

ROOTED

GOOD • CLEAN • FAIR: THE ITALIAN WAY

A Magazine
Exploring
Italy's Food
Systems
Through The
Lens of
Cortona

STELLA ADDIS
Summer 2025 Issue





CORTONA FRAMEWORK



In Cortona, food is more than just what's on the plate. It's a story of culture, place, and community. Guided by the philosophy of the Slow Food Movement, this magazine looks at the food systems that exist within Italy, more specifically within Cortona.

Born in Italy in the late 1980s as a response to the rise of fast food and the "fast life," Slow Food highlights a more sustainable approach to food consumption and production.

The Slow Food Movement emphasizes that the choices we make as consumers shape the world around us. In order to participate in a more connected and sustainable way of living, we must choose food that is good, clean, and fair for everyone.

This framework guides the pages ahead. Each section of this magazine, Buono (Good), Pulito (Clean), Giusto (Fair), unpacks one piece of the Slow Food philosophy, exploring how Cortona and Italy as a whole embody these values through taste, tradition, ecology, and community.

BY STELLA ADDIS
RESEARCH FROM THE SLOW FOOD MOVEMENT

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Map of Cortona, Italy



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BUONO

Food should be enjoyed as a celebration of flavor that keeps traditions alive. Taste isn't something to give up for speed or convenience

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Preserving Taste & Tradition

THE ART OF

"My grandmother told me, 'slow, slow, slow' is important for the food," Dadalo explained. "People in my house, nothing is fast and this is very important."



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In Camucia, just outside Cortona, Chef Dadalo Bellini and his wife Otilia opened their home to me and my family and friends. This wasn't a restaurant, it was their home. "Slow, slow,



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slow," Dadalo repeated, echoing his grandmother's words as we stirred the ragu. "This way the food absorb[s] the flavor." We let the sauce simmer while we rolled pasta dough on the wooden table where his family had made noodles time and time again. Otilia showed me how the rough texture from wood helps pasta hold sauce better

than any machine can create. There is no waste in this kitchen. Leftover bread feeds their chickens. The remaining pasta dough becomes tomorrow's gnocchi.

"Many kids don't eat in the world," Dadalo reminded us. "[It's] Important to finish all." The portions of ingredients correlate with the number

PASTA MAKING



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of people: 100g of flour and one egg per person. Nothing extra, nothing wasted.

By my second visit, they welcomed me like family. Otilia had learned to cook from Dadalo's grandmother. She once told Otilia the homemade pasta was "much better than mine", which was the highest compliment possible. Now,

Otilia teaches their daughter Sophia, keeping the tradition alive. American cooking prioritizes speed and convenience. We want 15-minute meals, pre-made sauces, and pasta that cooks in under 10 minutes. In Dadalo's kitchen, we spent 5 hours making what we could have purchased in boxes from any store. But the time wasn't about efficiency, it was

about connection. The amount of love they put in their pasta is clear. While America tries to cook 15-minute meals and prioritize efficiency, Dadalo's kitchen operates on a different clock entirely. Here, love is measured in hours spent stirring and the time being together in the kitchen, not the seconds saved with microwaving.

"It's important to have basic ingredients," Dadalo explained. "Fresh vegetables not chemicals, fresh beef, shop local from family shops. The cycle is 100% natural in my village, in my family."



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COOKING PHILOSOPHY

Good food doesn't start in the kitchen, it starts with the ingredients and the story behind them.

Hayley Mosher



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Hayley Mosher

The Italian cooking philosophy is a way of life. Simple ingredients are what turn into the best dishes. For example, an avocado, an egg, or a cut of meat can be transformed into something that can create a memory in your mouth. In Italy, meals are built from what is close by and fresh, guided by the seasons and what's available. In Italian culture, no matter who you talk to,

choosing simplicity is a way of honoring food. When we respect ingredients, we protect the whole system. Italian cooking integrates few ingredients into each dish, but each one is chosen with intention. The goal isn't to mask the flavor of a tomato for example, it's to highlight them. Each dish is different from region to region, and that's what makes it special.

