

Autentico Florence

With Elizabeth Minchilli & Rolando Beramendi



Rolando Beramendi has made introducing people to the food of Italy a career. Since he was 22, he has been foraging for one of the best-loved Italian food importers in the USA. If you have been buying things like high-end olive oil, pasta, and other pantry items, chances are that many of them have been lovingly imported by Rolando's company, Manicaretti. For much of the past 3 decades, Rolando has called Florence home, and he has agreed to open his doors - and those of his friends - to a few lucky guests to discover the culture of food in this delicious corner of the world.

I am lucky enough to call Rolando one of my best friends, and I am joining him to host a week in Florence. After living in Florence during the 1980s while working on my Ph.D. on 16th-century gardens, I return as often as possible

reporting on one of my favorite places in the world in my books and on my blog.

Together, we would like to share a completely unique, food focused, exclusive, behind the scenes view of what we love most about Florence.

When: October 20-26, 2024

Where: Florence, Italy

Arrival & Introductions

Sunday



Hotel

We are staying at one of Florence's most beautiful and oldest hotels, the Helvetia & Bristol. This 5-star hotel is in the perfect location and underwent a complete and gorgeous restoration recently, and now has one of the best spas in town. Upon checking in, you will find a gift basket with wine and snacks to get you settled and a personal guide to our favorite places to shop, eat, and drink in Florence. I also hope you will have read my book *Eating My Way Through Italy*, which we sent to you in the mail before your arrival and has a few chapters on Florence, as well as Rolando's book *Autentico*, which portrays some of the people we'll be meeting during our week.



Drinks and dinner

At 7 pm, we will meet for a drink to start our week in the lovely private Bristol Winter Garden. Over bubbles and nibbles, we will get to know each other, and Rolando and I will tell you what we'll be up to this week.

We will then head out to dinner, walking along and across the Arno River to start our week at a restaurant beloved by locals. Located in the San Frediano neighborhood, All'Antico Ristoro di Cambi is where you will find Florentines eating local food. We'll start our meal enjoying antipasti like crostini con fegatini, fagioli all'uccelletto and finocchiana before moving on to one of their specialities, pollo fritto and bistecca.

Rolando's Neighborhood and Kitchen

Monday



Cooking class

This morning, we will be Florentines in a residential part of town, Oltrarno, far away from the tourists. We'll grab a quick coffee in Piazza Santo Spirito before walking towards the Porta Romana. This ancient gateway stands guard over most of the stores where we will be shopping for our lunch: butcher, vegetable stand, and bakery.

Rolando's home is in a building belonging to one of Italy's best kitchen designers, Barthel. They have created a cooking space within the artisans' workshops, where Rolando will teach us some of his favorite dishes. We will also have a few guests from the neighborhood to share their knowledge: Marco Gambi will give a wine tasting, and Giulio and Ginevera Gualtieri will give a dessert lesson.

Garden walk

Count Torrigiani Malaspina has agreed to open up

his private 18th-century garden for us. Normally closed to the public, we will walk off our lunch with the Count. Don't be surprised if he bursts into song: opera is kind of his thing.

Aperitivo

After a rest at the hotel, we will meet for an aperitivo with one of Rolando's oldest friends. Marquis Francesco Mazzei's family has been making wine in Chianti for 24 generations. This evening, Francesco and his wife, Countess Elisabetta Guicciardini Corsi Salviati, will host us in their private apartment. We'll enjoy a glass of one of their wines while getting to know this charming couple.

Dinner

After a long day of eating and drinking, tonight you are on your own dinner. We can suggest some wine bars or nibbles or else a regular restaurant.

Olive Oil Pressing

Tuesday



Olive oil

Today is all about one of the most important ingredients in Italian cooking: olive oil. Rolando was one of the first importers of high-quality olive oil to the US and has greatly impacted the way Americans consume olive oil today. One of the first olive oils he imported was from Tenuta di Capezzana. Luckily for us, they will be pressing the first batches of olive oil.

We will spend the day with Countess Beatrice Contini Bonacossi, at her family's Tenuta di Capezzana. We'll visit the centuries-old olive groves and ancient cellar, where we will sample the vivid green oil as it is pressed. We then make our way into the private villa where the family still lives and sit down to lunch, feasting on recipes passed down through generations.

Capezzana wines are some of the most revered in

Tuscany, and lunch will be paired with some very rare bottles.

Gelato

After a brief rest at the hotel, we will take a short walk to one of the oldest gelaterie in Florence. Vivoli is owned and run Silvana, the third generation to run this beloved institution. We will learn how to make their famous crema, a rich custard gelato, churned in the ice cream machine her grandfather bought over 60 years ago. We will then sit down to a special gelato-aperitivo, tasting some of the most famous flavors paired with artisanal liqueurs. To finish: the now viral caffè affogato: a shot of espresso pulled directly into a cup full of crema gelato.

