Food Day on October 24 is a nationwide celebration of real food and an effort to improve health, the environment, and America’s food system. It’s a grassroots mobilization to push for healthy, affordable food produced in a sustainable, humane way. Food Day, which is spearheaded by the nonprofit Center for Science in the Public Interest, wants to get Americans cooking healthy, delicious meals for their families again. Modeled on Earth Day, Food Day will inspire Americans to hold thousands of events in schools, college campuses, houses of worship, and even in private homes.
Pellegrino Artusi (Forlimpopoli, FC, 1820 – Florence, 1911), a merchant and financier by trade, lived in Forlimpopoli, Bologna, Livorno and Florence. Interested in literature, he published a biography of Ugo Foscolo and a book on the poet Giuseppe Giusti. Artusi can be considered as the father of “Italian” cuisine thanks to the cooking manual *La scienza in cucina e l’arte di mangiar bene* (*Science in the Kitchen and the Art of Eating Well*), Florence, 1891. After a slow start (1,000 copies in four years), this fortunate cookbook caught on: before Artusi died, more than 200,000 copies had been sold, and it has remained a hit on the bookstores’ shelves ever since. It has been translated into Spanish, Dutch, German, French and most recently, Portuguese. The Italian American Olga Ragusa was the first to adapt it into English from Italian (*Italian Cook Book*, New York, S. F. Vanni, 1944). A complete translation by Murtha Baca and Stephen Sartarelli, with an introduction by Luigi Ballerini, appeared in 1997 for Marsilio Publishers, NY.

The lecture

Artusi designed menus that helped upper bourgeois Italian ladies to entertain. In a striking similarity with the role played by Francophile cook and food expert Julia Child in the transformation of American cuisine, Artusi made available a variety of dishes to the entire country with his cookbook, not least the triumphal introduction of the tomato sauce to everybody’s table, particularly in the North of the country, where tomato sauce was an imported and important new dressing for pasta dishes. Like Child, Artusi, too, was a bon-vivant who loved food and learned to cook at a relatively late stage of his life. Artusi peppered his recipes with anecdotes and advice, hence making the reading of his *La scienza in cucina* a delectable experience in which he taught how to balance the use of butter with that of olive oil, still today a fundamental discrepancy between Northern and Southern cuisine. Language – an Italian made plain and cleaned out of French terminology, echoing of Niccolò Tommaseo’s *Dizionario della Lingua Italiana* in eight volumes (1861-74) - also played a great role as a homogenizing factor. The manual’s reading had to be accessible as these recipes had to be prepared and eaten by all the new Italians!

The speaker