Untold Italy Episode 233: A Taste of Puglia - Local Dishes and Flavors to Try

This is the Untold Italy Travel podcast, and you're listening to episode number 233.

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 Clarke:
Ciao! Welcome and great to have you here friends. I have a question for you. Do you have a favorite food region in Italy? Sorry, It's a bit of a trick question because of course Italy is a country blessed with a rich diversity of cuisine across its 20 regions and it's almost like picking a favorite child which of course you'd never do. But let's see when it comes to Italian food regions!

Today we're headed down south to Puglia where I was surprised and delighted to discover so many interesting and unique dishes. And so many vegetable-based plates suitable for vegetarians and some even for vegans. Plus seafood, meat dishes and delicious sweets. And let's not forget that life-changing cheese. You'll find it all there in Puglia

Joining us today is prolific cookbook author and food experience creator Flavia Giordano. Originally from Bari, she's returned home to Puglia after many years abroad to share her passion for Pugliese cuisine with the world. I can't wait for you to meet her so let's get started.

Katy Clarke:
Benvenuto Flavia, welcome onto the Untold Italy podcast.

Flavia Giordano:
Grazie Katy. I'm so happy to be here.

Katy Clarke:
Oh, it is so wonderful to have you here, and we're gonna chat about the amazing and delicious cuisine of Puglia. But I was wondering if you could first share with our guests where exactly you are in Puglia, what you do, and the story of how you got to this place in your life.

© Untold Italy 2020

Flavia Giordano:
Okay. Hi, everybody. I'm Flavia Giordano. I'm from Bari, and now I'm airing from Polignano a Mare. So I was raised and born in, in body and when starting my career as an archaeologist. And then I discovered that food, was food, tourism, hospitality was my real passion. That's why I'm I started to I wrote books about, Apuglian foods, and I took an MBA in tourist management. And since I'm very nerdy about food, I also became a cheese and extra virgin olive oil taster, now becoming a sommelier.

Flavia Giordano:
But then after a while, like, say, so, brought me to Sweden, in Malmo, where I lived for 8 years, and, I run my Italian cooking school, teaching, all Swedish people to make orecchiette. And now I'm back to Puglia, to Polignano. I moved back in, last Christmas, so it's a few months and here we are.

Katy Clarke:
And you're running food tours and experiences there from Polignano, right?

Flavia Giordano:
Yeah, exactly. Experiences like cooking classes, and food tours, and also tastings. So my goal is to my mission is to share my passion about Apuglian cuisine with international public.

Katy Clarke:
Well, I'm excited about that. And so happy to have you here today. So listeners, if you have never seen a photo of beautiful Polignano and you're near computer or a device and it's safe to do so, I suggest you go have a little Google and see exactly how beautiful this place is. You're so lucky to have Polignano as your playground Flavia. I'm very jealous.

Flavia Giordano:
I live really on you know the bridge of Polignano, the Roman bridge? I live just on the cliff, above the bridge in, what we call the teracielo or in, we have another name that it says, like, teracielo is terra is the ground, and cielo is the sky. So it's a three-level building. It's like 3 rooms, one on the top of the other, from the terra ground, the soil to the cello sky. Or in Bari, since I'm from Bari, I'm gonna say it in dialect, we say, Sus med a bache. So, Sus it's up, Med in the middle, down, a bache - where normally is the kitchen.

Katy Clarke:
Wow. The dialect sounds completely different to Italian. I'm thinking sounds almost Portuguese or something. That's interesting. Oh, oh my goodness. Now I know, Polignano is just so beautiful dear friends, Vicky, who had a very emotional moment in Polignano a few years ago on tour with us. She, all she'd ever wanted was to go to Polignano and she made it there and she was hugging everyone and she had the best time. So I wanted to give her a shout-out.

© Untold Italy 2020

Katy Clarke:
Okay. Now Flavia, apart from the beautiful landscapes, like you have in Polignano, Puglia is such a great place for food. And, oh, I did wanna mention to our listeners, Flavia has actually she's only made a few cookbooks. I think it's 7, isn't it? 7 cookbooks and they're in both Italian and Swedish. So she's very talented.

