

Part Five

Dining in Central Italy

Buon Appetito!

The highlight for most travelers to Italy, be they first-timers or old pros, is a chance to chow down on the country's many culinary delights. Indeed, many tourists come to Italy not to shop or to cruise museums but to eat. And why not? Among Americans, Italian food is consistently rated as the favorite cuisine. Just wait until you try to real thing.

Italians are concerned with two factors when it comes to eating: freshness and pleasure. When the first tomatoes of the season beckon at the market with their juicy, red plumpness, or when mushrooms and truffles have their autumnal debut in risottos, Italians are there with forks and knives ready. Appetites here wax and wane with the seasons, and it seems that everyone is in tune to what's ripe. This inherited knowledge of what to eat and when enables Italians to enjoy a fruit or vegetable at its peak, which leads to ultimate gastronomic bliss at dinner.

While you are in this mecca of Mediterranean eats, you may have a hankering for an old standard, like spaghetti and meat sauce or a simple slice of cheese pizza. Give in to your cravings! But, also try to do as the Romans do and indulge in the succulent produce of summer, the complex, earthy flavors of fall, and the cornucopia of flavors that you may encounter in Italy. Memories of those unique meals with last a lifetime.

When to Eat

Breakfast, *prima colazione*, or simply *colazione*, is very small (a roll and coffee, if anything at all), and is typically consumed before 9 a.m. There's nothing unusual there. However, you'd be hard pressed to find an Italian drinking a milky cappuccino after 11 a.m. It's just not done. Lunch, *pranzo*, has been traditionally the largest meal of the day, which is why many boutiques and markets close at noon for a couple of hours. Years ago, most Italians went home at this time to enjoy lunch with the family

138 Part Five Dining in Central Italy

and then take a nap (*siesta*). Such a luxury is on the decline these days. Now you'll find that many restaurants are swamped between 1 and 2 p.m. Early-bird Americans will be upset to learn that dinner, *cena*, in Italy is rarely eaten before 8 p.m.; most Italians make restaurant reservations for 8:30 or 9 p.m. Of course, in larger cities you should be able to find restaurants serving dinner at 6 p.m., though be warned—most restaurants open that early cater to tourists and, therefore, are rarely recommended.

You should also be aware that almost every restaurant you encounter will have a rest day, or *giorno del riposo*. These are usually taken on a Sunday or Monday night, though you might find an odd restaurant that closes on a Wednesday or a Saturday. To avoid disappointment, take note of the *riposo* day, posted outside every restaurant, or inquire when you make your reservations.

Types of Eateries in Italy

Ristoranti

The most formal of Italy's dining establishments, *ristoranti* typically have discrete service, fancy-schmancy décor, and overpriced menus. You'll want to wear your cuff links and pearls here, and set aside at least two hours to savor a full-course meal.

Osterie/Hostarie

Less formal than a *ristorante*, an *osteria* (sometimes spelled *hostaria*) is, in the traditional sense, a family-owned restaurant with less expensive but fine fare. You needn't dress too formally to dine at an *osteria*. However, take note that many up-market restaurants have capitalized on the name "osteria" to lure in diners with promises of economical, rustic fare.

Trattorie

A *trattoria* is very much like an *osteria*, in that it is commonly a family-run eatery with inexpensive food. *Trattorie*, with their hand-scribbled menus and amiable service, are even more relaxed than *osteria*.

Tavole Calde

The *tavola calda*, or literally, "hot table," is akin to American self-serve cafeterias, but the selections are generally much better. Catering to the business set, *tavole calde* offer hot entrées like roasted chicken and potatoes (*polla arrosto con patate*), pastas, salads, and sides of vegetables (*contorni*) at very affordable prices. Dishes are premade, so they are often heated up in the microwave when you order them. But they are ideal for a quick bite. Another note: Unlike with *caffè*, where there is a sharp price

Types of Eateries in Italy 139

difference between bar orders and table service, a *tavola calda* has no table service, and thus no extra charge for sitting at a table.

Pizzeria

In Italy, pizza is served in two ways. People on the go opt for *pizza a(l) taglio*, or pizza by the slice. At this kind of stand-up *pizzeria*, you choose which and how much pizza you want, and the *pizzaiolo* will cut it for you on the spot. In most instances, the slice is weighed (a regular-size slice costs approximately €1) and wrapped in paper to keep your fingers and clothes clean while you eat. If you want your pizza to be heated (*caldo*) before you chow down, ask the *pizzaiolola*, and he or she will pop the slice into the oven for you at no charge. You may also see *pizza al taglio* referred to as *pizza alla romana*, for it was the busybody Romans who invented this convenient way to enjoy the pie. Other items you can buy in the *pizza al taglio* shop are calzone, *suppli* (balls of rice and mozzarella cheese breaded and fried), and, in the Marches, *olive ascolane* (olives stuffed with meat, anchovies, or cheese, then breaded and fried).

Head to a typical, sit-down *pizzeria* for a longer, more casual lunch or dinner. Here, you'll find even more varieties of pizza for vegetable or meat lovers, as well as salads and light appetizers. You can easily share a pizza at a traditional *pizzeria*—pies measure about 10 inches diameter—but this practice is frowned on. Prices range from €7 to €10 per pie.

Wine Bars (Enoteche)

Linguists and wine aficionados should recognize that the words *enoteca* (wine store/bar) and *oenology* (science of viticulture) derive from the same Greek origin. The *enoteca* (plural, *enoteche*) is the oasis for anyone who wants to sample a variety of wines at relatively inexpensive prices. During the day, most *enoteche* are in the business of selling bottles of wine, though they also serve wines by the glass along with light plates of cheese or antipasto to those who wish to settle down in between shopping excursions or touring. By night, in some towns, the *enoteca* becomes the spot for a drink before dining or dancing. In some cases, the *enoteca* is the nighttime destination. Below is a list of some of our favorite *enoteche* in Florence and Rome.

Florence

Enoteca de' Girdali Via de' Girdali, 4 (Santa Croce); phone 055 216 518; www.vinaio.com

Cantinetta Antinori Piazza Antinori, 3 (Santa Maria Novella); phone 055 292 234; www.antinori.it

Pitti Gola e Cantina Piazza Pitti, 16 (Oltrarno); phone 055 212 704

140 Part Five Dining in Central Italy

Rome

Angolo Divino Via dei Balestrari, 12 (Centro Storico); phone 06 686 4413

Enoteca al Parlamento Via dei Prefetti, 15 (Centro Storico); phone 06 687 3446

Enoteca Antica di Via della Croce Via della Croce, 76b (Spanish Steps); phone 06 679 0896

Vineria Campo de' Fiori, 15 (Centro Storico); phone 06 688 03 268

Slow Food

An organization that developed in response to the globalization of fast food, the Slow Food Movement states in its manifesto that it exists to “protect the right to taste.” The organization puts a premium on restaurants that cook the old-fashioned way (i.e., “slowly”), using fresh ingredients and time-tested techniques. Equally important to Slow Food is the ability of the consumer to savor a gourmet meal without feeling rushed.

Approximately 60,000 restaurants and wine makers from around the world—and at least 30,000 in Italy—have been designated as Slow Food establishments, and more members are waiting in the wings. Most restaurants that become Slow Food members make this fact known by posting the group’s snail decal on a door or window. Other Slow Food restaurants prefer to stay incognito, so as to maintain a savvy, gourmand clientele.

Before taking your culinary journey through Italy, consider checking out Slow Food’s website, where you can find a comprehensive listing of restaurants, wineries, and groceries that do things the slow way. You can also write or call Slow Food’s representatives in the United States (phone (212) 965-5640), in Canada (phone (866) 266-6661) or in the United Kingdom (phone 0800 917 1232).

Slow Food Via MendicITÀ Istruita 14; 12042 Bra (Cuneo); phone 0172 419 611, fax 0172 421 293; www.slowfood.it

The Dining Experience: Before and after You Sit Down

Making a Reservation

Many family-run *trattorie* do not accept reservations, preferring to work on a first-come, first-serve basis. Most eateries in Italy, except for the really haughty ones, used to prefer this method, but reservations are now *de rigueur* among Italians, who often have to compete with hordes of visitors from abroad. For tourists, the *prenotazione* (pray-no-TATS-yo-nay) may often be the only way to score a table at a reputable establishment. That’s easier said than done.

The Dining Experience: Before and after You Sit Down 141

Your best bet for making a reservation as a non-Italian-speaking traveler is to investigate whether the restaurant has a fax machine. Many hot spots, such as Enoteca Pinchiorri in Florence, which is often booked months in advance, allow diners to reserve a table via fax. But you will still need to call to confirm your reservation—right after you make it, and some weeks prior to your trip. If you're already in the country (better yet, if you're already in town), stop by the restaurant during lunch hours and inquire about reservations. Making a reservation with someone face to face is much simpler, and, who knows, you may get a seat due to a late cancellation by another party. Finally, if you must rely on the telephone to book a table, remember this important phrase: "*Parla inglese?*" Chances are, the *maitre d'hôtel* will know exactly why you are calling and will take it from there.

Dressing for Dinner

Use common sense when dressing for dinner in Italy. As we've mentioned before, Italians tend to dress up more than Anglos, so it's always best to err on the more formal side. Besides, what's wrong with looking your best while dining out? On the other hand, if your suitcase is full of jeans, you may want to eat at a *pizzeria* or a more casual *trattoria*.

Pane e Coperto

This "bread and cover" charge can be the source of much anguish for foreign diners if they don't know what it is. At most eateries, be they *ristoranti* or *trattorie*, an extra charge is automatically tacked onto the check, no matter if the diners eat bread or not. The *pane e coperto* is a service charge per person, starting at about €2 per person and/or roughly 5–10% of the check. What's more, the supplemental charge usually does not take into account the charge for service, which sometimes is an obligatory 15%. Of course, it would make sense for restaurants to factor this bread and cover cost into the price of meals—but you're in Italy, and they do things differently here. To avoid a surprise, glance at the menu (it often lists the charge at the bottom of the page) or inquire about the *pane e coperto* before you sit down for dinner.

Nonsmoking Sections

Although there is a law that requires every restaurant in Italy to provide a nonsmoking section, it is hardly ever enforced. Italian smokers outnumber nonsmokers three to one, so when a restaurant does provide for a nonsmoking section, the area is usually small and tucked off to the side away from the main dining room.

In some tiny diners, you may even find that the nonsmoking section abuts the smoking section, which can be a real kick in the face if you have reserved a nonsmoking table. If you want to avoid secondhand smoke

142 Part Five Dining in Central Italy

during your meal, our advice is to try to secure an outdoor table, where the effects of smoke are less exaggerated. If you're visiting during the cooler months, try dining out before 8:30 p.m.—smokers seem to prefer to eat later.

Reading the Menu

Many restaurants near tourist attractions will have menus either translated into English or an English-speaking server who will help you navigate your dining options. Far off the tourist track, you're on your own. If you're unsure of the difference between *anatra* and *ananas*, look to our following list of common food items:

Fruits and vegetables

Albicocca apricot
Ananas pineapple
Arancia orange
Carciofo artichoke
Fagioli beans
Fragola strawberry
Frutta fruit
Funghi mushrooms
Limona lemon
Mela apple
Melanzana eggplant
Noci nuts (typically hazelnuts)
Patata potato
Peperoni peppers
Pera pear
Pesca peach
Pomodoro tomato
Pompelmo grapefruit
Tartufo truffle
Uva grape

Meat, fish, and dairy

Acciughe anchovies
Agnello lamb
Anatra duck
Bistecca steak
Calamari squid
Carne meat
Cinghiale wild boar
Coniglio (or *lepre*) rabbit
Formaggio cheese

Meat, fish, and dairy (continued)

Gamberi shrimp
Latte milk
Manzo beef
Pesce fish
Pollo chicken
Porchetta pork
Prosciutto ham
Salsiccia sausage
Uovo egg
Vongole clams

Breads and grains

Cornetto croissant
Dolci sweets
Pane bread
Panino sandwich
Torta cake

Beverages

Birra beer
Caffè coffee
Spremuta (fresh squeezed) juice
Succo juice
Tè tea
Vino wine

Miscellaneous

Cioccolato chocolate
Dolci sweets
Pepe pepper
Sale salt
Zucchero sugar

Ordering Wine

Chances are, unless you're a wine connoisseur, your waiter or waitress will be more knowledgeable than you are about what wine to drink with your meal. *Vino* is about as common as water in Central Italy, which means

The Dining Experience: Before and after You Sit Down 143

that most natives have an inborn sense of what red or white goes with which dish. Don't be timid—just ask.

On the other hand, if you wish to go it alone, your best bet for choosing a wine with your meal is to know which vintages are indigenous to the town or region that you are visiting. In Italy, cuisine and viticulture have matured in tandem, which means that, for example, if you order up a plate of pasta with truffles while in Umbria, then you'd probably do well to choose the Orvieto Classico *vino bianco* as an accompaniment. Likewise, a *bistecca alla fiorentina* in Tuscany calls for a bold red, or perhaps an expensive nip of Brunello di Montalcino.

In 1963, the Italian government enacted a set of regulatory laws that were intended to help guarantee a vintage's quality and ensure its provenance. Today, the three classifications for Italian wine are **DOCG** (Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita), wine of the utmost quality (very few vintages have been awarded this label); **DOC** (Denominazione di Origine Controllata), wine of very good quality; and, since 1992, **IGT** (Indicazione Geographica Tipica), good to very good wine that has yet to prove itself as a DOC. Most restaurants will list on the menu whether a wine is a DOC, DOCG, or IGT vintage, though it's unlikely that you'll find the latter at fine dining establishments.

The regions of Central Italy, most especially Tuscany, produce some of the best *vini* that Italy has to offer. Some vintages to remember:

Tuscany

Brunello di Montalcino, Chianti, Chianti Classico, Vino Nobile di Montepulciano; Vernaccia di San Gimignano

Latium

Colli Albani, Est!Est!Est!, Frascati

Umbria

Sagrantino di Montefalco; Orvieto Classico

The Marches

Rosso Conero; Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi, Verdicchio di Matelica

Paying the Bill

When you ask for the bill (*il conto*) in a restaurant in Italy, don't be surprised if you have to wait a short while. The tab is usually tallied after you ask, rather than throughout the meal. Because waiters here don't work for extra tips, they are rarely in a rush to turn their tables. (Some restaurants will automatically add about a 10% gratuity to the bill. Those that do will usually state this fact on the menu or on the bill itself.)

Most restaurants have wised up to the fact that tourists prefer to pay with credit cards, so you shouldn't have any problem paying with your Visa or MasterCard. Some eateries take American Express, as well. Restaurants usually indicate if they accept credit cards on their doors or menus. On the other hand, quite a few *osterie* and *trattorie* operate on a cash-only

144 Part Five Dining in Central Italy

system. You'll encounter only a handful of these old-school restaurants in the tourist hubs of Florence and Rome. But be aware that paying for your meal with cash is still common practice in small, out-of-the-way towns.

A tip of at least a couple euros (rounded up to the nearest even amount) is expected of foreign tourists. If you choose to pay by credit card, try to pay your tip in cash. Otherwise, it is unlikely that the house will share the gratuity with your waiter.

Settling a Dispute

If you have a problem with your meal, notify your waiter immediately. Otherwise, you might not have two legs to stand on when the check comes. One of the most common dilemmas that a foreign diner encounters in Italy is that what he orders is not always what he gets. For example, if you order *spaghetti al ragu*, you'll get long pasta with a meat sauce, not just a plain, red sauce. This could be a potential disaster for vegetarians. Other modifiers you may want to watch out for are *piccante* (spicy), *noce* or *nocciola* if you're allergic (*allergico*) to nuts, or *crudo* if you're not particularly fond of undercooked meat or fish. The point is that many problems can be solved before you even begin your meal.

On the other hand, dear tourist, it's not always your fault. Even Italian chefs make mistakes sometimes, and it's your right to point out a problem after you take your first bite. Notify your server if your food is too cold (*freddo*), burned (*bruciato*), undercooked (*poco cotto*), stale (*vecchio*), or spoiled (*avariato*). A fly (*mosca*) in your soup is cause for alarm. If you get a wine that is corked, tell the waiter, "*Questo vino sa di tappo!*"

Our Favorite Restaurants in Central Italy

Following this section are detailed profiles of the best *ristoranti*, *pizzerie*, and *trattorie* to be found in in Central Italy. The profiles are organized by region—Florence, the rest of Tuscany, Rome, the rest of Latium, Umbria, and finally the Marches and the Republic of San Marino. First, we provide an overview of the cuisines of the four main regions. Next is a convenient table that lets you see at a glance how the profiled properties in that city or region stack up. Florence and Rome restaurants are listed alphabetically; for regions, profiles are listed by province, then by city, and then alphabetically by name. Each profile features an easily scanned heading that allows you to check out the restaurant's name, cuisine, overall rating, cost, quality rating, and value rating.