Dinner

Tonight, after a long day of eating and drinking, you are on your own for dinner.

Artisans of Oltrarno

Wednesday



Oltrarno's Artisans

The Oltrarno neighborhood has long been home to some of Florence's most exciting artisans' workshops. While many date back only decades, some have been around for centuries. We will visit three of our favorites.

Locchi—This crystal and glass workshop has been hand-crafting tableware for over a century.

Bartolozzi e Maioli—This restoration workshop was founded in 1938. Its magical interiors are packed with stucco and wood artifacts from churches and palaces.

Ratafia—This workshop presents the newer side of the neighborhood where age-old craftsmanship meets fresh and vibrant design. You'll fall in love with Anna and Maria, and their collection of bags, aprons, and linens.



Lunch

Today's lunch is at the rooftop loggia of Palazzo Guadagni. A glass of white wine and nibbles under the soaring arches of one of the most romantic spots in Florence. They are usually closed for lunch, so we have the terrace all to ourselves!

Afternoon

You will have the rest of the afternoon free.

Dinner

Rolando's very best friend in Florence is Chiara, the owner of the famous Trattoria Cammillo. If you have ever tried to dine here, you know how difficult it is to get one of their very few tables. On Wednesdays, the place is closed. But not for us! Chiara has invited us over to step into her kitchen and help her prepare some of her best-known dishes. Afterwards we'll sit at the family table for dinner.

Ribollita in the Tuscan Countryside

Thursday



Ribollita

If you want to understand the culture of food in Tuscany, you have to understand the history behind ribollita. And if you want to understand ribollita then there is no better place than the historic countryside restaurant Da Delfina. More chefs than you realize count Carlo, the owner, as one of their fundamental inspirations in the kitchen. We will learn why this iconic dish is so important and how to make it.

Archeological museum

We will then head down the country road to the Museo Etrusco di Artimino for a private reception just for us. Surrounded by local archeological finds, we will enjoy an aperitivo.



Lunch

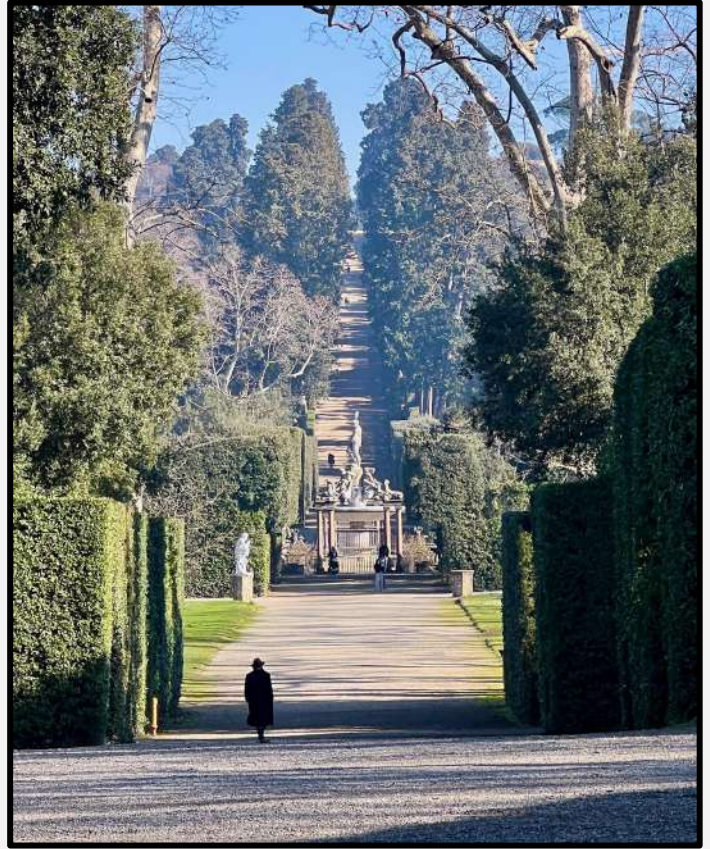
After our museum visit, we will return to Da Delfina and enjoy our ribollita as the start of our multi-course feast.

Afternoon and dinner

We return to Florence, where you will have the rest of the day free. We can suggest some wine bars or nibbles or else a regular restaurant for dinner.

Shopping in Santa Croce

Friday



Santa Croce

When Elizabeth lived in Florence in the '80s, her little apartment was located in the Santa Croce neighborhood. We will visit some of her favorite shops that most visitors to Florence miss.

