ITALIANITÀ

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A COMPILATION OF ALL THING ITALIAN
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When people think of travelling to Italy, the first place that pops into mind is nearly always *la città eterna*, Rome, and then quickly followed by Florence and Venice. The kilometers of fields, hills, mountains, rivers, lakes, vineyards and groves, in between, and North, South, East and West of those cities, are almost always overlooked by your typical traveler. Had I not had a reason to step beyond the famous triangle, I too would have been blind to the other joys Italy has to offer.

After almost a year living in Bologna, another must outside the famous three cities, I realized there was so much more to be valued in Italy. I generally made a point to explore the unknowns of Italy, but it never occurred to me that the place I’ve travelled to most often also be an unknown Italian treasure. It came to me last spring when I invited one of my friends who I studied with in Bologna, down to my grandparent’s house for a long weekend. I was well aware of the treasures the region of Lazio kept besides the grand capital of Rome, but Julia wasn’t prepared for where I was taking her. A 2-hour *freccia* train to Rome, an hour and a half *treno regionale* to Frosinone, and finally a 40 minute car ride brought us to our final destination; Muto, casa di miei Nonni.

My grandparent’s house is tucked away in a province of Lazio that few tourists can claim to know. Driving from Frosinone, famous in Italy for being the province of the *Ciociaria* (the named derived from *ciocia*, the traditional footwear worn by peasants and shepherds particularly in the region of Lazio) through the hills to my grandparent’s house, Julia was shocked at the beauty the passing hills had to offer and was curious as to why she had never heard of such a beautiful Italian region when she was so passionate about Italy and eager to explore every corner. Luckily for me, *la ciociaria*, was nearly an annual destination for my family and me, so I was fortunate to know the region and its peculiarities very well.
The valley that my grandparent’s hometown (Fontechiari) sits in is known as the Val di Comino. This valley is home to many tiny hill towns each with its own precious history and own unique beauty. In the Val di Comino, tourists are rare to come by, and the experience is that of true Italian life, one of daily work, relaxation, delicious culinary delights and other Italian traditions. The small hill towns that line the valley could be comparable to some famous ones in Tuscany, except in the Val di Comino, there is a different feel, there you are part of Italy, you are forced to interact with locals, can manage a broken English conversation with a nonna on the street, and you will not have to fight over the beauty with other tourists.

Within the valley, the history of the various hill towns is rooted in roman and medieval times. In the largest city of the valley, Sora, you can hike up to the castle from the Middle Ages and look down at the beautiful Liri river, the valley and the not so far off mountains of Abruzzo. Travelling between cities is possible by bus, yet having a car is the easiest way to get around if you are not afraid of narrow winding roads. Driving through the town of San Donato (Sister city of Newton, Mass), you can hit hair pin turns, see gorgeous architecture of the city, stop for a coffee in the streets where locals sit and enjoy life, then continue through into the mountains to see motorcyclists whip around curvy mountain roads, or watch the hang gliding club do their weekly run down a boarded launch into the valley below. Driving through the valley you can see a huge red cross painted on a stone fortress that rests sturdily at the top of the city of Alvito. Other towns that line the valley are, Fontechiari, Casalvieri, Broccostella, Casalattico, Campoli, Settefrati, Galinaro and Atina.

While visiting the valley would be fabulous any time of the year, the summer months are the clear winners. The mountains keep the cities relatively cool at night, so you do not suffer the famous Italian summer heat like you would in Rome or Bologna. In addition, the summer marks the period of le feste. Parties! Every day there is a new Saint or a different type of food or drink to celebrate. Step out on to a patio any day of the week and you are sure to see fire works exploding in one of the hill towns lining the valley. There are no limits to the events held in the summer, and they guarantee you have a wonderful time and keep your tummies lined!

So what are you waiting for? Ditch the regular Italian hotspots and head for la Ciociaria! Consult http://www.ciociariaturismo.it for further information!

Lia graduated from Union College in 2012. She studied abroad in Florence as a junior and interned in Rome at Aircom International during the summer of 2011. She is currently working towards a Masters degree in International Relations at the University of Bologna.
For as long as I can remember, I've loved Pinocchio (not necessarily for the moral of the story, really only because he's adorable). It wasn't until high school, for some reason, that I realized Pinocchio was Italian before he was Disney. I don't know how I missed that, given my Italian-American upbringing. But I loved him even more after I figured it out. Anyways, I thought I'd share a few other (less obvious) things that you may not know about this little guy, his history and his creator.