Flavia Giordano:
Yes. I wrote 7 books mainly for the Italian market because my focus was on special diets, and I wrote 2 books about vegetarian food. Oh. Since I really like to cook with vegetables, in a sustainable way. But now I'm working on an international book because since all my clients are from abroad, I want to... I get so many question from, my guest that I want to answer in a proper way. So soon, we will you will read about food from Puglia in English.

Katy Clarke:
Amazing. Oh my goodness. You're so talented. I'm well. Well, okay. We need to hear about this food. So Flavia, can you share with our listeners a little bit about the landscape of Puglia and the produce that we can find there? Because, you know, these will be the main ingredients in local cooking.

Flavia Giordano:
Yeah. Puglia is definitely the land of extra virgin olive oil. It's the biggest, region in Italy, and we produce the 50% of the national production comes from Puglia. To cook, to deep fry for everything. I think that butter is almost not allowed in our fridges, and we have many variety. Generally, extra virgin olive oil from Puglia is, bitter and very spicy, very powerful, like a, and it it works very well with our food. The other produce we have is pasta filata. Pasta filata is the pulled curd, cheese. So it's the family of, mozzarella, burrata.

Flavia Giordano:
It is the iconic cheese from Puglia. And, of course, you know, the burrata I mean, mozzarella is the most popular, but then we have burrata that everybody loves, and it was created here in Puglia around Andria in the north valley. And it was actually a way to recycle old mozzarella and mix with cream and, and then make, like, a bag to protect this blob of mozzarella and cream. And if you age a mozzarella for days, you can have a scamorza, which is a little bit firmer, so still pulled curd cheese, but more firmer. And sometime we can even smoke it, and we can have, scamorza affumicata, smoked scamorza. And if you aged more, the pasta filata in big shapes, you can have a caciocavallo, and this big, round cheese. It's like you have, like, a big pear topped with a big stir. This is the the shape of a caciocavallo, and it can be aged for several months up to 1, 2 years.

Flavia Giordano:
I mean, 1 year. And then sometime even in a grotto that gives this intense aroma, to the pulled curd cheese. We have the durum wheat, of course, Semola. It's made in Puglia. We use it for bread. In fact, our bread is very yellow because we use durum wheat - for pasta, focaccia, and it gives a completely different texture to the food you prepared. In fact, our

© Untold Italy 2020

bread is super crunchy or also the focaccia is very crunchy. The durum wheat pasta like orecchiette, cavatelli - they have very special texture because durum, it means hard.

Flavia Giordano:
So when you chew it, it's hard and it's al dente always. It kicks while the cooking.

Katy Clarke:
Yeah. It's so good. Oh my gosh. Pugliese pasta. It's so good. I love it. And the cheese, the burrata, I think I prefer burrata than mozzarella actually.

Katy Clarke:
I just, I have to actually say, I just love that little surprise when you burst it open. It's so delicious.

Flavia Giordano:
Yeah.

Katy Clarke:
Is there any other food produce that is particular to Puglia or that you're particularly proud of?

Flavia Giordano:
Of course. We have a a lot a lot of almonds, especially in the area around Bari. There is Quasano, Torrito, where we produce a slow food presidia, almond called Mandorla di Toritto, and it's very automatic and sweet, and we use for making pastry. In fact, all the patisserie in, in Puglia is the the majority is based on marzipan, so, almond flour and sugar. And it's also connected, with our past and the Arab influence. There are very similarities, with Arab Pastry from Northern Africa, like, Morocco and Algeria. Of course, we have also tomatoes. We produce a lot of tomatoes.

Flavia Giordano:
We have local varieties. It's very nice. The one they are produced in the area of National Park of Torre Guaceto. We have Pomodoro Fiaschetto di Torre Guaceto. Fiasco is like the bottle of wine, with the big belly. So because it has this big belly, and, then we have the datterino because it's small as a date is more elongated. So we produce also a lot of, of tomatoes. And, actually, we do a lot of salsa, pelati. So it's a it's a great region to experience also, the biodiversity in produce, as tomatoes.

Katy Clarke:
Oh, it's so good. I love it. So everything's fresh down in Puglia. I think it's a really interesting always to talk about food in Italy because it's so different from region to region. And I just love, you know, the commitment to the produce and local ingredients when you're making the dishes. It's so refreshing to always come to Italy and try these dishes that are so that have been around for a very long time often and that are just respect the ingredients. So Flavia,

© Untold Italy 2020

can you talk us through some of these typical dishes and let us know what are your favorites?

