

Untold Italy Episode 111 - Venice Carnevale

This is the Untold Italy Travel podcast, and you're listening to episode number 111.

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

Ciao a tutti! Hello everyone! How are you all doing today? I'm excited because guess what is starting tomorrow? Carnevale in Venice! One of the most spectacular festivals in the world. And it's making a comeback after being cut short abruptly in 2020 and canceled in 2021.

I really feel like this Carnevale is heralding brighter times ahead. And we sure need that don't we. What could be better than a mid-winter party with the most amazing and incredible costumes and parties to get you through February's darkest days?

So what is Carnevale? Well, it is a Christian tradition and the last celebration before lent begins on Ash Wednesday. During Lent, the time before Easter, many Catholics deprive themselves of things they enjoy and focus on the sacrifices made by Jesus before his death. Deprivation comes in many forms - parties, certain foods, alcohol, music, dancing. So the idea with Carnevale is that you party until you drop and spend the period of Lent recovering.

Carnevale is somewhat similar to Mardi Gras in the United State and it is celebrated throughout Italy - with costumes, parades, feasting and general partying. You'll find big celebrations in Viareggio in Tuscany, Cento in Emilia Romagna and Ivrea in Pledmont but the biggest, most spectacular party or should I say series of parties is held in Venice.

Joining me today on the podcast direct from Venice is my friend Elisabetta who is a licensed tour guide and Venetian local (for many generations or a few hundred years!) She's attended many Carnevale events over the years and is excited to share this beautiful and exciting tradition with you

Katy

Bentornata Elisabetta! Welcome back to The Untold Italy Podcast.

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Elisabetta

Grazie. Grazie. I'm so glad to be back again. I tell you, it's always a little bit of light every time that we have to speak about something to do with Venice and Italy altogether with you, Katy.

Katy

Oh, I know. You know Venice is my favorite, don't you? We're so thrilled to have you back with us today, Elisabetta. And how is beautiful Venice these days?

Elisabetta

Well, I have to tell you, Katy, I wish I could just give you a glimpse of what's happening outside my window. Today, it's one of those blue-sky days, and I'm serious. I look at it and I think I am so lucky to have such a day. We've actually had several days of fog, you know, those kind of misty fog where you don't see literally nothing at all - over like a meter in front of you. And instead, today it's fantastic. It really is.

Katy

Well, I mean, you're lucky to have that contrast because I really love both kinds of days in Venice. There's nothing quite like walking through the town over the bridges where there's mist and everything. I really love that, too. But, yeah, it's nothing quite like a beautiful, sunny day in Venice. So before we start delving into Carnevale, which is just about to start, and that's so exciting. Can you please remind our listeners, especially our new ones who haven't met you yet about your background and what you do.

Elisabetta

Alora. So all the new friends that we have maybe listening today. My name is Elisabetta. I was born in Venice, and my family has lived in Venice for many, many, many years. We calculated more or less it's approximately 500 years. Then when you do searches for family trees, sometimes you can get confusing. But on my father side, let's say about 500, my mother that's a little bit more complicated because it looks like the surname has changed probably at least one time. So my mother's side, quite a lot of them are artists. They're mainly painters and restorers. And then instead from my father's side, part of the family there, have worked in boat constructions. I have lived most of my life in Venice. I have kind of left the city for approximately 10/12 years to go and learn English. It took me several years to learn it. So then when I decided it was good enough, I kind of came back. Now I have to tell you, Katy, it's something that maybe I've never told you. I was in London and I was definitely missing the food and the weather. So in 2000, I decided it was time to come back. From approximately 2000, I've been working as a tour guide and city guides for the city of Venice, but not only because I travel quite a lot of the country as well.

Katy

It's so fabulous to have you on the show here because everyone Elisabetta is so much fun. And as she mentioned, she's a local of Venice and so she has all that insider knowledge, and there aren't actually too many people that are locals of Venice, like Elisabetta left, actually, I think I can't remember. I think it's less than 50,000.

Elisabetta

That's exactly right. We have a sign exactly in Rialto, in Campo that is called San Bartolomio. And at the moment we are just about 50,000, but we are decreasing very quickly. So we will be literally some rare type of humans very soon.

