



Dream of Italy Season 2 Crew in Abruzzo

INSIDE:

Filming in Abruzzo 3

Gucci Garden in Florence 5

Bologna Tour Guide 6

Venice Tour Guide 7



Giacomo, Tripperia Fiorentina

CELEBRATING 15 YEARS OF GREAT TRAVEL ADVICE

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Behind the Scenes: SEASON 2 OF *DREAM of ITALY* on PBS

A new season of the TV travel series *Dream of Italy* is now airing on PBS (and available to watch at www.dreamofitaly.com) and this time my Italian adventures are deeply personal. 2017 was an intense year planning, filming and editing the six episodes that will continue to air and repeat on PBS and CreateTV for the next few years. I'd love to take you behind the scenes of season two with fun stories from filming and tips for planning your own trip to any of these areas.



On the Arno, Florence

Our crew when we are filming consists of six (me, director, fixer, director of photography who mans one camera, second cameraman and sound). A fixer

in the TV world is often a local, in this case, our friend *Fabio* who lives in Tuscany, who arranges our appointments, helps with segment ideas and assists with all of our needs while filming, from arranging transportation to providing translation.

We spend four or five days in one location for an episode and usually film two or three segments per day. Not every segment makes it into an

New Buzz on the Florence Food Scene

Florence is a city with a long culinary history. Most restaurants serve classic dishes heavy with meats and fried foods. The locals go out for just that, things that they wouldn't cook at home. If you are here on vacation, the menus get repetitive quickly and the traditional three-hour multi-course lunches are not something for every day.

Fortunately, Florentine restaurants are adapting to the more modern lifestyle. New cafes and alternative places to eat and shop have opened recently, bringing new life to the Florence food scene, making it easier to grab a sandwich or a salad and eat a lighter meal.

Markets and *moda*, food and fashion, have come together for some new surprises:

At The Markets

Florence is blessed to have two historic markets dating to when it was the capital of newly founded country of Italy. *Mercato San Lorenzo*, also called the *Mercato Centrale*, not far from the train station or the *Duomo*, and the smaller *Mercato San Ambrogio* in the *Santa Croce* area.

Both seasons of *Dream of Italy* are available online.

continued on page 2

continued on page 4

Behind the Scenes of Season 2 *continued from page 1*

episode and when we can, we produce those segments as web-only features. When we get home it takes about five to six weeks to write and edit each episode. TV is labor intensive!

The ideas for what we film are inspired by places I've visited in my 40+ visits to Italy and the people I've met along the way. This show is really about the locals and in some cases the chefs, artisans and historians are people I've known for years and other times they are people I will have just met a few minutes before (who were found by our fixer). A lot of the show is much more spontaneous than you might imagine.

I can't adequately explain our experience filming in Italy last summer without mentioning our unexpected guest, *Lucifero!* Also known as the heatwave that blanketed Italy for months. We were in a constant state of sweat with temperatures sometimes more than 100 degrees. Luckily my crew could wear shorts and t-shirts but the heat definitely was a challenge for me looking "fresh" on camera!

Florence

Florence was the first episode that we



Crane next to Duomo

filmed and we packed so much into our four days of shooting that we could have produced two half-hour episodes on Firenze. I had two goals for the themes we wanted to convey with the content: Florence isn't just a

city stuck in the Renaissance but always evolving and being reborn and offering new ways to experience the city.

One of the joys of now producing the TV series is to feature some of the friends I have met in more than 15 years of editing this travel publication. I've known Judy Witts Francini for nearly the whole time I have been running *Dream of Italy* and there are few culinary experts in Italy who know as much as Judy does. She met me at Florence's *Mercato Centrale* — she knows all of the stand owners and



Kathy tastes lampredotto

their stories — to join me for my first taste of *lampredotto*. Yes, all these years, I had avoided any kind of tripe. But I had a lamp sandwich at the famous *Nerbone* and loved it!

One of the biggest surprises of our entire season of filming took place at Florence's famous *Duomo*. The purpose of our segment was to show that Florence isn't just something that was created and remains stagnant. The great works of art and sites are often under renovation, this includes the *Duomo*.

Monsignor Timothy Verdon, who heads the *Opera del Duomo*, told me, "For 500 years of its existence, Florence had one major artistic project which when Florentines want to say something takes an enormously long time, they say it is as long as the *Opera del Duomo*." We visited the workshop where stone masons craft pieces to

constantly renovate the interior and exterior of the *Duomo*. I thought *Marcello*, the stone mason, would then take me for a walk around the exterior to show his work!