Flavia Giordano:
Yeah. Of course. So I think it we can start, you know, in Italy, we have the order of the in every meal, we have a specific order, even though sometime I don't follow it because since I lived abroad in Sweden for for a long time, sometime it's beautiful to have also to serve everything together in a small sharing plates - it's more like. But in Italy, you know, we have antipasti, primo, secondo, contorno, dolce. We are more structured. So as for antipasti, we really like having, vegetables, starting with vegetables. So especially in the agriturismo. So in in farm that offer also hospitality, you can find grilled pepper, especially in summer, grilled pepper, grilled zucchini, peperonata.

Flavia Giordano:
So we grill especially, vegetables, and we serve the very in very simple way. We like to serve frito, I mean, deep fried food as antipasto that can be polpette di pane so polpette using bread bowl, using stale bread, cheese, milk, and deep fry. Or as antipasto, you can have also small slice of, of course, focaccia. Focaccia Barese. Sometimes, if you are in Bari, you can also try other this is street food, but some restaurant and pizzeria service it also for antipasto. You can try sgagliozze which are the fried polent or popizze which is the, you know, pizza dough deep fried. I mean, to have, maybe a popizze together with vegetables or small charcuterie. For example, as a charcuterie and especially in Bari. In Bari, my town, we serve crudo alla Barese that is prosciutto crudo cut in thick slices, so like a couple of centimeters, then cut in square and, seasoned with extra virgin olive oil and pepper. And so seasoned with extra virgin olive oil and pepper and so we eat it, like, in in cubes. So crudo alla Barese and with a lot of black pepper.

Flavia Giordano:
And, then you can also add some, calzone, or, pie, stuffed pie, especially the famous one in, in Puglia is with onion. So Calzone di cipolla, it's a pie filled with the onion, stewed onion, and every area has a different way of making it. You can have, olives. In Bari, we use anchovies and raisins. So this is like, agrodolce with sweet and sour. And also to balance the the onion that can be, like, made with the the red onion, cipolla rossa, the Acquaviva, the red onion from Acquaviva. Or we have a special leek called sponzale, and, and it's more delicate to stuff these calzone with. And, also, we have, we are famous for eating wild herbs for foraging. So as antipasto, you can find, Lampascioni, which is a wild onion that is, like, in the same family of hyacinth, and, it grows, like, 2 meters, in the in the soil.

Flavia Giordano:
So it's very hard to pick it, but we are very we really like to forage, and we pick it, we clean it, and we boil it, and we season it with the vinegar and the mint, or we can deep fry it and serve it with the vincotto, which is kind of, reduction, of must from grape or fig. Can have some cicoria, of course, wild cicoria or cicureddha, also with especially in Salento, we have paparina. Paparina is, our leaves, external leaves of the poppies, the the flower. So we pick them, in, in March, and we cook them with, we stew them with a lot of virgin olive oil and

© Untold Italy 2020

black olives. We like to have this bitter contrast. We really like to have bitter as a taste.

Katy Clarke:
I really, really enjoy those bitter tastes. It's really been one of the revelations that I've had actually since being in Puglia that I really enjoy. And I really seek out those bitter tastes and the bitter greens. It's so delicious and it just cleans your palate too. But Flavia, I had no idea about most of those dishes. That's incredible. That's like, I feel like I could just go to Puglia for antipasti. Was there any more?

Flavia Giordano:
Yeah. It's we we like antipasti because we we like to impress with antipasti.I'm impressed.And, of course, we have to mention that for antipasti, you can have, also some antipasto le mare, like, fish antipasto. And normally is the Cozze gratinate - gratinated mussels, with breadcrumbs and parsley and, and onion, insalata di polpo, polpo is octopus. Sorry. Octopus salad and also marinated anchovies. So if you want to also have some fish.

Katy Clarke:
I mean if you can't find something in that that you're going to enjoy, then I think there's something wrong with you really. And I think that's actually when we take our tour guests to Puglia, that's what they really find. There is always something. And we had one lady who, was vegan actually, and she managed to eat very well in Puglia actually, you know, and that's not always the case in Italy, actually. So she did, eat very well in Puglia. That's that's actually incredible. I now want my own Pugliese antipasto feast, and I'm not sure where I'm gonna find it here in Australia. I'm sure there's a place where I can get it, but, wow, that's amazing.

