

CASA MANNI ROMA

The Ultimate Roman Lifestyle

Food Tours, Lessons, and Tastings

Most visitors to Rome are happy enough with their gastronomic discoveries, but they don't know what they've missed. In Rome, as perhaps nowhere else, insiders eat better. Our friend, Maureen Fant, is the right person to introduce you to the world of Roman food excellence and she would be happy to custom create experiences to suit your interests and requirements. You can have a variety of private tours, lessons, and tastings that showcase the best food and wine that Rome has to offer. As guests at Casa MANNI you can eat like the most privileged Romans—whether you seek tradition or the cutting edge or both.

We also think that the pleasures of Rome are not so easily separated from one another. You'll notice that sometimes a lunch is suggested before or after an art or archaeology tour—not just to take on fuel but because the particular food in mind is interesting. You can either continue to discuss Caravaggio over lunch, or your art guide can hand you over to a food guide for a lunchtime lesson on, say, the traditional food of Jewish Rome. Or an archaeologist can pick you up at your cooking lesson for a tour of the nearby Colosseum. Feel free to think up combinations of your own— in fact, new ideas for Food Experiences arise every day, so if you don't see what you'd like, be sure to ask. It may be in the works already.

Coordinating the gastronomic adventures is Maureen Fant, a food writer, classicist, and longtime Rome resident—and an expert in interpreting the local flavors for visitors. She coauthored *Dictionary of Italian Cuisine* and wrote *Eat like the Romans: the Visitors' Food Guide, Trattorias of Rome, Florence, and Venice*, and the Rome volume in the Williams-Sonoma *Foods of the World* series. Most recently, she translated *Encyclopedia of Pasta*, featured in the *New York Times* dining section. Maureen is well known to discriminating travelers who want to know what and where to eat in the Eternal City.

Dining Experiences

Maureen will give you plenty of help in order to discover the best restaurants and trattorias in Rome. You will receive a list of the best restaurants in town, and choose the ones you find most appealing. You can have arrangements made for a single

meal—or choose and coordinate a rich experience of fine dining and traditional *cucina romana* for your entire stay. A special menu can even be arranged at a restaurant you choose.

Would you like dinner delivered ready to eat at Casa MANNI? Or should a top chef come to cook for you in your own kitchen? Or would you like to eat each course of your meal at a different restaurant? Each and every dining experience will be tailored to your desires and curiosity.

Market Tours

The market tours focus on authentic Roman fare. Your food guide will explain how the foods of Rome are different from those in the rest of Italy, and point out what's grown locally and what's in season. For example, if you've only been to Rome in the summer, you've never tasted the crisp, bitter salad called *puntarelle*, or tender, flavorful artichokes braised Roman style. If you've only visited in the winter, then you've missed the best of the local zucchini, tomatoes, and bell peppers. And if you've never tried raw fava beans with *pecorino romano* in the spring, or tasted Roman *pizza bianca* (a sort of focaccia) with prosciutto and ripe figs in early summer—well, you just haven't lived.

Every neighborhood in Rome has a large or small market where mostly produce but also some meats, fish, breads, and cheeses are sold. The beautiful and much-photographed Campo de' Fiori market is certainly the best-known outside Italy, but you can discover it with a walk through its historic neighborhood (10 minutes' easy walk from Casa MANNI), perhaps on an art or archaeology tour. In the market tours, you can visit the markets where more residents than tourists choose to shop, such as the one in Piazza Testaccio, at the foot of the Aventine Hill. Actually the Testaccio market, a favorite of Roman food lovers, will soon move into modern indoor headquarters, so now is the time to catch this piece of the city's gastronomic history before it's gone forever.

All market tours are in the morning because most Roman markets close for the day at about 2 p.m. (They tend to be crowded on Saturdays and are closed Sundays and holidays, as well. Also keep in mind that most food shops close between 2 p.m. and 5 p.m., and most are closed for the day on Sundays.)

Maureen will be happy to make adjustments to any of our tours, according to your schedule and level of experience with Roman and Italian food. Here are some ideas to get you started thinking about how you'd like to approach the food of Rome.

