

Untold Italy Episode 142 - Tale of 3 Cities: A Food Tour Adventure in Italy

This is the Untold Italy Travel podcast, and you're listening to episode number 142.

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 Benvenuti! Hi everyone. I have a question for you and it should be an easy one to answer if you've been following Untold Italy and the podcast for a while. What are the tours and experiences that I love doing the most in Italy (and if I'm honest around the world)?

If you answered food tours then you would be absolutely right! Food tours are my favorite because not only do you get to eat really well, you'll try new things you may not have considered ordering on your own. But most importantly food is an important connection to the land, the seasons, and culture of a country and this is especially true in Italy where people can argue over the required number of eggs in a biscotti recipe for decades!

Joining us on the podcast today is Lauren Aloise [Aloyce] a dedicated foodie, originally from the United States, who harnessed her passion for food and food culture while living in Spain. Here Lauren cofounded Devour Tours, a City Experiences company, one of the most popular and well-regarded food tour companies in Spain which I can attest to after my own experiences in Madrid and Seville.

The success of Devour tours quickly spread beyond the Spanish borders to Italy and other destinations in Europe where new tours were created to showcase the unique local food culture. Today we're going to hear from Lauren about the differences in the dishes and food focus in Italy's major cities, so without further ado let's welcome her onto the show.

Katy

Benvenuta Lauren. Welcome to the Untold Italy podcast.

Lauren

Hi, Katy. It's great to be here. Thanks for having me.

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Katy

Oh, I am so delighted that you joined us on the show today, Lauren. Our listeners know how much I love doing food tours, so I'm absolutely fan-girling here, and I wanted to learn so much from you. But before we get started chatting about the food tours and the food culture in Italy, would you mind introducing yourself to everyone and letting them know a little bit about you, your love of food, and your connection to Europe and Italy?

Lauren

Sure. Yeah. So I'm Lauren Alloise. I'm originally from Massachusetts in the US, but I've been actually based in Spain for the past 13 years. And this is where I started Devour Tours walking food tour company that we've since expanded throughout Europe and, of course, throughout Italy. My connection to Italy actually goes back a lot deeper. I am a second-generation Italian American on my father's side. So my grandparents were from Naples and Calabria, and so I grew up with a very kind of typical East Coast Italian American identity. And it was only as I got to be older that I actually realized there is a big difference between this Italian American identity and the actual Italian identities, because I'm sure, as we'll discuss, Italy is such a varied country when it comes to culture and food. And so that's kind of my connection to Italy, why I'm here in Europe. And, yeah, my business is called Devour Tours, and we run food tours across Europe and now in the US as well.

Katy

And I've done a few of them, let me tell you. It's very delicious.

Lauren

Good.

Katy

Yeah. Of course, now there's such a deep connection between food and culture in Europe, and you really could argue that it doesn't go deeper than in Italy. And you can't really understand Italians if you don't appreciate their food and the produce and its connection to the seasons and rituals. How do you feel about Italian food now that you've got to know better living in Europe?

Lauren

So I think again, when I came to Europe as a teenager for the first time, and it was actually to Italy, where one of my first trips to Europe was, and I was first surprised because it was like, well, where's the food that I've grown up with? I realized later trips that actually, when I went to Naples, some of that food was actually represented in Naples. And then other things are purely Italian American, and we won't have to go into those right now. But I think that the first surprise for me as a young adult was just how different a country like Italy could be. A

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country the size of, I think, the state of California and the US could be so varied from one region to another, and often it would be a town apart - you'd have people who hadn't heard of a preparation or a dessert from another town or who would argue quite passionately about the use of one ingredient versus another. One was the right way, one was the wrong way. So, I mean, I was just completely overwhelmed by the passion for food and the diversity and how it all connected to the history and how it was very much just a social thing as well, and a constant topic of conversation, which I wasn't a stranger to, having grown up in an Italian American family, but it was amazing to see that kind of on a grand scale.

Katy

Yeah, it really is fascinating to watch the Italians, I find it hilarious because they all say we have the best olive oil - everywhere you go. Now I'm on to it and I'm like, now, what makes it the best? What is it? What actually is it that makes it so amazing? And then that goes on for a long time.