Flavia Giordano:
You have to have it here. And I agree with you being vegetarian and even vegan in Puglia is kind of simple because we have a lot of fresh, vegetables. Some recipes are born vegan, and we we just don't mention it because, of course, none don't know what vegan is. It's peasant cuisine, cucina povera, that, doesn't use meat or fish. It's inland cuisine, vegetables and pulses. That's it.

Katy Clarke:
Yeah. Exactly. Okay. I'm I'm very hungry now. So you need to tell us about the pasta or the primi.

Flavia Giordano:
Okay. As prima, of course, we have orecchiette. These are handmade durum wheat pasta in the shape of a small ear. So the name orecchietta meaning small ear, and we generally prepare it in different ways. The most famous is with the cima di rapa, these, wild turning tops or broccolini, rapini. I've I've heard many names in the Canada and US. And, so it's basically we cook them together, the pasta and the and the cima di rapa, and then we saute in a pan with a small anchovies and tomato. We use a lot, anchovies, preserved anchovies, in our in our cuisine because it gives that umami kick, that soulless that we need.

© Untold Italy 2020

Flavia Giordano:
Of course, if you are vegetarian, you can have orecchiette in a different way. In summertime, it's very nice to have orecchiette alla crudaiola with, raw tomatoes and cacioricotta cheese, or you can have, of course, with ragu and maybe braciole which is a meat roll slow cooked into tomato sauce. Or if you don't want to have a orecchiette, you can have cavatelli. One iconic, especially in the area of Taranto, it's like cozze e fagioli. So it's like mar e monti, sothe mountain, and the sea. So we serve cavatelli in a, like, in a soup with mussels and and beans, which is kind of strange as, especially when I say that, to Swedish, guests, they say, wow. How can you pair muscle with beans? And I must say it works.

Katy Clarke:
It really does. Now the pasta in Puglia is not made with egg. Right? It's just flour and water. Correct. It's different to the ones in the north. So it's not as, rich. Is it? It's more a vehicle for the sauce as well.

Flavia Giordano:
It's also a matter of how to use the ingredient. This is a little bit technical. At the same time, I think it's important to know because in the northern part of Italy, they have wheat. And, in the southern part, we grow grano duro, durum wheat. These are 2 different, kind of wheat, and they react in a different way because, for example, wheat, needs an egg for the dough because the farina debole it's a weaker flour, so it needs an egg to put together the dough. While the durum just need water because it has more firm and more compact. So, eventually, I mean, you could add an egg, but there's no reason. So this difference comes also from the crop we grow.

Flavia Giordano:
We discover many, many centuries ago that we don't need an egg to hold together, durum wheat pasta, and that is also the tradition we have. And there is also a technical reason because these 2 doughs, the egg dough, and the durum wheat dough, they react completely different while working on it because, the egg dough is more elastic and is created to be, rolled and make thin layers, thin and supple. So all this pasta is coming from I mean, egg pasta derives all from lasagna. It something that is meant to be rolled very thin and then serve as it is as lasagna or cut in tagliatelle, pappardelle, or folded as a tortellini. The model is a sheet, a lasagna sheet. On the contrary, the durum wheat pasta is difficult to to create sheet because it's not as elastic. It tends to break. So the majority of southern Italian shapes are mini sculpture, Orecchiette is a sculpture, cavatelli is a sculpture, It's not rolled.

Flavia Giordano:
It's a sculpture.

Katy Clarke:
I love it. You know, Flavio, I have been talking about pasta for very many years of my life and I have just learned so much from what you just told me. That's incredible. Yeah. It's so

© Untold Italy 2020

interesting. I love it. Now are we done with the primi, or can we move on to the main course?

Flavia Giordano:
I just have to mention very briefly because maybe our, our, public wants to know what to order. Just, I have a list. If you want to, for example, if you want to eat gluten-free, go for riso patate e cozze is a baked rice with potatoes and mussels. It's called also tiela and it's completely gluten-free. It's delicious with this crunchy top, very nice. Vegan, 2 vegan dishes, fava cicoria, fava beans puree with chicory. We mashed the fava beans and we serve it with a lot of extra virgin olive oil and steamed, or boiled cicoria, and this is the piece of meal. In Salento, you can also order ciceri e tria.

