

Untold Italy Episode 99 - Milan Coffee Bars

This is the Untold Italy Travel podcast, and you're listening to episode number 99.

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,

Have you had your cup of coffee today? I hope so! We're accelerating into one of the busiest times of year and I don't know about you but coffee is a definite requirement to keep me going. Our recent coffee episode where we explored the ins and outs on how and what to order when it comes to coffee in Italy is very popular so if you missed it, head on over to untolditaly.com/95 for the low down on Italian coffee culture.

I've invited our guest from that episode, Michael Horne from Du Coffee, back onto the show today as he's just made a flying visit to one of my favorite Italian cities - Milan - to check out the coffee scene and generally soak up the atmosphere. Du Coffee's Milano roast is just about to be launched so it was the perfect opportunity for him to appreciate what inspired their new bags of beans!

Now Milan is often a quick stop on itineraries to drop into the Duomo and see Da Vinci's Last Supper, but as you'll hear from Michael, the city offers so much more. Spend any time there and you get a glimpse of modern Italy - a country driven by design and innovation but also with a foot firmly planted in tradition and community. The city has a strong food and wine and of course fashion focus too and if you ask me it is a lot of fun and I can't wait to hear all about it from Michael's perspective

Michael is a dedicated coffee drinker and cake lover so we're also bound to get some amazing tips on where to go to find those when we visit magnificent Milano! So let's get started

Katy

Benvenuto, Michael Ciao and welcome back to the Untold Italy podcast.

Michael

Thank you. Great to be back.

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Katy

So you're just back from beautiful Milano. And how is everything there?

Michael

Milan was busy and bustling. I was really quite surprised how booming it was this past weekend, so I just got back this last weekend. It was absolutely beautiful. It was a cool, sunny day. They had predicted rain. There was no rain. It was clear as a bell. It was wonderful. But I was just amazed. It was just bustling with locals and tourists didn't see too many tourists from outside of Europe. It really seems like it was really mostly Italians, and probably some of the Europeans. I saw quite a few Germans as well. So it looks like there's just a late tourist season going on there, and you can tell it's really thriving in spite of the challenges that I think Italy had with the Pandemic. And it kind of goes to the resilience of the Italian people. It's one of the reasons I love Italy. It's amazing how resilient the Italians are. They had such terrible challenges during the Pandemic, especially in the North, but they've just bounced back and they've got a real determination to just keep living and moving forward. And it's one of the reasons Milan has been so interesting and exciting to me to visit the city. It's really industrious. They just have a kind of a life embracing ethic that permeates the city. And it's that optimism and kind of fast pace. You've been to Milan a number of times. Have you gotten a similar kind of vibe out of the city?

Katy

Yeah, absolutely. And I think it's their resilience like you say, and they've hit a few challenges over the centuries, so they didn't really have a great time during the Second World War, it was extensively bombed and damaged throughout that period. And I think that's why a lot of people kind of maybe don't fall for Milan like they do some of the other great cities of Italy because it's not maybe quite so immediately aesthetically pleasing, and it doesn't have that glorious Arno going through it. But it's got the beautiful Duomo, and it's got a feeling of Milan, I think rather than a look and that's what I really love about the city. It's a really fun, vibrant and it's a modern city. And what I really hope people understand about Italy is you have all these beautiful little towns, but you also have these amazing modern industrial powerhouse, design and culture and it's very exciting, actually.

Michael

Yeah. Milan, in particular. You've been to the Central train station there in Milano Central. And the architecture there dates back to 30s and 40s, and they would consider the kind of a fascist architecture, but it's really interesting because it kind of historically defines Milan. But when you talk about beauty - besides the Duomo, it's really the people, right? They're intense, they're passionate. It's kind of the way I describe the Milanese. They're really living life with some style. A lot of people consider Milan the fashion capital of the world right? So you've got Gucci and Prada and Versace and all those folks, and it really shows up. The people are dressed quite nicely, quite amazing - maybe not all the tourists, but definitely the locals. And

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there is a beauty there. And it's just the vibrancy makes it so fun. It's so different from other Italian cities.

