

Untold Italy Episode 160 - Delicious dishes from Capri

This is the Untold Italy Travel podcast, and you're listening to episode number 160.

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! Hi everyone. Do I have a treat for you today and I do hope you're not hungry just now because you will be once this episode is over. Sorry but actually not that sorry because today I have one of our most popular guests back on the show to talk about the dishes you can try on one of the world's most famous and definitely most beautiful islands. And that is of course Capri! Yes, my lovely friend Holly from food experiences company Michelangelo Capri is back to help get our tastebuds tingling.

What I love about this chat is that despite being so close to Naples which is obviously a vibrant foodie city renowned throughout the world, Capri has its own cuisine, dishes and identity which the people are so proud of. A culture that runs deep and with the seasons

I love exploring these ideas with Holly because it's in such a stark contrast to the way most people visit the island - quickly for a day trip. To truly appreciate Capri, its people, culture and cuisine you really need to stay a few days. And that's why we've collaborated to build the ultimate Capri experience that takes in the island and all its magic. I'll explain a little more at the end of this episode but for now, let's hear from Holly about what you can eat when you go to Capri.

Katy

Ciao, Holly. Welcome back to the Untold Italy podcast.

Holly

Thank you for having me. Of course.

Katy

So great to hear your voice again, and even better now that we finally met in person, not once, but twice. Amazing.

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Holly

I know. Can you believe it? The craziness of summer in Capri, and then in summer, almost summer in Australia.

Katy

I know. It's so good to finally meet you in person. For anyone who's been listening along to Untold Italy for a while. Holly and I met in the deepest, darkest interwebs of the Pandemic in 2020. And, yeah, we forged a really nice friendship, and it was just so great to go and meet her and her family, and very briefly, because Capri is super busy. And then we had a beautiful lunch together later last year. But one of those things, an amazing thing about this podcast is it's brought a lot of people together. And I really love chatting with Holly and excited to have another chat with her again today. Now, before we get started on our discussion about the amazing food of Capri, Holly, you told everyone the full romantic story about how you came to be on the island on [episode 42](#) untold Italy. But can you quickly remind our listeners how a feisty Australian lady came to be living on this beautiful island and what you do there now?

Holly

All righty, then. Yes, like you said, I had told in a very comprehensive way the long story of how Gianluca and I met, but let's put it very specifically to what we're talking about today. In short, I was dining in his restaurant, which is in the center of Capri back in 2013. So it's actually ten years since we first met this year, and I was on a solo trip, and it was basically food, wine, a little bit of limoncello courage, and even a little bit of spiritual help from Gianluca's papa that we can thank for our meetings. So I feel like I can talk about the food of the island in a different sense and that is all-encompassing, as I owe it to the island food and Gianluca's restaurant for our meeting. I guess I also should explain a little bit about Gianluca's family prior to us meeting, also to put in context the island cuisine and how it's evolved over time. So, a little bit of background about Gianluca. Clearly, I'm the Australian Gianluca is actually Caprese born and raised, and he's lived on the island his whole entire life, and his grandparents were primarily involved in agriculture and fishing, which is much like much of the island was prior to the influx of tourism, they raised livestock on the island, etc. And Gianluca's father, for example, was a fisherman and a carpenter. However, when tourism started to rise to be the main source of income on the island, there was an increased demand for chefs and people to work in the hospitality industry in the 60s and 70s, for example. And like many other of the residents, Gianluca's father also retrained and became a chef, and he worked at restaurants at the beach clubs in Marina Piccolo, specifically, where Gianluca family lived, where Gianluca grew up. He was very lucky to grow up. Now my kids are equally lucky to spend their beach summer beach days down at the local beach, down a Marina Piccolo with Nonna. And I guess that's his family, in a very brief way, his family's introduction to food on the island. And look, his brother, for example, he followed in his father's footsteps. He's a chef and a fisherman. And his cousins likewise followed the pathway to, you know, hospitality. And now in their family, specifically, there are many chefs in the kitchen. I'll say that. And it's also trickled down to the next generation. So while Gianluca himself, when he

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grew up, he actually diverged from the family trend, and he began an electronic business, which he ran on the island for 20 years. It was completely out of the norm for his family, but it was actually his father's passing that led him to change direction and enter the restaurant world. He actually opened Michel'angelo, which was the name of his restaurant with his brother, and it was in memory of his father. So Michel'angelo, the name actually translates to "Michele", which was the name of Gianluca's father, "who is now with the angels". So it's Michele is with the angels. And, you know, they hoped in opening the restaurant that they would be able to keep his father's legacy alive and continue by sharing their family recipes and their island hospitality with the world.

Holly

So it's a beautiful backstory and how obviously a story that I absolutely had no idea about when I walked through the door in 2013 when I was dining there for an evening meal. I also wasn't to know that the significance which is beautiful of how we came to meet as well, which has to do spiritually with his father, because he believed when I walked through the door and asked for my table for one, he said that he immediately got a feeling that his father had sent me. And so he felt like he had to talk to me and said that's how it came about. We didn't speak each other's language, but through food and Gianluca's entertaining ways of trying to talk to me, here we are. It's beautiful. And I'll say that the fact that we didn't speak each other's language, it really was food. Lots of our first memories are revolved around food. You know, our first I can tell you I could tell so many stories. I mean, obviously, now we run a cooking class. I'll go into that a little bit later. But I love telling stories about the specific dishes and how they related to our relationship growing and our family growing. But I'll fast forward a lot. So he had the restaurant Michel'angelo. We met in 2013. In 2014, we married. And then I was thrust restaurant business by marriage, very far away from what I did in Australia. So before I was in the corporate world, I was a lawyer. And then I, you know, I have my own business and I'll say this, I dined out a lot, but let's say I had a very different relationship to food.

