

# A HELPING HAND



Bemused by all that wild, seemingly random gesticulation you experienced last time you were in Italy? Photojournalist and expat **Jim Andrew** heads for the market and provides a guide to the complex lexicon of the Italian hand gesture



**Y**ou can't help but notice it. Visit any market, bar, restaurant or workplace in Italy and you will witness the locals flailing about, wildly waving their hands and arms around as they chat to each other. Could it be the latest European dance craze sweeping across the continent? Or an innovative, eco-friendly, EU directive to solve the energy crisis, requiring all European citizens to pretend to be mini windmills?

No, don't worry, it's all totally normal. Unlike us uptight northern Europeans, for Italians, talking is a full body-contact sport. In fact, there are occasions when actual words become pretty much obsolete, the gestures saying it all.

Okay, but how do you know what these moody, Mediterranean movements mean? Our handy, cut-out-and-keep (ever so slightly tongue in cheek) *Gesticulation for Beginners* guide should help you converse more freely with the natives, but be warned, don't scratch your nose when ordering your after dinner cappuccino! You might be insulting the waitress.

**1** **Finger poked into the cheek and then twisted back and forth.** Used to show approval of something. For example, "Yummy! This *gelato* is the bee's knees!" Note – the word *gelato* can be substituted for pretty much anything else you find attractive – *Sophia Loren*, *Monica Bellucci*, etc.