Katy

But you are very special. It's a very special thing to be Venetian. And there's so much very rich history and culture around Venice because, of course, it's built on a lagoon and it just creates a whole different type of society, I think, than a city that's based on land. But one of these amazing parts of the culture happens every year in around February. And it's called Carnevale. So when I was thinking about Carnevale, which is just about to start for this year, I couldn't think of a better person to talk to our listeners about it than you. And so let's have a chat about what actually happens in Carnevale. And let's maybe start off with when did it start? What's the origins of it.

Elisabetta

Katy! This is one of the things definitely that made me come back to Venice when I was so far away in a place called London, so grey and cold. Carnevale - it's a fairly old event. There isn't much in writing. So we kind of when you go back and start searching for documents, one of the very first things that we learn from a Doge. So we know that Doge used to be our Duke from the year 697. The Doge is the Doge Vitale Falier. So he mentioned Carnevale in a document back in the year 1094. So we're looking at approximately 1000 years ago. Imagine that after that. This is just mentioned. We need to skip approximately 200 years. In 1296, we have the very first recorded celebration that has to do with Carnevale in Venice. So it really is gone a long time ago. And that's when we have the very first mentioning of this particular event. It's an annual festival, as you said, Katy, the end of the Carnevale is exactly falls exactly 40 days prior length or Ash Wednesday. So 40 days prior, we have what is known as we call in Italian Martedì Grasso or Shrove Tuesday. And that's when, let's say the 'peak' of the celebrations ends pretty much. So if I have to talk about nowadays, let's say that the peak of the celebration would start approximately Fat Thursday. And then you have Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, and the last day is Tuesday. Now I'm talking about nowadays, though, Katy, if you leave me a second, I also want to go back to the past, because I have to tell you, sometimes when I think about Carnevale, this is when I think I would like to go back, if I had the chance to travel in time - about 300 years ago, let's say 1700, when Venice was

kind of in a very slow and soft decline, when people in any case, still have quite a bit of money to spend and they were spending their days enjoying themselves very much!!

Katy

Good on them. As we know now after the last two years. You should not put that off. Just go and enjoy yourself.

Elisabetta

Yes, Katy, I think I should definitely try to remember it every day when I wake up in the morning.

Katy

Yeah, absolutely.

Elisabetta

So going back in time. Right. First, one more thing. Just to mention the word Carnevale if you need to go back and etymologically speaking, the word Carnevale, they say, even if I have to say, I'm not 100% convinced - it might come from the word "carne vale", which means farewell to meat. So not meat - you know that during lent, usually we shouldn't eat meat or even maybe we can talk about the past more than the present. And it was to kind of overindulge before going into a very hard sort of dieting for lent. Now the roots of Carnevale are extremely uncertain. We can go back to quite a lot of different things. If we leave Italy, we can think about the Greek celebration of Dionysus, which was known as Bacchanalia. And then you have a variety of pagan celebration and that might be like the arrival of spring, for example, and things like this. So this would be really the origins of Carnevale. Now, coming back into Venice, we can think of. So if we considered approximately around the 1300, people would have started to seriously celebrate Carnevale. So you can think that people started to slowly, slowly, literally, maybe wearing some maybe the very beginning, very simple masks, probably some of the most let's say the simpler at the very beginning were very plain masks. And one of the things that started to happen quite soon was having men dressed as ladies. Okay. And this is starting to go slowly, slowly. Now, already by the 15/1600s, we have a strong increase of masks. Now the masks, the Carnevale - the season would start from imagine this, 26 December, and it would go all the way to, as we say, lent. But then with the time, it would also keep on going for quite some time. Unbelievable to think that at one point Venice reached on having about four or five months of Carnevale.

Katy

They really knew how to party.

