



Orvieto

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# DREAM OF ITALY®



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## SCALING THE HEIGHTS: *Two Days in Orvieto*

**O**rvieto is the ultimate city on a hill with a deep history to explore. Although the ups and downs don't only include the Umbrian town's rise to power during the Middle Ages from its ancient Etruscan roots, and occasional declines during political infighting among its noble families.

It's also a story of life above and below ground, even today. A city of about 21,000 people, Orvieto is less than 90 minutes north of Rome by train. The city—with its magnificent *Duomo* glinting in the sun—rises majestically above the surrounding countryside from its perch on a plateau of volcanic tuffa rock.



Duomo in mist

Inhabited by the Etruscans as early as the 9th century BC, the porous *tuffa* contains a complex underground world of caves, cisterns and quarries where many worked while living above in the town. By the 13th century, Orvieto became a thriving city-state and a popular Papal retreat.

*Pope Urban IV* really put the city on the map when he took up residence in 1262 while escaping civil unrest in Rome. In 1263, a doubting priest stopped in nearby *Bolsena* on his way to Rome and saw blood dripping from the Host, or communion wafer, while delivering his sermon. The blood covered the

*continued on page 2*



## Making *Marbled Paper* in Florence

**I** drop spots of rose, yellow, blue and green pigment onto a jelly-like solution. After running assorted combs in different directions to transform lines, dots and arches of paints into a rhythmical swirling pattern, I place a piece of thick paper atop my design. The paints immediately adhere to the paper. As I gently lift it, the design of my marbled paper slowly reveals itself.

My Italian cousin, *Anna*, with whom I share a "paper-loving" gene, and I are at the factory of *Il Papiro*, for a hands-on class in paper marbling and bookbinding. The factory is located in *Grassina*, about 25 minutes south of Florence.

Marbled paper (*carta marmorizzata*) has been closely associated with Florence since the 17th century when it was used to cover the flyleaves of hand-bound leather books. *Il Papiro* has several well-known stores in Florence and other shops across Italy and even in the United States.

I am happily surprised to find that we are not in a demonstration classroom but in the factory's actual workrooms. This is a small group activity, and we are the only participants in this morning's class.

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The patron saint of *Orvieto* is St. Joseph.

altar cloth, which was taken to show Urban.

The pope was so impressed by the "Miracle of Bolsena," he established the Feast of Corpus Christi, a celebration of the Eucharist still marked by Catholics today and in particular in Orvieto (usually in June) with a midnight pilgrimage from *Bolsena* to Orvieto followed by a grand procession of townspeople in jewel-toned costumes. Urban also dictated that a new church be built to house the bloody cloth. That church, the first cornerstone of which was laid by *Pope Nicholas IV* in 1290, would become the magnificent Orvieto cathedral.



Orvieto street

Once in Piazza Cahen, for a gorgeous view over the Umbrian hills, make a left out of the station to reach the ruins of the *Albornoz Fortress*, built in 1364 by Spanish *Cardinal Egidio Albornoz* to celebrate his military victories and provide defense (although with its position on the cliff, Orvieto was nearly impregnable). The grounds of the fort are now a public park ideal for a picnic.

From the funicular, buses go up to the center, but for a better introduction to the town take the 10 to 15 minute walk up the main street, *Corso Cavour*, which runs to *Piazza Repubblica* on the far side of town. (You can pick up a map at the tourist office in Piazza

Cahen.)

Today, Orvieto offers a wonderful walk through history and there's plenty to keep visitors busy for several days, but if you only have one or two, here are a few suggestions of what not to miss.

## DAY ONE *Ride High*

The best (and most fun) way to arrive is via the *Bracci Funicular*, which takes people from *Piazza Matteotti* opposite the Orvieto train station up to *Piazza Cahen*. The funicular, completed in 1888, runs every 10 minutes and makes for a dramatic entrance as it rides past local vineyards and olive groves. It closes around 8:30 p.m., though, so ask at the station when the last run will be if you plan to leave early.