Katy

Oh, exactly. Now, Michael, before we go and explore Milan a little bit further, do you want to just remind everyone what your background is and what you took to Milan on this trip?

Michael

Yeah, sure. So I have had an opportunity to meet with a number of coffee roasters and coffee houses in Milan. I have a company called Du Coffee, and we are bringing some of the coffee styles and coffee culture from other major cities. Today they're all in Europe and bringing them back to - essentially bringing them home to people. It's something from my past when I traveled all over the world for some of the jobs that I've had over the years, I always was looking for a great coffee shop - every time I landed in a new city. And I often found these coffee houses in different cities, both in Italy and throughout Europe and throughout Asia. And the coffee was amazing. But what was more interesting was just the coffee culture and how these coffee houses were kind of a focal point for community, for people coming together, doing meetings, sometimes business, sometimes family. It was really exciting. And I wanted to bring some of that home. So I recently started Du Coffee and we have some coffee roasts from a number of European cities, Stockholm, Prague, Istanbul and we're about to launch Milan - because we wanted to bring kind of that wonderful Italian espresso blend style and coffee culture back to folks here in the States in particular.

Katy

Well, if you can't be in Milan, you might as well drink the coffee. I'd say.

Michael

Exactly.

Katy

All right. So before we get deep into the coffee culture in Milan, what are some of your favorite things to do there?

Michael

Well, Milan, I think, as you said, it's not really on the radar. I think of first big cities for people who go to Italy for the first time. And there's the usual Rome, Florence, Venice trek that a lot of people go on. However, I think Milan is definitely a city to visit for a first visit. I always recommend just doing a bee line for the Piazza del Duomo, and you really get a feel for the vibrancy of the city by checking out the Piazza and how many people are there. And the Duomo is just jaw dropping in beauty. And it's really a must visit. I go there every visit when I

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go to Milan, I have to go there. I actually like to catch a coffee in the Galleria, which is right next door or maybe even a cocktail and just really enjoy the vibe of the city with so many people just pulsing through it. And while you're there, you just go across the street. In the Milan spirit of commerce, there's the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele. It's literally right to the side of the tower, and it's a stunning shopping gallery words just cannot describe it. I even took some more pictures and video, and I was looking at them just the other day going, "My God, this is amazing". This is just such a beauty to it. There's a vaulted glass portico and a central dome, and it really just coax you and I go in there mainly for the shops and restaurants and cocktail bars. Probably my favorite little place to take a cocktail or even a coffee if it's in the morning is the Camperino bar. I'm sure you've seen it. You may even there's just inside as you enter on the left hand side. And what's great is you can sit at a table. You can take a coffee at the bar inside or even a cocktail. That's just not as much fun as sitting out. They have some tables and you can watch the sea of humanity going by. It's really quite fun and refreshing.

Katy

And they're also well turned out, and they sort of striding along in their Milanese way. It just looks fabulous. And you sort of think, oh, I need to go and up my sartorial game, because somehow I don't know how they do it. They must be born with that style, I think, because it's quite special. And what I love as well on the other side of the Duomo is you've got the Museo del Novecento, which is I don't know if you've been in there, but what I love about this is you've got this modern building next to this Gothic masterpiece opposite this 19th century Gallery. And it's just magnificent.

Michael

Yes, absolutely. Yeah. In the central core, there's just so many things that you can see within 5, 10, 15 minutes walk. So it's really quite manageable. I don't know if you're into opera or ballet, if you've ever been to Teatro alla Scala, it's just literally like if you go through the gallery and come out the other side, here's a big theater. And that is itself another special Milan experience that I think everybody should probably experience at least once in their life. You can get a ticket for one of the show - there's a lot of shows almost daily, and they're not that expensive. You can get some fairly inexpensive seats. There's also some expensive seats with some special operas or ballet, but it's really quite fun.