Holly

And I say that for the specificness of this podcast, is that, don't get me wrong, I've always loved food. However, I rarely cooked it or I rarely prepared food in my kitchen. I lived a fast paced corporate life in the city. I was dining out a lot with colleagues and clients and family and friends. And look, I was an amazing cheeseboard preparer. I had many toasted sandwiches in my repertoire, which we call Jaffle in Australia. I also had one signature spaghetti bolognese that I am so embarrassed that I cooked for Gianluca on his very first visit to Australia. He was very humble. He ate it all. He even complimented me. But after I moved to Capri and saw how he makes fresh pasta tagliatelli with his bolognese, okay, I stand corrected and I eat cringe now, when I think about that meal. Maybe I'll say that I felt guilty now that I look back on my life before, that I didn't place enough emphasis on my food sources or my connection to health and vitality, and also what it meant as an experience etc, eating in general, food ingredients. And I guess life presents us with many sliding door moments. And it

was unimaginable to me prior to meeting Gianluca that my life could take such a turn and that food would actually literally become the center of my life.

Katy

This is honestly, everyone, it's one of the best real life stories ever. So if you want to hear the extended version of Holly and Gianluca's story, go ahead and listen to [episode number 42](#) because it's a cracker. We loved it. Now, listeners, we're going to have a chat about what you can eat when you go to Capri. Because like everywhere in Italy, the cuisine is quite different, even from the mainland, which is just 40 km away. And let me tell you, after all that exploring, walking and swimming that you're going to do on Capri, you're going to be pretty hungry, aren't you, Holly?

Holly

Most definitely. Look, in Italy in general, food is central to everything about life. Daily life, festive, celebrations, etc. They are all around food and maybe some other related activities such as fashion, family, food, but they're all interrelated. And I guess food also evokes all those senses. It's an experience, it's all-encompassing. So if a plate is visually pleasing but not tasty, you're going to remember those things. You're going to remember smells, tastes, aromas or textures. It's all a part of your experience. And if you're coming to a vacation destination, of course, you're here for the experiences, you're here for the taste. You want to savor those memories. And food has that ability to really you can visualize or take you back to those times when you're sitting on a, you know, a beach table, seaside and eating a spaghetti alle vongole. It has that ability to really bring you back to your holiday and bring back those beautiful memories. So, yes, definitely, food is a central part of both, you know, Italian living and a part of any vacation to the island.

Holly

So I guess, for me, I've got to say a couple of things. First, I'll just go back to what we're doing now, because I didn't mention before that we now actually have closed Michel'angelo, and we have now opened a food experience business in our garden villa in Anacapri. So we hold cooking classes, degustation meals, cheese, wine and extra virgin olive oil tastings and gelato and sorbet workshops. And I guess why I want to mention this is because it's changed my journey again from not being involved in the restaurant business specifically, to now moving towards a more boutique offering, I guess, but growing your own food. So even another intricate step of what we're we're doing now in the food scene is we're growing things by the seeds or plants. And I've got to say that on the food journey, I've come along with Gianluca. I think this is the best and most rewarding of all is eating produce that you've actually planted, cared for, grown, harvested yourself, you know. And it's not just the taste and the taste. Yes. Explosion. I can 100% tell you that the food that we've grown in our garden is absolutely another world on the taste spectrum, but it's also the experiences that are involved in that. From spending time with your family, our children, they're fully involved. They'll come and harvest with us. It's educating them. It's, like, also a part of the sustainability of the island

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and contributing to a better way of life. So, for me, it's been empowering, enlightening, and I think that, I guess, is one part that I do absolutely love, is now that our involvement with food is to another level, literally growing the food, and we get to share those bounties with people who come and visit us.

Katy

I know, and I was so lucky and thrilled to see that garden in person, having had a few virtual tours over the preceding months. And it is a beautiful, verdant, abundant, gorgeous garden. It's so seasonal, and I just loved the way that you described it. He's like, look, this is what's growing now. This is what's in season when you're here. It was so exciting. The tomatoes are coming.

Holly

Oh, my gosh, it's so fun. And even the planning aspect. So right now, Gianluca and the gardener are planning what they're going to plant, where and he's actually in the garden today. He's getting his little greenhouse ready for the basil seeds he's going to plant. We've also already put in the ground, we have our fava beans and peas that are going to be ready for Pasqua. The cuisine in Italy generally, like you mentioned, it is regional and it is seasonal. You use what you have that's abundant at the time. So in winter, right now, we're eating, for example, yesterday I had a pasta with spinach and broccoli. I mean, that was the straight from the garden, spinach and broccoli. We're not eating our tomato pasta right now, when I say fresh tomatoes, but we do, by the way. We bottle up our tomatoes and we get to eat our garden tomatoes year-round, which we also sell and ship. But, yeah, we eat what's in season, or if not in season, what we have preserved so that we can preserve the freshness of the summer taste and eat it in winter.

Holly

So right now, we're enjoying broccoli, escarole, spinaches, fennel, onions. And in spring, you have your fava, beans, your peas, lettuce, zucchini, zucchini flowers. In summer, you've got those delicious, delicious and sweet, yet rich tomatoes that the soil, volcanic soil of the south impacts. And eggplants peppers, cucumbers, melons, chilies. Then we go to Autumn when we've got pumpkins. So there is a dish for every season and as a little way of example, for it to, I guess, stress this seasonal concept, parmigiana, a Parmigiana Melanzane, a famous dish in Capri in the summer season. In the summer season, we use the eggplant - the melanzana. However, in the fall, we can make a Parmigiana de zucca, which is a parmigiana with pumpkin. In the winter, we do it with carciofo, with artichokes, and then in the spring, we will do it zucchini. So Parmigiana de Zucchini. So it's interesting that one dish is completely four seasons.

Holly

And my mother-in-law actually made the zucchini parmigiana last weekend. So good. She's actually from the mainland. But I don't know, they must be born with some sort of skill or magic in their fingers, because this was the most amazing thing I've ever eaten. Well, not for a long time, anyway. We had some amazing meals last year. It was so good, though. I love it and I love the fact that you can change it up and switch it out and it still tastes delicious.

