

Departures, Nov. 2009



Dispatch

When In Rome...

A few new finds from a recent trip to the Eternal City: First, the best guide ever, **Salvatore Barberi**. He is beautifully educated, speaks gorgeous English, and was an altar boy at the Vatican (he only lasted three days, though, so that's good). He can talk about anything but isn't so erudite that he's no fun at lunch. Then there's **Casa Manni**, a short-stay apartment designed by American architect Adam D. Tihany and owned by Italian olive oil maestro Armando Manni. In a 17th-century palazzo on a quiet street near the Spanish Steps, it puts a fresh, modern spin on the more classic **Residenza Napoleone** (which I also love). Casa Manni's kitchen is tricked out with bone china and Sambonet silverware, the bathroom has an elaborate mosaic shower, and in the bedroom Pratesi sheets in cotton or linen cover the bed. The amenities and services include a personalized wine list and expert guides—chefs for culinary tours, fashion insiders for shopping.

Now on to eating and drinking. One night Manni took me to **Salotto42**, behind Piazza Colonna, for grape and sake cocktails and spice-infused martinis—cool, attractive people and music ranging from classical to jazz. Made me wish I was 30. Or even 40. At **Grano** we sat on an atmospherically lit terrace (a miracle; Italians usually light restaurants like they're prepping patrons for surgery) and had the most velvety tomato soup. And **Il SanLorenzo** is *the* place for fish, delivered daily from Ponza. I had the Catalan crustacean salad with raw shrimp and scampi—briny and sparkling.

—LINDA WELLS