*The funicular is open daily between 7:20 a.m. and 8:30 p.m.; tickets cost 1.30€. If you're arriving by car, Orvieto is off the A1 highway between Florence and Rome; parking lots connect to the town by elevator.*

Strolling along the cobblestone street introduces visitors to the gold-toned architecture of Orvieto. Nearly all the buildings are made from the tufa, lending the town a homogeneous color palate that's warm and inviting. Along the way you'll get glimpses of the red brick *Torre del Moro* ahead. The massive clock tower stands out for its color and its height: about 155 feet.

If you're feeling the need for a pick-me-up, several coffee bars are along *Cavour*, including *Barrique* and *Caffé Cavour*. With tables outside, they're excellent spots for people watching, and for having a glass of Orvieto wine later in the day.

## *The Golden Duomo*

At the *Torre*, make a left on *Via del Duomo* and you'll pass several artisans' shops, like *Orogami*, a high-end jewelry store owned by friendly husband and wife master jewelers *Massimo* and *Tiziana Aloisio*. You'll also pass ceramic shops like *Ceramicarte* and *Mastropaolo*, which offer authentic handmade Orvietán ceramics.

As you approach *Piazza del Duomo* the breathtaking, triple-gabled façade of the cathedral slowly comes into view with its glittering mosaics, gold and marble inlay, and stunning rose window by *Andrea di Cione*. The church took over 100 years to complete and is a triumph of Gothic and Romanesque architecture.

The austere interior initially stands in stark contrast to the façade. Immense columns divide the vast space into three aisles. But walk forward and out of the moody darkness behind the altar you'll see the walls are crammed with

frescoes by *Ugolino di Prete Ilario* and *Pietro di Puccio* depicting episodes from the life of Mary. To the left, visitors may feel humbled by the great organ (containing over 5,000 pipes!), one of the largest in Italy, which stands above the Chapel of the Corporal, where the famous altar-cloth of the Miracle of Bolsena is preserved.



Corporal Chapel, Duomo

On the opposite side is the Chapel of the *Madonna of San Brizio*, decorated with frescos by *Luca Signorelli* showing scenes from the Last Judgment in all its gruesome glory. The lower register has somewhat playful portraits of famous poets, like *Homer*, *Horace*, *Ovid* and *Dante*.

# The city of *Orvieto* sits a thou

The cathedral is open daily between 9:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. though in the off-season it often closes by 2:30 p.m. Entrance costs 3€ or is included when you purchase the *Carta Orvieto Unica* (20€), which includes entrance to basically everything in Orvieto: the Duomo and its museums, the *Opera del Duomo*, and almost all museums in town, as well as the Underground tour, and the Cava and St. Patrick's Wells. You can purchase it at many points around town including kiosks at the train station and in Piazza del Duomo.

Having worked up an appetite, the challenge now will be deciding where to eat. A great spot is *Trattoria del Moro*, beneath the clock tower. Family owned since 1965, sisters *Rolanda* and *Emiliana Livi*, and Rolanda's son *Cristian Manca*, run the place and they tell me dishes like *Umbricelli al Tartuffo* (pasta with truffles) and *Cinghiale alla Cacciatora* (wild boar in tomato sauce) are the local favorites.

Another option, with outside seating in Piazza del Duomo, is *Enoteca al Duomo*, also family-owned, by husband and wife *Emiliano Micheli* and *Ilaria Stacchiotti*. Their restaurant offers flights of the tasty Orvieto wines (*Orvieto Classico* or *Superiore*, a crisp blend of *Grechetto*, *Trebbiano* and *Verdelho* grapes), and specializes in traditional Umbrian pork dishes, pasta and the like.

## Orvieto Underground

From the Duomo, I recommend checking out the 45-minute guided *Orvieto Underground* tour, conducted several times a day in English. Here

you'll get a true sense of how deep Orvieto's history goes. The tour takes you beneath the city into the ancient caves and tunnels that stretch for miles.



Umbricelli al Tartuffo

Because Orvieto was built on a bluff, the only place to expand was down, and early citizens did just that to find much-needed water, and they also used the space for business.