Katy

Yeah. And there's a beautiful statue. Well, I don't know if beautiful is the right word - it's a very brooding statue of DaVinci just between the Galleria and La Scala as well. And I'm a real fan of Leonardo Da Vinci. And obviously Milan was sort of adopted him as their main artist. And there's so many things to explore about Da Vinci, in Milan particularly like that statue, because it's sort of brooding. You can see that he's got his hold over the city somehow.

Michael

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Yeah. There are so many interesting galleries. I remember when I first went to Italy and it was very long time ago '95, and I was just floored by the galleries and the paintings and the beauty and things that I just had not been exposed to, where I grew up in Washington State, in the Portland area. And yeah, in Milan, there's so many things that you can see and visit - fairly inexpensive and just get a real appreciation for the history and the Renaissance even further back and myself, I've probably stopped going to most of the galleries these days. I think I've had my fill of Madonna's for a while. I find it's now more fun for me to go walking and exploring different neighborhoods. There are so many different neighborhoods in Milan, and they're all quite safe. There's no issues, especially if you're in kind of the central area, and there's just some really unusual high, not in a certain fashion, but artistic things that are showing up in different areas. So there's some things you can bump into. One of them is Bosco vertical. I don't know if you've seen it. It translates as vertical forest, and it's a pair of tree studded apartment buildings. I don't know if you've seen this yet. I'm not sure if you've had a chance to see it.

Katy

I have. I love it.

Michael

It is quite amazing. So I did a little bit of research on it. There's 800 trees on these two buildings, apartment buildings. Each one is about 100 meters tall, and they essentially put these trees and these are big trees. These are not small trees and they're on staggered balconies, and it just literally looks like a vertical forest, just as they describe it. And it's so Milanese in the sense of they are leaning a lot more towards green movements and things. A lot of green businesses in Milan, but this is a piece of art, but it's also a commentary on how we can actually live more in unison with nature. It's in the Porto Nuova area. It's not too far from the Central train station between Central train station and Garibaldi, right across the street from it. There's an excellent osteria style restaurant called Ratana, which I absolutely love to visit - when I can get in, you have to book a reservation in advance, but you can sit outside and dine and you can see the Bosco Vertical off in the distance, and they have a wonderful wine list. It's wonderful. It's just a great place

Katy

From memory, I believe those trees on the building are deciduous and they change color in the fall as well. It's pretty spectacular. Side this is the creativity and ingenuity of the Milanese. As you say, you're probably not going to find that down south or maybe in other parts of Italy, but you definitely find it in Milan. And I find it really exciting myself.

Michael

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Yeah, it is exciting. And you just don't normally see these things unless you move away from the central core and just start kind of going out, radiating out around, maybe the next ring, if you will. I was wandering around in the business district. So over near their equivalent of kind of the Wall Street business district. They have their stock market exchange. And right in front of it is a statue. And I just happened to notice it a couple of visits ago, and it's not something you would normally find and it's also a little bit - let me put it this way. The artist is Maurizio Cattelan, and he has a reputation of getting people pretty excited with some of his artwork. So the Italians love their art. And he decided to put a statue across the street from the stock exchange. So if you go to New York City and you're in Wall Street, there's the real famous charging bull, it's right near Wall Street. And it was intended to be a comment on capitalism in the markets. Well, Catalan decided to have a different kind of message. So there's a statue called *Il dito D-I-T-O* and it's basically a very large, pretty much a huge hand that has, let's just say, a single dito or finger showing. And the statue is called *Love*. But it's not quite the meaning we might think by the letters. So Cattelan never really said what he meant by it. But he installed it, and the city kept it there as a permanent installation after the big crash of 2008, the economic crash and Italy was hit really hard, and he was trying to send a message. But if you don't get out and wander around, you won't see these things. And it's really interesting because there's a lot of tourists coming to that neighborhood now because of that statue.

Katy

This is the thing. If you want to find out how people are living their lives in the city, then you do have to go and branch out. And I think Milan tends to because of the magnificent *Duomo* and that piazza there like people would say "oh, I went to Milan - I went and saw the Last Supper, and I went to the *Duomo*, and I've done Milan". Well, yeah. I mean, it's got so much more to offer. I think I could easily fill a week in Milan actually, so many fun things to do there.

