

Cooking & Wine Vacation



Tastemotions

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Delight your senses
Food & Wine

When one thinks of Tuscany one reflexively thinks of the artistry that flowed from the works of Da Vinci, Michelangelo, Raphael and Puccini. These masters unlocked our senses and fueled our passions, aspirations and hunger for more and greater things. Tuscany has another form of artistic expression - something we might argue even fuels our collective passions even more - and this is the art of Tuscan cuisine.

This art form drives our very essence as it inspires our senses and drives our emotions.

Like a potent aphrodisiac, our cuisine seduces and inspires us to love. The famous saying 'the best way to a man's heart is through his stomach' is an understatement as our cuisine is a passion of love and discovery as is constantly evolves leading us towards a gastronomical Nirvana! The secret of our Tuscan Cuisine is and always will be its simplicity. It follows the age old traditions of using the freshest local ingredients, respecting the seasonality and creating appetizing delights using only a few carefully selected ingredients and then adding just the right amount of feeling, through choice seasonings - this is not something precisely measured in a weight, instead it comes from an instinct and a feeling, and accounts at the same time to personal taste. This style of cooking should appeal and inspire everyone.

We are happy and fortunate to live in a land with an abundance of natural ingredients. From sea food and fish, meats and cheeses, olive oil and wine, porcini mushrooms and fresh vegetables, farro and beans, freshly grown garden herbs, homemade pasta and breads.

We are excited to share with you our love and passion for the Tuscan cuisine, wine and culture in the beauty of one of the most beautiful villas in the rolling hills of Lucca!

Chef

Pestritu George Valentin

Sommelier

Laudat Larisa Lavinia

Saturday

If you dream of staying in a luxurious, stylish house amidst beautiful Tuscan countryside where vines, olive groves and cypress trees make up the breathtaking views...come and stay at The Villa !!!!!!!



Your Chef and Sommelier are delighted to introduce you to your home during the cooking itinerary.

Having the joy of preparing your own Italian lunch or dinner under the watchful eye of your Chef, from appetizers to desserts. Learn new kitchen techniques and special tips, delight in new flavors and aromas and relish the relaxing and fun atmosphere. Your culinary experience will not be complete without being paired with wines chosen for you to taste meal by meal. Enjoying a glass of wine through our senses and tactile sensations, getting to know the territory where is produced and creating new friendships.



Sunday - Discover the reality that surrounds us

*In the morning visit one of the **historical villas** of the Lucchese area with a tour of the gardens and the villa at just ten minutes driving distance from your home away from home. Villa Torrigiani which is one of the most opulent and spectacular in the whole Lucca area dates back to the mid-16th century. The "Garden of Flora" is the clearest example of Lucchese taste, an amusing and surprising ensemble of grottoes, nymph temples, flowers, masks, secret water games, all intended to make you feel as if you were in a fairy-tale..*



*After seeing this architectural gem we are going to stop in a local winery in the nearby medieval city of Montecarlo for **winery tour**. The owners will delight us with their wine and olive oil obtained through organic agriculture . The Montecarlo area has an old tradition regarding white wines production that for more than a century participated to many galla tables, made with grapes such as vermentino, roussane, semillon, sauvignon and pinot blanc but also the well known chardonnay. In the last 10-15 years the red varieties such as sangiovese, merlot, cabernet and syrah are showing the vocation for viticulture of this territory.*

Cooking school lesson: *Get started with the cooking, speaking about extra virgin olive oil and understanding through tasting the different varieties of olives and knead it with durum flour to obtain your own fresh pasta.*



Monday – Explore Chianti area and San Gimignano

Departure for Chianti that is an area of 300 square kilometers of pure Tuscany, situated in the center between Florence and Siena. A truly unending source of culture, humanity, scenery, architecture, gastronomy and wines. Entirely hilly covered in serried rows of vines, green forests or stony meadowland with olive groves, fortresses, parish churches and castles.



On clear days you can see forever, on misty days the light filter the colors and the objects as though through a smoky silk veil, and one seems to be leaving in a Renaissance landscape.

Amazing wines are produced in this district from four special grapes: Sangiovese and Canaiolo (black) and the Malvasia and Trebbiano (white).