Elisabetta

Absolutely. Now, what did they used to do? I had to tell you that our ancestors, they seriously knew how to party. As you said, Katy, now we are talking about - and listen to this - so we are starting to have a lot of parade in costume (and this is the simpler thing) we started to have masquerades in the big campi so everyone would dress up with some of the most unusual. And then together that wouldn't stop there. As you or some of our guests might know, in Venice, we used to have bullfights but not only bullfights, so what they used to do to enjoy themselves, they used to close all the access that they were on some of the bigger Campo I can think about, for example, Campo Santo Stefano which is close from the Academia to San Marco, they would close the Campo and they would literally leave lose some bulls. That's quite an unusual thing but then we used to have also acrobatics and acrobats, for example, all around the campi or something else which Venetians became extremely well known starting from approximately 1500 we used to have bridge battles and I'm talking about like seriously fights and this was all part of the entertainment of people performances of all kinds, dances, regattas, comedies in every campo there used to be maybe a different theater group and then one of the things that I remember even from my time so let's say that the peak for me for my Carnevale would have been about 35 years ago and I remember still going to the Shrove Tuesday and ending the night with fireworks in Piazza San Marco I have to tell you, Katy, that's still stuck in my mind and that's one of the best memories I have of Carnevale myself.

Katy

Amazing. Now just for our listeners I think maybe we just go back because a Campo in Venice is a Piazza like that you have in other towns.

Elisabetta

Venice is a big group of Islands and it's all together 118 Islands, most of them they are connected with bridges and usually for each island, the Islands when they started they were quite independent entities. So for each island you have, let's say a small little center. The center of an island is usually marked by a Campo which is a Piazza, it's a square and for each Campo you have usually a Church, a Belltower which is extremely important. It was extremely important in the past and then various palaces around Campos or Piazza. Now we only have one Piazza in Venice and that's Piazza San Marco. So the Piazza San Marco, it's the heart of the city that used to be our political and religious center for the city of Venice and that was for us, let's say the main stage of Carnevale if we go back to Carnevale, the main stage of Carnevale, for example, one thing Katy, I was forgetting which is quite something which we still carry from the past. So back in the 1300s they started to have some Turk acrobats, okay? And they started to have the very first flight of the Turk which was literally a Turkish acrobat that was coming down on a rope. It was from I think a boat that was standing just next to the square and the rope was tied to the Doge's Palace and then slowly, slowly this thing changed but we still do have such a presentation. The only thing that changed that we don't no longer have the Turk, we usually have a dancer and every year they will pick a different dancer. The

rope nowadays is actually pulled from the Belltower. I'm talking about the very high Belltower to the Palazzo Ducale, the Doges Palace. And this lady usually starts from the Belltower and she goes all the way down to the Palazzo Ducales. And that nowadays is known as the Flight of the Angels.

Katy

I would love to see that. I think it sounds absolutely magnificent. And people, you can go and Google that on YouTube so you can see it, but it's stunning. But I think the lady is very brave.

Elisabetta

Absolutely. I would not even think about it. I wouldn't either.

Katy

And I think the Turk must have been even braver because they probably have all sorts of safety things that they can do these days that they couldn't do back in those days. And this is what I love about Venice is because this city, this tiny, tiny city just was such a powerful force in the world that they spread their Empire as far as Constantinople and even further. And this is where they brought back all these amazing different cultures and flying Turks and beautiful domes and gold-encrusted everything. And that's part of the mystery and intrigue of why I love Venice.

Elisabetta

I totally agree. I have to tell you that sometimes I am happy that I live now in 2000 in 2022. But I think if I had the chance, maybe between the 16 and 1700s, it would have been not a bad time for a living.

Katy

You know what, Elisabetta, I could give the last two years back. But yeah, I tend to agree with you.

Elisabetta

Katy - Yes, I'm with you.

Katy

Oh dear. Yeah. But I think this whole idea of going around from Campo to Campo - I'm sure did they have some sort of rivalry of who would have the best celebration? I'm sure they did.

