

HOW TO LIVE BETTER THE ITALIAN WAY AND
MAKE YOUR DREAM OF ITALY COME TRUE



DREAM OF ITALY:®

Travel. Transform. Thrive.™

A COMPANION *to the*
PUBLIC TELEVISION SPECIAL



Kathy McCabe

FOREWORD BY FRANCES MAYES

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Kathy with Trudie Styler and Sting

The Land

The land gives life and inspiration here in Italy. Italians are strongly connected to the earth, which bestows both beauty and bounty.

Italians eat and drink well because the land and coastline provide the fertile sources to harvest the building blocks for the healthy Mediterranean diet. The rich soil produces grapes for wine, olives for oil that is also known as “green gold” and fresh fruits and vegetables of all shapes and sizes. The soil and sea provide sustenance for animals and fish.

Sting and his wife, actor/producer Trudie Styler, were drawn to live part-time at *Tenuta Il Palagio*, south of Florence, where they witness the power of the land firsthand and produce their own wine, olive oil, vegetables, honey and eggs.

There’s something more to the land here, a calm and beautiful energy, and I ask Sting why?

“Everything is related: the wine, the way it’s grown. It all helps the environment. There are more insects here, more birds here. They treat [the land] kindly. Nature pays you back a hundredfold,” Sting says.

While wine has been produced on this property since the 1500s, Sting and Trudie led a replanting of the vines in 2000. When they moved in, the vineyards had been neglected for years, but thanks to their efforts, the

grapes now go into a variety of award-winning red, white and rosé wines that are exported worldwide, including a red named *Roxanne* for Sting's famous song.

"I would call ourselves stewards in that we're here to look after [the land], to protect it and, if we can, to make it better than it was when we found it. So far, we've managed to do that," Sting says.

"We wanted to treat the land in an organic way and not put chemicals on it. It's amazing what happens to nature when you allow it to just be nature. It actually revitalizes itself; it heals itself and you see stuff growing out of the ground. I mean, I'm a city boy, just to see something that you plant bear fruit is still a miracle to me," he adds.

Trudie and Sting appreciate the opportunity to share their bounty with their neighbors.

"We have a farm shop that serves the local community," Trudie notes. "They're very grateful for organic vegetables, and our eggs are really good organic eggs, as well as all the wine."

And what is it about that inextricable bond between wine, the land and Italians? I ask local *Tony Sasa*, who works for *Il Palagio*.

"It's essential to the food. That means for Italians, beside that it's part of the culture and the history, is something that, it's a part of our life. When I taste the wines from *Palagio*, talking about *Sister Moon*, *Casino delle Vie*, *When We Dance* or *Roxanne*, they're reflecting really beside the soul, but even the personality of Trudie Styler and Sting, who are artists, musicians, but they are smooth, we can say like water. They are like wind. This is what our wines are; they're transmitting your personality and they're giving you the music and the words," Tony says.

Author Frances Mayes also made her part-time home in Italy because of the land.

"I felt like I wanted to put down roots here because I saw how amazingly close to the land the Tuscans still are," Frances says. Her purchase and renovation of the villa *Bramasole* in *Cortona* was made famous in the book and movie *Under the Tuscan Sun*.

"*Bramasole*" means "to yearn for the sun" and the sun of course is an essential element in the alchemy of nature.

Not only do Frances and her husband Ed enjoy the colors, beauty and scents of the land in the exquisite flower-filled garden at the front of their villa, but they also enjoy its nourishment, particularly from the olive trees.

Fall is the time when Italians feel a particularly strong connection to *la terra*.

“Everyone will soon be out hunting mushrooms and truffles and each season has its own foraging things,” Frances says.

“You enter into this ancient agricultural cycle that’s been going on forever, and it really makes you feel close to the land. It’s quite something to participate in an olive harvest,” she adds.

I ask Ed when they know it is time to harvest. “Exactly whenever they tell you that they are getting a little darker, they’re ready to be picked off the tree. All of our olives are handpicked by poets,” he laughs.

Ed tells me that the FDA recommends Americans consume two tablespoons of olive oil per day to improve health and lower the chance of heart disease. It is easy to see that Italians and those who live like Italians likely consume even more. There’s a reason Italians call olive oil “green gold.” I tend to think my friends who produce and consume olive oil also look younger than everyone else!