Lauren

I'll bet.

Katy

Exactly. So when you develop food tours, it's mainly in the major cities because that's where people tend to gravitate to, what can we expect on a food tour? How do you create them?

Lauren

So there's a lot of elements which surprises some people because there are food tours and there is a model maybe, out there that is just about the food, and you eat eight different things and they're all yummy, and that's great, but our tours at Devour Tours go a lot deeper. And I think the reason when we stumbled upon the word devour, to name the company many years ago, we loved that word because, of course, you think first and foremost about food, but you can also devour art, you can devour history. It's the passion of just really getting deep into something. So, for me, food was always a connector. It's something that is able to connect people socially, connect present day to something in history to tell a story. And I think that our tours, while the food is, of course, an important ingredient, so to speak, we also have a really strong connection to the people who are providing the food. We want them to be involved in the experience as much as possible to interact with our groups, especially in somewhere like Italy, where often there is a language barrier. And also the tourists that we have in our group, they're very respectful, they're very curious, and they might not want to pester someone.

Lauren

So to have that guide be able to facilitate a conversation, to be able to allow that connection is really special. And then, of course, the narrative of the tour is always a story. It might be just the history of a neighborhood or the kind of food history of a big city like Madrid or Rome, but we always try to make connections and really connect the past and present, explain why the food is the way it is, and try things that have a story instead of just like a yummy taste. And I think that's what makes our tours unique, but also what a really good food tour provides.

Katy

Yeah, absolutely. And I was recently on one of your tours in Rome. The Street Food Tour. And I think what was really lovely about that was not only like you said, do you try the different foods and you go around to the different restaurants, but you're learning about the history of Rome as a city and how food is so important to the Romans and what connects the people of the city to the food, to their culture, and to their history. And it's this symbiotic relationship between all of those things, which I think is very unique in Italy and in other parts of Europe as well, that makes it so very special. I think one of our favorite activities there was making pizza.

Lauren

Oh, yeah. Especially with kids - that's a favorite.

Katy

Yeah, that was definitely one of their favorites. But I think what was really nice about that is we met the Pizzaiolo. He was showing people how to roll out the dough and make it so people could take that skill back home as well, which is really lovely, too. And I thought that was really nice touch. Yeah.

Lauren

I think anything hands-on and those little moments to connect and to learn something, and, like you said, to take it home with you. Because I think the more information or skills or even like a recipe or curiosity for new food that you've never tried anything like that, that you can give to someone to bring back to their country or their city, I think that's a really nice thing to do. And it allows also for them to share this experience with their friends who may travel, and maybe they won't take our food tour, but instead of going to some tourist trap or eating a food in Rome, that really is better, if you were traveling to Florence, you're able to have that knowledge that is really hard to get from just the guidebooks these days.

Katy

Yeah, and that's a really good point, Lauren, because I think one of the things that we love about Italy is its diversity. And especially first time visitors go there, they're sort of looking for the carbonara, they're looking for the Bistecca La Fiorentina. They're looking for certain dishes of pizza that they're familiar with from home. But the amazing thing about Italy is it's so diverse, and the most important thing is to seek out the dishes that come from the specific areas, because that's what they specialize in. What differences can we see in the food cultures of Italy's iconic cities?

Lauren

I think it's a very different food culture, and it's something that's so ingrained in Italian history to really just eat regionally, eat what grows in your area, to make things from those ingredients. So, I mean, if we start with Florence, of course, you have more of almost like a simple food culture at face value. And you have these amazing olive oils, this hearty bread. Of course, you have the Florentine steak, but it's really a place where you want to taste some of those raw ingredients as well. And I think that's what a food tour often can facilitate that can be really also hard to get on your own because nowadays you have places that do olive oil tastings and stuff like that, but otherwise you might go on a trip and you may only eat in restaurants if you're not staying at an apartment or something like that. And you miss out on those opportunities to just try a chunk of cheese or a few different varieties of olive oil. And so that's something that we try to do on our Florence tour.