Cuisine This is actually less straightforward than it sounds. A couple of years ago, for example, "pan-Asian" restaurants in the United States were typically serving what was then generally described as "fusion" food—Asian ingredients with European techniques, or vice versa. Since then, there has been a pan-Asian explosion, but nearly all specialize in what

Our Favorite Restaurants in Central Italy 145

would be street food back home: noodles, skewers, dumplings, and soups. Once-general categories have become subdivided—French into bistro fare and even Provençal; “new continental” into regional American and “eclectic”—and others have broadened and fused: Middle Eastern and Provençal into Mediterranean, Spanish, and South American into nuevo Latino, and so on. In these cases, we generally use the broader terms (i.e., “Italian”), but sometimes added a parenthetical phrase to give a clearer idea of the fare. Again, though, experimentation and fusion are ever more common, so don’t hold the chefs to too strict a style. Conversely, we avoid creating hybrid cuisine categories except as a last resort.

Overall Rating The overall star rating encompasses the entire dining experience, including style, service, and ambience in addition to the taste, presentation, and quality of the food. Five stars is the highest rating possible and connotes the best of everything. Four-star restaurants are exceptional, and three-star restaurants are well above average. Two-star restaurants are good. One star is used to indicate an average restaurant that demonstrates an unusual capability in some area of specialization—for example, an otherwise unmemorable place that has great barbecue chicken.

Cost To the right of the overall star rating is an expense description that provides a comparative sense of how much a complete meal will cost. A complete meal for our purposes consists of a main course with vegetable or side dish and choice of soup or salad. Appetizers, desserts, drinks, and tips are excluded.

Inexpensive	€15 and less per person
Moderate	€16–€30 per person
Expensive	Over €30 per person

Quality Rating The food quality is rated on a scale of one to five stars, five being the best rating attainable. The quality rating is based expressly on the taste, freshness of ingredients, preparation, presentation, and creativity of food served. There is no consideration of price. If you are a person who wants the best food available and cost is not an issue, you need look no further than the quality ratings.

Value Rating If, on the other hand, you are looking for both quality and value, then you should check the value rating, expressed as stars.

★★★★★	Exceptional value, a real bargain
★★★★	Good value
★★★	Fair value, you get exactly what you pay for
★★	Somewhat overpriced
★	Significantly overpriced

Pricing Here we supply an average price per person to eat a full meal at the profiled restaurant. We’ll also tell you if the restaurant offers prix-fixe menus (or only offers prix-fixe menus), and how much they cost.

146 Part Five Dining in Central Italy

Payment We've listed the type of payment accepted at each restaurant using the following code: AMEX equals American Express, CB equals Carte Blanche, D equals Discover, DC equals Diners Club, MC stands for MasterCard, and V is for Visa. For the most part, restaurants in Italy that do take credit cards only accept the big names—MasterCard, Visa, and American Express. In the case a restaurant does not accept any credit cards, we have indicated this with the phrase “cash only.”

The Cuisine of Tuscany

Although Tuscany (Toscana) is one of the most popular regions in Italy, its cuisine is not as well known. Much of the *cucina Toscana* is centered around age-old peasant recipes that call for simple ingredients, like beans (*fagioli*), bread, seasonal vegetables, and locally available meats, like wild boar (*cinghiale*), duck (*anatra*), and rabbit (*lepre*).

Traditional first-course dishes you'll find in *trattorie* all over Tuscany are the twice-cooked, or “reboiled” *ribollita*, a soup of stale bread, cabbage, beans, and other ingredients, and *pappa al pomodoro*, a mush of tomatoes and bread. Though simple, both dishes have depth of flavor, are delicious, and need to be sampled at least once. Variations exist from town to town.

Despite having a cuisine rife with vegetable-based dishes, Tuscans are meat eaters. The *bistecca alla fiorentina*, one of the most characteristic *secondi* on Tuscan menus, is the closest thing Italians have to a Texas-size steak. (However, mad-cow disease scares have made this dish less than popular over the past couple of years.) Wild boar is extremely common in Tuscany (and, actually, throughout Central Italy) to the point that many restaurants, cafés, and butchers will display a hairy, snouty boar's head above the front door or a mantel. You'll likely find *cinghiale* mixed with tomato sauces for pasta or dressed up as salami on an *antipasto* plate. Duck, rabbit, and animal innards, especially tripe (*trippa*), sometimes appear as featured menu items at even the most elegant of restaurants. You can expect that most meats will come roasted (*arrosto*) or grilled (*alla griglia*).

From appetizers to dessert, there are many provincial variations on Tuscan cuisine. Florence is renowned for its *bistecca*, and, throughout the world, anything *alla fiorentina* indicates that spinach plays a big role in the recipe. Along the coast, *cacciucco*, a five-fish stew, is a staple, and nowhere more so than in Livorno. Meanwhile, the Sienese sweet tooth has contributed *pan forte*, a sophisticated kind of fruit cake, to Tuscany's dessert menu.

Below you'll find our picks for the best dining options in Florence and Tuscany. For convenience, Florence restaurants are listed by quality and then by neighborhood, followed by their respective restaurant profiles sorted alphabetically.

Restaurant Profiles—Florence

THE BEST RESTAURANTS IN FLORENCE						
Restaurant	Cuisine	Overall	Price	Quality	Value	Neighborhood
Osteria de' Benci	Italian	★★★★★	Inexp/Mod	★★★★★	★★★★★	Santa Croce
La Congrega	Tuscan	★★★★½	Mod	★★★★★	★★★★	San Giovanni
Enoteca Pinchiorri	French/Tuscan	★★★★½	Exp	★★★★★	★	Santa Croce
Garga	Contemporary Tuscan	★★★★	Mod/Exp	★★★★★	★★★	Santa Maria Novella
Beccofino	Contemporary Tuscan	★★★★	Exp	★★★★★	★★	Oltrarno
Il Pizzaiuolo	Pizzeria	★★★★	Inexp	★★★★	★★★★★	Santa Croce
Acqua al 2	Italian	★★★★	Mod	★★★★	★★★	Santa Croce
Osteria Santo Spirito	Italian	★★★★	Inexp/Mod	★★★★½	★★★	Oltrarno Spirito
Trattoria La Casalinga	Traditional Tuscan	★★★★	Inexp	★★★	★★★★★	Oltrarno
Trattoria Za-Za	Tuscan	★★★★½	Mod	★★★★½	★★★★½	San Giovanni
Baccus	Pizzeria	★★★★½	Mod	★★★	★★	Santa Maria Novella
Il Latini	Tuscan/Italian	★★★	Mod	★★★	★★★	Santa Maria Novella

Acqua al 2 (Due)

★★★★★

ITALIAN | INEXPENSIVE/MODERATE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★★ | SANTA CROCE

Via della Vigna Vecchia, 40r; phone 055 284 170, fax 055 230 2696

Customers Well-to-do students, yuppies, Chelsea Clinton. **Reservations** Highly recommended. **When to Go** Early evening or on a weeknight. **Pricing** €16–€25. **Payment** V, MC, AMEX. **English Spoken** Yes. **Bar** None. **Wine Selection** Up to 30 wine choices, mostly Tuscan varieties. **Dress** Casual chic. **Disabled Access** None.

Hours Daily, 7:30 p.m.–1 a.m.; closed Monday, 1 week in August

Setting & Atmosphere Though the name may seem to imply that it is for couples, Acqua al 2 is usually full to the brim with gossiping locals and out-of-towners. As it does a brisk business, the service is sometimes rushed. But despite the frenzy, everyone seems to be having a grand old time.

House Specialties Sample platters of pasta, cheeses, or meats.

Summary & Comments Since 1978, when Acqua al 2 opened on the corner of Via dell'Acqua, down the street from the Duomo, foodies have flocked here for the *assaggio*

148 Part Five Dining in Central Italy

dei primi, which is a tasting of five of the restaurant's pastas or risottos. This innovative way to dine eventually led to other *assaggi* (for salads and cheeses), and a second location in San Diego, California.

Baccus

★★★½

PIZZERIA | MODERATE | QUALITY ★★★ | VALUE ★★ | SANTA MARIA NOVELLA

Via Borgo Ognissanti 45; phone 055 283 714

Customers 30-somethings, tourists. **Reservations** Recommended for dinner. **When to Go** Lunch **Pricing** €12–€25. **Payment** AMEX, MC, V. **English Spoken** Some. **Bar** None. **Wine Selection** At least five varieties of reds and whites by the glass; ample selection of moderately priced Tuscan vintages. **Dress** Casual chic, no jeans or sneakers. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Tuesday–Sunday, 11 a.m.–3 p.m., 7 p.m.–midnight; closed Monday

Setting & Atmosphere In the warmer months, the most coveted tables at Baccus are the cramped two or three that face the *motorino*-filled street. Inside, the restaurant is lofty and accommodating for power lunches.

Summary & Comments Though Baccus does do pizza best, it is far from a typical *pizzeria*. The smiling if distant waitstaff are ever ready to recommend seasonal pastas and big, fresh salads. Check the menu board before grabbing a table because, curiously, the *pizzeria* sometimes dabbles in seafood and fresh fish. Daily specials have included *spaghetti con gamberoni* (prawns) and whole trout simmered with olives and capers.

Beccofino

★★★★

CONTEMPORARY TUSCAN | EXPENSIVE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★ |

SANTO SPIRITO/OLTRARNO

Piazza degli Scarlatti; phone 055 290 076

Customers Hip locals and tourists looking to splash out. **Reservations** Recommended. **When to Go** Try it for lunch or on a weekday evening (Monday or Tuesday) to avoid long waits. **Pricing** Lunch €20, dinner €30–€40. **Payment** V, MC, AMEX. **English Spoken** Yes. **Bar** Yes. **Wine Selection** More than 500 bottles; at least 50 wines by the glass. **Dress** Casual chic. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Daily, 12:30–3 p.m., 7–11:30 p.m.; wine bar: daily, 12:30–3:30 p.m., 7 p.m.–midnight

Setting & Atmosphere The restaurant and wine bar have that warm, modern look you'd find in New York or London. Lighting is soft, placemats are black leather, and a few unusual pieces of art adorn the walls. The rather calm setting lends credence to the fact that a mosque and an art gallery once occupied this space.

House Specialties Fresh seafood; Tuscan recipes with a twist.

Summary & Comments This much-anticipated second project by Scottish expat David Gardner opened in 1999 and has garnered quite a following of Florentines and tourists. Chef Francesco Berardinelli prepares Tuscan cuisine in innovative ways, including ravioli stuffed with cod, risotto with squab ragu, or *bistecca alla fiorentina* grilled with oranges. An additional wine bar, separated by a large slab of a counter, serves first course, pastas, and desserts and is your best bet for a lighter, quicker, and less expensive meal. All of the buzz surrounding Beccofino is true, making it almost impossible to get a table on the weekends.

Restaurant Profiles—Florence 149

Enoteca Pinchiorri

★★★★½

FRENCH/TUSCAN | EXPENSIVE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★ | SANTA CROCE

Via Ghibellina, 87; phone 055 24 2777, fax 055 244 983; www.pinchiorri.it

Customers Aristocratic offspring and wealthy tourists. **Reservations** Required. **When to Go** When you hit the lottery. **Pricing** €80–€130. **Payment** V, MC, AMEX. **English Spoken** Yes. **Bar** Yes. **Wine Selection** The cellar boasts more than 80,000 bottles! **Dress** Formal. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Lunch: Tuesday, Thursday–Saturday, 12:30–2 p.m.; dinner: Tuesday–Saturday, 7:30–10 p.m.; closed Sunday, Monday, Tuesday lunch

Setting & Atmosphere Housed on the first floor of the 16th-century Palazzo Ciofi-lacometti, Enoteca Pinchiorri has no time for casual diners. Here, you'll dine on the finest china, drink wine from glasses of Austrian crystal, and use Frette napkins to wipe your mouth. Service is serious and stuffy.

House Specialties Braised rabbit in rosemary, duck foie gras, cheese course. Enoteca Pinchiorri also offers several tasting menus.

Summary & Comments Enoteca Pinchiorri, is, in many ways, a tourist trap. For years, it has been considered one of the best restaurants in Italy, and its two Michelin stars have earned it a spot on every fashionable foodie and rich American's itinerary. Indeed, the nouveau Tuscan and French cuisine is delicious. But staying true to the *alta cucina* formula usually means that portions are even smaller than usual. The best bet is to order up a tasting menu (*menù di degustazione*), which pairs each course with the appropriate wine. On the other hand, when you can choose from almost any vintage ever made in Italy, what's the point in eating?

Garga

★★★★

CONTEMPORARY TUSCAN | MODERATE/EXPENSIVE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★★ | SANTA MARIA NOVELLA

Via del Moro, 48r; phone 055 211 396; garga@fol.it

Customers Well-heeled Florentines, culinary adventurers. **Reservations** Recommended. **When to Go** At the height of the evening rush—it's theater to watch. **Pricing** €10–€22. **Payment** V, MC, AMEX. **English Spoken** Yes. **Bar** Yes. **Wine Selection** Tuscan reds and whites, starting from €8–€10 per bottle. **Dress** Low-key evening wear. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Tuesday–Saturday, noon–3 p.m., 7:30–11 p.m., Sunday, 7–11 p.m.; closed Sunday lunch, Monday

Setting & Atmosphere The rich hues of Garga's purple, crimson, and emerald walls echo the cuisine's complex flavors, as well as act as a backdrop for the drama of the kitchen and dining room. Opera blares, pots clank, and young waiters hurry to deliver your dish so that you can fully enjoy its wafting aroma.

House Specialties Homemade pasta tossed with sprigs of fresh herbs.

Summary & Comments Florentine Giuliano Gargani and Canadian Sharon Oddson are the husband-and-wife team that keep the engines of this beloved *trattoria* well-lubricated with lots of extra virgin olive oil and heaps of creativity. Locals flock to Garga to sample the nouveau Tuscan cuisine, which is invariably an infusion of fresh pastas, meats, and cheeses with unexpected herbs and spices. The tortellini with orange and mint is only one example of the restaurant's interesting *primi*. During the week, Sharon runs a cooking school from the Garga kitchen. Four-hour courses cost €155.

150 Part Five Dining in Central Italy

Il Pizzaiuolo

★★★★

PIZZERIA | INEXPENSIVE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★★★★ | SANTA CROCE

Via de' Macci, 113r; phone 055 241 171

Customers Locals, homesick Neapolitans. **Reservations** Recommended. **When to Go** Early evening. **Pricing** €6–€15. **Payment** Cash only. **English Spoken** Little. **Bar** Yes. **Wine Selection** House wines by the glass, carafe, and half-carafe. **Dress** Casual. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Monday–Saturday, 12:30–3:30 p.m., 7:30 p.m.–1 a.m.; closed Sunday, August

Setting & Atmosphere Photographs of Mt. Vesuvius, lively conversation, and a tavern atmosphere take you back to old Napoli. When the *pizzeria* is packed—and it often is—diners are paired together at long tables, making for an interesting, communal arrangement.

House Specialties There are more than 20 varieties of pizza.

Summary & Comments Il Pizzaiuolo is about the only place in town where you can get an authentic, Naples-style pizza pie, piled high with *muzzarella* (as the Neapolitans call it) and other typical toppings. On the menu are *pizza caprese*, *pizza napoletana*, and *pizza quattro stagione*, among others. There are also plenty of pastas and antipasti to choose from. *Spaghetti a' Vesuviana* is an especially spicy number.

La Congrega

★★★★★

TUSCAN | MODERATE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★★★★ | SAN GIOVANNI

Via Panicale, 43r; phone 055 264 5027, fax 055 264 8578

Customers 30- to 40-something set and a smattering of expats. **Reservations** Recommended. **When to Go** Before 8:30 p.m. **Pricing** €18–€22. **Payment** V, MC. **English Spoken** Yes. **Bar** Yes. **Wine Selection** A rotating selection of 10–15 wines; house wines by the glass. **Dress** Casual chic. **Disabled Access** Yes, on the lower level.

Hours Monday–Saturday, 8 p.m.–11 p.m.; closed Sunday, August

Setting & Atmosphere The warm, wooden, vaulted-ceiling restaurant is like entering into a cozy Tuscan farmhouse. The dining room is decidedly congenial, with views of the open kitchen, and there is a quieter loft area upstairs appropriate for private parties and couples.

House Specialties Medieval Tuscan cuisine; the gnocchi is outrageous.

Summary & Comments La Congrega bills itself as an *osteria del tempo perso*, or an eatery from days gone by. The fireplace in the lower dining room and the antique mirrors and wagon wheels decorating the walls do give it a rustic feel. Additionally, some of the Tuscan fare is culled from recipes from the Middle Ages. Few restaurants in the city give you a chance to try *ginestrata*, a sort of egg soup, or a salad of cabbage and tripe. For those with a modern palate, La Congrega offers plenty of vegetarian options, including handmade pastas and grilled vegetables. Though the cuisine may be somewhat old school, the chef has an eye for detail and flavor; for example, serving broccoli and tomato gnocchi in a bowl made of hardened, oven-baked Parmesan cheese. Presentation is key.

