

# ***RIPARBELLA***

CLUB 100



FEBRUARY 2024



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## **CIAO A TUTI - WELCOME TO FEBRUARY - 4**

February may be the shortest month of the year, but Italy is still packed with things to see and do.

## **TEXAS A&M CAMPUS REMEMBERED - 6**

Cushing Library.

## **AGGIE NETWORK NEWS - 8**

Rural Engagement Program, MJH Drill Pathway to killing cancer cells, How to help beneficial insects survive winter, TAMU to lead the SSTI

## **BREAKFAST IN BED - 10**

Italian Baked Eggs, Old-World Puff Pancakes, Sparkling Pomegranate Mimosas, three delicious recipes to spoil your Valetine.

## **VALENTINES DAY IN ITALY - 12**

Discover the history of Valentines Day in Italy and ways to say I love you in Italian.

## **VENETO REGION - 22**

A blend of historic cities, rolling hills, and alpine landscapes.

## **VENICE NEW VISITOR PROCESS - 26**

Venice has announced that it will begin limiting the size of tourist groups in an effort to reduce the impact of overcrowding.

## **VENETIAN SHRIMP WITH CREAMY GARLIC SAUCE - 28**

Everyone goes crazy for this simple yet tasty recipe. Transform ingredients you most likely already have into an incredible dinner.

## **TOP WEDDING VENUES IN ITALY - 32**

We take a look at why Italy is such an easy choice for engagements and weddings.

## **ASK AN ITALY AG - 38**

12 questions with BG Joe E. Ramirez, Jr '79 United States Army (Retired) Vice President for Student Affairs.

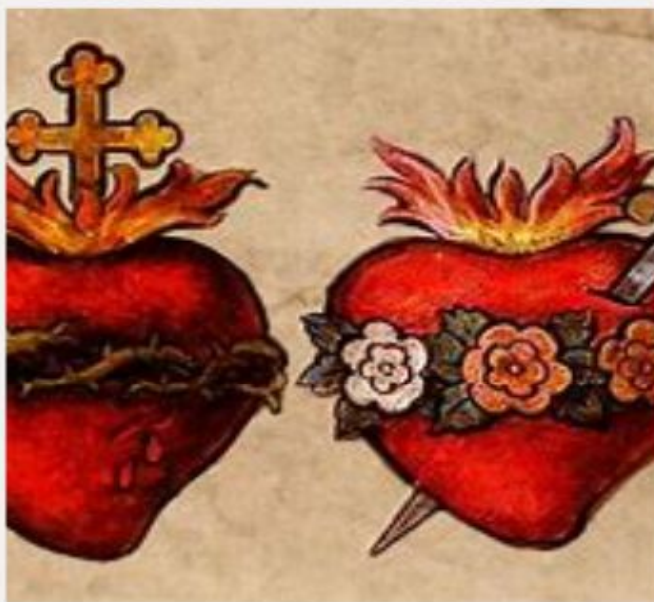
## **AGGIE SPORTS UPDATE - 41**

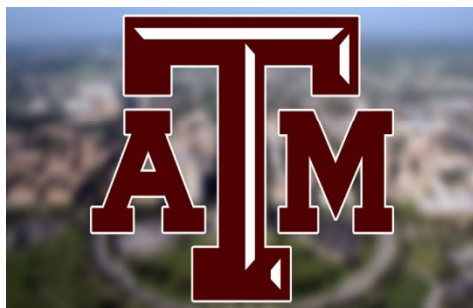
All things Aggie Athletics.

## **TEXAS TIDBITS & PAROLE FINALI - 45**

Texas history and trivia plus a final word as we look ahead to March.







## CIAO A TUTTI! & HOWDY AGGIES!



I hope this letter finds you well and thriving in the mists of this long winters nap. It

brings me immense joy to introduce our February E-Newsletter, specially crafted to celebrate the season of love. In this edition, we've gathered a collection of articles and features to captivate your hearts and inspire romantic endeavors. Here's a sneak peek into what awaits you:

**Valentine's Day Special:** Dive into the magic of love as we explore the history and some unique ways *Italy celebrates Valentine's Day*, plus a look at some of the *most beautiful places in Italy*.

**Italian Weddings Extravaganza:** Italy, known for its unparalleled charm, serves as the backdrop for our exploration of wedding venues from across the country. Discover the allure of tying the knot in the heart of Italy, from breathtaking venues filled with timeless customs that make every Italian wedding an unforgettable affair.

**Recipes for Love:** Indulge your taste buds with our collection of mouthwatering recipes, crafted with love and passion. We have *three quick and easy recipes for breakfast in bed* to surprise your Valentine. Whether you're cooking for a loved one or hosting a romantic dinner, these recipes are sure to add a touch of culinary magic to your celebration. Plus a recipe for *Venetian Shrimp with Creamy Garlic Sauce*.

We take a look at the *Veneto region*, *campus and Aggie sports update*. In our *Ask an Italy Aggie column* we get to meet with *Brigadier General (Ret) Joe Ramirez, VP Student Affairs* and a few other *Texas Tidbits* along the way.

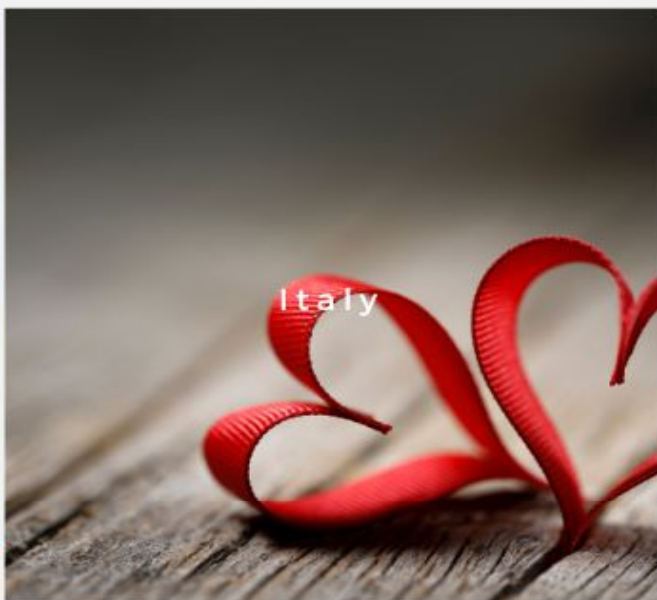
Your enthusiasm and support are the driving forces behind the creation of each edition, and we look forward to sharing this special issue with you. Be sure to download the material. Over time the issues will roll off and not be available for review.

Here's to a February filled with laughter and love.

Thanks, ciao and Gig'em!

Ryan '91





# TEXAS A&M CAMPUS REMEMBERED

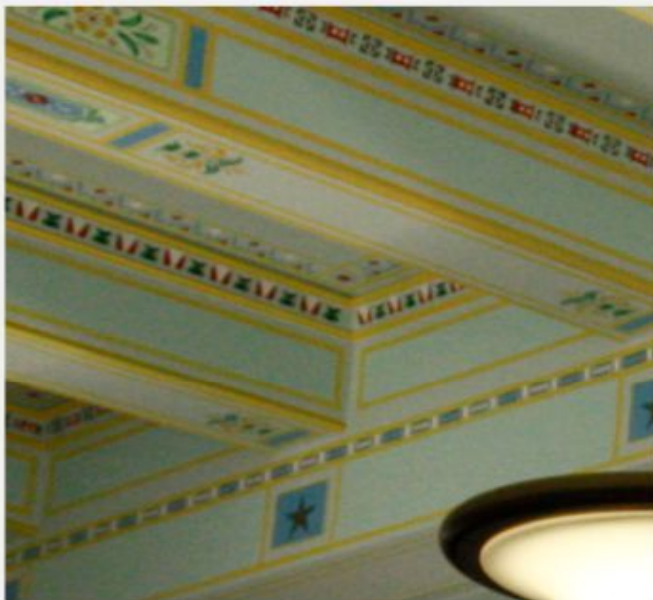


## CUSHING LIBRARY

*C*ushing Library (1930) designed by Frederick E. Giesecke, Thomas F. Mayo, S.C.P.

