



View from Villa San Michele

INSIDE:

Where to Eat in Anacapri 5

Badia di Cava: Amalfi Coast

Hidden Gem 6

Rome's Taverna Lucifero 8

DREAM OF ITALY®

Volume 9, Issue 9

www.dreamofitaly.com

November 2010

Capri's Shining Treasure: VILLA SAN MICHELE

The village of *Anacapri* sits more than 1,000 feet above the coast on the fabled island of Capri. The white stucco structures are blinding under the Mediterranean sun but nothing in Anacapri dazzles more than *Villa San Michele*.

The singular creation of Swedish-born physician *Axel Munthe* (1857-1949), Villa San Michele includes a museum, gardens, and cultural foundation supervised by the Swedish Institute of Classical Studies in Rome. During my visit on a June afternoon, visitors were amazingly few. What a gift it was to savor this magical spot at my leisure.

After threading my way through the center of Anacapri, past vendors hawking sandals and sunglasses, coral and mass-produced *maiolica*, I turned at the

carved marble sign that read "Capri Beauty Farm" (a spa?) and walked down Via Axel Munthe.

The simple white stucco façade of Villa San Michele looks vaguely Spanish. A few antiquities are positioned out front. With a visitors guidebook, I navigated the bedroom, study, and kitchen that remain as Munthe had furnished them and lived within their walls.



Enamored with *Capri* from previous visits, it was in June of 1895 that Munthe purchased a tiny house and vineyard in Anacapri from the carpenter *Vincenzo Alberino*. It stood on the ruins of an ancient Roman summer villa. At the same time, Munthe bought adjoining land and a ruined chapel from other sellers. On this ground, he

continued on page 4



In Tuscany, Biodynamic Wines Help Preserve the Past

"What I am making is only from and for this place," says winemaker *Giuseppe Ferrua*. "My wines are the exact character of this place. They belong to this place."

We are strolling through the 50 acres of *Fabbrica di San Martino* in the hills about four miles northwest of Lucca in Tuscany. Below us are the Serchi River Valley and the *Lucca* plains. Behind us is the 18th-century *Villa Sardi Tronci*, home to Giuseppe and his wife, *Giovanna Tronci*.

Fifteen varieties of grapes grow in the 50-year-old vineyard. Giuseppe points out that "these are special to the Lucca region. Some of these varieties have disappeared elsewhere." Giuseppe grafts these old varieties onto California rootstock. "We need to save the treasure, the diversity," he says. "We make products which can't be copied."

"Fabbrica" is a term for a place that produces both wine and olive oil. Fabbrica di San Martino's five acres of vineyards yield about 12,000 bottles of wine annually.

The 10-acre olive grove produces premium *olio extra vergine* (extra virgin olive oil) from the *Frantoiana*, *Leccina* and *Moraiola* olives grown here. All

continued on page 2

The island of Capri is four square miles.

are picked by hand and arrive at the mill within six to 12 hours of that harvest.

It's warm, late afternoon at the end of August. Some of the grapes are ripe enough for us to pluck from the vines. As we wander and nibble, Giuseppe talks about the harvest, his grapes and his unusual growing methods.

When the grapes are sticky, the seeds pleasantly crunchy—like that of almonds—maximum harvest has been reached. Then, using just seven or eight people, with one person on each side of the rows of vines, harvest begins. "I prefer using fewer people," Giuseppe says. "I can explain how I want this done, and the work is better." And he always leaves a few grapes for the animals.

The Biodynamic Difference

About 14 years ago, Giuseppe started using organic agricultural methods. Then in 2002 he began biodynamic agriculture. Like organic agriculture, biodynamic methods eschew chemicals and synthetic fertilizers. But biodynamic agriculture goes further, operating a farm, a vineyard as a self-contained living organism.

Giuseppe considers biodynamics more than just a system almost of agriculture. "It is a philosophy of life. Give back to the land, leave it richer than when you started." He explains that biodynamics emphasizes the cycle of life and respect for the land. "We work for the richness of the soil, to grow plants in a live soil, to provide a good vitality in the cycle of life."

