

Untold Italy Episode 96 - A Wander through Trastevere

This is the Untold Italy Travel podcast, and you're listening to episode number 96.

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

Trastevere is a charming district just over the river Tiber from the centro storico. Here you wander cobbled streets draped in vines and eat at trattorie that have been around for decades. It's a neighborhood whose character endures despite definitely being a place where tourists like to visit. And a good reason for that lies in the character of its people.

Those of you who have visited Italy will know that there is something about the Italian people and culture that's so enchanting. Sure the sights and landscapes are mind blowing but it just wouldn't be the same without the Italian people and you'll definitely find that character and the essence of being Italian in Trastevere.

Today we're talking to my friend Maria Pasquale, an award winning travel and food journalist and author who has peeled back the layers of what it means to be Italian in her newly released book "How to be Italian." Maria lives in Trastevere and I've asked her onto the show to talk about her beautiful neighborhood and how you can find what it means to be Italian in its streets, cafe bars and pizzas.

Katy

Benvenuta Maria. Ciao, and welcome back to the Untold Italy podcast.

Maria

Thanks so much, Katy. Thanks for having me.

Katy

I am so thrilled to have you here with us today, Maria, and to be talking to you in beautiful Roma about your wonderful neighborhood Trastevere. How is it there today?

Maria

It's great. It's just after midnight here. So, but the neighborhood is still buzzing because anyone that's visited Trastevere would know that it's this beautiful, quiet slice of Italian community during the day. But at night it's where Romans and all the young kids come and drink and eat and dance the night away. So even just walking home around midnight, I mean, the neighborhood, it seems like it'd be about probably around 9:00 pm or something Melbourne time on a Saturday night like it's just pumping. Great.

Katy

It sounds like it is how it's always been, despite the challenges of the last 18 months.

Maria

It has and it is - it is quite different. It is slightly different from the Trastevere that most people will know, and from the Trastevere that I left. As you know, I was in Melbourne for 16 months through the pandemic. And so I think you notice those differences, but the charm and the spirit and the vibe of the neighborhood are still alive and well. There are some differences that you'll see, especially during the day, with queues everywhere. That's one thing I've noticed in Italy, I think it's the salumeria or the cheese shop or the bakery. There are so many more people it seems on the street and all reasonably distanced where possible. But there are so many limits on capacity in terms of the number of people that can enter a shop at the one time or the number of people that can enter and stand at the bar and grab a drink and those sorts of things. So the landscape or the aesthetic of it looks a little bit different, but it's still Trastevere.

Katy

Oh, that's so good to hear now, Maria, before we start delving into what makes Trastevere such a quintessential Roman and Italian neighborhood, can you remind our listeners who may have missed the episode we recorded last year about your story and your background and how you came to be living there.

Maria

Okay. I am an Australian, as you can tell by my accent - an Australian food and travel writer, and I've been based in Rome for ten years. So I moved here in 2011. My parents were both born in Italy. They're born in Abruzzo in a small town in the Aquila province, and so they immigrated to Australia over 50 years ago. I was born and raised in Melbourne, but I fell in love with Italy when I was a child. We used to travel back and forth quite regularly because my paternal grandparents never emigrated. So we had quite a strong connection to Italy. But I always say it was around when I was 16 that I became infatuated with the culture, the people, the language, with something that I like/kind of describe as a beautiful chaos. It was so different to what I was used to in Australia, because, as you know, Italy really is - it's not for the faint of heart, but it really electrifies the senses. And so I fell in love with the place,

and I traveled here almost every year throughout my 20s and 30s and then thought, Well, I'm either going to keep talking about living in Italy, or I'll give it a go. And I moved here in September 2011, and the rest is history.

Katy

It's such a great story, and it really must fill your heart with a lot of joy to be back walking those streets. Okay - listeners, I invited Maria on to the show today, as she's just published a new book, *How to Be Italian* which is fantastic - congratulations.

Maria

Thank you so much.