Holly

That is a very delicious and versatile dish. The only thing, before we actually get into the Capri cuisine, part of this, the only thing I'll say is I did actually read Maria Pacquale's book, *How to be Italian*, and I just love this sentence that she writes in the book, that Italians have a deep love affair with food. And I've got to say that I'm actually a little nervous talking about food not being Italian. And obviously, it's only over ten years that I have really come on this journey. I have sat down in the piazza with Gianluca and some of his friends and just say, I've heard debates that are like full-fledged, hand-waving arguments about how a recipe must be cooked. And its passion. It is passion and it's serious business. They have a deep love affair with food. From the moment we wake up, Gianluca is already planning what we're eating for lunch and dinner and there's a celebration on the weekend. It's happening, the preparation is happening during the week. And yes, there are a lot of cuisines that he uses, like his family recipes that are passed down through the generations. But another thing I've also learnt coming along this journey with him, is that when you grow your own food, you also need to have a bit of flexibility with your recipes because you're using what you have in abundance at any particular time. So he will create a lot of different dishes using whatever you have or preserve in different ways. Or at the moment, we have an abundance of citrus right now, everything from grapefruit, oranges. We have our lemons, of course, and so we're making sorbet right now. He's juicing, he's doing all sorts of things with his citrus and I just love it. He's very creative in what he does.

Katy

And he's using everything absolutely. There's no wastage no waste.

Holly

That's also an important thing to talk about in terms of cuisine. Here in Italy, especially down south, there was a term of reference in *cucina povera*, which basically is using all parts of your food, your ingredients, to make dishes. So there are some dishes in Capri that are very much based on this concept. For example, throwing one out, there a Caprese caponata, which uses *friselle*, which typically back in the day, was a stale bread, and that was a way of using bread that had gone past its freshness, I guess, but still in a delicious way that made it edible.

Katy

We have a lot to learn, I think this - I don't know the full stats, but some of the food wastage that happens in Western Anglo English speaking countries is quite ridiculous. And given that there are people in our countries that are hungry, I think we could do a lot to be a bit more considerate about how we eat and how just be a bit more thoughtful, I think. Just a bit more planning. It actually makes me a little bit cross if I have to throw food out, to be honest. So we try and do that as much as we can, but we can always do a lot better. I'm not saying that we're perfect at all.

Holly

No, I don't think anyone's expected to be perfect. No one is perfect in the world. But definitely, if you are mindful, that is the first step to take one step each day to either manage your food better or plan your meals or compost your food or however whatever it might be. If everyone in the world was taking one step would be a lot further advanced than we are in some aspects of food wasted.

Katy

Yeah, I think being conscious of it is definitely the first step.

Holly

Exactly.

Katy

If we all try a little bit, then we can make a difference.

Holly

I'm with you on that front. But anyway, back to Capri. So now I was talking about in general our food in Italy. I guess, again, like I said, so distinctly regional. You're not going to find in Capri on any of the menus - you're not going to find a traditional Roman dish such as in a carbonara or cacio e pepe. You're not going to find other dishes that specifically are connected to another region of Italy.

Holly

So what have we got in Capri cuisine? Okay, this small, almost ten, and a bit square kilometer island has created a big name for itself in some of its more internationally renowned dishes. So what comes to mind to me initially when we're going to be talking about Capri's, you know, cuisine, are the dishes with Capri in its name. So Capri, okay, Caprese means from Capri. Now, what dish first comes to mind is the famous salad, Insalata Caprese. Okay, so this is one of the most famous salads in the world. Actually, we enjoy these three dishes. So I'll say the three dishes with Caprese in their name Insalata Caprese, which is antipasti. Then we have

Ravioli Caprese, which is the famous pasta, which is the primi piatti. And Torta Caprese, which is the dolce, the famous dolce. And these three dishes form actually part of our most popular cooking class menu called the Capri master class. And I love talking about these three dishes also because they are very integrally involved, like I said at the very start of the podcast in Gianluca and I's life here on the island. And I will tell you stories, little stories why. But I guess the first thing I would say is that Insalata Caprese, if you think about the most famous salads in the world, what do you think comes up?

Katy

Well, I think of mozzarella and tomatoes and basil.

Holly

Yes. So this is the Capri salad. But if you were to think of what is the number one most famous salad in the world, what would you think of?

Katy

Caesar salad.

Holly

Yes. Okay, there is a couple of the well famous salads. We got the Caesar salad, we've got the garden salad, we have a Greek salad. But Caprese comes within the top five. It is the most famous around the world for a number of reasons. Okay? Firstly, it personifies summer on a plate. It's literally delicious, rich, sweet tomatoes. You've then got your basil. By the way, it is only five ingredients. Okay? So we have tomato, we have basil, we have mozzarella, extra virgin olive oil and a pinch of salt. Now, many people, there are some optional ingredients. For example, a sprinkle of, for example, dried oregano or it might be presented on a bed of rocket lettuce or arugula. However, there is never any balsamic vinegar. So if you come to Capri and you ask for balsamic vinegar, firstly, it will not be served on the salad. And if you ask for it, you may, depending upon your waiter - not get it. Never been a part of the salad. I know it's something that in Australia and America and England, and now it's basically in places outside of Italy that people would definitely dress there Insalata Caprese salad with a drizzle of balsamic vinegar.

Holly

Here, I say it's for this reason. Firstly, balsamic vinegar was never a part of the salad because it is not from this region. And we're going back to regional cooking. Secondly, it has a very strong flavor, so it overpowers. It basically would become the victor of the dish. Whereas here, this dish is actually celebrating the delicious Southern ingredients. I mean, the tomatoes of the south, the basil, the fragrant homegrown, freshly torn basil that you can

smell from the moment you tear it. The mozzarella - like, we're in Campania, the capital - Puglia and Campania of mozzarella in the world.

Katy

Yeah, I think if anyone's in any doubt, they should perhaps get out a bottle of balsamic vinegar and a few sprigs of basil and just sort of like have a taste and test it out. Because it's so true. It just doesn't go, does it?