Lauren

And then you have, of course, Venice, which actually, I'll be honest, I've never been to Venice, and I'm actually going this fall, which I'm really excited about. And Denise, who is your guide and who's our product manager in Italy, she's going to show me around Venice, and I'm really excited to do our tours there. And just I've heard so much about Venice's food history, the incredible seafood and the fact that it was so obviously involved in the spice trade, and just the fact that the dishes there are so different and the history of those dishes is so different than the rest of the country. And then Rome. Rome was actually, like I said when I was a teenager, a huge surprise for me because when I went to Rome, I was expecting a lot of the kind of Naples style food that I'd grown up with Manicotti and other things that I've had in my Italian American household. And instead I'm seeing, like, these heavy carbonaras and the Guanciale used in all of these dishes. And I'd never seen those on a menu where I grew up. I'd never even seen I have to be honest, I've never seen carbonara on a menu except for in like, the I don't know that I've actually ever been to an Olive Garden, but on those kind of restaurants that have maybe those dishes, but very different interpretation. So it was a complete surprise.

Lauren

And the stews and the offal, which, while I'm not a huge fan of most of those dishes, I think the history and the bars that you'll see the people eating them for lunch and just really enjoying a big plate of tripe or something - it's so interesting. Italy continues to surprise me with every trip to cities that I've been to, to new regions, and of course, the countryside with just the variety and the dishes that aren't famous, basically, which you can just find so many of them.

Katy

Yeah, I think there's something to be said for just going around and doing a cheese tour. I would definitely be up for that. Actually, I was just writing today about a buffalo mozzarella that I saw being made in Puglia and they stuffed it with pistachios at the end and then just handed us a ball of it.

Lauren

Oh my gosh.

Katy

So amazing. But, yeah, I think for me as well, just the contrast between those cities that you described really well. And I can't wait for you to go to Venice because you're going with Denise. Oh, my goodness. That's going to be amazing.

Lauren

I know.

Katy

She's a very amazing tour guide for all our listeners. And she used to be a chef, too, so she's got it all. And so going around Venice, you obviously try all the Cicchetti, which are the little bites, which there's a bit of a controversy around that. Some people like to say they're Italian tapas, but I don't think that would go down very well in Venice. They've got their own way of doing things. But that is a great place to do a food tour because it really lends itself to small bites and moving around the city and out of tiny alleyways and I just think it's amazing.

Lauren

Yeah. And something like that, it's like we're not just looking to taste 8 amazing Cicchetti - it's like that experience of doing this crawl through these different places and tasting and standing and eating and drinking. It's just something that it's so unique and I think that's what builds the memory that our guests go home with and take with them and makes them remember the trip forever, instead of just like, oh, yeah, that was a really yummy thing I ate there. It's an experience. It's something that is way beyond the food.

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Katy

Yeah, for sure. So when we were in Rome a couple of months ago, I know I was with Denise going around - well, this was very surprising because I went through a secret tunnel that I didn't even know existed in an area where I always stay, where I'm in Rome. And so my little mind was blown. I was like, "where are we going now, Denise? This is so exciting". And the other really amazing thing was because you kind of get into a rhythm, being a tourist, and I love what travelers, whatever you want to describe yourself, but I think sometimes you get into a bit of a rut and it's good to disrupt your mode of doing things. And what was really great about Denise is she took us to this gelato shop and from the outside, it was one that I would never go into because it had this big colorful ice cream cone out the front and it just looked like a tourist trap, basically. And we went inside and let me tell you, I walked past this gelato shop a lot. It was so good. And I need to just recalibrate because sometimes the fancy places like the Fatamorgana, which is amazing, they do amazing gelato, but sometimes these little family-run places are just as good.

Katy

Yeah

Katy

I had the lemon with chili gelato.

Lauren

Oh, that sounds amazing.

Katy

It was really good. And so if you're going to Italy and you're going on a food tour, then I think this is the message that you got to get across. If you're not someone that really loves well, you're not really like into history or you're not really into art, and you think, well what do I do when I'm in Italy? Then I think it's just you really need to think, well, a food tour is going to actually combine all of those things.