Vosper and members of the college staff. Built on the site of the first veterinary building, this Texas interpretation of classical architecture has second and third floor pilasters with carvings of ram heads and cow skulls. The frieze identifies Cushing, and names of men in arts, literature and science. The intricate metal grille in the reading room depicts the brands of famous Texas ranches. The ceiling decoration has an eclectic collection of Native American, Egyptian, Hindu, Texan and European symbols. Colonel Edward B. Cushing was chairman of the board of directors (1912-1914).





# TEXAS A&M HEALTH LAUNCHES RURAL ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

*The state-funded program aims to improve health care delivery in rural Texas.*



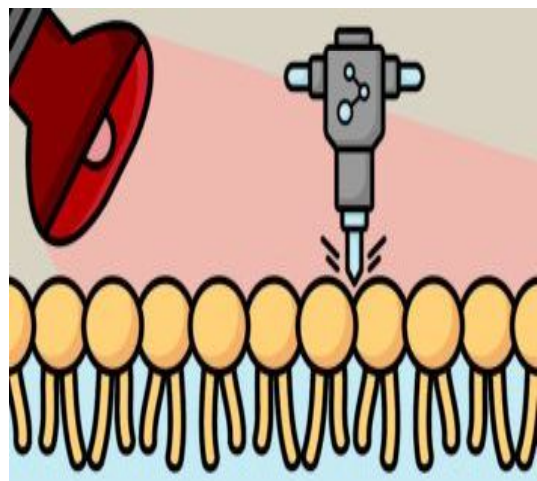
To read more about the rural engagement program click [here](#)

## MOLECULAR JACKHAMMERS DRILL PATHWAY TO KILLING CANCER CELLS

*The first-of-its-kind technique could offer a safer and more effective alternative to current cancer treatments.*

Just as jackhammers can penetrate concrete, molecular jackhammers (MJH) are nanoscopic machines capable of creating blows so strong they can crack or rupture the cell membrane, decompensating and killing the cell. The MJHs are turned on by near-infrared (NIR) light that stimulates synchronized delocalized vibrations throughout the cell — a mechanical action that can be exploited to rapidly kill cancer cells.

Researchers from Texas A&M University, Rice University and the University of Texas-MD Anderson Cancer Center tested this method using lab cultures of human melanoma cells and mice with melanoma tumors. They found that the molecular jackhammers had a 99% efficiency in killing the cancer cells in vitro and that 50% of the mice treated with this method became cancer-free. This development is the first of its kind and offers a much safer and more effective alternative to current cancer treatments.



To read more about the MJH program click [here](#)



# HOW TO HELP BENEFICIAL INSECTS SURVIVE WINTER

*A Texas A&M entomologist says that by planning in advance, flowering plants are possible even during the winter months..*



While a decrease in insects as the weather cools is a plus to many people, Texans should keep in mind that beneficial insects in gardens and yards could use a little help.

"Although many insects die off in the colder months, some hibernate while others are still active as needed," said Dr. Sonja Swiger, [Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service](#) entomologist and professor in the [Department of Entomology](#) in the [Texas A&M College of Agriculture and Life Sciences](#), Stephenville.

Some insects have it harder than others depending on where they are in Texas. Some also migrate south to locations where lot, protecting beneficial insects benefits all Texans, Swiger said.

To read more about the five things you can do right now to help beneficial insects stay safe and survive the winter months click [here](#)



## TEXAS A&M ENGINEERING LEADS COLLABORATION FOR REVOLUTIONARY IN-SPACE OPERATIONS TECHNOLOGIES

*Students and researchers will help the United States Space Force's Space Strategic Technology Institute with critical research worth nearly \$50 million.*



The United States Space Force has chosen Texas A&M University to lead the Space Strategic Technology Institute for In-Space Operations (SSTI-ISO), a groundbreaking initiative to advance technologies for in-space operations.

SSTI-ISO will develop new in-space operations, infuse new technologies into industrial efforts and government laboratories and provide access to workforce, talent and subject matter experts for defense space missions. Dr. Robert Ambrose, J. Mike Walker '66 Chair Professor in the Mechanical Engineering Department at Texas A&M and Director for Space and Robotics Initiatives for the Texas A&M Engineering Experiment Station, will lead SSTI-ISO as director.

To read the full article click [here](#)

**To contact or follow the  
Italy A&M Club**

**WhatsApp:**

+1 (713) 962-5775

**Email:**

italyags@aggienetwork.com

**Instagram:**

[italy\\_am\\_club](#)

# Breakfast in Bed

## Valentines Day Menu Ideas



### 01

#### Italian Baked Eggs

Ingredients:

- 2 Tbsp heavy cream
- 2 eggs
- Salt and pepper
- 1-2 Tbsp parmesan cheese
- Toasted bread

Preheat oven to in a 400°. Crack the eggs in a shallow ramekin.

Pour the heavy cream around the edges, moving the yolks towards the center.

Season with salt and pepper and grate the parmesan cheese.

Bake for 12 minutes or until the egg whites have set.

Rest for 3-4 minutes.

Serve with toast.



### 02

#### Old-World Puff Pancake

Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 3 large eggs, room temp
- 3/4 cup 2% milk
- 3/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- Confectioners' sugar
- Lemon wedges
- Syrup, optional
- Fresh raspberries, optional

Place butter in a 10-in. ovenproof skillet; place in a 425° oven until melted, 2-3 minutes. In a blender, process the eggs, milk, flour, sugar and nutmeg until smooth. Pour into prepared skillet. Bake at 425° until puffed and browned, 16-18 minutes. Dust with confectioners' sugar. Serve with lemon wedges and, if desired, syrup and raspberries.



### 03

#### Sparkling Pomegranate Mimosas

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup pomegranate seeds
- 6-8 sprigs of rosemary
- pomegranate juice
- 1 bottle of Prosecco

Add 1 tablespoon of pomegranate seeds, a rosemary sprig, and 1 1/2 oz of pomegranate juice to each glass.

Top with Prosecco.

Serve!





# *R***EN AIS S A N C E**

The Renaissance was a period of European history that began in Italy in the 14th century and lasted through the 17th century. During this time, art, literature, science, and philosophy flourished. Artists such as Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Raphael produced some of the world's most renowned works of art. Writers such as William Shakespeare and Miguel Cervantes wrote some of the most influential works of literature. Scientists and philosophers such as Copernicus, Galileo, and Descartes made groundbreaking discoveries and paved the way for modern thought. The Renaissance was a period of immense creativity and progress that continues to influence our lives today.

How to Celebrate

# VALENTINE'S DAY IN ITALY



It's no secret that Valentine's day is the most romantic holiday celebrated by couples worldwide. Today many countries developed their own traditions, but Valentine's Day in Italy has its origins tracing back all the way to the Roman Empire!



A romantic couple is shown in a close embrace. The woman, on the left, has dark hair and is smiling. The man, on the right, has a beard and is also smiling. They are both wearing grey sweaters. The woman is holding a large red heart. The background is a soft, out-of-focus indoor setting.

# The History of Valentine's Day in Italy

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Many legends surround this romantic holiday. According to one, the history of Valentine's day has its roots in ancient Roman culture. February the 14th was the day when people celebrated Juno, goddess of woman and marriage.