Wrong! When I walked around the side of the *Duomo*, I saw a crane and quickly learned we were going up in it to see the restoration truly up close and personal. This was so unexpected that I didn't have the proper attire — I was in a dress and espadrilles. This was one of the coolest things that I have ever done. I had so much adrenalin that I didn't have time to be scared, but only later found out my cameraman wasn't too keen about how high up we went.

Venice

A thousand stories have been told about Venice, that's for sure. One story I wanted us to tell is that of the city's essential relationship to the water and how that has been challenged in modern times. I've always been



Learning to row a gondola

impressed by Context Travel and their academic-led, small-group tours. I've written about their ecology tour of Venice and knew I wanted to film this as a segment. Our time with scientist *Luca Zaggia* gave us a completely unique view on Venice and we even got to see the \$6 billion *Mose* gates that are helping to mitigate the rising sea levels.

Also look for *Dream of Italy*

Another major theme throughout this episode is that Venice, despite its dwindling population and massive numbers of visitors, is still a living city where real people live and work. One of my favorite segments is my bead-stringing lesson with *Marisa Convento*, a vivacious, modern woman who is



Mose gates in Venice

carrying on age-old tradition as an *impiraressa*, bead stringer. Our viewers love artisans and I'm happy to introduce you to these amazing people. What I love about so much of what I do in the show is that viewers can do it too and Marisa also offers lessons to visitors.

Everything in Venice gets done by boat so it isn't surprising that two of our segments cover "rowing" — in one I learn to row a gondola from a charming and funny, 8th-generation gondolier and another, my old friend Nan McElroy of Row Venice teaches me *voga alla veneta*, a traditional Venetian style.

We spent a lot of time on our small crew boat (this one with a motor, no rowing) throughout the day. Each morning started with a 30-minute boat ride from our hotel, the *Kempinski San Clemente Palace*, which is on its own island out on the lagoon. Staying here was such a treat because it was quiet and peaceful (and full of grass and gardens and even a pool) and a world away from the hustle and bustle of the main area of Venice.

Bologna

Bologna is a city that will surprise you. We are so lucky to have Rome, Venice and Florence but because Italy is filled with extraordinary cities, Bologna often gets short shrift. It is an easy and comfortable place to visit and I really hope this episode will encourage more of you to add it to your itinerary. You can get to Bologna from Florence in just a half-hour on a fast train.

One thing I love about writing for television is that you simply must get your point across succinctly. There's no time for anything else. How do you explain just how delicious and important a foodie city Bologna is? Say "this is where Italians come to eat" as I



Making ragu in Bologna

did in our introduction. I learned to make *tortellini* and later *tagliatelle ragu* with some of the great characters of Bologna — watch and you will see.

I wanted this season to be much more action-packed so when you are in Italy's Motor Valley, that means getting in a *Lamborghini*. I joked to Fabio, make sure that they give us their best-looking test driver and they didn't disappoint. Our drive was another great adrenalin rush, which you can tell from my screams!

Abruzzo

More people need to visit *Abruzzo*! That's why I devoted an episode to

this little-known, wild and enchanting region. The diverse terrain offers something for everyone. I absolutely fell in love with the coastal town of *Vasto*. We had a few hours off on the day that we arrived at our seaside hotel and I took a walk on the wide, sandy beaches. One of my favorite features of Italian beaches are the rows of colorful lounge chairs and umbrellas. Vasto is also where we visited one of the famous *trabocchi*, fishing huts. It was not only fascinating from a culinary and historic perspective but visually stunning — and the perfect place to take some drone footage.

I can without a doubt say that Abruzzo's *Gran Sasso National Park* is *continued on page 8*

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New in Florence *continued from page 1*

In 2014, the Mercato Centrale got an overhaul when they converted the upstairs into the privately owned "Primo Piano" which was created by *Umberto Montana*, a famous restauranteur in town.

Each food stand upstairs is privately run by the artisans. It has become hugely popular with locals and gets really crowded at meal times. There is a great fresh fish stand with grilled and fried fish as well as some daily specials listed on the blackboard. You can also enjoy burgers (even vegan ones), coffee, cocktails, artisanal beers. I love the Chinese food stand offering dumplings, spring rolls and my personal favorite, the breakfast crepe, *Jianbing*.