Katy

It's the follow up to her debut, *I Heart Rome*, and it delves into all the aspects of Italian life that make it, well, uniquely Italian. And so I believe that if you spend a little time in Maria's neighborhood when you visit Rome, you get a little taster of many of those things that she mentions in the book. So, Maria, let's have a chat about your neighborhood Trastevere. Can you give us an overview of this neighborhood - I'm curious what makes it so special?

Maria

Okay. Well, I'll start from the name, which a lot of people - well they might know, but I know that some people that come to visit often have difficulty pronouncing it. Okay? So the easiest way I always say is to remember the Tiber River. Okay. So the Tiber River that cuts through Rome is the Tevere - so *Tras Tevere* in Latin means across the Tiber across the river. So Trastevere. It's on the left bank of Rome, so it's on the same side as the Vatican. So you have on the right bank of Rome, you have the major monuments of the historical center. So the Trevi fountain, the Colosseum, the Pantheon and then just across the river, you have, if you look at some old maps of the city, you will notice that Trastevere was never really considered a part of Rome, so it was conquered by the Romans, and then they kind of gave it up. They didn't really want to do anything with it. So on a lot of old Roman maps, you'll see *Roma et Trastevere*. So never really considered a part of the city, which is quite funny, because nowadays, if you tell anyone in Rome that lives in Trastevere that it's not the center, they would completely disagree because it's a crucial part of what the city is today. I mean, it's probably a ten minute walk to the Pantheon from where I live in Trastevere. So it's across the river - it kind of gives it this different feel or a different vibe. But it's so much a part of the center of Rome and being on the river, that's really what has given this neighborhood, I guess, its identity because its origins lie in the working class. Being on the river was where all the merchants used to arrive. So the initial groups of people that settled in Trastevere were sailors and people that worked at the docks. Like I said, a working class neighborhood that always had this separate identity, which it retains to this day. Trastevere is completely self sufficient in that there are hospitals here, there are schools here, there are over 40 churches

in the neighborhood. Urban myth in the neighborhood is that some of the older people that live here (because there are still a lot of Romans that live in this neighborhood, even though it has become quite touristic over the last 20 years). Rumor has it, or we should say, urban myth has it that some of them say that until the 50s and 60s, they'd never even crossed the river because they had everything they needed in Trastevere. Like I said, there are restaurants, there are bars. You could spend the day. You could spend weeks here without actually having to cross the river. It's this dynamic place with a lot of heart. And like I said, during the day, you could walk around. It feels like the old Rome, so it's ivy hanging off the walls, the ochre walls of Rome, the cobblestone streets, and at night it really does come alive with the Romans and tourists, foreigners coming to eat and drink.

Katy

It is a really magical place. It's got a really different energy. It's fun and it's more fast paced, I think, than central Rome. I really love it because it's a really great contrast. Now, in your book, you talk about Italians are fairly superstitious and culturally religious. Do you see that around Trastevere?

Maria

You do. And these are the sorts of things that I guess tie it to the rest of Rome or the rest of Italy. But there are a number of religious shrines in Trastevere - just around the corner from where I live, there's a Virgin Mary on the wall, and sometimes they're not at eye level. So I do always say to people look up, which has become such a common, like hashtag on social media. But the very reason for that is that look up down around and all around when you're walking through Rome because there are so many of those details that you might miss if you're not looking for them. There's also, I think, in terms of shrines and religion, Santa Maria Trastevere, which is the main Basilicata in this neighborhood, is a beautiful Basilicata and is the first Church in the world to be dedicated in the name of the Virgin Mary. And so on the bell tower for anyone visiting Trastevere, be sure to look up to the bell tower because there is a beautiful mosaic of the Virgin Mary. In terms of pride and identity, I guess superstition could come into it as well. But each year, as I said earlier, the neighborhood has this unique identity and people from Trastevere - if they're around the world and somebody asks them where they're from, they will often say or especially at least in Italy, I should say they will always say they're Trasteverino. They would say that before they say they are Romano because they're super proud of being from this neighborhood. So proud that there is a festival here each year in July. And it's called Festa de Noantri, La Festa de Noantri - us/others. Okay. So just to give you an indication, if anyone thinks that Trastevere doesn't have this kind of (it's almost like this chip on their shoulder, to be honest), they're very much "we're not part of Rome", even though they are. But they're not - like they're going to try and keep this identity thing going. And so each year they have this festival where they carry the Madonna at the end of the two week celebration, they carry her along the river and the superstition around that is that making sure that it all goes well every year, which is quite common with festivals in Italy. Even in Abruzzo, they carry the Madonna at Easter and they say that if someone drops

