

FOOD

Our Trip To Tuscany

A Culinary Adventure in Italy

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Like many of you, I have a very long “bucket list” and love to be able to make time for some of my dreams. Last October my husband I went to a cooking school in Italy – Venice and the Veneto area first - but primarily Tuscany, so that I could cross off a dream from my list.

“Tuscookany “is a wonderful cooking school outside the town of Arezzo in North East Tuscany. We opted for the 3-day program rather than the weeklong program. Mike would come along to take a few photos and to join us for all the meals. This is a great option offered by this school.

We spent three nights and four days at their location Torre del Tartufo deep in the countryside. It was fall and a bit on the “nippy” side, which we loved. This luxurious, though somewhat rustic villa has 8 rooms exclusively for the school, which takes place in a very large restaurant style kitchen with several adjoining dining rooms and bar area.

The first day we arrived late morning and met the group of 12 for lunch followed by a “hands on” cooking lessons in preparation of the evening meal. Interestingly, most of my fellow “students” were either from Canada or California! The Chef/Instructor was Franco Palandra who lived in the area. He is Italian, and had cooked in kitchens throughout the world. He was especially proficient in Tuscan cuisine.

Each day we met at 8 am for breakfast in the dining room. Staff at the school prepared eggs to order, platters of fruits, pastries and

charcuterie was laid out for “family style” service.

Lunches included pizza in the fantastic 17th century pizza oven from dough that we had prepared in advance. Each day we made many different and delicious types of pasta including gnocchi, stuffed tortellini and fettuccine. Sauces included a heavenly Bolognese, pesto, wild boar ragu, and fungi (which we gathered nearby).

Evening meals were 4-5 courses, served by the villa staff and included: Arezzo style tagliata, duck breast, guinea fowl (my favorite), pork tournedos, saltimbocca, swordfish and veal. We always had 1-2 pastas for both lunch and dinner.

And we didn’t forget dessert! The hazelnut tart was fantastic, tiramisu delicious and the panna cotta “to die for.”

One day we spent touring the old city of Arezzo, which boasts fabulous shopping that I can attest to, especially the leather goods, which were priced far better than nearby Florence. We also went to two wineries, a local cheese and bread tasting, an olive oil mill with tasting and a nearby textile factory.

Mike was a great sport to go along with all the cooking and fun in the kitchen. His favorite day was when they brought in the specially bred, truffle-hunting dog for a demonstration

on his prowess. It was an amazing experience. What’s next on my “bucket list”? Maybe a cooking school in Oaxaca, Mexico! This seems like the ideal trip for a group of ladies who love to cook. Who wants to join in?

One of my favorite recipes from the Tuscookany school:

Classical Filling for Tortellini or Ravioli

(also wonderful stuffed into peppers or tomatoes)

3.5 oz diced mortadella

3.5 oz minced lean pork loin

3.5 oz parma ham, diced

3.5 oz minced lean veal

1 egg

1 handful grated Parmesan cheese

pinch nutmeg

Salt and pepper to taste

Combine all ingredients in blender and process until completely minced.

Add salt to taste. Use filling for pasta, zucchini, peppers, tomatoes etc.