Holly

Everybody has and everyone can put their own twist on any dish. But I will say, like my job in the cooking class, I love, I love educating people, but that doesn't mean you have to do it. So I always say to people, go for it. If you want to do it, you do, you. But I say this is important origins of why it's not actually a part of the ingredients. So that for me is more important. And also because here we're again in the south, and especially on the island, we have olive trees. And the olive oil is something that has been very much part of the root of Capri culture for a long time, and the south in general. And a drizzle of a good extra virgin olive oil on a salad is everything. Here, I know it's different, again, different places outside of Italy, but already made salad dressings are not much of a thing here. It's extra virgin olive oil, a pinch of salt. And it's important what type of extra virgin olive oil that you drizzle on a dish, because again, there is different olive cultivars that impact on the flavor of the oil.

Holly

But then some are better on cooked food, some are better on raw food, some are better with particular dishes. And so everything the food here, coming back down to the ingredients, simple as they are, there is a reason for everything that they do with each ingredient. Anyway, Insalata Caprese that is hands down probably the most famous dish worldwide. I guess that originated from Capri. I will say also that originally, the mozzarella that was served with this dish was Fior de latte, which is cow's milk mozzarella. However, now in the trend towards the ever more popular buffalo mozzarella, you'll often find it served with the buffalo mozzarella. Sometimes restaurants might have it both ways and you can choose whether you want the Fior de latte or the buffalo mozzarella. I will say there are many different stories as to how these dishes became evolved too. So a lot of them are conflicting. Other people claim it's theirs, etc. I generally go with a story that I like the best. I listen to all the stories, but of course there are some that are more exciting that I prefer, which goes to like, for example, the Torta Caprese - when I talk about that, different families say that it was their grandparents, etc. Or in a restaurant, there's another restaurant that explained that it was their chef who forgot an ingredient, and this is how it became evolved. But I like the story where it involved the mafia, of course. Anyway, Insalata Caprese - first dish.

Holly

Second dish, Ravioli Caprese. Now, this is the island pasta. I think this is absolutely delicious. This is like a regular dish for us, not only in the summer, like all year round, because again, like I said, if we're not using the fresh tomatoes, we're using our tomatoes that we've bottled up for winter. So for us, Ravioli Caprese is a year-round dish. It's also a very special Sunday family lunch dish. I'll say that in Capri, definitely. Now, what is it comprised of? It's fresh pasta. It's very easy to make. I say this now, and Gianluca always laughs when I say this - he's, like, "how often have you actually made it?" Yeah, it's very easy to make. Well, I personally haven't made it, but have I seen it over 100,000 times? Yes, possibly. I feel it is quite a simple dish. What I will say is it's fresh pasta. It's pasta without eggs. Now, I will say, which is important is because this is traditionally a summer dish, it's got to be also got quite a heavier cheesy filling. They do a lighter pasta. So it's just flour, water, salt and a little bit of olive oil for your pasta. It's actually the filling and the sauce that makes it Caprese. So the filling and the filling, you've got two different cheeses. One particularly is quite a traditional cheese in Capri, along with Campania in general, which is called Caciotta. Caciotta - and then sort of Caciotta, Parmigiano Reggiano, egg, and there is a herb that grows wild on the island called Marjoram. And so it's the Marjoram and the Caciotta that specifically make the filling, the Caprese ingredients. And then we have the sauce. And the sauce is simple as well. Now, I'm sure I've mentioned before, but the cuisine here is very much about the ingredients. It's not about putting too much, too many flavors all together at one time. In this particular dish, you've got four ingredients to make the pasta, four or to make the filling, and four to make the sauce.

Holly

The sauce is tomatoes, olive oil, onion, and basil. It's very simple and refreshing and delicious. So, honestly, that pasta is absolutely one of my favorites, all time favorites. And I'll say, like, everywhere, like the regional, every region has their little intricacies to their cooking. Ravioli Caprese, you'll always find one size, and it's always round. I've never seen a square ravioli Caprese.

Katy

I'd like to see someone try.

Holly

Of course, as soon as dishes move from their origin, of course, they vary according to what you have available to you. So we do a lot of virtual cooking, and we always say to people, you don't need to buy new equipment to be able to cook the dishes. We can always substitute with whatever you've got. I remembered back in the day when Gianluca first came to Australia and he made Ravioli Caprese for my family. And of course, we didn't have the ravioli cutter, or the ravioli Caprese cutter. So he literally cut them with a highball glass and then

got a fork, and he went around and made the little pattern around the outside. And where there's a will, there's a way.

Katy

I bet that was a hit.

Holly

Everything was the first time he met my family. It would have been really intimidating, but he literally, because he couldn't speak the language, his way into everyone's heart was through his food. He just wanted people to be happy, and they were. Seriously. He went to the markets and he bought every bit of seafood, fresh seafood. And he was then making Insalata di Mare, which is fresh seafood. It's a cold drizzled with lemon oh, my gosh. Mix of everything. So we had prawns, mussels, clams, everything. And then we had next to him, we moved to his Ravioli Caprese.

Holly

Then, of course, he always has his signature Torta Caprese. So that's moving on. I'll say that the third dish with capri in its name, Torta Caprese. Again, simple. Only five ingredients in the chocolate version. Okay, so there is the lemon version, but I'm going to get to that a little later, because that, by the way, if you go back to that other podcast, is another reason that I say is pivotal to how and why I am here. Go back to that podcast and hear why. But the traditional chocolate Torta Caprese has five ingredients, and literally, they are sugar, almond butter, chocolate, and eggs.

Holly

And this cake, I call it a crowd pleaser. First of all, it's the best dinner party cake because you actually make it the day before, and it's better the next day. So it crusts on the outside and stays beautifully moist on the inside. And also, as you can prepare it the day before. It's like the perfect dinner party cake that's already ready, so you don't need to worry about dessert before your guests are coming over. And also, I would say it's just great because it lasts a long time. When I say it lasts a long time, it's not going to last a long time because you're going to eat it.

Katy

I can attest to that, personally, having had two versions of that cake arrive at my hotel in Capri last year. There wasn't much left!