The other legend is about St. Valentine, the priest who defied the Roman emperor's order. During wartime, the emperor banned marriage, and when St. Valentine was discovered to marry the lovers secretly, he was put to death on February the 14th. Later, Pope Gelasius declared February 14th St. Valentine's Day, and it's celebrated for more than 1500 years.

# Fun Facts About Valentine's Day in Italy

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The tradition of "lucchetti dell' amore" became so popular in Italy that cities placed a ban on attaching padlocks to bridges and removing them. Despite the ban, many locks of love still appear on the bridges around Italy.

Maybe because of all the romantic scenery and dinner with candles and roses, Valentine's Day is the most popular day for couples to become engaged in Italy. If the proposal goes according to the Italian traditions, the Italian girl is presented with a diamond ring.

Every year, the city of Verona, where Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet lived, receives about 1000 letters addressed to Julia. All the letters are answered by the team of volunteers from the Juliet club, and the most touching love letter gets awarded with the "Cara Giulietta" ("Dear Juliet") prize.






# Italian Valentine's Day Traditions

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In Italy, Valentine's Day is celebrated only between couples as "La Festa Degli Innamorati." It is expressed with romantic dinners, giving the flowers and of course, the chocolate! Famous Italian chocolate maker Perugina makes the special edition of Baci chocolate candies in a red wrapper with a liquid sweet cherry center instead of the traditional one with hazelnuts.

These sweet chocolate candies have romantic quotes under the foil, making them the perfect gift for Valentine's day!





# Different Ways of Saying I Love You in Italian

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The words, the tone, and the music of the Italian language makes it the most romantic language in the world. If your significant other is an Italian or you just want to impress, here are some useful Italian phrases to express your love:

- Ti amo! – I love you!
- Buon San Valentino, amore mio!  
– Happy Valentine's Day, my love!
- Sei sempre nel mio cuore. – You are always in my heart.
- Sei più bella di un angelo. – You're more beautiful than an angel.
- Ti amerò per sempre! – I'll always love you!
- Sei la mia vita. – You're my life.

Whether you and your Amore plan to celebrate Valentine's Day in Italy or at home, there's no reason not to make it a romantic occasion.

With your favorite Italian dish, some homemade dessert, wine, candles, flowers, and some nice Italian music playing in the background, you can make your own Italian Valentine's Day.







# ART HISTORY



Art History is a fascinating topic to explore! It is a great way to learn about different cultures and the evolution of art throughout history. There are so many amazing artworks to admire, from ancient Egyptian wall paintings to the Renaissance masters, and all the way up to contemporary masterpieces. A great way to start exploring art history is to visit your local art museum and observe the different pieces on display. You can also find lots of resources online to learn more about art history and the different styles and movements. Italy is no finer place to study art history. Everywhere you look you will find amazing paintings, sculptures, architecture and frescos. Good luck on your journey of discovering art history!

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# THE MOST MAGNIFICENT CHURCH...

Santuario de la  
Madonna della  
Corona, Italy  
Set in the rock, at an  
altitude of 775  
meters. Built in 1522.



**BUILT OVER 2,000 FEET  
ABOVE SEA LEVEL INTO  
A VERTICAL CLIFF FACE  
ON ITALY'S MOUNT  
BALDO IN FRONT OF  
VALDADIGE, THE  
SANTUARIO MADONNA  
DELLA IS MAGNIFICENT.**



# THE OLDEST

—  
THE TASTE OF OVER  
THREE HUNDRED  
YEARS OF HISTORY  
THIS ICONIC PLACE  
WAS ESTABLISHED IN  
1720.

## IN



From a sumptuous breakfast to the Caffè Florian afternoon tea, with sweet and savoury interludes: when in Venice it's well worth the time to discover the Florian menu.

## CAFE



A name renowned all over the world, with over three centuries of history and contemporaneity. Entering at Caffè Florian is not a coffeebreak, but the beginning of a unique experience.

## ITALY



Taking a seat at the Café becomes at the same time an experience and a journey through history, a luxury ritual in pure Florian style: waiters in livery and impeccable service strictly on silver trays.

*Florian*<sup>TM</sup>

VENEZIA 1720

# Very Brief history of Pizza

The pizza is a popular food that has roots since before the Ancient Romans!

Back in the 8th century BC, and Ancient Etruscans made a thick dough from ground grains, which was baked beneath hot ashes and topped with oils and herbs. Eventually, the Ancient Romans called this "panis focacius" which gave birth to what we call focaccia today.

So where did pizza come from? Well, pizza comes from "pinsa," which is the past tense of the Latin verb "pinsere, meaning "to press down," that's because pizza tends to be thinner than focaccia.

It was only in the 16th century that tomatoes would be introduced to Europe from the New World, and eventually top the pizza.

Fast forward to the early 19th century, the city of Naples was packed with people who couldn't afford much food, so they needed something cheap that could be eaten quickly. Street vendors would sell pizza topped with various things to feed them. Yup, pizza was considered a street food! In fact, even today in the city of Naples, pizza is still served on the streets in the form of pizza a portafolio (or wallet pizza because it is folded a few times).





# THE 4 MEANINGS OF THE ITALIAN WORD “ALLORA”

Italians use this word a lot – but what is the meaning of *allora*?

**There are four key meanings of *allora*:**

1. **“So,”** to introduce a new topic and get people’s attention:  
*Allora, cosa facciamo?* – So, what shall we do?
2. **“Well...,”** when pausing to answer a question:  
*Dove mangiamo?* – Where shall we eat?  
*Allora... questo ristorante è buonissimo!* – Well... this restaurant is really good.
3. **“So,” “then” or “in that case”** to show a natural consequence:  
*Fa caldo, allora andiamo in spiaggia.* – It’s hot, so we’ll go to the beach.  
*Se non vuoi venire, allora non venire* – If you don’t want to come, then don’t come.  
*Il vino è economico?* – The wine is cheap?  
*Allora ne prendiamo una bottiglia!* In that case, let’s have a bottle!
4. **“Back then,”** when referring to the past:  
*Allora, tutto era migliore!* – Back then, everything was better!



# VENETO REGION

A BLEND OF HISTORIC CITIES, ROLLING HILLS, AND ALPINE  
LANDSCAPES





# VENETO

*T*he Veneto region of Italy, a captivating tapestry of history, culture, and natural beauty, unfolds like a Renaissance masterpiece. From the enchanting waterways of Venice to the picturesque landscapes of the Dolomites, every corner of this region is infused with a rich tapestry of experiences waiting to be discovered.

**Venice**, the crown jewel of the Veneto, beckons visitors with its unique charm. As Henry James once said, "Venice is like eating an entire box of chocolate liqueurs in one go." The city's iconic landmarks, such as St. Mark's Basilica and the Grand Canal, offer a visual feast for the senses. Yet, it is the labyrinthine alleyways and hidden squares that reveal the true essence of this floating city. Wander off the beaten path to discover secret gardens, artisan workshops, and the timeless beauty that inspired poets and artists throughout the centuries.

In the words of Lord Byron, who famously declared Venice to be "a fairy city of the heart," the romantic allure of the city is undeniable. For a truly immersive experience, indulge in a gondola ride along the winding canals. As you glide beneath the bridges, you'll understand why Venice has been a muse for countless romances.

