

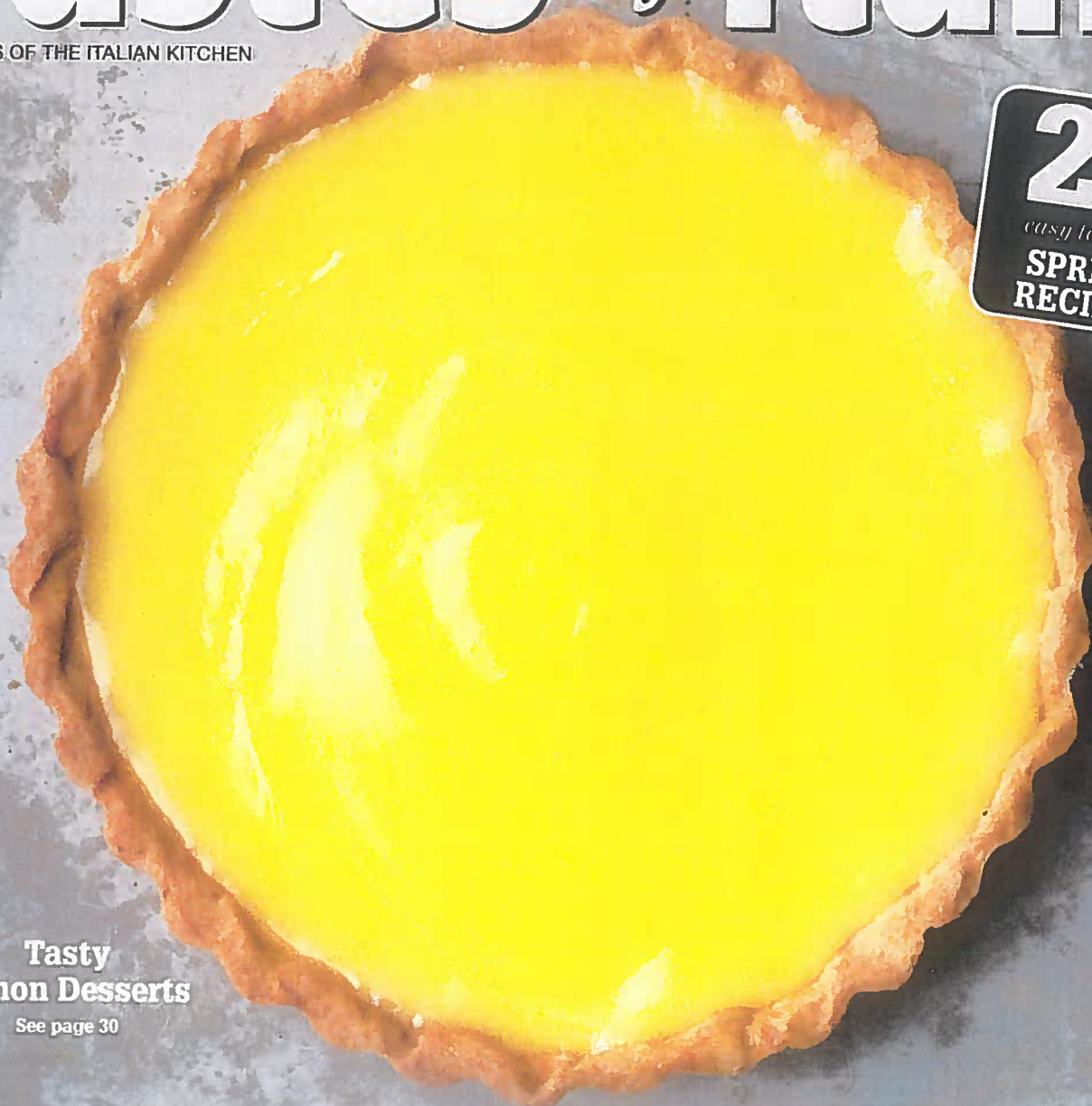
Sampling Southern Italy

Tastes of Italia

BASICS OF THE ITALIAN KITCHEN

APRIL 2017

28
easy to make
**SPRING
RECIPES**



**Tasty
Lemon Desserts**

See page 30

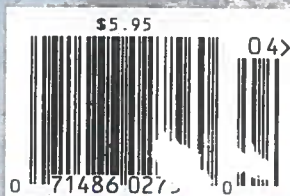
The Road to Sicily

Plus

Super Pasta Recipes

Perfect Risotto

The Best Wines of Puglia



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Church of Saint Antonio is one of two churches in Serrara Fontana, a village on the island of Ischia.



