

Untold Italy Episode 248: Mangia! How to Eat Your Way Through Italy with Maria Pasquale

What are the regional dishes of Italy and how can you take a culinary journey to discover the unique produce and food traditions of the Italian regions? I'll find out as we help my friend, journalist Maria Pasquale launch her new book *Mangia!* On episode 248 of the Untold Italy podcast.

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! Hi everyone, today I'm excited to help my friend Maria Pasquale launch her new book *Mangia! How to eat your way around Italy* - here on the podcast.

Maria is an Australian journalist living in Rome and we met via this podcast where she's appeared a few times to talk about life in Rome and Trastevere the neighborhood where she lived until a few weeks ago. We're both from Melbourne and have a shared passion for all things Italian so I'm thrilled to have her join us today to talk about the amazing food of Italy from the top to the toe of the boot.

Of course, Italian cuisine is so much more than pizza and pasta with tomato sauce and I hope you've noticed that in our conversations on the podcast. And what Maria has done with her new book *Mangia!* is provide a comprehensive overview of the dishes and food experiences you can have in each of the Italian regions with so many gorgeous pictures and useful information about food festivals and more.

So let's get started and see what delightful suggestions Maria has for us based on her very thorough and important research for the book.

Katy Clarke:

Bentornata, Maria. Ciao, and welcome back to the Untold Italy podcast.

Maria Pasquale:

Thanks, Katy. It's so good to be with you.

Katy Clarke:

Oh, it's fantastic. I'm so excited to have you back on the show, Maria, and so thrilled to have had a sneak peek into your brand new book, *Mangia*, which we'll chat about in a bit, but I'd love you to tell our listeners a bit about you, how you came to live in Rome and how you became the author of 4 wonderful books about Rome, Italy, and the Italian lifestyle.

Maria Pasquale:

Thanks, Katy. I'm gonna have to guide you as my PR - you do a good intro. So for those of you who don't know me or who have forgotten, I am an Australian, well, Italian Australian. My parents are Italian. So I was born to 2 Italian-born parents in Melbourne and I moved to Rome 13 years ago. So I've been living here since 2011. I'm a food and travel journalist. I write for publications in Australia, like the Sydney Morning Herald and The Age and American publications like CNN and USA Today.

Maria Pasquale:

So I write mainly about food and travel. I always say to people, not the real news, the good news, which is nice, and nobody lets me complain about that job. And yes, this is my 4th book coming out, so it kind of sounds a bit surreal when you say it out loud. My first book, *I Heart Rome*, came out in 2017 and after that, *How to be Italian*, the Eternal City and now *Mangia - How to eat your way through Italy* will be out in Australia in, well, 29th October, let's say, and then the rest of the world in March 2025.

Katy Clarke:

Just in time for Christmas. Perfect timing here in Australia.

Maria Pasquale:

Exactly.

Katy Clarke:

Maria, I know many of us think that you are living the dream, living in Rome, but I also know how hard you work and what it takes to have that lifestyle. So, Auguri, congratulations on *Mangia*. Having had a little sneak peek, it's an incredibly detailed, well researched and might I say very beautiful piece of work.

Maria Pasquale:

Oh, thank you.

Katy Clarke:

What inspired you to write it? What was the inspiration?

Maria Pasquale:

Thank you for acknowledging that. Cause anyone that's written a book or done a huge body of work, I'm sure you probably do this with some of your resources or the podcast. It was like "oh, it's so beautiful."

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Maria Pasquale:

Then I look at it. I just want to go to sleep because it's just, you know, it took a lot. It took a lot. But, you know, it's equally as rewarding, of course, when it comes out. What inspired me look. You know, Mangia for me, it took me 2 years to write or, you know, in terms of a book process, like, it's taken about 2 years from signing the contract to when it'll come out on you know, it'll be out on bookshelves around the world. It's, yeah, about 2 year process. But it's probably, I dare say, a project that I've been working on my whole life because it's a culmination of my travels, and I've had the good fortune of being able to travel through Italy since I was a child.

Maria Pasquale:

I came as a 6 year old in 1985. So anyone that's good at math is not like me can work out my age there. But, you know, like, since I was a kid, I've been traveling through all the regions, and it took me close to 40 years, but I've now visited every single region across Italy. And that doesn't mean that there's not more to do. And that's, I guess, for me, the mantra of the book is that I want it to, as much as I've been inspired by Italy, I want the book to inspire people to think before they travel and, you know, to know that, you know, Italy's cuisine is regional and to know that there are food festivals on throughout the year. And, you know, I'm not going to cover them all in my book because it's not all exhaustive because it can never could be. But it's, you know, it's just a reminder to, you know, get people to kind of think about what they want to do when they travel and what they want to get out of it.