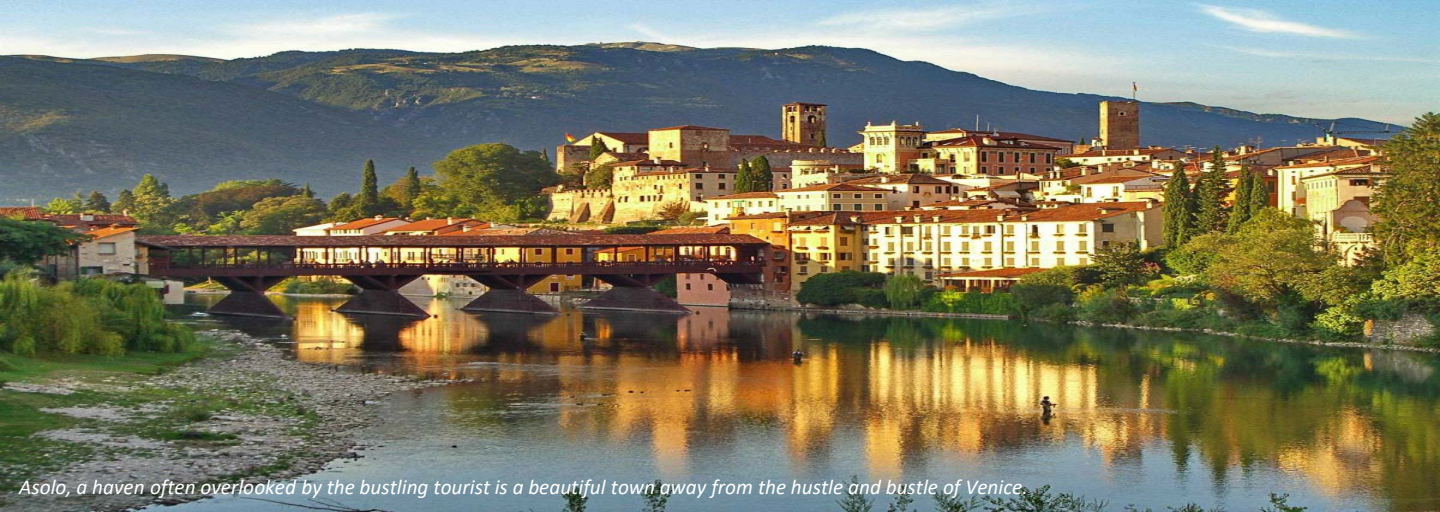
Venturing westward to **Verona**, the city of love and tragedy, one encounters a place where history and literature intertwine. The Roman Arena, a marvel of ancient architecture, echoes with the ghostly whispers of gladiatorial contests and modern operatic performances. As you stand in Juliet's courtyard, where the timeless tale of "Romeo and Juliet" unfolds, the words of Shakespeare resonate: "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet."

Hidden among the hills is the charming town of **Asolo**, a haven often overlooked by the bustling tourist crowds. With its cobblestone streets and medieval charm, Asolo is a place where time seems to stand still. As the renowned author Freya Stark once mused, "Asolo is a pearl, soft as pink paint on old plaster."



*Juliet's courtyard late at night.*





*Asolo, a haven often overlooked by the bustling tourist is a beautiful town away from the hustle and bustle of Venice.*

Wine enthusiasts are beckoned to the **Prosecco Hills**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site where vineyards paint the landscape in hues of green and gold. Sip on the effervescent nectar of Prosecco as you traverse the undulating hills. In the words of Ernest Hemingway, "Wine is one of the most civilized things in the world and one of the most natural things of the world that has been brought to the greatest perfection."

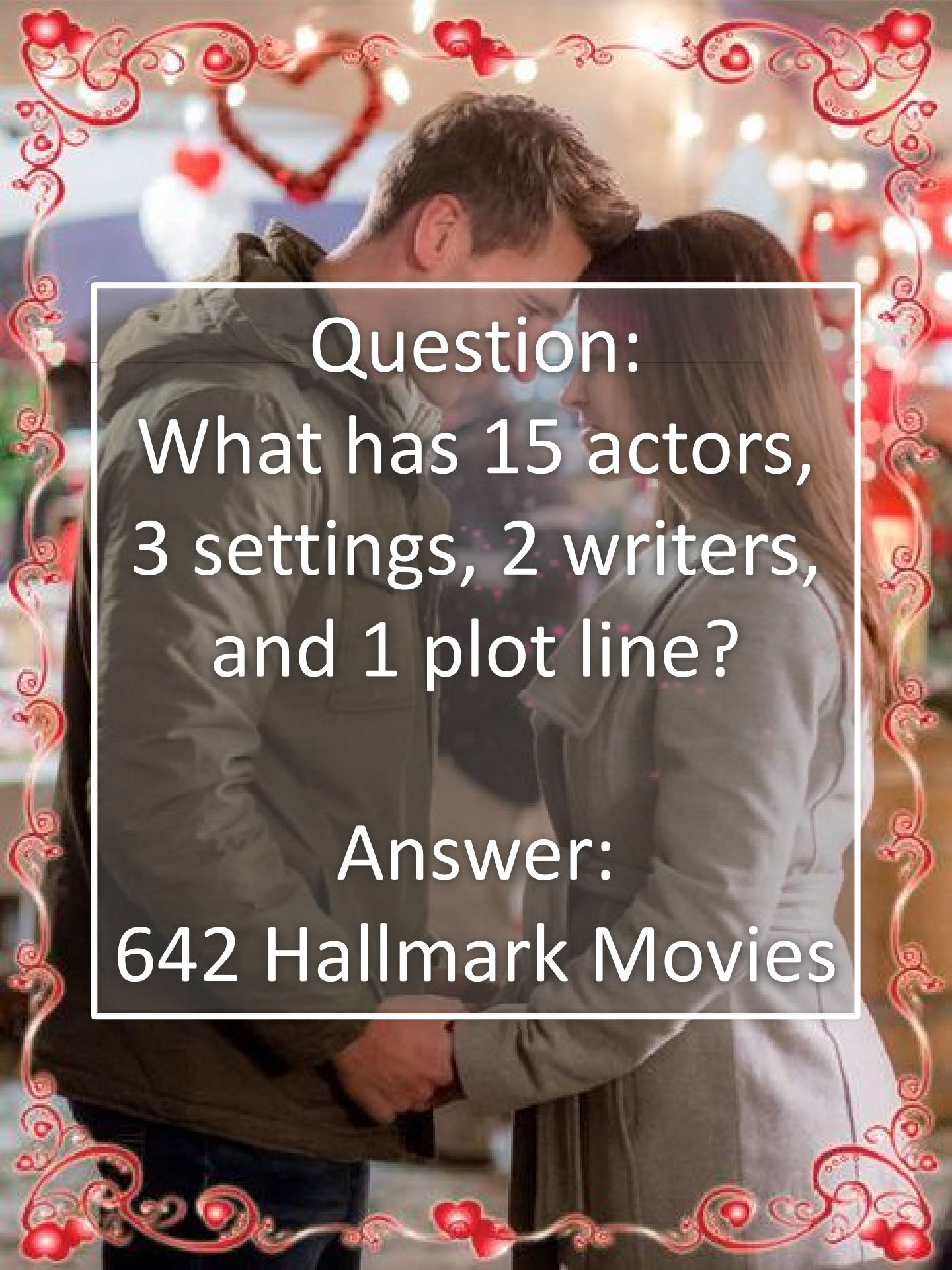
For those seeking the grandeur of nature, the **Dolomite Mountains** provide an awe-inspiring backdrop. Reinhold Messner, the legendary mountaineer, once remarked, "Mountains aren't fair or unfair, they're just dangerous." The Dolomites, with their rugged peaks and alpine meadows, invite exploration, whether by hiking in the summer or skiing in the winter.

Beyond the well-trodden paths lie the hidden treasures of the Veneto region. Local festivals, like the Carnevale in Venice, offer an immersive experience into the vivacious spirit of the Venetian people. Traditional dishes like *sarde in saor* and *risi e bisi* unveil the gastronomic delights shaped by the region's maritime and agricultural influences.

