TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

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It was only when the supply and prices of farmhouse fixer-uppers in Tuscany and Umbria reached a critical point, twenty or so years ago, that English-speaking visitors to Italy began to notice the large region to their south. In addition to affordable real estate, it offered rugged natural beauty and inhabitants who couldn't have cared less about attracting tourism, a refreshing alternative to the manicured, Anglophone Chiantishire model. Those of us who hiked the region's hills and mountains, explored its wilder Etruscan rock-cut tombs, admired its medieval towns, and kayaked in its volcanic lakes felt adventurous even just knowing this wonderful land existed. The food was good too and in many ways indistinguishable from that over the border. The region's olive oil was often better than that of its more famous neighbors, as were the many local beans, greens, and mushrooms. Meanwhile, in the southern part of the region, adjacent to Campania, water buffalo gave excellent mozzarella. The political and geophysical-gastronomic distinctions were similarly blurred on the mountainous east, where there is a long border with Abruzzo and short ones with Molise and the Marche. But since the region's restaurants and trattorias until recently largely ignored its rich gastronomic heritage, food tourism continued to go elsewhere.

As a result, when, in the early 1990s, I would tell friends that I was translating a gastronomic history of the Lazio region, the usual response was, "Huh?" I've been explaining the Lazio region to English-speaking visitors ever since. Allow me to summarize. The regional borders of Italy can, with a moderate stretch, be compared to the national borders of Africa: just substitute "foods" for "tribes." They often represent political boundaries that may work on paper but do not necessarily reflect the divisions practiced by the actual people who live there or cut much ice with the sheep in the Apennines and the water buffalo in the former Pontine marshes. Like all Italian regions, Lazio is divided into provinces: Rome, extending in all directions from the national capital; Viterbo and Rieti to the north; Frosinone and Latina to the south. Unlike, say, Tuscany and

Emilia-Romagna, which contain numerous cities with strong identities of their own (think Pisa and Arezzo, Parma and Modena, in addition to Florence and Bologna), the small provincial capitals of Lazio have always been overshadowed by the Eternal City. How could they not be? Thus we have a region—one of tremendous natural variety dominated by agriculture and pastoralism—at the service of a capital city ruled for much of its history by emperors and popes. In this book (a greatly revised and expanded edition of that earlier translation), Oretta tells the captivating story, through its people and their food, of the continuity and coexistence of this unique capital and its surrounding countryside with its multifaceted hinterland—not just popes, peasants, and shepherds, but Jews, poets, politicians, paupers, priests, nuns, brides, grooms, innkeepers, fishermen, and movie stars.

The revisions to and expansion of the original Italian book have been made for this edition and have not been published in Italian. Oretta writes for educated Italians in a spirited and lighthearted way. We have tried to gloss or annotate allusions that educated English speakers would find mysterious. Such notes are necessarily laconic, but—I would suggest—could be jumping off points for explorations in Latin and Italian literature, history, political theory, geography, sociology, urban planning, and agronomy. Oretta touches all these subjects, and more.

I've preferred to use the Italian Lazio to the Latin Latium, though that archaism still turns up in English. Modern Lazio only partly coincides with ancient Latium and so should have a different name. The Italian adjective form of Lazio, *laziale*, offers no solution in English, so for this I have kept with the Latin and use Latian.

Since Rome and its river, the Tiber, are household words in English, Roma and Tevere are translated. Otherwise, the region's toponyms have no equivalents and are necessarily given in Italian. Ancient names are left in Latin. For example, aqueducts that existed in antiquity are spelled *aqua* (Latin), while papal constructions are called *acqua* (Italian), which is how both sets are known in English.

The recipes may be historic, but they are meant to be cooked—not that we are expecting frog frittata (recipe on page 194) to become all the rage—and have accordingly been recast to bring them closer to the format Anglo-American cooks have every right to expect. The Italian future and future perfect tenses have been eliminated so that most actions are now in chronological order. Ingredients are presented in order of appearance instead of importance, the Italian way. Nevertheless, we've tried to keep a lid on the Anglicization so that the recipes would still convey something of the traditions they represent. For this reason, most prepping is in the body of the recipe, as Oretta wrote it, not the ingredients list, as is current in modern English-language cookbooks. I have

more to say on the specifics of the recipes, such as measurements and substitutions, at the beginning of that section. We are less accommodating about substitutions than modern cookbooks like to be, but if you make some allowances for eels, frogs, some of the offal, and some of the game, the recipes are really quite accessible (and delicious).

Translating Oretta is a privilege, a pleasure, and a challenge. You don't even want to know what translating Italian recipes is like (add enough salt and cook it till it's done?). The recipes would not be so easy to follow without the careful ministrations of our copy editor, Sharon Silva, nor, for that matter, would the text. For her skill, knowledge, and patience she has our profound thanks. Oretta joins me in thanking too our agent, Jennifer Griffin. And finally, our most affectionate thanks to Darra Goldstein, Sheila Levine, Kate Marshall, and Dore Brown at the University of California Press, who have given this book, long after its initial low-profile publication in Italy, the home I have always felt it deserved.