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## Culinary Adventure in Tuscany

BY CATRIONA ROWNTREE (HTTPS://WWW.JOURNEYSTOCOME.COM/AUTHOR/EDITOR/) TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2016

I'm a lover of everything Italian, so naturally, I was excited at the prospect of signing up for a Tuscookany cooking class in a beautiful Tuscan villa.

My destination was the 18th-century villa Torre del Tartufo, high in the Tuscan hills, a few pleasant hours drive from Rome. The 200-hectare property is surrounded by a truffle estate and groves of hazelnut and oak trees. It is believed to have once been a chapel and has been added to over the years.

It has recently been restored, using Tuscan materials - terracotta floors, wood



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beams and marble bathrooms. There are twelve bedrooms divided into four suites, each with a living room, fireplace and small kitchen. A large central area includes a kitchen, bar and dining room. Every room has a terrace or balcony with views across the hills.

I loved my room, complete with heated floors and an adorable Juliet balcony and was taken by the piazza where meals are served. There is a solar heated pool, sauna and hot tub for complete relaxation.

With such beautiful surroundings, it's easy to forget that you are actually here to learn, but it was aprons on and knives sharpened for a handson lesson with chef Franco Palandra. Classes are in English, but you can't help picking up bits and pieces of the beautiful local language.

The lesson began with handmade ravioli filled with spinach, ricotta, parmesan and egg. Next was rolled chicken with pecorino and truffles. Everyone visited the garden with a local man and his truffle-sniffing dog. Once the dogs get the smell, they scratch the ground, wag their tails and the prize is just half a centimetre underground. The prized truffles are taken to the kitchen then brushed and cut with a special slicer. It's *really* a hands-on experience.

The passion of the Italian kitchen is contagious and learning to make a range of antipasti, gnocchi, Tuscan fillings and sauces is just wonderful. Desserts include making the perfect panna cotta or warm lemon pie with Italian meringue.

Tuscookany has organic vegetable gardens and many ingredients you cook with come from the farm, or from local farmers.

Between classes and chatting with other students, I loved just wandering around the estate. It's so peaceful and has views of hills, valleys and woods that will stay with me forever.

#### LOCATION

Tuscany, a 3-hour drive from Rome.

#### COST

Tuscookany 3 day courses are around AUD \$2800 per person twin share (and don't worry, if your travel buddy isn't into cooking that's ok – there is also a price for non-participating guests). Luxury accommodation, meals, fine wines, food tour, classes plus more is included.

To discover more, click here. (http://www.tuscookany.com/)

#### WHAT TO WEAR



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