In conclusion, the Veneto region of Italy is a symphony of experiences waiting to be orchestrated by every traveler. From the grandeur of Venice to the intimacy of Asolo, each destination unveils a different facet of this cultural gem. As the poet Petrarch once wrote, "It is right that what is just should be loved, and that it should be sought for its own sake." The Veneto region, with its timeless beauty and hidden treasures, is a testament





A romantic couple is shown in a close embrace, nearly kissing. The man is on the left, wearing a dark jacket, and the woman is on the right, wearing a light-colored coat. They are in a winter setting with blurred lights in the background. The entire image is framed by a decorative border of red hearts and swirling lines.

Question:  
What has 15 actors,  
3 settings, 2 writers,  
and 1 plot line?

Answer:  
642 Hallmark Movies

# VENICE NEW VISITOR PROCESS

One of the beautiful things about Italy is that not much really changes. New technologies arrive and are adapted into lifestyles that have existed for centuries.

Venice is a great example of this. Where ambulance boats were once powered by oarsmen, these days they have a slick electric version that's much more friendly to the lagoon waters than those powered by gas. Something that is changing in Venice this year however is that if you plan to visit on certain days of the year, you will need to either:

- pay an access fee of €5 - for those visiting on day trip **OR**
- apply for an exemption - available to those staying overnight in Venice and children under the age of 14

You can pay the fee and apply for the exemption on the official website.

## APPLICABLE DATES IN 2024

- April 25-30
- May 1-5, 11-12, 18-19, 25-26
- June 8-9, 15-16, 22-23, 29-30
- July 6-7, 13-14

All persons traveling to Venice on these days must complete this process for each day they are in Venice and be able to produce the QR code generated as proof. Fines of up to €300 may apply if you are stopped and cannot produce the QR code. Additional dates may be added to this process later in the year. This is a classic example of Italian bureaucracy and the official information is a little clunky. Be sure to check their website often if you plan on visiting Venice this year or in the future.

There's no denying that this is a somewhat onerous and confusing process however it is the first step in addressing the over tourism threatening Venetians' way of life and the city's very existence.

And, at this time it's easily avoided if you can plan your travels around those dates.





# Venezia

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*"If I could re-name love, I'd call it Venezia"*

*— Conny Cernik*





# VENETIAN SHRIMP WITH CREAMY GARLIC SAUCE

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# VENETIAN SHRIMP WITH CREAMY GARLIC SAUCE



4 servings



20 minutes

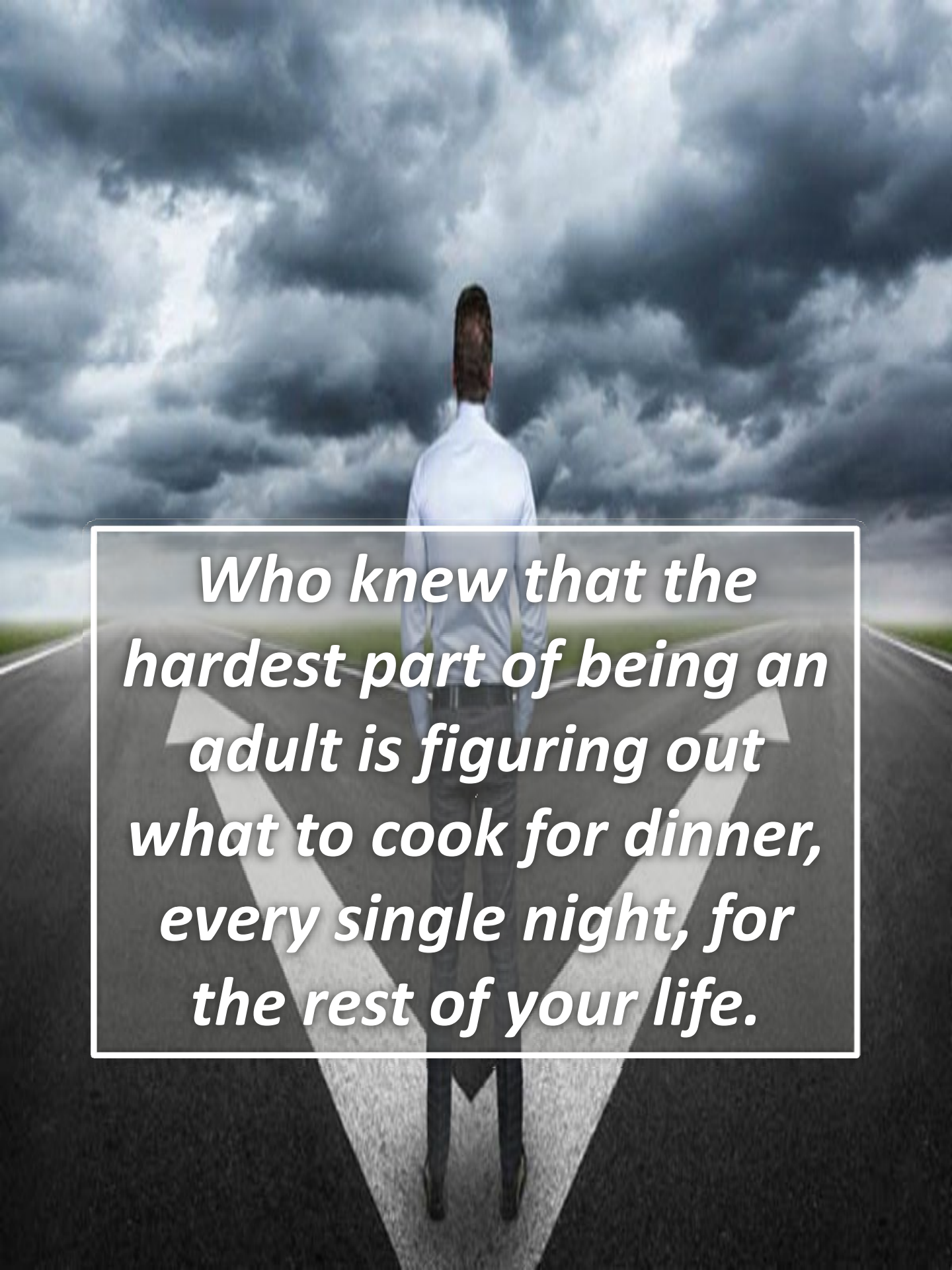
## Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 pound (500 grams) shrimp, tails off
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 6 cloves garlic minced
- 1/2 cup dry white wine or chicken broth
- 1 1/2 cups reduced fat cream
- 1/2 cup fresh grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 tablespoons fresh chopped parsley
- Pasta of your choice