SEASONS OF CORTONA

Each season brings its own ingredients, its own dishes, its own celebrations.

UGA Cortona Website



Fall

brinzan.com



Winter

Cortona International EN



Spring

Cortona International EN



Summer

In Cortona, the season decides what's on the menu. When spring arrives, wild asparagus and artichokes appear, not because they're shipped from somewhere else. Summer tomatoes are used for panzanella with day-old bread, where fall means more white truffles from local oak groves. The winter months bring wild boar and castagnaccio made from chestnut flour to the table. In Cortona, and in other parts of Italy, food follows the land's rhythm, rather than convenience. This creates a flavor that can't be recreated with ingredients that are shipped across continents.

FOOD TRADITIONS

"WHEN YOU CHANGE THE RECIPE, YOU LOSE THE STORY"

- LIDIA BASTIANICH

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All over Italy recipes don't just exist in cookbooks, they exist in kitchens where families work side-by-side. Every town and village celebrates its unique identity through food, with traditional dishes

continuing to be "the favorite" dishes on the menu. I noticed this when I traveled throughout Italy, ordering the same dish at different places meant different flavors and different traditions.

For example, San Marzano tomatoes. When you order a dish with these Campania tomatoes, you're tasting a story that began in 1770 in the

volcanic soil around Mt. Versuvius. They developed their distinctive sweet flavor that can't be replicated. When I ordered the pasta marinara with real San Marzano tomatoes in Naples, it was clear that the dish carries years of tradition in every bite, because it doesn't taste like pasta marinara from somewhere else. This is how Italian food works. Each dish shows local identity from the past and the present.

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PULITO

RESPECTING OUR PLANET



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GOING GREEN:

Food should be produced in ways that respect the earth, protect biodiversity, and sustain ecosystems for future generations.

COMPARING WASTE DISPOSAL PROCESSES

Google Images



ZERO WASTE KITCHEN

Google Images



In the US, waste often ends up in the landfill. On average, Americans generate far more municipal solid waste per person than Europeans do with around 50% of it being buried rather than recycled. Recycling systems vary between cities, and convenience often takes priority over sustainability. The result is a system that produces more

waste while doing less to protect the environment.

In Tuscany, things work differently. Sei Toscana makes it easy to sort organics, paper, plastics, glass, aluminum, and cartons, with both home pickup and public drop-off points. Over 80% of waste is recycled or recovered, and less than 16% goes to landfills.

This is the Pulito principle in action: taking care of what we throw away in our kitchens helps protect the land, water, and communities around us.



Servizi ecologici integrati Toscana

RESEARCH FROM SEI TOSCANA,
STATISTA, ENVIRONMENTAMERICA

The Organic Question



Hayley Mosher

Italy produces some of the world's best organic ingredients due to the long tradition of using local, seasonal ingredients. More than half of Italian families eat organic food at least once a week, and farmer's markets like the mercato del contadino make it easy to buy directly from producers.

SO WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Organic food avoids synthetic chemicals, nourishes the soil, protects the environment, and simply tastes better, making it a smarter choice for people and the planet. While it can cost more (sometimes up to 15% higher), Italians are willing to pay for quality, sustainability, and connection to their local culture. It isn't just about eating well, it's about maintaining a tradition of clean, responsible food practices.

FARM TO PLATE

FOLLOWING PRODUCTION TO CONSUMPTION



CORTONA FARMS

Around Cortona, family farms have worked on the same hillsides for generations. These are small plots of land where farmers know their soil, seasons, and crops individually. Harvest timing depends on ripeness and weather, not shipping schedules or storage capacity. Therefore, the focus is on quality over quantity.



PRODUCTION

The average Italian apple travels just 50 miles from farm to table, compared to 1,500 miles for American produce. This means farmers can wait for perfect ripeness instead of picking unripe fruit that will survive shipping with added chemicals. In Italy the avocados were bigger than my hand and had flavors I'd never experienced before.