Today visitors can still see an ancient olive oil press that used techniques still employed in modern oil production.



Underground entrance

The caves, our guide told us, were an ideal location for storage of oil, cheese and more because they remain a constant 58 degrees Fahrenheit. Noble families owned many of the caves and used them as dovecotes to house pigeons, a local delicacy and big business. Today, some houses still have private caves below that are used as wine cellars or for storage.



Underground cistern

The entrance is located at Piazza Duomo 23. For more information, call (39) 0763 340688 or visit [www.orvietounderground.it](http://www.orvietounderground.it). Group tours leave several times a day and the cost for a ticket is 6€.

If you're feeling adventurous, you can try pigeon at *Trattoria La Palomba*, near *Piazza della Repubblica*. Or you may want to eat dinner at the Sicilian restaurant *Cibus*, opened in 2013 by *Alessandro Franzella* and one of the few places in town where you can order fresh fish, like pistachio-crusting tuna and grilled sea bass.

## DAY TWO Market Morning

Thursday and Saturday are market day in Orvieto, so if you are in town then it is fun to pass by the colorful stalls of fresh vegetables, cheese, and cured meats, which are set up in *Piazza del Popolo* in the shadow of the striking *Palazzo del Capitano del Popolo*. The market usually wraps up by about 1 p.m.

Returning to Corso Cavour, *Caffe Montanucci* has been serving coffee and homemade pastries for 100 years, so it's a tasty place for breakfast. If you want more than the traditional Italian morning snack of coffee and *cornetto*, they also serve an American-style breakfast.

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# sand feet high above a valley.

*A good way to work off your morning pastry is to climb the 150-or-so feet up the Torre del Moro.*

### Time to Climb

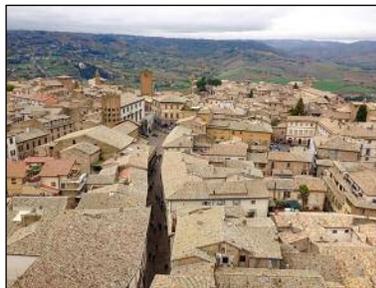
A good way to work off your morning pastry is to climb the 150-or-so feet up the *Torre del Moro*. The tower was originally part of the noble *Della Terza* family's *Palazzo dei Setti*, next door, but after passing from private hands to the church and then to the commune, it became the residence of the papally-appointed governors and delegates to the Holy See.

Now the palace is an exhibition space. Inside the tower, there's an elevator that goes up partway but then you'll need to take the stairs. It's "*valsa la pena*" (worth the pain), as they say in Italy, because at the top you're rewarded with a 360-degree view of the countryside. While you're looking off, it's likely that the clock, cast in 1313, will strike the time (it tolls every quarter-hour) and ring out over the countryside.

*Visit Torre del Moro at Corso Cavour, 87. It is open daily between 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. or 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. in low season. Tickets cost 2.80€.*



Torre del Moro



View from Torre del Moro

bell tower. The church served as the community center in the Middle Ages where citizens' meetings were held. *Pope Innocent III* announced the 4th Crusade from the church in 1216 and one of the kings of Jerusalem, *Pierre d'Artois*, was crowned here.

Continue on to *Via Filippeschi*, and follow signs to the Churches of *Sant'Agostino* and San Giovenale. *Sant'Agostino* is now a part of the *Opera del Duomo* museums and houses dramatic sculptures of the apostles, by various artists, that once stood in the Duomo, along with Francesco

Mochi's beautiful depiction of the *Annunciation*.

Around the corner from *Sant'Agostino* stands the oldest church

in town, the Romanesque *San Giovenale*, built in 1004, where 12th- and 13th-century frescoes still grace the interior. Standing near the edge of the tufa cliff, the church is a peaceful retreat, and if the local priest is there he can provide a brochure with more information about the church in English. But go early or later in the afternoon, it's usually closed from around noon until 4 p.m. From the small piazza in front of *San Giovenale*,

you can stroll along the edge of town for a spectacular view.