As Frances alludes to, the land also gives Italians a strong sense of place and connection through time. Italy as a unified country is a relatively young concept, only becoming a nation-state in 1861.

Italians can trace their families back hundreds of years or even more than a thousand years to a specific *borgo*, town or city, and feel incredibly tied to the swaths of soil they hail from, even if they now live in other parts of Italy or have emigrated.

It was that little speck on the map that brought Francis Ford Coppola back to his roots, his grandfather’s birthplace of *Bernalda*.

“Everything originated from the fact that we came from a part of Italy known as *Basilicata*, previously known as *Lucania*, in the town of *Bernalda bella*,” he tells me.

Perhaps it is because so much of Italy has a rich rural past that Italians appreciate nature and make time to enjoy it. Italy has 24 national parks that in total cover 5% of the nation’s land. Urban Italians make

good use of city parks like *Villa Borghese* in Rome (which is one of the biggest parks in Europe) and venture into the countryside for regular nature refills. Even the day after Easter, *Pasquetta*, is set aside for a picnic or jaunt into nature.

Italians are onto something when it comes to their love of nature. Spending as little as two hours a week in nature improves health and feelings of well-being, according to a study in the journal *Nature*. Among the benefits of spending time in nature are lower blood pressure, higher self-esteem, lessened anxiety and lower stress.

Those who live close to the land have even better outcomes. *The Journal of Environmental Health Perspectives* found that those who live around greener areas of vegetation actually live longer than those who live in cities.

There are so many opportunities for travelers to experience the magic of the varying Italian landscapes. Plan time on a farm, in the mountains, on a lake, in a national park, at some hot springs. Staying at an *agriturismo* is a must for those who wish to experience how Italians and the land interact. This is a working farm that welcomes guests. The owners often host farm-to-table cooking classes as well as a plethora of outdoor activities, like participating in an olive or grape harvest, on or near the property.

THRIVE TIPS

- Put spending time in nature on your calendar; even two hours a week can make a difference in your emotional well-being.
- Walk on the grass with your bare feet, a practice known as “earthing” or “grounding.”
- Plant your own small garden in your backyard or even on your apartment balcony.
- Join a hiking group to explore the areas around where you live.
- Help clean up local parks and waterways.
- Visit a local farm to appreciate what the earth gives us and buy their products.

- Photograph or paint landscapes to preserve and enjoy the beauty of the land.

TRAVEL TIPS

- Plan a farm stay in one of the many *agriturismi*, where you will see how the land provides us such bounty and how everything is connected.
- Add nature to your itinerary. For those who love mountains, check out the Dolomites. Sicily's beaches are perfect for coastal fans. There's something for everyone.
- Take a hike! Hiking is a perfect way to explore Italy. Explore the *Cinque Terre* by foot, take a trek on a volcano on the island of *Stromboli* in Sicily, hike and take in the views on *Il Sentiero degli Dei* (the Path of the Gods) on the Amalfi Coast.
- Visit one of Italy's 24 national parks.
- Snorkel or scuba dive in one of the four seas surrounding Italy: the Adriatic, Mediterranean, Ionian and Tyrrhenian.
- Explore a *grotta*; natural caves are a fascinating sight and Italy is full of them from north to south.
- Choose eco-friendly destinations like *Bandiera Blu* (blue flag) beaches, which have quality criteria related to the cleanliness of the beaches and water and the services offered, and *Bandiera Arancione* (orange flag) towns that have been recognized by the Italian Touring Club for their quality.
- Visit a vineyard and sip a glass of wine while walking through the vines or stop at an olive mill to see how olive oil is extracted. To taste wine or olive oil when visiting Tuscany, visit the Farm Shop at *Il Palagio*. Sting and Trudie have added a *pizzeria* and wine bar for a full experience.
- Spend the night in the Italian wilderness while glamping, which is a more luxurious form of camping and a vacation you will never forget.