her or if somebody trips during the procession, it's a bad omen and it means there's going to be an earthquake that year. And it is a very seismic part of Italy that has had many earthquakes. Unfortunately, in Aquila the part Abruzzo where my family are from. So, yes, superstition is a huge thing in terms of/is a huge part of Italian culture.

Katy

Yeah, it really is. Well, you wouldn't want to drop that. And they are very heavy those floats.

Maria

They're extremely heavy.

Katy

These guys are carrying it. They can only walk like 20 steps, can't they? Or even that - at a time before they have to put it down.

Maria

Exactly. I wouldn't want to have the responsibility of having caused an earthquake or something - by tripping/by not being able to carry the pillar properly.

Katy

Oh, goodness. So how do we see Italian daily life play out in Trastevere? You mentioned before that during the day. You've got that really nice rhythm of people going about their business. Can you share some places where people can see how the Italians or the Trasteverion carrying out their daily business?

Maria

I think that one of the cornerstones of the Italian character identity is the market. Or especially if you're talking about food. We often say that Italian food/Italian cuisine begins in the market, in contrast to French cuisine, which begins in the kitchen. And that's no disrespect to how fine French cuisine is, but it's perhaps a little bit more traditionally focused on technique. And Italy is all about the produce in that market and the market here in this neighborhood, there's probably more than one. I think there's a main one and then there's a couple of smaller ones, which is a beautiful display of Italian community, but also Italian culture. So each quarter of the city, still to this day, has a fresh food market. It might not run every day like it used to decades ago. It might not be as big as it used to be, but you'll find at least a few stands in each neighborhood at least one day a week. So in Trastevere the main market is in Piazza San Cosimato, and it runs six days a week from probably about seven in the morning till two in the afternoon. And the thing I love most about it is that you can just even from afar as you're walking into the market just to look at the stands, even if you don't see exactly what's put out there. But just by the colors, you can tell what season it is because

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you can see what fruits are on display or what vegetables are no longer on the stands that might have been there last week. But we're seeing that now because we've just moved into autumn, even though we've had a ridiculously cold snap in Rome. But those sorts of things, seeing the older Italians bartering at the market, watching someone prepare artichokes or prepare vegetables for a minestrone because they sell them already cupped and they're not processed, and it's not a commercial bag. But it's something that they do in the market, which is quite common. I'd say the market. Also the bar. I mean, the bar is a beautiful display of Italian community. It can be a bit confronting if you don't know what to do when you get into the bar and you would know, Katy, that you've got to get your scontrino at the bar and pay for that first and then you go up to the counter. You could kind of do it vice versa if they know you. But I think that the clinking of the plates and the cups and just the way the barista moves around the bancone is a great display of how to be Italian.

Katy

Wonderful. Do you have a favorite bar that you can share with our listeners where you can see all of those things happening?

Maria

I think - look, the neighborhood institution in Trastevere is San Calisto. Like I said, this neighborhood is a working class neighborhood, and that's really retained that feel. And all the local workers head there, and a lot of people head there in the morning. But also it's not just the morning having your coffee in Italy. I mean, any excuse, really for a coffee. I write in the book that even in terms of punctuality, Italians are not renowned for (depending on where you are on the boots, of course, it kind of changes), but if you turn up late to a meeting or to a birthday, if you said that you stopped off to have a coffee on the way, I mean, that's totally acceptable. Anytime is a good time to stop for coffee. But yeah, I'd say San Calisto is probably the neighborhood institution I would recommend having a coffee, if not a coffee in summer a granita or cafe shakerato. And like I said, it's not just the morning, it's after lunch, it's the afternoon, it's before dinner, it's after dinner, it's before you go to bed. The bar is always open. I think the bar is a beautiful display of community as well, because they know you there. It's like the Trattoria you always have your go-to in the neighborhood like I do. You might go there and nine times out of ten, it'll be perfect one time it might not be, but you still go back because they're your people. They're your community. They're your tribe, which is really fundamentally important in the Italian psyche and DNA.