The fresh pasta stand makes the pasta in the back of the shop and has sauces paired to regional pastas, cooked to order. Truffles? Yes, *Savini*, my favorite truffle hunters in Tuscany have a stand where you can sit and have a simple pasta, *risotto* or even eggs with fresh grated truffles on top. We have truffles all year long, the season for the white truffles is shorter, only available in winter.

On the main floor there is an historic tripe stand, protected by the art commission of Florence, with its marble base, iron columns and black glass sign with gold lettering. The *Tripperia Fiorentina* is run by a family who have been *trippai* since 1890. Their shop, *Bambi*, was in the *San Frediano* area of town across the river. Today,

they have their workshop in in Mugello Hills above Florence.

Recently, the son *Giacomo* has updated the stand with marble-

lined walled refrigerated display section and added prepared food and a space for eating at the stand as well as being able to buy tripe to take home and cook yourself for the locals.

Florence's most famous street food the traditional *lampredotto panini*

are made from the fourth stomach of a cow. It is a dark brown, less chewy and more of a meaty flavor than the normal white tripe that everyone is used to seeing. (I introduced Kathy to it in the Florence episode of

season 2 of *Dream of Italy* on PBS.)

The panini are served with an Italian *salsa verde* sauce, salt, pepper and chili sauce if you like.

You can also order several other classic preparations such as *trippa alla Fiorentina* (in a tomato sauce) or *insalatata di trippa*, boiled tripe cut into strips with served cold as a salad or a non-tripe stew like *Peposo* a peppery slow cooked beef cheek stew. Look for the fried

lampredotto polpette "fritters" and some of the other harder to find dishes like *nervetti* (tendons) and *poppa* (udder). Only for the brave!

Giacomo has also taken over the bar in front of the stand and is opening a *cicchetto* bar,



Tripperia Fiorentina



il Pane vero e il Latte vero e la Pasticciata C.Bio



C.Bio



La Macelleria di C.Bio

serving small plates as well as opening another stand upstairs, which is open until midnight, serving traditional slow cooked stews such as *ribollita* (a classic vegetable and bread stew).

In this fish market downstairs, Andrea the owner of the stand *L'Ultima Spiaggia*, (means "the last beach"), was the first to start to serve cooked food. You can get a large plate of fried calamari, fresh cod and prawns for 12 euro. Nearby, the *Pasta Fresca* stand now serves up a fresh plate of pasta with sauce made in the small kitchen around the corner from their stand, for just 5€. Very popular with students.

There are two new reasons to head over to the *San Ambrogio Market*. First of all, my favorite Florentine chef, *Fabio Picchi*, (I wrote about him in the March 2017 issue) has now opened *C.Bio*, an organic grocery store and more on *Via della Mattonella*. (www.cbio.it)

When you enter, you find the fresh food section with fruits and vegetables from local farms. Then head over to the prepared foods, breads baked on site and pastries as well as pantry items and wines. There is a small fresh fish section and the line of jarred items which Cibreo has created for years and served as their *antipasti* as well as jams and pickled vegetables.

Florence was the first country

Inside the market, C.Bio also has two stands; a bakery with breads made from ancient heirloom wheat and also a butcher shop with organic beef, pork, chicken and eggs as well as some prepared items to cook at home.



Risto-Macelleria Menon

This past October, one of my favorite butchers also opened a secret restaurant (for lunch only) on top of his shop in the market. Unless you know about *Risto-Macelleria Menoni* it is impossible to find. On the right-hand side of the stand you will find the menu which changes daily. Order what you want for lunch and go up the stairs to wait for your dish to arrive on the food elevator. I also love the classic trattoria Rocco's just a couple of shops down; many old school classic dishes at reasonable prices.

Fashion-Influenced Food

Many of Italy's famous fashion designers are old Florentine families, *Gucci*, *Pucci*, *Ferragamo* to mention a few. The newest fashion restaurant opening is *Gucci Garden*, located in *Piazza Signoria* in the *Palazzo della Mercantia*, the old merchants' building. Gucci created a museum and the restaurant is located on the ground floor.



The shop here has some really wild modern clothing and in the shop near the restaurant beautiful graphics on smaller fun pieces to buy, shopping bags, notebooks and more. *Massimo Bottura* from *Modena*, one of the top Michelin-starred chefs in the world, was hired to open the restaurant.