Michael

Yeah. The food scene is also pretty exciting in Milan. Everybody thinks of Italian food, and I've always told people there's no such thing really as Italian food. It's all very regional, right? And in Milan is a very regional style of food, and the restaurants are absolutely outstanding. Another fun thing to do is there's a lot of brew pubs popping up. Right. So the beer, there are artisanal beer 'birra artisenale' that Italy has really embraced in the last ten years or so. It's really exploding in Milan as well. So you could do a pub crawl, right? It really is quite fun. There's a famous one. It's *Birrificio Lambrate*. So it's in *Citta Studi*. It's not quite in the center, but it's not that far from it. And it is a wonderful place to get some of the locally made beers. And there's music and local food. And then you can move from pub to pub to pub. It's really quite fun. And that place, by the way, is just down the street from one of my favorite quirky coffee joints called *Upcycle*. I think I mentioned that last time it's a coffee shop for people who like to ride bikes.

Katy

What district is that in?

Michael

It's in Citta Studi. So you can think of it as study city.

Katy

Yeah.

Michael

Citta Studi. There's a couple of them. They've expanded a little bit. So it's the one on Via Adelchi - so that's where the original one was. And it is a classic pub. And it's just got all the feel. Almost feels like you're stepping into a pub in London somewhere.

Katy

Oh, wow. Sounds amazing. Pub crawls in Milan.

Michael

Who knew, believe it or not? Well, if you get tired of wine and you want a beer now, you know, one thing I wanted to mention worth mentioning is how to get around. So I had some fun this last trip, I rented a car. I don't normally rent a car and renting a car in Milan is not a good idea. So I highly recommend you not rent a car. And there's other ways to get around. You can take the Metro, which works really well. It's cheap. You can walk. And now you can ride bikes and scooters. So they have the micro mobility all over the city. There are scooters everywhere. There's rental bikes everywhere. I rented a scooter just for fun and learned the error of my ways. When I was going down a cobblestone street. It's really rough on the body, so the bikes are a little easier. But the moral of the story is don't rent a car. The center of Milan is now mostly a toll zone, and the best way to get a big fat ticket is to drive through there and not pay attention - if you're a tourist and you've got a rental car.

Katy

This is quite funny, because a few episodes ago, I was talking to a friend. She has lost count of the time she's been to Italy, probably a bit like you and had a similar driving experience. So I think listeners, all of these seasoned people who have been traveling to Italy and everyone still makes this mistake, but we're trying to let you know, try not to drive in these big cities, if at all possible, because it's not fun.

Michael

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Yeah. In places like Rome and Naples, it's like a full contact sport. It's definitely not recommended. I historically have gotten every two or three times that I've rented a car in Italy I end up with a ticket by mail because I've gone into a zone that is just not allowed unless you have your license plate registered and it becomes very expensive. So, yeah, don't drive in the big cities. It's not a good idea.

Katy

And even if you think you can handle that, it's the parking. Oh, my goodness. Too much.

Michael

Yeah. If you can find a place to park and you need to be careful, is it a blue zone? Is it a yellow zone? Is it a white zone? Do you have to pay? Do you not have to pay? Yeah. It's a great way to rack up tickets.

Katy

Yeah. And then you don't have as much money to spend on wine, which is not fun at all.

Michael

Right. You eat into your gelato money.

Katy

Exactly. That's not good. So you were there to suss out these coffee places. So what did you find?

