

Untold Italy Episode 89 - Harvest in Tuscany

This is the Untold Italy Travel podcast, and you're listening to episode number 89.

Ciao a tutti and Benvenuti to Untold Italy, the travel podcast, where you go to the towns and villages, mountains and lakes, hills and coastlines of Bella Italia. Each week your host Katy Clarke takes you on a journey in search of magical landscapes of history, culture, wine, gelato, and, of course, a whole lot of pasta. If you're dreaming of Italy and planning future adventures there, you've come to the right place.

Katy

Buon giorno! Ciao! Hi everyone,

It's Katy here dreaming of Italy and ready to share more beautiful stories from the bel paese with you.

But first, I wanted to take a pause and reflect over the past few months. During this time our podcast has grown and flourished and we've heard from some of you who have headed off on adventures of a lifetime.

Many of our listeners are American and Canadian and we are so happy for those of you who have been able to travel to Italy in the past few months. And more recently the Brits who've just recently had their travel restrictions lifted.

But, I have to admit, it's been with mixed feelings that we've watched so many people travel to Italy, enjoying their time in all our favorite places. Don't get me wrong, We are so happy for you and love seeing all your photos and memories in our Facebook group. But some of us are still not able to travel due to the ongoing pandemic and it's heartbreaking for those of us who would love to be there too.

So this is a special shout out to all of our Australian, New Zealand, and South African friends and all of you listeners around the world who are dreaming of Italy but can't be there just yet and those of you who are still a little nervous about traveling abroad. We need to be a little more patient, but I can feel change in the air and am hopeful things will improve for us all very soon. Stay with us as we journey to Italy virtually and you all know that when we finally get there it will be the sweetest arrival and trips full of the memories we wished for.

Speaking of hope, Recently I was chatting to my friend Arianna in Tuscany and was reminiscing about how lovely her part of the world is at this time of the year. I've been lucky enough to visit Tuscany in fall or autumn several times and it is a very special place in this season - full

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of harvest abundance, celebrations and gorgeous colours. So I thought we should record a podcast all about Tuscany in autumn for our listeners.

Arianna has been heard on Untold Italy a few times now and we love her enthusiastic insight into her home in Chianti just outside Florence. She and her husband Alessio run tours and experiences company KM Zero Tours and they are passionate about sharing the unique traditions, artisans and culture of their very special part of the world in any season. But today, we're talking about autumn...

Katy

Benvenuta Arianna Ciao. And welcome back to the Untold Italy podcast.

Arianna

Thank you so much, Katy, and for having me again. And ciao tutti from Toscana.

Katy

Oh it's always great to have you back on Untold Italy. How are things in Tuscany these days? Are you starting to see the seasons change already.

Arianna

Well, yeah. It's a beautiful time of the year actually. It's the end of summer, beginning of the fall season. So everyone is getting very excited about the grape harvest, which is going to happen in just a few weeks. So it's getting there and it's beautiful. The countryside is plenty of beautiful, juicy grapes, which are almost ready and beautiful colors. And then the figs are ready. So everyone is having figs and proscuttio and salami. Then we'll talk about that later as well. But it's a very exciting time of the year.

Katy

Oh, beautiful.

Arianna

Yeah.

Katy

So I really wanted to have you on the show today to chat about the fall or autumn and harvest time in Tuscany, because actually, this is the time that I've traveled there the most myself and I do think it's a really special time of year. And I wanted our visitors to know exactly why it's so special from someone who lived there. And obviously you do right in the heart of Chianti country. And so what do you think people can expect when they visit in the fall or the autumn time?

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Arianna

Well, it's one of my favorite times as well, for several reasons. For sure, days are still long and so temperatures are perfect. So it's warm during the day, like warm, but a nice kind of warm, not too hot during the day. And then it gets nice and cool during the night. The colors, they are wonderful. They start to - vineyards, they start slowly to get golden. And then again, the cuisine. It's plenty of seasonal recipes. The colors are beautiful. Sunsets are amazing. And the excitement of the people, the farmers here in the countryside, everything is about the nature and its rhythms.

Arianna

And so now it's basically designed to collect the gifts from the nature after a whole year of work. So imagine how excited people are in this time of year.