- Pinocchio is the thought child of Florentine writer Carlo Collodi.
- In 1880, Collodi began writing Storia di un burattino AKA Le avventure di Pinocchio AKA The Adventures of Pinocchio. In 1883, it was published in Il Giornale per I Bambini, the first Italian newspaper for children. Since then, it has been translated into 260 languages.
- Collodi’s real last name is actually Lorenzini. The name Collodi comes from the name of his mother's native town…Collodi.
- Disney released Pinocchio in 1940. It was his second feature-length film.
- Collodi’s original Pinocchio is vastly different from Disney’s adaptation. Collodi’s Pinocchio is not the charming wooden puppet we associate with the word Pinocchio, rather he's described as a “rascal”, “imp”, “scapegoat”, and “disgrace”.
- Pinocchio is also kidnapped, stabbed, whipped and starved in Collodi’s version. Did I mention he's hanged at the end of the original version?
- Disney actually briefly halted production of the film…he thought it was unsuitable for children (for obvious reasons).
- In Collodi’s original, Gepetto is referred to as maestro Ciliegia and Jiminy Cricket is called Grillo-parlante.
- Pinocchio’s birthday is celebrated on 25 May in Collodi, Italy.
- There’s actually an entire park dedicated to him in Collodi…il Parco di Pinocchio.
I don’t know about you, but any time I think about eating in Italy, I think pasta, pizza or panino (or gelato, let’s be real). I rarely think of risotto. And when I say rarely, I mean I only think about it when I glaze over the risotto entry on a restaurant’s menu and say to myself “hmmm that sounds good but I’m feeling tortellini tonight [for the fourth time this week]”. It hardly occurs to me that risotto is an iconic Italian dish.

Risotto, though, is practically perfect, when you think about it. First off, it’s pretty easy to make. It can also be made with anything. And it’s creamy. And flavorful. Listen to this mouthwatering description from essentialingredient.com: “At its simplest, risotto is a hearty, warming rice dish, rich with the flavors of the stock used in its making, as well as saffron, parmesan, butter, and any of the hundreds of ingredients that match so perfectly with it”. Yes, please.

Risotto is actually a traditional dish of the Lombardy region and was first made in Milan. The story behind it as actually pretty funny. In September 1574, the master artist, Valerio di Fiandra, working on the stained glass windows of Milan’s Duomo would mix saffron into their glaze to achieve a gold color. He did this so often his assistants used to joke about how next, they would be eating saffron. Fast forward to the wedding of Master Valerio’s daughter. As a joke, plates of saffron risotto appeared at the wedding banquet. Thus, the birth and immortalization of risotto.

Next time I find myself in Milan, perhaps I’ll surpass the pasta and opt for the risotto alla Milanese.
Well I’ve spent the decent part of a semester here so I figured I should write something about Bologna. Last night I was Skyping my mom and she asked me what my favorite Italian city has been. I had to think about it for a second because it was strange that the obvious answers of Florence or Rome didn’t come, but then I thought about Sunday night as I was getting off a four-hour train ride from Napoli and the Amalfi coast, bone-tired and freezing cold in the December air. As I was climbing down the three little stairs to the platform I turned back to my friend and said, “Thank god we’re home.”

This is my home, and it is an incredible feeling to belong to this Italian city enough to say that. Even better was getting back to my apartment half an hour later to find all eleven of my roommates chattering in the kitchen. They jumped up when they saw me to give me hugs and ask how my four-day trip had been as though I’d been gone for a month. They also saved me a piece of warm chocolate cake right out of the oven.

I figure a lot of people are interested in finding out about the different abroad programs or tamp down on the pre-departure anxiety of moving overseas. I was the exact same way, absolutely craving information about life in Bologna, so I’m going to talk a little about what my life is like here in between weekend mini-breaks to Nice or Napoli.

On weekday mornings I wake up and head to the centro, a half-hour walk but ten-minute bike ride with my lovely new bicicletta. I head to the little bar/café down the street from our program office, where I’ve made friends with Alessandro the bartender. He lets me sit at my table for hours with my thimble-sized cup of café macchiato and will come over when there’s a break between customers to show me pictures of his new Vespa or a dish he made practicing for his restaurant. I love to sit there reading, munching on a Nutella croissant, and listening to the best of Frank Sinatra.

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My classes are wonderful, and all completely in Italian. Right now I’m taking an 19th century Italian literature course called The Pathos of the Body, a contemporary history course of the new republic of Italy from 1948-2008, a writing course based on Italo Calvino’s short stories and fairytales, and a class at the University of Bologna called Semiotics of Art, which focuses on the scientific reading of symbols in paintings and their effect on the spectator.

On Wednesday afternoons I walk to a gorgeous apartment on a piazza, where I tutor two little girls in English. Beatrice is six and Angelica is eight and they are quite the sassy little ladies. Most of my time is spent tricking them into responding in English, drawing flashcards of apples and princesses and teaching them American pop songs.

On the weekends when I don’t travel, it’s fun to explore Bologna like I’m a tourist here. It’s so easy to take the city for granted so I try to do something new as often as I can. A few weeks ago some friends and I hiked up miles of porticos to the Sanctuary of San Luca, a gorgeous church overlooking the city. It’s a beautiful spot to sit and think, even if you’re not the slightest bit religious, and the hike up is worth it for both the church and the incredible pizzeria down the road from it.

