



Comune di Roma

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TRATTORIAS OF ROME

TIPS ON SAVOURING THE CITY'S
TASTES AND SMELLS



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TIPS ON SAMPLING THE CITY'S
FLAVOURS AND AROMAS

PREFACE

To travel is to be curious. Curious to discover the different dimensions of a place. Curious to understand what it is that makes a place and its people unique.

Here then are a few suggestions as to how to capture the true soul of Rome in a journey through its traditions of food and wine, yielding to the pleasures of its local dishes. Gorgeous food which has assimilated the flavours of different traditions over the course of the centuries, at the same time conserving its most authentic essence. A culinary universe which is best appreciated in those places enlivened by a typically Roman milieu.

It is in this spirit that the Department of Tourism has come up with a special itinerary for the gourmet traveller, containing handy suggestions for finding one's way around the vast number of eating places on offer.

This is a shortlist of restaurants worth tracking

down during your exploration of the capital's most typical quarters: Testaccio, Trastevere, the historical city centre and the Ghetto.

It won't be hard to be seduced by the homey spirit of Roman cooking: *abbacchio scottadito*, *rigatoni co' la pajata*, *coda alla vaccinara*, *carciofi alla giudia*... Simple dishes which are nonetheless delicacies, adding a unique flavour to your unforgettable time in the Eternal City.

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Rome's gastronomic history has ancient roots and the character of the cuisine is authentic and wholesome, as we also know from Classical Latin literature in the works of Cicero and Juvenal, Ovid and Virgil, down to Ancient Rome's most famous culinary work, "De Re Coquinaria" by Marcus Gavius Apicius. The different regional traditions have made an important contribution to Roman cookery, which has thus become a delicious gastronomic compendium, bearing evident traces of the surrounding *campagna ciociara*, above all, and also of neighbouring regions such as Umbria, Tuscany and Abruzzo.

Indeed, it may be defined by the simplicity of its dishes, fruit of a peasant tradition, which is by no means a poor one, and has defended itself splendidly from the pressure of fads and tourism, maintaining the honesty of a country cuisine over the course of time. This has been possible thanks also to the survival of places like the old *osterie* (taverns), where the customs of the past are



respected and handed down (and sometimes enriched and personalized), with simple, tasty traditional recipes on offer.



Embarking upon our "gastronomic itinerary" as if we were leafing through a hypothetical menu, the first thing we will note is that Roman cooking is somewhat short of *antipasti* (starters). There are a few, simple recipes, mainly vegetable based, an important feature of which are the *fritti* (deep fried). These are *filetti di baccalà* (salt-cod), *fiori di zucca* (squash flowers stuffed with mozzarella and anchovies) and *suppli* (mozzarella-stuffed rice balls), which are often eaten as "street food". Of all the Roman *fritti*, don't miss the ***carciofo alla giudia*** (Jewish-style artichoke, so called because the recipe was born in the Ghetto of Rome). The artichoke is carefully selected (the rounder Roman type is best) and scrupulously pared, leaving only the softer lea-

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ves and a little of the stem. It is then seasoned with salt and pepper prior to being fried in boiling oil (in two distinct stages). Try it at **Gigetto al Portico d'Ottavia** - Via del Portico d'Ottavia, 21, +39.066861105 - where it is a real must!

Moving on to the *primi* (first dishes), the undisputed queen is the **amatriciana** which, as its name suggests, originates from Amatrice, a small town in the province of Rieti. The ingredients of the sauce are tomato, *guanciale* (unsmoked jowl bacon), pecorino cheese, oil and a pinch of *peperoncino* (dried chili pepper), and it is usually eaten with *bucatini*, a form of long pasta with a hole down the middle, but it is also equally good with *spaghetti* or *rigatoni* (ridged tube-shaped pasta). It should be sampled in two of the historic *trattorie* in the Testaccio quarter, **Felice** - Via Mastro Giorgio, 29, +39.065744194 - and **Checchino dal**