Katy

Amazing. And there's so many different crops around other obviously, you mentioned the figs and the grapes. And when you picture that Tuscan countryside, you can see those rolling kind of - it's yellow at this time of year and it's a really distinctive color. And it's so beautiful. It's hard to explain exactly that feeling you get because you've seen the pictures. If you've seen the pictures, it is like that. It's exactly like that. And they've got that sort of shimmery haze over the hills. And it's just so beautiful.

Katy

Yeah.

Arianna

No, it's very beautiful. Actually there's, you know, the fall or autumn season here. It's kind of a long season. And because it starts now and it goes on until, let's say, the end of November. And the more you go on through, let's say the fall season, the more colors and products that you have. So you begin now with, you know, like now the big protagonists are the grapes. That's why I mentioned the grape, because now it's all about getting ready for the grape harvest. And so you'll see all the grapes on the vines and farmers there. It's nice because we have been touring Chianti these days and farmers already getting out all their wine boxes getting ready for the harvest. It's so beautiful. They go and check if the level of sugar is the right one. So you can really feel it. Then we'll be having this kind of excitement and atmosphere for the whole month of September. Then we start in October, the mid of October we start with the olive harvest. And that's also an amazing time of year. I love it - olive trees. It's plenty of trees here in Chianti. It is pretty much equal. The production of olive oil is equal to the production of wine. And it's an amazing time of the year - olive harvest. It's all about excitement and the rewarding of having this such a precious olive oil. I will tell you more than

later. It's an amazing atmosphere. But also the new olive oil is so special. And then also in the late, starting from September, there's the truffles - another harvest. So starting let's say from now until the end of November, is it's possible to go in the woods. And it's so special because sometimes you go to search for truffles but you also come back home with some porcini, which is the other mushrooms amazing. And then also there's the saffron that some people may think saffron in Chianti?. And there's plenty of stuff from especially around San Gimignano. And it grows - it's pretty much at the same time of the olive trees. So people start to harvest the saffron around the mid of October and then until the end of November. So there's so much going on. So many harvests. And each of the harvest has a specific time of the year when it happened. So there's lot of excuses to come to Tuscany even more than once.

Katy

Oh, my goodness. I think I have to stay three months next time. This is fantastic. Yeah. I remember just a few years ago, I went there and we were driving along in the Val D'Orcia, actually and the vines are just dripping with grapes. It was September, actually. And they're just huge, juicy grapes. And, like, you know, I found this perfect shot of this, the grapes dripping with the cute little town in the background. And I was like, this is it. I made my husband pull over. This is the perfect Tuscan - stop, stop now!! It was just perfect. Oh, goodness. But I think, you know, people are celebrating the harvest, as you say, there's excitement. Do you want to talk about food? Do you want talk about the celebrations or should we talk about both? Because there's a lot of festivals at that time of year as well, isn't there?

Arianna

Yeah. It kind of harvest has a celebration, of course, which is within the family. Of course, if you have the opportunity to go right to the family, it will be invited to join this excitement in a more intimate way. But then there's also a way to participate in the celebration at a larger scale. Let's say, with this Sagre festival. So in September, now, starting from next week in Katy, there will be lots of wine festivals, of course, connected to the excitement of the harvest of the great harvest.

Arianna

So let's say September is known for wine festivals. There's one in Greve in Chianti, which is beautiful. It's called the Chianti Classico collection. It happens in the main square of Greve in Chianti, which is this cute little town in Chianti. And in the main Piazza, there's been represented by wine makers and said, so it's fun because you go there you a glass. They give you an empty glass. They have even the a little bag. They give you this little bag, which is a special bag for holding the glass. So it's very organized. And basically you go from one end to the other one. And the beautiful thing is that it's the wine producers himself giving you the wine. So it's not just about drinking is about learning about each place right from the family. So that's something I love. And then there's, of course, the food specialties. Then there's also

some artisans, the flag waivers and all these kind of things. It's an amazing atmosphere, drummers and live music. It's wonderful.