Lauren

Yeah. And it will feed you for (depending on the tour you take), but at least one of your meals, if not two. So it really is - it checks a lot of boxes. It's definitely my favorite type of tourism experience. I am, of course, biased. And it's not to say that if you want to go deeper in the history, do a history tour, and we'll also touch on a few things, but it's not going to be overwhelming, it's not going to mean that you shouldn't have taken the other tour. Same with art. It's a unique experience that really does it feels quite natural when you're on it, like you're not really on a tour.

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Katy

Yeah, I totally agree. And I also think it's a great one to do if you're traveling solo. So when I travel solo - I used to I don't anymore, but I've got a few people in town now. But when I used to travel solo, I always would do a food tour on the first night I was in the city, because then you always meet really interesting people and it's a really convivial atmosphere. Everyone's like relaxed, having a glass of wine, tasting some food, and everyone seems to really relax and get to know each other. And so you might make some friends, but at least as well you have someone to share a meal with, which I think is really lovely. And that's one of the things about solo travel, which can be a bit awful for me because I love sharing food with people - I always found that a bit challenging.

Lauren

Yeah. No, I agree. I also used to travel solo a lot more often and it was always great to do either a food tour or some sort of like cooking class that has a group experience because you weren't alone for that meal. And you could get great tips from not only your guide, but also your peers because people who tend to join food (tourists do like food) and so people would have been to Venice and you were off to Venice, and they'll give you tips there or other tips in the city of Rome or wherever you are. And then, of course, the guide provides a lot of tips, both officially, like we always have our guides provide a little email after the tour that has suggestions on what else you could do and see and eat. But also unofficially, if you say, hey, I really want to try the best oxtail in Rome. Where can I go? They're going to have the answer for you.

Katy

They always do. And they're not afraid to share it either, which is so good because sometimes people keep those secrets to themselves, which I think is a bit unfair. But the other thing that I really like about doing a food tour in Italy is that sometimes, well, for starters, you may not know the local dishes, but you just might be a little bit scared to order them on your own. And so sometimes when you're on a food tour, they'll provide the opportunity to give you so you can taste when you visit restaurants on your own, you can get a list of the restaurants that are on a food tour quite easily if you really want to. There's some bloggers always written about it, but I think there's a difference. And what do you think that is?

Lauren

There's definitely a difference in something you just mentioned, which is a really good point. Almost the portion size, which is simple enough. But yeah, of course, especially thinking of a solo traveler. I have this list of 20 restaurants. How can I take 20 restaurants off in two days? That's an issue. And then even if you were there for two weeks, that's a lot of meals, that's a lot of big heaping plates of pasta. What if you don't like it? And that's a lot of money. So this is a great way to just check off anywhere from three to eight to restaurants at a time or places

at a time, to taste smaller portions, to be able to be a little more curious. Like try some of the offal, even if you don't think you're going to like it, or you've tried it before and maybe it wasn't your favorite, I still try it every time. But you're not committed to a huge tripe sandwich when you go to the Testaccio market, so that's nice.

Lauren

And then, of course, if you're at the restaurant on your own, maybe you're social and you strike up and you have great Italian, or your waiter speaks English and you strike up a conversation and you get to know a little bit about the history or you read an amazing blog post, you can do all that. You can watch great documentary about the place, but a food tour facilitates all that for you. And you're not going to have to have to put yourself out there necessarily. The story will come from the guide, from the people we have interacting with you on the tour. I think go a lot deeper than you often would on your own.

Katy

One of the dishes that I think people would not know where to go to get a good one, for example, that we had in Rome, was the artichoke, and Denise took us to an amazing place where it's just really fresh. And I've had them before, and unfortunately, not as juicy or not the same different textures that you get when you have a really good artichoke. And the difference is amazing. Yeah, and it's also good to know where you can get these seasonally as well because it's not always in season and we were.. just happen to be there at the right time, which was very lucky. But you have to kind of go with the guide as well because this is the amazing thing about Italy. Not everything is in season and they eat very seasonally as well. So do you adjust the tours for those type of things?

