

Posted on July 9, 2013 by [lorrishawn](#)

Day 181 – Casa Ombuto, Poppi, Italy

This is the greatest place on Earth. We are on our fourth day of cooking school here in Tuscany, and it is absolutely perfect.

The facility consists of a large building built in the 1600s which houses all the guests, a huge, arch-ceilinged kitchen (partially underground) that was a 17th century storeroom, with an adjoining dining room, and a number of beautiful outdoor spaces – the terrace where we eat dinner, the terrace where we make pizza, the pool and surrounding lawn, the vegetable/herb garden, the orchard . . .



(the villa where we are staying)

There are only 5 guests in the class this week – us, two sisters from Calgary, and a woman from San Francisco – so we have the whole upper floor of the villa to ourselves – huge bedroom with ensuite, HUGE kitchen (that we don't even use) and sitting room, with two verandas.

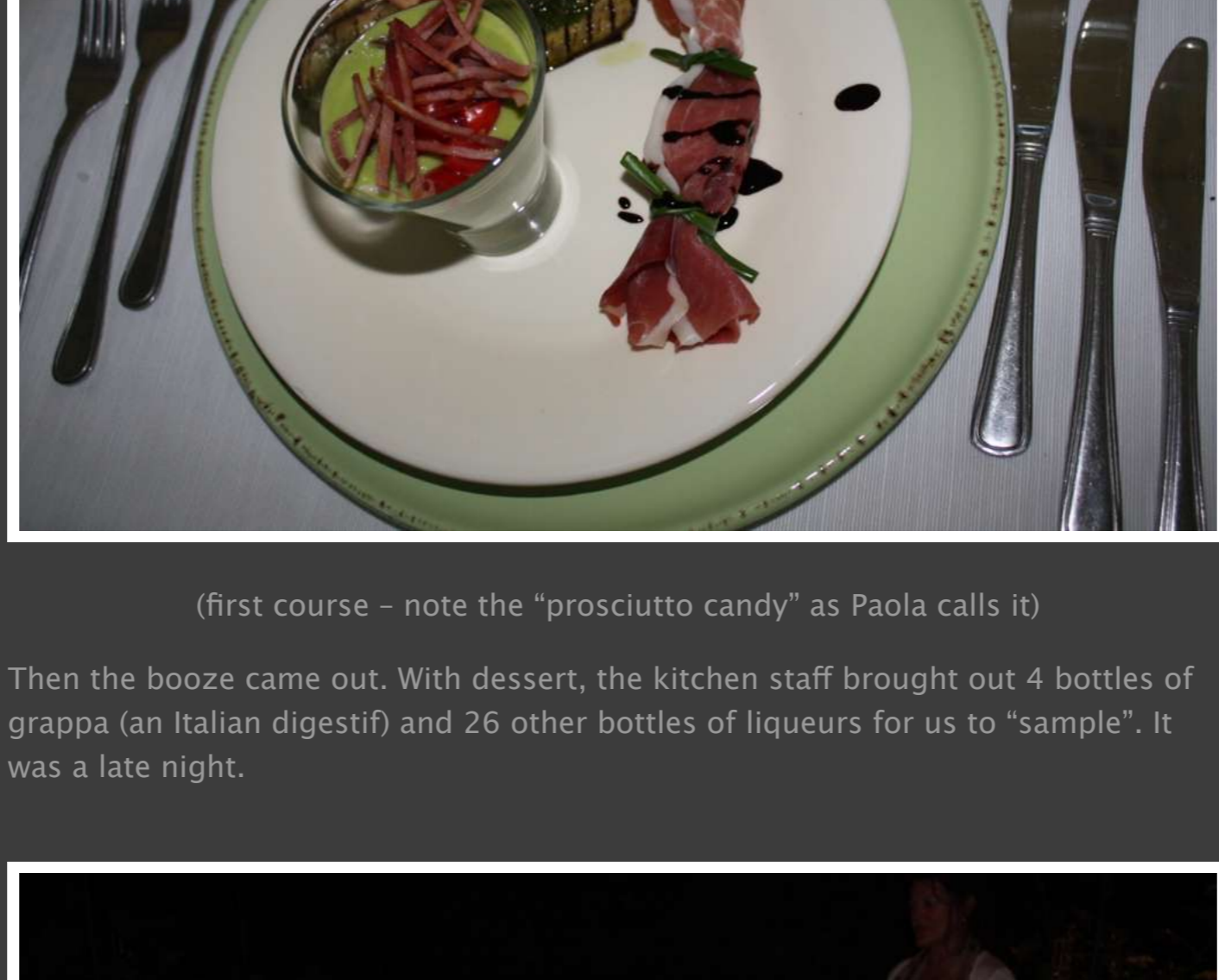


(our room)



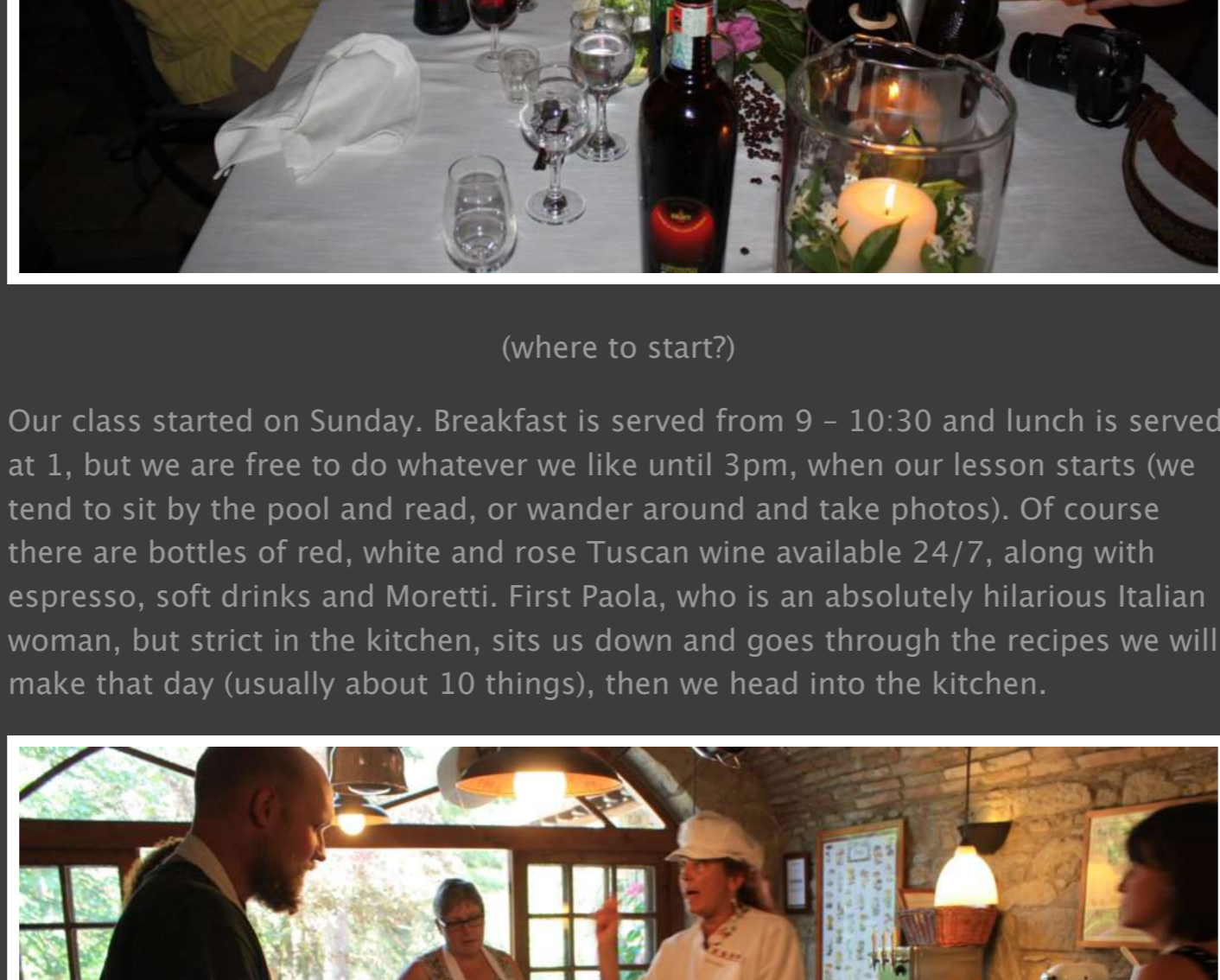
(the kitchen in our villa)