Flavia Giordano:
This is still pasta and it's also vegan. It's with the chickpeas and tria. They are small macaroni, kind of flat. So it's pasta basically, so pasta and chickpeas. But the nice thing, we deep-fried some of this pasta, and, we use it as a topping for adding some crunchiness to this, pasta. So it's very nice.

Katy Clarke:
Wow. Thank you for sharing all those dishes. Cause we do get a lot of questions about, you know, eating for different, dietary requirements and those types of things. But so what I was hearing from you when you were talking Flavia is that you can order these at restaurants, these dishes, which is really amazing because sometimes, you know, when we hear about local dishes, there may only be available at a home cook's home, but I'm hearing that you're saying these dishes, you can go to a trattoria, and in around Puglia, and you will find most of these dishes.

Flavia Giordano:
Agree. Fava cicori almost everywhere. Vegan safe. riso patate e cozze gluten free. You can find it everywhere in Osteria, Trattoria, that may I mean, that makes Apulian food. Ciceri e tria just in Salento. While if you go in the northern part in Gardano, you can maybe find the pancotto, which is soup using stale bread and vegetables.

Katy Clarke:
Oh my gosh. I love Puglia. Need to go back soon. This is really, really exciting hearing about all these dishes. Okay. So then with the main dishes, you know, we haven't really talked much about meat and you mentioned a lot about the Cucina Povera and I guess that's more to do with the history of Puglia as well. It's, it hasn't traditionally been a Yeah.

Flavia Giordano:
Yeah. I agree. And, also, we don't have a strong culture of breeding big animals. We don't we don't have cows, big cows. We are a goat and sheep culture, and that's why, for example, the zampina, which is a sausage is with mince originally was with minced sheep meat seasoned with tomato, pecorino cheese, and basil was I mean, was created using sheep meat. Now is also mixed with some, cow meat, but originally, zampina from Sammichele, it's very thin

© Untold Italy 2020

sausage rolled around like a spiral using just the sheep meat. We can have in the area of Valle d'Itria, but you can also find them in macelleria. In grilled place, Bombette. Bombette is pork rolls, typically the part called the capocollo, which is the meat around the neck stuffed with cheese, salt, and pepper, and then grilled over a barbecue so the the cheese melt inside and is amazing.

Katy Clarke:
I have to agree. I've had that, and that's incredible. Well, I've never had it anywhere else, actually. I don't know anywhere else in the world that you would find that dish or anything similar, actually. So you need to go to Puglia, everyone, and try it.

Flavia Giordano:
And, of course, if you like octopus, we have a recipes that we say Polpo nell'aqua sua. So octopus cook in its own water because this is a recipe where you make a stew, no water, nothing, just the octopus, tomatoes, potatoes, and olives, and you slow cook this, octopus for 1 hour, 1 hour and a half just as it is. Slow cooking, just leave it on, on the stove, and eventually, you will have a super soft octopus, very nice, to, to eat.

Katy Clarke:
Seafood is my favorite. If I like, if I had to choose 1 protein meat, I would choose seafood actually. I mean, because it's actually quite varied, isn't it? And, last week when I was chatting to you, planning this episode, we talked about sea urchins, which I mentioned because I was kind of amazed at how cheap they were. But, Flavia educated me and said, unfortunately, now you can't get sea urchins at the moment. And why is that?

Flavia Giordano:
Because we were too greedy with them all, and now there is a stop from fishing them for 3 years because, a sea urchin takes, many years to to grow and in order to be eaten. And, we had them too much, and now we add to to wait. And, if you order in a restaurant or you buy at a fishmonger sea urchin, either they are from Greece or either they are illegal.

Katy Clarke:
Good to know. Good to know. That's really important, I think. And, I I was so glad that you told me that, and I really wanted to share that with everyone because I feel like, you know, maybe we don't know. And if we see some a delicacy like that, yeah, for sure, we wanna try it. But, if it's not sustainable, then we really shouldn't do that. And, hopefully, those sea urchins grow back and everyone's a little less greedy going forward.