Grocery shopping 101 (Campo de' Fiori), 10:30 a.m. to about noon

This tour is for those who just want to get some supplies but who want, at the same time, to learn the ropes of local shopping and have a more authentic experience than a trip to the supermarket. From Casa MANNI you will walk through the heart of old Rome with your food expert, stopping for coffee at the Caffè Sant'Eustachio or Tazza d'Oro, considered the best in the city, to the outdoor market at Campo de' Fiori and the superb shops that surround it. You'll learn what's authentic Roman fare and what's just for the tourists and, most important, what's in season, with tips on how to cook what you buy. Stalls and shops selling high-quality fruits, vegetables, meat, fish, bread, and traditional Roman sweets are concentrated in a conveniently small area.

Available Monday through Saturday.

Grocery shopping 101 (Campo de' Fiori) plus simple cooking lesson at Casa MANNI, 10:30 a.m. to about 2 p.m.

After Grocery shopping 101, described above, your food expert will return to Casa MANNI with you and show you how to put together a simple, but authentic, lunch based on your market purchases.

Available Monday through Saturday.

Real Roman market morning (Testaccio) plus gastronomic gift shopping, 10 a.m. to about 1 p.m.

From Casa MANNI you will take a taxi with the food expert (about 10 minutes) to the Testaccio quarter, on the south side of Rome, still within the walls, where true Roman food lovers go. Here you can see the unusual monuments belonging to the city's rich gastronomic history and talk about the various pillars of *cucina romana* in this most Roman of neighborhoods. Your food guide will take you to explore the exuberant Piazza Testaccio market and conclude with a visit to one of Rome's best gourmet shops, Volpetti. If you have a list of deserving friends and relatives to buy gifts for (with maybe a little something for yourself, of course), this is the place. They will vacuum-pack, bubble-wrap, and Styrofoam-box aged cheeses, balsamic vinegars, Sicilian marmalades, and any delicacy you can legally take home with you. And all the while, they'll provide tastes and explanations, so you'll know what you're buying and why it's special.

Available Monday through Friday. The market is open only the morning, but a tour of Testaccio food shops can be arranged for the afternoon.

Real Roman market morning (Testaccio) plus traditional Roman lunch, 11.30 a.m. to about 3.30 p.m.

As in the preceding tour, you will take a taxi with the food expert from Casa MANNI to the Testaccio quarter, but this time you start at the Volpetti shop and keep purchases to a minimum. From there you continue to the market and end up at Checchino dal 1887, a historic restaurant whose menu reads like a textbook of Testaccio tradition (and for those of you who may have heard that means offal, trust us; even vegetarians can get enough to eat). Checchino is run by the fifth generation of the founding family and is built into one of the most curious archaeological sites in Rome, Monte Testaccio.

Available Tuesday through Saturday.

Market, cooking, and lunch, 10 a.m. to about 4 p.m.

Guests of Casa MANNI can even develop the sensation of having a life in Rome. Maureen Fant is willing to share her life for a day, at least her gastronomic life. After a morning of shopping in the Testaccio market and shops, Maureen will take you home with her to the loft-like apartment by the Colosseum where she lives and writes. There she'll show you how Romans approach everyday food. She'll show you how the locals put together a simple lunch that might include some combination of pasta, *frittata*, cheeses, *salumi*, and vegetables in about the time it takes to bring the pasta water to a boil. And if you've always wanted to know how the Romans trim those fabulous artichokes, now's your chance. (That can include a fresh tomato sauce from scratch.)

Over lunch you'll have a good-humored seminar about how the Italians eat in general and about *cucina romana* in particular. You'll be out in time for the afternoon round of shopping or, better yet, a tour of the Colosseum or the church of San Clemente, just a couple of minutes from Maureen's front door.

Available Monday through Friday.

The food of Rome and Jewish Rome, full version, 11 a.m. to about 3 p.m.