We arrived on Saturday, and had a huge meal prepared by Paola, the professional chef who is teaching us this week – pea puree with ricotta-stuffed prosciutto and eggplant layered with mozzarella to start, then zucchini lasagne, then steak Florentine with rosemary potatoes, and for dessert a peach tart with almond biscuits, and peach gelato. All with local Tuscan wine pairings, of course. It was a very good start to the week.



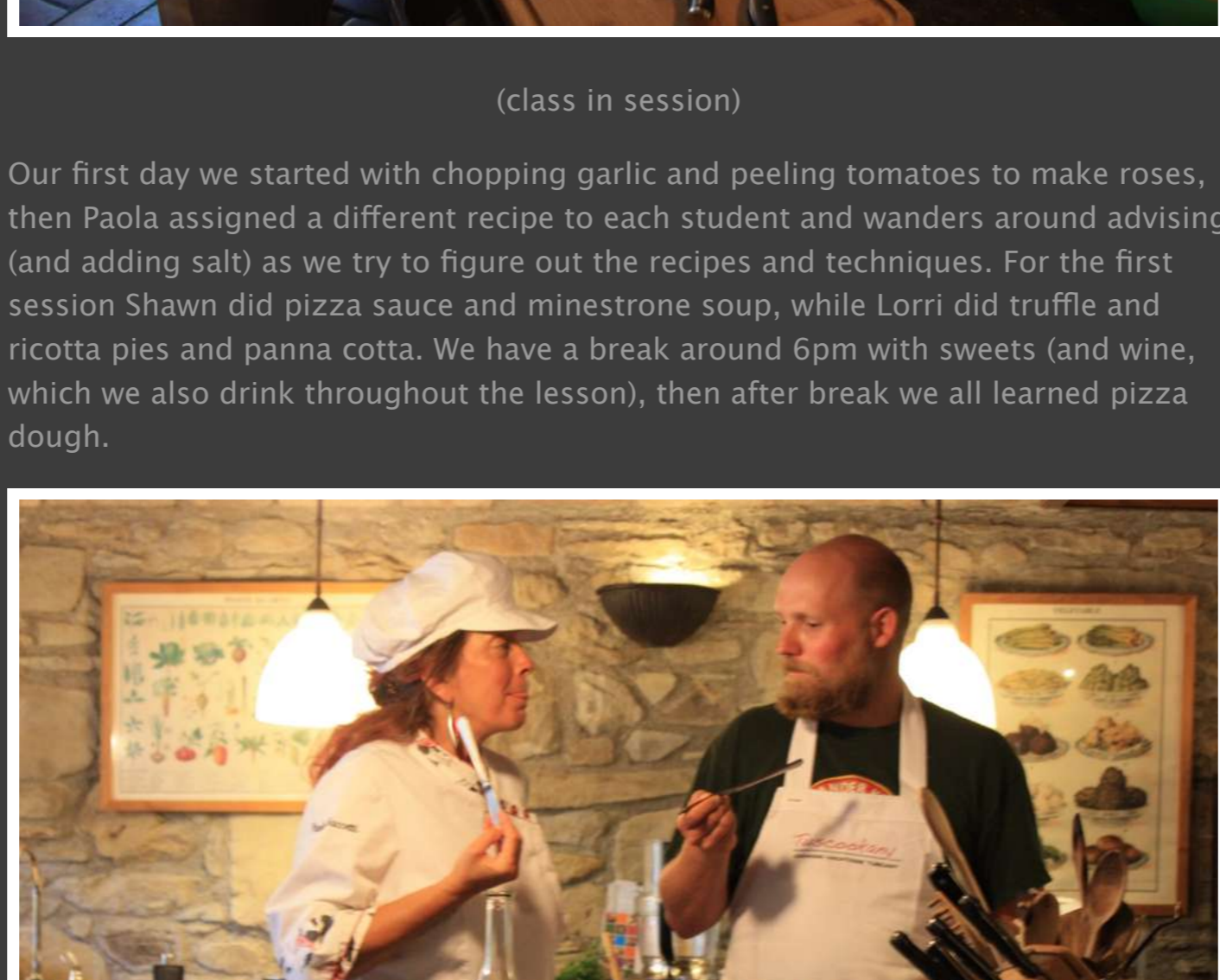
(first course – note the "prosciutto candy" as Paola calls it)