## Directions

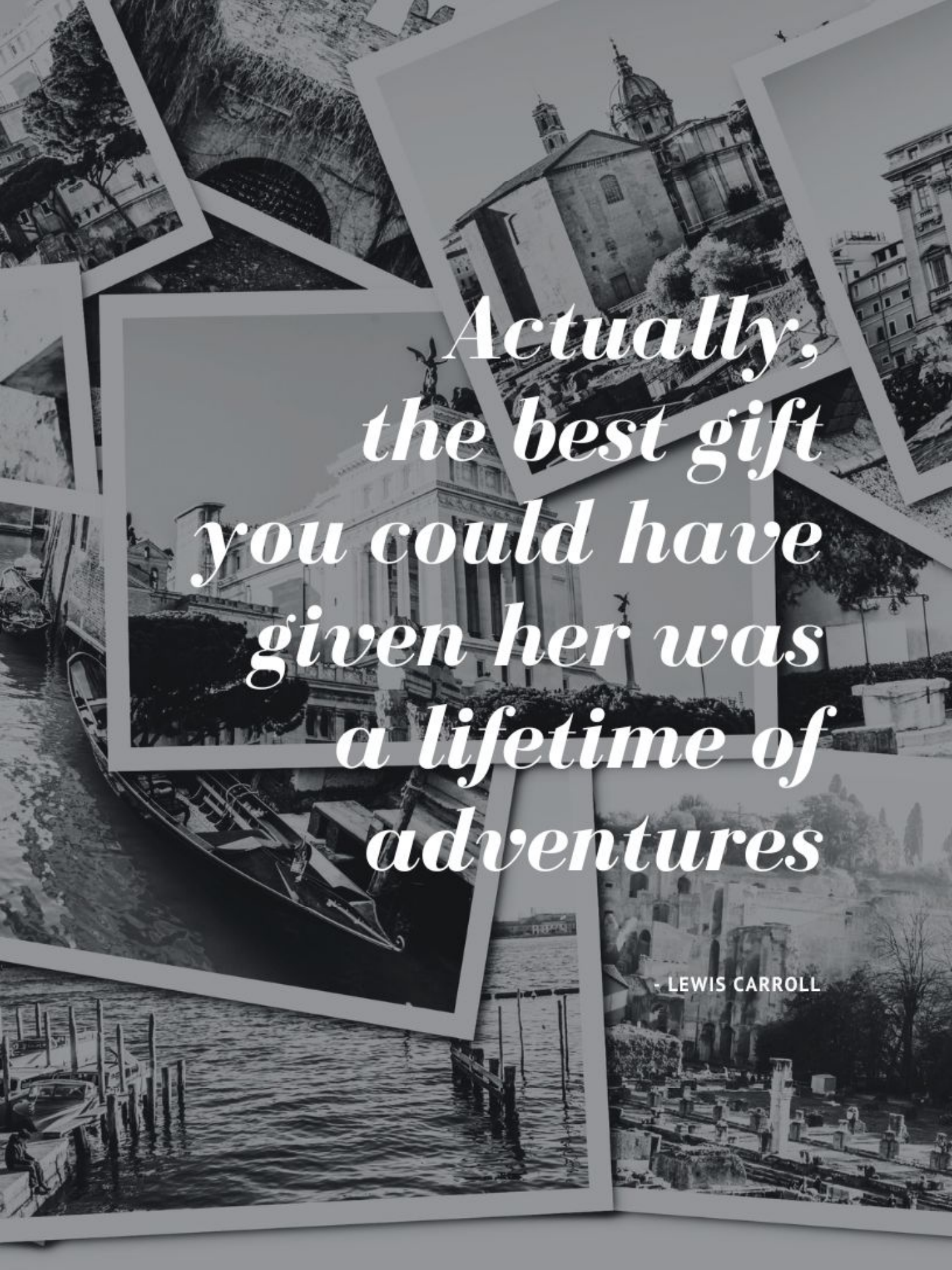
1. Cook pasta according to package instructions.
2. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Season shrimp with salt and pepper, fry for 1-2 minutes on each side, until just cooked through & pink. Transfer to a bowl; set aside.
3. Melt the butter in the same skillet. Sauté garlic until fragrant (about 30 seconds). Pour in the white wine or broth; allow to reduce to half while scraping any bits off of the bottom of the pan.
4. Reduce heat to low-medium heat, add the cream and bring to a gentle simmer, while stirring occasionally. Season with salt and pepper to your taste.
5. Add the parmesan cheese and allow sauce to gently simmer for a further minute or so until the cheese melts and sauce thickens.
6. Add the shrimp back into the pan, sprinkle with parsley. Taste test sauce and adjust salt and pepper, if needed.
7. Serve over pasta. ENJOY!



A man with a very tall neck, wearing a light blue shirt and dark trousers, stands with his back to the camera on a dark asphalt road. The road has white arrows pointing forward. The sky is filled with dark, heavy clouds, and a faint rainbow is visible in the distance. A white rectangular box with a thin black border is centered over the man, containing white text.

*Who knew that the  
hardest part of being an  
adult is figuring out  
what to cook for dinner,  
every single night, for  
the rest of your life.*





*Actually,  
the best gift  
you could have  
given her was  
a lifetime of  
adventures*

- LEWIS CARROLL



## TOP WEDDING VENUES IN ITALY

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Rolling Umbrian hills doused in golden light, Romanesque villas winking at Rivas across glassy lakes, and sunbaked Sicilian beach houses inhaling the salty Tyrrhenian air.

It's easy to see why Italy is a popular choice for weddings. Not only does this enviably beautiful country offer up a vast array of landscapes, from the snow-capped Dolomites to olive grove country, but its textured, trade-focused history also makes for resplendent architecture traced around la Dolce Vita...and you can rarely go wrong on food.

From fantastical, frescoed Venetian palaces to bougainvillea-smothered villas clinging to the Amalfi cliffs, here are the best Italian wedding venues for renewing your vows to upcoming nuptials.





*"When you realize you want to spend the rest of your life with somebody, you want the rest of your life to start as soon as possible."*

As said in *When Harry Met Sally*, it's a once in a lifetime opportunity.

Italy has always been one of the most desired destination to get engaged and married. Hills, mountains, sea: here you can choose your favorite spot in unique settings. From vast vineyards to olive groves, Italy will create an unforgettable backdrop, such as a romantic picnic with a stunning view during the summer or a wine cellar in the winter. The only thing you will need to take care of is The Ring!



01.



02.



03.





## XOXO

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### 01. TONNARA DI SCOPELLO, SICILY

The bridal couple and their guests will relish the memories of nursing Sicilian Negrinis a few yards from the sea, with a medieval tower jutting ahead and the sun sinking below the same Tyrannian horizon where the Ancient Greeks once watched for invading fleets.

### 03. HOTEL VILLA D'ESTE, LAKE COMO

Fairytale is a word too often bandied around wedding websites. But with its grand, symmetrical facade peering over a terrace framed by statues, a mosaic garden and Lake Como, Villa d'Este has more than earned the term.

### 05. HOTEL DE RUSSIE, ROME

Getting married in the Eternal City is pretty special in and of itself. But Hotel de Russie's sunken courtyard restaurant, framed by elevated fountain-filled gardens is an oasis of calm, worlds away from the tourism circus.

### 02. AMAN, VENICE

This historic Palazzo Papadopoli, with its privileged perch on the very edge of the Grand Canal, is pure frescoed, chandelier rapture, with a Piano Nobile spread over two floors, featuring a splendid ballroom and dining room for grand occasions, and a salon, bar, and library room for more intimate affairs.


### 04. BORGO SAN FELICE, TUSCANY

The picturesque setting of this Tuscan wedding property in Siena, Italy, encompasses the whole medieval borgo (hamlet), including the wedding chapel, small square, and views of the rolling hills of Chianti.

### 06. VILLA CETINALE, TUSCANY

Lording over acres of olive groves and haughty cypress trees on the hilly fringes of Siena, Villa Cetinale is a Tuscan knockout—its landscaped gardens give the building's Roman Baroque facade a run for its symmetry.





"WHILE WE OBSESSED  
OVER HAVING THE  
PERFECT WEDDING,  
AFTER EVERYTHING  
WAS SAID & DONE, OUR  
FAVORITE MEMORIES  
WERE THE ONES THAT  
WERE COMPLETELY  
CANDID WITH OUR  
FREINDS AND FAMILY."

