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*Italians and foreigners at dinner during an event of 'Benvenuti a cena'. | Credit: RomAltruista*

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## Cooking initiative 'Benvenuti a cena' fights migrants' isolation

Latest update : 2017/09/25

By [ANSA \(http://www.infomigrants.net/en/author/ansa/\)](http://www.infomigrants.net/en/author/ansa/)

**"Benvenuti a cena", or welcome to dinner, is a project in Rome aimed at helping migrants meet Italians while sharing a meal organized in a private home.**

A host, four foreigners, four Italians and a cultural mediator sit together to have dinner and talk about their personal history and typical dishes from their country thanks to a project called "Benvenuti a cena", organized by the Rome-based association RomAltruista to foster integration and fight the isolation that can be experienced by migrants. The initiative kicked off in 2016 to help migrants "feel integrated in society" after they arrive, "especially in a difficult context like Rome", the project's coordinator Diana Radeva told ANSA.

### A dinner to forge friendships

The project was inspired by an Australian initiative launched in 2013, called "Welcome dinner project". "We implemented their model", organizing dinners with locals and people who had recently arrived and "creating opportunities for people to get to know each other better" while sharing food, she said. Eating together offers an opportunity to "listen to each other" and establish "reciprocal confidence" while "reflecting on real problems to find innovative solutions for cohabitation in a multiethnic society", said Radeva.

Those interested in participating in the project can find more information on the project's website. Meals are organized in the home of one of the participants. "There are people who open their homes to welcome people". Everyone brings a dish to share with a preference for typical delicacies. "The dish must have a history that involved the person or their culture", she explained. A mediator attends the dinner "to help participants interact" and help with the organization.

So far, participants have given positive feedback, said Radeva, who said the meals inspire a "positive atmosphere" and help people open up and become "almost friends".

## Food helps fight prejudice

The project is organized in partnership with associations Cittadini del Mondo and Prime Italia, who support foreign citizens in Rome. The inaugural dinner took place in December 2016 and so far seven events have been organized with a total of 80 participants from 16 different countries in Africa, Europe and Latin America who are living in Rome. The organizer said that, "this is an important aspect so that relationships established during an event can have continuity". The dinner in a private home offers the possibility "of getting to know foreign people first hand". "We want to give people an opportunity to fight prejudice".

The next events will be held on September 29 and October 6. "The project is very recent, we hope to involve more people in the future, especially mediators and foreigners, creating positive and sustainable integration". (

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