He sent *Ana Karime Lopez Kondo* as the executive chef. It is a fun menu,

blending classics from his famous Modena eatery *Osteria Francescana* with some new light "street-food" influenced international dishes. Reservations are taken for dining from 12:30 to 8:30 p.m.

I recently went in and tried their 50€ tasting menu offer smaller portions of five of the dishes from their menu. One of the chef's signature dishes is tostada with *palamita*, a local tuna. She makes her own masa for the tortillas using the original recipe. I was amazed.

Kondo has created a special Caesar salad, which was a tiny head of lettuce, with multiple sauces, artfully places so each bite was perfect and thin bread chips. A large plate of *tortellini*, the signature dish from Modena, was in what seemed to be a cream sauce but was created with boiling the rinds of 3-year-aged *parmigiano* in water and creating an emulsion,



Gucci Garden

reminiscent of the "five ages of parmigiano" dish at the Osteria.



They have some other fun dishes like a Bao bun, created by Ana's husband, who is in Modena cooking with Massimo. It is pork belly, slaw and sliced apple. Next visit I will try the burger and the hot dog, made with *Chianina* beef. *Piazza della Signoria*, 10; 39-055-75927010; www.gucci.com/guccigarden

Another new fashionable place to eat is the terrace room at *Floret Bar*, on the second floor of



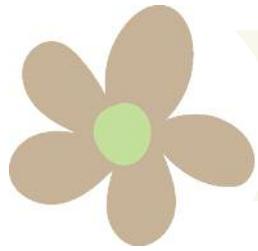
Luisa Via Roma, a trendy local shop featuring international designers. It is like Florence meets Los Angeles, serving everything from juices and smoothies to tea and coffee,

coconut water and light lunches to a full brunch on Sunday.

The *Floret Bar Terrazza* specializes in organic fresh foods and juices but also offers a large menu with bowls, soups and non-traditional Tuscan dishes. The terrace is open all year and reservations are a must on the weekend. Their incredible Sunday brunch menu changes weekly and you can pick to taste three of the menu items for 30€. *Via Roma*, 19/21r; 39-055-295924; www.floret-bar.com

—Judy Witts Francini

Judy Witts Francini has lived in Tuscany since 1984. She's the author of *Secrets From My Tuscan Kitchen* and the *Taste Chianti* app. Judy runs custom culinary tours in Chianti and Sicily. For more information, visit www.divinacucina.com



Favorite Tour Guides in

Bologna: Anna Brini

"I have clients who've taken tours with me for more than 20 years," she says. "I've seen people getting married, I've seen their children being born and growing up."

Anna Brini likes to say she's not merely *Bolognese* — she's *petroniana*, that is, she was born inside the 11th century walls that surrounded Bologna during the Middle Ages, the area that today is still the heart and soul of the city.

The fact that Brini is a born and bred Bolognese is what makes her tours different, she says. "I can recount anecdotes that my grandparents told me, which they in turn had learned from their parents. I have a knowledge of Bologna that isn't just academic, gathered from textbooks; it comes from the life experience of generations."

That's probably why Brini is extremely successful not just with foreign visitors, but with the *Bolognesi* themselves.

"I have clients who've taken tours with me for more than 20 years," she says. "I've seen people getting married, I've seen their children being born and growing up."

Brini manages to create a relationship of empathy with her public, and, after more than 30 years working as guide, that's still one of her great assets. "Looking in the eyes of the people who are listening to me, seeing their satisfaction and gratitude for what they're learning, is the most rewarding aspect of my job," she says.

"Sometimes I take visitors to *Palazzo della Mercanzia* where there's a replica of a perfectly-sized golden *tagliatella*, and when I explain them the differences between *tagliatella*, *fettuccina*, *pappardella*, *linguina*, they're related. I mean, for them they were all noodles."

Because Bologna was for many years overlooked not only by tourists, but also by tourist guides, which suggested to skip Bologna because it was "just an industrial town," people usually arrive unsure of what to expect. "In my tours," says Brini, "I give a comprehensive view of Bologna, from anecdotes to history to art to food to sex — yes, the carnal aspect of our city is very important."

