

AMERICAN ACADEMY IN ROME

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American Academy in Rome Appoints Mark Bittman and Kathleen Finlay as Co-Directors of Rome Sustainable Food Project

Charting a vision for the future of institutional food, Bittman and Finlay will lead the next chapter of the ecogastronomic endeavor founded by Alice Waters and Mona Talbott in 2006



L: Mark Bittman. Photo by Jim Henkens. / R: Kathleen Finlay. Photo by Mel Barlow.

ROME, ITALY AND NEW YORK, NY – November 1, 2024 – The American Academy in Rome (AAR), the dynamic international community that supports innovative artists, writers, and scholars living and working together, today announced the appointment of Mark Bittman and Kathleen Finlay as co-directors of its Rome Sustainable Food Project (RSFP), which nourishes scholarship and conviviality with seasonal, nutritious, and delicious food served at the communal table. Finlay and Bittman, partners who are based in New York’s Hudson Valley, assumed their posts this fall.

“The American Academy in Rome is a laboratory where people from across disciplines work together to generate new ideas that help reframe the human experience. The Rome Sustainable Food Project connects creativity to nature and climate. With food systems accounting for at least a quarter of global greenhouse gas emissions, the Rome Sustainable Food Project models the way institutions can feed a community while promoting the health of people and the planet. We could not ask for better stewards of this important work than Kathleen and Mark,” stated **Peter N. Miller**, President of the American Academy in Rome.

Kathleen Finlay, a Visiting Scholar at the American Academy in Rome in 2022, is a leader in the regenerative agricultural movement. She serves as the President of the Glynwood Center for Regional Food and Farming, the

premier hub for food and farming professionals that innovates programs to increase access to regionally produced food while resourcing regenerative farmers. Finlay also founded and leads Pleiades, a membership organization working to advance women's leadership in the sustainability movement. Previously, Finlay was a Director of Harvard Medical School's Center for Health and the Global Environment where she developed and shaped programs to educate communities about the connection between human health and the global environment.

"Highlighting food at the Academy has the opportunity to go far beyond providing meals—it is an avenue to reconnect with and repair our relationship to the natural world as well as incorporate the scholarship of the Academy into an important aspect of campus life—one that can build and reflect the community," stated Finlay.

One of the most influential voices shaping mainstream attitudes about food and agriculture, Mark Bittman has been writing about food since 1980 and has been a leading voice in global food culture and policy for more than a generation. In addition to writing the long-running weekly *New York Times* column "The Minimalist," he has authored more than 30 books, including *How to Cook Everything* (and its many spin-offs), *Food Matters*, *VB6* (the first popular book about part-time veganism and an instant #1 NYT bestseller), and in 2021, *Animal, Vegetable, Junk: A History of Food from Sustainable to Suicidal*, which the *New York Times* called "epic and engrossing."

"Working alongside Kathleen, I'm thrilled to bring more awareness to sustainable food practices on a global platform. The Rome Sustainable Food Project offers an incredible opportunity to address critical issues in our food systems, from reducing waste to supporting regenerative agriculture. I look forward to helping reshape the way we think about food and sustainability while expanding access to nutritious, ethical food," stated Bittman.

Founded in 2006 under the guidance of Alice Waters and Mona Talbott, the Rome Sustainable Food Project currently serves approximately 80 members of the Academy community and their guests twice a day. Guided by the spirit of the Roman table and using the Academy's vegetable garden as well as that of nearby farms and organic suppliers, the kitchen cooks seasonally and sustainably. Interns and volunteers devote a half day a week to garden work, which yields salads, greens, herbs, and radishes from the garden that are served at the dining table.

About the American Academy in Rome

Since 1894 the American Academy in Rome has functioned as a residential center for research and creativity. Its purpose has always been to enable highly motivated scholars and artists to immerse themselves in the experience of Rome, ancient and modern, and to be inspired by daily exchange with the other members of this creative community. The Academy has made an outsized impact on the intellectual and cultural life of the United States, and its Fellows and Residents have been recognized with 622 Guggenheim Fellowships, 74 Pulitzer Prizes, 54 MacArthur Fellowships, 26 Grammy awards, 5 Pritzker Prizes, 9 Poet Laureate appointments, and 5 Nobel Prizes. Approximately 35 Fellows are selected as winners of the Rome Prize each year by rotating juries in the different fields.

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