

That's Amore!—Sort of

Marisa Iallouardo (June 17, 2008)

An Italian tries to conquer American reality TV with charm, passion and oh yes, a kiddie pool full of spaghetti and meatballs

These days, it's almost a given that every successful reality TV show will have a spin-off. The honor will usually be bestowed upon the runner-up (see: [I Love New York](#) [1]), or, the most memorable character from the season (see: [The Hills](#) [2]). Since [A Shot at Love with Tila Tequila](#) [3], a bisexual dating show starring a pint-sized entertainer/internet celebrity/nude model, was one of MTV's most successful shows (its finale was watched by some 6.2 million people), there was no doubt it too would have a spin-off. Who was given the honors this time around? Domenico Nesci, a 27-year-old from Milan, arguably the most popular character from the show, who won over American audiences by wearing a red-white-and-green Speedo, neon headbands, and an Italian accent. The name of his dating show? [That's Amore!](#) [4] naturally.

That's Amore debuted on MTV on March 2 and ran for only six episodes. It featured 15 girls vying for Nesci's love and attention by competing in various challenges to win his heart and become his "bambina." Challenges—which were delivered via pizza box—included wading through a kiddie pool full of spaghetti and meatballs, with each girl attempting to put the most meatballs in her mouth, cooking the best chicken parmesan and making a pizza in the least amount of time. But the food wasn't the only testament to Italian "culture." The outside of the entire mansion was lit up in red, white and green and inside was a confessional of sorts, where a table with a red-and-white checkered tablecloth was set up for the bambinas to talk about their feelings for Nesci, all while sausages and prosciutto hung on strings behind them.

Although Nesci is from Milan, when he brings the two finalists—child-care worker Megan and club hostess Kim—to Italy to meet his family, they actually visit [Acquaro](#) [5], a small town in the [Vibo Valentia](#) [6] province in Calabria where his grandparents are from, presumably because with its village atmosphere (this includes a donkey and a band processing into piazza) it's a bit more "authentic" than the big city.

Nesci himself had been working as a waiter in L.A. before being chosen as a contestant on A Shot at Love. With dark hair and greenish-hazel eyes he describes himself as the "Mastroianni of the 2000s" and when asked by the Italian newspaper [Corriere della Sera](#) [7] if he helped bring the mythic "Italian man" back to America, he basically says that Americans have accepted the way he is: sweet, nice, passionate. That American men can be a bit "rozzi", and that he knows what to do with women. "Le invito a cena a casa, apro una bottiglia di champagne, cucino piatti italiani, dico cose carine. È una tecnica infallibile. In poche ore sono già nel letto," he says. (I invite them to the house, open a bottle of champagne, cook Italian dishes, say nice things. It's an infallible technique. In a few hours, they're already in the bed.)



Now, here's the thing, we've all realized by now that reality shows aren't, well, real. But sometimes, the stereotypes within this show were just too much to handle. Really, did the girls need to stand on pedestals attempting to be Roman statues or cook chicken parm? It's so ridiculous that it's actually kind of funny. But honestly, I am truly scared for Americans if they think that this is what Italy is: donkeys in the street, sausages hanging from the ceiling and boys with accents asking "Will you be my bambina?" So while Nesci can be quirky and endearing and does seem a bit more genuine than, say, Brett Michaels in [Rock of Love](#) [8], let's hope that if they ever shoot a second season they do it with a lot less of the stereotypical "pizza, spaghetti and mandolino" and a lot more of what present-day Italy actually is. Although, come to think, there weren't any mafia-related challenges. Thank God for small miracles?

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