Il Latini

★★★

TUSCAN/ITALIAN | MODERATE | QUALITY ★★★ | VALUE ★★★ |

SANTA MARIA NOVELLA

Via dei Palchetti, 6r; phone 055 210 916; www.illatini.com

Restaurant Profiles—Florence 151

Customers More tourists than locals. **Reservations** Not accepted after 8 p.m.; reserve well in advance for large groups. **When to Go** Lunch. **Pricing** €25–€30. **Payment** V, MC, AMEX, DC. **English Spoken** Yes. **Bar** No. **Wine Selection** Minimal; offers some home-made wines. **Dress** Casual **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Lunch: Tuesday–Sunday, 12:30–2:30 p.m.; dinner: Tuesday–Sunday, 7:30–10:30 p.m.; closed Monday, last week in July, first week in August

Setting & Atmosphere Inside is an Italian version of a *biergarten*, where diners, who may or may not know each other, crowd next to one another on benches. Decorations are of the trite variety, including red-and-white checkered tablecloths and bottles of Chianti in basket casks. Dining here is very communal—perhaps to pack in as many as possible—but you'll more than likely be sitting next to other English-speaking tourists anyway.

House Specialties Large portions of Tuscan treats like *ribollita* and *bistecca*.

Summary & Comments Try to arrive at Il Latini with a reservation, or else you'll be stuck waiting in line for a table. Just about every guidebook written in the past ten years has mentioned this laid-back *trattoria*, and there's good reason. Dishes here are hearty and authentic, and the English-speaking waiters are ever-helpful with recommendations for a well-balanced Tuscan meal. Unlike some eateries in Florence that tend to be stuffy and antitourist, Il Latini is far from intimidating—ideal if you're traveling alone. What's more, if you're scheduled to take a night train, the *trattoria* is only blocks away from the Santa Maria Novella station.

Osteria de' Benci

★★★★★

TUSCAN/ITALIAN | INEXPENSIVE/MODERATE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★★★★ |
SANTA CROCE

Via de' Benci, 13r; phone 055 234 4923

Customers Families, large groups. **Reservations** Strongly recommended. **When to Go** Weeknights. **Pricing** €12–€20. **Payment** V, MC. **English Spoken** Little. **Bar** No. **Wine Selection** Chianti in carafes and half-carafes. **Dress** Anything from casual to business wear. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Monday–Saturday, 1–2:45 p.m., 8–11 p.m.; closed Sunday

Setting & Atmosphere The din of clinking, clanking, and chatter provides the background to this modest neighborhood *osteria*. Service is friendly and efficient.

House Specialties *Bistecca alla fiorentina*, fresh pasta.

Summary & Comments If you don't make a reservation for this little eatery, then be prepared to wait. Even Florentines, who have had prior opportunities to gorge themselves on the Osteria's hearty fare, are willing to stand in line for a spell. The menu changes almost daily but always has local specialties like *bistecca alla fiorentina* and *ribollita*, and Italian standards, like spaghetti bolognese, on the menu. All meals are served with flair on colorful ceramic plates; it's no wonder that diners keep coming back.

Osteria Santo Spirito

★★★★

ITALIAN | INEXPENSIVE/MODERATE | QUALITY ★★★½ | VALUE ★★★ |
SANTO SPIRITO/OLTRARNO

Piazza Santo Spirito, 16r; phone 055 238 2383

Customers Art students, neighborhood folks, a few tourists. **Reservations** Recommended. **When to Go** Go at lunch to watch the goings-on of the flea market. **Pricing**

152 Part Five Dining in Central Italy

€15–€26. **Payment** V, MC. **English Spoken** Yes. **Bar** Yes. **Wine Selection** Approximately a dozen varieties of reds and whites by the glass or bottle. **Dress** Casual. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Daily, 12:30–2:30 p.m., 7:30–11:30 p.m.

Setting & Atmosphere This trendy *trattoria* is renowned for its brightly painted walls and modern décor. Multicolored dishes also pack a kaleidoscopic punch, making dining here fun. The outdoor dining area looks out onto one of the most pleasant *piazze* in all of Florence, which is a real treat in the summer.

House Specialties Big salads, fresh pastas, seafood.

Summary & Comments It's no surprise that Italian celebs like to pop in here when they pass through Florence. Osteria Santo Spirito is routinely packed with the see-and-be scene, who like to dish the dirt over diet-friendly salads and bites of Tyrrhenian seafood. Also popular with nibblers are the restaurant's cheese boards, which are a fine accompaniment with the selection of Tuscan wines. At night, patrons can unwind on the terrace with a plate of pasta. The spinach and ricotta gnocchi are particularly delicious.

Trattoria La Casalinga

★★★★

TRADITIONAL TUSCAN | INEXPENSIVE | QUALITY ★★★ | VALUE ★★★★★ |

SANTO SPIRITO/OLTRARNO

Via dei Michelozzi, 9r; phone 055 218 624, fax 055 267 9143

Customers Students, young couples, and a smattering of tourists. **Reservations** Advised, but not necessary. **When to Go** Early evening. **Pricing** €10–€14. **Payment** V, MC. **English Spoken** Very little. **Bar** No. **Wine Selection** A few house wines by the bottle, or quarter-, half-, or full carafes. **Dress** Casual. **Disabled Access** No, but only one step up into one-floor restaurant.

Hours Monday–Saturday, noon–2:30 p.m., 7–10 p.m.; closed Sunday, three weeks in August

Setting & Atmosphere This is the rustic kind of diner that most first-timers to Italy are looking for. Once past the first small room, the interior resembles a large banquet hall, where rowdy student sing-alongs and birthday parties aren't uncommon. The waiters here are friendlier than most.

House Specialties Tuscan standards like *ribollita* and *pappa al pomodoro*.

Summary & Comments *Casalinga* means housewife in Italian, and this *trattoria* serves the kind of fare that you'd find in your *nonna's* kitchen. First courses, like *gnocchi al ragu*, are simple; second courses are hearty; and goodies like figs, porcini mushrooms, or melon are often incorporated in recipes (and scribbled onto the menu) once they're in season. Even if you don't speak a lick of Italian, you can probably find something that you like. Yes, you can even order lasagna.

Trattoria Za-Za

★★★½

TUSCAN | MODERATE | QUALITY ★★★½ | VALUE ★★★½ | SAN GIOVANNI

Piazza del Mercato Centrale, 6r; phone 055 215 411

Customers Young locals. **Reservations** Not necessary. **When to Go** For lunch, or early or late for dinner. **Pricing** €12–€18. **Payment** V, MC. **English Spoken** Some. **Bar** No. **Wine Selection** At least 20 wines by the glass or bottle. **Dress** Casual. **Disabled Access** Yes, but restroom is downstairs.

Restaurant Profiles—The Rest of Tuscany 153

Hours Monday–Saturday, 11:30 a.m.–11 p.m.; closed Sunday

Setting & Atmosphere Za-Za has a sizable dining room decorated with posters of Italian celebrities. Its two floors and large outdoor dining section, overlooking a square full of passersby, are generally packed with locals and tourists from spring until the end of October.

House Specialties Soups and *crostone* (large pieces of Tuscan bread topped with vegetables or spreads).

Summary & Comments What's not to like about a restaurant where the staff treats you like a regular? Trattoria Za-Za is named after the sound a bee makes, and you'll notice right away that your young server buzzes with friendliness and will help tired tourists and locals alike. Some of the best foods to try at this fairly traditional *trattoria* are the soups, like *ribollita* and *passata di fagioli*, and *crostone* slathered with chicken liver pâté. You can also depend on there always being a few good prix-fixe specials consisting of a first course, second course, and dessert. The wine selection here is slightly disappointing, with very few reds. Luckily, no one minds if you want to sit for a spell sipping wine and grazing. The pace is ideal for the post-sight-seeing blues.

Restaurant Profiles—The Rest of Tuscany

THE BEST RESTAURANTS IN THE REST OF TUSCANY					
Restaurant	Cuisine	Overall	Price	Quality	Value
The Province Of Florence					
Chianti Fiorentina					
Castello Vicchiomaggio	Tuscan	★★★★	Exp	★★★★★	★★★
The Province of Siena					
Siena					
Al Mangia	Tuscan/Italian	★★★	Mod	★★★	★★★
Osteria Le Logge	Tuscan	★★★★	Mod	★★★★	★★★★
La Sosta Di Violante	Contemporary Tuscan	★★★★★	Mod	★★★★★	★★★★
Chianti Senese					
Badia A Coltibuono	Tuscan	★★★★	Exp	★★★★★	★★★★
The Province of Arezzo					
Arezzo					
Il Saraceno	Tuscan/ Aretine	★★★★	Inexp/ Mod	★★★	★★★★★
Le Logge Vasari	Tuscan/Aretine	★★★★	Exp	★★★★★	★★★½
Le Tastevin	Creative Tuscan	★★★★	Mod/ Exp	★★★★★	★★★
Cortona					
Il Falconiere	Italian	★★★★★	Very Exp	★★★★★	★★★

154 Part Five Dining in Central Italy

THE BEST RESTAURANTS IN THE REST OF TUSCANY (continued)					
Restaurant	Cuisine	Overall	Price	Quality	Value
The Province of Lucca					
Lucca					
All'Olivo	Seafood	★★★½	Exp	★★★★★	★★½
Buca Di Sant'Antonio	Tuscan/ Lucchese	★★★	Mod/ Exp	★★★★	★★★★
Trattoria Gigi	Italian	★★★★★	Inexp	★★★★★	★★★★★
The Province of Pisa					
Pisa					
Antica Trattoria da Bruno	Pisan/ Italian	★★★★	Inexp/ Mod	★★★★	★★★★
La Nuova Pizzeria del Borgo	Pizzeria	★★★	Inexp	★★★	★★★★★
Osteria La Grotta	Pisan/Enoteca	★★★★	Inexp/ Mod	★★★★	★★★★

The Province of Florence

Chianti Fiorentina

Castello Vicchiomaggio

★★★★★

HEARTY TUSCAN | EXPENSIVE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★★ | GREVE IN CHIANTI

Via Vicchiomaggio, 4; phone 055 854 079; www.vicchiomaggio.it

Customers Tour groups, hotel patrons. **Reservations** Required. **When to Go** Friday or Saturday evening. **Pricing** €30–€55. **Payment** V, MC, AMEX. **English Spoken** Yes. **Bar** Yes. **Wine Selection** The restaurant serves its own vintages, including award-winning reds Ripa delle More and Chianti Riserva La Prima. **Dress** Casual chic. **Disabled Access** No.

Hours Tuesday–Sunday, 7–11 p.m.; closed Monday

Setting & Atmosphere The 11th-century castle in which this restaurant and hotel is housed boasts Caterina Medici as a former guest. The great hall here, complete with white, vaulted ceilings and enormous fireplaces, has been converted into an elegant and timeless dining room. The varying clientele determine whether the atmosphere is somber or spirited.

House Specialties Beef *stracotto*, marinated in at least three liters of wine.

Summary & Comments If you're not staying at the inn here (see profile in Part Four, Hotels in Central Italy), then you may have trouble finding this restaurant tucked away on a dark road in the heart of Chianti. For the last several years, Castello Vicchiomaggio's chef, Francesco Lagi, formerly a sous-chef at Florence's esteemed Enoteca Pinchiorri, has been given creative license and full culinary control of the cooking arm of this award-winning vineyard. The menu he has produced is strictly Tuscan and makes use of the bounty of the surrounding hills. Appetizers, entrées, and desserts here are so delectable that you don't know whether to savor them or gobble them up at once.

Restaurant Profiles—The Rest of Tuscany 155

The Province of Siena

Siena

Al Mangia

★★★

TUSCAN/ITALIAN | MODERATE | QUALITY ★★★ | VALUE ★★★ | SIENA

Piazza del Campo, 42; phone 0577 281 121

Customers Day trippers. **Reservations** Not necessary. **When to Go** Early evening. **Pricing** €25–€40. **Payment** V, MC. **English Spoken** Yes. **Bar** Yes. **Wine Selection** Vast selection of local Chianti wines by the glass or carafe. **Dress** Casual chic. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Daily, noon–10 p.m.; closed Wednesday during low season.

Setting & Atmosphere The restaurant's most prized outdoor tables look out onto the imposing, medieval buildings of the Piazza del Campo. Inside, the original brick archways set a charming scene.

House Specialties Traditional Tuscan dishes, especially steaks and ribs.

Summary & Comments Most of the touristy *trattorie* that line the Piazza del Campo aren't worth the cost of their red-checkered tablecloths. Al Mangia caters to locals as well as tourists but refuses to act like an overpriced trap. Italians stop by here for the restaurant's honest interpretations of Tuscan-style ribs (*costate*)—basically *bis-tecca* but cut differently—and entrées of lamb, veal, rabbit, and fowl. The authentic, flavorful food is not as much of a draw for visitors, who are content with being able to eat in the shadow of the Torre del Mangia.

Osteria Le Logge

★★★★

TUSCAN | MODERATE | QUALITY ★★★★ | VALUE ★★★★ | SIENA

Via del Porrione, 33; phone 0577 48 013

Customers Tourists at lunch, locals at night. **Reservations** Recommended. **When to Go** Weeknights. **Pricing** €15–€32. **Payment** AMEX, MC, V. **English Spoken** Some. **Bar** No. **Wine Selection** House reds and whites available by the glass or carafe. **Dress** Casual. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Monday–Saturday, noon–3:30 p.m., 7:30–10 p.m.; closed Sunday, two weeks in November

Setting & Atmosphere White-clothed tables are snug against one another in both the main dining room downstairs and the additional room upstairs. Strong wood accents, antique clocks, and retro prints make this *trattoria* feel like a homey tea den.

House Specialties Menu changes daily.

Summary & Comments Being right off the Piazza del Campo, this old-school *trattoria* gets a healthy share of tourists. But that shouldn't put you off. The menu here is authentic, with hearty *primi* like *risotto alle verdure* and cheese and spinach *gnocchi*. Beef and lamb figure prominently on the daily menu, but Le Logge also likes to experiment with fish and seafood. To satisfy the Sienese sweet tooth, the dessert menu is appropriately ample.

La Sosta di Violante

★★★★★

CONTEMPORARY TUSCAN | MODERATE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★★★★ | SIENA

Via di Pantaneto, 115; phone 0577 43 774

156 Part Five Dining in Central Italy

Customers Students, young and old trendsetters. **Reservations** Recommended; you can make them online. **When to Go** Before 8 p.m. if you have no reservation. **Pricing** €16–€24. **Payment** V, MC. **English Spoken** Some. **Bar** No. **Wine Selection** Ample selection of local reds, like Chianti and Montepulciano, some whites; by the bottle only. **Dress** Casual. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Tuesday–Sunday, 7–11 p.m.; closed Monday

Setting & Atmosphere The dining room is simple, with a handful of two-top tables and a few larger ones tucked into the corners. On crowded nights, you may find yourself involved in conversation with other tables, given the intimacy of the place and the playful ambience. A small courtyard seats larger groups, and there are a handful of tables outside the entrance when the weather is warm.

House Specialties Carpaccio of salami and zucchini, *ravioli “alla violante.”*

Summary & Comments It takes a small stroll off the Campo in Siena to get to this lively new restaurant, but we guarantee you’ll be so happy that you passed up all of those eateries on the tourist drag. Here in the shell (*nicchio*) contrada, five young friends and a congenial staff have developed the type of place where you can bring your kids and your parents, vegetarian and carnivorous friends, and culinary novices and food snobs. The chef tweaks ancient recipes with new flavors (try ravioli with radicchio, or beef with red pepper and basil), and makes sure that each plate is a colorful work of art. La Sosta di Violante opened in August 2001, but it’s already a hit with the locals. Get there before other tourists discover it.

Chianti Senese

Badia a Coltibuono

★★★★★

TUSCAN | EXPENSIVE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★★★★ | GIAIOLE IN CHIANTI

Badia a Coltibuono; phone 0577 74481, fax 0577 74 9235; www.coltibuono.com

Customers Serious gourmands, cooking-school students. **Reservations** Required. **When to Go** In the fall, when the *vino novello* and fresh-pressed olive oil have arrived. **Pricing** €40–€70, tasting menu available for €49. **Payment** V, MC. **English Spoken** Yes. **Bar** Yes. **Wine Selection** Badia vintages and the finest wines from throughout Italy. **Dress** Relaxed elegance. **Disabled Access** No.

Hours Tuesday–Sunday, noon–2:30 p.m., 7–10 p.m.; closed November–March, closed Monday

Setting & Atmosphere The restaurant is set in a restored 11th-century monastery deep in the Chianti valley. Outdoor tables enjoy the shade of the grapevines and trellises and the live sounds of jazz bands and string quartets during the summer. Service is friendly and attentive.

House Specialties Risotto with white beans and braised pork; the house-pressed olive oil.

Summary & Comments Badia al Coltibuono didn’t have to work too hard to become one of Italy’s best-known restaurants. The pedigrees sported by owners Roberto Stucchi-Prinetti and Lorenza de’ Medici ensured that. But that didn’t stop the owners from creating a cuisine that is both innovative and undeniably Tuscan. The menu, which changes seasonally, spotlights rustic grains and nuts (like spelt), locally grown Chiana beef, and delights from the garden, including ripe tomatoes, meaty olives, rosemary, basil, and other herbs. The tasting menu is the best value, featuring four courses complimented with the vineyard’s own whites and reds.