When food systems prioritize freshness over convenience, they create connections between people and the land that American industrial agricultural practices can't replicate



THE JOURNEY

In Cortona, the journey from farm to market happens in hours, not days. Local farms make daily deliveries to small markets throughout the town. This direct relationship between farm and market eliminates the need for preservatives entirely. The short supply chain benefits everyone, from producers to consumers.



CONSUMPTION

Shopping daily in Cortona became a ritual, not a chore. I'd stop by the market to see what had arrived fresh from nearby farms. Vendors would explain which produce is best to eat today vs tomorrow. This forced me to plan meals around peak freshness rather than stocking up for the week. The result was meals that tasted extremely fresh.

PACKAGE-FREE



Live In Italy Magazine

LIVING

In the US, packaging is often single-use and disposable. Grocery stores wrap produce in plastic, offer customers endless plastic bags, and prioritize convenience over sustainability. This results in more packaging entering the waste stream.

On the other hand, Italy's package-free shopping is becoming mainstream. In some shops, customers bring their own refill containers for items like detergent and olive oil. Italy's packaging regulations require businesses to register with CONAI, the national packaging consortium, and pay fees based on packaging type and quantity. Companies using easily recyclable materials pay less in fees, while less sustainable options cost more, holding everyone accountable. The difference is clear. While American retailers focus on packaging convenience, Italian policy incentivizes businesses to reduce their packaging waste.

GIUSTO

Food should honor the people who grow, make, and prepare it, ensuring dignity, equity, and access for all.



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FAIR FOR EVERYONE



THE RESTAURANT DILEMMA



ITALIAN CHEF VS. AMERICAN CHEF: COMPARING MENUS & PHILOSOPHY

Two chefs, two continents, fighting two completely different battles.

In Cortona, Chef Antonio sources 80% of his ingredients from four neighboring towns. "Keep things simple," he tells me. "We have fresh ingredients. Our main ingredients taste good, so we don't need added spices."

In Colorado, Chef Ian Wortham spent eight years at Tavernetta recreating Italian flavors for Americans. "People expect more here, more spices," he says. The challenge isn't just ingredients, it's fighting "the American expectation of having access to everything, everywhere, all the time." Both chefs care about quality and producer relationships. But Antonio operates within a system where tradition and locality align naturally. Ian fights against mass consumerism.

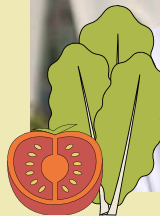
Antonio's 56-year-old family restaurant exists because the system around him makes giusto choices possible. This dilemma isn't about which approach is better, it's understanding that sustainable food systems require entire communities to change, not just individual choices.



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@populushotel_denver



HARVEST GATHERINGS

Cortona's Sagra and Seasonal Abundance

In Cortona, food festivals (sagre) are more than just meals, instead, they are celebrations of community, tradition, and the land itself. Each sagra honors a specific food or drink, often at its seasonal peak. For instance, the Sagra della Bistecca, held annually in August, features Chianina beef grilled over a massive 14-meter-long grill, accompanied by local wines and sides like beans and tomatoes. Similarly, the Sagra del Fungo Porcino celebrates the porcini mushroom harvest with dishes prepared from freshly foraged fungi. These gatherings are very community centered. Volunteers prepare and serve food with lower prices, allowing everyone (locals and visitors) to enjoy what's in season.

sagretoscane.com



The sagra system reflects a philosophy of fairness: everyone can enjoy a meal, not just those with more resources or access to specialty markets.

By contrast, in the US, access to fresh, healthy food is often limited, and farmers' markets or festivals can feel commercialized or inaccessible. Cortona's food festivals show the value of creating seasonal events that celebrate ingredients in a way that's accessible for everyone.



cortonamia.com

PORTRAITS OF LOCAL CHEFS,



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Interviewing people in Cortona, I found the story of a food system built on relationships, tradition, and time. With each conversation, I began to understand how food connects us to place, to each other, and to something deeper.