Arianna

But then it goes also into the food. So let's see, of course, again, September is more wine. But then you start also having the new olive oil and the truffles and the porcini. So the late September October is also about some sagre, like food festivals and basically the sagre are these food festivals on the streets. And you have a theme. And then they create a menu all around that theme. So for example, they have the sagre de porcino and so it will be basically from appetizers, and then the first courses and second courses, everything around the porcini mushrooms. So imagine the porcini ravioli , porcini risotto and all these kind of things. So with the porcini and all the fried porcini is amazing. And then also you have maybe a sagre tartufo. So everything will be all around tartufo. You have the sagra la castagne, because also the Castagne - the chestnuts are a specialty from that time of year. And we have the roasted chestnuts that usually it's the end of October, beginning of November. So they put this fire and then they roast the chestnuts right in the square. And also we have this special kind of dessert, which is called the Castagnaccio, which is cake dessert that we eat early at that time of year, which is made actually with chestnut flour and then new olive oil and then raisins and then pine nuts. It's delicious. It's gluten free it's vegan, so you can please everyone with that cake. And it's delicious. And we enjoy it at that time of the year. Earlier in September, earlier in the full season, we do have another specialty, which is the Schiacciata di Uva. I don't know if you ever heard about it. Schiacciata is like forcaccia right?

Katy

Right.

Arianna

It's like a teared, but in this case it's sweet. This is a cake we will start eating now until, let's say, the end of the grape harvest. It's flat bread, but it's sweet because you add sugar and then you put the grapes into it.

Katy

Oh!

Arianna

So you put grapes into the dough. So basically the tradition said that when you were going to harvest the grapes, some of the grapes, maybe they were not perfect for wine because they were too small. Or, you know, there was a variety which was the uva fragola, which was a very tiny little grapes which were not ideal. Let's say, for the wine. And so the ladies, they would go and harvest them and then they would make cakes so they would bake with these

grapes. They would just incorporate these grapes into the dough and then they would put in the oven and a lot of sugar, other grapes. You finish to Cook it. And it's delicious. So it's called the grape foccaccia, and we have it at this time of the year. It's a seasonal is delicious.

Katy

That does sound delicious. Yum! And you get that from, like bakeries or the pasticceria is where you get them from?

Arianna

Yeah. Every bakery, starting from now until the end of the month, every bakery. But also, if you go to a lot of restaurants or even at home, we love it because it's a simple cake. But by tasting the specialties, you can really feel the whole atmosphere of the harvest. So it's a wonderful specialty. Another big protagonist, let's say, of the fall/autumn season is the Cinghiale, which is the wild boar. There are so many really - there's Ribolitta, which is this Tuscan soup is, let's say, the autumn season is, of course, about the kales and cabbages and we have this kind of particular kind of cabbage, the kale, Tuscan kale We made this Ribolitta, which is this very Tuscan winter soup, like winter/fall winter soup, which is with Tuscan kale and Cannelini beans. And then, of course, there's the olive nouvo, which is the big bread, which is the new one oil, which is everywhere, let's say, starting from October until Christmas time.

Katy

So the new olive oil is at that the freshly press, a very fresh pressed olive oil. Is that the special?

Arianna

Yeah. So the new olive oil - so what happens is for the wine. We do have also some vino novello. We call it vino novello. So the new wine, usually for San Martino, at the beginning of November. But let's say the Vino Novello, so the new wine iso -s we do lots of sagre festivals about the new wine as well. But it's more simple. So it's nothing that takes more like the new wine is not aged. So it's just for fun to be enjoyed. But it's not considered, let's say - it's a very simple wine. The olive oil, when you talk about the new olive oil, you talk about the highest level of quality for the olive oil. In the sense of the olive oil, the more you wait, the more let's say the olive oil becomes flat and it loses its characteristics. So the best for the olive oil. Let's say the earlier you in buy the olive oil is the best it is. And the new olive oil. It's called the Olive Nuove. And it is basically when it's fresh is best, you just go in the fields, you harvest the olives and then it goes to the mill and in a few hours, the olive oil is ready to be enjoyed. And it has this very bright green color. It has this peppery taste spicy. It's so rich. It's amazing. And then it basically loses his a little bit naturally after a few months. So already starting from let's say February, olive harvest happens in the late October and then the whole month of November. Usually, we talk about Olive Nuovo from, of course, the moment it is

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harvested until I would say the beginning of February and then already starting from February, March, it loses a little bit. It gets milder. So the color starts to get a little bit more yellow and it gets milder. So you lose that kind of richness. So that's something you can enjoy only at that time of the year.