Boats in the bay off the coast of Ischia.

Simply Magical

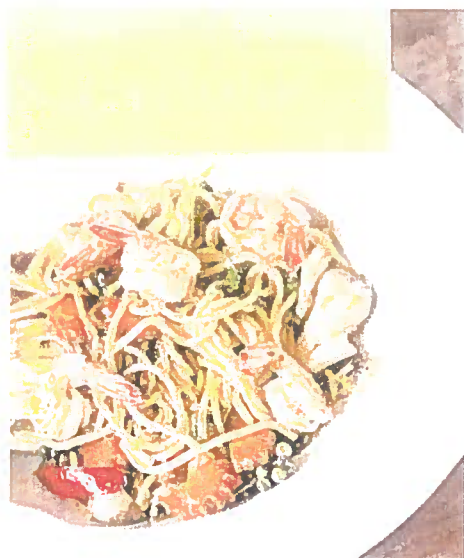
THE SPARKLING ISLAND OF ISCHIA IS AN ENCHANTING ESCAPE THAT LETS YOU INDULGE IN THE SWEETNESS OF DOING NOTHING.

BY SUSAN VAN ALLEN

It's magical to begin an Italian vacation on the island of Ischia. Sure, the arrival can be overwhelming; Landing in Naples where I'm immediately struck with the hands flying through the air chaos, the taxi to the port (which involves arguments with the driver over the fare), jostling in line for a ferry ticket.

But soon there I am, rocked by slow Mediterranean rhythms in that sparkling mythical bay, and Ischia appears: first the massive castle, backed by green hills covered in forests and vineyards, then we dock at the folksy porto and I'm immediately enchanted.

The major allure of the island, formed by volcanic action way back when, is that it's bursting with curative, mineral-rich waters and mud. Since Roman times, Ischia's been adored for its springs and steam caves. Today that goodness is funneled into many hotel pools and parks, totaling 300, making Ischia the largest thermal destination in Europe. Add to that its 23-mile coastline of beaches and swimming coves, vibrant gardens, welcoming natives and delicious food, and I have what I consider an ideal spot to indulge in what Italians call *Il Dolce Far Niente*—The Sweetness of Doing Nothing, perfect to take away jetlag and refresh me for the adventure



Steamed Mussels with Parsley and Lemon

- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 4 pounds of mussels, scrubbed
- ½ cup white wine
- 1 cup fresh parsley, roughly chopped
- Juice of 1 fresh lemon
- 1 loaf thick-crust bread, if desired

Heat the olive oil in a heavy-bottomed stock pot. Add the mussels, stirring to coat. Raise the heat, pour the wine over the mussels, stir for a few minutes, and then cover the pot and steam for about 7 minutes, until the mussels open. Sprinkle the chopped parsley over the mussels, stir, then pour the lemon juice and stir again. Serve in warm bowls with thick-crust bread. Makes 4 to 6 servings.

to come. Meals here are simply prepared, showcasing the island's abundance of fish, fragrant herbs, and vegetables that thrive in the fertile soil. They're accompanied by Ischia's fine wines that come from a tradition begun by ancient Greek settlers who planted grapes here. If you're up for eating rabbit, you'll find delicious Coniglio all'Ischitana on most restaurant menus, as the forests are full of wild ones. There are also lots of Neapolitan style pizzerias, and meals end with limoncello, the prized liqueur of Campania. If you're ready to go, be sure to put Ristorante Epomeo in Forio on your list. It's a cozy, family run place, humbly set in the village piazza, where you can settle in after a day of luxurious soaking and be treated to charming service and excellently prepared dishes. Or if you're staying home, try these recipes to bring the simple goodness of Ischia to your springtime dinners.

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.

Spaghetti with Shrimp

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 20 large raw shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 3 tablespoons white wine
- 1½ pounds of fresh asparagus, trimmed, spears cut into 1-inch lengths, steamed until tender
- ½ cup cherry tomatoes, cut in half (optional)
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 pound of spaghetti, cooked al dente

Heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the shrimp and cook until pink and cooked through. Add the white wine and stir.

Add the steamed asparagus and cook about 2 minutes, stirring gently. Add the tomatoes if using. Salt and pepper to taste.

Serve the shrimp and asparagus mixture over the cooked spaghetti.

Makes 4 servings.