Elisabetta

That's interesting that you mentioned this, because that's something that I was exactly reading about yesterday. So then Venice was divided in two main, let's say rivalry factions. The city already from the very early times of the city all the way through the 1700s and there were some rivalries. And that's exactly the explanation of the war or the battles that we used to have on the bridges. Literally. Why on the bridges? Because it was literally the border of these two rivalry groups, the Castellani and Nicolotti. Very interesting. By the way, I have to tell you one thing though. When I was saying to you, I love to go back to the past because really, really they were something I was looking at some of the laws that were passed already from the 1300s and from the laws that were passed by the Venetian Republic, the government, you really understand what was happening here. And I can tell you that these people really they were overdoing it big time. My goodness. Interestingly enough already from 13/1400s, but let's say the peak is 1600s. A lot of the people in the city. Never mind what extractions you were - poor, super poor, super-rich, everyone could dress up. And this is the interesting thing. The masks were really the great equalizer in between the rich and the poor. If you were going to a casino, I don't know if some of our listeners knows, but the Venetians were like they were totally addicted to gambling big time. To be able to gamble, they would open up gambling houses in their houses, in their own houses. This is exactly the reason why the word ridotto starts. Where is ridotto? Ridotto is a small casino, a small casino that was opened up at the very beginning and it was opened up by a gentleman called Marco Dandolo, which received the permission to all the private gambling in his large palazzo. So close to San Moise, close to San Marco. And that's how the word Ridotto, which means small gambling house was born. Now, we were saying about these great equalizers, which are where the masks. So everyone goes down to the same level or up to the same level. So rich and poor, casino owners, patrons or peasants and nobles and so on. The masks also were not really considered a luxury item. You really needed to have them. From approximately the 13/1400s, they were also worn in different environments. So not only in the casino, but you were going outside at the operas, at the cafes, state ceremonies, receptions and they were only forbidden during lent and the ten days also prior to Christmas. Now going back to present, if you want to be transported, let's say towards nowadays Carnevale. I'm thinking of the Caffè Florian in Piazza San Marco, the main square where you still have a lot of masks that would go and sort of go back and live the moments of the 1700. Now for our listeners that might have not heard of the Caffè Florian, the Caffè Florian, is the very first coffee that opened up in Europe. It opened up on if I'm going right, 29 December 1720. And the inside of the cafe has been kept just exactly as it was. So you have pinkish, green, light greens, light blues, lots of mirrors, stacco and all these beautiful masks. They're usually sitting inside or outside enjoying coffee and the atmosphere of the 1700s, which for me, Katy, I find it just fantastic.

Katy

It's absolutely charming. And this is one of the places where you are going to pay a little bit more than you might think for your coffee. But it's so worth it because there's nowhere else you can experience that, really, like you said, it's like stepping back in time 300 years and you

don't need to be Marty McFly to get into the flux capacitor to do that. You just need to wander around Venice and it's just so beautiful.

Elisabetta

Absolutely. Katy, I just tell you this for me - let's say that when you are born here, you kind of live with it and for you, it's quite a normal thing when you enter, let's say a patisserie or even my newsagent shop and you'll find the guy behind the desk dressed up as a pirate. And for us, it's nearly a normal thing. I do appreciate so much. I have a friend that was born - she's half Argentinian and half New York. American. She comes back every single Carnevale since the past 25 years, Katy. She comes back with three friends, they rent an apartment and she comes back with two huge suitcases full of costumes. I'm not kidding Katy.

Katy

Amazing.

Elisabetta

She comes and she goes to every single party. Unbelievable. So every time she comes, I go and see her and she has all her wigs, all in this place. The apartments that they rent has always all the costumes hanging everywhere and wigs everywhere. And for me, it makes me think that at least somehow the Carnevale still keeps on going.

Katy

Yeah, absolutely. I think people who embrace it, they really embrace it, don't they? They go that extra mile and they want to make sure that they're really feeling part of it because it did evolve, didn't it, into something that was just so elaborate and the most divine silk dresses and huge wigs and these elaborate masks. And it's been a journey of Carnevale, but an evolution, shall we say. And I think your friend, she sounds like a fun person. I'd like to meet her.

Elisabetta

I tell you, she's definitely interesting but she's now retired, so she comes here on her own time and that's her main forms of enjoyment. It's very interesting. And if anyone is thinking about coming, one of the things that she attends nearly every year, there's a ball that is organized by one of the most well-known Atelier in Venice. And this Atelier is run and owned by a lady called Antonia Sautter. She's I think she's partially Austrians or German and Venetian. She has Katy, this incredible Atelier and she organized Il Ballo del Doge every year. So it's this incredible ball in one of the historical palaces of Venice. I have to tell you the truth, I've never managed really to attend it because you really have to have the dress, the time, et cetera, to prepare. But it would be a dream for me, I think, to see if I could ever attend one of our balls. Mama Mia!

Katy

Are there many of those? I think there's public events and private events, aren't there? So there's a mixture.