Holly

That's the best thing it travels well. So in our cooking class, we often pack up the extra of what we've made in the cooking class and you can eat it for a couple of days because it

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actually gets better by, like, day three or four. It peaks because it's still that moist in the inside, but the nice texture contrast on the outside. So, yes, it's delicious. It lasts a long time. And look, it's been a part of our relationship. I can tell you one story about the Torta Caprese that I absolutely loved. Quickly. When we first met in Capri, on the very first trip, I actually went away for a little bit and Gianluca asked me - I went to Pisa to visit a friend - and Gianluca asked me to come back and go to Positano with him before I went back to Australia. And I said yes. I came. And it was so cute. He arrived with a Torta Caprese all wrapped up in foil, and he said, "this is for your mum". And I said, "oh, okay, firstly, this is beautiful, but my mum in Australia. I don't know how I'm going to transport this." And I was leaving three days later and I was like, It's three days and blah, blah. And I said, and then also, Australian customs are not going to let you through. Anyway, long story short, we decided to crack it. And over the three days we went through it. And I say this is very versatile cake because you can have this cake for breakfast with a cappuccino or in the evening with a glass of Taurasi, which is the premium local red wine in Campania. So we enjoyed it both with the cappuccino and with the red wine in the evening. And I can attest that it's a very delicious cake. And Gianluca's version is especially amazing, I guess. Another story back in Australia, it was the day before I was due to go to hospital, and I was in my bedroom, stressing out about packing the bag, the hospital bag, checking off all the things that were in there, and I started smelling Torta Caprese and I was like, what is going on? And I came out to the kitchen and I'm like, "Gianluca, like, what are you doing?" He had three Torta Capreses lined up to go into just in the oven. And I was like, "what are you doing with three Torta Capreses?". And he goes, "Holly", I'm like "yes?" He's like, "okay, one for the doctor, one for the nurses". And he goes, "and one for the family when Valentino arrived safe", and I was like, oh, my gosh, that is so beautiful. I would never have thought like that, but like I said, that food is literally central to them, and it's a way that he expresses himself. And I just thought it was beautiful. And I can tell you the hospital loved him.

Katy

Of course. It is probably a good thing if you'd chosen the names already, because otherwise the kids might have come out being called Torta Caprese.

Holly

Literally. I have so many stories with the Torto Caprese. Valentino loves Torto Caprese.

Katy

Came into the world smelling it and obviously has stayed with him since then.

Holly

Anyway, so they're my three most famous dishes that I believe, if you're on the island, that you should try. They're from Capri. They're world-renowned, and what better way to experience, you know, culture and cuisine than the place where the dishes originate.

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Holly

Next? I'll tell you, because you did ask me to, like, think about six dishes. Now I've gone through three, but I will say that the next I'm going to categorize, because there are so many delicious things to eat in Capri. So I'm going to say eat anything lemon. You are on the land of lemons, the island of lemons. Lemons now form a part of, you know, all the cuisine. It doesn't need to not just, you know, your primi piattis or your savory plates, your sweet plates, but also your drinks. And so, you know, anything lemon, anything that celebrates that delicious... Here. I will say again in a cooking class, when we start zesting lemon, oh, my gosh, it hits you. It's that powerful, it's fragrant, and it's so delicious. So here, look. Famous dishes that I would say pastas, savory dishes to eat involving lemon. We've got Fettuccine al limone, lemon risotto, risotto al limone, seafood pastas. In the restaurant, we had a very famous dish. It was called Linguine Marina Piccola, which was lemon-based sauce with fresh seafood. And then I'd say, moving on to desserts, of course, we have the Torta Caprese al Limone, so the lemon version of the chocolate and almond cake. Then we've got limoncello tiramisu, Delizia al Limone, a whole range of desserts that have lemon in them that celebrate the smell of the taste, the island vibrancy that runs through with the lemons in summer. And then, of course, we have limoncello. I mean, limoncello is the ingredient in a lot of these desserts actually.

Holly

The limocello is the digestivo, the well-known digestive on the island, and also, of course, different drinks and sorbets etc through the granitas, sorbets, gelatos, all that celebrate lemon. So, look, I can recommend any sort of lemon dish while you're on the island, and it will be delicious.

Katy

So don't order the traditional tiramisu go for the lemon one, because that's the local version, right?

Holly

Well, yeah, they put their twists on everything. It's the same with, like, baba. The baba is like a famous dessert in Naples, and they generally dip it in rum. But here they might do the limoncello version.

Katy

Oh, my Lord.

Holly

They put a limoncello spin on everything.

Katy

Now you're talking. Baba dipped in limoncello. Oh, my goodness. That's outrageous.

Holly

No, it's delicious. I've tried that, too. So I will say I've tried everything. I was officially (unofficially) the taste tester in the restaurant. So that was good and bad. I had to do a lot more exercise, but no, it was a fun job. So I'll say that now.

Holly

Next category, seafood. Anything? Seafood. We're on an island, so it's no surprises that even prior to the influx of tourism on the island, the cuisine was generally based upon vegetables that they grew and seafood that they caught. So fish that they caught. Everything from scialatielli is the famous homemade pasta that you'll find on the restaurant menus, and that's generally served with a mixed seafood. So scialatielli with mixed seafood, all different seafood, clams, mussels, etc. And then we've got, for example, Risotto alla Pescatora, like I mentioned before, the Linguine Marina Piccola, octopus salads, insalata de mari. You have your saute mussels and clams - spaghetti alle vongole is a very summer favorite, especially down at the beach or something light enough that you can enjoy and then take a dip in the sea afterwards.

Holly

I'll say also, I guess, some very specific seafood that you'll find in Capri that you may not find elsewhere, some delicacies. So I would say Pezzogna. Pezzogna is a fish that's like I said, the local delicacy, and it's hand reeled from generally the waters between Ischia and Capri, but also going down towards the Amalfi Coast. And this is generally cooked in two ways. One is it's called Aqua Pazza, which means literally crazy water, which is like a, you know, very simple sauce. Again, they don't mix too many herbs, etc in with it. It's literally just olive oil, prezzemolo tomatoes, and a little bit of the water. They also cook it with this - baked in salt. So that's another way that you can cook this delicacy.