Lauren

Yeah, we do. It depends on the tour. It depends on the stop and kind of what the partner is able to do, but we have some classic things like in Rome, you're always going to try certain pasta dishes, but then there are also parts of the tour that can change depending on the season. And we really want to give the opportunity to some of the vendors we work with, especially like in the market, to change out cheeses based on seasons, which is something that's funny that a lot of people don't associate cheeses with seasons. But that was something I actually learned on our Rome tour, that there's season for every cheese and you have your cheese monger in the know, they'll explain exactly what and why and what it's going to taste like in one month versus another month. And so yeah, we do that as much as we can while still making sure to include some of the kind of main stays of each destination.

Katy

Yeah, the cheese, the cheese - it always comes back to cheese, I think.

Lauren

Exactly. Cheese or gelato.

Katy

Exactly. But if you have like a fresh cheese, it's come from the mountain, I guess when you think about it logically, of course, there's a season for cheese and different types of cheeses. And historically the hard cheeses were obviously produced so they could get people through winter. I'm just thinking about it, then I'm thinking, oh yeah, of course.

Lauren

I know. It was so obvious, but I also had never really thought about it before. The animals eat different things in different parts of the year, which presents a different flavor in the cheese depending on when it's from as well. It's fascinating. And I also think that this is another thing a food tour can do. Our company generally operates in large cities, like you said at the beginning of the interview, but it's able to connect people to maybe the more rural areas that they might not get a chance to visit on the trip. And we do that by trying some of those products that might come from the countryside outside of Rome and the guide might show a visual or explain or the shop owner might explain what it's like in that area. And that's special because of course we would love to take people out to the more rural areas but it's not as easy to do a lot of people don't sign up for those tours. We've tried it. It's not to say we'll never do it, but it's a little bit more of a hard sell. But of course, anyone who loves food, you want to get people out to the farms and out to the mountains and to the actual factories.

Lauren

And so it's nice when even though the person is only in Rome for a couple of days and they're not going to be able to do that, you can kind of bring that to them and give them a little bit of that experience, even though you're in the city.

Katy

Well, I like to think people will be inspired by that, actually, so that they would think, okay, well, there's something more to explore about this food culture. And I think that's really what happened to me. I started tasting all these different things and obviously got curious about where the produce came from. And I think it's so different in such a big contrast to our lives in the US and in Australia as well, and in the UK - we're just used to go into the supermarket and picking it up and just not even thinking about what's happened. So I just think it's a great piece of education to actually stop and have a think about where your produce has come from, who's making it, what processes have gone on behind it. And when you stop and think about that, you can really appreciate the food a lot more, I think.

Lauren

Yeah. No, I totally agree. And that's something that in Italy, if you go into any market, you have that in front of you visually. And of course, if you can communicate with the vendors, they're going to tell you, oh, this is in season, or I just got these artichokes, or these ones actually, at the end of the season, don't buy them. Which I always found also funny that sometimes they'll tell you kind of not to buy something, but, hey, you trust your vendor and he knows that if you don't buy those today and you trust him, that you'll probably buy the other thing tomorrow. So it's a really nice relationship.

Katy

I think that market relationship is amazing, actually. We have some great markets here where I am in Melbourne, but, yeah, even there, when we went shopping in Modena, actually, which would be a great place for a food tour, in my opinion, if more people went there, because it's just like the foodie capital, really, of Italy. And we met a guy at the market and he was selling cherries and they have a lot of cherry orchards around, and he said, no, don't get those ones because they're sour, because obviously they're used for cooking, whereas the cherries that we were after for my daughter were actually a lot sweeter, but it turns out she actually does like sour cherries. Anyway but...

Lauren

Yeah, no, it's a relationship, I think, and it's something that you'll never get that experience at a supermarket. Everyone kind of probably needs to stop at a supermarket every now and then. But it's just such an amazing experience to be able to shop at the local markets in Italy.

Katy

Yeah, and I think some of the confidence that I've built up in the market is actually come from seeing the interaction when I've been on the tour. So you can see how the exchange works because it's a little bit different than what you might expect. So, obviously, in Italy, you do not touch the produce. Even our favorite, some of our favorite TV stars - I've forgotten his name now.