Elisabetta

Of course, now public events, I have to tell you, I'm waiting Katy - a little bit anxious to see what they've managed to organize. Well, this year I'm not sure, but I hope they will keep as much as possible from the past because we used to have some very interesting stuff now usually in the main piazzas or Piazza San Marco, the center there used to be lately in the past, let's say ten years, there was a stage and they used to have some Commedia dell'arte on plays from Goldoni, which is one of the most famous play writers here in Venice from the 1700 and little concerts and so on. The Piazza was used for this, let's say, this little stage. Now you could buy tickets and go inside and sit down. Otherwise, even if you stay outside, you could hear some of the events, concerts or plays going on. And then in each Campo or in most of the Campi in Venice, I'm talking about Campos, San Polo, Campo Santo Stefano, Campo Santa Margherita, San Giacomo dell Orio the bigger Campi where things happening pretty much all the time. Every Campo back in the past, it was somehow dedicated to different people.

Elisabetta

So you would have had activity for kids, some company that would have had lots of stands for food, for example. At the moment in Campo San Polo, we've got a skating ring which usually would have stayed and the people would have gone skating maybe with their costumes. Also something else which usually it's a great fun for kids. So there are usually some makeup artists and they would have their little station, let's say in every area of Venice. So you could sit down and they would paint a mask on you. And I tell you they were very good artists - I'm not kidding. You would have, let's say a cat or an interesting mask full of colors or maybe some sparkles. For me in the past, the past few years when I don't have so much time, I would go and buy few wigs and I would use my wigs to go around with maybe something funny on me.

Katy

I love it. So everyone's getting into the spirit of it a bit, even in their own little way. You don't have to go all out with the big huge wigs and everything. You can just take your own little piece of kind of island. Just enjoy.

Elisabetta

Exactly. Yes, Katy. So usually you see what happens. I have to tell you, the most crowded days it would have been the Saturday prior to Tuesday and then Tuesday itself. Imagine, Katy, that

during those two evenings the police will have to direct the traffic of people and close down some of our alleys because there would be so many people that you literally would not be able to walk anymore.

Katy

You can't even imagine that now, can you? And do they have any activities actually on the water? Are there any boat-based activities?

Elisabetta

In Cannaregio, there is an evening that it's something to do with direct competition that they have with the Flight of the Angel. I'm trying to remember the name. I think it's the Evening of the mouse/the rat. So they wanted to put themselves in totally in the contrast of the angel. And they actually have a fake sort of rat on a big boat that is carried through a canal next to the old area of the Jewish ghetto on a big barge. And then you have fireworks on the canal around all this boat, with this big raft and all the people are usually on their boats on the canal of Cannaregio, of this big canal. Of course, it just came to mind because this had a huge success just before the last few years and everyone was waiting for this to come. And hopefully (I doubt not this year because it does call quite a lot of people, so they are concerned about too many people) but hopefully next year we will have this big evening in the Cannaregio district.

Katy

That sounds like fun. And are there any regattas at that time of year or is that mainly in the summer?

Elisabetta

Sometimes they do organize something dressed up, but every year they would have something different. So you would have usually some small regatta that would go down the grand canal. Now with people dressed up in various ways, I just remind you that usually we do have quite well-known regatta on the 6th January and they are all dressed up as the old lady in the Italian tradition. This is one of the last regatta that we have on, let's say the coldest season.

Katy

Okay. And so I can imagine though as well, like if people are dressed up like your friend in absolute finery, would she actually take a gondola to her party? Is that what she would do? Like - it just gives me shivers just thinking about all these people dressed up looking fabulous going around in the gondolas.

Elisabetta

She would have some fairly expensive clothes and also the dimensions of her skirt. It takes up about four people. So you need to be careful with - because if it's too crowded you really risk to ruin your dress.

Katy

Now I've got an image of her going into the canal. Now not everyone can have the chance to visit Venice at Carnevale time, unfortunately, because it's a small city and in normal times actually Carnevale is like peak, peak season, isn't it, in Venice, which you might not think in February, but it's booked out and you have to book months and months in advance for it. But obviously, when you visit Venice at any other time, you can still get a little bit of a taste of Carnevale as well, can't you, because they still try to keep some of those traditions happening throughout the year.