Restaurant Profiles—The Rest of Tuscany 157

The Province of Arezzo

Arezzo

Il Saraceno

★★★★

TUSCAN/ARETINE | INEXPENSIVE/MODERATE | QUALITY ★★★ | VALUE ★★★★★ | AREZZO

Via Mazzini, 6; phone 0575 27644

Customers Close friends, gourmets. **Reservations** Not necessary. **When to Go** Lunch. **Pricing** €12–€30. **Payment** AMEX, MC, VISA. **English Spoken** Yes. **Bar** Yes. **Wine Selection** Dozens of reds and whites available by the bottle or half-carafe. Over 20 selections in the “reserve” cellar. **Dress** Casual. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Thursday–Tuesday, noon–3 p.m., 7–11 p.m.; closed Wednesday, July

Setting & Atmosphere Warm and inviting, Il Saraceno is furnished with small, intimate tables which can be put together to accommodate bigger groups. The perimeter of the restaurant is decorated with family mementos and photos from the Giostro. Tantalizing spreads of the day’s specials are kept within eyesight of the entrance, making it hard to pass this place up.

House Specialties Roasted meats; Aretine-style *ribollita*; pizza

Summary & Comments An Arezzo institution near the Piazza Grande, the family-owned Il Saraceno puts a friendly face on Arezzo and its local fare. Owned and operated by the ebullient Dragoni family, the *trattoria* straddles the fence between peasant and gourmet fare. Rustic food here consists of lots of game, including Valdichiana beef, rabbit, and wild boar. But, the chef has also filled the menu with enough pasta, pizzas, and soups that any picky eater should be satisfied. Let the waiter order for you, and you will likely be served an assortment from their prix-fixe menus, which range from €20–€30 per person. Particularly inspirational are the ravioli with truffles, the *ribollita aretina*, and the pork loin stuffed with duck.

Le Logge Vasari

★★★★

TUSCAN/ARETINE | EXPENSIVE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★★½ | AREZZO

Via Vasari, 15 (Piazza Grande); phone 0575 295 894

Customers Locals and tourists. **Reservations** Recommended. **When to Go** Lunch or early evening. **Pricing** €20–€40. **Payment** AMEX, MC, V. **English Spoken** Some. **Bar** Yes. **Wine Selection** House reds and whites available by the glass or carafe; an abbreviated selection of premium vintages. **Dress** Refined, but not formal. **Disabled Access** No.

Hours Daily, noon–3 p.m., 8–11 p.m.; closed Tuesday

Setting & Atmosphere Romance lives under this restaurant’s vaulted ceiling, where you’ll also find candelabra lighting, fine crystal stemware, and vases of fragrant flowers. From the terrace are lovely views of the Piazza Grande.

House Specialties Handmade pasta; Chianina steak.

Summary & Comments A cozy cove off the main square, Le Logge Vasari is under the arcade of the sumptuously decorated Casa Vasari. Similar to the ochre-hued dining room, the dishes here are sparse but beautiful. *Primi* include innovations with fresh pasta, such as a ravioli of red rapini and Umbrian truffles, while *secondi* are typically plates of

158 Part Five Dining in Central Italy

beef and pork dressed up with roasted vegetables and dashes of fresh herbs. Meals here are meant to last hours, not minutes, so leave room for a cheese or dessert course.

Le Tastevin

★★★★

CREATIVE TUSCAN | MODERATE/EXPENSIVE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★★ | AREZZO

Via de' Cenci, 9; phone 0575 28 304

Customers Italian celebrities, locals. **Reservations** Recommended. **When to Go** Weeknights. **Pricing** €15–€32. **Payment** V, MC, AMEX. **English Spoken** Some. **Bar** Yes. **Wine Selection** More than 100 Italian vintages. **Dress** Casual chic. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Monday–Saturday, noon–3 p.m., 7–11 p.m.; closed Sunday

Setting & Atmosphere The large dining room is split into two sections. One section is refined, with dark walnut fixtures, exposed wood-beam ceilings, and delicate chandeliers. The second section is decorated in a quirky style, cluttered with old Hollywood and Cinecittà promotional black-and-whites. During the warmer months, guests can dine outdoors or stick around until late when the restaurant becomes a piano bar.

House Specialties Tuna carpaccio, penne Tastevin.

Summary & Comments Arezzo native actor/director Roberto Benigni, whose skills lie in the ability to make light of serious moments and vice versa, has been known to dine at this centrally located restaurant on occasion. Meanwhile, Le Tastevin is a restaurant that can't decide whether it wants to be a funky, French-style bistro or an elegant Tuscan *trattoria*. No matter what role the restaurant is playing, it always serves meals that are as pleasing to the eye as they are to the stomach. Try the house dish, penne Tastevin, a steaming pasta bowl drizzled with a cream of black truffles and sprinkled with herbs and cheese.

Cortona

Il Falconiere

★★★★★

ITALIAN | VERY EXPENSIVE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★★ | CORTONA

Località San Marino, 370; phone 0575 612 616; falconiere@relaischateaux.com

Customers The jet set, foodies. **Reservations** Required. **When to Go** Lunch, to enjoy views over the Tuscan countryside. **Pricing** €50–€75. **Payment** V, MC, AMEX. **English Spoken** Yes. **Bar** Yes. **Wine Selection** The sommelier develops a new wine menu each season. **Dress** Formal **Disabled Access** No.

Hours Daily, 12:30–3:30 p.m., 8–11 p.m.; closed November, Mondays from December to March

Setting & Atmosphere Il Falconiere is, perhaps, the most fancy farmhouse restaurant in Italy. Only the best linens, china, and crystal are used in the dining room, and the waiters here are hushed and meticulous. Fresh flowers, artisan pottery, and lilting classical music complement the scene.

House Specialties Seasonal vegetables dishes, Val di Chiana beef.

Summary & Comments Lauded by Frances Mayes, Il Falconiere is the house restaurant of an inn located in a 17th-century villa once owned by Italian poet Antonio Guadagnoli. Definitely best saved for splurging (entrées start around \$25), this restaurant is out of a Tuscan dream. Lunch on the veranda affords views of the rolling landscapes of both Tuscany and Umbria, dotted with cypress, silvery olives trees, and

Restaurant Profiles—The Rest of Tuscany 159

patches of rosemary. By night, you can indulge in Italian *alta cucina*, with hand-rolled rigatini dressed in fresh tomato and fava beans, thin strips of beef carpaccio with capers, and some of the most esteemed vintages in Italy.

The Province of Lucca

Lucca

All'Olivo

★★★½

SEAFOOD | EXPENSIVE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★★½ | LUCCA

Piazza San Quirico, 1; phone 0583 496 264

Customers Businessmen, anniversary celebrants. **Reservations** Recommended. **When to Go** When you're splashing out. **Pricing** €40–€50. **Payment** AMEX, MC, V. **English Spoken** Limited. **Bar** Yes. **Wine Selection** French and Italian vintages, many premium, by the glass or bottle. **Dress** Business attire. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours 12:15–3 p.m., 7:30–11 p.m.; closed Wednesday; mid-January–February

Setting & Atmosphere The restaurant's shaded terrace is its biggest asset, while a neutral palette in the dining room allows the food to be the centerpiece. Sepia-print portraits and copper pots add the proper amount of rustic elegance.

House Specialties Grilled seafood, Lucchese specialties.

Summary & Comments Locals consider All'Olivo one of the finest restaurants in town and celebrate special occasions here by ordering grilled scampi, lobster, and spaghetti laden with sea scallops, calamari, clams, and mussels. Though seafood is the establishment's strong suit, fancy meat dishes, including Chateaubriand and ossobucco, are given proper attention by both the chef and the clientele. All'Olivo's brief Lucchese menu, including farro soup, is done well, but can be had elsewhere for less.

Buca di Sant'Antonio

★★★

TUSCAN/LUCCHESE | MOD/EXPENSIVE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★★★★ | LUCCA

Via della Cervia, 3; phone 0583 55881

Customers Locals. **Reservations** Recommended. **When to Go** Early evening. **Pricing** €17–€30. **Payment** V, MC, AMEX. **English Spoken** Some. **Bar** Yes. **Wine Selection** Italian wines, especially Tuscan vintages, by the glass or bottle. **Dress** Business attire. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Tuesday–Saturday, 12:30–3 p.m., 7–11 p.m.; Sunday, 12:30–3:30 p.m.; closed Sunday dinner, Monday, last three weeks of July

Setting & Atmosphere Located in an 18th-century tavern that was once a staging post for horses, the restaurant maintains a rustic elegance with farmhouse décor.

House Specialties Farro (spelt, a type of cereal grain) soup.

Summary & Comments One of Lucca's oldest restaurants, Buca di Sant'Antonio (or St. Anthony's Inn) began serving townspeople and traveling Tuscans back in 1782. Puccini supped here, as did Ezra Pound. As for the menu, it reads much the way it did from the beginning, with emphasis on traditional Lucca-style cooking. Some of the rural recipes include farro soup *alla garfagnana*, spit-roasted kid goat with turnips, and stuffed rabbit with a soufflé of green beans and codfish. Buca's chef, Giuliano Pacini, has taken liberties with the old recipes, mixing old flavors with a new combination of herbs, and this has helped keep the restaurant in the culinary spotlight. If you go, save room for dessert—the apple tart is the perfect ending to a country meal.

160 Part Five Dining in Central Italy

Trattoria Gigi

★★★★★

ITALIAN | INEXPENSIVE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★★★★ | LUCCA

Piazza del Carmine, 7, Lucca; phone 0583 467 266

Customers Neighbors, tourists, local soccer stars. **Reservations** Advised for evenings and weekends. **When to Go** Lunch or early evening, Monday–Thursday. **Pricing** €15–€20. **Payment** Visa, MC. **English Spoken** Limited. **Bar** No. **Wine Selection** Lucchese reds and whites available by glass or carafe. **Dress** Casual. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Daily, noon–3 p.m., 7:30–11 p.m.; closed Sunday

Setting & Atmosphere The overly friendly staff will win you over first. Then, prepare to be amused by the colorful assortment of wooden chairs, checkered tablecloths, and local artwork.

House Specialties Pastas, hearty entrées.

Summary & Comments Snootiness is not something you'll want to equip yourself with if you're dining at Gigi's. Possessing the warm atmosphere that all *trattorie* should have, the eatery, located by the market at Piazza del Carmine, is ideal for families or boisterous groups of friends. The kitchen cooks up Italian comfort foods, including fried chicken (rabbit, too), *baccalà*, and lasagna. Appetizers, desserts, and vegetable dishes depend largely on what's available at the market—at least you know it's fresh. Though it's been in operation since the 1950s, Gigi was recently updated with new furnishings and owners. Italian soccer player Michele Tambellini now has a stake in the local favorite, lending this retro dive a new swagger.

The Province of Pisa**Pisa****Antica Trattoria da Bruno**

★★★★★

PISAN/ITALIAN | INEXPENSIVE/MODERATE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★★★★ | PISA

Via Luigi Bianchi, 12 (Porta a Lucca); phone 050 560 818

Customers Tourists by day, Italians by night. **Reservations** Recommended for evening. **When to Go** Late afternoon, early evening. **Pricing** €13–€22. **Payment** AMEX, DC, MC, V. **English Spoken** Yes. **Bar** Yes. **Wine Selection** Tuscan vintages available by the glass or bottle. **Dress** Casual. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Daily, noon–3 p.m., 7–10:30 p.m.; closed Monday lunch, Tuesday

Setting & Atmosphere Wood-slat ceilings, low lighting, and long banks of tables lend a communal setting and a typical *trattoria* feel.

House Specialties Grilled fish, plus salt cod and eel.

Summary & Comments Pisani tend to shy away from Da Bruno around lunchtime. At just a few blocks from the Leaning Tower, the restaurant can become a mob scene of day-tripping tourists. However, out-of-towners who opt to stay the night can enjoy a meal among locals at one of Pisa's most beloved institutions. As Pisan fare is not well known outside of this city, it is worth it to try the few specialties, including the entrée of salt cod with leeks or the appetizer of grilled eels, which purportedly are plucked from the Arno. If you're feeling less adventurous, sample the treat's fine *pasta e ceci* (pasta with garbanzo beans) or *ribollita alla pisana*.

The Cuisine of Latium 161

La Nuova Pizzeria del Borgo

★★★

PIZZERIA/TRADITIONAL ITALIAN | INEXP | QUALITY ★★★ | VALUE ★★★★★ | PISA

Vicolo dei Tinti, 15; phone 050 580 322

Customers Lost tourists, students, business types. **Reservations** No. **When to Go** Lunch. **Pricing** €10–€15. **Payment** V, MC. **English Spoken** No. **Bar** No. **Wine Selection** House reds and whites by the glass or carafe. **Dress** Casual. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Monday–Saturday, 11 a.m.–11 p.m.; closed Sunday

Setting & Atmosphere Located on a small alley in central Pisa, this part spit-and-sawdust *pizzeria*, part respectable *trattoria* doesn't look like much from the outside. When the weather permits, most customers dine outside under the raggedy awning. There are many tables inside for cooler months and rainy days.

House Specialties Pizza and simple pasta dishes.

Summary & Comments A healthy mix of Italians and budget-minded travelers attest to this restaurant's hearty dishes and bargain prices. The *gnocchi al ragu* is particularly delicious, and you can't go wrong with a *pizza margherita* and a mug of beer. Service is spotty.

Osteria la Grotta

★★★★

PISAN/ENOTECA | INEXP/MODERATE | QUALITY ★★★★ | VALUE ★★★★★ | PISA

Via San Francesco, 103, Pisa; phone 050 578 105

Customers Local wine lovers. **Reservations** Strongly recommended. **When to Go** Early evening for a table, later for atmosphere. **Pricing** €12–€30. **Payment** Cash only. **English Spoken** Limited. **Bar** Yes. **Wine Selection** Hundreds of Italian vintages; daily specials by the glass. **Dress** Casual. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Daily, 7:30–11:30 p.m.; closed Sunday, August

Setting & Atmosphere Friends meet here to clink glasses, smoke, and chat up the opposite sex—a fun place if you're into people-watching as a spectator sport.

House Specialties *Antipasta*, grilled meats, dessert.

Summary & Comments Housed in vaulted cellar and hemmed in with stone to resemble a grotto, Osteria La Grotta is a delightful wine bar with an exceptional kitchen. Little plates of meats, cheeses, olives, and other *antipasto* stand-bys are a specialty, but there are plenty of entrées to choose from, too. The pasta menu, though abbreviated, will please any palate, while carnivores can indulge in tortellini with meat ragu, occasional offal offerings, and mixed grill of meats barbecued *alla maremmano* (from Tuscany's wild Maremma countryside). When you're done, linger for *dolci* and a nip of *vin santo*, else join the crowd for a glass of wine.

The Cuisine of Latium

Rome's overwhelming influence in Latium has strongly affected the region's culture, history, and cuisine. *La Cucina Laziale* is much less refined in comparison to the food in Tuscany, taking its cue from pastoral origins and offal recipes. Poor, hapless slaughterhouse workers who had to make do with the fifth quarter (*quinto quarto*) of slaughtered beasts, or

162 Part Five Dining in Central Italy

the parts of the animal that the wealthy didn't want, are responsible for developing the region's most beloved carnivorous dishes. If you're visiting Rome, you will definitely see items like brains (*cervetello*), oxtail soup (*coda alla vaccinara*), and a number of dishes made with lamb (*pecorino*), including *pecorino romano* cheese. *Rigatoni alla pajata*, made with the intestines of an unweaned calf, is a delicacy to some, but something to steer clear of if you're the least bit squeamish. Less intimidating specialties from Latium include: *bucatini*, a long, tubular pasta; *alla matriciana*, pasta in a tomato/wild boar/onion sauce; *saltimbocca*, made with prosciutto and veal; and spaghetti *alla carbonara*, an egg and bacon (in this case, cured wild boar bacon) pasta, a dish familiar to many travelers. A nod should also be given to Rome's Jewish community, which has created some of the most memorable dishes in the region, including *carciofi alla giudea* (golden fried artichokes), *fiori di zucca* (zucchini flowers stuffed with anchovies and cheese, then battered and fried), and *filetti di baccalà* (salted codfish).

Diners watching their salt intake should know that Romans are heavy-handed with salt. In olden days, when salt equaled wealth, the more salt a dish was flavored with, the richer a person was deemed to be. For better or for worse, the tradition stuck. If you don't want too much salt on your meal, ask for little salt (*poco sale*) or no salt (*niente sale*). And order up plenty of water.

In Rome, be on the lookout for the "Sapore di Roma" (Taste of Rome) if you're traveling in late fall. Many restaurants throughout the city participate in this month-long event, allowing diners to enjoy gourmet, prix-fixe meals at reasonable prices.

Below you'll find our picks for the best dining options in Rome and Latium. For convenience, Rome restaurants are listed by quality and then by neighborhood, followed by their respective restaurant profiles sorted alphabetically.