Bizzarri—Our first stop is at one of the oldest shops in Florence, an apothecary that still stocks essential oils, saffron, chemist-strength mustard, and rosewater, all stored in antique jars.

Sbigoli—Elizabeth's obsession with majolica began in this family-run workshop. It is one of the only functioning ceramic workshops that still produces its wares on-site.

Aquaflor—This perfume shop is located on the ground floor of a Renaissance palace. We will have a private tour of the workshop which holds over 1500 precious essences.

Mercato Sant' Ambrogio—We will walk through

the stalls of one of the most vibrant markets in Florence, looking at the seasonal produce and butchers' stands. Our lunch will be a typical Florentine street food: a panino of lampredotto (tripe!) or prosciutto or cheese if you prefer.

Afternoon

You have the afternoon free to catch up on shopping or visit museums. We are happy to put you in touch with a private guide if you'd like.

Dinner

Tonight, Princess Sabina Corsini has invited us to dinner in the private quarters of the historic Palazzo Corsini. This monumental 17th-century palazzo is one of the finest in Florence and is never open to the public. We will join Sabina for a private tour of the palace and one of the most beautiful secret gardens in Florence, before our dinner in the family's dining room.

Departure

Saturday



Check-out

Our tour is officially over, and after one last breakfast, you will be checking out of the hotel.

About This Tour

Important information: please read



The culture of food

Our tours are about exploring places through the culture of food. This means that almost all of our activities are food-related. You can expect big meals and often snacks in between. If you do not have a big appetite, have food intolerances, or are squeamish or a picky eater, then this is not the tour for you.

Food intolerances

Since we are in Italy, the cuisine is focused on the Mediterranean Diet, so there will be plenty of grains and vegetables. That said, many of our meals revolve around local food traditions and may include meat and almost always cheese. Tuscany, and Florence in particular, offers a very meat-centric cuisine. If you are a vegetarian, gluten free or lactose intolerant, you will not go hungry, but you will not be experiencing the true food culture of this region. Please let us know if you have any concerns.

Activity level

Each day will be an exploration. We often get up early, and the days are long and will involve walking up to an hour or more. While the level is never overly strenuous, you must be able to keep up with the rest of the group.

Travel companions

Our days will be spent exploring the culture of food through visits to farms, markets, and more. If you are thinking about bringing along a traveling companion (friend, spouse, relative, partner) please make sure they are aware of the types of things we will be doing. If they are not interested in food, visiting farms, eating in rustic settings, etc. then they may not enjoy this tour.

Details

Dates and Fee



Dates:

October 20-26, 2024

Price:

Double occupancy room (2 people in 1 room):

€9000 per person

Single occupancy room (1 person in 1 room):

€10,500 per person

Since our tours are based on small family-run businesses, we reserve the right to vary the specifics of the itinerary. We may switch days, add/change activities, or substitute locations. We send out an updated itinerary within 30 days prior to the start date.

Each tour is limited to 12 participants

The fee includes:

- 6 nights in Helvetia Bristol Hotel
- Buffet breakfast in the hotel
- Welcome snacks in your room
- All of the meals, activities and transportation outlined above
- A copy of Elizabeth's book *Eating My Way Through Italy*
- A copy of Rolando's book *Autentico*

Not included:

- Transportation to and from Italy
- Transportation to and from hotel

For more information and to book this tour please email minchillitours@gmail.com

About Us

Your hosts for the week

Elizabeth Minchilli

Elizabeth has been writing about the joys of Italian life for the last 30 years. She is the author of [9 books on Italy](#), including her most recent, [The Italian Table](#), [Eating My Way Through Italy](#), and [Eating Rome](#). She has written for over 40 publications, including Bon Appetit, Food & Wine, and The New York Times.

Her [popular blog](#) is where she shares her passion for Italian food, writing about recipes, meals, and restaurants. She has been leading food tours since 2011, and you can read about them in [magazines](#) and in this article from [the New York Times](#).

Rolando Beramendi

Rolando is the founder of [Manicaretti Italian Food Importers](#) based in California. He was one of the first to distribute fine Italian food products to retailers and restaurants in the US. A food connoisseur and culinary archaeologist, Rolando is also a cooking instructor and the author of the widely praised [Autentico: Cooking Italian, the Authentic Way](#) (2017).

Rolando was in his early 20s when he started Manicaretti in 1989 and soon became the go-to man for everything Italian in the retail food and restaurant industries, winning awards and teaching Italian cooking classes around the world. After dividing his time between the Bay Area and Florence for years, he now happily calls Florence home.