Holly

One thing to know about in Capri, and I guess in other restaurants along the Amalfi Coast too, is that when you order fish, it's often by weight. Okay? So I think that confuses people a lot, because me personally in Australia, I wasn't used to that when I first came to Capri. But they will generally show you the fish and then weigh it, and then it's usually priced as a per 100 grams price. And so this is to be mindful when you're ordering, okay? So other fish, particular types of fish that you'll find on menus, fresh fish, for example, is going to be spigola, orata, scorfano. These are the type of fish names that you will come to know and familiarize yourself when you're on the island.

Holly

Another thing that's very typical of Capri is the local squid and it's called totani. It's delicious. I would say that it's a different, more distinct and stronger flavor than squid than I'm normally used to with squid. But I would say it's still very local. It's very delicious. And they will usually do it ripieni, which means filled and stuff are baked with a delicious filling of cheeses and or potato or whatever they create. And another way is Totani e patate, which is fried tomatoes and onions. That is really good, but that's naughty. But yeah, these are the seafood. So like I said, if you're on the island, you buy the sea, you think of seafood. There's also a lot of dishes with dried salt cod - baccalà, all sorts of different seafood dishes. So anyway, there we have it seafood.

Katy

You're not going to be tasting a lot of these if you're only coming for the day, are you?

Holly

No. When I'm talking about how you visit the island, I know it's different for everybody. I understand everyone has a different way of traveling. However, look, to really get a feel for the island, its culture, its traditions, its food, its cuisine, you do need to stay a little longer. One of the most fascinating parts about it is that it is an island that you have a different feel, a vibe - you're on island time. Now, to get into island time, you need to spend time. If you're rushing around on a day trip and you spend, you know and look, the statistics are very high that, you know, 90, almost up to 90% of visitors for the day in Capri spend under 4 hours on the island. So that's a lot of rushing around in a short period of time. And in that time, there's no way to feel island time because the whole beauty of island time is that there is no time. How many times did I say 'time'?

Katy

I don't know. Sure, but I think that really having spent some 'time' there last year. Sorry, this is terrible! I would say one thing that really stood out for me was the real difference between Capri Town and Anacapri, which is a totally different vibe. Most people would only probably see Capri Town and it's obviously very chic, very and it's got all the designer stores and the Piazzeta and it's lovely, but I really preferred Anacapri because you've got all the whitewashed buildings, the beautiful flowers are dripping down everywhere, the cute little piazzas. I've been there on a day trip myself and I just did not have the time to appreciate those contrasts at all.

Holly

100%. You are correct that Capri and Anacapri are two totally different worlds and in that where you stay on the island or where you visit will impact also your experience of the island. And I think we spoke a little bit about that when we were talking in our first podcast together. Capri is slow paced, but Anacapri is beautiful. It's like more community feel. There's

more families that live up here around, as I think I might have mentioned, maybe in the winter podcast that we did. There's 140 bustling restaurants in the summer season, in the low season, most of those close. And at some points on the island, there may only be a smattering of restaurants, four or five restaurants, and most of them will be in Anacapri. I'm not biased. I've lived everywhere on the island. We live in Capri, right in the center of Capri, and I experienced that for four years/five years we were right in the center of Capri. And every day I walked through the Piazza, back and forth from our house to the restaurant. And of course, it's a buzz, it's a vibe, it's great. But equally, I am so happy when I wake up in our villa garden in Anacapri and I hear birds chirping, I don't hear the sounds that I heard before, which, you know, are equally as exciting depending upon what you're looking for out of the holiday.

Holly

I can say that when we moved to Anacapri, I said to Gianluca, why didn't you show me this before? And to be realistic, in the summer season, if you have a business focused in Capri, especially in hospitality, it's very difficult to travel between Anacapri and Capri. I know it's a small island, but if you can imagine the queues for busses, there's not very many parking stations. They're expensive if you were to drive. And the traffic is not something that I particularly want to face every day. It is difficult to live in Anacapri and work in Capri for us, especially because we would have just a small gap between shifts of lunch shift and dinner shift, in between cooking classes, to go home and have a refresh or a little sleep, and it wouldn't have been possible. But I understand now why he didn't show me. But I am extremely, extremely happy that we relocated to Anacapri. I feel much more at home here. I feel the connection to the land, the fact that we are growing our own food. Also, the fact that to go into the center of town, I only have to walk by ten minutes. It's not very far. Then I'm in the hustle bustle, but then I come to our villa garden and I'm like, I'm in another paradise. It feels like so far away from the 28,000 people that visit per day in July and August. It's just a different I don't feel it the same way anymore. I feel now that I'm actually really embracing the island life and how fortunate we are to live on a paradise island with fertile soil and beautiful blooming bougainvillea. It's just beautiful sunny summers and crystal blue water. What more can you love?

Katy

No, it is it's one of your paradises. So being a local now as you are, are there any local dishes that people should try? Some hyper local dishes?

Holly

Yes, there are now. Definitely, that is my last category is real home cooking. These are dishes that you may not see on the restaurant menus. They're more casual, very homely, comforting. They trace back to memories with your family on a beach picnic. And I would say I'll throw out a couple. So I mentioned before pizza spaghetti, did I? Yeah, pizza spaghetti. Pizza spaghetti is a good one where you can eat it. It's easy to transport. So we might make a pizza spaghetti. We're going down for a beach picnic or doing a hike because it's easy to eat and it

also keeps okay in the weather, etc, or transports well. So we have pizza spaghetti is one. Okay. I'll also say if you're..

Katy

Wait, wait, wait! You've got to tell us more. What's the pizza spaghetti?

Holly

Okay, basically, it is baked or fried spaghetti. You cook it, and then you pick it, and you put whatever ingredients you want in terms of a bit of egg. You could put salamis, or you could put whatever you like in it and you bake it. You serve it cold so it's not a hot dish.