Katy

So it's got a real intensity of flavor. Is that what you're saying? Yeah. Okay. And do you just have it on its own with bread, or is it something that - it is incorporated into different dishes?

Arianna

So one of the things old Tuscan people are addicted to during the olive harvest, is Fettunta? I don't know if you've ever heard of this name. It's called the Fettunta is made of two different words. The first one is Feta, which is the slice like a feta de pani is a slice of bread. So Fettunta - unta means oily. So it's an oily slice of bread. It sounds very simple, but it's one of the most delicious things on Earth. You basically just grill a slice of bread and then you put a little bit of garlic and then you put new olive oil on top. And it's like old Tuscan people could just dine on that for, like, a month.

Arianna

Another great way to taste in new olive oil is with cannellini beans, because again, it's a very delicate flavor. The cannellini beans, they have a delicate neutral taste. So it's the best way to enhance the richness of the new olive. Oil with, like, boil potatoes or with also the Pinzimonio. I don't know if you've ever heard of these words. This is also something very popular at that time of year, the Pinzimonio. And it's basically just some raw vegetables, like raw fennel or raw carrots. Usually, they give you several kinds of raw vegetables, and then they give you these vegetables right next to a little bowl with new olive oil. And you need to dip these vegetables in the new olive oil, and then you eat it and it's delicious. Let's say that's also considered a very good way to taste the new olive oil. And then, of course, again on the Tuscan kale and on the chickpeas, like the garbanzo. And then all on everything on any kind of meat and kales. And the new olive oil is really something like from October until Christmas time is the new one in is on every single thing.

Katy

Well, I mean, it is super healthy, too, right? When you were saying- like you were going through everything - there was just so many different vegetables and legumes and different types of fresh products that you're using it on and everything's in abundance, I guess, you know, you just have to soak it all up and try everything. But I really I think it's really interesting - people have this perception that Italian food is very like pasta and pizza - which, of course, we love, right? But yeah, as you just described, we can have all these many different vegetable dishes and even if people are eating vegan style, which I could never do

because I just love cheese too much. But yeah, you can totally have that really rich food experience there, whatever your diet is really can't you?

Arianna

Yeah. There are so many different specialties that are not just about the pasta and pizza, especially in Tuscany - pizza is more from the south of Italy, of course, we love pizza, but let's say, Tuscan specialties for sure, we have so many other recipes to enjoy, which, of course, especially in the fall season, is plenty of these vegetables, of course, the mushrooms, the truffles as well and the saffron. So yeah, it's very particular things, and we love to mix them with them, whatever - even the Porcini Fritti, for example, is basically just porcini mushrooms and then you fry them and you put a little bit of salt. And they are one of the most delicious things on Earth. So, yeah, you can really create so many different recipes using one specialty. So in the end, there's kind of food specialties for everyone. So from the risotto, for somebody who cannot have gluten to the porcini frito for somebody who doesn't eat pasta, then, of course, the pasta with porcini or with truffles and then the beef steak for the meat lovers and the cinghiale. So there is really every sort of specialty - especially at that time of the year.

Katy

Oh, my goodness. It's just nonstop feasting. It sounds amazing. And I think the key here as well is if you're visiting Tuscany at that time, you must must must ask what is in season and what's recommended if you're eating out because you don't want to be asking for artichokes, which is a spring vegetable because they won't be fresh. You want to get those fresh porcini mushrooms and have them delicious in your risotto or your pasta. I think it's a really key thing to remember when you're visiting Italy, and that can be hard as well, because sometimes you really just want to try that thing that's only available in spring, but it's really what you'll find is it's not worth it. I think you're better off sticking with what's seasonal and you'll have the most incredible food experiences. Now tell me about the harvest of the olives, actually. Is it done by hand mostly, or is it done with a lot of machines these days? How does that work?