Nights out are wonderful, and completely different depending on your mood. There’s the classy aperitivi place with giant Aperol spritzes and cheese plates with honey, fig jam, and warm bread or there’s the Irish bar with Guinness on tap and soccer flags covering the wood-paneled walls. There’s a wonderful jazz bar with Brazilian food where we saw an Ella Fitzgerald tribute concert, and a discoteca with special Erasmus nights for foreign students every Wednesday. It’s like being a kid in a candy shop!

Last but not least is the incredible food. Bologna is known as the food capital of Italy, quite the high praise and completely well earned. I love lunches of the pasta specials at Osteria dell'Orsa, dinners that weirdly always fall on Mondays at the famous Spacca Napoli pizzeria, and trips to trattorias all over town to compare tagliatelle, gnocchi, and Bologna’s famous tortellini. Then of course there’s the late night walks in the rain to get a bombolone donut filled with Nutella and mascarpone and the sunny afternoon stops at your favorite gelateria.

My favorite nights though, are the ones in my big apartment kitchen. On Tuesdays my foodie friends Ari and Alex will come over to try something new (current favorite is goat cheese and red pepper linguine), on nights when she doesn’t have soccer practice with the local women’s team my friend Evie will come over and make me eat vegetables before we watch New Girl, and then of course there’s Josh, universally loved by my roommates and much appreciated by me for his ability to eat four servings of whatever pasta dish I’ve invented that night. Dodging all my roommates in an intricate dance around our two stoves, teasing each other in Italian, forcing everyone to try our respective dishes with smug smiles, and then serving eight people at once from a large pot of my signature penne arrabbiata—it’s my heaven. Fondue night, burgers and beer night, “I have no idea what’s in my fridge but come over anyway” night, they’re the best.

It’s a wonderful life, and if you’re considering it all I can say is come!  

Bologna is the best thing that’s ever happened to me.
I am addicted to ice cream. Which is unfortunate, as I technically should be avoiding dairy at all costs (blame it on the lactose sensitivity). That, however, didn’t stop me from having a gelato every day for the six months I spent studying abroad in Italy. Every time I struggled to pick flavors, as if it were my last gelato ever. There are so many options, though, it can be incredibly overwhelming, especially if you don’t exactly know what flavors you’re choosing from. Here’s a list of some flavors you’ll likely come across:

- **Cioccolato fondente**: dark chocolate.
- **Nutella**: to state the obvious, Nutella. If you’re really into Nutella, I suggest you get this flavor. It’s sooo good. Just make sure you’re not getting a scoop of frozen Nutella (unless you’re into that sort of thing).
- **Bacio**: chocolate hazelnut. This flavor is named for the famous Baci candies that come from Perugia. It’s basically Nutella base with some hazelnuts mixed in.
- **Cioccolato all’arancia**: chocolate orange (as in dark chocolate gelato with orange flavor and/or candied orange peel).
- **Pistacchio**: pistachio. Fair warning, though, once you have pistacchio gelato, there’s no turning back…pistachio ice cream will never be the same.
- **Mandorla**: almond.
- **Nocciola**: hazelnut (sans chocolate).
- **Fior di latte**: literally flower of milk. It’s a subtly sweet cream flavor. You’re more likely to find this than vanilla.
- **Crema**: cream. It’s an egg custard flavor…don’t confuse it with vanilla!
- **Zabaione**: there’s no real direct translation for this one. It’s based off the dessert Zabaione and is made from egg yolks and sweet Marsala wine.
- **Cocco**: coconut (really good with cioccolato fondente, just saying).
- **Caffè**: coffee.
- **Amarena**: black cherry.
- **Zuppa Inglese**: English soup. The gelato version of the English dessert known as “trifle”. It has a custard flavored base with bits of cookies and a splash of sweet wine.
- **Malaga**: rum raisin.
- **Stracciatella**: again, no great translation. But this is the Italian equivalent of chocolate chip ice cream. It’s also delicious. And classic.
- **Cannella**: cinnamon!

These flavors can be found pretty much at every gelateria. All places have fruit flavored sorbetti. Of course, many gelaterie offer specialty flavors or regionally inspired ones (you can find ricotta flavored gelato in Bologna). Don’t be surprised, though, if you find yourself never wanting American ice cream after experiencing the bliss of Italian gelato.
We hope you enjoyed the fourth edition of Italianità, a creation of the Tufts Italian Society to promote the Italian culture and lifestyle on campus. If you’d like to contribute a photo or an article to upcoming issues, please contact us at: Tufts.italianclub@gmail.com

Grazie mille to everyone who wrote for this issue!

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We at the Italian Society hope you find yourself on one of these beautiful Pugliese beaches!