Bologna has one of the best-preserved historic centers in all of Europe, Brini points out. It has extraordinary museums, with no lines and low-cost entry tickets, from the *Pinacoteca*, with one of the most important collections of 16th-century art, to the *International Museum of Music*, which boasts unique pieces, to the *Civic Art Collections*, which leave people speechless. But it's more than museums and monuments (and food).



"Bologna is much more real than many other Italian cities. Visitors can see the daily traffic of people going into the city center to work, they can see people who actually live in the city center going about their business, walking and carrying their grocery bags. People have a hunger for authenticity these days, and they can find it in Bologna."

Not to mention the richness of sights near Bologna, *Ravenna* first of all. "There is no other place in Italy, not in Rome, not in Pompeii, not in *Piazza Armerina*, where you can admire

Roman mosaics so old and of such quality. And let's not forget that Ravenna was capital of the Roman Empire."

Anna's Favorite Restaurants in Bologna

Trattoria di Via Serra

(39) 051 6312330

www.trattoriadiviaserra.it

Ristorantino Il Tinello

(39) 051.221569

www.ristorantetinello.it

La Bottega di Franco

(39) 051 311243

www.labottegadifranco.it

Brini also likes to take her clients to historic *borghi*, such as

Montevecchio, *Dozza* and *Brisighella*, to the castles of the hills of *Parma*, from *Canossa* to *Torrechiara*, and more.

"I've taken people to tiny villages in the Apennine mountains

south of Bologna and saw them touched because they were in places that were absolutely authentic, untouched by mass tourism."

—Silvia Donati

Anna Brini

(39) 339 8393099

www.bolognatourguide.com

Rates: 115€ for 2.5hr tour; 225€ for 5hr tour
(up to 15 people)



San Petronio is the patron



Bologna and Venice

venice: Luisella Romeo

"when we travel, we remember the people we've met, we remember the stories, and we'll remember if a guide has moved us, made us cry or laugh."

"Venice is a city that loves to exist and to resist," says tour guide *Luisella Romeo*. "It exists because it has an active community and it resists because, despite the changes brought about by the modern world, it still boasts artisans who do great things and believe in what they do."

If too often the focus of the media when covering Venice is on its plagues (residents forced to move out, soaring housing costs, closure of independent and artisanal stores replaced by big chains), Romeo likes instead to show her clients what Venice is still capable of doing well, and that's why people are always at the center of her tours.

"I like to tell stories," Romeo explains of her work as a guide, which she's been doing professionally since 2000. "I don't just give out facts, numbers, dates, names. I want people to understand, and to remember. A big part of my job has to do with emotions. When we travel, we remember the people we've met, we remember the stories, and we'll remember if a guide has moved us, made us cry or laugh."

Romeo's passion for history and art came at an early age as her parents, lovers of Venetian history and art themselves, owned thousands of books on the topic. She entered the profession almost by chance, applying for the

qualifying exam on the last day. She's never looked back. "I love the opportunity to be an intermediary for my city," Romeo says.

When people visit Venice for the first time, Romeo likes to take them on an orientation tour that includes must-see sights, such as *St. Mark's Square*, the *Rialto Bridge* and the *Gallerie dell'Accademia Museum*. She also, always, gives them a tour of a less-obvious part of Venice, in locations not yet damaged by excessive tourism, for example one of the *sestieri* of *Dorsoduro*, *Cannaregio*, *Castello*, *San Polo* or *Santa Croce*.

For those who've already been to Venice, and those who want to go deeper into the knowledge of the city, Romeo takes them to meet the local artisans. Favorites

include big names like *Bevilacqua* (silk weaving), *Battiloro* (gold beating), Murano glass-making, but also smaller realities, such as *impiraressa* Marisa Convento (featured in season two of *Dream of Italy* on PBS) and brothers *Attombri* (bead stringers), and the few craftspeople left who make masks and costumes, gondola oars and *forcole* (oarlocks).

One of Luisella's specialties is Jewish Venice. "The arrival of



the Jews in Venice in the 16th century is a very important piece in the history of the city; understanding how the community contributed to lift the economy after years of crisis helps understand the power the Republic of Venice acquired in subsequent years."

As an active member of *Best Venice Guides* (www.bestveniceguides.it), an association of professional guides that works to promote sustainable tourism, Romeo is tirelessly busy developing off the beaten track itineraries. She's passionate about the idea that museums are not separate entities from the city, they are in the city. Her itineraries include *Palazzo Grimani*, *Ca' Pesaro*, *Carlo Goldoni's House*, *Fondazione Querini Stampalia* and *Scuola Grande Carmini*.