*Sant'Agostino is open daily from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. in high season and 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. in low season; closed Tuesday. Tickets cost 4€. San Giovenale is free to enter and is generally open noon to 4 p.m.*

### St. Patrick's Well

Finally, heading back to the funicular, you may want to take one last opportunity to go underground. In 1527, *Pope Clement VII*, hiding out from the latest sack of Rome, commissioned Florentine architect *Antonio da Sangallo* to construct St. Patrick's Well and its two spiral staircases that descend 248 steps down to where water had been found and could be used topside in case of Orvieto falling under siege.



Sant'Agostino with apostles

Completed 10 years later, it's a beautiful work of engineering that's worth seeing if you have the energy left after two jam-packed days in this enchanting Umbrian town.

*The well can be found on Viale Sangallo and is open 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. or 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. in low season. Entrance fee is 5€.*

—Lisa Chambers

*Lisa Chambers, an American expat living in Rome, contributes regularly to Dream of Italy. She wrote about Caravaggio's Rome for the April 2015 issue. Visit her blog at [www.searchingforberni.com](http://www.searchingforberni.com)*



San Giovenale

### A Step Back In Time

One of my favorite areas in Orvieto is the far western end of the town. From Cavour, walk through *Piazza della Repubblica*, pausing to admire the *Church of Sant'Andrea* with its 12-sided

# The Orvieto Jazz Festival is he

# THE DETAILS

## Where to Stay

### Hotel Palazzo Piccolomini

Piazza Ranieri, 36  
(39) 0763 341743  
[www.palazzopiccolomini.it](http://www.palazzopiccolomini.it)

**Rates:** Start at 150€  
for a double room.

A lovely 4-star hotel in  
a 16th-century palazzo.

### Hotel Virgilio

Piazza Duomo, 5, Orvieto  
(39) 0763-394937

[www.orvietohtotelvirgilio.com](http://www.orvietohtotelvirgilio.com)

**Rates:** Range from 80 to 190€ for  
a double, including breakfast.  
A lovely, 3-star boutique hotel  
located near the *Duomo*.

### Ripa Medici Bed & Breakfast

Vicolo Ripa Medici, 14  
(39) 0763 341343  
[www.ripamedici.it](http://www.ripamedici.it)

**Rates:** Start at 65€ per night,  
including breakfast.  
Small, friendly B&B on  
the western side of town.

## Where to Have Coffee or An Aperitivo

### Bar Montanucci

Corso Cavour, 23  
(39) 0763 341261  
[www.barmontanucci.com](http://www.barmontanucci.com)

### Caffé Cavour

Corso Cavour, 74  
(39) 0763-342510

### Barrique

Corso Cavour, 111  
(39) 0763 340455

## Where to Eat

### Trattoria del Moro Aronne

Via S. Leonardo, 7  
(39) 0763 342763  
[www.trattoriadelmoro.info](http://www.trattoriadelmoro.info)

Closed Tuesday.  
Excellent for local pasta  
and meat dishes.

### Trattoria La Palomba

Via Cipriano Menente, 16  
(39) 0763 343395  
Closed Wednesday.  
Good place to try pigeon!

### Il Giglio d'Oro

Piazza del Duomo, 8  
(39) 0763 341903  
[www.ilgigliodoro.it](http://www.ilgigliodoro.it)  
Closed Wednesday.

High-end restaurant with  
views of the Duomo.

### Cibus

Via Garibaldi, 12  
(39) 0763 630091  
[www.cibusorvieto.it](http://www.cibusorvieto.it)  
Closed Monday.  
Serves a variety of fresh fish.

## Where to Drink Wine



### Enoteca al Duomo

Piazza del Duomo, 13  
(39) 0763 344607

## Where to Eat Gelato

### Di Pasqualetti

Piazza del Duomo, 14  
Via del Duomo, 10  
[www.ilgelatodipasqualetti.com](http://www.ilgelatodipasqualetti.com)

## Where to Shop



### Federico Badia

Via Garibaldi, 27  
[www.federicobadiashoes.com](http://www.federicobadiashoes.com)  
This young Roman cobbler moved  
to Orvieto and with his wife is  
continuing an artisan tradition of  
handmade and custom-made  
shoes, handbags, wallets, belts, etc.