Restaurant Profiles—Rome

THE BEST RESTAURANTS IN ROME						
Name	Cuisine	Overall	Price	Quality	Value	Neighborhood
Cul de Sac	Enoteca & appetizers	★★★★★	Inexp	★★★★★	★★★★★	Centro Storico
La Campana	Roman	★★★★★	Mod/Exp	★★★★★	★★★★★	Centro Storico
Asinocotto	Contemporary Italian	★★★★★	Mod	★★★★★	★★★	Trastevere

Restaurant Profiles—Rome 163

THE BEST RESTAURANTS IN ROME (continued)						
Name	Cuisine	Overall	Price	Quality	Value	Neighborhood
Osteria dell'Ingegno	Italian/Mediterranean	★★★★★	Mod/Exp	★★★★★	★★★	Centro Storico
San Teodoro	Roman/Italian	★★★★½	Mod/Exp	★★★★★	★★★★	Ancient City
'Gusto	Pizza/Italian/International	★★★★½	Inexp/Mod	★★★★	★★★★	Tridente
Ripa 12	Fish/Seafood	★★★★	Mod/Exp	★★★★★	★★★	Trastevere
Quinzi e Gabrielli	Fish/Seafood	★★★★	Exp	★★★★★	★★	Centro Storico
Dar Poeta	Pizza	★★★★	Inexp	★★★★	★★★★★	Trastevere
Al 16 del Portico d'Ottavia	Roman/Jewish	★★★★	Mod	★★★★	★★★★	Centro Storico
Montevecchio	Italian/Roman	★★★★	Exp	★★★★	★★★	Vatican Area
Camponeschi	Seafood	★★★★	Very Exp	★★★★	★★	Centro Storico
Sora Lella	Italian	★★★★½	Mod	★★★★	★★	Centro Storico
Maccheroni	Italian	★★★★½	Mod	★★★	★★	Centro Storico
Margutta	Vegetarian	★★★	Mod/Exp	★★★★★	★★	Tridente
Checchino dal 1887	Roman/Offal	★★★	Very Exp	★★★★	★	Aventino
Da Augusto	Italian	★★★	Inexp	★★★	★★★★★	Trastevere
Miscellanea	Italian	★★★	Inexp	★★★	★★★★★	Centro Storico
Settimio al Pellegrino	Italian	★★★	Mod	★★★	★★★★	Centro Storico
Capranica	Italian	★★½	Inexp/Mod	★★½	★★★	Centro Storico

Al 16 del Portico d'Ottavia

★★★★★

ROMAN/JEWISH | MODERATE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★★★★ | CAMPO DE' FIORI

Via del Portico d'Ottavia, 16; phone 06 687 4722; bus 23, 44, 56, 60, 65, 75, 170, 710, 774, 780

Customers Neighborhood folks. **Reservations** Recommended on the weekends. **When to Go** Lunch, weeknights. **Pricing** €12–€21. **Payment** V, MC, AMEX. **English Spoken** Some. **Bar** None. **Wine Selection** More whites than reds; the house white is bottled down the road in the Castelli Romani. **Dress** Business casual. **Disabled Access** Yes.

164 Part Five Dining in Central Italy

Hours Wednesday–Monday, 12:30–3 p.m., 7:30–11 p.m.; closed Tuesday

Setting & Atmosphere This *trattoria's* soft lighting and no-frills décor allow the flavorful Jewish dishes to take center stage. Outdoor dining comes with views of the crumbling Octavian Gate.

House Specialties Jewish dishes and homemade pastas.

Summary & Comments One of the cornerstone's of Rome's Jewish Ghetto neighborhood, 16 (*seidici* [SAY-dee-chee]) serves up traditional Roman fare *alla giudea*. The emphasis here is on lean cuts of beef, ample portions of fish (such as *baccalà* and terrines of fish roe), and vegetables fresh from the market. As for pasta, the signature dish is the *penette al 16*, a very unkosher combination of sausage, tomatoes, and eggplant.

Asinocotto

★★★★★

CONTEMPORARY ITALIAN/MEDITERRANEAN | MODERATE | QUALITY ★★★★★ |
VALUE ★★★ | TRASTEVERE

Via dei Vascellari, 48; phone 06 589 8985; bus 23, 97

Customers Artsy types, adventurous gourmards, and Rome's gay contingent. **Reservations** Required. **When to Go** Thursday and Friday are lively. **Pricing** €20–€30. **Payment** V, MC, AMEX. **English Spoken** Yes. **Bar** Yes. **Wine Selection** Premium Italian and French wines ranging from €10 to €65 per bottle. Some vintages are available by the glass. **Dress** Casual chic. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Tuesday–Sunday, 8 p.m.–midnight; closed Monday, January

Setting & Atmosphere Gay-owned and -operated Asinocotto attracts a vivacious crowd of liberals, gays, young couples, and gourmards. Service is swift and congenial.

House Specialties Mediterranean plates pretty enough to be in a museum.

Summary & Comments This is one of the best places in Rome to sample modern, creative fare and mingle with the locals. Giuliano Brenna, proprietor and chef of the restaurant whose name translates to “cooked ass (donkey),” takes inspiration from classic Italian and Mediterranean ingredients, especially fish, fresh vegetables, and citrus fruits, and mixes them in new ways. Some of the mouth-watering dishes include salmon medallions with spinach and herbs, gnocchi with sweet peppers and mint sauce, and a salad of orange-marinated sea bass. Brenna is always experimenting with what's available at the market, making a visit here a must if you're in Rome.

Capranica

★★★½

ITALIAN | INEXP/MODERATE | QUALITY ★★★½ | VALUE ★★★ | CENTRO STORICO

Piazza Capranica, 99; phone 06 699 40992; bus 56, 60, 85, 116, 492

Customers Parliamentarians, tourists. **Reservations** Not necessary. **When to Go** Lunch or early evening. **Pricing** €10–€22. **Payment** V, MC, AMEX. **English Spoken** Yes. **Bar** Yes. **Wine Selection** Hundreds of bottles of reds and whites from throughout Italy. **Dress** Your choice—business suits and weekend wear mingle here. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Monday–Saturday, 12:30–3:30 p.m., 7–10 p.m.; closed Sunday

Setting & Atmosphere Inside Enoteca Capranica, the floral upholstery, dark wood moldings, and checkerboard floor clash, resulting in a very frumpy look. Outdoor tables, set under a canopy of vines, are more inviting and are usually packed with tourists. Service can be brusque.

Restaurant Profiles—Rome 165

House Specialties Meat, risotto dishes, pizza at lunch.

Summary & Comments Parliamentarians come to Enoteca Capranica at lunch or after work to pow-wow, but tourists will find that this centrally located restaurant is just as good as any for daytime munchies. Pizza and pasta portions here are ample and reasonably priced, and the large wine selection makes this a good stop-and-sip point between landmarks.

Camponeschi

★★★★

SEAFOOD | VERY EXPENSIVE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★ | CAMPO DE' FIORI

Piazza Farnese, 50; phone 06 687 4297, fax 06 686 5244; bus 46, 62, 64

Customers Rome's power brokers, older couples. **Reservations** Required. **When to Go** Avoid Friday, when the place is full to bursting. **Pricing** €35–€60. **Payment** V, MC, AMEX. **English Spoken** Yes. **Bar** None. **Wine Selection** Italian and French vintages, and its own house wine. **Dress** Formal. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Monday–Saturday, 8–11 p.m. (after 11 p.m. with reservations); closed Sunday

Setting & Atmosphere If you eavesdrop here, you're likely to hear heated political debates and hushed conversations about financial plans. Business types love the formality of Camponeschi's *Godfather*-worthy dining room. Even so, couples flock here for extravagant dinners under candlelight. Outdoor seating faces the wide Piazza Farnese and the French embassy.

House Specialties Fish and seafood, especially mussels and clams.

Summary & Comments A Roman institution, Camponeschi has long been synonymous with fish and seafood. Here in one of the most sumptuously decorated restaurants in all of Rome, you can savor appetizers of lobster and black truffles, and main courses of venison and blueberries, or oysters stuffed with lump crab and rosemary. Over the past several years, Camponeschi has increasingly added thick cuts of game and beef to its menu, perhaps to satisfy its masculine clientele's hearty appetites.

Checchino dal 1887

★★★

ROMAN OFFAL CUISINE | VERY EXPENSIVE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★ | AVENTINO

Via di Monte Testaccio, 30; phone 06 574 6318; Metro Piramide (Line B)

Customers Meat lovers. **Reservations** Required. **When to Go** Weeknights. **Pricing** €45–€70. **Payment** V, MC, AMEX. **English Spoken** Some. **Bar** Yes. **Wine Selection** An exhaustive selection of bold reds and some whites. **Dress** Business attire. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Tuesday–Saturday, 7:30–11 p.m.; closed Sunday, Monday, August, Christmas week

Setting & Atmosphere The humble yet elegant surroundings go well with the plebeian food. Walls display old farmhouse tools.

House Specialties Innards, entrails, and thick cuts of meat.

Summary & Comments Only in Rome would one want to dine across from an old slaughterhouse. But Checchino's location is more than appropriate, for it has earned its stripes by cooking the offal cuisine that the old abattoir workers made famous. In operation since 1887, the restaurant serves traditional favorites like *rigatoni alla pajata* and oxtail stew, plus many other meals sure to make a vegetarian faint. The prices here seem very steep, especially given what the key ingredients are, but Checchino is the place to go if you want the very best in *quinto quarto* cooking.

166 Part Five Dining in Central Italy

Cul de Sac

★★★★★

ENOTECA AND APPETIZERS | INEXPENSIVE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★★★★ |
PIAZZA NAVONA*Piazza Pasquino, 73; phone 06 688 01094; bus 46, 62, 64, 70, 81, 87, 186, 492*

Customers Hip locals and tourists. **Reservations** Advised. **When to Go** Early or late evening. **Pricing** €8–€12. **Payment** V, MC. **English Spoken** Some. **Bar** None. **Wine Selection** More than 200 bottles and more than 30 varieties by the glass. **Dress** Casual. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Tuesday–Sunday, noon–3:30 p.m., 7 p.m.–midnight; Monday, 7–11 p.m.; closed Monday lunch

Setting & Atmosphere Cul de Sac's interior space is exhaustive, with booths lining the side walls and wine bottle stacked high on shelves above. The *enoteca's* ten or so outdoor tables, which are highly coveted, look out on the quaint Piazza Pasquino.

House Specialties Outstanding appetizers.

Summary & Comments You can never have a bad meal at Cul de Sac—unless you've left your tastebuds at home. Specializing in wine and savory appetizers, with a few entrées thrown in for good measure, this vibrant neighborhood joint is always packed and consistently rated as one of the best places in Rome to get a bite. The puréed onion soup served with a wedge of crusty bread will always hit the spot on a cool November night, and the escargot (*lumache*, in Italian) swim in a sea of garlic, pesto, and olive oil. Additionally, there's almost always a cheese sampler if you just want a little nibble in between sips of wine. The knowledgeable waiters are more than happy to give you a glass-by-glass tour of Italy.

Da Augusto

★★★

ITALIAN | INEXPENSIVE | QUALITY ★★★ | VALUE ★★★★★ | TRASTEVERE

Piazza de' Renzi, 15; phone 06 580 3978; bus 23, 97; tram 8

Customers Locals, young couples, families, few tourists. **Reservations** No. **When to Go** Anytime. **Pricing** €8–€16. **Payment** Cash only. **English Spoken** Some. **Bar** None. **Wine Selection** House reds and whites. **Dress** Casual. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Monday–Friday, 12:30–3:30 p.m., 7:30–11 p.m.; Saturday, 12:30–3 p.m.; closed Saturday dinner, Sunday

Setting & Atmosphere A traditional *trattoria* in every sense of the word. Here, the management, chef, and waiters are all members of Augusto's family. Customers can also feel the love—the three inside dining rooms are cramped, and outdoor seating consists of communal picnic tables. Lunches here are mellow.

House Specialties *Cacio e pepe*, *bucatini alla matriciana*.

Summary & Comments Tucked away in an alley in Trastevere, Augusto's is off the main tourist track. Neighborhood folks who want food like Mom used to make at decent prices come here in droves. Specials at this rough-and-ready *trattoria* change every day, and you should take note of them (on the board next to the door) before grabbing a table. Traditional Laziale pastas, such as *bucatini alla matriciana*, are always on the menu, as are Hungry Man–size portions of roasted chicken with peppers and veal chops.

Dar Poeta

★★★★★

PIZZA | INEXPENSIVE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★★★★ | TRASTEVERE

Violo del Bologna, 45; phone 06 588 0516 Bus 23, 65

Restaurant Profiles—Rome 167

Customers Students, young couples, party groups. **Reservations** Recommended. **When to Go** Weeknights. **Pricing** €10–€15. **Payment** V, MC, AMEX. **English Spoken** Some. **Bar** None. **Wine Selection** House reds and whites, and up to 10 varieties by the bottle or glass. **Dress** Casual. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Daily, 7:30–11 p.m.; closed Monday

Setting & Atmosphere Dominating Dar Poeta are large tables that accommodate the after-work pizza crowds. Intimate tables are made less so, as they are inevitably in full view of the frenzy around the wood-burning pizza oven. Waiters and customers seem happy to be here.

House Specialties Pizza.

Summary & Comments Dar Poeta is appropriately named after the people's poet Giacchino Belli, who would have applauded the *pizzeria's* laid-back everyman mentality. Waiters here cavort with the clientele, and, in return, the patrons sometimes serenade the waiters. People come here to nosh on some of the city's best pizza, of which there are at least 15 choices. Folks stick around to enjoy the atmosphere, which is not unlike a local pub at happy hour.

'Gusto

★★★★½

PIZZA, ITALIAN, AND INTERNATIONAL CUISINE | INEXP/MOD | QUALITY ★★★★★ |
VALUE ★★★★★ | TRIDENTE

Piazza Augusto Imperatore, 9; phone 06 322 6273; bus 90, 119, 913

Customers Couples, work colleagues, families, tourists. **Reservations** Recommended on weekends. **When to Go** Tuesday–Thursday. **Pricing** Pizzeria: €12–€20; restaurant: €22–€32. **Payment** V, MC, AMEX. **English Spoken** Yes. **Bar** Yes. **Wine Selection** A rotating, edited selection of Italian reds and whites by the glass or bottle; there's also a separate wine bar on the premises. **Dress** Casual chic. **Disabled Access** Yes, though restrooms are in the basement, accessible only via stairs.

Hours Sunday, Tuesday–Thursday, 12:45–3 p.m., 7:45–midnight; Friday and Saturday, 12:45–3 p.m., 8 p.m.–2 a.m.; closed Monday

Setting & Atmosphere 'Gusto looks slick and trendy but not intimidating, and it has the professionalism and efficiency you'd expect at restaurants in New York, Toronto, or San Francisco. Young male and female students outfitted in 'Gusto T-shirts make up the waitstaff, a sight that is somewhat uncommon in a country populated with sixtysomething waiters in bow ties and cummerbunds.

House Specialties Bubbling pizzas, *fritto misto*.

Summary & Comments 'Gusto has something for everyone. The lower half of the restaurant is a *pizzeria*, where you can order up thick-crust pies, fried appetizers, and several entrées. As you go upstairs to 'Gusto's restaurant, the prices and the cuisine elevate. Here, you are likely to find Italian standbys next to stir-fry.

La Campana

★★★★★

ROMAN | MODERATE/EXPENSIVE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★★★★ |
PIAZZA NAVONA

Vicolo della Campana, 18; phone 06 686 7820; bus 70, 87, 119, 186

Customers Old-money Romans, politicians, tourists. **Reservations** Recommended. **When to Go** Weeknights. **Pricing** €22–€36. **Payment** V, MC, AMEX. **English Spoken** Some. **Bar** None. **Wine Selection** Premium Castelli Romani vintages by the bottle, a few by the glass. **Dress** Business attire. **Disabled Access** Yes.

168 Part Five Dining in Central Italy

Hours Tuesday–Sunday, 12:30–3 p.m., 7:30–11:30 p.m.; closed Monday

Setting & Atmosphere There's a very sober and conservative air about La Campana. The clientele don three-piece Armani suits, and the bow-tie-and-cummerbund waiters are cordial and appropriately attentive.

House Specialties *Bucatini alla matriciana* and *coda all vaccinara*.

Summary & Comments This *trattoria* has been around long enough (since 1528 by some estimates, perhaps even since 1450) to have been able to serve Goethe when he took a spin through the capital city. For several centuries, La Campana has dished out traditional Roman fare, like *osso buco*, *bucatini alla matriciana*, and *quinto quarto* standards. But despite having had a mention in Goethe's *Roman Elegies*, the *trattoria* hasn't become the overpriced tourist trap that one would expect.

Maccheroni

★★★½

ITALIAN | MODERATE | QUALITY ★★★ | VALUE ★★ | CENTRO STORICO

Via delle Coppelle, 44; phone 06 683 07895; bus 64, 70, 75, 116

Customers Fine young things. **Reservations** Recommended for later in the week and on weekends. **When to Go** Lunch, Monday–Thursday nights. **Pricing** €18–€32.

Payment V, MC, AMEX. **English Spoken** Yes. **Bar** Yes. **Wine Selection** A variety of reds and whites line the walls and are part of the design aesthetic here. **Dress** As trendy as you want to be. **Disabled Access** None.

Hours Monday–Saturday, 1–3 p.m., 8 p.m.–midnight; closed Sunday

Setting & Atmosphere The décor is understated, but the all-star clientele is not.