Katy

Yeah. I love this sense of loyalty and longevity. I think it's a really important thing that sometimes we miss in our more (I don't want to say modern cultures because Italy is also very modern), but they do carry that sense of longevity with them throughout their day-to-day lives. Okay, now, Maria, there's also some famous piazzas or piazzini in Trastevere in there where people like to hang out. Have you got a favorite of those?

Maria

I'd have to say, Piazza Santa Maria in Trastevere, because it does have the Basilicata, as I mentioned earlier, it also has the centerpiece is a beautiful fountain. And you'll see the inscriptions on the Fountain of SPQR, which anybody that has been to Rome - and if you haven't been to Rome, look out for these. And I always say once you've seen it, you can't unsee it. But the acronym SPQR is the I guess, almost what you'd call the coat of arms of the city of Rome. And it's like Senātus Populusque Rōmānus or something like that. Somebody I'm sure will correct me after they listen to this. But the essence of it is that it's the Senate of the people of Rome. And so you'll see that inscribed on the fountain. And then there are a number of bars and restaurants. I don't really recommend those ones in Trastevere - anyone that's listening? I think it's lovely to sit and have a drink with the Basilicata as your backdrop. Absolutely. The food is not bad. I wouldn't say it's great. I would steer away from Piazza Santa Maria Trastevere to eat at least, but definitely to sit and people watch. I think it's one of the most beautiful. Piazza Trilussa is the other main piazza in the neighborhood. But there's Piazza Santa Cecilia - just on the other side of Trastevere that has a smaller Basilicata, which is just as beautiful and Piazza San Cosimato as well, which is the area around which I live, which has great gelateria. There's a couple of pizza places I like to go to, street food, my local pasticceria, cheese shop, all of that sort of stuff, all the good stuff.

Katy

Now I think we're not going to let you get away with that, sharing some of these places with us. The fact that you can go to all these different places to get the specialty goods. And so it's not a general shopping experience like we have at the supermarket. It's like you go to your individual stores. And that is a really Italian way to shop, isn't it?

Maria

It is. Absolutely. Supermarkets, obviously, there are supermarkets everywhere in Italy and always have been. But the concept, even of a 24 hours, I mean, there's no 24 hours supermarket in Trastevere, at least not that I know of. You'd be hard pressed to find one that's open until midnight. So very different to the city in which I grew up in Melbourne, where you can go to Coles at like three in the morning if you had to or at least until midnight, let's say. That culture doesn't really exist here. And in terms of going to do your weekly supermarket shop, like you said, obviously out of necessity and out of people that are working, obviously, we know and this is not to talk about gender or labor market issues, but more women are - in terms of Italy from the 40s and the 50s onwards - when supermarkets started to become popular, when the market started to slowly, (they're still around) but they started to become way less than what they were because there were more women in the workplace and less time to be doing a number of those things that we traditionally aligned with what the woman did in the Italian family structure. So I think the most traditional way to shop is to buy your meat at the butcher and your cheese at the cheesemonger, and you go to the fish man at the market. Even that - at the market, it's not just fruit and vegetables. You might also get different fruits and different vegetables at different vendors. And actually, one thing I love

about the market is things like tomatoes - when you go and ask for tomatoes usually have this relationship with the vendor, and they will ask you what you're making with them. And that's not because they're being nosy. They just want you to have the best experience. So they're like, okay, is it for a sauce? Is it for a salad? Is it for a Caprese salad? What's it for? And so then they'll often kind of put this tomato mix together for you, which just enhances that cooking experience for you.

Katy

Amazing. So tell us about this cheese shop. Is there a favorite cheese shop. I won't let you go.

