



BUON APPETITO!
ITALIAN FOOD GUIDE



ABSTRACT

The cuisine of Italy changes as you move from region to region (even sometimes, from city to nearby city); each area has its unique specialties and culinary tradition. That said, these documents are designed to serve as a basic, yet fairly comprehensive, review of the traditional "typical" foods (cucina tipica) that an adventurous traveler might encounter in the various regions of Italy. In reviewing the food for each region, the typical antipasti, primi, secondi, and dolci are discussed. The document begins with some general recommendations for understanding the Italian approach to food and dining (when to eat, how to tip, when not to order a cappuccino, etc.) and then goes on to provide a region-by-region culinary review. When appropriate, we have let our opinions be known. Ease of reference and accessibility have led us to employ a bullet-point based format. Buon appetito!

Related ApproachGuides

- We highly recommend that this wine guide be used in conjunction with ApproachGuides' "Dining throughout Italy: Wine Guide".



- At a restaurant, coffee is not served at the same time as dessert. Coffee is served once dessert has been finished. (see “coffee etiquette” section above.)
- Always check your bill for accuracy. (see the “not getting ripped off” section below.)

THE BILL AND TIPPING

- The bill.
 - The check will not be brought in Italy until you ask for it. Simply state “il conto” (use round “o’s”, like the o in “hello”).
 - The bill should include a coperto (a coperto is a cover charge that typically includes the price for bread and the cleaning of your table cloth).
 - Prices on the menu already include taxes.
 - No tip is included in the bill.
- Tipping takes a much different twist than in the USA. It really is not done on a percentage of the total tab basis. A tip of 5-10 Euros is generous at pretty much any place that you will eat at in Italy. You are not being cheap. Trust me.

NOT GETTING RIPPED OFF ... A FEW TRICKS

Although you will probably get ripped off in any case (after all, this is Italy and it is part of the experience), here are a few tips that should help to minimize the damage.

- Always check your bill. You will be overcharged more often than you might think.
- If your bill consists of only a handwritten number on a sheet of paper (with no detail), you are probably being ripped off. Ask for a ricevuta, that is, an itemized bill. Very often, they will claim the amount was an error, “sbagliata,” and give you a ricevuta with an amount lower than the original (typically by €20).
- Try to remember the prices of all of your dishes; sometimes the rip-off will only be one or two Euros added on to the price of a dish.
- Again regarding any exchange of money with an Italian: check the amounts charged; check the total amount; check your change.
- Paying per etto.
 - Etto-based pricing is assessed often for seafood and sometimes for steak.
 - The conversion: 1 etto equals 100 grams; accordingly, 100 grams equals 3.5 ounces. Given that 16 ounces equals one pound, 1 etto equals 0.22 pounds, and 4.5 etti then gets you right around a pound.
 - You should always ask for the waiter to weigh the fish or meat in order to assess the weight before you order it. Otherwise, the weight (and the corresponding price) has a greater chance of coming in a little more expensive than might have been anticipated. More often than not, asking before you order will result in the waiter returning to you with a price for the dish rather than an exact weight. If the price is acceptable to you, then say okay. If not, you can ask if they have anything smaller or choose another dish.

CALABRIA

ANTIPASTI

- Known throughout Italy for its spicy hot dishes, revolving around its locally grown hot peppers, called peperoncini.
- Fruit: Citrus (esp. lemons and bergamot) flavors, figs.
- 'Nduja (a soft, spicy hot, spreadable pork sausage), usually spread on toasted bread.
- Sagne Chine. Lasagne filled different types of vegetable and meat interiors.

PRIMI

- Pasta with vegetables is the staple of the region. Local varieties of pasta include: paternosti (cubes with holes), rascatelli (thick pasta), cannaruzzoli (bent canes), pizzicotti (round), ricci di donna (women's curls).
- Soppresata (cured sausage using the pig's head).

SECONDI

- Tonno (grilled tuna), alici (anchovies), and pesce spada/stocco (swordfish).
- Cinghiale al tegame (sautéed wild boar) or capretto (baby goat).
- Melanzane alla Parmigiana. Breaded, fried eggplant baked with tomatoes, mozzarella, and and Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese).

CONTORNI

- Sweet onions (cipolle di Tropea) are prized throughout Italy
- Eggplant is a staple, used in many preparations.

CAMPANIA

ANTIPASTI

- Insalata caprese (this is the home of mozzarella di bufala and sweet Marzano tomatoes, so enjoy).
- Mozzarella in Carrozza (mozzarella placed between bread, dipped in egg and fried).
- Peperoni imbottini (sweet peppers filled with capers, olives, anchovies, bread crumbs, basil, garlic, and parsley).

PRIMI

- Gnocchi alla Sorrentina (gnocchi baked with tomato sauce, mozzarella, and sometimes eggplant).
- Pasta al forno (baked pasta).
- Friarelli (tender greens that grow in the province of Salerno, cooked with oil, garlic and peperoncino).
- Genovese (a sauce of onions, carrots, and celery that tops meat dishes and some pasta).
- Ziti (thin tube-shaped) and paccheri (large tube-shaped) pastas. Durum wheat is used in the production of the region's pastas.

- Ciambotta. Vegetable stew.
- Parmigiana di melanzane. Breaded, fried eggplant baked with tomatoes, mozzarella, and and Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese).

SECONDI

- Mussels (cozze), polpi (baby octopus), calamari (often stuffed), alici marinate (marinated sardines), and vongole (clams) are all of high quality.
- Costata alla Pizzaiola (anything pizzaiola has a sauce of tomatoes, oregano, garlic, and white wine; this is with veal cutlets).
- Pizza. And of course, based on the abundance of excellent quality tomatoes and mozzarella cheese, Campania is the place for great brick oven pizza (see below).
- Bacala. Salted cod in myriad presentations.
- Polpette. Small meatballs.

DOLCI

- Sfogliatella is the consummate pastry (a crispy dough exterior enclosing smooth ricotta cheese and orange rind, it comes into two varieties: ricca (a flaky exterior) and frolla (doughier, smoother exterior)).
- Baba -- a sweet, citrusy rum pastry -- is another to consider.

NEAPOLITAN COFFEE

“I have found coffee heaven and it is Napoli.” D. Raezer

Napoli takes coffee to another level, even relative to other coffee-focused areas in Italy; in Napoli, it is an obsession. But there is a reward: the coffee is the best there is.

A few words of wisdom: You will be asked when you walk up to the bar what type of water you want (flat or still, that is, frizzante o naturale). You are expected to drink the water while your coffee is being made, in order to prepare your palate (not your normal deal right?). Of course, then you will be given the best coffee there is (the Neapolitans often add sugar, but feel free to add nothing, a café amaro). One critical sin, described to us as the "sin of death": NEVER DRINK ANY WATER WHILE OR AFTER CONSUMING THE COFFEE. IT IS CONSIDERED THE WORST POSSIBLE ERROR AND AN INSULT TO THE BARRISTA.

If you can't live without experiencing this coffee experience again... You will notice that every coffee bar uses the same manual machine (with hand pumps to control the pressure applied to the water that pushed through the coffee grounds – hard at first and then less as the coffee is finished). The brand of the machine is La San Marco (www.lasanmarco.com). If you are hooked, you can look to purchase this type of machine from their single US importer, www.leodoro.com.

Sweet or not sweet. You have a few sweetness options for your coffee:

- Amaro. No sugar.