Arianna

So everything is done by hand. It's a team work. Basically what happens during the olive harvest. You put a net on the soil and then there is at least two people because one is harvesting and the other is busy standing and combing the olives from the lower, let's say branches and so that the olives fall in the net. And then usually - there's at least one person who climbs on the tree. Because olive trees are pretty big. They're not like vineyards. They are proper trees, you know. So we harvest. We prune them at the end of the winter to keep them small, but they are still quite big. So there's usually somebody who climbs or on a ladder or just for the one more adventures at the climb on the tree so they can reach the higher branches. And then they comb the olives, which fall on this net. And now, thanks to technology, we do have a sort of electric comb, which is very useful in the sense that you have basically this farmers - they have now a backpack and inside the backpack they have some batteries. And then they have

this long electric comb. It still combs very gently, so it's fine for the tree, it doesn't really harm anything, but it's very let's say it's higher than a normal arm so they can reach even the highest branches. And then the olives fall in this net and you need to collect all the olives. And then you pour them into a case. And then when you reach about 20 different cases, you go to the oil mill and they put all these cases into one big, big case. You have, of course, each big case has a number, so you know that it's going to be your olive harvest because of course, everyone is so jealous of other olive oil. Everyone thinks that it's olive oil is better than the neighbors, because the thing is you bring your olives to a public mill, like for the wine, each farmer has its own little cellar, but for the olive oil, usually you go to a public mill. So when you go there and you bring your olives, they put it all big cases into one big case, which has a number and you know that you're the number 26, for example, and at that point you follow the whole process where at the beginning they mash. Of course, they wash the olive, they remove the leaves, and then they mash them together with the pit, together with the little stone inside. And then there is one kind of machine which slowly turns and it creates like a olive paste. And then there is one last machine, which is like a centrifuge, which goes very, very, very fast and basically it divides the watery part from the oily part - that's, of course, the most important part. And then the oily part goes through some tubes and it goes finally out with the last machine, which is the one from where the new olive oil comes out. And usually this whole process is take only 1 hour low temperatures. This is why the reason why we call Extra Virgin Olive Oil - it's the first press with very low temperatures. The maximum is 27 Celsius degrees, because you want to have a temperature which is cold enough to keep the same characteristic of the olive oil without altering, because with higher temperatures, you would extract more juice, but then you would ruin the characteristics. And at that point is you see all this beautiful olive oil coming from the tank. And the farmers are so excited that they get there right with their piece of bread because they want to taste is like - the most of the excitement. I remember when I was a child. And now it happens a little less. It's less common. But when I was a child, I remember going I always had olive groves myself and I would go with my family to press the olives. And then right at the mill, I remember they would like a fireplace. And we could bring sausages and our own food from home. And then we would stay there in the mill and we would do a sort of barbecue there. And then as soon as the new olive oil was coming out, we would just cook with the olive oil and share the food with the other people waiting. Maybe the next appointment, they were waiting and it was cold. And so maybe at night. And so we would just enjoy the fire and the food altogether. It was one of my best memories.

Katy

That sounds like a beautiful tradition. Oh, how lovely. And now I just think I was when you were talking, I was thinking, Well, what happens with the leftover olives? I mean, because I know the Italian tradition is like, we don't really waste a lot of stuff. So once the oils press, what happens with the remaining olives?

Arianna

Yeah, actually, that's a good point, because there's more than - imagine that from one olive, if you are lucky on a good year, maybe the 15% become olive oil and you have 85% of waste. So it's a big amount of waste. You only use a little part. That's why - that's another thing, so many people don't understand all the work that is behind a bottle of olive oil, and they are ready to spend quite a lot of money for wine, but they're not ready to spend a lot of money for olive oil, which is set because actually there's so much work behind a bottle of olive oil and just a little part of this - so much waste and just a little bit of the precious olive oil for its oliver. So with the rest, of course. Yes. You're right, Italiants not to waste anything so basically, I told you at the beginning that it's the very first step further in the olive oil is about mashing the olives all together, also with the stone with the pit inside. So let's say with the other step, this stone is removed because of course, then only the oil part goes into the final step and the rest is basically the flesh, the pit, the stone and the watery part. So the watery part and the skins - let's say that they are collective and they are processed to do, like bio gas for the cars, like they create. I don't know how. But let's say they are able to create, like a bio gas and an organic sort of for the cars. With the stone, with the hard part, they separate them and they let them dry. And then as they have a little oily part, still what they do, they create, like, sort of pallet for heating the houses as well. So it's called ,Nocciolino and it's a very common way here in the countryside to heat in the stove because they burn very easily because they still have a little bit of the oily part and its wood. It's perfect for heating. No, we try not to have any waste.