*Visit the city of Greve in Chianti considered the gate of Chianti area with a characteristic square, little shops and sample Tuscan meats inside a very old and traditional butcher shop owned by the 8th generation: **Macelleria Falorni**. Don't miss to taste the flavors of "cinta senese" pork.*

*We are going to tour, wine taste and have lunch at the **Verazzano Castle** dated back in the 14th century known of being the birth place of the family Verrazzano.*



Giovanni da Verrazzano, celebrated navigator and discoverer of the bay of New York and the majority of the East Coast of America, was borne here in 1485. New York's bridge!



The towers of San Gimignano are the emblem of medieval Tuscany, ancient symbols of power. The whole historic center is an Unesco heritage and still today it is considered one of the best examples in Europe of urban organization during the Age of the Communes. It is borne on the ruins of an Etruscan village and had a strategic position on Via Francigena since 998.



Along with the amazing views, the ceramic and terracotta's shops are making our eyes to sparkle with unique pieces of artisan work, all entirely handmade and painted.



Feast your eyes and your taste buds at one of the world's best gourmet sights that is a member of the Gelato World Championship. Among the traditional flavors are unusual combinations such as rosemary-scented raspberries or pink grapefruit and sparkling wine.



The saffron here has a long history and as the legend say it the famous towers of Middle Ages were built upon the profit made by selling it. This "red gold" it is a certified product allowed to be cultivated just in this

*small Senese province. Enjoy your risotto tonight! And learn to master the preparation technique during your **cooking class lesson** and end your day with one of the most well-known dessert- Tiramisù. We promise that will pick-you-up!*



Tuesday - History, Art and Gastronomy of Lucca

Lovely Lucca is a pearl of a city hidden behind Renaissance walls that allows you to view the bell towers of the churches (Lucca is named also The City of the 100 churches), the red brick roofs, palace gardens and cobbled streets of the historic center, but also the imposing villas outside the walls. Home of Giacomo Puccini its medieval character is preserved until today. Your steps will lead you to the Roman Amphitheatre long ago mined for building stones and nowadays a quiet piazza.



*City of wealthy silk merchants that were investing their profits into the “Fattorias”, with a long history around the table enjoying wine and food, gives us the opportunity today to sip a glass of wine in the oldest **wine cellar** of the historic center and two generation knowledgeable choices of wines.*

*Sampling of local gourmet food in a historical shop-kingdom of taste and flavors enrich our gastronomic culture through the passion for excellence for “**delicatezze**”. The rolled pancetta of the Lucchesia is made with locally grown pigs, layers of fat and lean meat are seasoned with a paste made from garlic, pepper and rosemary. Used in cooking will enrich many dishes as beans and game. The pork sausage is a series of irregular shape cylindrical links of 7-9 cm. This Italian sausage from Lucchesia is consumed in short period of time after production in 4-5 days.*





The cuisine of Lucca is a balance of tastes divided in preparations of strong, decided flavors from the inland and more delicate flavors of the seaside cuisine. Is a large variety of soups as Minestrone prepared with seasonal vegies and garden aromatic

*herbs and pastas dressed with superb Ragù aromatized with bay leaves and cloves that we are going to prepare during today **cooking class lesson** . Together with a nutmeg besciamelle sauce and layers of fresh pasta will become a unique dish of Lasagna.*

Buccellato is a sweet aromatized bread with loaf shape or ring shape. Typical Lucchese dessert that among the ingredients has the raisin and the anice seeds that gives the particular flavor. We do have the saying. "For those who visit Lucca and don't eat buccellato, it's as if they have never visited at all!"



In the basket with vegetables, Lucca has the cardoon (cardo) cooked on gratin or " in umido"; the cale (cavolo nero- locally called "braschetta") for soups; the classic lucchese onions used for "pinzimonio" raw vegies and also ingredient for soups, pastas and in sauté. The Lucchese area has many types of beans such as : Cannellini beans from San

Ginese, the red bean- due to its texture and intense flavor it is used as a base for farro soup, the schiaccione beans from Pietrasanta, scritto beans and stringa beans.

The taste in the Lucchese kitchen is given by the intense use in dishes preparation of its extra virgin olive oil DOP (protected designation of origin).