Flavia Giordano:
Yeah. Especially people from Bari. I'm from Bari and we are so we love them so much, but we have to be patient thinking in more sustainable way.

Katy Clarke:
Yeah. Absolutely. So with these dishes and I really love the focus on lamb as well, because

© Untold Italy 2020

here in Australia, lamb is a very popular meat actually, because we have a lot of sheep. So it's really nice to actually go somewhere where they do know how to cook lamb actually, because, or sheep's meat. We usually eat the younger animal when it's like a baby. It sounds terrible when you say it out loud, but we, that's what we tend to eat here and I've lived abroad and you can't really find lamb. That's cooked very well because people don't have it. You know, even in the UK, a lot of the lamb is imported, actually.

Katy Clarke:
So it's nice to go to Puglia and have some tasty well-cooked sheep's meat.

Flavia Giordano:
Yeah. You can you can find it. And we don't like to waste food. We also eat the head of the lamb, we grill it and serve with the with the potatoes. So zero waste cuisine.

Katy Clarke:
Yeah. It's amazing. And I think we can all learn a lot from that actually because, yeah, there's one thing about Italian cooking is there if even if you eat meat, there's respect for the animal. The animal's been treated right when it's been growing up, and it's also treated right, you know, as it's slaughtered. So like Flavia says, they're using all of the animal, not we're not just wasting parts of it.

Flavia Giordano:
In fact, I don't know if you tried the when you tried the bombette, but we also do nghiemeridde or turcinello. So these are, like, meat roll, but using the offal. So, like, with the liver or with the lungs, so we use each part of the animal. And this is this way of using also offals, in Italian cuisine is called cuintoguartos, so not just cherry-picking, but we, use every part of the animal. I agree. I like when you say it's a way of respecting, each part of it.

Katy Clarke:
Yeah. It really is a different food philosophy, and I I really respect it. And as even as I learn more and more about the philosophy, I respect it even more, actually. So, contorni, do we have some I mean, this is the feast. This pool Puglia experience is a big feast, but I'm sure you have some contorni that are popular too.

Flavia Giordano:
Yeah. I mean, the contorni on the contrary, are quite simple because, what is mandatory to have on the table, so these are raw vegetables. So we like after the fish or after the grilled meat, we always like to have some fresh cicoria, like cicoria di catalogna, which is similar to puntarelle, just to eat raw some, celery, some finocchio, some fennel, or in the summertime, we have Barattiere which is people thinks it's a cucumber, but actually is unripe variety of green melon. And we slice it and we eat it like this because it's a way to reset the palate. So contorno is quite simple because, you what you want to have after this piece is just to have some fresh vegetables, radish, radicchio, clean, simple.

© Untold Italy 2020

Katy Clarke:
I understand. It's such a great concept. I think it's exactly what's needed. Is it also for digestion as well? Is it those type of vegetables are very specific for digestion?

Flavia Giordano:
Yeah. You have to increase the level of fiber that you eat during the meal. And actually there, I mean, I've had the chance of being invited to a farmers' house and eat with them. Normally, you eat, the crudites or the the raw finocchio or the raw barattiere together with the pasta. So it's like one fork with the pasta and, one another fork, you bite, the barattiere or the fennel because it is a way to incorporate, fibers and also liquids, especially during summertime too because you need to hydrate. And barattiere cucumber is, it's very popular. So it's it's frequent in, at farmer's house that you eat together the pasta together with the crudité.

Katy Clarke:
That sounds very delicious, but you can't be in Italy and not have, sweet. Right?

Flavia Giordano:
Of course. Do you know Tette delle monache?

Katy Clarke:
No. Tell me more. Tell me more.

Flavia Giordano:
So it means literally nun's tits. Oh. So these are fluffy sponge cake, round sponge cake, very, very fluffy because they are obtained whisking, beating whisking the egg and incorporate a lot of air, and they have the shape of teeth, and they are filled with the pasta cream, custard cream, and some cream, and they are heavenly. It's like biting a cloud. They are super good. And these are traditional, made by the nuns of Altamura. And you can also find a similar cake - it's a pastry called sospiri in, in Bisceglie, in the area around Bisceglie

Flavia Giordano:
And it's basically the nun's tits but covered with the ice sugar. And so sospiri means mounds. Dates and mounds is like the erotic version of pastry in Puglia.