How to Grow an *Italian Garden* at Home

Growing your own fresh, organic produce is also an easy way to incorporate the Mediterranean diet into your lifestyle. In your own garden, you can grow varieties that aren't readily available in American supermarkets, including heirlooms that have been passed down through generations. My friends mother-and-son duo Lynn Byczynski and Will Nagengast of Seeds From Italy (www.growitalian.com) import heirloom seeds to bring the best of the Italian garden to the U.S. They share some of their best strategies for creating an Italian-inspired garden at home.

1. Grow three kinds of tomatoes and use them in as many ways as possible. Grow a paste tomato such as *San Marzano Redorta* for sauces, a huge slicer such as *Franchi Red Pear* for sandwiches and a salad tomato such as *Principe Borghese* for snacking and roasting.
2. Grow basil the way it's grown in Italy: Direct seed it (i.e., plant the seeds right in the ground) at close spacing, and pull up plants as you need them when about 4 to 6 inches tall. Succession plant it (i.e., plant seeds every week or so) all summer so you always

have fresh, tender leaves at the peak of flavor. This strategy is perfect for growing basil in a pot on your patio.

3. Try *cima di rapa*. This quintessential Italian vegetable is a close relative of broccoli, popular for both its leaves and its small flower stalks. It's super easy to grow—just direct seed it in the garden and harvest anytime before it flowers.
4. Grow chicory in cool weather. This is a huge category of plants—everything from dandelions to *radicchio* to baby salad greens. The flavor is best when the plants mature in fall or early spring.
5. Show off with a *zucchetto* serpent of Sicily! The huge leaves and vigorous vines of this amazing plant will cover a fence or *pergola* quickly. The fruits can be picked young and cooked like zucchini or left to mature into huge gourds for fall decorating. It goes by several names in Italy, including *pergola* vine, *cucuzza* and *gagootza*. If squash bugs and cucumber beetles are a problem for your other squash, try *zucchetto* instead, as it seems to be immune.
6. Grow many kinds of squash. Every region has its favorites and you'll have fun comparing a few every summer. Plus, they'll give you plenty of zucchini blossoms for frying.
7. Ditto for beans—every region has a favorite so try different types to see what works and tastes best in your climate. *Rampicante* means climbing or pole beans, which require a strong trellis but produce all season from the same plants. *Nano* means bush beans, which should be planted several times for a long harvest.
8. Many Italian recipes call for pumpkin, which is not the jack-o-lantern type we associate with the word “pumpkin.” In Italy, pumpkin means *zucca*, or winter squash. Heirloom varieties tend to be very large, sprawling plants with gigantic fruits. A few plants will produce enough squash for eating now, freezing and storing.

Praise for
**DREAM OF
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“Trust Kathy. Kathy knows best. She created the *Dream of Italy* television series, magazine, and book club—and now this book—out of her limitless passion and extensive knowledge of the most fascinating country on Earth. Kathy is never a voice from on high, directing you to see this and that. She’s a full-on participant wherever she goes. The three Ts: *Travel. Transform. Thrive.* They’re seamlessly woven in this book, Kathy’s irresistible invitation to Italy. *Buon viaggio.*”

—FRANCES MAYES

Author of international bestseller *Under the Tuscan Sun*



The public television special ***Dream of Italy: Travel, Transform and Thrive*** explores how Italy can change your life, and this book provides a more detailed road map on how to adopt the healthy Italian lifestyle at home, travel to Italy in a more meaningful way or even move to or retire in Italy. Host and author **Kathy McCabe** explores the 11 essential elements of the Italian lifestyle—the land, food, family, art & culture, beauty, pace of life, passion, movement, community, celebrations and sense of home—through the stories of full- and part-time expats Sting & Trudie Styler, Francis Ford Coppola, *Under the Tuscan Sun* author Frances Mayes, best-selling financial author David Bach, retiree Sally Carrocino and interior designer Arlene Antoinette Gibbs. Kathy shares her family’s story to help readers understand how to investigate their own Italian ancestry and possibly claim Italian citizenship *jure sanguinis*, providing an easy way to live and work in Italy. For those who dream of spending extended time in Italy or moving there full-time, Kathy talks with relocation and legal experts on everything from securing a visa to navigating healthcare to buying and renovating your dream Italian home. Filled with anecdotes and practical tips, ***Dream of Italy: Travel, Transform and Thrive*** is a guide to making your own *dream of Italy* come true in big and small ways.

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