Wednesday- The North part of Lucca- Garfagnana area

Departure for Garfagnana to meet the local producers for taste, shop and learn how the local pecorino cheese, salami and Tuscan prosciutto are made. Surrounded on East side by the Apuane Alps famous for its Carrara marble, North part by Lunigiana and East by the Apennins rolling down towards Modena, is an area with unique flavors linked to the tradition, culture and above all the people that live here. Mountain farming for cheese and fine meats, corn and farro- the most ancient cereal present today, cultivated in its country of origin, the Middle East since 7000 years B.C., flavored porcini mushrooms, chestnuts flour.



The pecorino cheese from Garfagnana is produced with sheep milk, fed with the rich grasses of the mountain areas. Can be eaten fresh or aged in every course, as a starter in antipasto toscano or grated on top of pastas and in baked vegetables pies and can also be served as dessert with honey, pears, dried fruits and mustard marmalades.



Castelnuovo is the principal town, situated in the heart of the green Garfagnana area cross by the Serchio River. Since 872 the town is defended by walls and castles, and you can absorb the medieval essence of the town step by step. It's not just a slow food area but also a slow tourism town.





*A typical dessert, called “**castagnaccio**” is made from the chestnut flour with the almost sweet taste(locally called sweet polenta) and who could afford it was putting on top pine nuts, raisin and orange zest. We are going to afford it during now days **cooKing class lesson!***

The flour once considered the principle food of the poor’s is used also to make a type of baked pancakes called “necci”, but also for biscuits and pastries.



***Prosciutto Bazzone** from Valle del Serchio has the origins in 1800s. Since 2004 has been part of the Slow Food movement and is still produced in the same way as old farming traditions. The prosciutto is seasoned with salt, pepper, spices, laurel, garlic and is aged between 20 to 36 months in stone tubs (pozza), just after that period of time being ready to eat. It is typically an elongated shape with a border of 4-5 cm called “**bazza**” which is how it got its name.*

As in the times of our grandparents, local cow farms raise animals using traditional techniques, often grazing in the wild. Bovine meat from Garfagnana has its identification certificate and has to be displayed separate from other cuts.



Thursday- Visit the King and Queens of Italy
Parmigiano Reggiano
Prosciutto di Parma and Modena's balsamic vinegar



*If you are fond in the Italian cuisine you cannot miss this journey to discover how true gastronomic gems are made. Seeing the traditional processing techniques with your own eyes at the **Parmigiano Reggiano** dairies will transform you in a truly estimator. The different flavors connected to the time of*

aging from 12 months to 36 months or more is making this cheese very versatile in the kitchen. A curiosity connected to these huge wheels of Parmigiano is that each wheel needs 110 gallons of cow milk to produce 99 pounds of cheese.



*Since Roman times, the unique conditions of the Parma region have made it possible to produce the highest quality of **Prosciutto di Parma** hams that have been appreciated by gourmets for century.*

*Visit to an “acetaia” vinegar house. **Aceto Balsamico di Modena** is synonymous with the culture and history of Modena with ageing methods that have been developed over the centuries.*



Friday- abundance of the Mediterranean Sea and Graduation Ceremony

With a full baggage of new discovers and knowledge you are having a half day to explore on your own and share your experience during our final cooking class lesson in this afternoon.

We are recommending the nearby cities of Montecatini Terme with its thermal waters and beautiful spa, Pisa with the Leaning Tower and Piazza dei Miracoli, Viareggio with its balneal beaches and seaside promenade or Pietrasanta with its marble sculptors and artists.



The Tuscan Archipelago with its seven islands is creating a perfect environment for a multitude of fishes and sea food. We are going to learn how to handle these delicate ingredients and transform them in a last delicious dinner all together.



Among the species most common are mussels and clams, shrimps and langoustine, lobsters and scallops, squid and octopus, anchovies and sardines, sea bass and sea bream, sole and turbot, sword fish and tuna.





Wine tasting -with your own private Sommelier to learn the tasting techniques through our senses - visual-olfactory -taste and tactile sensation. We are going awake our olfactory memory and define the bouquet of the wine through the most common descriptors.

Looking forward to hear your own wine aphorism during the wine seminar.

*A meal without wine is like a day without sunshine.
Louis Pasteur*



Graduation Ceremony

Saturday

Exchange address and emails, crying and laughing, last photos and good byes, last cup of Cappuccino! Followed by departures!

Miss you already and see you next time!

Grazie mille Valentino & Larisa