This tour begins with a walk through the Campo de' Fiori and a look at the surrounding shops; it continues with a walk to the nearby medieval Jewish quarter for lunch at a restaurant specializing in the Roman *cucina ebraica* (Jewish kitchen). As you walk with the food expert, and over a lunch that includes the traditional fried whole artichokes and stuffed zucchini flowers, you will learn about the gastronomic traditions of this neighborhood, which contains some of oldest continuously inhabited buildings in Rome and which was for

centuries a locked ghetto. A long-considered favorite restaurant in this area serves traditional Roman Jewish dishes, but isn't kosher. If you prefer, your food expert can take you to one of the several kosher restaurants (meat) in the neighborhood.

Available Monday through Thursday. Many establishments in the Jewish quarter close on Friday afternoon and Saturday.

The food of Rome and Jewish Rome, short version, about 90 minutes before or after an art or archaeology tour

To add a food or food-history element to an art or archaeology tour in the Campus Martius area (the heart of old Rome, around Casa MANNI), without a full food tour, your food expert can take you on a short walk and informal lunch-seminar in the Jewish quarter. Your art guide will hand you directly over to your food guide, or vice versa.

Available Monday through Thursday. Many establishments in the Jewish quarter close on Friday afternoon and Saturday.

Specialty Experiences

Specialty Experiences concentrate on aspects of Italian food beyond *cucina romana*. You can have a hands-on lesson, or just watch, listen, and taste. Here are some ideas.

Homemade pasta (about 4 hours, late morning/lunch or late afternoon/early dinner)

Maybe you won't be able to fool an Emilian grandmother after this hands-on lesson in making fresh pasta, but you will definitely impress your own family. Our friend Oretta Zanini De Vita, a distinguished Italian food historian and author of *Encyclopedia of Pasta* (University of California Press, 2009), has been rolling out translucent *pasta sfoglia* since she was a schoolgirl in Bologna. The lesson takes place at Maureen's house, across from the Colosseum, but the day begins with a short trip to the Testaccio market to buy ingredients for the fillings and sauces.

Oretta will bring her special flours and equipment (most notably a particular kind of large wooden board) and will teach you how to make the silky egg pasta of her native region, Emilia-Romagna, and how to transform it into *tagliatelle* and *ravioli*. As a bonus, she'll also teach some of the fanciful flour-and-water pasta shapes typical of Rome and its region, Lazio.

Maureen will provide additional commentary and show you two or three sauces and fillings you can make from scratch in less time than it takes the pasta water to boil (including a delicious fresh tomato sauce.) Your lesson will end with a wonderful pasta-based lunch.

Chef tutorial (details depend on specific arrangements)

The best chefs in Rome—from traditional trattoria style to Michelin starred—are friends of Casa MANNI. How would you like a private cooking lesson from one of them? The lesson, which can take place either at Casa MANNI or in the restaurant kitchen, could focus a lesson on a single theme (say, pasta, *risotto*, or fish) or give you the secrets to a complete *cucina creativa* meal. Though all the chefs have very different styles (and we love them all), most are firmly rooted in the delicious traditions of Rome and central Italy.

Guided tastings (details depend on specific arrangements)

If your mouth waters when you enter the specialty food shops of Rome, it's no wonder: Italy has more types of gourmet cheese than any other country in the world (yes, including France)—and don't even get us started on Italy's prosciutto, salami, guanciale, pancetta, and other cured meats. A private tasting can be arranged for you at Casa MANNI of all of Rome's best gastronomic offerings.

Armando Manni himself can teach you how to appreciate **olive oil** like a true connoisseur with a vertical tasting of his own oils (and a look at the chemical analysis) and a blind comparative tasting.

Renzo Fantucci, one of the most prominent Italian experts in **cheese and cured meats**, can bring a selection based on a particular theme or a region you are curious about. (A few ideas: Italian blue cheeses, because there's more than just gorgonzola; a comparison of prosciutto;

or an incredibly varied array of mozzarella that you have to taste to believe.) He will include all the necessary breads and fish (smoked or marinated, depending on your palate) to make your tasting truly authentic. And he can explain the nuances of each flavor as you experience it yourself for the first time.

Wine tastings and **wine-appreciation lessons** can be organized for you either at one of Rome's best wine bars or at Casa MANNI.