



Garlic and Oil: Food and Politics in Italy

By Carol F. Helstosky

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Pasta, cappuccino, olive oil Italian food culture is a prominent feature of Western society in our cafes, restaurants and homes. But what is the history of Italian cuisine? And where do we get our notions about Italian food? *Garlic and Oil* is the first comprehensive history of food habits in modern Italy. Chronicling the period from the mid-nineteenth century to the present day, the author argues that politics dramatically affected the nature of Italian cuisine and food habits. Contrary to popular belief, the Italian diet was inadequate and unchanging for many decades. Drawing on the writings of scientific professionals, domestic economists, government officials, and consumers, the author shows how the miserable diet of so many Italians became the subject of political debate and eventually, the target of government intervention. As successive regimes liberal, fascist, democratic struggled with the question of how to improve peoples eating habits, their actions purposefully and inadvertently affected what and how much Italians ate, shaping not only the foundations of Italian cuisine, but also the nature of Italian identity. *Garlic and Oil* is a popular national food history that offers a new perspective on the history of consumerism and food studies by examining how political change affects food consumption habits.

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