Katy

That's fantastic. I love this. It's so great for the environment, too, just using everything that's available and making delicious things and then having the heating. I just love it. It's fantastic. Now, is there any way for people/visitors to experience that sort of process and to go and see that or go and see the wine harvest? I mean, I'm just thinking I'd love to do it, but I wouldn't want to get in the way, do you know what I mean? Because obviously it's very busy and people are obviously they've got their processes that they need to do, but I think it's really fascinating process and be great to go see it. .

Arianna

Yeah What we suggest is always to - most of the family farm, they are small and of course, as you said, the time of the year is busy. But, for example, if we know very well some are our friends and we know that kind of world because we do have a little olive grove ourself and a few vineyards as well. So let's say we help, I think the work of a guide, especially in that time of the year of let's say, a local expert kind of guide, is extremely important because it makes it possible for travelers to assist the whole process without interfering too much with the work of the farmers. So the farmers can do their work. And then there's somebody like us or in any case, the local experts who are explaining what they're doing and doing all the - sharing all the work. And we always started from now until the Christmas time. We have always in our itineraries visit to this now to learn about the grape harvest. Next, we will be

going with some guests to the wine festivals and we'll be with them so that we help them to understand the whole process. I understand that going on your own, especially if you don't book in advance, it can be tricky because maybe sometimes they arrive at one place and no one showed up because they're busy doing their own things. We suggest, in any case, first of all, to book in advance at least a few days, because the last minute may not work for the small little farms. And of course, it is even better if you have somebody with local from the place introducing you to the whole system, for example, in the late fall, so let's say October, we take guests to the oil mill, and again, they're busy processing all the olives, but we explain the whole process and then we can taste the new olive oil together. And of course, it's all about trying to respect the other ones work, but at the same time learning and being able to assist and to experience yourself.

Katy

There's no better way to appreciate it. And I think if you've ever tasted this small batch olive oil, then you go home and you buy, you know, they've got these in Australia. And I think in the United States as well. They have these big bottles of Spanish olive oil, and it's industrially produced. And you can tell, right. I mean, we have an industrial produced olive oil here and small producers here. And the difference is absolutely phenomenal like the taste, the pepperiness, you can taste the ground and you can taste wherever it's been. And it's delicious. And I think what an amazing experience to go home having experienced that.

Arianna

Yeah, we try as much as possible to create hands on, immersive experiences. So let's say also for the truffles in others, the possibilities to go in the woods and search for truffles. For the grape harvest, if there's some festival going on, we always make sure that we include a day there and we always go to the little vineyards and they can see the process like they also can see how also the next step, what happens in the fields and then also what happens in the cellar. For example, going to a seller when it's a grape harvest time, is fun because you actually can see the wine when it's fermenting and when it does the fermentation and you see all the pop pop pop - you can see it when it's bubbling - it's so much fun. You can see how the yeasts are working and how the wine is alive in the time of the year. And also we have one of our most recent experiences also to go to a little winery and they allow guys to pick some of the grapes together with farmers, and they can understand they can help them to also bottle a bottle of wine. So to understand how to put the cork and so to really go to assist and to try yourself when it's possible, of course, to fully understand, let's say the whole process, of course, in the olive oil. I love this time of the year of the season. And I love as much as possible to have guests enjoying and being part of this as much as possible.

Katy

Yeah. I mean, I think it's the best souvenir those type of memory, if you never forget that and it's just special and you can probably get - who knows, they might make a bottle of wine for you, you can pick up and you can just say "I helped make this wine". How amazing.

Arianna

Exactly. Yeah. Yeah. It's a great memory. And I said it's like precious to have the memories that have helped a process - to have been part of that process even if it is just for a few hours.

