

## Your Guide to 82 Decadent Cooking Holidays in Italy



The agriturismo is housed in Palazzo La Croce, built in Florence, N.W. Italy

Margaret Cowan

Tuscany  
88

### Cooking at Casa Ombuto in the Casentino Valley

#### Setting

Casa Ombuto, a Tuscan villa, lies on a hill in the secluded, peaceful Casentino Valley with spectacular views of hills and villages all around. This 80 acre estate is 4 km from Poppi, a picturesque medieval town, 35 km north of Arezzo and 50 km south of Florence. Three rivers flow through the estate that has chestnut, oak and walnut trees.

The villa is divided into three apartments. The largest one on the main floor has three bedrooms and two bathrooms. Two other apartments both have private entrances, terraces, two double bedrooms and one bathroom. Apartments feature farm style oak furniture, large living areas with fireplaces, well equipped kitchens with dishwashers, and romantic bedrooms with stylish marble ensuite bathrooms.

Weather permitting, you have breakfast and dinner in a small piazza shaded by four very old trees. On a plateau 40 metres from the villa, with wonderful panoramas, you can indulge in the solar heated swimming pool with jacuzzi, hydro massage and jet stream and a patio with garden furniture, a pergola and barbecue. A fruit orchard with lots of fresh fruit is near the parking area.

#### Cooking Teachers

Carla Gambineri started in 1961 as an assistant chef in a local pizzeria where she worked eight years. She moved to Poppi to work at one of the oldest and most famous Casentino restaurants, La Leggia. She's a member of the Regional Association of Chefs in Arezzo and graduated as a chef in modern and creative Italian cooking. In 1993 she started teaching creative cooking. She's also given cooking demonstrations on local TV. In 1996 she and Michele Norelli opened their restaurant, La Taveruola. She has great teaching talents, knowledge and passion for food.

Michele Norelli's parents owned a restaurant. He worked in various restaurants and bars in Florence before moving to Bristol, England where he worked about two years as assistant chef in a pizzeria and got a tremendous amount of cooking and catering experience. With his contagious enthusiasm, he'll explain the ingredients and traditions around the dishes and teach you about food presentation and wine choices.

Your cooking classes take place in the villa's restored wine cellar with arched brick ceilings and a professional kitchen that opens onto a terrace. The actual cellar is about 20 metres away.

#### Dates:

May 12-19, May 19-26,  
June 23-30, July 28-Aug 4,  
Sep 1-8.

#### Group Size: 8-14

#### Type of Class: hands-on

#### Prices: per person

\$1400 U.S. double occupancy  
with shared bathroom.  
\$200 U.S. a day  
\$1600 U.S. double occupancy  
with private bathroom  
\$220 U.S./day  
\$1720 U.S. single occupancy  
\$850 U.S. non-cooking friend,  
double occupancy

#### Included:

- \* 7 nights accommodation
- \* 4 cooking lessons, 4 hrs. each
- \* buffet breakfast daily
- \* 6 dinners
- \* 1 excursion to vineyard and olive oil mill
- \* cookbook, apron, certificate

#### Not included:

transport to the villa, lunches,  
restaurant dinner, wine.

\*\*NOTE: You must rent a car.

#### Price Category:

A Great Deal

#### To Reserve:

Italian Cookery Course,  
Casa Ombuto,  
Larniano 21,  
52014 Poppi (Arezzo)

Early

Phone cellular: 0348-736-3864

E-mail: info@casasombuto.com

Web site: www.casasombuto.com

#### Travel Agents' Commission

Please contact Casa Ombuto

### Cooking at Casa Ombuto in the Casentino Valley

#### Itinerary

**Saturday** Arrive at Casa Ombuto around 4:00 p.m. Welcome dinner and get to know Carla and Michele.

**Sunday** Free time until cooking lesson at 3:00 p.m. Hands-on lesson on a four course dinner. Dinner of your creations with fine Tuscan wines.

**Monday** Free time until cooking lesson at 3:00 p.m. Hands-on lesson on a four course dinner. Dinner of your creations with fine Tuscan wines.

**Tuesday** Trip to Arezzo for sightseeing and shopping. This rich, former Etruscan city is known for its jewellery stores and paintings by Piero della Francesca in the cathedral. After lunch visit a vineyard for a tasting. Visit an olive oil mill to learn about how it is produced and taste different oils. Dinner in a typical Tuscan restaurant.

**Wednesday** Free time until cooking lesson at 3:00 p.m. Hands-on lesson on a four course dinner. Dinner of your creations with fine Tuscan wines.

**Thursday** Whole day free. An ideal day to explore Florence.

**Friday** Free time until 2:00 p.m. when you prepare an elaborate buffet dinner covering all the cooking techniques you learned this week. Focus on food presentation. Grand finale dinner.

**Saturday** Breakfast and departure.

#### Sample Menus that vary with the seasons:

1. Vegetable tart, bruschetta (little pieces of toast) with wild porcini mushrooms, polenta with wild boar, stuffed chicken breast, artichokes with mushrooms, cheese and garlic, Grandma's cake with cream and pine nuts.

2. slices of Bresaola ham with cheese and aragola, potato gnocchi with spinach, ricotta and tomato sauce, steak fillet with green pepper sauce, fresh grilled vegetables, cake with peaches and almond biscuits.

3. pecorino cheese baked in the oven and served with aragola, smoked ham and truffles, little crepe bags filled with asparagus and served with mushrooms, entrecote with aragola vinaigrette, cheese and pine nuts, chocolate cake with nuts.

4. Buffet.

crostini, bruschetta, rolls of bresaola ham with goat cheese, rolls of prosciutto with ricotta and almonds, carpaccio with aragola and parmesan cheese, prosciutto and melon, skewers of mixed cheeses, veal in tuna sauce, agnolotto rolls with thin tagliatelle, tomato sauce and prosciutto, risotto with wild mushrooms, pieces of pizza with various toppings, vegetables with breadcrumbs baked in the oven, fresh fruit salad, tarts, Grandma's cake, cake with peaches and almond biscuits.

WOW!