Maria

That's alright - we'll get everyone to get some pen and paper out so they can take down some of these places. Antica Caciara is my local cheese store in Trastevere, has been there since 1900, so that's a long time. It's a lot of cheese. All the Italian cheeses. There are a few foreign cheeses, but Italy makes up (French cheese is great and so is Swiss, of course) but Italy does have enough of its own selection. In Pecorino Romano is king. We say Parmigiano Reggiano generally is in Italy, but especially in Rome. We also eat Parmigiano Regano a lot, but Pecorino Romano, which is sheep's milk cheese, is pretty much in every Roman pasta. It is in every Roman pasta dish. So quite popular. And Signor Roberto Polica is the owner of that store, and he's worked there ever since he was 13, and he's my dad's age. So I'm not giving his age away, but he's worked every day for about almost 60 years, which is amazing.

Katy

Wow. He must know a lot about cheese.

Maria

He knows a lot about cheese. You can also get salumi there as well. So if you're looking for cinghiale, pork gel or pork cheeks to make all of those, if you are staying in an apartment in Trastevere - most people that stay in the center, in the center, obviously you'd probably be staying in a hotel, but there are a number of Airbnb and apartments in Trastevere, so it is a great place to stay, if that's the experience you're looking for, because you can just pop downstairs and pick up all of those basics that you need to prepare a Roman meal at home, if that's what you want.

Katy

Delicious. And where do you go for bread? Because the bread is important and the cookies or sorry biscuits, the biscuits.

Maria

I go to Biscottificio Innocenti, so you can say hello to Stefania there, and that is beautiful, also another just gorgeous. I mean, it feels like you're stepping back in time and they have - on any one day be hard-pressed not to find about 30 or 40 different biscuits there. So her grandfather started making biscuits for the Italian military - for all the troops, and they've been there for gosh. I should know this off by heart, but I can't tell you that it's been at least 50 years I would say. So definitely recommend Biscottificio Innocenti. Where else in the neighborhood. So for bread there is a bakery called Panella, which they're the supplier for a number of the restaurants in the neighborhood. I would head across the river to Roscioli, which is not typically Trastevere, but I think we can squeeze that one in for bread. For pizza, though, if you're looking for like pizza bianca, which is probably one of the most popular of the Roman breads, because that's our version of flatbread, which you'd eat on its own, or you open up and fill it with mortadella usually or porchetta if you wanted. And I get that at I Suppli, which is also where I get my street food. So all the fried snacks, pizza by the slice, and not just the classic Suppli. They do a soup with a carbonara filling or with shrimp and squid ink. And all of these gourmet versions now of the classic Roman suppli, which is not an arancino. I don't know if anyone - arancina, I should say, depending on where you are in Sicily, but it's Rome street-food version of a rice ball.

Katy

Oh, my goodness, I don't know. I've just had my breakfast, but I'm really starving now.

Maria

I know I've already had dinner. So there you go. We're at different parts of the day and me talking about food. It's like 1am. Thinking about what I'm going to do tomorrow.

Katy

Italians are always thinking about food, though, right?

Maria

Always.

Katy

Always. Always. Okay. And so one last place. How about the trattoria? Because that is an important part of an Italian neighborhood.

Maria

Yeah, it is. Anybody that follows me on social media will know that I'm a big fan of D'Enzo, but there is a huge queue to get in, and I hope that that doesn't deter people, but I'm sure it will for some, because there really is a long wait. Thankfully, their quality has not been

compromised by the floods of people that go there now because D'Enzo have been mentioned, probably by every foreign press newspaper in the world, I would say. It is my favorite. That's the best carbonara in Rome for me, but other places I would mention in terms of a trattoria would be Da Teo is another trattoria not far from there, and also Osteria Der Belli, which is not a Roman Trattoria, but they have a number of Roman dishes on the menu, the owners are Sardinian. And so I always recommend people go there, especially for seafood, which many people coming to Rome don't kind of think of seafood when they think of Roman cuisine, because it's so pork heavy and cheese and artichokes. That's what people associate with Rome and cuisine. But Rome is quite close to the sea, and there is this tradition of seafood in Rome as well - you've just got to know where to go. So they're the places I would recommend. And for pizza, I would say Seu Illuminati, which is one of Rome's best pizza makers, Pier Daniele Seu, who has recently been like I said, he's won every award possible and has also beaten some Neapolitans, which is quite controversial, but he does a gourmet pizza. It's not Neapolitan. It's not Roman. It's not like your thin Roman pizza that you would expect, but they have all the classics and then things like a carbonara pizza or a pizza with burrata and tuna tartare. Look, it's really an amazing pizza. And I think the other one, I would mention finally would be for Roman-style pizza, either L'Elementare or Ai Marmi or Ivo. That's probably got everyone covered, I think, for a few meals.

