

Itinerary

Culinary Italy: From Milan to Rome

Day 1: Saturday, March 24, 2012—Arrival in Milan

Chef's note: Italian cuisine is based up fresh seasonal ingredients that vary greatly by each region.

Upon arrival in Milan on March 24th, you will be greeted at the airport, after the customs area, and transferred to your luxury accommodations by private van service. This evening we will be staying at the Hotel Principe Di Savola, one of Europe's most highly regarded hotels, in a classic premium room or higher (suites available upon request at an additional cost.) The hotel's central location overlooks the Piazza della Repubblica.

Optional: depending on your arrival time

Call for a taxi or walk towards the center of town (about 1.5 miles) to Peck, Milan's largest and famous food emporium. Here you will discover over a thousand food stalls full of homemade ravioli, risottos, porchetta, salads, stews, cheeses, pastries, homemade breads, roast veal, sausages and the list goes on and on.

7 p.m. Aperitivo in the Principe Bar

This evening, make your way to the Principe Bar located in your hotel. Here you will meet your host, Chef Blauberg, and his team of experts. This will also be an opportunity to meet your fellow travelers. We will enjoy a flute of prosecco to toast the beginning of our culinary journey through Northern Italy. After we have our first aperitivo of the trip, we will make our way to Acanto, one of Milan's best five-star restaurants, which is located in the hotel. The primary inspiration for the Acanto menu has been the local Lombard culinary tradition, which the chef has melded with flavors from the Mediterranean and beyond to create delicate dishes infused with a world of flavor. We also will enjoy wine pairings with our meal. D

Day 2: Sunday, March 25, 2012—Winery Tour & Luncheon in Turin

Chef's note: The Piedmont region is where both the Slow Food association and the most prestigious school of Italian cooking, the University of Gastronomic Sciences, were founded.

This morning after breakfast, we will board our luxury motor coach at **9a.m.** promptly and make our way to Turin (where we will arrive by **11:30a.m.**) and tour the **Pelissero Winery**. There we will learn all about grape production, Piedmont's regional wines, and the winery's renowned DOC vintages Brunetta and S. Costanza.

Lunch will follow at the **Le Ciau del Tornavento Restaurant** in Cuneo.

After an afternoon of touring the winery, tastings and lunch, we will return to Turin where we will check into our hotel, The Golden Palace.

In the evening, we will have a late "light" dinner (**9pm**) at a traditional Piedmont restaurant in the heart of Turin—**Porto di Savona**. After a splendid meal, we will return to our accommodations. B, L, PD

Day 3: Monday, March 26, 2012—Montebore Cheese and Culatello Demonstration

Chef's note: Parmigiano Reggiano cheese is produced in Reggio Emilia, Parma, Modena and Bologna and is a staple in Italian cooking. The region is more famous for its meat products, especially pork-based, that include: Parma's culatello.

After breakfast, we will head to the Mercato di Porta Palazzo at **8:30a.m.**, one of the largest outdoor food markets in all of Europe. If the weather is not ideal for this excursion, we will go to Eataly, a food emporium that showcases the Slow Food ethos. Many of you may recognize the name from New York City's food emporium (also called Eataly); the one in Turin is the original. Feel free to browse the stalls—tasting, testing, and purchasing whatever looks good.

At **10:30 a.m.** we will leave Turin and head to Parma, where we will do our antipasto course. En route to Parma, we will stop at **Vallenostra Agriturismo e Caseificio**, which is the only Montebore cheese producer listed under the Prsidio of Slow Food designation. Montebore cheese is produced from raw cow's milk and is characterized by its cone shape of overlapping cheeses. A **light lunch** will be served at the end based on a mix of their local products.

At **2:30-3pm** we will head to Parma for a "Special Culatello Experience" at **La Fattoria di Parma (estimated arrival by 4pm)**. Culatello is a refined variety of prosciutto, made from heavier pigs. Visit to the ancient cellars where the culatelli are seasoned. Aperitif in the cellars based on locally produced Strolghino salami, Parmesan cheese, hot focaccia and Fortana local wine. Afterwards we will enjoy a light dinner (**9pm**) at **Osteria del Gesso**.