### Orogami

Via del Duomo, 14/16  
(39) 0763 344206  
[www.orogami.it](http://www.orogami.it)  
Master jewelers Massimo and  
Tiziana Aloisio create original,  
unique and beautiful handmade  
jewelry and will happily answer any  
questions you might have about  
the items in their shop  
(they speak some English).  
They have a range of pieces from  
simple and affordable to more

intricate and expensive, and  
they do custom work.

### L'Orvietan

Via del Duomo, 74  
(39) 0763 341060  
The owner of the shop, *Lamberto*,  
(if you see a bald-headed man  
with a great smile and kind eyes  
behind the counter, that's him),  
sells all kinds of olive wood items,  
soaps and linens. He's also  
a papermaker.

### Ceramicarte

Via dell Duomo, 42  
(39) 0763 341394  
Unusual handmade, artisan  
ceramics by artists *Nadia*  
and *Alberto*.

### Mastropaolo

Piazza dell Duomo, 36  
(39) 0763 343667  
[www.ceramicemastropaolo2.com](http://www.ceramicemastropaolo2.com)  
Another great place for ceramics,  
including modern designs.

## Where to Take A Class

### I Love IT School

Vicolo Ascanio Vitozzi, 2  
(39) 0763 450016  
[www.iloveitschool.com](http://www.iloveitschool.com)  
A local school owned and operated  
by two wonderful women, Laura  
Cardinali and Evelina Santaguida,  
it offers Italian language classes to  
students of all ages. They also  
offer cooking lessons. Find out  
more in the June/July 2013 issue  
of *Dream of Italy*.

1€ = \$1.11 at press time

# ld in the winter and summer.

We pass walls of metal shelves, with stacks and stacks of marbled paper carefully arranged by color. Other shelves hold Il Papiro's other products, from albums to desk sets. Everything here is still crafted by hand.



ago. They, as well as the algae-based solution, are secret formulas that distinguish Il Papiro's marbled papers from those of other artisans.

I watch as Anna deftly applies the colors according to Diego's directions. A few more steps and her beautiful marbled paper comes to life.



teeth of varying thickness and spacing. The combs are attached to frames sized to glide along the tracks built into the sides of the bins.

We arrive at a paint-splattered work corner where *Diego*, our instructor, demonstrates the technique of marbleizing. Diego, who is in his 20s, makes about 180 sheets of marbled paper daily. His father, *Claudio*, who has worked at Il Papiro for about 30 years, makes about 200 sheets a day.

*Maria*, our guide for the morning, makes the most important point of the day. "Every object that we create is covered with the papers made by hand by Claudio and Diego. For the marbled papers, no machine exists that can substitute for the artisans."



hands me a plastic bottle of green paint with long narrow nozzle, instructing me to make a line of arches. I instinctively squeeze the bottle, a "no-no," so a thick line instead of orderly dots forms the arches. Next comes the yellow for forming a line of dots, along with another reminder, "*Non spremere*, (no

Then it's my turn. Diego

The first comb has widely-spaced teeth, creating a feathered effect as I slowly pull

it from top to bottom. Pulling the next comb, its teeth more closely aligned, left to right, expanding the feathers. The third comb is a double comb, with two moveable pieces of wood, each with widely spaced, thinner, offset teeth.



On the right to left run, I hold one comb in the forward position. On the opposite run, the other comb has the forward position. These movements add details and expand the scallops, swirling them across the solution, producing the traditional peacock's tail pattern.

Design completed, I place a piece of textured, 95-gram weight, ivory paper atop the paints, which quickly adhere to the paper.

The first step in marbling paper is to put the colors atop the viscous solution that is in a rectangular metal bin, just a bit larger than the paper used in the process. So gelatinous is this solution that the paints just float on top and the colors do not run together.