Katy

I reckon. And I think that's the main thing about Trastevere, isn't it? It's a place where people go to have fun and eat..

Maria

Exactly

Katy

And drink and have a lot of good time.

Maria

Have you even been to Rome if you haven't eaten at all hours of the day? So I think you leave a few kilos heavier on the way out, but it's worth every single bite.

Katy

Well, at least Trastevere's got a few hills you can climb to walk off those calories.

Maria

You can walk afterwards. Exactly. And you need a gelato as well at the end. I should say. Otaleg is my favorite gelateria in the neighborhood, and it's easy to remember because it's gelato spelt backwards.

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Katy

Aha! Very clever.

Maria

So just think gelato spelt backwards when you're next year, Katy.

Katy

Okay, I'll get that one. So what else do people do for fun in Italy and in particular, Trastevere?

Maria

Oh, gosh. Museums, churches, architecture, all of that stuff. The neighborhood here alone - even if you're not religious and looking to practice, I think that if you're an architecture or a history buff, there are over 40 churches just in the Trastevere neighborhood just for you to walk into and admire. We have a small museum that has at least a couple of exhibitions going on throughout most of the year on a normal year anyway. But museums have reopened in Italy now, so I don't know what exhibitions on there at the moment, but I think la passeggiata, if we're talking about how to be Italian, I think that not only foreigners, but Italians, it's just a cornerstone, I should say, of the Italian culture, and they're not going anywhere. Some people say to me like, "where is everyone going?" And I'm like "they're not going anywhere. They're just walking". I mean, they've had dinner and it's just so normal. It's sacrosanct to go and walk and have a gelato and a la passeggiata, or just even meet for a la passeggiata,. And so you would dress for a passeggiata, because Italians always like to make that good impression. .

Katy

Absolutely. And that's a very important part of Italian culture, isn't it? And I was wondering, can you easily tell them when you're having your passeggiata around Trastevere? Can you tell who's a local and who's maybe not a local based on what they're wearing?

Maria

Yeah, you can. Especially when you live here. I was probably not this good when I was traveling here, I could kind of pick out the Italians, but especially now that you live here and we notice so many more things, like the transition from one season to the other. And it's great that you ask me that question, especially at the moment, because like I said, it's just gotten unseasonably cold in Rome over the past couple of weeks. And we've all been complaining, of course, because that's another Italian thing to do - just to complain about things. And we always talk about the cambio di stagione, which is the change of season or the time where you have to change your wardrobe over. Because Italians usually - because of space in their home, will usually only have their summer closed out during summer, and then they pack them all away and have their winter ones. So that's like a big, big day at the end of the season

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where you have to spend all day switching your wardrobe over and everyone's talking about that at the moment. So like I said, unseasonably cold. So foreigners around town are still walking around with T-shirts on and Italians are like wearing Piumino which is like a puffer jacket or a Parker. I don't know. That's what we call it in Australia, at least, but, you know, a thick jacket or a big coat and scarves and always covering the neck because we just kind of don't want to catch a cold or anything like that. And I think especially because of Covid - people are super conscious with the winter months ahead. But I think that's the biggest way you'd probably tell the difference, but in summer, I think is another good way. I mean, Italians wouldn't really be caught dead walking around the city with something like flip flops on (thongs, as we call them in Australia, I don't know what everybody else calls them), but things that you wear to the beach you don't wear when you're walking around the city and vice versa. So you don't wear open shoes to get on a boat. Italians will always have closed shoes for things like that. So just these little things. Obviously, I speak about those and make those distinctions in the How the Italians Dress chapter of the book.