My Wife

# ASK AN ITALY AGGIE - 12 QUESTIONS

## BG JOE E. RAMIREZ, JR '79

### UNITED STATES ARMY (RETIRED)

### VICE PRESIDENT FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS

### TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

**1. Tell us a little about yourself. Where you grew up, what your interests were, family, pets what you do now?**

*A. I grew up in inner city Houston (2<sup>nd</sup> Ward). Dad was an Army veteran and former POW in Korea. Mom was a housewife and mother to 4 children (I was the oldest). I had 2 sisters and 1 brother. Nobody in my family had ever gone to college. I played sports (football, baseball, soccer) in HS, and was also in the Band and ROTC. I graduated from Stephen F. Austin HS in 1975, and attended Texas A&M. I joined the Aggie Band in the Corps of Cadets – a **VERY** difficult transition for me coming from the inner city to a very structured, military style regimen! I also joined MSC Town Hall, MSC OPAS, and Fish Camp while I was a student (cadet) at A&M. I graduated from Texas A&M in 1979, and commissioned into the US Army as a Field Artillery Officer. I served in the Army for 31 years, retiring in 2010 as a Brigadier General. I loved my time in the Army, and the opportunities it provided me and my family. I have served in Germany, Korea, Iraq, Afghanistan, Qatar, Kuwait, Bosnia, Kosovo, Israel, and many other countries around the world. It truly was a wonderful career for me and my family. After I retired in 2010, I served as the 45<sup>th</sup> Commandant of Cadets at Texas A&M – where it all began for me – from 2010 to 2021. Once again I thoroughly enjoyed my time as Commandant, and overseeing the largest cadet Corps in the nation outside of West Point, Annapolis, and the AF Academy. I was blessed to work with some of our nations finest young men and women, and watching them develop into exceptional leaders of character who have gone on to lead across the nation and the world has been truly rewarding for me. In 2021 I was asked by then President Kathy Banks to become the Vice President for Student Affairs, a role I continue to serve in today. I truly enjoy my role as the VPSA, as I get to work with students all across campus every day. I have been married to my wife Theresa (Terry) for 9 years now (second marriage for both of us), and between the 2 of us we have 9 children and 7 grandchildren. We live in College Station and enjoy traveling, going to concerts to listen to live music (Jazz, Classic Rock, and R&B are our favorites), going to Texas A&M sporting events, and spending time with our families – especially the grandkids! Overall I am a blessed man, and am grateful for all that God has blessed me with throughout my life – especially my family.*

**2 Why did you choose to attend Texas A&M, how did you select your major and why?**

*A. I came to Texas A&M for ONE reason: I wanted to be in the Aggie Band. I had seen the Band march in to downtown Houston when I was in HS, and I was immediately impressed and decided that I wanted to be a part of the Aggie Band and the Corps. I didn't know ANYTHING about the Band and the Corps, but that day made a big impression on me, and made me decide to come to Texas A&M to join the Band. I was a Physical Education major, mainly because I wanted to go to Physical Therapy School after I graduated. As a child I contracted Guillan Barre Syndrome, a disease that paralyzed me. It was a frightening experience for me and my parents, but a Physical Therapist helped me through the experience, and I never forgot it. That woman inspired me to want to do the same thing when I graduated college. The Army had other plans for me, however...*



**3. If you started a band with five of your closest friends, what would the band's name be? What kinds of songs would you sing?**

*A. The Streetfighters. We'd probably sing a combination of R&B and Classic Rock (70s, of course!)*

**4. Why did you choose to serve in the military?**

*A. I joined the Army because Army ROTC awarded me a 2 year scholarship at the end of my sophomore year and I owed the Army 4 years of active duty service when I graduated as a result. Being the son of an Army veteran and former POW it was not a difficult decision to make!*

**5. Have you ever visited Italy? If so, where did you go and what was your favorite memory of your trip? If not, what is your favorite Italian meal and why?**

*A. I have been to Italy. I have been to Arenzano, on the coast, as well as Rome and Naples. And I'm pretty simple when it comes to Italian food: I LOVE spaghetti!*

**6. What's the first thing that comes to your mind when I say 'think of a happy memory'?**

*A. Having my entire family present when I was promoted to Brigadier General in the US Army. A very proud and happy day for me and my family.*

**7. What is your current role/job? What's the best part about it? What's the most challenging part? If you could change one thing about your job, what would it be? What was the best part of your work week?**

*A. Vice President for Student Affairs at Texas A&M. LOVE working with students every day! The best part of my day, without question! Probably the most challenging aspect of my job today is trying to ensure we can provide first class services and programs for our students at a time of rapid growth at Texas A&M (~75,000 students). I want to ensure that our students get the very best experience possible while at Texas A&M, and I know that a big part of that falls on the Division of Student Affairs and our ability to provide the best services, facilities, and programs possible for our students. If I could change one thing about my job it would be that I would spend the entire day with students and not attend any of the myriad of meetings I attend every day! The best part of my week is interacting with students – in my office, in the MSC, at their activities, at dinners, at sporting events – without a doubt the best part of my week every week.*

**8. Do you have a catchphrase you say all the time? What is it and how/when did you start using it?**

*A. "It doesn't get any better than this!" I've used that phrase throughout my career, especially during the most difficult of times (like deployments). Its amazing how much a positive attitude can make the difference between success and failure – especially as a leader. I try to ensure that the people I work with and lead NEVER see me negative about anything – especially when we are experiencing difficult times. A positive attitude is a combat multiplier!*

**Joe E. Ramirez Jr. ,  
Texas Aggie Band  
Commanding Officer  
B-Company - 1979**

A first-generation college student, Ramirez graduated from Texas A&M in 1979 with a bachelor's degree in physical education. He was a member of the Corps of Cadets as well as the Aggie Band. Upon graduation, he joined the Army as a field artillery officer, climbing the ranks to Brigadier General and serving in many prestigious roles.



Including as Deputy Chief of Staff for U.S. Central Command during Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, Deputy Division Commander for the 2nd Infantry Division in the Republic of Korea, and Deputy Director for Strategy, Plans and Policy for U.S. European Command in Stuttgart, Germany.



He earned a master's degree in management from Webster University in St. Louis, Mo. (1993) and a master's in strategic studies, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle, Penn. (2000). After 31 years in the military, he retired and returned to Texas A&M to lead the Corps. He served as the 45th Commandant of the Texas A&M Corps of Cadets for 11 years.

**9. Do you own anything sentimental you can never get rid of?**

*A. The religious medal my father gave me before he died. He wore it since 1949 when his mother – my grandmother – gave it to him. He had to hide it during his captivity as a POW in North Korea, and I never saw him without it my entire life with him. He always wore it and swore that it protected him during the most difficult of times. He gave it to me before he died, and I wear it proudly around my neck every day. One day I will give it to one of my sons.*

**10. What are the top five things you're most grateful for in life?**

*A. My Faith. My Family. My Friends. My Country. All the opportunities that I have been blessed with over the past 67 years.*

**11. What's the top three things on your bucket list?**

*A. I want to visit places in the world I have not seen yet: Machu Picchu, South Africa, Indonesia. I want to go skydiving (I'm Airborne qualified, and have jumped out of military aircraft with a static line, but would like to try skydiving too). I want to learn how to scuba dive and dive the Great Barrier Reef.*

**12. Take Sides – with this question you have to choose your preference between the following dichotomies. The Bold and maroon colored are 2 Lt Heads selections:**

- **Ketchup** or ranch?
- **Air guitar** or air drums? I'm a prodigy!
- Passenger or **driver**?
- Lose sleep or **skip a meal**?
- Reality shows or **documentaries**?
- **Call first thing in the morning** or call in the middle of the night? **Morning** (but I've dealt with both throughout my career)
- French fries or **onion rings**?
- Roller coasters or **water slides**? I do them with my grandkids!
- **Save as you go**, or save at the end?
- **Win a race** or win a debate? **Not many debates are "won" these days...**
- **Football game** or basketball game?
- Education or **experience**?
- **See the future** or change the past? **Never look back....**
- **Intense pain for ten minutes** or dull pain for one day? **Been there, done that...**
- **Free travel for one year** or free lodging for five years?
- **Eggs** or pancakes?
- Pizza or **Tex-Mex**? **TACOS!!**
- **Flying** or turning invisible?
- Batman or **Superman**?
- Sunrise or **sunset**? More romantic...