Then the booze came out. With dessert, the kitchen staff brought out 4 bottles of grappa (an Italian digestif) and 26 other bottles of liqueurs for us to "sample". It was a late night.



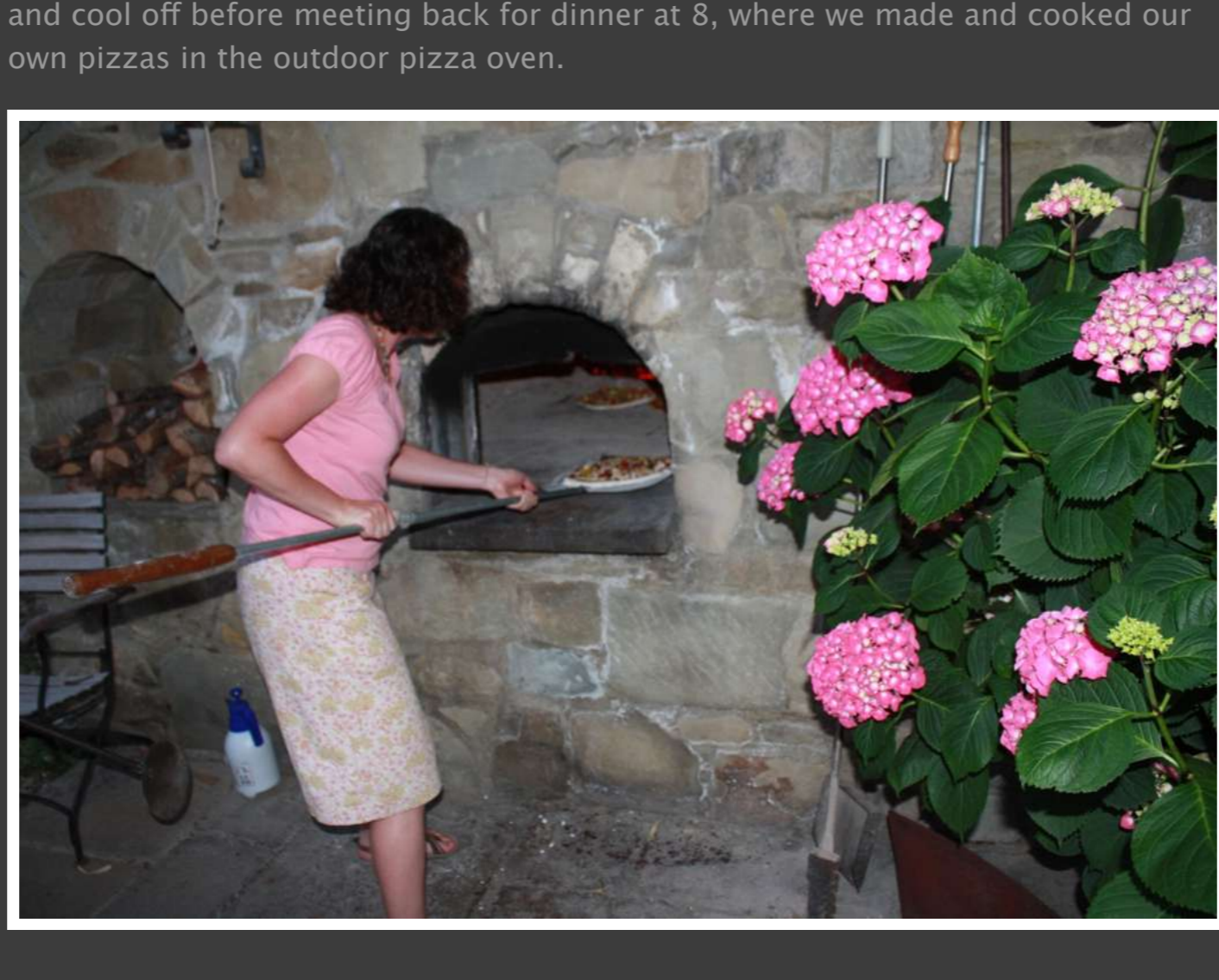
(where to start?)