This solution is made by boiling various types of algae, which is then cooled overnight in a refrigerator. The same solution is used throughout the day, topped off as its level lowers during the day's marbleization process. The next day a fresh solution fills the bin.

The special pigments used for the decorations were formulated 40 years

## The Details

The paper-making and book-binding workshop is offered each Monday at 9:30 a.m. or 2 p.m. and lasts about three hours. If requested, the lessons can be offered in English. The cost for one or two people is a total of 145€. For groups of three or more participants, the price is 52€ per person. Il Papiro can arrange a round-trip private transfer service (a bit pricey) to the factory or the town of Grassina can also be reached by taxi or by bus on bus line 31 from Piazza San Marco in Florence. For information or reservations, email [corporatesales@ilpapirofirenze.it](mailto:corporatesales@ilpapirofirenze.it)

# Marbleization was invented



## Paper Shops in Florence

As you wander the streets of Florence, you'll see many shops offering multitudes of items covered with marbled paper, some of the papers handmade, others printed. The following shops offer large varieties of beautifully crafted objects and hand-marbled papers.

### Il Papiro

Via Cavour 49/r  
Via de' Tavolini 13/r  
Via Guicciardini 47/r  
www.ilpapirofirenze.it

Il Papiro has several shops in Florence. There are frequent demonstrations of paper marbling at these locations. For other locations throughout Italy and overseas see the website.

### Giulio Giannini e Figlio

Piazza Pitti, 37/R  
(39) 055 212621  
www.giuliojiannini.com  
Founded in 1856, Giulio Giannini e Figlio offers marbled paper demonstrations and several workshops in making marbled paper and bookbinding. For information, email maria@giuliojiannini.it

### Alberto Cozzi Antico Laboratorio Artigianale

Via di Parione, 35  
(39) 055 294968  
In this intriguing family-owned shop, you'll see members of the family at the workroom in the back, busy marbling paper or sewing together pages for their hand-bound leather books. Check for occasional demonstrations.

Now it is time to see my "work of art." Starting at the forward corner, I slowly lift the paper out of the tank. Wow! I see those swirls, each encasing ever-smaller swirls filled with lines and tiny dots of many colors, never repeating the design. One corner of larger yellow swirls with less detail is a permanent display of my overly zealous application of paint.

A six-inch, muddled green diagonal line is an unforgiving testimony to the brief hesitation I made while lifting the paper from the solution. But overall, it looks pretty great. I will crop out those flaws when I have my paper framed.

After the paper is lifted out of the bin, none of the colors remain on the solution—and the surface of the



marbled paper is dry to the touch.

I quickly understand why no two marbled papers are ever alike. The artisan, the vagaries of the amount of paint and their colors, the patterns in which they are applied and, finally, the combs used and the ways in which they are moved make it virtually impossible to make an exact copy of any design.

Before marbling the papers, we began binding journals, which is also part of this program. After choosing which marbled paper to use, we glued three pieces of cardboard on to the paper—



two rectangular pieces for the covers, a thin strip for the book's spine. Paying special attention to the corners, Laura, our instructor, helped us to carefully fold the paper over the cardboard pieces.

Again, we are in a regular workroom, with shelves of

supplies and book presses nearby and a lady at the next table covering boxes with marbled paper. While the glue dried we made our marbled papers. Returning to the bookbinding table, we insert bound pages into the books, carefully aligning the edge of the pages along the spine.

After gluing the pages to the covers and checking the top and bottom alignments, our journals go into the book press. Our last bit of creativity is gluing a strip of marbled paper around a pencil to create a matching set, the book too lovely to spoil with my sprawling penmanship.

After receiving our diplomas, Anna and I compare our marbled papers.



They are absolutely different. Ours were not as perfect as the pros, but we had joined the legion of artisans who never repeat a pattern.

—Mary Ann Hemphill

Mary Ann Hemphill wrote about Todi for the November ber of xxx for the xxx issue of Dream of Italy.



