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AUGUST 2016

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Tomatoes

Summer in  
ANACAPRI



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# Summer in ANACAPRI

Far from the madding crowds of summer, the less traveled paths of this popular vacation destination offer spellbinding peacefulness, delicious food, and a memorable escape from reality.

*by Susan Van Allen*

**O**ne of my favorite walks in the world is along Via Migliera in Anacapri. This is the wilder side of Capri, set on the slopes of Mount Solaro. Anacapri's center is crowded with tourists who come to check the town's main attractions off their list: chairlift to the top of the mountain, the church and Villa San Michele. I head away to a flat footpath from Roman times, flanked by vineyards, citrus groves, tiny farm houses with vegetable gardens. The views out to the sparkling sea in the distance are mesmerizing. All I hear are birdsongs.

Within a half an hour I reach a delicious destination: da Gelsomina, a restaurant and hotel that's been family run for four generations. Chef Mamma Teresa is busy in the kitchen, wearing her white cap and apron, while her charming son, Pasquale, manages the dining terrace. Sitting down and sighing over the view, I could stretch out my arm and touch the vines from which their house wine is made. The menu changes according to the seasons, using the freshest ingredients from the farms I've just passed.

I've watched da Gelsomina grow since my first visit more than a decade ago. Though the terrace has expanded, there is still the feeling of discovering a secret paradise here—the enchanting beauty, welcoming spirit and high quality of food remain unchanged. Diners begin to wander in. Some who prefer not to walk have arrived by da Gelsomina's free shuttle that they called from the Anacapri

center. We all take our time, lingering over lunch, pouring wine from hand-painted ceramic jugs, savoring Teresa's fresh vegetable creations, homemade pastas, excellent fish dishes, and amazing desserts.

"You must go to the belvedere," I remember Pasquale telling me and my friend Meredith on my first visit, as we finished up our glasses of limoncello. I couldn't imagine that the view could become better, but a short walk away is an overlook, where I learned the word *mozzafiato*—breathtaking, from an Italian couple standing near us. Here, above the rocks, seagulls swoop overhead, boats bob below in the turquoise sea. Time stands still. On a recent visit, I saw a circular wooden platform had been built here, to make it ideal for a wedding ceremony.

Adding a unique touch to the extraordinary experience, behind the belvedere is the Capri Philosophical Park. It's a hilly few acres, shaded by tall trees, with winding paths cut through patches of wildflowers and brush. Exploring, you'll find surprises of terracotta plaques on which are written quotations by a range of sixty philosophers—from Aeschylus to Saint Paul to Karl Marx. The park was created by a Swedish professor, Gunnar Adler-Karlsson, who has lived in a house next door since 1979, and was inspired to share his backyard with the public.

La Vita e Bella. I always recommend a meal at da Gelsomina to anyone who asks me for Capri advice.

Lucky for us, Pasquale has shared a recipe with me, so your summer can be filled with delicious flavors from this piece of

paradise. For a virtual escape to paradise, see [dagelsomina.com](http://dagelsomina.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](http://susanvanallen.com).

## Pasta with Shrimp and Asparagus

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 clove garlic, peeled and smashed
- 1/8 teaspoon hot pepper
- 1/2 pound of shrimp, shelled and deveined
- 1/2 cup asparagus tips
- 1/2 cup white wine
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes, cut in halves
- 1 tablespoon heavy cream
- 1/2 pound paccheri (large tube-shaped pasta) or ziti

Boil water in a large pot to cook the pasta. Put the olive oil in a large sauté pan, and sauté the garlic and hot pepper on medium heat, until the garlic is fragrant. Add the shrimp, asparagus tips, and stir 2 minutes, then add the white wine. Raise the heat to high and cook until the wine evaporates. Lower the heat and stir in the tomatoes for 3 minutes, then stir in the cream.

Cook the pasta as directed on the package, until al dente. Add the cooked pasta to the sauté pan, stir to combine well. Remove the garlic and serve immediately.

Makes 2 servings.