Katy

I'm picturing this. Like, you make a whole bunch of spaghetti and you put some red sauce in, and you chuck a whole lot of things, and then you.

Holly

No red sauce!

Katy

No red sauce?

Holly

No red sauce. No. So you'll boil the spaghetti. But we're very al dente because then we're also going to bake it in a pan. So then we will mix it with we'll have some cheeses, eggs, salami, and prosciutto, whatever you want to put with your spaghetti, your little pie. It comes out like a pie. Maybe I get it - maybe people would get confused because they say pizza. But here a pizza also is referred to anything that's savory that you cut as a slice.

Holly

So that leads also to another very famous, intricately local dish called Pizza Monacone. This also is very close to Gianluca's heart because this is also a dish that his father was working with, the head chef that created this dish. He was there when they created it, and he was also very well known in Capri for making the most delicious Pizza Monacone. So Gianluca's mom actually makes this for me on Sunday specifically because I love it, too. But it is a pastry pie. Again, when we first started teaching people to make this in our cooking class, Gianluca's mom was horrified that we didn't make the pastry ourselves. But that is an exercise in itself, and that takes a whole day, the day before to make the pastry. So we want people to make these dishes at home. So we just use some pastry, some puffed pastry, and then we have delicious - inside we make mini meatballs, and then we have tomatoes, mozzarella, fried

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eggplant, we fry those meatballs, we put in basil, tomatoes, everything, all of the deliciousness. And top it off with your pastry. So it is a very delicious pie. Again, it's something you don't serve piping hot. You maybe wait to luke warm. We eat it cold as well. It depends what you prefer. But it is very delicious. So you won't find that on restaurant menus as such, but we teach people how to make it or can come and request it at our location, of course, if you're coming to a degustation meal or anything.

Holly

Other dishes in the casa, I would probably finish up with saying, for example, I think we mentioned before the Caprese Caponata, which is different to a Sicilian Caponata. So don't expect to receive that. If you are thinking of that when you order it. It is like a cold salad, delicious salad with tomatoes, olives, they can put Sott'olio eggplant. Also the friselle bread that I was telling you about, which is made specifically now for this dish. And literally it's one of those dishes that his mum - Gianluca's mum will tell me it's whatever you have in the cupboard or the fridge. And so it changes. I remember writing the recipe and I said (we were testing the recipes) and I went back the next day, I said to nonna, okay, today we're doing Capri Caponata. And then all the ingredients changed and I said no, and she said, oh, Holly, you need to change the recipes. So when I put in olives, I mean black olives, green olives, or this, this and this. When I say tuna, I could have anchovies, I could have... when I say she could be mozzarella one day and next day provolone the next day, caciocavallo. I'm like, oh, okay, yeah, sure. But delicious. Regardless. Caprese Caponata.

Holly

Then a panini Caprese. If you're on the run and you go to the delicatessen and you can order a Caprese panini. This is actually part way of the story of how the Insalata Caprese came about. It was initially served with bread and then the person who first ate it and said, no, it doesn't need the bread. And that's how it became the Insalata Caprese salad. Just a standalone salad, which, by the way, is never a side dish, it's always a dish on its own. But going back to the panini version, it's just the salad in a delicious panini. What more can I say?

Katy

Oh, I'd eat one. Right now.

Holly

Yeah, there are a few places on the island, different delicatessens that serve amazing Panini Capreses. Definitely reach out if you want to know, Insalata di riso Caprese style. Another, this is a cold rice salad, perfect for summer as well.

Holly

Okay, maybe I haven't mentioned a couple of dishes that I guess in the home a lot, we do eat a lot of legumes. And there is, for example, a specific type of legume that is grown and traditionally grew in Capri, again, before the rise of tourism, and the Caprese still eat it, and we still do too. And I want to tell you, but I am so bad at pronouncing it, and I asked Gianluca three times before this. I'm going to try chichierchie.

Katy

Can you send that one to me? That'd be great.

Holly

I will. Again, that's a pasta that we will eat with chichierchie and ceci (the chickpeas), etc. We do eat a lot of legumes.

Holly

So recapping when you come to Capri, the three most famous dishes of Capri have Capri's name in it. We got Insatata Caprese, Ravioli Caprese, Torta Caprese. Then my three categories of dishes that you should definitely try when you come to Capri - anything lemon, anything seafood, anything local. That's what I would say.

Katy

That's pretty awesome to me. Amazing. And what I really noticed, actually, is that you can probably easily maintain a vegetarian diet very easily in Capri. Would I be right?

Holly

Yeah, 100%. Yes. There are so many vegetarian options, and equally, there's many vegan options as well, because the food, like I said, was based on the vegetables they grew here. It's very simple, simple food. Vegetables form the simple ingredients are good, seasonal produce. That is the most important thing. So, yes, gluten free is also something that's very well understood. There are a whole range of different gluten-free options. So I know a lot of people ask me questions - if there's a possibility we can offer gluten-free degustation or cooking classes, yes, we can. Obviously, we're limited in terms of cross contamination of gluten containing ingredients. It's to only solely offering a gluten-free menu, etc, but look, it is something that's very commonplace to have all different options on a restaurant menu, for example, and also have a dedicated cooking station area for that. But obviously, inquire before you go to a restaurant to make sure.

Katy

Well, I mean, I think that's the amazing thing about Italian cuisine, and I think when people get kind of get stuck on the pizza and pasta, it's missing out on a whole world of excitement.

Okay, now, Holly, we now know that the best dishes on Capri are those made with freshly, freshly grown local ingredients from your garden and probably prepared by Gianluca. Maybe not yourself, maybe Gianluca, but...

Holly

I believe that I could cook if I had to.

Katy

I think you can. You can. We're going to test it out one day. But anyway, how can our listeners get in touch with you in organizing a cooking class or a degustation so they can learn to make the dishes for themselves or at least taste them in the best possible version?