Lauren

Oh, Stanley Tucci right?

Katy

Stanley Tucci. That's it. Stanley Tucci is going around and yeah, he touches the produce. No, Stanley. I think it's told off.

Lauren

Bad idea.

Katy

Exactly. Well, now, I could build a case for doing a food tour in each of the cities because, as we've just discussed, there are different foods to try in every single city. And in fact, I have done a food tour in each of those cities, and I can't actually choose just one. But I'm actually going to ask you to choose one, Lauren, which is your favorite?

Lauren

Well, I think I have to just go with the first tour that we developed in Italy. And also, it happens to be the first place that I traveled in Italy as a teenager, and that is Rome, one of our Rome tours. And it would be our Testaccio tour because it's just really comprehensive - it visits a local market, it goes to some of these places that are so off the beaten path and family run that you just wouldn't stumble into on your own. Like, you were talking about the gelato type of place that you go to, the ones that were a little more famous or a little more polished. And I just love that about it. And I think the Roman cuisine is really something that surprised me when I first came to Italy. I wasn't expecting it. It started my lifelong fascination with the regional cuisine of different parts of Italy and Europe in general. And it really is just a place where you finish that tour and you're full. It's not like a terrible full, but you're full. You feel like you ate hearty, homemade kind of comfort food. And I just love it.

Lauren

I mean, I do love all of our tours, I have to say. But I guess I would say the Testaccio tour. Yeah.

Katy

Everyone goes to Trastevere. And I'm telling everyone Testaccio is where it's at. Because, like you said, it's a local neighborhood. They've got a very cool market there. And it's actually been the food bowl of Rome for a very long time, thanks to its position on the river. And they used to - the Romans used to bring the food from all around the Empire through these Amphorae.

Lauren

Yeah, and that's incredible, too. Just the history of it and seeing the hill and the amphorae that are so old, and it's almost, like, incomprehensible, but it's a fantastic area. Definitely. For foodies, you have to go to Testaccio while in Rome.

Katy

One of my colleagues, Olivia, she actually moved there when she went to Rome. She made a beeline for Testaccio - I'm moving to Testaccio! And I was like, Good idea. Yeah, it's a really amazing area. And so if people have been to Trastevere, which is a great place as well, like.

It's a really vibrant nightlife area and there's a lot of work going on. But if you want to take it to another level, you need to spread your wings and go to Testaccio because it's one of those places that - it just gets under your skin a little bit. I think.

Lauren

Yeah, we do Testaccio during the day, and we're able to go to the market and kind of see it during the day, which is also a time where a lot of people are at work, so it's not necessarily bustling with people and local people, but it's when people are doing their shopping and eating at the lunch restaurants, and it's really cool. And then one of our Trastevere tours is the evening gourmet food and wine experience and then yeah, you're also living kind of the evening in Trastevere, which is interesting in itself. You see all the people going to all the restaurants and the lights, and it's so romantic. And I mean, it's amazing as well, but it's different.

Katy

Yeah, I think it's really interesting the way that you've done that actually - makes the most of both those areas, and it really speaks to the fact that I think it's Denise, again, is local there and really knows those areas really well. Because I think when you're looking for a food tour, look for those differences because you want to tease out what the local culture is and how you're going to interact with it. I think that's the most important thing because I think food tours are now becoming very, very popular, and there's a lot of them on the market, so it's good to just have a look at where they're going and maybe look for something different. And the other thing is, if you're interested in a certain type of food, like street food is really a good example, I think - people like these munchy bites. I've got these great photos of my kids with their cheese oozing out of their mouths with the Suppli.

Lauren

Yum.

Katy

Yeah, it was so good. It's a totally different experience than maybe a more elegant dining in Florence, for example. Yeah. Oh, goodness. I think I need to go on another food tour.

Lauren

Me too.

Katy

Oh, my goodness. So, Lauren, is there anything else you want to tell us about the food tours and what have we missed? I feel like we've covered the reasons why I go on food tours - to

discover the culture, to get immersed into the local produce and meet new people. That's, for me, the most amazing thing.