"A guide can open your eyes to things that otherwise you wouldn't notice," Romeo says. "It's no coincidence that my hashtag is *#getaguideforthedetails*. I do believe in it! When you see a place

for the first time, your gaze may pass quickly on a lot of things, or you may not understand everything that you're seeing. If your time is limited, then spending it with someone who knows the city inside out can be a way to extend that time."

—S.D.

Luisella's Favorite Restaurants in Venice

Trattoria Antiche Carampane

(39) 041 5240165

www.antichecarampane.com

La Zucca

(39) 041 5241570

www.lazucca.it

Cantine del Vino Già Schiavi

(39) 5230034

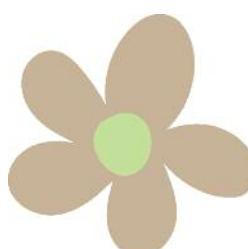
www.cantinaschiavi.com

Luisella Romeo

(39) 349 0848303

www.seevenice.it

Rates: 75€ per hour



saint of the city of Bologna.

Behind the Scenes of Season 2 *continued from page 3*

perhaps some of the most breathtaking mountain terrain I've ever seen (and I live in Colorado, so I have plenty of this back home). If you love the outdoors, please get yourself to Gran Sasso; even our footage doesn't do it justice.

What do Italians think about and talk about more than anything else? (If you have seen *Franco*, the gondolier, in our Venice episode you might say sex!) Well, food and eating, of course! No day out can be planned without seriously considering options for



Grilling arrosticini

where to stop for lunch. A few years ago, Linda Dini Jenkins wrote for this publication about a place in the heart of Gran Sasso where you can stop and grill your own LAMB skewers. We decided to go there and film and what a hoot — the characters you meet while grilling together!

Basilicata

I've been enchanted by the region of *Basilicata* since I first visited the cave city of *Matera* in 2004. I returned in 2012 specifically to visit the small hotel *Palazzo Margherita* that *Francis Ford Coppola* opened in his ancestral hometown. I was blown away by every detail of my stay (only a movie director could create such a full sensory experience) and before I left, wrote a handwritten note for Coppola commending what seemed to be his love letter to his ancestors and this corner of Italy.

After the premiere of the first season, Coppola's publicist reached out to congratulate me and I asked, "Do you think he would ever come on the show?" The answer was yes!

What was Coppola like? He's intense and doesn't mince words but he's also funny and gracious (apologizing as soon as I met him for having to change the date of our interview). And boy can he tell a story. I almost spent more time with him off camera than filming — we had a very limited time, just about two hours. Most nights when he is here, Coppola has a drink at the hotel's *Cinecittà* bar (which is also open to the public) and invited our crew to join him one evening. I didn't take a photos; just a fun hour of conversation.

What I love most about the Coppola segment is the whole sense of family. Coppola tells some great tales about his grandfather (who scaled balconies to visit local girls) and his first visit to Bernalda. Since Coppola's 100-year-old uncle and his wife were visiting, we got them to come on camera and share stories too.



Kathy with Francis Ford Coppola

Coppola has said "I didn't believe it existed" about his ancestral hometown of *Bernalda* and the region of Basilicata and we used this quote to open the episode. I know many will tune in just to see Coppola but there are many more treasures in our Basilicata episode.

Castelvetere sul Calore

The final episode of our second season on the town of *Castelvetere sul Calore* in *Campania* is the one that means more to me than anything else I have ever done professionally. My first line in the voiceover is "My dream of Italy started here..." and with this episode, I finally tell my story of how I came to fall in love with Italy and the story of my family who come from this town.



Kathy's family in Castelvetere

I brought my mother and father to Castelvetere to film this episode about my ancestral hometown, which I had rediscovered in 1995. What is most surprising is that because of my mother's health issues, I only decided three weeks ahead of time to bring my parents. We sprang into action and boy am I glad we did because, well, this episode is all about family.

This is the only episode of the series that has a narrative from beginning to end and woven throughout are a handful of stories about dreams, miracles, identity and the meaning of home. While I hope viewers enjoy my story or stories, I also would like this to inspire them to visit Castelvetere and the surrounding area of *Irpinia*. This is a most enchanting and authentic place and a great wine destination, too!

—Kathy McCabe



Most Italian immigrants came from southern Italy.