Our class started on Sunday. Breakfast is served from 9 – 10:30 and lunch is served at 1, but we are free to do whatever we like until 3pm, when our lesson starts (we tend to sit by the pool and read, or wander around and take photos). Of course there are bottles of red, white and rose Tuscan wine available 24/7, along with espresso, soft drinks and Moretti. First Paola, who is an absolutely hilarious Italian woman, but strict in the kitchen, sits us down and goes through the recipes we will make that day (usually about 10 things), then we head into the kitchen.



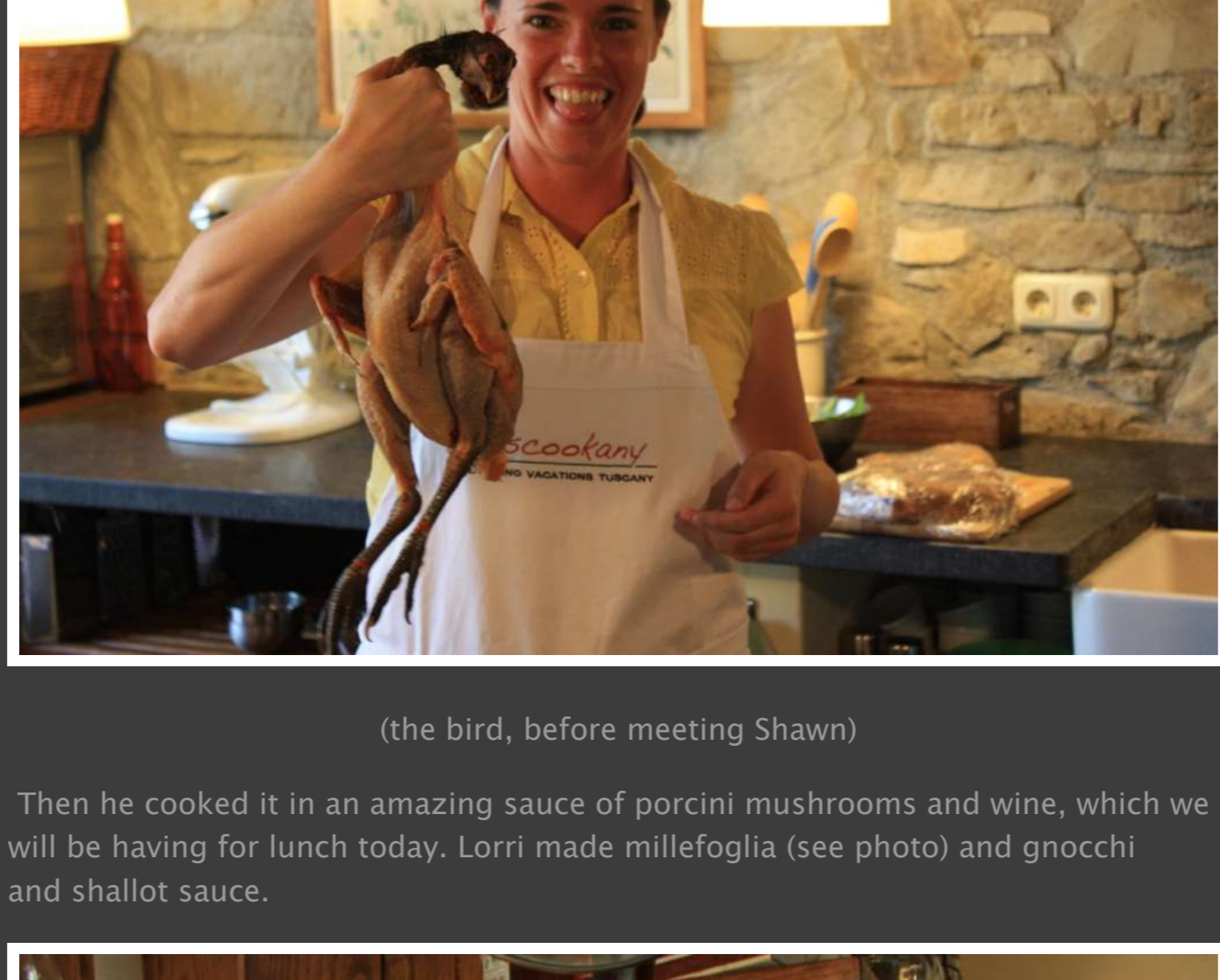
(class in session)