Michael

What's interesting with Milan and more so than I've seen, like in Rome is the coffee culture. I won't say it's quite dividing, but there's definitely two cultures there now that even say, ten years ago, you just didn't see much of this. And there's the classic coffee culture, Italian coffee house, coffee bar culture that we're all familiar with. Right? And it's where you can grab an espresso or a cappuccino, enjoy some baked items, like a cornetto or whatever. And it's by far the most common and popular coffee house throughout Italy and in Milan, right. It's usually family meets there. Or you might meet a friend there you have a quick coffee. But there's really a newer style of coffee house that's booming in Milan, typically run by a new generation of coffee lovers. Quite a few of them are owned by 20 something 30 something folks who potentially have traveled to other places in the world and they've realized that coffee has come a long way and they're kind of jumping on the specialty coffee or what used to be called the third wave coffee bandwagon, if you will. So essentially, it's locally roasted coffee, single origin coffee and some unique espresso blends. So if you're in San Francisco or Melbourne, a big thing is you would have, like, a single origin coffee that's roasted and maybe light or medium, usually not dark roast - very rarely, it's usually lighter, medium. And the

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whole idea is that the coffee and it's where it comes from - the origin- if you roast it too long essentially, that origin just basically goes up and smoke quite literally. And so if you roast it lighter or medium, you get more of the origin of the coffee. And so traditional Italian espresso was roasted a bit darker. And the bean quality may not have been amazing. So you have this younger generation who's, like, we could do better. We can improve espresso. We can make it a blend of very unique and interesting origin coffees. We can maybe lighten it up slightly, give it a little bit, even more, potentially a little bit of fruit flavor, as opposed to, like, a cocoa type flavor. So it's really quite exciting. And what's happening is there's a bunch of small coffee shops popping up all over and some new roasters in Milan, there's probably ten or 15 coffee roasters in Milan, and they're selling to these local coffee bars, these new ones. So what's different also is there tends to be a younger crowd in them. You get a small crowd of folks gathering together over espresso or cappuccino. They seem to linger and just enjoy the coffee more slowly. There can be more talking, and it could be less talking. It's just a different kind of vibe. And it's something you might see, like in Melbourne, like in San Francisco, like New York or even London. And you'll often find locals who are working. They'll camp out in these places. They'll bring their Macbooks, like I often do when I go to a coffee shop here, you've got some work to do. bYou sit down, you order a coffee and you sit there for potentially an hour or two. And this is very unusual in the traditional Italian coffee shops. So what's also interesting is they charge a bit more money. The espressos cost a little bit more, and it might be 50 Euro cents more, not a lot. So instead of €1.50, it might be €2. And the traditional coffee bar lovers, the folks who like the traditional Italian coffee bar they balk at these prices, even \$0.25 more or \$0.50 more. They're like, "oh, this is crazy". It's like a national right to get inexpensive espresso, but they're popping up all over. And in Milan, there are quite a few. I was able to find one or two new ones that I hadn't seen before. And then I also hit up a couple of roasters and a couple of the coffee shops that I love to visit.

Katy

Okay, well, you better take us through them. What was the one that made you remember that you're in Milan.

Michael

What was the first classic one that you went to the first place that I had coffee in Milan so many years ago, and I went back to revisit this last trip is Cafe Cucchi. It's on Corso Genova, and it's right on the corner. There's great seating right outside on the sidewalk. And there's a wonderful salon in the back if you prefer to sit indoors. And I love it because they have this really long case of house baked sweets pastries. They consider it pasticceria, you kind of get in line and somebody is there to help you. You point to some pastries that you want. You let them know if you want an espresso or cappuccino or something like that, and they'll tally it up, and then you go find a place to sit and they'll bring it to you and then at the very end, you can settle up with the cashier. The interior has a real retro feel to it. The waiters are dressed very stylish with little bow ties. It's really quite an experience. It's like the coffee shops you see all over Italy, but the service level is at a much higher level. So if you just want an

espresso drink, you can also just pull up to the coffee bar and you can stand there, enjoy a quick coffee or espresso or cappuccino, or if it's later in the day, you can get an aperitivo. And this is my favorite place in Milan for the classic coffee bar experience within Milan, where I had my first espresso when I arrived so many years ago. It really quite literally changed my life. So it's one of the reasons why I love coffee so much in Italy and looked to bring more of that coffee and culture back here to home.