House Specialties *Maccheroni* (the generic name for pasta) with all manner of sauces.

Summary & Comments Bono, Martin Scorsese, and Cameron Diaz have all paid *Maccheroni* a visit while on jaunts in the Eternal City. Truth be told, we're not sure why this restaurant draws so many celebrities, other than the fact that it is tucked away on a quiet street near the lovely Piazza Navona. The food here is very basic, with an emphasis on typical *primi* such as *cacio e pepe*, *penne all'arrabiata*, *carbonara*, and *bucatini alla matriciana*.

Margutta Vegetariano

★★★

INTERNATIONAL VEGETARIAN | MODERATE/EXPENSIVE | QUALITY ★★★★★ |
VALUE ★★ | TRIDENTE

Via Margutta, 118; phone 06 326 50577; Metro Spagna (Line A)

Customers Gucci models and natural women. **Reservations** Recommended. **When to Go** Lunch or Sunday brunch. **Pricing** €20–€28. **Payment** V, MC, AMEX. **English Spoken** Yes. **Bar** None. **Wine Selection** Only a few wines by the glass. **Dress** Trendy duds. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Daily, 12:30–3:30 p.m., 7:30 p.m.–midnight

Setting & Atmosphere Modern art mingles with Far East motifs and giant potted plants. The regular clientele are cool and sophisticated.

House Specialties Unique salads, vegetable soufflés.

Summary & Comments This ain't no hippie hangout. Instead, *Margutta* has established itself as the premier vegetarian restaurant in Rome, convincing even die-hard carnivores to give it a try. The colorful dinners of homemade pasta, organic veggies, and ample spices are memorable, and the portions are generous. At lunch, you can order up

Restaurant Profiles—Rome 169

a prix-fixe meal (which includes appetizer, entrée, and dessert) for about €12; on Sundays, Margutta's brunch is the best thing going. The vegetarian restaurant's two other locations—Le Cornacchie at Piazza Rondanini (near the Pantheon) and Al Leoncino at Via del Leoncino (near the Ara Pacis)—are more low-key but equally appetizing.

Miscellanea

★★★

ITALIAN | INEXPENSIVE | QUALITY ★★★ | VALUE ★★★★★ | CENTRO STORICO

Via delle Paste, 110a; phone 06 679 3235; bus 64, 70, 75, 116

Customers Working stiff by day, foreign students by night. **Reservations** Not necessary. **When to Go** Lunch. **Pricing** €8–€12. **Payment** V, MC. **English Spoken** No. **Bar** Yes. **Wine Selection** A few house reds and whites by the glass or carafe. **Dress** Business casual. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Monday–Saturday, noon–3:30 p.m., 7 p.m.–1 a.m.; Sunday, 7 p.m.–midnight

Setting & Atmosphere This is a raucous student pub by night, so the décor here is random, with lots of soccer pennants and photos. Lunchtime meals are prepared and eaten in a jiffy.

House Specialties Gnocchi, *penne all'arrabiata*, big salads.

Summary & Comments While tourists near the Pantheon are making do with fast food or overpriced tourist eats, workers from the neighborhood are getting big, steaming bowls of pasta at this hole in the wall. Here, you can pop in for a quick, no-frills lunch for about the price of a Big Mac meal. Specials change daily.

Montevecchio

★★★★

ITALIAN/ROMAN | EXPENSIVE | QUALITY ★★★ | VALUE ★★★ | VATICAN AREA

Piazza Montevecchio, 22a; phone 06 686 1319; Metro Ottaviano (Line A)

Customers Locals. **Reservations** Recommended. **When to Go** Weeknights. **Pricing** €22–€30. **Payment** V, MC. **English Spoken** Yes. **Bar** No. **Wine Selection** Dozens of Italian vintages by the bottle, a few by the glass. **Dress** Prim and proper. **Disabled Access** None.

Hours Wednesday–Sunday, 7:30 p.m.–midnight; closed Monday, Tuesday, three weeks in August, two weeks in December

Setting & Atmosphere Long drapes and high ceilings define the boundaries of this classy, family-run restaurant, located in a building where Raphael and Bramante once had studios. The scene is conservative but convivial.

House Specialties Diet-destroying entrées.

Summary & Comments A restaurant of refinement in the very building where Raphael once worked, Montevecchio is the type of restaurant that only does about two seatings per night, so as to allow the customers time to enjoy a pleasurable evening out. Dishes to linger over here include the strudel of porcini mushrooms, gnocchi with cinghiale ragu, seafood lasagna, and roast suckling pig.

Osteria dell'Ingegno

★★★★★

ITALIAN/MEDITERRANEAN | MOD/EXPENSIVE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★ | CENTRO STORICO

Piazza di Pietra, 45; phone 06 678 0662; bus 64, 70, 75, 116

170 Part Five Dining in Central Italy

Customers Young lovers, gourmands. **Reservations** Recommended. **When to Go** Lunch, weeknights before 9 p.m. **Pricing** €15–€35. **Payment** V, MC. **English Spoken** Some. **Bar** Yes. **Wine Selection** At least 10 reds and whites by the glass or bottle. **Dress** Casual chic. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Monday–Saturday, 12:30–3:30 p.m., 8 p.m.–midnight; closed Sunday, two weeks in August

Setting & Atmosphere The vibrant, modern décor looks like it could have been Picasso's dining room. Besides the cute interior, the restaurant faces the ancient ruins of Hadrian's temple, which is gorgeously floodlit by night.

House Specialties Organic ingredients, fresh fish, and lots of choices for vegetarians.

Summary & Comments Had Leonardo da Vinci been a chef, he may have developed the sort of innovative cuisine that the Osteria dell'Ingegno has come to be known for. Using only the freshest (read: seasonal) ingredients, the Osteria has gained a reputation for its fusion-style plates, including Chiana beef with spicy mustard salsa, polenta with Gorgonzola cream, and tortilla soup.

Quinzi e Gabrielli

★★★★

FISH/SEAFOOD | EXPENSIVE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★ | CENTRO STORICO

Via delle Coppelle, 6; phone 06 687 9389; bus 64, 70, 75, 116

Customers Seafood fans, well-to-do Romans, tourists. **Reservations** Required. **When to Go** Tuesday or Wednesday (less packed). **Pricing** €30–€55. **Payment** V, MC, AMEX. **English Spoken** Yes. **Bar** Yes. **Wine Selection** Italian and French reds and whites, many of the latter of French provenance. **Dress** Suit and tie. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Monday–Saturday, 8 p.m.–midnight; closed Sunday

Setting & Atmosphere Known for its thoughtful and diligent service, Quinzi e Gabrielli is located in a 15th-century *palazzo* on a quiet street near Piazza Navona. The interior is done in shades of cream and ivory, which offset the colorful bounty of the sea, on display in the front window. There's a small terrace for summer dining.

House Specialties Spaghetti with lumps of lobster, squid, and octopus.

Summary & Comments Fulfill your omega-3 requirement with a stop at Quinzi e Gabrielli, Rome's most exclusive and sophisticated fish and seafood restaurant. The menu here is strictly from the sea, and it varies daily depending on what was caught. Whatever is on the menu—sardines, lobster, turbot, mussels, octopus—you can get a look at it before you order. In fact, the catch of the day, prominently displayed at the entrance, is a ritual part of the restaurant's décor.

Ripa 12

★★★★

FISH/SEAFOOD | MOD/EXPENSIVE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★ | TRASTEVERE

Via San Francesco a Ripa, 12; phone 06 580 9093; bus 23, 97; tram 8

Customers Trastevere locals, young couples. **Reservations** Recommended. **When to Go** Weeknights. **Pricing** €18–€30. **Payment** V, MC. **English Spoken** Some. **Bar** None. **Wine Selection** Several Castelli Romani whites by the glass and bottle. **Dress** Casual chic. **Disabled Access** None.

Hours Monday–Saturday, 8–11:30 p.m.; closed Sunday, August

Setting & Atmosphere A friendly, *trattoria*-style atmosphere tucked away on a medieval street in Trastevere.

Restaurant Profiles—Rome 171

House Specialties Sea bass and tuna carpacci (slices of raw fish).

Summary & Comments When Romans want to go out for seafood and not break the bank, they head to this small neighborhood restaurant. Casual meals involve *antipasti* of fresh, thinly sliced slabs of the day's catch, often tuna and sea bass, and *primi* of spaghetti con *vongole* (clams) and homemade tagliatelle prepared with *seppia* (black squid ink). Entrée portions are generous and feature such items as whole grilled fish done Calabrian style and infused with hints of citrus.

San Teodoro

★★★★½

ROMAN/ITALIAN | MODERATE/EXPENSIVE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★★★★ | ANCIENT CITY

Via dei Fienili, 49/51; phone 06 678 0933; Metro Colosseum

Customers Romans, lucky tourists. **Reservations** Highly recommended. **When to Go** Warm summer nights. **Pricing** €25–€36. **Payment** V, MC, AMEX. **English Spoken** Yes. **Bar** None. **Wine Selection** An exhaustive list of Italian red and white vintages by the glass or bottle. **Dress** Casual chic. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Monday–Saturday, 1–3 p.m., 7:30–11:30 p.m.; closed Sunday

Setting & Atmosphere With its vaulted brick ceilings, twinkling chandeliers, and pencil sketches of local monuments, the restaurant possesses an Old World elegance—and an excellent location at the back of the Roman Forum. Dining outdoors with a view of the ancient ruins is a magical experience.

House Specialties Traditional handmade pasta, fish, 100% all-natural ingredients (no additives or preservatives).

Summary & Comments This gem of a restaurant is mere steps away from the ruins of the Forum and the Palatine, which are dramatically floodlit by night. San Teodoro's cuisine is mostly Roman, but there are a few seafood dishes thrown in for good measure. One favorite is a fish stew consisting of tomatoes and zucchini flowers accented with thyme. Heartier fare includes saltimbocca, *coda all vaccinara*, and, occasionally, *trippa alla romana*.

Settimio al Pellegrino

★★★

ROMAN/ITALIAN | MODERATE | QUALITY ★★★ | VALUE ★★★★★ | CENTRO STORICO

Via del Pellegrino, 117; phone 06 688 01978; bus 64, 492

Customers Local workers, friends of the management, tourists. **Reservations** Strongly recommended. **When to Go** Lunch. **Pricing** €12–€21. **Payment** Cash only. **English Spoken** Yes. **Bar** None. **Wine Selection** House reds and whites by the glass or carafe. **Dress** Casual. **Disabled Access** None.

Hours Monday–Saturday, 1–3 p.m., 7:30–11 p.m.; closed Sunday

Setting & Atmosphere: A friendly, casually run hangout, where customers are treated like family.

House Specialties Fresh vegetables bought each day at the nearby Campo de' Fiori market.

Summary & Comments This small *osteria* a couple paces from Campo de' Fiori is the real deal, with Mom and Pop owners and an authentic, Roman menu. The food choices change daily according to what's fresh and available at the market. Must-try items include the *rigatoni al sugo*, a basic, tasty pasta with tomato and meat sauce; *carciofi alla romana*, breaded and friend artichokes; and *pollo alla diavola*, chicken with peppers.

172 Part Five Dining in Central Italy

Sora Lella

★★★★½

TRADITIONAL ROMAN | MODERATE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★ |

CENTRO STORICO

Via Ponte Quattro Capi, 16 (Isola Tiberina); phone 06 686 1601; bus 23, 44, 56, 60, 65, 75, 170, 710, 774, 780

Customers Italian tourists, Romans. **Reservations** Recommended for lunch and dinner. **When to Go** Lunch, Monday–Thursday night. **Pricing** €28–€40. **Payment** V, MC, AMEX. **English Spoken** Some. **Bar** Yes. **Wine Selection** Approximately a dozen varieties each of red and white vintages. **Dress** Comfortably formal. **Disabled Access** None.

Hours Monday–Saturday, 1–2:30 p.m., 8–11 p.m.; closed Sunday, August

Setting & Atmosphere Sora Lella has the unique distinction of being the only restaurant on Rome’s Tiber Island (Isola Tiberina). But despite the unusual location, this eatery has the inviting look and feel of a grandmother’s dining room. Service is affable.

House Specialties Stick-to-your-ribs Roman fare.

Summary & Comments Elena “Lella” Fabrizi, lovingly known to Italians as “Sora Lella” (Sister Lella), was a Roman actress who made her living being typecast as the wise, plump, and affectionate *nonna* in film and television. True to form, the recipes at this restaurant, opened in her honor by her son in 1993, get back to basics with traditional Roman home cooking. There are the usual *quinto quarto* selections, like *rigatoni alla pajata*, as well as a particularly good *pasta alla matriciana*, done with potato gnocchi rather than bucatini. The ricotta pie is the perfect end to a feast.

Restaurant Profiles—The Rest of Latium

THE BEST RESTAURANTS IN THE REST OF LATIUM					
Name	Cuisine	Overall	Price	Quality	Value
The Province of Rome					
Castelli Romani					
Antico Ristorante Pagnanelli 1882	Italian	★★★★	Exp	★★★★	★★
The Province of Viterbo					
Viterbo					
Il Richiastro	Italian	★★★	Mod	★★★★	★★
Ristorante La Zaffera	Laziale/ Italian	★★★★½	Mod/Exp	★★★★★	★★★

The Province of Rome

Castelli Romani

Antico Ristorante Pagnanelli dal 1882

★★★★★

ITALIAN | EXPENSIVE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★ | CASTEL GANDOLFO

Via A. Gramsci, 4; phone 06 936 0004

Restaurant Profiles—The Rest of Latium 173

Customers Day-tripping Romans. **Reservations** Required. **When to Go** Lunch **Pricing** €30–€50. **Payment** V, MC, AMEX. **English Spoken** Some. **Bar** Yes. **Wine Selection** The restaurant's cellar holds at least 1,000 bottles of premium Italian reds and whites. **Dress** Comfortably formal. **Disabled Access** Yes, one floor of the three-floor restaurant is accessible.

Hours Wednesday–Monday, 1:30–3 p.m., 7:30–10 p.m.; closed Tuesday

Setting & Atmosphere Set in the town that is the pope's summer home, this old restaurant is a conservative eatery with a stunning lakeside view. Service is genteel.

House Specialties Smoked freshwater fish, desserts.

Summary & Comments Located next door to the pope's summer residence and overlooking Lake Albano, this restaurant is the perfect ending—or beginning—to a visit to the Castelli Romani. In the summer, when Pagnanelli does most of its business, the choices of fresh fish, big salads, and small plates of *antipasto* will overwhelm you. For dessert, the restaurant's signature *torta ai fichi* (fig cake) is a unique and delectable finale.

The Province of Viterbo

Viterbo

Il Richiastro

★★★

ITALIAN | MODERATE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★ | VITERBO

Via della Marrocca, 16; phone 0761 228 009

Customers Locals. **Reservations** Required. **When to Go** The dining room is especially lively at lunch on Sunday. **Pricing** €18–€26. **Payment** Cash only. **English Spoken** Some. **Bar** None. **Wine Selection** Italian reds and whites by the bottle, reasonably priced. **Dress** Comfortably formal. **Disabled Access** None.

Hours Thursday–Sunday, noon–3 p.m., 8–11 p.m.; closed Sunday night, Monday–Wednesday, August 1–7, 31

Setting & Atmosphere: A refined atmosphere in a converted *palazzo*. The restaurant's small, hidden garden is a treat for outdoor dining.

House Specialties Medieval Latium recipes.

Summary & Comments Located in the heart of historical Viterbo, Il Richiastro recreates the farmer fare of days gone by, relying heavily on an archive of medieval recipes. Some of the interesting food you'll find here is garbanzo bean and chestnut soup (*zuppa di ceci e castagne*), fennel and mushroom salad, and medallions of pork dressed with a sauce of prunes. Carnivores can eat well here, as there are always plenty of roasted meats, including duck, chicken, and rabbit, on the menu.

Ristorante la Zaffera

★★★★½

LAZIALE/ITALIAN | MOD/EXPENSIVE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★★ | VITERBO

Piazza San Carluccio, 7; phone 0761 342 714, fax 0761 322 210

Customers Anniversary celebrants, well-to-do locals. **Reservations** Highly recommended. **When to Go** Midday; weekday evenings. **Pricing** €21–€32. **Payment** MC, V. **English Spoken** No. **Bar** No. **Wine Selection** Italian and foreign vintages by the bottle, a few by the glass. **Dress** Business attire. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Daily, 12:30–3:30 p.m., 6–10 p.m.; closed Sunday night, Monday

Setting & Atmosphere Set inside a cloister, the hushed but pleasant La Zaffera inspires you to be on your best behavior. Service is courteous and efficient.

174 Part Five Dining in Central Italy

House Specialties Roasted pork and game, fresh pasta.

Summary & Comments Many restaurants in Italy offer you the chance to eat in the shadow of lovely churches, but how many let you eat in the sanctuary itself? Built inside the 15th-century monastery of San Bernardino, La Zaffera is quite possibly one of the best restaurants in northern Latium, both in terms of atmosphere and edibles. Expect to find many staples of the *cucina Laziale* and other filling fare, including fresh tagliatelle with *cinghiale*, hearty lentil soups, and herb-crusted suckling pig. Defer to one of the chef's tasting menus and you'll have ample time to admire the cloister between courses.