At Ristorante Ambrosia, Chef Matteo opened his restaurant at 24 in his grandmother's old building, bringing in her recipes but never copying them. "Don't copy and paste, add to the grandmother's recipe and make it new," he told me. After learning to cook in Michelin-star kitchens, he came back to Cortona to create a restaurant that feels more like a home.

For 3 generations, Antonio's family has been cooking for UGA Cortona students. He keeps two big binders of his mother's recipes, knowing that "recipes are very personal depending on who makes them." His pasta fumo comes from his mother's cooking, but varies with ingredients and techniques. Chef Dadalo passes on their recipes to their daughter Sophia, proving that traditions survive when knowledge is passed on.

VENDORS, & BUSINESS OWNERS



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25 years ago, Mara moved from Brazil to Cortona, becoming the 1st woman to own a restaurant in town. She faced a community that believed "only Italian food is good" and found that the locals were often "closed off" to her Brazilian cuisine. "I had to show them my food, show them the spices," she told me. Through her cooking, she started sharing her culture with neighbors who soon became friends. After our interview, I would see Mara in town and she would greet me with a kiss on the cheek, showing me that kindness can turn strangers into family.

These conversations taught me that giusto isn't something you regulate, it's something you practice. Each person chose to open their doors to others, leaving them with a memory of tradition and innovation. Whether it was Matteo, Dadalo, or Mara, each story revealed that sustainable food systems work because people value time over convenience and relationships over efficiency. Everyone understands their role in making sure the cycle is circular. This in turn creates a culture completely different from the US.

COMMUNITY TABLES

SHARING DISHES IN ITALY

Food in Cortona isn't just about eating, it's about sharing.

At Ristorante Ambrosia, I learned that Chef Matteo grew up with this idea deeply rooted in his work. Meals in Cortona aren't rushed; instead, they're shared. Each dish is built to hold not only flavor, but heart.

"If you don't put heart inside, you just make food. But if you put the heart inside and love, you can make more than food, you can make emotion." - Matteo

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Matteo's approach shows tradition and togetherness built into the experience. For him, cooking is an act of connection, rooted in memory. Food is meant to be enjoyed collectively, where each person is a part of something bigger than themselves. This idea goes beyond Ristorante Ambrosia.

Italian community tables spill into the streets, where entire towns gather to eat side-by-side. Eating together is about community, not convenience. This feels entirely different from American tables, where meals are often fast, individual, and disconnected from tradition.



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COMMUNITY TABLES

SHARING DISHES IN AMERICA

Google Images



In America, sharing food looks different.

At small restaurants around Athens, I noticed people sitting alone on their phones, finishing meals quickly, and moving on to the next task in their busy schedules. It felt urgent and disconnected from the meal itself. Where Italian meals are filled with conversation and last till late at night, American dining often operates on schedules. Reservations are made online, tables are turned over quickly, and the bill is brought before dessert is even considered.

Fast food culture embodies this disconnection perfectly. Drive-throughs prioritize speed over

connection, going against the Giusto principle completely. When speed matters more than story, we lose sight of the farmers, servers, and cooks who make the whole meal possible. However, there are places in America where sharing a meal means more than convenience. Community gardens feed neighborhood gatherings, family dinners become a “no-phone” environment, and some restaurants have shifted away from prioritizing efficiency to focus more on the connection their food can create.



visitathensga.com

*"Food is more than just nourishment,
it's a universal language." - Fonze*

RESEARCH FROM THE CHOPPING BLOCK

CONNECTIONS



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& TAKEAWAYS

Food has the power to transform, to connect us to place, and to change how we see the world around us

MY FOOD EXPERIENCE



Sharing meals with UGA students who became family taught me the importance of being present. Italian meal aren't rushed, they're enjoyed.



Mara's passion for bringing authentic Brazilian flavors to Italy taught me that food traditions travel and adapt, but they never lose their heart or their story.



Some of the best conversations happen in restaurant kitchens. Letizia showed me that behind every group dinner were people who care about what they create.



ALL PHOTOS TAKEN BY STELLA ADDIS

Gelato became a daily ritual. It was an excuse to be with friends, wander new streets, and learn about traditions that filled the small town of Cortona.

