

Italian Lemonade



THE TASTE of Italian lemonade. . . . How can one describe it? Can't be done! For Italian lemonade to be at its best, it takes more than the right blend of ice, sugars and fruit chunks. And I don't agree with the so-called experts who say it has something to do with perfecting the right ice crystallization techniques.

Surely, these are relevant technical factors, but I think there is more to it than meets the eye or, for that matter, the taste buds. It has something to do with the environment. That's right—slurping on Italian lemonade is an aesthetic experience. I think that is the reason why Italian lemonade in California never tasted as good to me as the Chicago variety.

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There is something about the late afternoon on a particularly hot and muggy summer day in Chicago. Just when your body feels most ravaged by the effects of the humidity and your legs feel like they are ready to buckle, the humidity lets up and a faint balmy breeze begins to blow in from Lake Michigan. It was at that moment, I found, that Italian lemonade tasted the best. As the cooling flavors of the lemonade invaded the senses, the body's natural rhythm and flow seemed to be restored. It even seemed to help release the grip of the malaise that typically affected Chicagoans during the most severe of summer "scorchers."

No better lemonade could be found than that made by Bella Ciozia in that part of Chicago known as Little Italy. Not only did all technical aspects of her lemonade rate a

perfect "10," but the aesthetic conditions couldn't be better. Little Italy was close enough to the lake to benefit invariably from the soothing effect of the lake breezes. An added bonus was that these breezes also helped push out the fetid odor of the nearby stockyards that hung like a cloud around the area on the hottest of days. Thus, if someone were to ask me what is the epitome of true joy, I would not hesitate: Just when the breezes begin to blow on some hot and sticky summer day, true joy is slurping on a Bella Ciozzia Italian lemonade.

I first developed a taste for Bella Ciozzia's Italian lemonade when as a young boy I would spend several weeks visiting my grandmother during summer vacation. Coming from the suburbs, I found Little Italy to be my wonderland, my land of adventure. Nothing I read in "Classic Comic Books" that retold the novels of Alexander Dumas and Robert Louis Stevenson could compare to the real life adventures of Little Italy. The tightly built neighborhood of row houses and scaled-down Victorians with aluminum awnings and perma-stone siding was such a contrast to the pasteurized environment of suburbia, so too were the idle pleasures of the youth.

When I asked Vito, the son of a friend of my grandmother who was forced to play with me, how he liked the movies, "Creature from the

Black Lagoon" or Walt Disney's "Peter Pan," he responded with a blank stare. His favorite show was put on by the "Ratman"—a local impresario who used captured vermin to put on a show for all those willing to plunk down a quarter. The show consisted mainly of igniting the unfortunate creatures using what sounded like a variety of rather elaborate stage trappings. The Ratman soon displaced the creature from the black lagoon as the principal heavy in my nightmares.

One might well understand and appreciate then the respite from this world offered me by my daily visits to Bella Ciozzia. My nickel's worth of Italian lemonade bought an inestimable amount of pleasure. A special treat was that Bella Ciozzia allowed me to jiggle her snow-filled glass memento of the 1933 "Century of Progress" Exhibition. Perhaps the most vivid memories of my summertime visits to Little Italy consisted of my slurping an Italian lemonade while watching snow fall on the silhouetted background of the "Century of Progress" skyline.

A Fierce Fighting Spirit

Bella Ciozzia was a soft-spoken, petite and quite beautiful woman. She earned her name "Bella" because her small nose, blond hair and blue eyes were roundly admired by the locals. Bella Ciozzia came from a small village in Sicily that was in-

vaded by Nordic traders who evidently had nothing to offer in trade for the goods they received except for some very dominant genes. To this day, everyone who comes from that village has blond hair and blue eyes. But as I was soon to find out, Bella Ciozzia inherited more than her good looks from the Norsemen; she also inherited some of their fierce fighting spirit.

The following summer, probably because of the strange fascination that all children seem to have for the macabre, I inquired about the latest theatrical efforts of the Ratman. Vito glumly responded that the shows had come to an end. It so happened that Bella Ciozzia somehow got wind of the goings-on. Evidently, seeing no socially redeeming merits in the show, Bella Ciozzia interrupted the presentation during a particularly climactic moment, flailing away with a huge Italian rolling pin. The Ratman made a quick and ignominious final exit. So too, as Vito related, did the youthful audience.