Giuseppe adds that animals are an important part of this cycle. "The don-



keys eat grass. The cows regularly attract insects, which, in turn, attract birds."

Many strange numbered preparations are the basis of biodynamic agriculture. Giuseppe uses #500 for soil preparation. In that one, manure is fermented in a cow horn, which is buried underground for the winter. The resulting contents are then mixed with water and sprayed on the soil. Giuseppe's starter concoction, with contents such as horsetail, nettle and various herbs, must be applied at the first light of day. "By 10 a.m. you can see the sprayed plants reaching for the sun," he says.

Giuseppe strongly believes in the merits of the biodynamic movement. "This is the only agriculture for the future. It is a philosophy of life—giving back to the land, leaving it richer than it was."

Although the cost of biodynamic agriculture is lower than that of other methods, Giuseppe emphasizes that "There is more handwork and more attention is required. The brain must work much more." It also means "living with the sun." Giuseppe is up at dawn and early to bed.

Fabbrica di San Martino produces red

and white *Arcipressi Colline Lucchesi* and red and white *Fabbrica di San Martino Colline Lucchesi*. All are bio and biodynamic agriculture certified. The *Arcipressi* can be consumed shortly after bottling. The *San Martino* wines, made from *Sangiovese*, *Canaiolo*, *Ciliegiolo* and *Colorino* grapes, need at least a year in the bottles to develop their full-bodied structure.

In Lucca, *Enoteca Vanni* on *Piazza S. Salvatore*, sells

Fabbrica di San Martino's wines. The wines are served at the *Vigna Ilaria* restaurant (www.locandavignailaria.it), part of an inn in the hills outside Lucca's city walls.

Villa Sardi Tronci

As twilight fell, we headed into the villa. Giuseppe describes the Villa Sardi Tronci as "a bit of baroque." Cherubs peek down from the living room's blue ceiling, and gold and silk abound. The 1735-built chairs bear the family's coat of arms.

"I have the receipts for these chairs in the family archives," says Giuseppe. "The original owner, Count *Lorenzo Sardi*, was a maniac for writing, so I can recompose the history of the house—details such as who was employed here, the purchase dates and prices of many furnishings, the number of years it took to make the furniture."

Commerce has always been the true vocation of the *Lucchesi*. The city's enormous wealth was built on a booming silk trade that shaped the town between the 12th and 13th centuries, a flow of money that built churches, monuments, country villas, grand estates and also gave birth to family

There are more than 450 biodynamic

dynasties that lasted hundreds of years.

Giuseppe explains that Count Sardi and his family traveled from Lucca to spend their summers in the villa. "To show that they were important, they displayed a culture of art and music. They hired *Giorgio Cristoforo Martini*, one of the finest painters of the time." The villa, little changed, was declared a national monument of historical interest in 1895.

Sitting at a large wooden table in the ground floor kitchen where Giuseppe bakes bread in the wood-burning oven every Saturday in the winter, we savored his wines, his olive oil and his acacia honey and the Pecorino cheese made by a local shepherd.

Vitality, Life, Balance

As we taste and sip, Giuseppe extols the properties of a biodynamic wine. "You open the bottle and it is better after three or four days. It has the vitality, life and balance."

"The mature grapes are expressions of the season, the soil, the minerals," Giuseppe says. "We don't manipulate the wines. We want to preserve the character."

He does not add yeast during the fermentation process. "All the fermentation comes from the natural yeast of the grapes," he explains. There's no filtration. Giuseppe adds very few sulfites, which are used for preservation. "Some natural sulfites are produced from fermentation."

He notes that his wines have much lower levels of sulfites than what he calls "industrial" wines. The latter have 120 to 150 milligrams per liter, while Fabbrica di San Martino's wines have 25 to 28 milligrams per liter. "Sulfites kill the life. The wine is not alive anymore. It is without energy."

Swirling his glass of *Arcipressi Colline Lucchesi, Rosso 2007*, Giuseppe reflects, "Wine has been living with us for thousands of years. There is so much history in a glass of wine. It has so many tales. Our riches are our history." Giuseppe is trying to save that history.