Katy

Yeah, it's really interesting. I love that they take so much pride in what they wear and it comes back to those rituals. And I'm sure you could really go deep into those rituals of uncovering all the grooming and everything that we maybe don't. Maybe we've lost a little bit in our lifestyles. Wow. Okay.

Maria

Another pastime is the aperitivo.

Katy

Oh, yeah. We need to talk about that.

Maria

Italians love it! And it's just it is such an important part of the culture, and it's also a part of Italian food, I guess, in the way Italians eat because aperitivo comes from the word 'aprire' to open. And so Italians do see the aperitivo as the moment where you open your stomach to prepare it for the dinner that's to come so aperitivo, is just such a normal part of the Italian culture. Most people don't even think twice about doing that. You'll have something to drink with a few snacks and usually anything alcoholic that serves to you in Italy comes with some peanuts even or just some nuts and some chips, crisps or Taralli or crackers or something - to the more elaborate affair, obviously, which you might find on a rooftop or in a fancier bar. So aperitivo is a great part of the Italian culture. I love it.

Katy

It should be everywhere, I think.

Maria

I think so, too.

Katy

We need it everywhere. And is there a special place to go in Trastevere? Is there one place that you'd recommend that does a really good one?

Maria

There's a few great places that do some really cool cocktails, and mixologies become such a there's been this rise in mixology across Rome over the past few years, and there are a number of great bars - obviously they're outside of Trastevere as well, but we're talking about Trastevere today. So I'll tell you, I think in the neighborhood, Santo. A great place for cocktails and a local institution which has been really popular with especially young Romans, is Freni e Frizioni, which is 'brakes and clutch' in English, I should say, and it is in an old mechanic - well the site used to be an old mechanic shop. So Freni e Frizioni is probably one of the most popular. If you're looking a rooftop there's Jacopa, which is a rooftop bar Trastevere. There are so many. If you're looking just for that quick drink before dinner, places like San Calisto, if someone's on a budget and looking for something quick and cheap before they want to go off and have their pizza, you can get a really cheap glass of wine, if that's what you're looking for at some places like San Calisto or another place is Proloco. They do cocktails, but I would recommend that more if you're looking for some local wine, which is also quite acceptable at aperitivo time - if you want to have some local Lazio reds or white, and they also stock only Lazio food products. So you'll get things like some pecorino romano, some salumi and some other small little canopies with produce from the Lazio region.

Katy

That sounds amazing. I can't wait to go back and just aperitivo all day every day.

Maria

We've got your itinerary all ready to go, Katy.

Katy

Okay. I'm so excited now when you're having these aperitivo and you're going to - particularly like the bar you just mentioned, you're probably going to run into some locals, right? And in your book, you said Italy wouldn't be Italy without the Italians. And that's just so true. But what are the locals like in Trastevere?

Maria

Like I said earlier, I mean - very proud, very loud (not to rhyme), but I think they're quite boisterous as a people. There is this strong spirit of community. And I think that if you don't

know, the people of Trastevere could quite often and quite easily be mistaken for being nosy. But I think Romans generally they do - they take you under their wing and they almost welcome you into their home. And like, I know every time I'm off for a work trip or when I'm heading back to Australia, the guy at the Alimentari in my house, which is like just a small general store, I guess - he knows when I'm late, like, you'll see a taxi turn up and he's like, okay, where are you off to? And I get back on your back. And I saw the other day you went out. So everyone kind of knows your business in Trastevere. And I've been very fortunate to make some really beautiful relationships with a lot of the vendors and the store owners and the chefs and the restaurant owners in this neighborhood, which is key to the broader Italian culture of the people of Italy generally, is that they are a strong, resilient and generous people. And I think that's what most people find not just of Romans, but across the country. I think that's why foreigners are generally so enamored with Italy. It's not perfect, as I say, all the time, but so many aspects of it are. And that's what we love about it.