Lauren

I think we've touched on it a little bit because you've mentioned Denise a few times, who is your guide on your more recent tour. But I think that's the only thing I might just add a little bit too, is that the guide is also such a resource on these tours because most food tours Devour tours, certainly, but other food tour companies as well have small groups and so you're really able to connect to the guide in a way that you often aren't on other types of tours. And the people who host food tours aren't your typical tour guides generally, like, there is cross-over, of course, but there are also people who are just great hosts and really passionate about food and wine. And some are chefs, some are the kind of descendants of like olive oil farmers or prosciutto factory makers. And so you find all of these really interesting people who have a connection to food and tell you the stories about their own upbringing, their own grandma, nonna's food and I don't know, I think that's something else that's really important today. When you travel, you want a local experience and you want a local person to show you around.

Lauren

And their stories are so small in some ways. You're not learning maybe these big historical events and dates, but you're seeing a glimpse of someone's world who's been born and raised often in this area, or at least had a part of their life in this area. And it's just a really cool thing too. So I think our tour guides are the stars of the show during those 3 or 4 hours that the tour lasts. And they're a very important part of what we do.

Katy

Absolutely. I can't speak highly enough of them, actually, because it is a real job to provide that hospitality and to get everyone mingling and enjoying themselves together. And you're right, they do an amazing job. So, Lauren, I could talk about this topic for hours, but I know that you and your team have a wealth of knowledge about Italian and European food culture and just love sharing it with your guests. How can our listeners learn more about Devour Tours and the experiences that you offer in Italy?

Lauren

Sure, you can just go to our website, it's devourtours.com and you can click on the Italy section to see all the tours that we're offering in Italy. If you want to go further afield, we certainly have plenty of options for that as well. I'm based in Madrid, Spain, so you can come find me here. And we're also, of course, on social media, probably most active currently on Instagram where we are [@devour_tours](https://www.instagram.com/devour_tours). And yeah, you can follow along with our stories, with our posts and it's a lot of fun.

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Katy

Yeah, it is. But if you're hungry, it might not be the best idea.

Lauren

After your snack!

Katy

Have your snack first and then go scrolling through. It's really amazing. Grazie Lauren. And I'm going to be dreaming of Cicchetti and pizza and gelato for days now. And so thank you so much for joining us on Untold Italy today.

Lauren

Thank you. Hopefully, you'll be back soon for plenty more.

Katy

Oh, don't worry, I will. Grazie Mille.

Lauren

Thank you, Grazie.

Katy

Food tours are truly my favorite way to explore a city. I've lost count of the food tours I've done in Rome and I've enjoyed them all. Each time I learn something new and interesting about the city and its food culture that has me craving more. And I don't mind saying that most of my favorite restaurants have been discovered this way.

I think the best time to do a food tour is when you arrive at your destination. You then get the lay of the land, understand what dishes to order and you should come away with some amazing eating tips from your guide. And yes I can make an argument for doing a food tour in every city I visit. You learn how to pace yourself after a few!

There are a lot of food tour companies out there but I love the way Devour tours has tailored each of their tours to their location and its food and wine culture. Take a look at the itineraries and decide which is right for you. We really enjoyed the hands-on pizza making experience on the Rome street food tour but I can also recommend visiting Testaccio in Rome and the Rialto Market in Venice to truly understand how produce is linked to the dishes you'll see in restaurants around town.

Of course, We'll put direct links to the tours mentioned and all the Devour tour's social media accounts into our show notes. You'll find them at untolditaly.com/142.

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Grazie Mille! Thanks for your ongoing support of Untold Italy. I hope you enjoyed today's show. If you did we would love it if you shared it with your Italy-loving friends and family. Grazie to those of you who have already done this. Untold Italy is now in the top 10 travel podcasts in the United States, Canada, and Australia which is so exciting. And it's all thanks to you. Grazie Mille! Thank you

That's all for today, next week we're heading back to one of the truly unsung regions of Italy - Abruzzo!

But until then it's "ciao for now".