andrea pieroni

ethnobiologist · full professor of ethnobiology, university of gastronomic sciences, pollenzo

Andrea Pieroni studies how **local ecological knowledge changes over time and across places**, with particular attention to linguistic, religious and diasporic minorities: how communities gather, cook, heal with and value plants and fungi, and how they **perceive climate change and the ecosystems they live in**. Since the late 1990s he has worked with local communities across the Mediterranean, the Alps, the Balkans, Eastern Europe, the Middle East and its fringes, and with migrant households in Western cities.

beginnings

Born in Lucca in 1967, he is, in his own words, a **village boy from the Garfagnana**, the valley of the Serchio in the Tuscan Apennines, where he grew up in a family for whom gathering wild plants was part of everyday life. As a teenager he collected minerals and seemed destined for geology, but a course in phytotherapy, which he followed at seventeen over twelve weekends paid for with his own savings, turned his attention to plants for good. At nineteen he led the Friends of the Earth group in Livorno. His years in the environmental and peace movements left a lasting conviction: ethnobiology must be relevant to people's needs and contribute to a fairer world.

training

He trained in the life sciences at the University of Pisa (1993). Medical botany and pharmacognosy, and above all the question of how people perceive and use their remedies, drew him towards ethnobotany. Supported by two Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellowships of the European Commission, he completed a PhD in Life Sciences at the University of Bonn in 1998.

The anthropologist Maria Elena Giusti, with whom he worked in the field for about a decade, taught him the craft of fieldwork. The work of Nina Etkin on the interface between food and medicine was a decisive intellectual influence, as was Tim Ingold's idea of doing research *with* people rather than *on* them.

career

2000–2002	Research Associate, School of Pharmacy, University of London (Mars Foundation Research Fellowship)
2003–2009	Lecturer, then Senior Lecturer, School of Life Sciences, University of Bradford, UK
2003–2005	Visiting Research Associate Professor, Wageningen University, the Netherlands
2009–2016	Associate Professor of Ethnobotany, University of Gastronomic Sciences, Pollenzo
2011–2017	Postgraduate Programme Director, University of Gastronomic Sciences

since 2016	Full Professor, University of Gastronomic Sciences
2017–2021	Rector, University of Gastronomic Sciences
since 2020	Visiting Research Fellow, Tishk International University, Erbil, Iraq
today	Coordinator, PhD Program in Ecogastronomy, Food Sciences and Cultures

research

His work is organised around four axes: foraging and foragers, including the contemporary neo-foraging of urban publics; human ecology and adaptation to depopulation, border shifts, market integration and climate pressure; migrants' food systems and the food–medicine continuum of the migrant household; and the making of food heritage and gastronomy. He prefers the label ethnobiologist to ethnobotanist, and argues for applied, participatory research, citizen science and a sustainability that is social as well as environmental.

He has coordinated the EU-funded RUBIA project on traditional food and medicinal plants around the Mediterranean (2003–2005) and led projects funded by the Leverhulme Trust, the UK Economic and Social Research Council, the European Research Council and the Italian Ministry of University and Research. He is the author of more than 280 peer-reviewed publications and has edited, among other volumes, *Traveling Cultures and Plants* (2007), *Ethnobotany in the New Europe* (2010) and *Ethnobotany and Biocultural Diversities in the Balkans* (2014).

editorial & service

He is the founder and Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Ethnobiology and Ethnomedicine* (since 2005) and Editor-in-Chief of *Gastronomy* (MDPI), and sits on the editorial boards of *Land* and the *Journal of Ethnopharmacology*, among others. He was President of the International Society of Ethnobiology (2010) and is President of the International Society for Gastronomic Sciences and Studies.

recognition

Honorary Member of the Academy of Sciences of Albania (2015); honorary citizen of Castelmezzano, Basilicata (2007); Distinguished Ethnobotanist Lecture, University of Kent (2019).

public

Author of the *Atlante gastronomico delle erbe* (2017), reprinted and published in Spanish in 2026 as *Hierbas. Atlas gastronómico de plantas silvestres del Mediterráneo*, and of a weekly column in *La Repubblica* (2016–2018). He has been interviewed by Deutschlandfunk and by the "How I Got Here" series of the SEB Student Blog.

off the field

He lives in Cologne, where he practises urban foraging. In his free time he follows contemporary art, experimental performance and the Eurovision Song Contest, keeps a large library of twentieth- and twenty-first-century poetry, cooks, above all pizza and filled pasta, and names the raspberry as his favourite plant.

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