Katy

Oh, wow. Life-changing coffee. I'm always talking about the life-changing cheese. And you've had the life-changing coffee.

Michael

I think I mentioned the last time we chatted, it was where I discovered the need to put a little bit of sugar in the espresso. The waiter helped kind of educate me a little bit on that. And it was quite an experience. And when you pair up the espresso with some of the pastries that they have, it's just an experience that you will always remember.

Katy

Yeah, I know. Even if you're not a sweet tooth, just give it a go I say, because you might very well be life-changing because they put a lot of care and attention into these sweets. And it pairs very well with the coffee. I think this is a thing. Michael obviously knows a lot about wine as well, but the food matches the wine, and the coffee matches the sweets, and it all goes in perfect harmony, and the coffee helps you digest the sweets as well. So obviously there's zero calories.

Michael

That's right. Yeah. The calories just don't count. When I go to Italy, I swear, I eat so much more food, and I come home and I notice I haven't gained any weight. I don't know why that is. It must be because of the walking. It has to be the walking.

Katy

Well, I think it's a combination of the walking and the quality of the food and also the combinations of what you eat. It must be something about that or the water. Maybe it's the water.

Michael

It's the water. It's got to be. That was one of the classic coffee shops that highly recommend people visit. It's not too far from the center. It's walkable. It's on one of the main thoroughfares, and it's actually quite entertaining to walk along that from the Duomo to this place, it's probably about a 15 to 20 minutes walk. But in terms of some of the newer style, the more modern style where the locals are building on top of history and adding a little bit more modern feel to it in both the environment and the coffee they serve, probably one of my favorites is Orsonero, right. So Orsonero has been there for a handful of years. It was actually founded by an expat from Vancouver in Canada. His name is Brent Jopson, and his style was to build on tradition, modernize it and bring the quality of the coffee beans and the roast to much higher level. It really essentially make the coffee be a much more interesting experience where the coffee beans themselves are kind of the focal point, and you get to enjoy the origins quite a bit. So he designed his space to kind of encourage people to sit, to linger like I was mentioning before. This is something you see often in other world cities, but you can also take a quick espresso at the bar. It's kind of a small old spot, but it's really wonderful. And Brent recently added a new Orsonero outpost. It's located inside what's called META, which is a collection of restaurants focused on food quality, and it's not too far of a walk from the central train station. So I visited the META outpost, and it was wonderful. It was beautiful. I took a little bit of video of them actually pulling the espresso, and it was quite an experience. If there is such a thing, a single origin espresso. And it was really quite unique. It was a lighter roast and so acidity level was higher. In my mind. There was a lot of more fruit coming through. It's very different experience than what you would traditionally find in espresso, but it was really quite good.

Katy

Awesome META. That sounds interesting. More interesting than the new Meta that's just been announced online. Yes, I think I can go for this measure.

Michael

Yeah. I don't know if we need the other Meta, but the Meta in Milan is worth checking out. Another gem. It's just literally right around the corner. It is almost brand new. A couple of guys opened it back in February, and it's literally just a stone's throw away from the central train station at META, and I had a chance to visit it's called LOSTE. L-O-S-T-E. LOSTE Coffee. I had a chance to chat with one of the owners, Lorenzo Cioli. It's a small place, and that is kind of a trend. I mean, real estate is expensive in Milan, right? So you're not going to have probably these giant coffee shops that have been sitting around for maybe 100 years or so. Some of the new places are actually quite small. So this seats maybe a dozen people. And of course, there's a bar where you can take coffee if you wish, but they really want you to come in and sit and linger and chat and have conversations with your friends, much like really traditional Italian coffee bars. It's a place to gather, but what's a little bit different is in addition to coffee, which is amazing. They have wine. Right. So there's vino. They have some stunning baked goods that they make there. They're adding a few savory lunch items. You can

take a classic espresso or do a pour-over. It's really nice. It's really a beautiful example of kind of taking classic Italian coffee bar culture and building on top of it, raise the quality standard and create a really warm and inviting environment to just hang out with friends.

