

TUSCAN TREASURE: VINO NOBILE DI MONTEPULCIANO

Tastes of Italia

THE BEST IN ITALIAN COOKING

OCTOBER 2016

The Best
Italian
Salami

*Make Fresh
Pasta Like A Pro*

PLUS A VILLA TO
REMEMBER

AUTUMN
IN FLORENCE

PERFECT DESSERTS
WITH WALNUTS

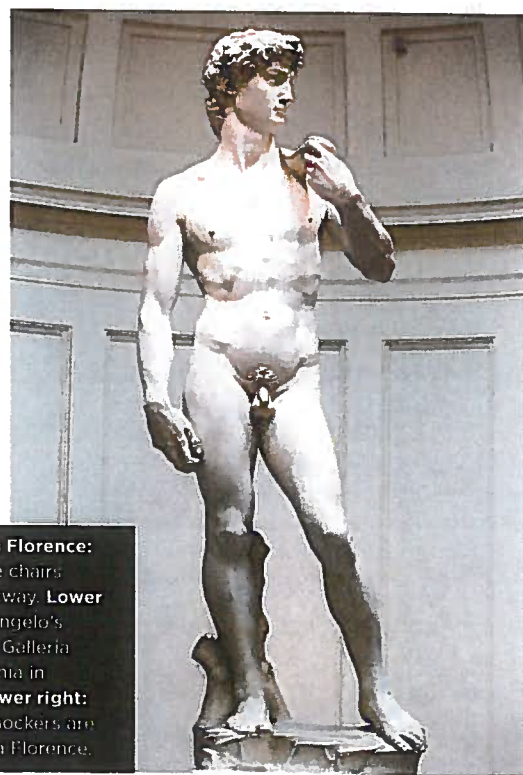


U.S. and CANADA \$5.95

Autumn in Florence

Bursting with fall's bounty, this Tuscan city offers recipes to savor in your own kitchen.

by Susan Van Allen



Scenes from Florence:
Top: Vintage chairs along a walkway. **Lower left:** Michelangelo's *David* in the Galleria dell'Accademia in Florence. **Lower right:** Lion door knockers are often seen in Florence.



GOOD TASTES

The most wonderful time of year to be in Florence is autumn. At harvest time the city becomes flavored with the bounty from Tuscany's farms, forests, and vineyards: freshly pressed olive oil, porcini mushrooms, truffles, chestnuts, and new wine. Tourist crowds have thinned, making it easier to stroll around the historic center.

To tag along with Linda Sorgiovanni on her Florence Foodies Walk is a divine way to get an insider's take on the city's autumn culinary scene.

Linda's a native of Australia, whose grandparents emigrated from Calabria to Perth in the 1940s. She grew up Down Under with delicious Italian food, and 16 years ago came to Florence to study Italian. Romance ensued, and now she's married to an Italian, mother of two boys, and lives in the San Frediano neighborhood. Her fun-loving spirit, along with boundless knowledge and passion for Tuscan food, sweeps eight of us curious travelers up the moment we meet her.

"My first job in Florence was translating for cooking classes," Linda tells me. "That's where I discovered how much I enjoyed introducing travelers to Florence through food and wine." These days she's moved on to design and lead highly praised private culinary tours throughout Tuscany, and created the Florence Foodie Tour to give visitors a solid introduction to the tastes of Florence, in just a few hours.

The adventure begins in the heart of the action, the Piazza della Repubblica, right next to Gilli, one of my favorite cafes in Italy, that's been around since 1733. Even though I've enjoyed many visits to this delicious city, Linda's tour, that zigzags around the historic center, took me to spots I've passed by many times but never ventured into. There was the humble Forno Top bakery where la signora sliced up her freshly made focaccia studded with grapes, and the Alimentari Uffizi where we settled into wooden tables with tumblers of red wine as owner Alessandro brought out platters of local cheeses and salumi. At an olive oil shop, we were treated to samples of fine oils and syrupy aged balsamic vinegar from Modena.

