**Italians in Canada**

By: Amanda Duffy

**Description:**

Italians used what was available to them to alter their original recipes when they first immigrated to Canada.

**Entry:** Italians immigrated to Canada in sizeable at the beginning of the 20th Century. When they first came over to Canada, they brought some of their classic traditional recipes over with them. Upon arriving in Canada, due in part to the change in climate compared to Italy, they discovered that they were unable to get certain fresh foods they had available back home. They began to improvise and adapted their recipes to what they had available to them. Overtime they gained the ability to import some items and began producing some of the produce themselves in Canada and selling it as well as canning it to sell it further away. Items that would now be found in any grocery store and are widely used such as olive oil, black olives, roma tomatoes were all unavailable and pasta was unheard of. Years later in the beginning of the 50s Gene Cioni opened an Italian restaurant in Calgary, Alberta a first outside of the Toronto and Montreal areas. He brought Italian food to the west of Canada, importing ingredients from the brand Unico in Toronto. He had to adapt his recipes as well to what he had available at the time. Using iceberg lettuce for salads because it was the only kind of lettuce that was available to him. He brought many different flavor profiles to the west that the people had never experienced before such as anchovies and lemon-olive oil dressing. Gene Cioni was innovative in his menu items creating a dish called spavoli, a combination of spaghetti and ravioli for people who couldn’t decide between the two options. He had to import ingredients such as canned tomatoes, cheeses, olives, olive oil, and anchovies. For Italians there has always been a big importance on fresh foods and using what is locally available. They prefer slow cooking, making things from scratch themselves. Making their own pasta and pasta sauce, now some may use boxed pasta or jarred sauce, but they typically prefer to make it fresh themselves when they can. Some even make their own sauce in bulk and can it for future use throughout the year. Its hard to believe there was a time when dishes such as pasta or pizza were unheard of, but this was only a short 70 years ago that these dishes were unavailable and unheard of.