Elisabetta

Exactly.

Katy

One of the things that you can do when you're there is you can actually go and visit one of the mask-making and the costume designer places.

Elisabetta

Oh, yes. Some artists have managed to stay in business and maybe they've changed. There is one which is a fabulous place which is called Ca 'Macana. It's very close to Campo Santa Margherita, one of the biggest campi where we usually have quite a lot of happening during Carnevale. And they are great because one they organize some very nice workshops. I usually sometimes take my students that I usually lead around the city so they can pick the shape of masks that they would like to paint. And then there are a couple of ladies that are actually fantastic, which they will help you to choose colors and a technique as well to paint your mask. I tell you, it's a great activity, but not only for Carnevale. Sometimes when you have kids and you're trying to maybe find something to do that they might really enjoy, this is perfect for a couple of hours and it's just an activity that takes you away. But in any case, it takes you away, but it keeps you somehow in the culture part of Venice.

Katy

Yeah. And I think it's really important to know that there are some - an actual real mask that you can buy that's been made by one of the local artisans is going to cost you quite a bit of money because these can take weeks to make because they are very delicate and they've been made with really special techniques and special materials. Just even a simple mask that's been handmade, they can really start at quite a high price. And I think some people get

a bit shocked by that. But what you do need to know is that anything that's around the ten Euro mark is not an artisan-made mask.

Elisabetta

Exactly. To be able just to produce the actual mask, as you said, it takes time because you have to glue all this paper mache and then it needs to dry out, you need to polish it, you need to paint it and that's only the base. After that, you have to start thinking, how am I going to decorate it? What can I put all the little sparkles and the stress, it takes so much time. So we really have to think about first the material used and then the actual hours that people would take. The masks that you can find in some of the shops, as you say, they go from five to €10 and you wonder where they come from.

Katy

They probably didn't come from Venice. I mean, let's be frank. No, they didn't. They came from a factory somewhere. And so I think that if you're wanting to really understand the Venetian - really respect for arts and crafts and design, it's a really good way to start is to look at these masks because they are absolutely beautiful and work of art and some of the - they've got lots of different designs that mean different things, don't they?

Elisabetta

Absolutely. I'll tell you, Katy, I always remember. So probably, let's say one of the most traditional, Katy, that we have is called Bauta. And it's, let's say the most additional Venetian Carnevale mask. Originally it was only worn by men, usually all social classes, but also during the 1800s, I started to also be worn by ladies. The mask is a white mask and it's got like a fairly long nose, a triangular bottom around the mouth, and it covers up your lips, but it distorts your voice. So you don't really understand if you can recognize the person by the voice. And that also allows you to eat and drink, which is useful because there are some master that they don't really allow you to do this. It's not usually used on its own, because you need to also wear it with a black cloak first and then a traditional hood, which is worn also over this black cloak. And on top of all this, you need to wear this tricorn hat. And this is the number one tradition. There is another one which I find quite interesting. It's called Moretta or Muta, which means muta when somebody cannot talk.

Katy

Oh, yes, mute, mute.

Elisabetta

And it's a black oval mask worn only by ladies. And it was held in place by biting a button which was attached to the back of the mask. I hope it's easy to understand, I hope, but it prevented the person that wore the mask from speaking. So this kind of rendered the person

extremely mysterious. And men were quite attracted to these masks. Sometimes they found this mask a little bit kind of nearly erotic and rather curious in the culture. The other one and last, but otherwise we'll go on until Easter here. It's the plague doctor mask, which I think probably most of our listeners might be familiar with this plague doctor mask. By now, I think the past few years has been quite well known because it was a fairly popular mask nowadays for tourists, and it's got a long beak that gives a finely macabre look to the person. And it was used instead to perform the doctor as the job of the doctor and to treat the plague sufferers. So usually they would put some perfume at the end of the nose so that the doctors would not smell the smells of the people that were ill. It was, let's say, the PPE of the Venetian doctors during the 16th-century plague.

Katy

I was going to say, where are those plague doctors now? We need them. I'm guessing that mask is going to be quite popular this year.

Elisabetta

Absolutely.

Katy

My goodness. Well, I do have one last question for you, Elisabetta, and I was wondering, are there any special foods that you eat around Carnevale?

