



## **Be Cool! Learn Italian Culture and Cuisine with Lidia**

Maria teresa Cometto (February 28, 2011)



Italian is becoming cooler and cooler in New York 200 American children in Harlem learn Italian culture and cuisine with the celebrity chef Lidia Bastianich

On March 2nd, from 10 am to 11 am, at the Our Lady of Lourdes elementary school in Harlem (468 W 143rd Street, New York, [www.ourladyoflourdesschool.net](http://www.ourladyoflourdesschool.net) [2]) the famous chef Lidia Bastianich will meet 200 children who are studying Italian. Lidia - the author of bestsellers, star of TV shows, owner of many high-end restaurants in the U.S. and co-founder of the maxi-food emporium Eataly - will talk about Italian cuisine and culture and have a Q&A session with the children who have prepared questions for her in Italian.

Our Lady of Lourdes School is one of approximately 100 schools in the Tri-state area of New York, Connecticut and New Jersey where more than 19,000 students attend Italian language courses, which are funded and supported by IACE (Italian American Committee on Education). IACE is a non-profit organization that operates with funding from the Italian Government and is under the supervision of the Italian Consulate General of Italy in New York: its goal is promoting the study of the Italian language and culture ([www.iacelanguage.org](http://www.iacelanguage.org) [3]).

Our Lady of Lourdes School (OLL) is a success story. It educates students in pre-kindergarten



through eighth grades, all of which receive some form of foreign language instruction (lower grades learn Italian and the upper grades learn Spanish). OLL serves students of diverse backgrounds, with Latino and African-American being the races to which the majority of students identify. In spite of receiving 100 percent free lunch and serving families, the majority of which live at or below the poverty line, OLL's academic excellence is recognized through its Middle States Accreditation (and the school is rated 4 over 5 stars on GreatSchools.org).

The morning of March 2nd will begin with a chorus of children singing in Italian "Hello!" and "Welcome!", and a greeting by the IACE President Berardo Paradiso. Then Lidia will answer students' questions.

This Lidia's "lesson" is one of many initiatives promoted by IACE in addition to regular programs, such as Tutti all'Opera ("Let's All go to the Opera"), which involves thousands of students every year who attend performances at the Dicapo Opera Theatre in Manhattan. This year IACE has also opened "Italian Forever KIDS" - a center with a library and Italian language courses for children of all ages - at the John D. Calandra Italian American Institute (25 West 43rd Street, New York).

Italian is one of the most requested languages by high school students in New York, after Chinese but more so than French, according to the latest statistics from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL).

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#### **Links**

- [1] <http://test.casaitaliananyu.org/files/lidiagrandchildren1298925750jpg>
- [2] <http://www.ourladyoflourdesschool.net>
- [3] <http://www.iacelanguage.org>