Katy

That sounds great, too. My goodness. Milan is going back on the list again. It's always on my list actually. Eat my way around Milan and drink - the coffee and wine combination. It's a bit of a winner for me. All right. Anywhere else we need to know about?

Michael

Yeah. Another one I visited for the first time, and it was really a wonderful experience. It's called Nowhere Coffee and Community. It's exactly what it sounds like. And they use the word community intentionally. So the owner was really inspired by the coffee shops of Melbourne. The owner is a gentleman named Andrea Prayer, and he studied in Melbourne, and he came back to Milan. He's like, we could take this up a notch. Right? And he calls it the Future coffee shop. Right. And for Milan, it really is the future.

Michael

I think you're going to see a lot more of these kinds of coffee shops and coffee bars established and more roasting going on locally. So you step into this place and you really get the point of community. It really does feel almost family-oriented. I don't know how to put it. So there's some people working in the back or making some baked goods and a few food items, there's the folks who are serving people, the barista who's making the coffee and you could see them interacting. And it really is a community or family there. You walk in, the walls are pink, very pink. And you step up to the bar and order your coffee. They've got a handful of baked goods right in front of you. You tell them which one you want, you pay, you sit down, they bring it to you. So if you're feeling adventurous, they're also selling records. They have some vinyl records there. They have some magazines, some coffee beans to go. It's really cool. So when they bring it to you, you sit, you enjoy.

Michael

The best thing to do is check out their Instagram site because you can really get a feel for this new style of Italian coffee house. I think it's nowherecafe.milano or something like that. It really is the future. Very fun. I was able to sit there for quite a while and just kind of soak up the vibe. It was very busy, though. And so if you can get a seat, great job. The other nice thing is it's just all locals. There literally are no tourists in these places. I don't think people understand that these really interesting hubs of local community are forming in all these neighborhoods. They're off the beaten path, and so they're definitely worth the trek.

Katy

I think that one's a little bit close to Santa Maria delle Grazie, which is where you have the Last Supper painting. So maybe you can get a side of new coffee house after you visit the Last Supper.

Michael

Yeah.

Katy

I love this combination in Milan of the old and the new. There's something really innovative. And maybe that comes from the influence of Da Vinci, who knows? But obviously, he was one of the greatest innovators ever lived. But, yeah, it's really exciting to hear there's these people that have taken the traditions of coffee and taken it to the next level.

Michael

It is exciting. And there's really dozens more of these. There's a couple of roasters who have I'll just call them an exhibition coffee shop where the only thing you can do is maybe have an espresso or a pour-over. That's pretty much it. And they're kind of showing off their style while they make these different roasts. They're selling the roast throughout Italy. They're selling them throughout Europe. It's really quite exciting. I'm real jazzed on Italy's prospects for taking its coffee culture even to the next level.

Katy

Yeah, it's very exciting now, Michael. It sounds like you must have had a lot of coffee in a very short amount of time. Were you buzzing?

Michael

Yes, I was. I think that day I probably had a dozen espressos - that was probably unwise, but I needed the extra energy at the end of the day, it was a mad dash to hit a lot of places before the sunset.

Katy

It sounds amazing. Now, is there one place that you just always go back to in Milan? I think you've mentioned these coffee places, but is it one spot that really says Milano to you?

Michael

In my heart, I love the old Italy. So visiting the Piazza Duomo, being in the Galleria, this architecture dating back hundreds of years - that I love and the people watching, so people watching is a big deal for me. I like to see how people are interacting. You know, the