Elisabetta

Yes, we have three things that comes to mind. One, these are the frittelle. They are like doughnuts. They're the size of a tennis ball, more or less. The frittelle. They usually have pine nuts and raisins inside. So these doughnuts have pine nuts and the raisins. There are variations with the cream or the zabaglione. Now, they came out with Nutella. Let me tell you - if I think about what I'm missing. Alora! And then we have the Galani. This is a little bit more complicated for me to explain. They are like fried, very thin biscuits. They are like literally the size of maybe a few pieces of paper put together, like a thin, thin cardboard box. Fried. Not very sweet, but very pleasant. Light. Right. If you eat as much as I used to eat, they're not very light, but they are fabulous, really. You can have quite a lot of them because they're not too sweet. They're okay then something else is Castagnole. There are some round, very hard biscuits. Even these are extremely interesting. These are all sweets which are not too sweet so you can have quite a lot of them without really being too full.

Katy

Yeah, they sound a little bit dangerous in a good way. But you probably can't eat too much if you've got a mask on. I'm thinking it's going to be a little bit awkward, especially that beak one.

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Elisabetta

Yes.

Katy

Elisabetta, you painted such a magical picture of Venice at Carnevale and I know that you do that with each and every visitor to your city. How can our listeners follow you, learn about your tours and stay in touch.

Elisabetta

If anyone is coming this way I do have a website and it's venicewithbetty. So my friends always call me Betty and not Elisabetta. So I just decided I'll do a Betty instead of Elisabetta so it's venicewithbetty.com And you'll find some information of some very basic tours but I can propose many different other things, of course.

Katy

She really can. I mean, obviously, if you want a Fritelle tour she might not be up for that this year, but maybe next year.

Elisabetta

Maybe next year. Hopefully.

Katy

Okay, Grazie Betty! Thank you so much for joining us on Untold Italy. Ciao

Elisabetta

Grazie Katy. Grazie. Ciao.

Katy

This year Carnevale in Venice begins on February 19th and runs to March 1st which is of course Mardi Gras or Fat Tuesday. I had a little sneak peek on the official site to see if there were any tickets left for the official parties and there were - usually they are all sold out well in advance. So you could hot-foot it over to Venice and participate this year if you're feeling spontaneous. You will need to find €500 per person plus a suitable costume and mask though so I guess I'll be saving for a few years to make my Carnevale dreams come true.

Needless to say, this is a very special time in Venice even if you don't attend a party or soiree. Imagine just wandering around, soaking up the atmosphere with all the party people dressed up to the nines. If you like photography it would be amazing.

So as most of us will not be attending Carnevale in 2022, I suggest you keep an eye on Instagram and the official account for the festival where they always post footage of the flight of the angel that Elisabetta described. We'll put a link to that into our show notes along with the places and sites Betty mentioned and of course how to contact her to arrange a simply wonderful tour of Venice with all the excitement and magic you hear in her voice. You'll find the show notes at untolditaly.com/111 for episode 111

Connecting with locals and fellow Italy-loving travelers is one of the absolute joys we have every week in our friends of the podcast membership group Untold Italy Amici. In our membership, we have a monthly live private podcast with an Italy expert who shares their 7 favorite secrets of Italy. These are not basic travel tips friends. They are exciting and unusual experiences you'll only find out about by word of mouth because 9 times out of 10 you simply cannot find them on a website. Past guests include author Corinna Cooke, our favorite tour guide in southern Italy PierPaulo, and my colleague Olivia Windsor who lives in the gorgeous northern Italian city of Torino. If you join the membership today you get all the past episodes plus access to our February private podcast with Robbin Gheesling who joined us last year to talk about the wine windows of Florence. Robbin has spent many months in Italy, is an award-winning photographer and sommelier and she has many wonderful secrets to share. So come join us at Untold Italy Amici and delve into all the fun. You'll find all the details at untolditaly.com/amici

Thanks to all our wonderful listeners for your ongoing support of Untold Italy. I hope you enjoyed today's show. We appreciate and love all your feedback. Grazie mille!

That's all for today, next week we're heading south again to visit an incredible palace whose grandeur is only matched by its amazing story. But until then it's "ciao for now"