From that moment on Bella Ciozzia was my hero. She seemed to represent those of the quiet and meek who say little but when pushed beyond a certain point by some outrage will trigger a mechanism that operates suddenly to release their pent-up emotional energy.

So ten years later when I moved back to Little Italy to attend a

nearby university, I was happy to find Bella Ciozzia still scooping out Italian lemonade. But now the calming effect of the lemonade soothed the ravages to my system brought on by "Beowulf" and national income accounting rather than the Ratman. You can well imagine then the consternation I felt when on one balmy Friday afternoon Bella Ciozzia told me the building department came and took her equipment away.

"They tella me I no sella no more. They say I donna have 20 . . . 222 . . . 280 . . . I donna know—somma kinna wires," she said as she shrugged in the characteristic Italian way that roughly translated to, "That's life."

I couldn't understand it; Bella Ciozzia was a neighborhood institution. But being a young student who had just mastered the basic elements of political science, I felt that a wrong had been committed that I could help right.

Take It to Alderman

The person to see was Alderman Tom Cooley, otherwise known as the "General." I was sure that he could help even though everyone in the neighborhood considered him a buffoon and political gladhander. In fact, the General was commonly known in the neighborhood as the "Citrulu"—an Italian term of derision reserved for the more inept of

the human species. The locals put up with him though and even regularly elected him to his office in spite of the fact that everyone resented his expecting and getting all the free beer and beef sandwiches his belly could hold at the annual festival of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel. The fact was he controlled all the patronage jobs that were doled out to a few people who were related in some extended and convoluted way to everyone in the neighborhood.

When I walked into the General's office, he sprang out of his chair to shake my hand. The General was animated and lively when we started talking about the people I knew in the neighborhood. But when I began to present an impassioned plea for the gross injustice done to Bella Ciozzia, his eyes glazed. As I continued, his facial expression turned to a look of concern. But the concern was not one of compassion or empathy, it was a look that told me he wasn't listening to a thing I was saying. I was quickly escorted out to meet with the many aides who hovered like flies around his office. All they could do was point to the voluminous stacks containing the city code that specifically pointed to the illegality of Bella Ciozzia's transgressions.

The truth finally came out after meeting with our local precinct captain who said, "Are you crazy . . . going to see the General? That Ci-

trulu actually thinks that Bella Ciozzia was closed down because she doesn't have 220 wiring. Ha! The squeeze has already been put on with the higher-ups. Big Jake is building a new house next to Bella Ciozzia's. You think he wants to live next to a lemonade stand? Besides, Bella Ciozzia doesn't need the money; she's living with her daughter."

This was the information I needed. I felt elated as I ran to inform Bella Ciozzia about the seamier side of politics and the real motivation in closing her down. As I ran, I had mental pictures of the General and his aides scurrying in various corners of City Hall being hotly pursued by Bella Ciozzia and her infamous rolling pin.

When I finally got there and told her, Bella Ciozzia gave another one of those shrugs of acceptance. I couldn't believe it. Had the passage of ten years taken away her Nordic fighting spirit?

I don't think so. It was more than that. I think it really involved the fact that Bella Ciozzia, like most of those living in Little Italy, came to this country to escape a land and an economy that was ravaged by an oppressive and corrupt government. Coming to this country, they cherished the freedom and opportunities this new land offered. A little corruption is something these street-wise people understood as a fact of

life. Compared to what they had left, it was something they could even accept.

The Tendency of Governments to Expand in Size and Scope

Karl Marx believed he had uncovered an inherent flaw in capitalistic systems when he wrote that exploitation by capitalists will bring about the downfall of capitalistic systems. History has proven Marx wrong. But Marx's use of the Hegelian dialectic could have been directed in a different way to expose a more real danger in capitalistic systems. And that danger relates not to the "unearned surplus" or "subsistence wages" but to the tendency for governments within a capitalistic system to expand in size and scope until they ultimately stifle individual freedom and the inherent efficiency of private markets. Marx's prophecy of doom for capitalism would have been more plausible if he tied its downfall to the exploitation of government and collective decision making rather than capitalists' urge to maximize profits.