The Cuisine of Umbria

Umbria is landlocked and somewhat rural, so much of its cuisine is based on grains, like *farro* (spelt), pork (again, *cinghiale*), and poultry (especially pheasant and squab). Umbria has long been known as the origin of some of the most tangy, sublime olive oils in the world, which are drizzled on soups, salads, and crusty *bruschette*. More recently, foreign visitors are discovering Umbria's other earthy gem, the black truffle (*tartufo nero*), which is found in abundance around Norcia and its environs. Norcia is also famous in Italy for its pork—so much so, in fact, that pork butcher shops throughout the peninsula are referred to as *Norcinerie*. *Salsiccia di cinghiale* (wild boar sausages), prosciutto, and suckling pig are just a few of the pork products that put Norcia on the map.

Pasta and chocolate, two of the most important words in a sybarite's dictionary, are also associated with Umbria. Both pasta maker Buitoni and confectioner Perugina are based in Perugia, the regional capital, and their brands can be found throughout Italy.

Restaurant Profiles—Umbria

THE BEST RESTAURANTS IN UMBRIA					
Name	Cuisine	Overall	Price	Quality	Value
The Province of Perugia					
Perugia					
Aladino	Mediterranean/ Sardinian	★★★★	Mod	★★★★	★★★★
Antica Trattoria	Umbrian San Lorenzo	★★★★	Exp	★★★★★	★★★
Caffe Sandri	Cafe/Pastries	★★★★★	Inexp	★★★★★	★★★★★
Assisi					
La Fortezza	Umbrian	★★★★★	Inexp	★★★★★	★★★★★
Ristorante Umbrian San Francesco		★★★	Mod/Exp	★★★½	★
Gubbio					
La Fornace di Mastro Giorgio	Umbrian/Tuscan	★★★	Mod/Exp	★★★★	★★½

Restaurant Profiles—Umbria 175

THE BEST RESTAURANTS IN UMBRIA (continued)					
Name	Cuisine	Overall	Price	Quality	Value
Gubbio (continued)					
Taverna del Lupo	Umbrian	★★★★½	Mod	★★★★★	★★★★
Spoletto					
Pecchiarda	Umbrian	★★★★	Inexp	★★★	★★★★★
Il Tartufo	Creative Umbrian	★★★★	Mod/Exp	★★★★★	★★★
The Province of Terni					
Orvieto					
I Sette Consoli	Umbrian	★★★★	Mod/Exp	★★★★★	★★★
L'Asino D'Oro	Umbrian	★★★★★	Inexp/Mod	★★★★★	★★★★★

The Province of Perugia

Perugia

Aladino

★★★★

MEDITERRANEAN/SARDINIAN | MODERATE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★★★★ | PERUGIA

Via delle Prome, 11; phone 075 572 0938

Customers Older students, couples, locals. **Reservations** No. **When to Go** Early or late. **Pricing** €18–€25. **Payment** V, MC. **English Spoken** Some. **Bar** Yes. **Wine Selection** Almost every type of Umbrian vintage; also many Tuscan varieties. **Dress** Casual chic. **Disabled Access** None.

Hours Sunday, Tuesday–Thursday, 8:30–11 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 8:30 p.m.–1 a.m.; closed Monday, two weeks in mid-August

Setting & Atmosphere Aladino has a Mediterranean feel to go with its island-inspired dishes. Deruta-ware and other pieces of art create a cheerful environment.

House Specialties Roasted meats, durum wheat pastas, sweet desserts.

Summary & Comments In a city that reminds you with every step of the somber Middle Ages, this unusual, Sardinian-inspired space is a refreshing change. The magical meals include roasted boar and goat, a bread-based *primo* called *zuppa sarda*, and the occasional bit of fish (usually tuna, imported from the sea) and Trasimene eel.

Antica Trattoria San Lorenzo

★★★★

CONTEMPORARY UMBRIAN | EXPENSIVE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★★ | PERUGIA

Piazza Danti, 19A; phone 075 572 1956

Customers Wealthy Perugians. **Reservations** Recommended. **When to Go** Weeknights. **Pricing** €35–€50. **Payment** V, MC. **English Spoken** Some. **Bar** Yes. **Wine Selection** The sommelier pairs haute cuisine dishes with Umbria's DOCG wines; by the bottle only. **Dress** Business attire. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Tuesday–Sunday, 12:30–3 p.m., 7:30–10 p.m.; closed Monday

176 Part Five Dining in Central Italy

Setting & Atmosphere Only the name has a rustic feel. This *trattoria* is refined and modern with soft lighting and fine china. Friendly, attentive waiters liven up the ambience.

House Specialties Unique pastas.

Summary & Comments Opened only in early 2001, the “antica” is a bit of a misnomer. However, the *trattoria* does serve an interesting menu of Umbrian fare, including *mezzalune* (half moons) stuffed with duck and gnocchi with pecorino cheese and local truffles. If you’re a chocolate lover, order up the Baci (chocolate and hazelnut) soufflé, a decadent homage to Perugia’s most famous confection.

Caffè Sandri

★★★★★

CAFÉ AND PASTRIES | INEXPENSIVE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★★★★ | PERUGIA

Corso Vannucci, 32; phone 075 572 4112

Customers Perugians of all stripes. **Reservations** Not accepted. **When to Go** Mornings. **Pricing** €2–€5. **Payment** Cash only. **English Spoken** Little. **Bar** Yes. **Wine Selection** None. **Dress** None. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Daily, 8 a.m.–noon, 3–7 p.m.

Setting & Atmosphere A café in the traditional sense, with small bistro tables and a long bar.

House Specialties Cappuccino and brioche.

Summary & Comments You haven’t been to Perugia unless you’ve been to Caffè Sandri, which occupies a prominent spot on the Corso Vannucci. Delectable pastries are the draw here, and locals stop by throughout the day for morsels of *torta di mela* (apple cake) and chocolate and hazelnut concoctions inspired by the star bon-bon of the local Perugina chocolate factory. Moreover, Sandri’s frothy and sweet cappuccino is (in our opinion) the best in all of Italy.

Assisi**La Fortezza**

★★★★★

UMBRIAN | INEXPENSIVE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★★★★ | ASSISI

Piazza del Comune; phone 075 812 418

Customers Hotel guests, locals. **Reservations** Recommended. **When to Go** As often as possible. **Pricing** €12–€20. **Payment** MC, V. **English Spoken** Some. **Bar** No. **Wine Selection** Excellent selection of Umbrian wine at respectable prices. **Dress** Casually elegant. **Disabled Access** No.

Hours Daily, 7:30–9:30 p.m.; closed Thursday, February, July

Setting & Atmosphere Recently renovated, the vaulted ceilings and plastered walls have been shored up, linens have been updated, and climatization has been improved. The modest dining room and simple lighting will satisfy sophisticates and romantics.

House Specialties Truffles, game, and fresh pasta.

Summary & Comments Practically hidden away from all but insiders, La Fortezza is a hotel restaurant that even the locals can love. Through an unassuming stone entrance you’ll find an unpretentious gourmet haven presided over by the Chiocchetti family since 1960. Umbrian specialties run the gamut from truffle-oil-drizzled crostini to *porchettini umbri ar girarosto*, a pork loin slathered with local olive oil, rosemary, and fennel. Prices for all dishes at La Fortezza are very reasonable, but if you can’t make a decision, order up a tasting menu—€22 per person is worth it for some of the best cuisine Umbria has to offer.

Restaurant Profiles—Umbria 177

Ristorante San Francesco

★★★

UMBRIAN | MODERATE/EXPENSIVE | QUALITY ★★★½ | VALUE ★ | ASSISI

Via San Francesco, 52; phone 075 812 329, fax 075 815 201

Customers Tourists, tourists, tourists. **Reservations** Recommended. **When to Go** Weeknights. **Pricing** €25–€38. **Payment** V, MC. **English Spoken** Yes. **Bar** None. **Wine Selection** Lungarotti reds and Orvieto Classico mingle with various Italian vintages; a half-dozen wines by the glass. **Dress** Church dress. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Thursday–Tuesday, noon–3 p.m., 7:30–10:30 p.m.; closed Wednesday, first two weeks in July

Setting & Atmosphere Diners flock here for the restaurant's jaw-dropping panorama of the Basilica.

House Specialties Sunday-dinner roasts, including goose, suckling pig, and lamb.

Summary & Comments Don't let the very touristy name and location deter you. The blandly named San Francesco faces the Basilica di San Francesco and features some delicious Umbrian specialties, such as *umbricelli* with black truffles. Entrée portions tend to be ample. Though the food is good and sometimes creative, prices are sometimes higher than they should be—St. Francis would not approve.

Gubbio**La Fornace di Mastro Giorgio**

★★★

UMBRIAN/TUSCAN | MODERATE/EXPENSIVE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★★½ | GUBBIO

Via Mastro Giorgio, 2; phone 075 922 1836

Customers Locals. **Reservations** Advised. **When to Go** The setting is especially awesome at dinner. **Pricing** €20–€35. **Payment** AMEX, MC, V. **English Spoken** Yes. **Bar** Yes. **Wine Selection** Wine cellar has more than 500 labels. **Dress** Business attire. **Disabled Access** No.

Hours Daily, 2:30–3 p.m., 7:30–11 p.m.; closed Tuesday, Wednesday lunch, January

Setting & Atmosphere As austere as Gubbio itself, La Fornace is ensconced in a dim, 14th-century alcove sure to impress history buffs and depress *al fresco* aficionados. Service is, at times, slow, but always friendly.

House Specialties Light salads, porcini dishes, roasted duck and pork.

Summary & Comments Former site of a 14th-century ceramics works made famous by designer Mastro Giorgio, this hilltop restaurant is about as close as you can get to the stony heart of this medieval city. Run by the Rosati—the hospitality moguls of Gubbio—this first-class restaurant handles Tuscan and Umbrian dishes with enough artistic flair to justify the location. Light fare includes gnocchi with fava beans and pecorino cheese or salads made of arugula and wild fennel. Heartier portions of *umbricelli* with sausage and porcini mushrooms or roasted duck with oranges will warm you when the wind begins whipping Mount Ingino.

Taverna del Lupo

★★★★½

UMBRIAN | MODERATE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★★★★ | GUBBIO

Via Ansidei, 21; phone 075 927 1269

Customers Locals. **Reservations** Required. **When to Go** Weeknights. **Pricing** €20–€28. **Payment** V, MC. **English Spoken** Yes. **Bar** None. **Wine Selection** A

178 Part Five Dining in Central Italy

thoughtful and extensive list of Umbrian and Tuscan reds and whites. **Dress** Comfortably formal. **Disabled Access** No.

Hours Tuesday–Sunday, 1–3 p.m., 8–11 p.m.; closed Monday

Setting & Atmosphere Perhaps Gubbio's best restaurant, this is a white-linen napkin kind of place, where tableside service is an art.

House Specialties Medieval Umbrian cooking, truffles.

Summary & Comments What will strike you first about the menu at Taverna del Lupo is the unfathomable selection of dishes whose main ingredient (or flavor) is the truffle. Among the selections are a *terrina di caciotta fusa al tartufo* (caciotta cheese terrine infused with truffles) and *medaglione di filetto con fonduta di formaggi tartufata* (beef medallions drizzled with a cheese/truffle sauce). Other regional specialties worth sampling are *salsiccia di cinghiale* (wild boar sausage) and Umbrian-style lasagna cooked with prosciutto and—you guessed it—thin shavings of black truffles.

Spoletto

Pecchiarda

★★★★

UMBRIAN | INEXPENSIVE | QUALITY ★★★ | VALUE ★★★★★ | SPOLETO

Vicolo San Giovanni, 1; phone 0743 221 009

Customers Spoletini, families and young couples. **Reservations** Recommended.

When to Go When the touristy restaurants fill up during Festival dei Due Mondi. **Pricing** €12–€20. **Payment** V, MC. **English Spoken** Some. **Bar** None. **Wine Selection** An edited list of Umbrian *vini rossi* and *bianchi*. **Dress** Casual. **Disabled Access** None.

Hours Daily, 1–3 p.m., 7:30–10 p.m.; closed Thursday in winter

Setting & Atmosphere The informal dining room surrounds a glassed-in garden. Waiters dole out advice on the best thing in the kitchen.

House Specialties Thick soups, lamb, truffle dishes.

Summary & Comments When the going gets tough (we mean, when the tourist hordes arrive), then the tough Spoletini head to Pecchiarda, an inexpensive neighborhood joint that cooks up classic Umbrian fare. In the summer, during the big music festival, you probably won't be too interested in the diner's best dishes, which include a soup of chicory and spelt and an equally heavy *gnocchi di ricotta*. However, the menu changes with the season, so, in the summer, you'll find a delicious assortment of *antipasto* and light pastas.

Il Tartufo

★★★★

CREATIVE UMBRIAN | MODERATE/EXPENSIVE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★★ | SPOLETO

Piazza Garibaldi, 24; phone 0743 40236

Customers *Funghi* fans. **Reservations** Highly recommended. **When to Go** As often as possible. **Pricing** €25–€35. **Payment** AMEX, DC, MC, V. **English Spoken** Yes. **Bar** Yes. **Wine Selection** Premium Umbrian vintages. **Dress** Casually elegant. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Daily, noon–3 p.m., 8–11 p.m.; closed Sunday night, Monday, January, July.

Setting & Atmosphere Hardly the dark den you'd expect, Il Tartufo is outfitted in breezy linens and simple flower arrangements, and has a amicable waitstaff to match. A foundation from a Roman villa forms part of the dining room floor, lending the eatery a credible cachet.

Restaurant Profiles—Umbria 179

House Specialties Mushroom dishes, from appetizers to entrées

Summary & Comments Those lacking a taste for black truffles and porcini usually emerge from Il Tartufo with a new appreciation for one of Umbria's most prized products. Dishes such as a polenta terrine with hazelnuts and fresh truffle shavings (when in season), roasted lamb in a porcini cream sauce, and *crostini* topped with substantial helpings of mushroom *caponata* seasoned with onions and herbs will give even the most skeptical the chance to explore the complex flavors of these earthy fruits. As for those who've made a pilgrimage to the Truffle Trail? This is heaven, of course.

The Province of Terni

Orvieto

I Sette Consoli

★★★★

UMBRIAN | MODERATE/EXPENSIVE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★★ | ORVIETO

Piazza Sant'Angelo, 11A; phone 0763 343 911

Customers Well-to-do Orvietani, tourists. **Reservations** Recommended. **When to Go** Sunday and Monday nights are mellow. **Pricing** €28–€40. **Payment** V, MC. **English Spoken** Yes. **Bar** None. **Wine Selection** Tuscan and Umbria reds and whites by the bottle or glass. **Dress** Comfortably formal. **Disabled Access** None.

Hours Thursday–Tuesday, 8–11 p.m.; closed Wednesday

Setting & Atmosphere Set on a quiet *piazza* a stone's throw from the Duomo, this restaurant is tiny—some say intimate—with only enough tables for a handful of guests.

House Specialties Pork, truffles, a cheese course.

Summary & Comments For such a small restaurant, it's surprising that Sette Consoli is able to turn out such a variety of interesting and flavorful dishes. One typical Umbrian entrée that the restaurant does well is *maiale al finocchio*, or pork with fennel. Other goodies are a *spaghetti alla chitarra con ragu di coniglio* (guitar-shaped pasta with hare ragu) and *tagliatelle al vino rosso* (pasta in red wine sauce). A good value is the tasting menu, which includes three courses with three types of wine for approximately €30.

L'Asino d'Oro

★★★★★

UMBRIAN | INEXPENSIVE/MODERATE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★★★★ | ORVIETO

Vicolo del Popolo, 9; phone 0763 344 406

Customers Locals. **Reservations** Recommended for evening. **When to Go** Lunch. **Pricing** €12–€20. **Payment** Cash only. **English Spoken** Some. **Bar** Yes. **Wine Selection** Many reds and whites from Tuscany and Umbria. **Dress** Casual. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Daily, 11:30 a.m.–midnight; closed Monday, November, February

Setting & Atmosphere Our experience here has always been relaxing and fuss-free, whether we're joining friends for dinner in the small cantina, or simply enjoying a glass wine at one of the outdoor tables.

House Specialties Fresh salads, *antipasto* plates.

Summary & Comments The mark of a good restaurant can often be discovered in the way that it treats its vegetables. Luckily, Chef Lucio Sforza of the convivial L'Asino D'Oro is as obsessed with the quality of his produce, pastas, and meats as he is with the creativity of his craft. We found salads of wild greens drizzled with lemon-tinged olive oil, simple plates of grilled asparagus and zucchini, and interesting combinations, such as

180 Part Five Dining in Central Italy

creamy *pancotto* with tomatoes and white bean and fennel soup, the perfect, fresh pick-me-up after a long day of touring.