TRANSFORMATION OF EATING HABITS



Google Images

BEFORE



Olivia Gay

AFTER

In Athens, eating was all about efficiency. I'd grab a coffee and a yogurt before rushing to class, eat quick lunches between activities, and cook dinner around my schedule instead of making it the focus. Grocery runs meant loading up on everything I'd need for weeks, looking for what would last the longest. Meals were squeezed in rather than being a time to pause and connect. I ate fast, often distracted by my phone or homework because food was just another task to check off my list.

Cortona taught me that meals are a key part of your day. I want to bring home eating the Italian way: dinners that aren't rushed, afternoon breaks with a sweet treat, and shopping for fresh local ingredients. Instead of buying in bulk for convenience, I want to visit local markets more often. Most importantly, I want to prioritize the social aspect of meals (ie. putting my phone away, inviting friends over more often, and treating dinner as an opportunity to connect). Food should be enjoyed, not a task to check off the list.

APPLYING ITALIAN PRINCIPLES ANYWHERE

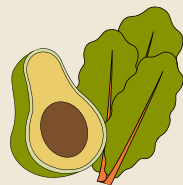
The system that works in Italy works because every part moves in harmony: farmers, vendors, restaurants, and families all participate in a circular system where food flows naturally from farm to table to compost and back again. In America, our linear system, produce, consume, dispose, operates with entirely different principles of convenience and efficiency. However, that doesn't mean that Italian principles and knowledge can't be transferred. It starts with recognizing that food, everywhere, serves the same purpose: to bring people together.

The small moments of connection that occur around a table, with a local vendor, or with friends don't require a perfect system, they just require intention. This means choosing fresh ingredients when it's possible and slowing down to appreciate the meal being made. It's about understanding that the person who grows the food, or cooks, or shares it with you at the table, matters.





Stella Addis
Cortona, Italy



PERSONAL REFLECTION

This experience has been incredibly transformative. What started as an interest in food, turned into an appreciation for culture. Food can be a vehicle for connection and sustainability. Watching local vendors, restaurant owners, and families approach food purposefully highlighted how cooking is an act of love rather

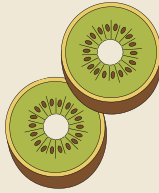
than convenience in Italy. Creating this magazine has forced me to synthesize not just what I saw, but what it means. The Slow Food Movement is about recognizing that how we produce, distribute, and consume food impacts everything from environmental sustainability to community wellbeing. Italy showed me a model

or a system that is circular rather than linear. What I'm bringing back to Athens isn't just recommendations or cool photos. It's a different relationship with food where I see meals as connection points, grocery shopping as a chance to eat local and seasonal, and cooking as a slow practice that holds a

story. Italy showed me that food systems can be regenerative, bring communities together, and be filled with love and tradition.

Through my interviews, I learned that having a successful food business requires understanding community needs, building relationships with local vendors, and bringing tradition into cooking. The challenges in the food industry are daunting, but I

witnessed so many tangible solutions, from restaurants composting their organic waste, to chefs sourcing ingredients directly from local farms, to family businesses passing down traditions to the next generation. The people of Cortona didn't owe me anything, yet they shared their stories, tables, and traditions with open hearts. Food isn't just what we eat, it's how we come together, how we care for the planet, and how we build communities that make food accessible to everyone.



"We don't want to over manipulate the ingredients. We want to show a reverence for nature through our food since it's truly a symbol of humanity's first interaction with nature," - Ian Wortham





UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

This magazine targets the three goals listed above by exploring Cortona's food systems. By looking at local farming practices and community-supported agriculture, it addresses Zero Hunger (SDG 2) and food security. The focus on communal eating, slow meals, and social well-being supports Good Health and Well-being (SDG 3). The Slow Food framework of choosing food that is good, clean, and fair, targets Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG 12) by highlighting sustainable practices that honor producers, protect the environment, and strengthen communities.



Sophie Gotschall

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