1887 - Via di Monte Testaccio, 80, +39.065743816 - where you certainly won't be disap-

pointed. **Gricia**, on the other hand, is a condiment similar to the *amatriciana* but with no tomatoes and with black pepper instead of hot pepper. This goes very well both with a long pasta like *spaghettoni* (slightly thicker spaghetti) and a short one like *rigatoni* or *mezzemaniche*. Try it at **Dar Cordaro** - Piazzale Portuense, 4, +39.065836751 - the historic Roman *trattoria* next to the Arch of Porta Portese, or at **Dar Moschino** - Piazza B. Brin, 5, +39.065139473 - a well-known spot in the Garbatella quarter. The **carbonara** was imported into Lazio, and then to Rome, by the *carbonari* (charcoal burners), who in the early 20th century would take to the forests of Umbria to make charcoal. The ingredients - egg, *guanciale*, black pepper and extra-virgin olive oil - are combined to produce a rich, creamy sauce - and not a mass of pasta and fried egg, as often tends to be the case! If you're looking for the perfect *carbonara*, check out **Da Danilo** - Via Petrarca, 13, +39.0677200111



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- a genuine *trattoria* in the Esquiline quarter, or **Il Quinto Quarto** - Via della Farnesina, 13, +39.063338768 - a modern *osteria* whose name refers to an important characteristic of Roman cuisine, the quinto *quarto* (the fifth quarter, ie, internal organs etc). And let us not forget **cacio e pepe**, which goes well with various types of pasta (*tonnarelli*, *spaghetti*, *mezzemaniche* and *rigatoni*) and is not as easy to prepare as it sounds. Good quality *cacio* (as pecorino cheese is known in Rome)

and fragrant pepper are the chief ingredients of this recipe, which categorically excludes the introduction of any kind of fat (oil, butter or cream) in order to obtain its desired creamy texture. Two reliable addresses for trying this are: **Da Gino** - Vicolo Rosini, 4, +39.066873434 - located just a few steps away from the palaces of government, and **Pommidoro** - Piazza dei Sanniti, 44, +39.064452692 - in the heart of the San Lorenzo quarter. In Rome, offal is used not

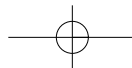


only to make delicious main dishes, but also tasty

pasta dishes like the famous **rigatoni con la pajata** (unweaned calf's intestine), a true delicacy which is becoming increasingly hard to find. The *pajata* is gently browned in extra-virgin olive oil and chopped herbs and then a dash of white wine is added.

Finally, the tomato is added and it is all left to simmer for about two hours. The resulting sauce is a concentration of taste which serves to flavour the *rigatoni*, which should be cooked *al dente*. The dish must be sampled at **Checchino dal 1887** - Via di Monte Testaccio, 80, +39.065743816 - a *trattoria* which has made a trademark of offal. Let us end this overview of first dishes with **minestra broccoli e arzilla**, the main ingredients of which are Roman cauliflower and skate, for which *arzilla* is the local name, cooked in a thick, tasty broth. A very good version of this is served at **Da Oio a casa mia** - Via Galvani, 43, +39.065782680 - another good place to eat in Testaccio.





As for the main dishes (*secondi*), special mention is deserved by those based on the "fifth quarter", ie, the offal: entrails and internal organs left over after the animal has been quartered and the costlier pieces have been removed. This would include tripe, kidney, heart, liver, spleen, sweetbreads, brain, tongue and oxtail. **Coratella** is prepared from the sheep's organs, a mixture of the liver, heart and lungs. Three very popular local dishes are:

coda alla vaccinara (a delicious version is prepared at **Checchino dal 1887** - Via di Monte Testaccio, 80, +39.065743816), **trippa alla romana** (this is done well both at **Alfredo e Ada** - Via dei Banchi Nuovi, 14, +39.066878842 - and at **l'Osteria del Velodromo Vecchio** - Via Genzano, 139, +39.067886793) and **coratella con i carciofi** (which should be tried at the *trattoria Lilli* - Via Tor di Nona, 23, +39.066861916). The first of



these is a recipe of oxtail, which must be properly trimmed and washed, and is then seasoned with tomato,

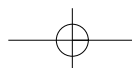
garlic, a small onion, cloves, a few sultanas, pine kernels and a grating of extra-dark chocolate.