For a high end touch, we stopped at Procacci, an institution since 1885 on fashionable Via Tornabuoni, where we sipped prosecco and swooned over delicate panini slathered with truffle butter. Wine from the

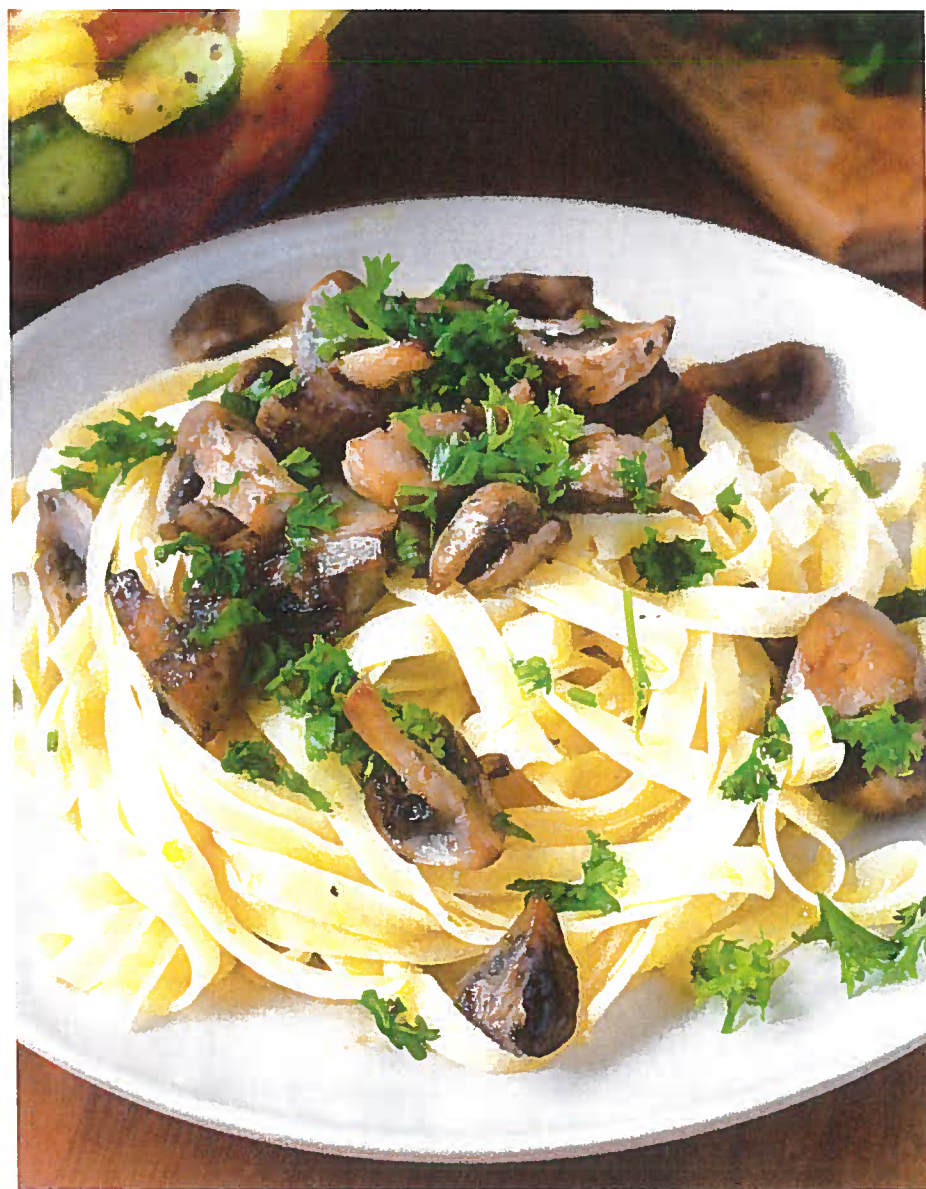
Antinori family fills the shelves of this tiny gem-of-a-spot, and Linda tells us that the Antinoris have been producing wine for 26 generations. We imagine what life was like here in Renaissance times when she stops the walk to point out a small arched opening near the main door of a palazzo, where folks in olden days would come a-knocking to fill their flask or jug. There are 20 of these buchette del vino left in the historic center, and now that Linda's opened our eyes, we notice more along our way. The tour sweetly ends with a top artisanal gelato shop, Carapina, where the freshest seasonal ingredients are used to create stunning flavors.