—Mary Ann Hemphill

Mary Ann Hemphill wrote about Lucca in the October 2009 issue of *Dream of Italy*.

The Details

Fabbrica di San Martino

Via Pieve S. Stefano, 2511
San Martino in Vignale
Lucca
(39) 583 394284
www.fabbricadisanmartino.it

Wine tastings at Fabbrica di San Martino include a tour of the farm and the villa. The cost is 15€ per person. Please call in advance to make arrangements.

The former farmer's house on the property has been renovated into two lovely apartments. Guests can wander in the woods and through the vineyards, relax by the swimming pool and savor the peaceful scenery of the Tuscan hills.

the building is simple and rustic, painted in soft peach and green tones and attractively furnished. The floors, the beams and the woodwork are original.

Il Timo (Thyme), on the building's ground floor, sleeps four people in two double bedrooms. There is one bathroom with a shower. The kitchen/dining area has a fireplace.

The upstairs apartment, *Il Pesco* (Peach), can accommodate eight people in four double rooms. There are three bathrooms with showers, a large kitchen with a fireplace, a dining room and a living room.

Each apartment has its own outdoor area with barbeque and garden furniture, ideal for *al fresco* meals.

The rooms in the apartments may be rented on a nightly basis, or the entire apartments can be rented weekly. The bed and breakfast rate for two people in one double bedroom with private bathroom and dining room is 100€ per night.

The weekly prices for self-catering accommodations using the entire apartment vary seasonally. In July and August (peak season), the weekly rate for *Il Timo* is 1,250€. The peak season rate for *Il Pesco* is 2,200€.

DREAM OF ITALY®

Kathleen A. McCabe
Editor and Publisher

Copy Editor: Stephen J. McCabe
Design: Leaird Designs
www.leaird-designs.com

Dream of Italy, the subscription travel newsletter covering Italian travel and culture, is published 10 times a year. Delivery by mail is \$99 in the U.S. and Canada and \$109 abroad. An Internet subscription (downloadable PDFs) costs \$79 per year. Subscriptions include online access to over 70 back issues and regular e-mail updates.

Three ways to subscribe:

1. Send a check to *Dream of Italy*, P.O. Box 5496, Washington, DC, 20016
2. Call 877-OF-ITALY (toll free) or 202-297-3708
3. Subscribe online at www.dreamofitaly.com (Visa, Mastercard and American Express accepted)

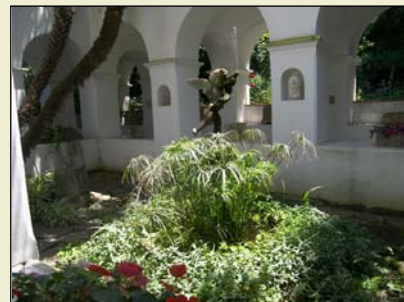
Editorial feedback is welcome.

E-mail: editor@dreamofitaly.com

Advertising opportunities are available.

E-mail: ads@dreamofitaly.com

Copyright © 2010 *Dream of Italy*, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Reproduction in whole or part without permission is prohibited. Every effort is made to provide information that is accurate and reliable; however, *Dream of Italy* cannot be responsible for errors that may occur. ISSN 1550-1353 www.dreamofitaly.com



Sharon Sanders

built Villa San Michele from scratch with his own money and design, and the labor of his neighbors. At the turn of the 19th century, the village was impoverished. A foreigner leading such a construction project was unprecedented since ancient times.

But Munthe wasn't a would-be Caesar carving out a pleasure palace. The structure reflected his Pantheistic life view. "My home shall be open in order to let in the sun, and the wind, and the voices of the ocean, like a Greek temple, and there shall be light, light everywhere!" Munthe wrote.