Katy

And I think it's hard to overestimate how difficult it is to find out how some of these festivals and sagre and activities - it's very difficult to find out online. Like, you really need to know someone local to help you find out. I found out one of my favorite stories about traveling in Italy because I found out about sagre sort of leaning up against a wall and looking at a poster on the wall and seeing there was a sagre. And I was like, what is this? What is this I see before me? And I was really - I had no idea that that was happening. There was no announcement on Facebook or anything like that. No, you really have to know someone local, but goodness me, what a special experience it is. And I talk about it a lot on these podcasts. But if you can find a way to connect that way, it is really a beautiful thing.

Arianna

I agree. It's a wonderful, but as I said, it's hard to get to know them through another country because they're not that - all these people, they are not that good in social media, and they just do a very basic work in terms of promotion. Also, because it's mostly words of mouth, and then they don't have the interest to make it a big event because mostly it's volunteers. Imagine - like we were on sagre in Montepulciano a week ago and it was so cute because they were the kids serving us. But they were children because it's all volunteer. No one gets really money, the money they got imaging the sagre - they have a very simple menu. Usually again, everything is around one theme. And then you have a set menu. You just get to choose. And then you very simple service. So you have these long tables. It's not fancy. It's a very let's say simple, genuine, authentic food. And then you have these volunteers who are having fun and enjoying the day together with a family member. So for example, we had this lovely child, probably he was like ten years old or something, you know. He got so excited to serve us, he was like, okay, so do you want coffee now? You want coffee later? We were like oh no later, we had just started, we just had the appetizers, and he was so excited that he wanted to go ahead and serve us the coffee. We're like now let's wait a little bit. Let's say their goal is to enjoy their time. That's the beauty of the sagre. So they don't really have the aim to become a big event. And so they don't invest that much money into the marketing because it's mostly something that is connected to the village and it's mostly for the local fool who already know somehow. So that's the beauty of it is that you don't feel like a tourist there in the sense that it's just about the locals that makes it so special but at the same time, of course, it's really hard unless you have, of course, somebody who is born or is from that place who can know in advance and ask for the extra date and everything. So it makes it for sure. I like things like everything in every other place. If you want to travel deep, the best way you have is to do through the people who live in that country because they will open some doors. They have

some keys which are not in a guide book. Is it difficult that they are to have all this information from another country?

Katy

Yeah, for sure. And I think what you're describing is it's really more of a celebration of all the hard work that they've done to create these products, to get the olive oil pressed, to get the wine, pressed, to harvest the truffles and porcini as well. So it's a celebration of that completion of that work. But what I really love is we've got these generations of people involved and the children, too. So no doubt, just as you remember the experience of having the barbecue with the olive mill of this child that was serving you coffee (with your appetizers) he's going to remember that, too. And hopefully that really makes those traditions strong they and they continue for a long time. I think it's a really beautiful thing. Yeah. Yeah.

Arianna

No, it really what makes it special. So then again, like you can experience through a *sagre* or a festival or just through being invited in somebody's home and just celebrate with the families having the nonna, the mamma and the little children also united by this kind of celebration and each of them playing it's own part. So it's a very special time of the year. I really hope to be able to share it today and in the future with also travelers from other countries, because it's a wonderful way to experience, I think Tuscany and our country.

Katy

Oh, that's beautiful. Now, before we go, I just wanted to just have any particular towns that really stand out to be particularly beautiful or areas near you that you would definitely visit in the autumn time or in fall that just look spectacular.

Arianna

Well, every single little village and little town here in the country set it looks special during the time of the year, because again, it's that you have these beautiful views of all the vineyards and they start to get cold and all these beautiful colors. And then these festivals, it really depends on the month. And, for example, the Chianti villages of Panzano and Greve- if you travel in September, for example, they have all these events and they have flags all over and they become so colorful. It's very beautiful, let's say, because of the festivals, maybe the last for only two or three days, but then for more time, they just keep other decorations which make them very beautiful. Also, for example, in San Gimignano, there is a festival also around September as well. Around the days is also very beautiful. It's all about, I think, trying to build a scenery according to again, the festivals and things that are happening. But let's say every town is, of course, beautiful, especially the small little towns, which are mostly connected to the wine and to the olive oil. The bigger towns like Siena/Florence, they are always beautiful, but you don't have that kind of feeling of the wine. And because, of course, they are more like bigger towns. In the smaller villages, you get more the excitement and the

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atmosphere that maybe makes it special in that time of year. But it depends. I think the fall season and this is a wonderful time to visit because it's less crowded and it's less hot than the summertime. And again, I don't have a favorite, but for sure, smaller villages, probably they give the best.