The Cuisine of the Marches and the Republic of San Marino

The Marches is the crossroads for the sea, the valley, and the mountains, so you'll find a wide variety of dishes based on the ingredients from these environments. Perhaps the most famous specialty of the Cucina Marchigiana is *brodetto*, a fish stew made with anywhere from 8 to 13 different types of fish (depending on where it is made), including mullet, skate, sole, and cod. *Brodetto* should be made with fish only, and any restaurant that "cuts" its stew with seafood should be avoided. *Vincisgrassi*, a lasagna of chicken livers, cream, and truffles, is a hearty staple in the region's interior. Meanwhile, the popular hors d'oeuvres *olive ascolane*, or olives stuffed with meat then breaded and fried, was first conceived in the ancient town of Ascoli-Piceno. In sum, you'll find a unique, blend of complex tastes and combinations in the Marches that is sure to surprise you.

Restaurant Profiles—The Marches and the Republic of San Marino

THE BEST RESTAURANTS IN THE MARCHES AND THE REPUBLIC OF SAN MARINO					
Name	Cuisine	Overall	Price	Quality	Value
The Province of Pésaro-Urbino					
Urbino					
L'Angolo Divino	Marchigiana/ Italian	★★★½	Mod/Exp	★★★½	★★★★
Vecchia Urbino	Marchigiana	★★★★	Mod	★★★★★	★★★
The Republic of San Marino					
La Fratta	Italian/ Sammarinese	★★★★	Mod/Exp	★★★★	★★★★
Righi La Taverna	Italian/ Sammarinese	★★★½	Inexp/ Mod	★★★	★★★★
The Province of Ancona					
Ancona					
La Moretta	Seafood	★★★½	Mod	★★★★	★★★
Teatro Strabacco	Anconetana/ Marchigiana	★★★★	Mod	★★★★	★★★★

Restaurant Profiles—The Marches and San Marino 181

THE BEST RESTAURANTS IN THE MARCHES AND THE REPUBLIC OF SAN MARINO (continued)					
Name	Cuisine	Overall	Price	Quality	Value
<i>The Province of Ancona (continued)</i>					
Senigallia					
La Madonnina Del Pescatore	Seafood	★★★★★	Mod/Exp	★★★★★	★★
<i>The Province of Macerata</i>					
Macerata					
Da Secondo	Marchigiana	★★★	Exp	★★★★	★★
Osteria Dei Fiori	Marchigiana/ Italian	★★★★	Mod	★★★★	★★★★
<i>The Province of Áscoli-Piceno</i>					
Áscoli-Piceno					
Gallo D'Oro	Marchigiana	★★★★½	Mod	★★★★★	★★★★
La Locandiera	Marchigiana	★★★	Mod/Exp	★★★	★★★

The Province of Pésaro-Urbino**Urbino****L'Angolo Divino**

★★★★½

MARCHIGIANA/ITALIAN | MODERATE/EXPENSIVE | QUALITY ★★★★★½ | VALUE ★★★★★ | URBINO

Via Sant'Andrea, 12; phone 0722 327 559

Customers Locals. **Reservations** Recommended. **When to Go** Anytime. **Pricing** €15–€25. **Payment** MC, V. **English Spoken** No. **Bar** No. **Wine Selection** Many Italian vintages by the glass or bottle. **Dress** Casually elegant. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Daily, 12:15–3:30 p.m., 7:15–10:30 p.m.; closed Sunday night, Monday lunch

Setting & Atmosphere Antique and intimate.

House Specialties Fresh pasta, game, offal.

Summary & Comments You may need a translator for this traditional *trattoria's* menu. A number of the Marchigiana and Italian *primi* and *secondi*, such as tagliolini with lamb (*taulin sa l'agnel sfugit*), are listed in dialect. Otherwise, the elegant eatery offers a wide variety of pastas, including Chitarrine del Duca—the house's tasty homage to Urbino's Renaissance patron—and *antipasto* plates of local mushrooms and *salumi*. Entrées are a bit more adventurous and consist of ample helpings of lamb, rabbit, duck, and offal, of which the pork livers with onions and herbs is exemplary.

Vecchia Urbino

★★★★

MARCHIGIANA | MODERATE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★★ | URBINO

Via dei Vasari, 315; phone 0722 4447

182 Part Five Dining in Central Italy

Customers Carnivores, truffle lovers, locals. **Reservations** Recommended. **When to Go** Wednesday–Friday nights; winter. **Pricing** €16–€22. **Payment** V, MC. **English Spoken** Yes. **Bar** None. **Wine Selection** An exhaustive list of Italian and foreign reds and whites by the bottle. **Dress** Casual chic. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Wednesday–Monday, 12:30–3 p.m., 8–11 p.m.; closed Tuesday

Setting & Atmosphere You can feel the history of the town when you sit in the rustic-style dining room. The restaurant is located in a 16th-century *palazzo* and has an original wood-beam ceiling. The chandeliers are fashioned in the shape of the “ducal star,” the symbol of Renaissance Urbino. Service is warm and attentive.

House Specialties Truffles, *vincisgrassi*.

Summary & Comments As the name implies, Vecchia Urbino prides itself on serving the traditional specialties of Urbino and the Marche region. Winter is high season here, when the local truffles are baked into ravioli and used as a complement to heavier entrées of veal, lamb, and rabbit. *Vincisgrassi*, a fattening Marchigiana lasagna made with a sauce of chicken giblets, pork, veal, and *béchamel*, is one of the restaurant’s signature dishes.

The Republic of San Marino

La Fratta

★★★★

ITALIAN/SAMMARINESE | MODERATE/EXPENSIVE | QUALITY ★★★★★ |
VALUE ★★★★★ | SAN MARINO

Salita alla Rocca, 14; phone 0549 991 594

Customers Gourmands, tourists. **Reservations** Recommended. **When to Go** Evenings. **Pricing** €21–€30. **Payment** MC, V. **English Spoken** Some. **Bar** Yes. **Wine Selection** The Sammarinese vintages are a treat; Italian reds and whites also available. **Dress** Business casual. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Daily, noon–3 p.m., 7–10:30 p.m.

Setting & Atmosphere One of the larger dining rooms in the country, La Fratta bustles with friendly, attentive waiters. Décor is elegant but unpretentious.

House Specialties *Piadina* (Emilia-Romagna-style focaccia), fish specials.

Summary & Comments Considered the country’s best, La Fratta attracts foodies from San Marino, the Marche, and beyond. Though it is situated near the base of La Rocca o Guaita, the restaurant steers away from strictly rustic fare, offering surprises like Norwegian-style salmon, red mullet with pomegranate, and frogs’ legs. San Marino’s wine industry is understandably small, but you’ll find most vintages here, including Brugnato and Biancale. Cap off your unusual meal with Aquavit, a sort of grappa.

Righi la Taverna

★★★★½

ITALIAN/SAMMARINESE | INEXPENSIVE/MODERATE | QUALITY ★★★ | VALUE ★★★★★ |
SAN MARINO

Piazza Libertà; phone 0549 991 196

Customers Natives, tourists. **Reservations** Not necessary. **When to Go** Lunch. **Pricing** €10–€22. **Payment** MC, V. **English Spoken** Yes. **Bar** Yes. **Wine Selection** House selections of mostly Italian vintages by the glass or carafe. **Dress** Business casual in the restaurant, tourist casual for the ground level. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Restaurant Profiles—The Marches and San Marino 183

Hours Daily, noon–3:30 p.m., 7–11 p.m.; closed Monday

Setting & Atmosphere Like most San Marino restaurants, Righi has a pervasive medieval feel, but it delivers with a castle-like interior and a view of courtly Piazza Libertà.

House Specialties Wood-oven pizza, fresh pastas.

Summary & Comments Righi La Taverna serves up a proper amount of the Middle Ages with its moderately priced fare. For lunch, we prefer the bar and *tavola calda*—Righi Bistrot—on the ground level, where you can pick up pizza or panini. Native to these parts, and done well here, is the *passatelli*, a hearty, carbonara-style pasta that even vegetarians will adore. The earthy *cucina Marchigiana* also makes an appearance in truffle-dusted casseroles and roasted meats.

The Province of Ancona

Ancona

La Moretta

★★★½

SEAFOOD | MODERATE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★★ | ANCONA

Piazza Plebiscito, 52; phone 071 202 317

Customers Tourists, seamen, couples. **Reservations** Recommended. **When to Go** Lunch or early evening. **Pricing** €14–€30. **Payment** AMEX, MC, V. **English Spoken** Yes. **Bar** Yes. **Wine Selection** About 500 vintages overall, including many regional reds and whites. **Dress** Business attire. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Daily, 12:15–2:45 p.m., 7:45–10:45 p.m.; closed Sunday

Setting & Atmosphere The dark, wood-paneled restaurant could use an update, so try for a table on the patio overlooking the square. Service is courteous and discreet.

House Specialties Marchigiana-style seafood soups

Summary & Comments Feeding the people of the port of Ancona since 1897, the Moretta is a typical *trattoria* with a seafaring theme. Fish dishes rule, from *brodetto* and *stoccafisso anconetana* (Ancona-style fish soups) and Ligurian *ciotola* to *spaghetti alle vongole* and tagliatelle with oysters. Stick to seafood—earthy dishes are mediocre—and pair your meal with a local Verdicchio.

Teatro Strabacco

★★★★

ANCONETANA/MARCHIGIANA | MODERATE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★★★★ | ANCONA

Via Guglielmo Oberdan, 2; phone 071 56748 Fax 071 54213

Customers Late-night theater, jazz fans, locals. **Reservations** Recommended. **When to Go** Early for a table, late for atmosphere. **Pricing** €18–€25. **Payment** AMEX, DC, MC, V. **English Spoken** Some. **Bar** Yes. **Wine Selection** Hundreds of Italian vintages. **Dress** Business casual. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Daily, 12:15–3:15 p.m., 7:15 p.m.–3 a.m.; closed Monday

Setting & Atmosphere Contemporary murals by local artists give depth to this otherwise rustic-style *osteria*. Service is professional, yet laid back. The dining room's din amps up as the evening rolls on.

House Specialties Local meat and fish, *stoccafisso*.

184 Part Five Dining in Central Italy

Summary & Comments Cool and sophisticated Teatro Strabacco takes the guesswork out of their menu by offering up to ten tasting menus, including wine and dessert. Each of the prix-fixe meals consists of at least one dish native to Ancona and/or the Marche, be it a *brodetto di pesce all'anconetana*, a *vincisgrassi*, or a glass of the local Rosso Conero wine. Many of the tasting menus, such as the *Spaggia della Salute* and the *Cena dello Stoccafisso*, feature several specialties from the Adriatic, but there are also dinners for meat lovers (*Menu del Poggio*) and vegetarians (*Menu di Ghettaello*). Teatro's kitchen stays open until midnight, while the adjacent *enoteca* hops until 3 a.m.

Senigallia

La Madonnina del Pescatore

★★★★★

SEAFOOD | MODERATE/EXPENSIVE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★ | SENIGALLIA

Lungomare Italia, 11; Marzocca di Senigallia (about 10 miles north of Ancona); phone 071 698 267; www.madonninadelpescatore.it

Customers Anconatani, seafood lovers. **Reservations** Strongly recommended. **When to Go** Summer days and weeknights (very busy on the weekends). **Pricing** €38–€50. **Payment** V, MC, AMEX. **English Spoken** Some. **Bar** Yes. **Wine Selection** Mild-flavored red and white wines from the Marche region, especially labels from small vintners, are featured on the menu. **Dress** Artfully casual. **Disabled Access** None.

Hours Sunday–Saturday, noon–3 p.m., 8–11 p.m.; closed Monday

Setting & Atmosphere The chef's wife, Mariella Cedroni, keeps an immaculate dining room, which is accented with antiques, modern art, and super-slick furnishings. Large windows open up to a lovely view of the sea, and an outdoor patio provides the perfect setting for a casual sushi lunch.

House Specialties An *assaggi* (taste) of eight seafood *antipasti*.

Summary & Comments Having a head chef who was once a naval officer is reason enough to believe that this restaurant doesn't mess around when it comes to serving fresh fish and seafood. Even the name, La Madonnina del Pescatore, which means the "little Madonna of the fisherman," is evidence that the ingredients here are pure and heavenly. The restaurant's patron saint, Chef Moreno Cedroni, is a star chef in Italy, known for his innovative ways with tuna, mussels, shrimp, and octopus. Indeed, his clever creations have earned him comparisons to Thomas Keller, culinary genius of Napa Valley's much-lauded French Laundry.

The Province of Macerata

Macerata

Da Secondo

★★★

MARCHIGIANA | EXPENSIVE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★ | MACERATA

Via Pescheria Vecchia, 57; phone 0733 260 912

Customers Opera stars, music-loving locals. **Reservations** Highly recommended. **When to Go** Weekday evenings. **Pricing** €30–€45. **Payment** All major credit cards. **English Spoken** Limited. **Bar** Yes. **Wine Selection** Small list of premium Italian vintages. **Dress** Business attire. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Daily, 7–11 p.m.; closed Monday, end of August

Setting & Atmosphere Da Secondo prides itself on premium, fit-for-a-diva service.

House Specialties *Vincisgrassi*.

Restaurant Profiles—The Marches and San Marino 185

Summary & Comments The closest Macerata gets to a celebrity hang-out is the well-loved local Da Secondo. Around the time of the opera festival, classical music stars can be seen in this centrally-located eatery digging into plates of *gnocchi al ragu*, *quaglie al cognac* (quails simmered in cognac), and spit-roasted pork. What makes us come back for the *secondo* time, however, is the *vincisgrassi* and the *ciauscolo*, a soft, savory salami that is slathered on the crustiest fresh bread.

Osteria dei Fiori

★★★★

MARCHIGIANA | ITALIAN | MODERATE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★★ | MACERATA

Via L. Rossi, 61; phone 0733 260 142

Customers Locals, Italian tourists. **Reservations** Not necessary. **When to Go** Lunch, weeknights. **Pricing** €18–€26. **Payment** V, MC. **English Spoken** Some. **Bar** None. **Wine Selection** A thoughtful selection of regional wines. **Dress** Casual chic. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Monday–Saturday, noon–3 p.m., 8–11 p.m.; closed Sunday

Setting & Atmosphere The intimate little restaurant is located a stone's throw from the Sferisterio. Furnishings are modest and service discreet.

House Specialties An ample selection of seasonal vegetables for *contorni*.

Summary & Comments Honestly priced Osteria dei Fiori is a favorite of locals and tourists looking for creative yet traditional home cooking. The menu here changes with the season and is heavy with fresh fruits, vegetables, and local mushrooms. Recommended dishes are the pasta *maltagliati* (misshaped pasta) with a vegetable ragu.

The Province of Áscoli-Piceno

Áscoli-Piceno

Gallo d'Oro

★★★★½

MARCHIGIANA | MODERATE | QUALITY ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★★ | ÁSCOLI-PICENO

Corso Vittorio Emanuele, 13; phone 0736 253 520

Customers Ascolani. **Reservations** Strongly recommended. **When to Go** Lunch, Wednesday–Friday nights. **Pricing** €18–€24. **Payment** V, MC. **English Spoken** Some. **Bar** None. **Wine Selection** A broad selection of Italian and foreign wines. **Dress** Comfortably formal to casual chic. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Daily, 12:30–3:30 p.m., 7:30–11 p.m.; closed Sunday

Setting & Atmosphere Tarcisio Mazziti, current owner and son of the restaurant's founder, maintains the restaurant's elegant reputation with attention to handsome lighting (candles), delicate table settings, and exquisite service.

House Specialties *Fritto misto*, Marches-style game and fowl.

Summary & Comments Its central location and award-winning menu have made Gallo d'Oro the place in Áscoli-Piceno to celebrate anniversaries and other special occasions. Since 1960, the restaurant has been serving up typical Picenian dishes; its *fritto misto*, made with *olive ascolane*, lamb cutlets, veal brains, zucchini, and cremini mushrooms, is often cited as one of the highlights. On Wednesday and Friday, freshly caught Adriatic fish is on the menu.

186 Part Five Dining in Central Italy

La Locandiera

★★★

MARCHIGIANA | MODERATE/EXPENSIVE | QUALITY ★★★ | VALUE ★★★ |

ASCOLI-PICENO

Via Carlo Goldoni, 2; phone 0736 262 509

Customers Locals, German tourists. **Reservations** Recommended. **When to Go** Anytime. **Pricing** €16–€30. **Payment** DC, V. **English Spoken** Some. **Bar** Yes. **Wine Selection** Italian wines by the glass or carafe. **Dress** Casual. **Disabled Access** Yes.

Hours Daily, noon–3 p.m., 7–11 p.m.; closed Sunday night, Monday, August

Setting & Atmosphere This is a friendly neighborhood restaurant, where tourists are made to feel like locals. Decorations are minimal, save for copper pots and framed pictures of friends and landmarks.

House Specialties Ample servings of seafood and meats.

Summary & Comments Boasting fare fit for a peasant or a king, La Locandiera has delicious dishes for every budget. There are plenty of small, reasonably priced plates that satisfy, including *farro* soup with shrimp or *orzo* with porcini. A tasting menu for meat (€15) or fish (€25) will reap rewards such as *spezzatino d'agnello con patate* (lamb and potato stew), fried and grilled seafood, and *lumache alla marchigiana* (snails cooked in an essence of fennel).