With its minimalist interior design, Villa San Michele could grace the pages of today's *Architectural Digest*. The house and grounds seem so modern that it's remarkable the villa was constructed in over-stuffed Victorian times. According to the curators, "The evocative architecture was intended to form a framework around Munthe's collection of relics and antiques whilst simultaneously emphasizing the beauty of the surroundings. The buildings and the arrangement of the collections were created in a symbolic, romantic style according to the ideas of the turn of the century."

A Home for the Soul

Munthe's friend Henry James described Villa San Michele as, "A creation of the most fantastic beauty,

poetry, and inutility I have ever seen clustered together."

The source of the artifacts in the villa and grounds are somewhat shrouded in mystery which Munthe cultivated. The pieces are primarily Roman, Etruscan, and Egyptian and most experts believe Munthe purchased them from curators on the mainland. A head of Medusa, a mosaic table, an Egyptian sphinx and a bust of the Roman emperor *Tiberius* are prominent objects in the collection. A small atrium holds a cistern to collect rain water, a necessity on the parched island.

As interesting as the residence is, I gasped when I entered the Sculpture Gallery and the curved colonnaded pergola overlooking the Bay of Naples. Of this glorious space, Munthe wrote, "The soul needs more space than the body."

The silver eyes of a statue of *Artemis*, the Greek goddess of the hunt and forest animals, seemed to look right at me. Nearby is a bronze copy of *The Resting Mercury*, a gift from the city of Naples to Munthe in gratitude for his volunteer work during the 1884 cholera epidemic.

The varied plantings include pine, palm and cypress trees. Among the acanthus, myrtle, broom, rock rose, camellias, azaleas, wisteria, hydrangeas, roses and hundreds of

other plants, something is always bound to be in bloom in this ever-green *giardino*. On the upper part of the garden sits the restored medieval Chapel of San Michele and part of a Roman ruin with frescoes in Pompeian red. Tom and Fellow, the beloved dogs of Sweden's Queen Victoria, are buried nearby with their names carved on simple stones.

Further on is *The Olivetum*, a pavilion set among olive trees, which houses a permanent ornithological display. The exhibits document the thousands of migratory birds who rest on Capri during their grueling journey from Africa to Northern Europe. Munthe led a one-man crusade to ban the ancient practice of commercial quail hunting on the island. He purchased the prime capture ground Mount Barbarossa and the castle that stands upon it to aid in stopping the practice.

The mountain, above the villa, is now the home of the Capri Bird Observatory, a research facility and habitat to a number of rare Mediterranean plants. The foundation has gained an informal recognition of the area as an Italian nature reserve by signing an agreement with the World Wildlife Federation.

Munthe Still Lives Here

As I explored San Michele, I found myself increasingly captivated by the abiding presence of Axel Munthe. He

The Story of San Michele was one of the

was not only a physician but was a best-selling author, sailor, musician, naturalist and philanthropist. Though a loner by nature, he traveled in royal and celebrity circles. His love of animals was legendary. He adored dogs and believed they were the creatures with the highest moral standing. His kindness and free medical care to the poor of Capri is well documented.

Munthe's *The Story of San Michele*, published in English in 1929 and translated into more than 40 languages, was an international sensation, the *Under the Tuscan Sun* of the day. With an engaging, witty style, he chronicles his emotional and intellectual journey as a son of the north hopelessly seduced by the Mediterranean. He also shares experiences in Paris where he earned his medical degree at the age of 22, time in his native Sweden, and in Rome where he set up practice at the foot of the Spanish steps in the house in which Keats lived. Not once in 400-plus pages, however, does he mention his two wives and two sons.

For someone who so worshipped the light, Munthe's last years were dark. After eye surgery blinded him in one eye, sight in the other eye increasingly failed and it was hard for him to endure the brilliant light at San Michele. Munthe moved into the darker Tower of Materita on Capri.

In *The Story of San Michele*, pondering an observation by Dante, Munthe writes, "Is it true that there is no greater suffering than to remember our past happiness in our misery? I for one do not think so. It is with joy and not with sorrow that my thoughts go back to San Michele, where I have lived the happiest years of my life."