Holly

Of course, we would love to cook with you or welcome you to our villa garden in Anacapri for any of our food experiences, the way you can get in contact with us is via email. My email, where I handle the inquiries, is bookings@caprimichelangelo.com And then, of course, connect with us on social media even if you're not able to visit us. We love sharing what we do, our cuisine, our love of the islands, the nature of the history, etc, on our social media channels. It's particularly on instagram. I post a daily story and when I can do a reel and that is that you can find us at https://www.instagram.com/michelangelo_capri/. And then of course, you can check out our offerings on our website at www.caprimichelangelo.com We try to be as accurate as we can in terms of sharing, like I said, our love of the island. And thank you, Katy, because this is another forum that we do that. So you can also check out what we do by the last two podcasts I've also recorded with Katy. Thank you very much for the opportunity, which was Come away to Capri, [episode 42](#) did you say?

Katy

Yep, 42 is the meaning of life, apparently, so...

Holly

We did a recording on Capri in the low season, in winter, and that is again, something we love for people to come and experience Capri in the low season. You were talking about island time before and getting to experience it. Look, in the hustle bustle of summer, it is rare to be able to experience, I guess, the real local life. Okay, so in the winter season, we have time to socialize a lot more. You're more likely to be having long chats with locals, whether you're dining out or even asking for directions, than saying that of course, Capri is hospitable, like all the locals are hospitable in summer or winter, but in winter you have more time. So it's a beautiful place. Also, there you don't have the crowds and you've got the nature. The nature is the island is particularly amazing in all seasons. It's different colors, different smells, different blooming flowers, different produce, and you can visit Capri over and over again and

still discover new things. I've said that before. I say that every single day. I am still discovering. Gianluca will take me on a walk down a lane/way I've never been down, or we will go on a hike of something I've never seen or just notice details I didn't. And look, I've been here ten years and I still love it. And people often ask me and they're like, how can you live on such a small island? Well, you know, I don't feel it's small. To me, in our little, like our garden, in our little world, I am completely content. That's what I'll say.

Katy

Well, you went from the one big island, Australia, to your little one. You can take the girl out of an island, take the island out of a girl. I do feel like an island person, even though it's very big, because you're always somehow connected to the sea - somehow. We're always living by the sea. And I think it's a really, I feel like, connection. So you're lucky to have it so close by in such a beautiful, one of the world's most incredible environments. But before I let Holly go, Holly and I were chatting before and she was mentioning that they've had a lot of bookings. Like, bookings are going crazy this year. So if you're coming to Capri this year, please get on to your bookings ASAP and sort them out because they might get sold out.

Holly

Obviously, post Covid, in the post-Covid world - last year was extremely busy. We went ... much of the island wasn't prepared. And the reason being is it was only in April and May that when international travel really got the go-ahead. I mean, we were still having restrictions in terms of, you know, mask-wearing etc in early last year. So again this year, of course, taking precautions, etc. It's all go again. So 2023, we're noticing already it's January. We are very almost fully booked for May and June. And now we have got receiving reservations right up until October. And look, I'm going to say one thing. We are a small island. I mentioned before, we're only 10 square kilometers and lot of people visit. If you have bucket list items or especially unique or different experiences that you really want to experience while you're here on your vacation, definitely plan. Definitely plan. Definitely book in advance. It's going to be difficult to get like last-minute tables at restaurants, especially in Capri town and Anacapri, I think. Yeah, definitely it would be in your best interest to plan, especially if you're thinking about taking a vacation, maybe with a tour, because I know Katy is also planning a tour to Capri. And if you do join that tour, I know a lot of those experiences you're going to be doing on that in terms of eating food is some of those with us. And you get to experience our local produce that we've just been talking about. But also you get to experience a lot of other local artisan activities - again, things that you might not otherwise ordinarily be able to experience. For example, learning how to make your own sandals, those types of experiences. Visiting your local artisans, going on your own private luxury boat ride. So, yeah, those sorts of experiences definitely are ones that you do need to plan and you do need to look at. But if you're looking for an organized tour, Katy, definitely now I'm passing it on to you.

Katy

Well, of course, I only collaborate with the best people. So if anyone wants to spend some extended time with Holly and Gianluca and hear a little bit more about this story and visit their garden in person, that's definitely included in our tour of Capri. So it's honestly a very special place and they're very special people, as you've heard on the podcast. So I do hope some of you can join us there and just experience the really magical side of Capri - that's not the rushing around, that's not the designer shops that you can see pretty much anywhere in the world. This is a truly, truly local experience with local people and local flavors, so I really hope everyone has a chance to experience that for themselves one day. Holly, thank you so much. Grazie Mille, it's always a pleasure. And we'll have to think of some more topics. Anyway, until next time Holly.

Holly

Thank you very much. Thank you again, like I said, for the opportunity. I really appreciate it.

Katy

Ciao

Holly

Ciao Ciao

Katy

It's always a pleasure to talk to Holly who I met via this podcast and only in person for the first time last year. I love her passion for her adopted home, its culture, history and food. And I'm absolutely thrilled to collaborate with her and Gianluca to bring you a truly experience spending time on Capri, discovering the island. Much more than a tour, we're going deep into local culture to discover what makes it truly special beyond the spectacular scenery everyone is bewitched by

Join our very small group experience and you'll meet the locals of Anacapri, hear their music and stories, dine in a lemon grove and sail the seas, ducking into inlets and coves to admire the waves crash against the rocks and birds soar over head. You'll also learn to make the dishes of the island too.

These experiences aren't always open to individual travelers and larger groups which is why they are exclusive in the "untold Italy" way. I've put a link to our Capri tour experience and of course the details on how to contact Michelangelo Capri on our website at untolditaly.com/160.

Thanks for your ongoing support of Untold Italy. We truly appreciate all of you, our listeners joining us from around the world. We'd love it if you helped spread the word so we can reach

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more Italy loving travelers just like you. And the best way you can do this is by leaving us a 5 star rating or review on your favorite podcast app or forwarding this episode onto a friend who also loves colorful towns, delightful local customs and the magic of regional Italy.

That's all for today, next week we're getting all romantic for San Valentino - St Valentine's day and talking about weddings and elopements and all sorts of celebrations in Italy but until then it's... "ciao for now".