A limited government is necessary in a capitalistic system. Adam Smith was specific about the role that government should serve in providing national defense, a judicial system and other public institutions and works that in the main facilitate the commerce of society. (*The Wealth of Nations*, The Modern Library Edition, pp. 653–682) But

Smith was not specific enough; nor could he be. There is no clear line that separates a public from a private good. Thus, those who find operating in the cold cruel world of the marketplace a less than happy or not very profitable state, have a strong motivation in expanding the role of the government in the free market. This motivation, however, is fairly commonplace. In the end, the free market loses its vitality as economic matters are decided in a tug-of-war fought out among competing interest groups in the halls of government rather than in the arena of the marketplace.

These are the powerful interest groups that have strong incentives to either help make laws or manipulate well-intended laws to their own advantage. The political clout of such groups is evident when one considers that the top spending political action committees (PACs) increased their donations to federal campaigns eighty per cent in 1983 compared to the previous non-election year of 1981. Recent trends also suggest that spending for the 1984 federal congressional elections will near a half billion dollars of which a large share will be funded by PAC spending. (*The Wall Street Journal*, Feb. 23, 1984, p. 54.)

The willingness of groups to spend such vast sums is certainly tied to the economic advantages to be gained by a benevolent government.

As stated by a representative of the National Association of Realtors: "We give early money to our friends, people who are tried and true. We don't care if a knight in shining armor comes in and runs against him (the incumbent); he's been our knight in shining armor." (*The Wall Street Journal*, Feb. 23, 1984, p. 54)

And though the private gains that could occur from this knight come at the cost of a greater loss to society, the gains accrue to an individual or identifiable group while society's loss is spread out thinly among many. As a result, the significant private gains provide a much more powerful incentive to influence government than a less interested individual has in politically opposing such influence. Hence, all groups who find that a system of government coercion will somehow make the uncertainties of the world (profits) less uncertain will continually prod our government until the laws work to their own advantage. And the more laws that exist, the more likely it is for powerful interest groups to bypass normal market forces.

In the case of Bella Ciozzia, someone found it cheaper to use some well-intended building code to close her down rather than use the normal market procedure that would otherwise have been followed—buying her out. It may seem as if the two have the same ultimate impact,

but they don't. If a mutually agreed upon price could be reached, that suggests retiring Bella Ciozzia's lemonade scoop would bring about a smaller loss to lemonade consumers than the private gain to the person living in the new residence. But if such a price cannot be agreed upon, the opposite would be true; society would gain more by Bella Ciozzia staying in business. Unfortunately, when government coercion applies, there is no assurance that the efficient market solution will occur.

Someone had a strong private interest in closing Bella Ciozzia's business. And this private interest provides the basis for a much stronger incentive to push the government in a self-serving way than any single Italian lemonade consumer can muster to oppose it. Thus, Italian lemonade connoisseurs will likely lose in any political tug-of-war even though in the aggregate or from a social point of view, the loss to consumers may be greater than the gain to the person who shut Bella Ciozzia's operation down. In the end, the inefficiency occurs because it is both possible and cheaper to get the building department to close her down rather than buy her out.

Many Similar Incidents

The Bella Ciozzia incident can be retold in countless forms. All you have to do is look at the vast number

of laws and regulations that envelop this country. Behind many of these laws, a Bella Ciozzia story is ready to be told. There will be different names, a different location and different motivations, but the theme will be the same: The laws favor a few at the expense of many.

Who are at fault? Are they the General Cooleys of this world? No, they are simply willing dupes. Are they the powerful interest groups that push for self-serving laws? No, they are simply attempting to maximize their private gains—the prime motive force of any economic system. The real fault rests with a people who are not sufficiently vigilant in holding the reins on their government. As John Stuart Mill stated in his classic essay, *On Liberty*:

Let them be left without a government, every body of Americans is able to improvise one, and to carry on that or any other public business with a sufficient amount of intelligence, order, and decision. This is what every free people ought to be: and a people capable of this is certain to be free; it will never let itself be enslaved by any man or body of men because these are able to seize and pull the reins of the central administration. (*On Liberty*, W.W. Norton & Company, p. 104)