—Sharon Sanders

The Details

From Sorrento, ferries from Sorrento's *Marina Piccola* to Capri's *Marina Grande* run year round—more frequently from spring through fall. The trip is approximately 50 minutes. Non-residents cannot take their cars to Capri for more than half of the year so it's best to leave a rental car on the mainland. Gescab round-trip 27.50€ www.gescab.it Caremar, the Campania regional ferry, round-trip 20€ www.caremar.it

To reach Anacapri, hop onto one of the distinctive convertible taxis lined up at Marina Grande. Less expensive alternatives are the bus or funicular to Capri town. Purchase tickets at the booths to the right of the ferry port (with your back to the water). From the town of Capri, continue up to Anacapri by bus.



Peter De Ru, Villa San Michele

Villa San Michele
Via Axel Munthe, 34
Anacapri
(39) 0818 371401
www.villasanmichele.eu

The museum and grounds are open every day of the year at 9 a.m. Closing times vary from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. depending upon the season. Well-composed signage makes self-touring easy. Admission is 6€. From June through August, classical music performances are scheduled.

For an even higher view of Capri's breathtaking beauty, take the 12-minute ride on the chairlift from the piazza, just down the street from Villa San Michele, to Monte Solaro, just over 1,900 feet above sea level.

Via Caposcuro, 10
(39) 0818 371428
From March to October 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
November to February from 10:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Round trip costs 8€

Where to Stay

Hotel San Michele
(not affiliated with the museum)
Via G. Orlandi, 1
(39) 0818 371427
www.sanmichele-capri.com
Rates: Double room with sea view and breakfast from 180 to 270€ depending upon the season.

Be sure to request a room with a sea view—the reason to stay at this traditional 4-star in a renovated 19th-century villa. It also has a lovely garden, a pool and is located within walking distance of Villa San Michele. Free transfer from the port at Marina Grande. Open year-round.

Where to Eat

Trattoria Il Solitario
Via G. Orlandi, 96
(39) 0818 371382
www.trattoriasolitario.it
Closed Monday except in the summer months.
Closed November through March.

Chef Massimiliano and wife Alessandra helm this 50-year-old family-owned eatery featuring fresh fish, pizza, homemade pasta and local wines such as Capri, Aglianico, Falanghina and Greco di Tufo. Outdoor seating is available. Reservations are recommended. Expect to pay about 30€ per person.

Ristorante Le Arcate
Viale Tommaso de Tommaso, 24
(39) 0818 373325

Open March to December. Closed on Monday (except August and September when it's open every day). Local cucina features seafood and pizza from a wood-burning oven. Outdoor seating is available. Expect to pay about 35€ per person, without beverages.

To read more about Axel Munthe and Villa San Michele, check out these books:

The Story of San Michele by Axel Munthe

Axel Munthe, The Road to San Michele, a biography by Bengt Jangfeldt

One Thousand Years

On the Amalfi Coast, the imposing *L'Abbazia della SS. Trinità di Cava de'Tirreni*, known locally as *Badia di Cava*, is perched near the summit of wooded *Monte Finestra*, part of the *Parco Nazionale di Lattari*. The active Benedictine Monastery is an Italian national landmark recognized for its religious, cultural and artistic significance. It's only a few miles above the pottery town of *Vietri sul Mare*, yet has remained a relative secret to foreign tourists.

Laura Thayer, an American art historian and writer who blogs at www.ciaoamalfi.com says she lived in the area for more than two years before she discovered the Badia. "I was amazed by the gorgeous architecture and the wealth of art and history so beautifully preserved at the abbey. It's certainly one of the hidden treasures of *Campania!*"

This relative obscurity may end in 2011 when the Badia celebrates its millennium year with masses, exhibits, seminars, lectures and concerts. Presiding over the events will be Abbot *Benedetto Maria Salvatore Chianetta*, who has held the office since 1995.

Roman ruins attest to pre-Christian building on the site but the original Catholic church was carved from a natural cave by a *Salerno* nobleman turned Benedictine monk, *Alferio Pappacarbone*, in 1011. The abbey grew so important that at the height of its ecclesiastical influence, SS. Trinita encompassed hundreds of other churches and monasteries throughout what is now southern Italy.