Katy

Exactly. Exactly. Okay, Maria, now, before we leave you in beautiful Trastevere in Rome, just tell us, do you have a favorite place in your district that captures its essence?

Maria

Oh, gosh. I think I would have to say the streets. Just as a broad concept. There is nothing like getting lost in the streets of Trastevere. I have a number of occasions wanted to tell some tourists walking past, and it's just so common and normal to have a map in your hand. And sometimes I just want to say, just let it go around here because, yes, there are big monuments that you might not want to miss in Rome. And I understand that you're often on your way to somewhere or to something, while you're exploring the city - but especially in a neighborhood like that, the sun on the golden ochre of the walls. And like I said, the hanging ivy and the cobblestone streets, you'll find Fiat 500s parked on the streets here in a vespa zooming by. And I think that just getting lost in those streets will really - they envelop you. And it's just this magical feeling which still hasn't gotten old for me after ten years. So I'm very fortunate to live in a beautiful part of Rome.

Katy

You are. And I think one of the other parts of the neighborhood that I really like is there some really creative street artists that you can see some really cute little murals and things around? And I think it really adds to that sense of history. You've got all these old and it's mixing with the new, and it's a beautiful place. I love it.

Maria

It is even in terms of the shops and the restaurants and anybody that walks past - walks through I should say the neighborhood will see that you'll see the cake shop from the 1920s

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and next door, there's a bowls place now or poke bowl or something like that. And then there's a Mexican place around the corner from a Baroque Building. So I mean, that's Rome.

Katy

Yeah, it really is. Maria, thank you so much for taking us on a virtual tour of Trastevere, your neighborhood and pointing out all the uniquely Italian aspects of life there. I know many of our listeners can't wait to discover all these treasures for themselves. But while they wait, where can they find your gorgeous book? And how can they follow you and get some more insight into Italy and Trastevere?

Maria

Thank you so much, Katy. Anyone that's interested can follow me on Facebook Instagram and Twitter - it's Heart Rome and you can visit my website either heartrome.com or maria-pasquale.com for more information about how to buy the book, but it is available in Australia in all bookstores and anywhere that books online are sold and that's the same for America, Canada, UK, rest of the World so Amazon if you really get stuck but anywhere books are sold online and it's How to Be Italian.

Katy

Wonderful! So listeners, if you want to learn how to be Italian, look out for Maria's book and spend some time in Trastevere soaking up the atmosphere when you finally get there. Grazie. Thank you Maria, for joining us on Untold Italy today.

Maria

Well, thanks so much, Katy. I look forward to seeing you in Trastevere one day soon.

Katy

Have you spent some time in Trastevere exploring its beautiful streets and popping into bars and cafes. It's certainly a place where you can spend at least half a day exploring. One place Maria didn't mention but which I love to visit in Trastevere is the Belvedere or terrace at Gianicolo Hill. You get one of the most incredible views of Rome from there and see the whole city spread out before you. It's a favorite spot of mine in the Eternal City and definitely worth the trek up the hill or you can get a taxi up there and walk down if you've got tired legs.

Big thanks to Maria for sharing the secrets of her neighborhood. We've put the details for where to buy her book "How to be Italian", the places she mentioned and all the ways you can connect with her into the show notes at untolditaly.com/96

You'll also find a link to our digital guide to Trastevere which includes a self guided walking tour of the district and handy map so you don't miss any of the most stunning streets and

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amazing bars and restaurants in this very special neighborhood of Rome. You can also find this guide in our shop at untolditaly.com/shop along with our other digital guides and planners.

And, if you're interested in staying in Trastevere, which I recommend that you do if you're visiting Rome for the second or subsequent time, you'll find our article on the best places to stay there too.

Thanks for your ongoing support of Untold Italy. We truly appreciate all our listeners joining us from around the world. We'd love it if you helped spread the word so we can reach more Italy-loving travelers and the best way you can do this is by leaving us a 5 star rating or review on your favorite podcast app.

That's all for today, next week we're heading back to southern Italy to visit a truly beautiful and unique city that is experiencing a resurgence of art and culture after a troubling past

But until then it's "ciao for now"