Our first day we started with chopping garlic and peeling tomatoes to make roses, then Paola assigned a different recipe to each student and wanders around advising (and adding salt) as we try to figure out the recipes and techniques. For the first session Shawn did pizza sauce and minestrone soup, while Lorri did truffle and ricotta pies and panna cotta. We have a break around 6pm with sweets (and wine, which we also drink throughout the lesson), then after break we all learned pizza dough.



(Shawn learning the finer points of "season to taste" – it usually means add more salt)

Our lesson finished around 7:15 and we had about 45 minutes to jump in the pool and cool off before meeting back for dinner at 8, where we made and cooked our own pizzas in the outdoor pizza oven.



(Lorri and her pizza)

Delizioso! It is really neat eating absolutely delicious and professional-looking food that you have made yourself!

Yesterday was the same format, although the lesson was a bit tougher. Whereas the first day we mostly did sauces, yesterday we did some meats. Shawn had to finish plucking, clean and cut up a guinea fowl.



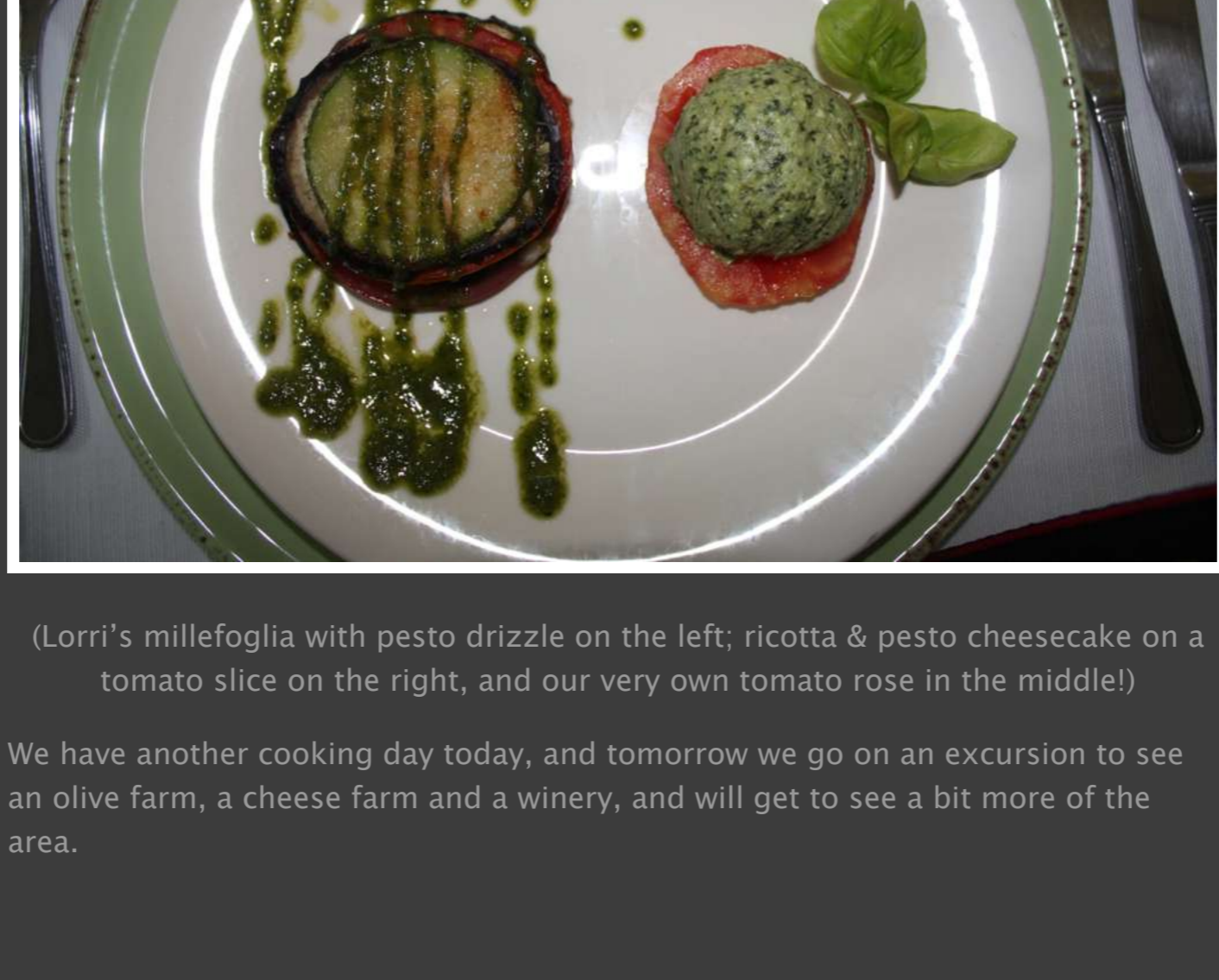
(the bird, before meeting Shawn)

Then he cooked it in an amazing sauce of porcini mushrooms and wine, which we will be having for lunch today. Lorri made millefoglia (see photo) and gnocchi and shallot sauce.