The 11th-century basilica was consecrated by *Pope Urban II* in September of 1092. The current basilica was completely renovated in the late 18th century from a design by *Giovanni del Gaiso*. It retains the 12th-century mosaic pulpit donated by *King Ruggiero II* of Sicily, whose wife *Sybil* is buried at the abbey. The structure bears Moorish influences, as does the tranquil medieval cloister.

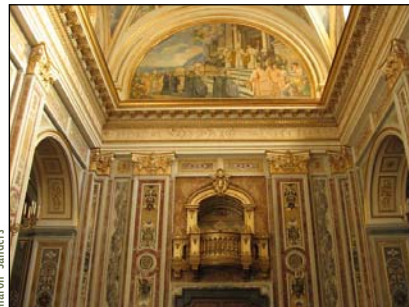
A 13th-century guest house, restored after World War II, is now a museum housing illuminated manuscripts, paintings, a 15th-century Siennese panel, Roman antiquities and other works.

The library archives more than 40,000 volumes as well as antique scrolls and parchments dating back to 792. The *Codex Diplomaticus Cavensis*—published in 1873 and considered a scholarly masterpiece—compiles all the Badia's documents in chronological order.

A high point of the year-long celebration will be the annual medieval festival held the first weekend in September to commemorate Pope Urban's visit. Participants dress in authentic period costumes to perform music, dance and other entertainments.

All present will surely be wishing the Badia another 1,000 years.

—Sharon Sanders



The façade of Badia di Cava

of Badia di Cava



The Details

From Naples by train to Salerno, transfer to a CSTP bus at Salerno central station, line 4 and 9 to Cava de'Tirreni. At Viale Crispi, near the Town Hall in Cava de'Tirreni, catch the CSTP bus to the Badia.

La Badia Benedettina della SS. Trinità

Via M. Morcaldi, 6

Cava de'Tirreni

Entry fee is 3€

Guided tours all holidays and weekdays:

from 8:30 a.m. to 12 noon and from 4 p.m.

to 5:30 p.m. Afternoon visits by appointment.

Guided tours of
Badia di Cava
are available in
Italian and
English.

Anna Russo is the official tour guide of the Badia.

(39) 3471 946957

annarusso_04@fastwebnet.it

For a complete schedule of the Millenium events, visit www.badiadicava.it and www.cavaturismo.it

Festa Medioevale — September 2-4, 2011

The highlight of the festival is a procession recreating Pope Urban II's entrance to the Abbey.

Admission and some food samples are free.

Tickets for a meal of four medieval dishes — featuring farro-chickpea soup, veal, bread, wine, and two sweets — are 10€ per person. A souvenir cloth millennium tote bag, pottery dish and wooden spoon are included.

www.festamedioevalecorporadicava.it

Where to Stay

Hotel Victoria

Corso Mazzini, 4

Cava de'Tirreni

(39) 0894 65048

www.victoria-hotel.it

Rates: A comfort double with buffet breakfast is 120€.

The town of Cava de'Tirreni is northeast of the Badia and this hotel is located in the center of town within walking distance of the train station.

Near the Cava de'Tirreni commune you can catch the CSTP bus to the Badia.



Villa Divina

Via Case Sparse, 18

Vietri sul Mare, Località Benincasa

www.villadivina.com

(39) 0897 61717

Rates: Per week (including breakfast) for 4 guests in the large unit range, depending upon season, from 1,600 to 2,130€.

This property has five villas with sea views set in an agriturismo of lemon and olive groves in the mountains above Salerno. A good choice for the visitor with a car. All the villas have satellite TV, quality linens, air conditioning and heating, telephones to communicate between the villas and the family house, an outdoor pool, a private garden fitted for outdoor dining, and parking space.

