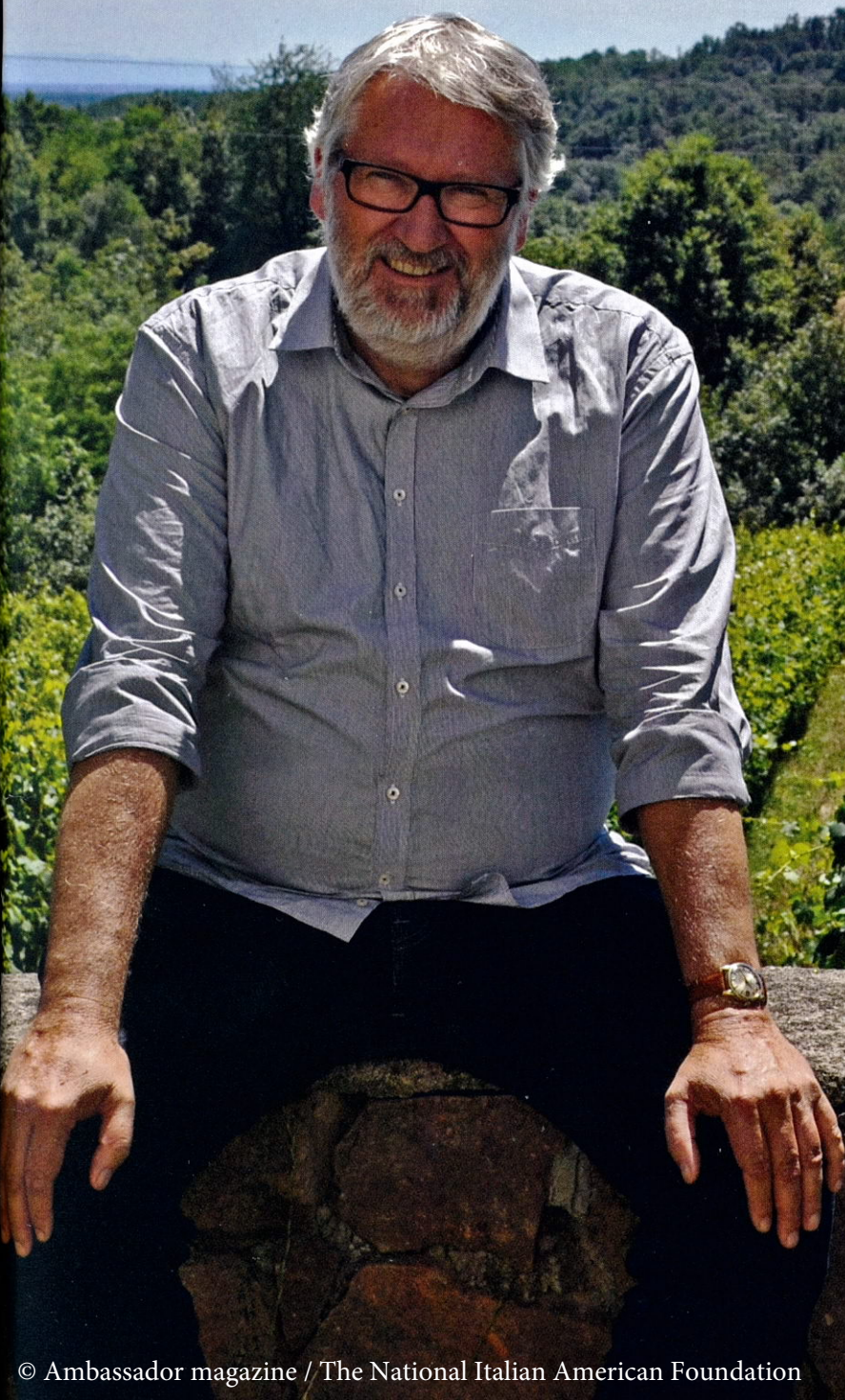


# Ambassador



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**Reviving Piemonte's Abandoned Vineyards**

**The Real La Cucina Povera**

**Restoring Florence's Masterpieces**

**Ciao Italia Goes Piemontese!**

**Anniversary Gala Preview**

**Grappa's Bitter End?**





## Raises Bottom Lines

Delivering keynote remarks on the state of financial education in Italy this past April, Annamaria Lusardi gave Il Salone del Risparmio conference participants in Milan advice they could take to the bank: “We won’t thrive if we’re not financially literate.”

The founder and director of the Global Financial Literacy Excellence Center (GFLEC) at the George Washington University School of Business, in Washington, D.C., Lusardi is a financial literacy advocate. Financial literacy means understanding how to manage money. Most people don’t.



More than 92 million Americans recently gave themselves a grade of C, D or F on their knowledge of personal finance. Lusardi knows this is a worldwide problem, similarly affecting such nations as Italy, Germany, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Japan. A November 2015 GFLEC survey found American adults ranked 14th among their counterparts in 148 countries in basic personal financial knowledge.

When Lusardi’s interest in financial literacy began, the subject wasn’t considered important among mainstream economists. “It was an irrelevant topic,” says Lusardi, who earned a bachelor’s degree in her native Italy, at Bocconi University, in Milan, studying under Mario Monti (later Italy’s prime minister), and a doctorate at Princeton, studying under Nobel Prize-winning economist Angus Deaton.

Lusardi says it’s time to stop passing the buck in raising financial IQs: “We must all be ambassadors for financial literacy.”

— Douglas Gladstone

## Digs Figs

A fig’s sweetness will tempt your sweet tooth. The sugary fruit from the ficus tree has a legacy extending thousands of years through different countries and cultures. It’s even referenced in literature — from the Bible to Roman mythology. Richard DeBenedetto possesses his own legacy of experience beginning at age 7, when he started working in the family business, DeBenedetto Orchards.

In 1934, brothers Mauro and John DeBenedetto, from Bisceglie, Italy, bought their first orchard in the Golden State’s San Joaquin Valley. Mauro’s youngest son, Richard, at age 32, left the chemical industry and rejoined the family’s orchard business in 1974.

“A hard-working approach to life,” says DeBenedetto, recalling his father’s advice about cultivating the soil to earn a living. In 1984, he started his own company, DeBenedetto Agricultural Services, and currently owns and manages 4,500 acres of figs, almonds and walnuts, in Madera County, Calif.



Today, DeBenedetto Orchards is one of the largest independent fresh fig growers, packers and shippers in the United States. DeBenedetto’s 31-year-old son, Christopher, the future owner of the company, ensures that his family’s roots are firmly planted with ficus trees — using the wisdom, ethics and a family lineage that his father handed down to him. And DeBenedetto will always cherish his heritage: “Italians are a fun loving, hardworking people.” Website: <http://freshfigs.com>

— Robert Bartus Jr.

# Persons of Interest