



Making Italian America: Consumer Culture and the Production of Ethnic Identities (Critical Studies in Italian America (FUP))

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A fascinating exploration of consumer culture in Italian American history and life, the role of consumption in the production of ethnic identities, and the commodification of cultural difference

How do immigrants and their children forge their identities in a new land--how does the ethnic culture they create thrive in the larger society? *Making Italian America* brings together new scholarship on the cultural history of consumption, immigration, and ethnic marketing to explore these questions by focusing on the case of an ethnic group whose material culture and lifestyles have been central to American life: Italian Americans.

As embodied in fashion, film, food, popular music, sports, and many other representations and commodities, Italian American identities have profoundly fascinated, disturbed, and influenced American and global culture. Discussing in fresh ways topics as diverse as immigrant women's fashion, critiques of consumerism in Italian immigrant radicalism, the Italian American influence in early rock 'n' roll, ethnic tourism in Little Italy, and Guido subculture, *Making Italian America* recasts Italian immigrants and their children as active consumers who, since the turn of the twentieth century, have creatively managed to articulate relations of race, gender, and class and create distinctive lifestyles out of materials the marketplace offered to them. The success of these mostly working-class people in making their everyday culture meaningful to them as well as in shaping an ethnic identity that appealed to a wider public of shoppers and spectators looms large in the political history of consumption. *Making Italian America* appraises how immigrants and their children redesigned the market to suit their tastes and in the process made Italian American identities a lure for millions of consumers.

Fourteen essays explore Italian American history in the light of consumer culture, across more than a century-long intense movement of people, goods, money, ideas, and images between Italy and the United States--a diasporic exchange that has transformed both nations. Simone Cinotto builds an imaginative analytical framework for understanding the ways in which ethnic and racial groups have shaped their collective identities and negotiated their place in the consumers' emporium and marketplace.

Grounded in the new scholarship in transnational U.S. history and the transfer of cultural patterns, *Making Italian America* illuminates the crucial role that consumption has had in shaping the ethnic culture and diasporic identities of Italians in America. It also illustrates vividly why and how those same identities--incorporated in commodities, commercial leisure, and popular representations--have become the object of desire for millions of American and global consumers.

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