*"I LOVE working with students every day! It's the best part of my day, without question!"*

BG Joe E. Ramirez, Jr '79  
United States Army (Retired)  
Vice President for Student Affairs





# AGGIE SPORTS UPDATE



## Thank You, Coach!

Steve Bultman Announces Retirement  
Following the 2023-24 Season

[Click for more information](#)



## NFL Pro Bowl

Three Aggies have been selected to play  
in the 2024 Pro Bowl

[Click for more information](#)



## No. 18 Men's Tennis Punches Ticket to ITA National Indoor Championship

The Maroon and White at Indoor  
Nationals runs from Feb. 16-19 in New  
York

[Click for more information](#)



## HEADLINES

TRACK & FIELD: [Abadie Breaks Pole Vault Record](#)

MEN'S GOLF: [Men's Golf Carries Blue Collar Mentality into Spring Slate](#)

BASEBALL: [Grahovac Tabbed as Preseason SEC Freshman of the Year](#)

FOOTBALL: [R.C. Slocum Named Interim Athletics Director](#)

EQUESTRIAN: [No. 2 Aggies Blank Dartmouth, 10-0](#)

FOOTBALL: [Texas A&M's Jonny Holland returns to the Super Bowl with 49ers](#)

# THE BEAUTIFUL IN



## MOST

In the Cannareggio district in Venice, shopping can be a truly unique experience. In fact, here is the Despar Supermarket built inside the former Cinema Teatro Italia and defined as "the most beautiful in Italy".

## SUPERMARKET

A neo-Gothic and Art Nouveau jewel of the early 1900s, once used as a theater, cinema and university and in disuse for decades, it has been transformed into a grocery store. The investment of about five million euros was divided between Aspiag Service, the Despar concessionaire for the Northeast and the owner of the historic building.

## ITALY

The entire internal and external structure has been restored and maintained as it was originally. In the center of the ceiling of the main hall you can admire in its splendor the fresco of an allegory entitled the Glory of Italy by the Venetian painter Alessandro Pomi.



THE

# MOST BEAUTIFUL



Nobile Collegio  
del Cambio

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## BANK IN THE WORLD



During the Middle Ages and Renaissance, traveling across Italy meant having to change money frequently because towns and regions had their own currency.



Besides spending money on food and lodging, you would encounter tolls to cross bridges, taxes to pass through city gates, and customs fees if you were a merchant looking to exchange goods. Fines could also be imposed for violating local regulations.



To exchange your coins, you would have to navigate the winding streets until you reached the town hall and its adjacent money exchange, the Nobile Collegio del Cambio.



If the doors to the moneychangers' audience hall were open, and if you were fortunate enough to peer inside, you might glimpse Pietro Perugino's assistants adorning the colorful ceiling of what would later be called "the most beautiful bank in the world."



# THE ITALY A&M CLUB NEEDS YOUR ASSISTANCE



## The Italy A&M Club Needs Your Help!

### • BREAKING NEWS

**UPDATE** – The Association of Former Students is assisting us with building out our clubs website! I can't thank them enough for the help. We also will have a *Facebook* page to accompany our *Instagram* postings. These mediums will allow us to post news articles, our monthly newsletters, *Instagram* postings and other social media. So everyone is aware our newsletter reaches out to almost 1,000 readers each month. Thank you all for your contributions to its success.

### • Italy A&M Club Scholarship

The club is exploring the possibility of establishing a scholarship program. The scholarship would be available to club members who live in Italy but are attending Texas A&M, their family members who are attending Texas A&M or possibly students who are studying abroad from Texas A&M in Italy (semester abroad program).

We are considering hosting a silent auction to help raise funds for the scholarship. If you are interested in donating to the auction or in the establishment of the scholarship please reach out to me directly.



### • News – Extra, Extra Read All About it!

Please feel free to share any photos, news articles, announcements, births, graduations, Silver Taps, career changes or any other news you would like to share with the club. We will find ways to include them in the regular updates.

### • Logo

We are looking to create our clubs logo and we need your help. We need to generate a few ideas for our logo. If you have any ideas or thoughts please let me know.

### • Recipes

Feel free to submit your favorite recipe(s) to be include with the monthly/periodic updates. We would love to share them with the group.

### • Feedback

Please provide feedback on this format, the content and any ideas you may have on ways we can generate additional engagement. Please encourage other people to join the club and to follow us on *Instagram*.

## Contact Information:

Email: [rprice.ireland@gmail.com](mailto:rprice.ireland@gmail.com)

Club email: [italyags@aggienetwork.com](mailto:italyags@aggienetwork.com)

Cell: +1(713) 962-5775

WhatsApp: +1(713) 962-5775

Instagram: [italy\\_am\\_club](https://www.instagram.com/italy_am_club)





# Texas TIDBITS

TEXAS STORIES,  
FACTS AND HISTORY  
PLUS A LITTLE FUN  
TOO. BLUEBONNETS  
AND BEEF, OIL  
WELLS AND FRIDAY  
NIGHT LIGHTS.





Texas Road Sign

# QUESTION 1: WHAT IS THE COLDEST RECORDED TEMPERATURE IN TEXAS?

**Question 2:** Which major airline began in Texas?

**Question 3:** What is the first official town in Texas?

**Question 4:** Which battleship was the only one to serve in all theaters during World War II?

**Answer 1:** On February 12th, 1899, the temperature in Tulia [dropped to 23 below zero](#)—the lowest recorded temp in state history.

**Answer 2:** Southwest Airlines was founded by Herb Kelleher and began flights in 1971. Kelleher wanted to compete with other airlines by revolutionizing air travel through unique marketing, low prices, and improved customer service. [\[See the Full Story\]](#)

**Answer 3:** Nacogdoches was established in 1779 by Dón Antonio Ybarbo. Prior to Spanish arrival in 1716, the Caddo Tribe controlled the region. [\[See the Full Story\]](#)

**Answer 4:** The USS Texas was involved in significant operations during World War II, including the invasions of North Africa, Normandy, and Southern France. It also played a role in the Pacific theater, participating in the Iwo Jima invasion and operating off Okinawa.

[\[See the Full Story\]](#)



Battleship Texas



# PAROLE FINALI

*A*s we bid farewell to the vibrant month of February, we find ourselves immersed in the spirit of love, gratitude, and shared experiences. It has been an absolute pleasure bringing you the latest updates, inspiring stories, and features through our online newsletter. Your continued support and engagement have made each edition a testament to the sense of community that unites us all.

As we turn the page to March, anticipation builds for the fresh adventures that await us. The upcoming edition promises to be a tapestry of diversity, with a myriad of exciting content designed to captivate and inspire. Here's a glimpse of what's in store for you:

**Spring Awakening:** March marks the arrival of spring, and we are dedicated to bringing you a celebration of the season's renewal. From gardening tips to outdoor activities, get ready to embrace the splendor of springtime.

**March 17th:** In honor of St. Patrick's Day, we will shine a spotlight on St. "Patrizio" and look at the little known fact that his parents were Italian and ways they celebrate him in Italy.

**Cultural Exploration:** March marks the time of year that Italian farms come alive with new lambs and calf's being born. Next month we take a look at the Italian cowboy who are known as Butteri's, and see how their way of life has shaped the Italian culture for centuries.

As we embrace the change of seasons and look forward to the warmth and vibrancy that March brings, we extend our heartfelt thanks for being part of our club. Your feedback, comments, and shared experiences drive us to deliver content that resonates with you.

Stay tuned for an exciting March edition that promises to be as diverse and captivating as the community it serves. Together, let's make March a month to remember!

Ciao for now!

Thanks and Gig'em!

Ryan '91

P.S. Be sure to follow us on **Instagram** at: [Italy\\_am\\_club](https://www.instagram.com/Italy_am_club)