# by Louis XIV's papermaker.

# Taste Florence With A Food Tour

**W**hat's your first thought at the mention of Florence? Art? Shopping? Food?

Half-day food-tours are all the rage these days in cities around the world. Seven years ago, *Toni Mazzaglia*, an Italian-American expat hailing from North Carolina, started one of Italy's first such tours and the very first food tour in Florence — *Taste Florence*.

With eight food- and wine-related stops in the course of a four-hour walk, *Taste Florence* is part culinary history lesson, part moving party (with guests like Toni or one of her engaging guides and the characters who run many of the places on the tour) and part scrumptious buffet.

Mazzaglia's itinerary takes into account the increasingly-refined palates of today's travelers. "Due to lots of cooking shows, travel shows, the internet, the farm to table movement, guests are more sophisticated now. Many are ready and willing to try tripe, tongue, anchovies," Mazzaglia says.

While Italian food varies by region and even by town, the culinary customs of one area influence neighboring gastronomic traditions. This is evident at the first stop at a *norcineria* — a shop selling the pork products made by the famous butchers of *Norcia*, a town in neighboring *Umbria*. Mazzaglia leads a comparative tasting of the traditionally sweet *San Daniele prosciutto* and the saltier *Norcia* variety.

"I like to mix up the savory and sweet," Mazzaglia says and our next stop is a *biscotteria*. If you've spent any amount of time in Italy, especially Tuscany, you've tasted plenty of biscotti especially dipped in *Vin Santo*

(sweet wine). I can generally take or leave *biscotti* but dear God, the chocolate and orange variety at *Il Cantuccio di San Lorenzo* (Via Sant'Antonino, 23) knocked my socks



Clockwise from top: Savini truffles, pudino di riso and Toni eating gelato

off. "In Tuscany, the foods that taste good, don't look good," Mazzaglia says and brings us to *Pasticceria Sieni* (Via dell'Ariente, 29), a 106-year-old bakery, to prove her point. We're served an unimpressive looking *pudino di riso*, a pastry made of rice pudding that turns out not only to be rich and mouthwatering but surprising — as rice isn't a very common ingredient in Tuscany.

Mazzaglia first lived in the *San Lorenzo* neighborhood as a student studying Italian gastronomy and culture, and though she has since moved, we hear shouts of "*Ciao Toni!*" ringing out as we make our way to Florence's Central Market.

The first floor is home to the Florentine institution *Nerbone*, home to perhaps Mazzaglia's favorite dish in Florence — *panino a bollito di manzo*.

"Not many people think of Italy and dream of a steaming pile of boiled beef. But when they take the first bite and realize that even boiled beef is a work of art when crafted by Italians, guests have a magic moment," she says.

After a visit to the renovated second floor of the market (a must-see) for tastings of mozzarella and truffles, it is on to wine and balsamic vinegar, where Mazzaglia, a sommelier, leads more seated, relaxed tastings.

"I decided to add it to the tour in Florence even though it is from another region (*Emilia-Romagna*). Balsamic is too special to be left misunderstood, or even worse, misused," she emphasizes.

What gourmet experience would be complete without chocolate and gelato? Mazzaglia brings us to *Vestri* (Piazza Gaetano Salvemini, 11) for a tasting of six — count 'em — six exquisite varieties of chocolate sourced

from Vestri's own cocoa plantation in the Dominican Republic. Florence has plenty of gelaterias to choose from, but *Leonardo Vestri* has combined passion and science to create mouth-watering and memorable flavors, like dark chocolate with chili peppers and white chocolate with wild strawberries.

The only thing left to do after a Taste Florence tour — take a nap!

## The Details

### Taste Florence

www.tasteflorence.com

(866) 736-6343

(toll-free in U.S.)

Tours are held Monday through Saturday at 9:30 a.m.

Private tours and custom food experiences are available on request.

Tickets: \$89 per person (or \$75 for children 17 and under)

1€ = \$1.11 at press time

# Bread in Florence is famously salt-free.