This evening, we will check into **Starhotels du Parc** in Parma. **B, PL, D**

Day 4: Tuesday, March 27, 2012—Balsamic Vinegar

Chef's note: The celebrated balsamic vinegar is made only in the Emilian cities of Modena and Reggio Emilia.

This morning, we will leave Parma and make a quick stop in Modena. First we will stop at a traditional, family-owned balsamic vinegar producer to learn the process of converting grapes into vinegar. We will visit the **Acetaia Paltrinieri (and arrive by 11a.m.)**. You will be warmly welcomed here, and even entertained for lunch with all dishes based on vinegar (parmesan with traditional balsamic vinegar of Modena DOP, risotto with traditional balsamic vinegar, fried waffle and ham, salame, bologna slices, roast beef, ice cream with acet-up balsamic cream, coffe. Lambrusco di Sorbara wine will be served.

After lunch, we will head to Bologna, which is considered the gastronomic capital of Italy. The richness of Bologna's cuisine has earned the city the nickname "La Grassa," or "the Fat One." The city is the birthplace of the world's most famous ragu sauce. Old Bologna is the site of the city's original medieval markets, which are now replaced by botteghe (little stores), fruttivendolies (fruit sellers), pescherie (fish dealers), pasticcies (pasta stores), and latteries (cheese stores).

Upon arrival in Bologna, you will have the rest of the afternoon and evening to enjoy at your leisure. We suggest you take a stroll through the main square, sampling foods such as *sfoglia* (homemade yellow egg pasta) and munching on local breads such as *crescente*, *crescentine*, and *piadina*.

We will overnight at the **Grand Hotel Majestic**, gorgeous 5-star hotel in the city centre. **B, L**

Day 5: Wednesday, March 28, 2012—Hands-on Fresh Pasta-making Class

Chef's note: Under Italian law, dry pasta (pasta secca) can only be made from durum wheat flour or durum wheat semolina, and is more commonly used in Southern Italy compared to their Northern counterparts, who traditionally prefer the fresh egg variety.

The Emilia-Romagna region is known for its egg and filled pasta made with soft wheat flour. Bologna is notable for pasta dishes like *tortellini*, *lasagna*, *gramigna*, and *tagliatelle*, which are also found in many other parts of the region. Bologna is one of the oldest university cities in the world.

Today we'll experience a hands-on pasta making class. The class will be held in a charming XVI century apartment located in the city centre. From the apartment you can enjoy wonderful views of the surrounding hills. The class will be instructed by a local named Rita. Rita has over 20 years experience and has taught at some of the top universities. Rita also owns two of her own restaurants in Sardinia.

To really create a more intimate one-on-one experience we'll split the group into two. The first group will be met at the hotel around **9:30am**. Before arriving at Rita's apartment we will stop at the local market. The lesson will focus on the preparation of the typical tortellini with brood and tagliatelle with ragu. At the end of the class lunch will be served and you'll enjoy what you've prepared.

Meanwhile, the other part of the group will have lunch at the famous **Enoteca Morandi** at the Grand Hotel Majestic.

Rita will then, accompany the first part of the group back to the hotel and they will **all together** go to visit the **Tower of Palazzo Fava** that is generally closed to the public. Then, back to her home with the second group for their pasta making class. At the end of the class, dinner will be served and the second group will enjoy what they prepared. The others will go for dinner at the **Enoteca Morandi**, where the others had lunch. We will overnight in the **Grand Hotel Majestic** in Bologna.
B, L, D

Day 6: Thursday, March 29, 2012—Florence

After breakfast, we will board our luxury motor coach for a quick trip to Florence. Upon arrival we will check into the Rocco Forte Hotel Savoy, and you will have the rest of the day and evening to explore this World Heritage UNESCO city in Tuscany.