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afternoon la passeggiata where the Italians will walk arm and arm up and down the street between, like, 5 and 7 p.m - depending on the time of year before dinner. And it's just wonderful to see this connectedness of people, the Italians. I think there's a lot to learn from that. So I like to people watch. One of my favorite places I mentioned before is the cocktail bar Camperino. I love a good Campari and soda. And so taking a cocktail and sitting at a table watching the people stream in and out of Galleria and looking up and it's just a look on people's faces. Everybody is so excited and it's really fun to just sit there and enjoy that. So that is, to me, is quintessential Milan, but there's so many things to do. It's hard for me to have, like, a single spot where I would say, if I only do this, then I'm happy. I love the food scene. I like to explore the different osterias and ristorante. It's not that hard to find amazing food in Milan and try and find the places where there aren't many tourists or there's no tourists. There's a couple of ways to do it. I use the Osteria D'Italia guide book and then the other way is just using good old Google maps and searching, setting some of the criteria for searching for restaurants, say 4.5 or 4.6 or better. Look for the restaurants that only have Italian reviews. This tells you that the Italians love the place. If the Italians love the place, you're going to love the place. And so I'm always looking for new food, wine bars, coffee shops, this whole food scene within Milan. And it's one big playground. Really.

Katy

So Milan is such a fun city because as Michael's said, we get the traditional, we get the new and they're always trying to elevate it to the next level. And having been through a lot of challenges, they're also very resilient people and so therefore quite creative. Thank you so much for sharing all the cool and classic coffee bars and those hot tips about finding the restaurants. That's great tips. And all the things to do there. Now, if our listeners want to stay in touch with you and get that taste of Milano coffee for themselves, how can they do that?

Michael

Yeah. I can be reached at michael@du.coffee. du.coffee, just like it sounds. You can reach me there by email after the last podcast I had several people reach out - it was great to meet some new folks also on Instagram and @ducoffeeroasters Facebook. Same thing. It's really great to see people so excited about Italian culture and the food culture and coffee in particular for me. And thank you for letting me chat about it.

Katy

You're welcome anytime, Michael. And also when is that Milano coffee blend coming out so we can all get our hands on it just in time for Christmas.

Michael

Yes, exactly. So we just finished a taste test with about 50 people. We shipped out a couple of Milan coffee roasts - one in a more traditional Italian roast one with a little bit more of the newer coffee kind of specialty coffee style that you see in some of these other places I

mentioned, and we shipped it out and asked people to taste and comment and grade. And we were going to use that to kind of select which one do we really want to launch with maybe something much more traditional or possibly something a little bit newer style. And I think by the time this podcast airs, we will have announced that. It looks like the traditional style is what people really want. The new styles are really interesting. People are like, oh, that's interesting. I've never had espresso with, like, a fruit and floral taste to it. It was kind of an eye-opener, but we got great feedback. So what we're going to do is within two weeks, probably the last week of November, we're going to be launching and shipping our Milan roast. So we're very excited about that.

Michael

We'll be posting information on our website on that and on Instagram and people can sign up there. We're also going to be running some Black Friday specials here in the States for those who want to give it a whirl, what we find is a lot of people are interested in giving coffee and coffee subscriptions as gifts for the holidays, especially for people who love to travel. And maybe they haven't been able to travel. And so they can maybe savor some of the coffee flavors in the coffee culture from these different cities until they get a chance to hop back on a plane.

Katy

I know that's something I'd like to receive for sure. Thank you for joining us on Untold Italy today. I can't wait to taste the Milano roast. It sounds amazing. I miss Milano so much. Grazie Michael.

Michael

Grazie. And it's great to see you again. Ciao.

Katy

I hope you enjoyed hearing about the sights, sounds and sips of Milan through Michael's eyes. It's a city that many people misunderstand and perhaps don't spend so much time in. But I love it - the food, fun, fashion and of course the coffee and people watching.

If you want to know where to find all the coffee bars and visit the places Michael mentioned in Milano you'll need to visit our detailed episode show notes at untolditaly.com/99. Here you'll find all the names of the places mentioned and details on how you can get your hands on the amazing Milano roast from Du Coffee. Having tasted it myself it's definitely a wonderful way to visit those coffee bars for a few moments virtually each morning.

That's all for today, next week we're celebrating 100 episodes of the Untold Italy travel podcast Wowwee! I'll be sharing my perspective on travel in Italy and what I'm going to do differently next time I visit. Tickets booked for a whole month in June, I'm so excited! But until then it's "ciao for now"

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