Consensus Statement “Healthy Pasta Meals” signed by nutritionists around the world, which incorporates the latest evidence on the importance of the Mediterranean diet and the role of pasta within it.
9. **It is the world’s favourite food – In 2011, a few months after the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage announcement, a study by OXFAM, involving 16 thousand people in 17 countries, elected pasta as the globalised world’s favourite food. And in 2019, the Economist published the results of a study by the University of Minnesota, which crowned Italian cuisine as “the most influential in the world,” ahead of both Japanese and French.**
10. **It has helped to dismiss the unjustified demonisation of carbohydrates – Since 2002, when the New York times coined the neologism “carbophobia” and about 26 million Americans completely abandoned pasta, bread, and potatoes, many things have changed. T**he US’ 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans advise against following a low-carb diet or reducing carbohydrate consumption. And research from the National Pasta Association reveals that 86% of Americans eat pasta at least once a week.

**For more information: UNIONE ITALIANA FOOD Press Office c/o INC- Istituto Nazionale per la Comunicazione**

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