Katy

Yeah. I actually was in Pienza a few years ago and they had all these beautiful garlands of flowers on the building and they had floral arrangements in the Center Piazza. It was so beautiful, like there's a lot of attention to detail had been put in. I was very you could tell it was the harvest and it was done very, very well. And there was no plastic. It was all fresh and obviously local freshly cut flowers and grasses.

Arianna

And what have you talking about, Pienza? This weekend they would be having a great festival. We cannot go unfortunately this year. We are planning for next year the festival, the pecorino. So the Pecorino di Pienza. It would be very good fun. They have lots of stands offering cheeses and then again, music and the flag, like all the beautiful medieval place with the flags. They throw the flags in the air and then also they do to a sort of game with Pecorino format that they need to arrive. But they just throw the pecorino form to go through the floor and it has to reach and then there's a winner. And then I think, of course, so many recipes with Pecorino, and it's happening in these days. I think it starts in two days and it will last for a few days now. It's all about this festival. There's plenty of them. It's really difficult. Let's say if you are like me that I love all this kind of thing. So I'm always like, I wish I could go. But next year.

Katy

That is definitely that Pecorino cheese festival, because I think the game is that they roll the cheese down the hill or something. Yeah?

Arianna

Yeah, yeah. They roll in the main piazza, which is flat. They need to roll this pecorino form which has a circus shape. They need to roll it. Alessio and I, we have just been the past weekend has been amazing to the Bravio delle Botti, Montepulciano, the sagre we went to and there was children offer in case with the other site. For any case, that is another amazing event that happens at the end of August, it's all about rolling the barrels. And then there was the winner and they need to roll this barrels through the whole town of Montepulciano. The thing is Montepulciano is quite steep. So that is really - they need to be strong. It has been amazing. We have been it was my first time because actually, I'm trying to get more and more involved in this kind of festival because I would love for the future to offer those kind of experiences more and more because they're really unique and they're so special. So it has

been amazing. So really, yeah. I really hope that we could transmit a little taste of the excitement we are experiencing in this week.

Katy

You definitely you really have. I just love chatting to you about Tuscany and your passion for your local area. It's just beautiful. So there were probably so many people now excited to maybe join you one day. How can they stay in touch with you? And maybe one day come and do some cheese rolling or some barrel rolling in Tuscany.

Arianna

So several ways - we of course have website which is www.kmzerotours.com And we are also on Instagram and Facebook. So we share some daily updates, and delicious stories, and we try to keep in touch with new and old friends from all over the world.

Katy

Yeah. So actually, just last weekend, you were sharing these flag waving and the festival, and it was really spectacular and fun. And there was lots of drums and beautiful festival. It was gorgeous.

Arianna

Yeah, it was amazing. Again, it was that one in Montepulciano But yeah. So you can follow us on our social medias. It's easy. You will find us everywhere at K M Zero Tours. And yeah, I was to find it there and hopefully to be able to welcome your in Tuscany soon - to experience all this together.

Katy

I hope so. I hope so. It's absolutely a beautiful part of the world. And everyone should go there and hang out with Arianna and Alessio. Absolutely so grazie mille Arianna thank you so much for joining us again on Untold Italy.

Arianna

Thank you so much Katy, for this opportunity. And I wish you all a wonderful autumn and ciao.

Katy

Tuscany at this time is truly magical. There's nothing quite like those rolling hills glowing and golden after harvest, the sun lighting them up. It's nothing short of perfection. I'd love to be there joining in the olive harvest barbecue and tasting the freshly pressed oil. And, you probably can tell I've been dreaming about that cheese festival in Pienza for the longest time.

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If you'd like to know more about the places, dishes and events Arianna mentioned then you'll find them in the show notes at untolditaly.com/89 along with all the details of how you can enjoy those experiences together with Arianna and KM Zero tours which I can assure you, are just as wonderful as they sound.

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