In our recent history, however, we almost seem eager to enslave and shackle ourselves with a heavy chain of laws and taxes. Usually under the guise of helping someone or

other or providing for this or that, such laws and taxes may seem justified to a reasonable people. Yet, piling laws and taxes on top of each other ultimately places a heavy burden on society. And this burden becomes more oppressive as laws become agents for dispensing with the normal forces of a free market. We should not quickly forget the greatest danger that John Stuart Mill saw in a rapidly growing government:

The third and most cogent reason for restricting the interference of government is the great evil of adding unnecessarily to its power. Every function superadded to those already exercised by the government causes its influence over hopes and fears to be more widely diffused, and converts, more and more, the active and ambitious part of the public into hangers-on of the government, or of some party which aims at becoming the government. (*On Liberty*, p. 102)

Nor should we forget the words of Henry David Thoreau who wrote in a similar vein:

... this government never of itself furthered any enterprise, but by the alacrity with which it got out of its way. It does not keep the country free. It does not settle the west. It does not educate. The character inherent in the American people has done all that has been accomplished; and it would have done somewhat more, if the government had not sometimes got in its way. (*On the Duty of Civil Disobedience*, The Simple Life Press.)

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A number of years ago, as I was leaving O'Hare Airport to fly to my new home in California, I caught sight of an article in a local newspaper. It reported that the Chicago City Council was considering a proposal of the Illinois Gasoline Retailers Association to make it illegal to display signs that posted the price of gasoline at local service stations. The rationale was that getting rid of unsightly signs would create a better environment for the city.

Settling back in the airplane, I felt content and happy to escape from a city that allowed such blatant collusion between business and government. But as I started to read a complimentary copy of the *L.A. Times* that the airline had kindly provided, my eyes were drawn to a headline: "State Assembly Considers Limits to Optometrist Advertising."

The airline attendant could only stare when I asked her for an Italian lemonade. ☉

Individual Liberty

I must not, in picking to pieces the notion that wishes are rights, leave the impression that wishes, of and by themselves, are proper objects of scorn. On the contrary, wishes, hopes, aspirations are among the most important forces motivating human progress, evolution, emergence. At issue here is only the means of their gratification.

IDEAS ON
LIBERTY



We who reject illusory schemes are not denying the good life to others but merely pointing out that these political nostrums can lead only to desolatory dead ends. No good end can be reached by choosing a wrong way.

While it is not the purpose here to explain the right way, that way is far from a secret—even though it be but little practiced and only slightly perceived. The right way is the greatest gratifier of human wishes ever come upon—when allowed to operate. It is as morally sound as the Golden Rule. It is the way of willing exchange, of common consent, of self-responsibility, of open opportunity. It respects the right of each to the product of his own labor. It limits the police force to keeping the peace. It is the way of the free market, private property, limited government. On its banner is emblazoned Individual Liberty.

LEONARD E. READ, "When Wishes Become Rights"

Barry W. Poulson

The Constitutional Crisis: An Historical Perspective

As we approach the bicentennial of the ratification of the Constitution, Americans face what many regard as a constitutional crisis. A resolution calling for a constitutional convention to limit the spending powers of government has been approved by thirty-one out of a required thirty-four states. Over two hundred other constitutional amendments, many of them dealing with economic issues, have been proposed in Congress in the last three years. We seem to be rapidly approaching a state of constitutional anarchy in which a host of economic problems remain unresolved within the framework of the Constitution. If we are to avoid a constitutional crisis, we must understand the origins of the economic provisions in the Constitution and what has happened to those provisions through Supreme Court interpretation over time.

In 1776 Adam Smith published the *Wealth of Nations*, the foundation of modern economic science,

wherein he explained the basis for American prosperity:

Plenty of good land and liberty to manage their own affairs in their own way, seem to be the two great causes of the prosperity of all new colonies. In the plenty of good land the English colonies of North America, though, no doubt, very abundantly provided, are, however, inferior to those of the Spaniards and Portuguese, and not superior to some of those possessed by the French before the late war. But the political institutions of the English colonies have been more favorable to the improvement and cultivation of this land, than those of any of the other three nations.¹

As Smith pointed out, America began not only with an abundance of resources, but more importantly, with a set of political institutions that had evolved over centuries in England. As citizens of the British Empire, Americans enjoyed property rights embodied in the British constitution and defined and enforced through common law. The origins of those property rights can be traced back to the Magna Charta in 1215, which states that no freeman "shall be arrested or detained in person, or deprived of his freehold,

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