Where to Eat

Ristorante PappaCarbone

Via Rosario Senatore, 30

Cava de'Tirreni

(39) 0894 66441

Closed Monday

www.ristorantepappacarbone.it

The kitchen at this Michelin one-star is manned by Chef Rocco Iannone who worked with French great Alain Ducasse. Emphasis is on top-quality local ingredients. Typical dishes include an antipasto of puff pastry with anchovy, mozzarella di bufala and mullet, carbonara pasta with roe, a main dish of grilled stuffed squid. Expect to pay about 120€ for a meal for two with wine.

Ristorante-Pizzeria La Foce

Via Luciano, 1

Cava de'Tirreni

(39) 0894 64099

Closed Monday

www.ristorantepizzerialafoce.com

This casual eatery features typical Salerno fare such as fusilli with sausage and rucola, ravioli stuffed with porcini, roast pork, assorted vegetables and desserts. Expect to pay about 35€ for a meal with wine.

Cours

The following tours both make stops at Badia di Cava:

"Walking on the Amalfi Coast & Sorrento

Peninsula" by ICNOS Adventures is an eight-day walking tour with English-speaking guide runs in June, September and October. Starts at 1,560€ per person. (39) 0892 145565;

www.icnosadventures.com

Music and Markets' Amalfi Tour from July 3 to 9, 2011 is based in Vietri Sul Mare and includes concerts and lectures at the Amalfi Coast Music Festival. Costs \$3,410 per person. (877) 260-6383; www.musicetc.us

1 € = \$1.37 at press time

dates from the 18th century.

Rome's Taverna Lucifero

Taverna Lucifero is located a few moments' stroll down a dimly lit, yet charming alley that leads to Rome's famous piazza, *Campo de' Fiori*. The atmosphere is sweet and unassuming and the service is Roman—meaning your food will be served with a smile, but don't expect it to come in a hurry.



The Details

Taverna Lucifero

Via dei Cappellari, 28

Rome

(39) 06 68805536

www.tavernalucifero.it

Open daily from 8 p.m. to 1 a.m.

Reservations recommended

Cash only

This enticing locale specializes in cuisine of Northern Italy's Piedmont region, and is best known for its delicious cuts of Argentine beef, white truffles, homemade pastas and sweets, and its delicious fondues. For starters, indulge in a plate of *salumi* (mixed regional cold cuts) accompanied by fresh, mouthwatering *mozzarella*. Enjoy a helping of the mixed vegetables before plunging into a savory pot of *bourguignonne*, *raclette*



or *pierrade* fondue.

If you're not a fan of fondue, give the garlic, butter and artichoke ravi-

oli a try—or ask the owner, *Francesco*, for his recommendation. If you're lucky, he just may whip something special up just for you. The fondue theme moves into dessert when you can dip fresh fruit and other sweets into warm chocolate.

—Shakira Mongul



Palatium

The Details

Palatium Enoteca Regionale

Via Frattina, 94

Rome

(39) 06 69202132

www.enotecapalatium.it

Closed Sunday

When you're visiting the chic shopping area in front of Rome's Spanish Steps, skip buying the Prada bag and tantalize your taste buds instead by heading to the wine bar *Palatium*. This "*enoteca regionale*" was opened by the government of Lazio (the region of which Rome is the capital) to showcase local products and traditional dishes. The space is open and modern and has become a favorite among Romans for its great atmosphere and delicious food.



Nancy Aiello Tours

Start off with a selection of local *salumi* or *tiella di Gaeta* (a type of seafood-

stuffed pizza from the Lazio Coast) or a *frittata* made with Roman mushrooms. Pasta dishes include Rome's famous *cacio e pepe* as well as other dishes enhanced by local *guanciale* (bacon made from pig's cheeks). Selections for the main meal include guinea fowl, roast suckling pig and the famous *baccalà frita* (salt cod).



Prices are only slightly more than a neighborhood *trattoria* with

starters running 9-12€ and main dishes priced at around 15€. A great glass of prize-winning Lazio wine will only set you back about 3€. If you're not in the mood for a full meal, you can sit at the bar and enjoy some wine and snacks. This place fills up, so reservations for dinner are a must.

1 € = \$1.37 at press time

Many Roman restaurants open for dinner at 8 p.m.