B

**** To enhance your experience we will offer suggestions for top sites in the city along with some great restaurant suggestions.**

Day 7: Friday, March 30, 2012—Cooking Class at Università dei Sapori led by Erik Blauberg

Chef's note: Local Umbrian meals are usually made with local herbs and olive oil. This region is what I believe to have the best truffles in the world! There are two types of soil in this region that grow the white and black truffle. The White truffle grows in a sandy grassland type of terrain. The winter black and summer black truffle grow in a rocky clay type soil with rough terrain and pine trees. This region is best for its wild boar dishes. Game birds are popular including squab, pheasant and guinea hen.

After breakfast, we will drive through the valleys of Umbria and arrive at the Università dei Sapori. Here, a place where only professional chefs are typically granted admission, Chef Erik Blauberg and his team will lead you through an exclusive and innovative modern Italian hands-on cooking class. Prior to founding EKB Restaurant Consulting, Chef Blauberg was most recently credited with his role in revitalizing New York's iconic '21' Club. Food critic John Mariani, who has named Chef Blauberg as one of top 10 chefs in New York City, described his infallible contribution, stating, "None has been so strikingly brought up-to-date as the venerable '21' Club, where new chef Erik Blauberg has replaced the once dreary 'Continental cuisine' circa 1965 with real snap and great depth of flavor."

Upon completion of the cooking class- lunch will be served and you'll enjoy what you've prepared. After lunch, you will be transferred to the **Relais il Canalicchio hotel**, your accommodations for the next two nights.

This evening, we will head to **Antonelli San Marco (by 7:30pm)** to enjoy a very special tour and wine cellar visit, followed by a perfect dinner to taste all of the flavors of Umbria. Antonelli San Marco is a producer of premium Umbrian wines, and the estate, which dates back to 1881, is situated on 40 acres in the Montefalco region of Perugia. Sagrantino and Sangiovese are the main red grape varieties produced, but also Montepulciano, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon are grown. Grechetto and Trebbiano Spoletino are the white grape varieties currently planted on the property. The average age of the vines is around 15 years. The oldest Sagrantino vines are 30 years old.

B, L, D

Day 8: Saturday, March 31, 2012—Truffle Hunt & Gala Dinner in Umbria

Chef's note: Black Winter Truffles have been called "the diamond of the kitchen". The black winter truffle is a hearty truffle and can be cooked with as the white truffle is a truffle that is what I call a finishing truffle not cooked no heat applied shaved over food and always served raw to preserve its texture and most importantly its aroma.

After breakfast, we will head to a private Umbrian truffle location, where you will join Chef Erik Blauberg and a master truffle hunter and his dogs on their daily truffle hunt. Deep in the Unspoiled Umbrian forests, we will be searching for the winter black truffles. Here in Umbria grows the summer and winter black truffle and the Italian white truffle, which are all very highly esteemed. The record price paid for a single white truffle was set in December 2007, when Macau casino owner Stanley Ho paid U.S. \$330,000 for a truffle weighing 3.3 pounds. Luciano Savini and his dog Rocco discovered this truffle and it was one of the largest found in decades. It was unearthed near Pisa and sold at an auction held simultaneously in Macau, Hong Kong, and Florence. Maybe you will find the next record-breaking truffle! After the truffle hunt, you will have the opportunity to enjoy a special lunch at the villa in the beautiful hills and fields of Umbria.

This evening we will have a special farewell dinner with wine pairings in an ancient Roman castle presented by your host chef, Erik Blauberg, in collaboration with local chefs and friends. It's sure to be the grand finale.

B, L, D

Day 9: Sunday, April 1, 2012—Rome Departure

This morning, you can enjoy breakfast at your leisure at the hotel. Depending on your flight time, you will be divided up into small groups of no more than eight and transferred back to Rome. **B**

****Transfers other than to the airport in Rome to additional locations in Italy and/or private transfers will be at an additional cost.**

**Meals as indicated in the itinerary:
B=breakfast, L=lunch, D=dinner, PL=partial lunch, PD=partial dinner**