

ITALY: WHERE TO EAT NOW

THE SPOTLIGHT IS ON VENICE, PERUGIA AND ROME THIS SUMMER

BY MICHELE PETERSON

Memorable cuisine is always a highlight of a visit to Italy. And with good reason: the ingredients are market fresh, the dishes regionally inspired and cooking techniques legendary. But three destinations are worthy of extra attention in 2016. Here's why these cities should be on every food-lovers list.

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SUGGEST

MARQUEE MEDITERRANEAN

From the modern masterpieces of Barcelona to the ancient ruins of Rome, the Western Mediterranean has long inspired the world's great artists. Now it is your turn. Oceania Cruises' elegant mid-size *Nautica* will take you on an inspired journey from Barcelona, calling on Alicante, Mallorca, Sicily, Rome, Port Santo Stefano, Florence, Monte Carlo, and Provence. Along the way you will enjoy exceptional personalized service and The Finest Cuisine at Sea™, served in four distinctive restaurants, all at no additional charge.

CULINARY & WINE HIGHLIGHTS:

Foodies must be sure to partake of the Farmhouse Culinary Experience tour from Rome. Journey through the beautiful Italian countryside to a traditional farmhouse where guests are taught to prepare traditional fettuccine with ragout sauce and tiramisu. After the culinary class, enjoy an authentic four-course Italian lunch, complete with wine and a sampling of local aromatic liquors.

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VENICE TAPAS CRAWL

A *cicchetti* (tapas) crawl through Venice's labyrinthine back streets is an exploration of the Venetian tradition of "giro d'ombra" meaning "giro" to stroll and "ombra" a wine sipped in the shade of a church at day's end. As the sun moved, so did patrons, following the shade as they sipped their way from bar to bar. Today, the best crawls centre is around Campo Cesare Battista near Rialto Bridge. At Al Mercà, pair an Aperol spritz with bite-sized crostini, eaten to go. Around the corner, the stylish (and pricier) Ancora offers views of the Grand Canal along with its mostly seafood menu. Perhaps the most atmospheric spot to enjoy *cicchetti* is Cantina Do Spade, a watering hole that dates back to 1754 when it offered hospitality to merchants and traders. Authentic tastes include *sarde in saor* (fried sardines with sweet onion), *code di rospo alla grigua* (fried monkfish tail) and *cynar*, a bitter artichoke-based aperitif created by Venetian entrepreneur Angelo Dalle Molle in 1952.