Katy Clarke:
Well, I'm very glad they decided not to waste the eggs on the pasta and use them for the desserts instead.

Flavia Giordano:
Exactly. If you are, in Lecce, but you can find them now also in Bari, you have to try the Pasticciotto leccese, It's a shortcrust pastry filled with custard and baked. It's very nice. Or there is a variation that is called fruttone and is still a shortcrust pastry, but this one is filled with the cotognata, which is queen's compote and marzipan and covered with chocolate

© Untold Italy 2020

frosting. And this is found in Salento in the area around Lecce. You can find it in Gallipoli or Galatina. It's very known for this kind of pasticciotto and frittone. While in Bari, but this is more Christmas pastry. We have cartellate.

Flavia Giordano:
They are like, small roses of, dough that we deep fry and we serve with the vincotto, the one I mentioned before, or with the honey. And these also testify how Apulian cuisine is connected to Arab pastry because they are very similar to griwech from Algeria and Morocco.

Katy Clarke:
I didn't ever know what to do with vincotto before, but that sounds like I can get behind, some rosette dough balls with some vincotto drizzle over the top. That sounds delicious. Yum.

Flavia Giordano:
Yeah. And also you can drizzle just over ricotta. So, very simple dessert. You can have a fresh ricotta, so and drizzle with the vincotto and maybe topping with some, roasted almonds or walnut and maybe also some fruit, cherries or apricot, and a very elegant, easy, and healthy dessert.

Katy Clarke:
Absolutely. That's the thing that really struck home to me in Puglia because you can get a lot of these traditional dishes and they're not they're making them for locals, they're not making them for tourists because that's what the locals like to eat. So I think that's the blessing that Puglia has, that tourism is very new compared with the rest of Italy, is that you still retain this amazing food culture that's driven for the locals mainly, I think.

Flavia Giordano:
I agree. I agree.

Katy Clarke:
Now, is there one town in Puglia? If you could only go to one town to try the food for the rest of your life, where would you go?

Flavia Giordano:
I would say, Bari. It's my town. For, I mean, for street food that I mentioned before, focaccia, popizze, sgagliozze. For the fish, I think, the fish that is cooked in Bari is another level and also for raw fish and also for pizza Barese. And my tip, it's also especially for lunch, instead of going in a restaurant, you can go in Panifico, and in Panifico, you can find for lunch also Parmigiana, riso patate e cozze, the baked rice, because, they prepare for lunch, these dishes to go. So they are cheaper than in a restaurant, and since they are cooked for locals, so for people that are coming back from the office because in Puglia, there are some jobs that make a pausa, like lunch and siesta between 1 to 4, especially in the summertime. And if you just finish working, at 1 PM and you didn't have time to cook, you go in your local Pacifico and you buy parmigiana. You can buy, stuffed pepper. You can buy, riso patate e cozze, so that is

© Untold Italy 2020

also a tip if you don't wanna go to a restaurant.

Flavia Giordano:
There are several in every area, and this is a tip for having lunch in Bari.

Katy Clarke:
Oh, that's an excellent tip. I love it. I love it. I love a Pacifico. And I have to say, I know you can get focaccia in other places, and I do like Ligurian focaccia, but the focaccia Barese, it's just, I don't like to use this term lightly, but it's a little bit life-changing. Like you need to go and try it because you have that crunchy and the soft, the olive oil, the tomatoes, if you're lucky, you might get an olive, but you've got to watch out because they don't take the pip out. And it's so good. I know some people can't eat bread, but it's worth the pain.

Katy Clarke:
That's all I'm saying to have a bite of that focaccia.

Flavia Giordano:
I agree. I think it's very nice focaccia because we use tons of extra virgin olive oil.

Katy Clarke:
I know. And you can feel it on your chin and you don't care. You're like, I think I need another piece. Now Flavia, can you tell me I mean, there's so many amazing dishes you've told us about, but do you have a favorite dish that you like to cook with guests or at home for yourself?