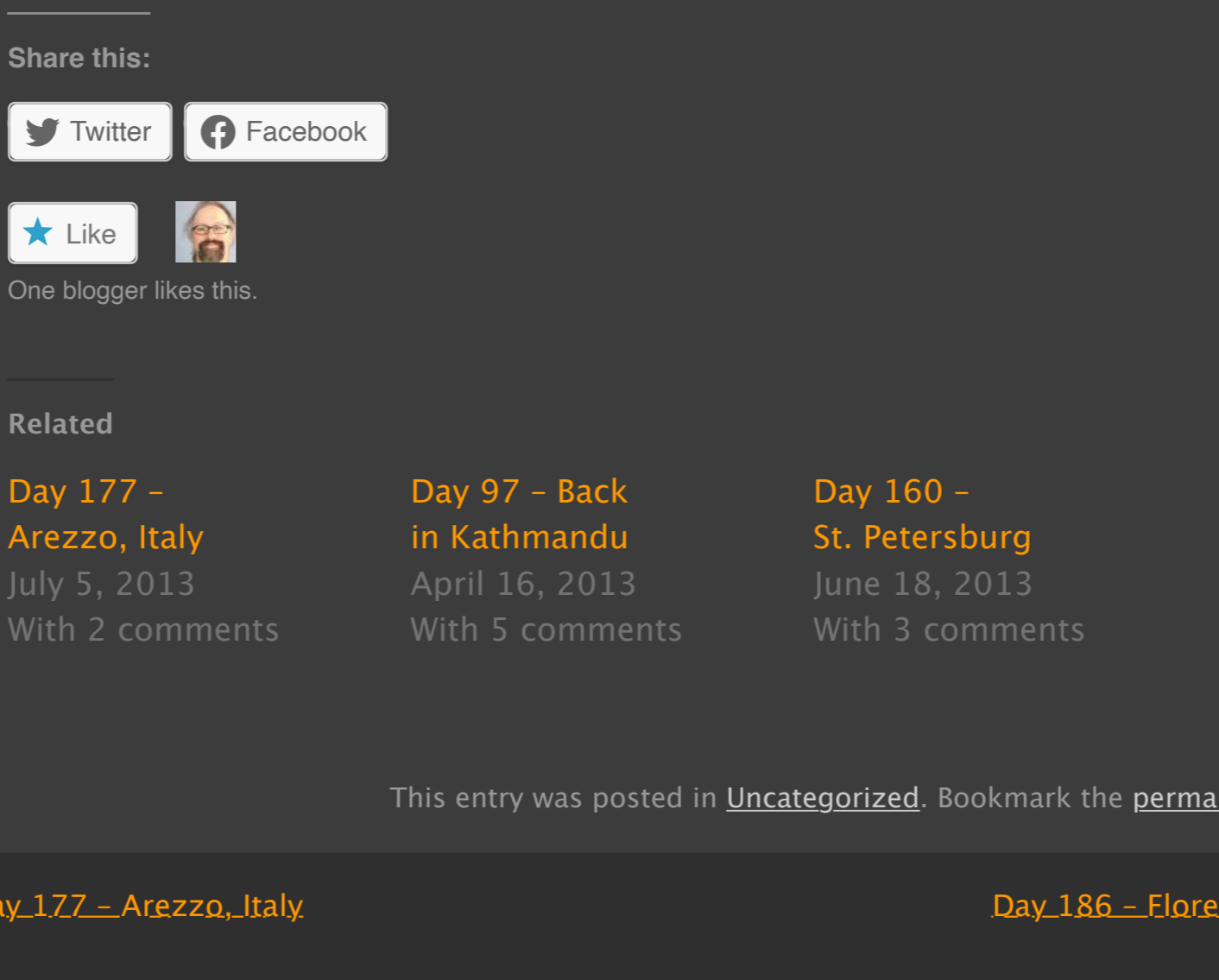
(Shawn the butcher)

After break we all learned to make pasta dough and roll it out by hand to an incredibly thin state, then made ravioli, fettuccine and farfalle.



(piping filling onto ravioli)

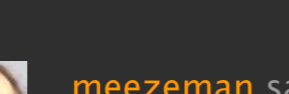
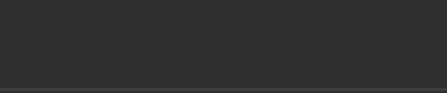
Last night for dinner we also had to plate and present the dishes we made during the day. It's still hard to believe that we are making food that looks so fancy!



(Lorri's millefoglia with pesto drizzle on the left; ricotta & pesto cheesecake on a tomato slice on the right, and our very own tomato rose in the middle)

We have another cooking day today, and tomorrow we go on an excursion to see an olive farm, a cheese farm and a winery, and will get to see a bit more of the area.

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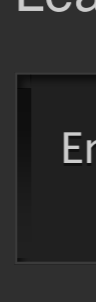
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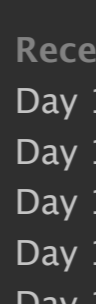


Greg says:

July 10, 2013 at 2:58 am

Looks like a great cap to an incredible trip!! Can't wait for an invite to dinner when you get back!

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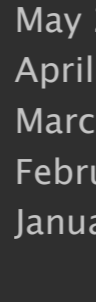


meezeman says:

July 11, 2013 at 12:01 am

Muolto bene....I think that is right....looks fantastic....cookery and drinkery.)

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lisarson says:

July 13, 2013 at 5:38 am

You're totally ready for MasterChef! I want to live here, it's beautiful! Italy in general.

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