The second is a dish of beef tripe, which is cut into strips and boiled, and then fried with onion, celery and carrot in extra-virgin olive oil. Tinned or peeled tomatoes are then added, along with a sprinkling of *mentuccia* (pennyroyal) and a generous grating of pecorino at the end. The third, finally, is the mixture of the sheep's heart, liver and lungs, which is cooked with artichokes cut into segments, oil, onion, garlic, a dash of white wine once the meat is browned, salt and pepper. On the subject of lamb (known locally as *abbacchio*), another typical Roman dish is **abbacchio al forno con le patate**, where the potatoes are roasted in the same pan as the meat and are therefore particularly tasty. We recommend this at **Da Ettore** - Corso Trieste, 129, +39.068554323 - a typical local *trattoria*. Still on the subject of meat dishes, let us not forget the famous **saltimbocca alla romana**, a simple but delicious

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recipe (the name translates "jumps in the mouth"). Thin slices of veal are covered with a slice of *prosciutto crudo* and a sage-leaf, then rolled up, secured with a toothpick and cooked in oil and butter, with the addition of a dash of white wine at the end. A most refined version of this may be tasted at the *trattoria Da Emilio* - Via Alessandria, 189, +39.068558977.

Another beef recipe is *polpette alla romana*, meatballs, which used to be made out of the leftovers of the previous day's boiled beef. The minced beef is mixed with *prosciutto crudo*,

breadcrumbs bathed in milk and squeezed dry, garlic, parsley, parmesan and eggs, to bind the ingredients. The meatballs are then dipped in egg and dusted with dry breadcrumbs and fried, after which they are added to a tomato sauce started off from a base of

chopped carrot, celery and onion, lightly fried. These are worth tasting at the *trattoria Felice* - Via



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Mastro Giorgio, 29, +39.065744194 - and at the **Trattoria Quirino** - Vicolo della Scala, 3, +39.0658301885. *Pollo*

alla romana is particularly tasty: first the chicken is fried gently in butter, cubes of *prosciutto*, garlic and chopped marjoram, to which a dash of white wine is later added, and then it is cooked in tomatoes and/or bell peppers. A mouthwatering version is served at **Il Quinto Quarto** - Via della Farnesina, 13, +39.063338768 - near Ponte Milvio. As for fish, *baccalà* (salt cod) plays the principal role. As an *antipasto* we saw it filleted and fried in a crisp, dry batter, but as a main course it is prepared as a stew with tomatoes, pine kernels, sultanas, onion and extra-virgin olive oil. You'll be mopping it up off your plate at **Enzo** - Via dei Vascellari, 29, +39.065818355 - a good place to go in Trastevere.

There are some unmissable side dishes (*contorni*) to go with the main courses: let us not



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forget **puntarelle**, which is the archetypal Roman vegetable. These are the sprouts of a variety of common chicory known as Catalonia or asparagus chicory. Their preparation is rather time-consuming and complicated, but luckily they are to be found ready prepared on the stalls of all local markets. They are soaked in cold water to make the points curl, and then seasoned with extra-virgin olive oil, anchovy fillets, garlic, salt and pepper. They are done perfectly at the *trattoria* **Gino** - Vicolo Rosini, 4, +39.066873434 - which is actually run by "Cavalier" Gino.

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Now we are at the end of the meal and it has to be said that Roman cuisine does not have a great deal to offer in the way of traditional sweets and pastries. In addition to the famous **maritozzo** (sweet bun) with cream and the



Roman **pangiallo** (cake eaten locally at Christmas), to be found in many of the city's pastry shops, the most common items on the tables of

osterie are **ciambelline**, which are to be dipped in a sweet wine, *romanella*, typical of the Castelli Romani area, and **crostata di ricotta e visciole** (ricotta and sour-cherry jam tart), another recipe originating in the Jewish quarter of the Ghetto, of which there is also an even more tempting version with chocolate. Ciambelline are dry biscuits made with flour, oil, sugar, baking powder and wine, shaped in the form of a ring and baked in the oven.



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Here ends our virtual tour of the most representative dishes of Roman cooking, its handful of suggestions of reliable places to eat representing just a fraction of what is on offer in this large city. Food is a vehicle of a people's culture, and we are convinced that if you frequent the historic *trattorie* of Rome you will enter into contact with a world which could never otherwise be explored, a world of human warmth and stories which no tourist guide, however well prepared, could ever tell with the same immediacy.



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Published by
La Pecora Nera Editore
www.lapecoranera.net

English translation by
Annabel J. Potter

Photos
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