Savoring a pistacchio cona, I venture out to the nearby Piazza della Signoria. It's filled with tourists, lined with stunning statues and

the Palazzo Vecchio towering above it all. Church bells ring in a buona sera, as I head to the River Arno, full of delicious tastes of Florence, surrounded by golden autumn light.

Grazie mille to Linda for these recipes that will bring the tastes of autumn in Tuscany to your tables. More info: www.florenceurbanadventures.com

Susan Van Allen is the author of *100 Places in Italy Every Woman Should Go*, *Letters from Italy: Confessions, Adventures, and Advice*, *50 Places in Rome, Florence, and Venice Every Woman Should Go*, and the Golden Days in Italy blog. She travels frequently to Italy, the native land of her grandparents, and lives in Los Angeles. susanvanallen.com



Fettuccine with Porcini Mushrooms

- 1 pound porcini mushrooms (thoroughly washed and dried)
- ½ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 4 cloves garlic in their jackets
- 3 tablespoons fresh mint, chopped
- 1 cup chicken or vegetable broth
- 1 tablespoon kosher salt
- 1 pound of fettuccine

Fill a large stockpot with 3 quarts of water and bring to a boil.

While waiting for water to boil, slice mushrooms into half-inch strips. Pour oil into a large skillet, add mushrooms, garlic cloves and mint and cook over medium heat for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add broth and cook for another 10 minutes, stirring frequently.

Add salt to boiling water, toss in fettuccine and cook until al dente. Drain pasta lightly and add to skillet, mixing the pasta with tongs to combine with the sauce. Remove the garlic cloves, add salt to taste, and serve immediately.

Makes 4 servings.

Chicken with Black Olives and Rosemary

- 1 whole chicken, about 2 pounds
- 1 small onion, thinly sliced
- ¾ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 cup dry white wine
- 1 tablespoon fresh rosemary leaves, finely chopped
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped
- ¼ cup pitted black olives
- 1 tablespoon cider vinegar

Wash chicken and pat dry well. Cut chicken into 12 pieces, or you can ask your butcher to do this or purchase a whole chicken in pieces.

Place onion and oil in a skillet. Add chicken pieces and brown on both sides over medium heat.

Reduce heat to low, add wine, and cook for 30 minutes. Add rosemary, garlic, olives, and vinegar and cook for 5 more minutes. Serve immediately.

Makes 6 servings.

Biscotti di Prato

- ½ pound almonds with skins
- 3½ cups unbleached all-purpose flour
- 2 cups sugar
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon saffron
- 4 large eggs

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Toast the almonds for 10 minutes on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper.

Remove paper with almonds and let cool on a flat surface. Leave the oven on.

Turn out flour in a mound on a flat working surface covered with parchment paper. Create a crater in its center. Into this crater place sugar, baking powder, salt, saffron, and 3 whole eggs. Mix with your hands until ingredients are well blended.

Add toasted almonds and continue mixing, brushing your hands with flour if the mixture gets sticky.

Divide the dough into 8 equal pieces. Still using your hands (slightly dusted with flour) form each of the 8 pieces into a log about 8 inches long and 2 inches wide. Place logs 2 inches apart (they mustn't be too close together, as they will expand) on a baking

sheet lined with parchment paper. You'll need to use two baking sheets to fit them all. Beat remaining egg and brush top of biscotti dough with it.

Bake biscotti in the middle of the oven for 25 to 30 minutes (until golden). As soon as you remove them from the oven, cut each strip on a diagonal into ½ inch slices (as if you were slicing a thin baguette). Return to oven with cut side up and bake for 5 more minutes.

Makes about 10 dozen biscotti.