Flavia Giordano:
Of course. Orecchiette. My whole life. Because, when I decide to make orecchiette, it's because I want someone to relax, to stretch the dough, and it's like a meditation in movement. And for forget, it's so fun to make. It's iconic. And to me, it's a perfect shape because they are like small balls, so they catch the sauce in a perfect way, and they are simply perfect. And now that we have, we are recording this, in summertime, and we have the best tomatoes. So to me, less is more.

Flavia Giordano:
I like to use fresh tomatoes and make a fresh sugo, sugo di pomodoro, just cooking, the tomatoes with a little bit of extra virgin olive oil and add at the end the basil and grated some, Parmigiano or even better cacioricotta, which is the ricotta aged and, and grated just on the top. So basic tomato orecchiette, You can't go wrong.

Katy Clarke:
Oh my gosh. That's amazing and so, so delicious. And really, as you were saying earlier, it's very nutritious too. Like you balancing out the different food groups. There's a balance of flavors, there's vegetables, it's fresh. And I think if I was to describe Puglia's cuisine that I've experienced, it's fresh, it's, it's a lot fresher than some of the other Italian regions. So you

© Untold Italy 2020

feel really good about it because you're like, oh, no, well, I'll have some pasta. Cause it's got fresh tomato in.

Katy Clarke:
It's not the really rich flavors that you get in some other regions, and I think it's, absolutely delicious.

Flavia Giordano:
But we don't need it because since our vegetable grows with very high temperature, it's like they concentrate their flavor. And so sometimes you don't have to add more ingredients, but actually quite the opposite. You have to just highlight them in the best way with good extra virgin olive oil, and that's it. Less is more.

Katy Clarke:
Absolutely. Like less is more. Although it's very hard to say no when you're not used to that type of cooking. And so, I know many of our guests on our tour, they just are quite blown away by the cuisine in Puglia. And I think anyone who goes there now they've now got a wonderful guide, thanks to you, of how to go about eating in Puglia, and we really appreciate you coming to do that. So, Flavia, can you let our listeners know how they can get in touch with you and maybe arrange with you one of your amazing food experiences?

Flavia Giordano:
Of course. My name is Flavia Giordano, and the name of my company is Spaghetti ABC. You can find me on my website, spaghettiabc.com, and on the social media a@spaghettiabc. You can write me, and we can organize, we can cook together, and I can guide you in my sensory food tours. So we are going to taste. And, actually, my tours are more like a master classes on Italian cuisine because since I am also an archaeologist, I like to tell the story and the food culture and let you taste the food as a professional taster.

Katy Clarke:
Amazing. I can't wait to come and do that myself. So grazie Flavia. Thank you for joining us on Untold Italy, and I hope to see you very soon.

Katy
Well if you're not hungry by now surely you've just finished eating a three-course meal because the menu of Pugliese dishes Flavia just shared made me so hungry and hankering for a trip to Puglia. What I really love about the cuisine there is how fresh and tasty everything is. Of course, this is due to the huge respect paid to the natural environment of the region, something we always appreciate about cooking in Italy.

If you are at all interested in food I would say plan some time in Puglia because as Flavia mentioned, unlike some other places in Italy which do cater to visitor tastes to some extent, Puglia is unapologetically Pugliese to its core. And let's hope it stays that way because I really

© Untold Italy 2020

think all of you deserve to try that mind-blowing focaccia Barese and of course the burrata because actually don't tell anyone but I really think I prefer burrata to mozzarella!

Of course, our tour guests are in for a huge treat because we do try many of these dishes on our 7-day trips departing from Bari. We are obsessed with finding the right places for you to try these dishes and will help you order and try them and learn how to make some for yourself with Flavia. We have 4 trips to Puglia running in 2025 and one is almost sold out already so if you're interested in joining us please book in early as it really is very sad to tell people we have no availability as we have to do this year.

You can find out all the tour details on our website and show notes at untolditaly.com/233 where you can also learn more about Flavia and her food experiences and get a full list of the dishes mentioned on the show. Shout out to my assistant Katie who captured all those Italian words and translations for you! Brava!

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 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 discovering delicious regional Italian cuisine and dishes that we shared today

Next episode a favorite podcast guest and friend returns to the show to chat about slow travel experiences - can you guess who it is!? Well in any case you'll find out next week.

But until then it's … ciao for now.

© Untold Italy 2020