Katy Clarke:

Amazing. And we, I mean, we have such a similar philosophy on that, I think, and it's really evident in your book, just the level of detail and research that's in that to have visited all of the regions. That's my goal, and I've got a handful left to do. So I'm I'm curious, which was the last one you visited?

Maria Pasquale:

The last one for me was alle d'Aosta. So the Aosta Valley. So I sat there and ate a lot of cheese fondue and wondered why it took me so many years to get there as I was, Yeah. Look, I stayed this gorgeous boutique property, you know, with a wonderful view of Mont Blanc. And like I said, you know, dinner was like cheese, cheese, cheese. And I thought, you know, this is like a bit of a little Italian secret. Why didn't I get here sooner?

Katy Clarke:

I know. I think we've driven through that, but so I wouldn't count it as a visit so much. We must have driven through on the way through from France, but, yeah, I'm desperate to go there. I think it sounds amazing.

Maria Pasquale:

Definitely recommend it.

Katy Clarke:

Excellent. So the thing is with, as you said, initially, like every little region is got its own food culture, own dishes, and that's what you really explore in the book. But what I'm curious about is food, wine, eating and drinking. There's such a core part of life in all of the regions of Italy. And you could really say that it's the heart and soul of the country. And I've always curious, why is that? Why is it that thing that binds them, even though it's a fairly new country?

Maria Pasquale:

It is, you know, it's like you said, the, the regional nuances and the regional differences are what sets each region apart. But what I think unites Italy is that, you know, in its cultural DNA, there is this desire to spend time together and to sit around the table and, you know, conviviality, *convivialità*, which kind of, we don't really use that much as a word in English, even though it exists, but it's just that it's the art of spending time together. And I think that's why it resonates and you know why I guess I've managed to survive 13 years of living in this country, but I think, you know, close to 30 or 40 years traveling through it, you know, and I'm sure like with you, it just resonates with me. You know, sometimes it's not about what you're eating, but about the company and it's about the setting. And, you know, I love eating just as much as anyone and, you know, whether it's at the pub or on the street or at a fine dining restaurant, I'm obsessed with the concept of dining. And that means just, you know, like I said, like the Italians do, you know, sitting around the table and enjoying each other's company, taking time to do that is what I think is fundamental.

Katy Clarke:

Yeah. It's so interesting. Recently, I interviewed a guy that tests the Parmigiano Reggiano, and I was asking him about his process of the testing. Is it possible to automate that? And he looked at me like I was crazy. You know? And I was, okay. I get it. You know? There's something innate within them that knows whether it's right or wrong, whether it's working, and they would never outsource that to a machine ever. You know? So it is their humanity.

Maria Pasquale:

I think, you know, and that's the other thing that unites Italians as much as it, you know, there are these differences is that pride, it's pride, it's tradition, it's legacy. And so I think that while each region, not only each region, but as you would know, you know, things change from town to town, you know, part of my family are from Abruzzo. And for many years, I had, you know, non Italian friends say to me, why don't you have you know, they'd taste something from Abruzzo and then say, oh, why doesn't your mum make that? Or why don't, you know, you guys have that? And I said, well, we do eat it because nowadays, you know, you can find everything anywhere across Italy. But traditionally, my family are from a mountainous area in Abruzzo. So, you know, so even that in itself, you know, we cook less fish, so it's more meat and game and foraging and all of that sort of stuff that defines the cuisine of that part of. And I think for me, the other really important thing about the book was to, I guess, in a sense, remind or, you know, not educate, because I don't want to use that in a patronizing way, but, you know, just as a reminder to people that, you know, Italy is not just about pizza

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and pasta, and there is a lot of that as well for anyone that wants that there's that everywhere, but it's so much more than that.

Katy Clarke:

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I'm obsessed with vegetables at the moment, especially the bitter greens, because for me, I love the taste of that bitter taste. And we were just talking about coffee where we, and I think maybe it's that coffee thing coming out. I don't know, but she cicoria and raddicio and all of these like sort of slightly bitter tastes. I'm obsessed by it. I really love going to find those in Italy and people would just look at you and say, oh, salad?

Maria Pasquale:

Absolutely. Absolutely. And I know there's been this, you know, phenomena with viral videos on TikTok and, you know, those sorts of things that often, you know, sometimes they're spreading good words and sometimes they're not. But, you know, there's been this, you know, trend recently of, like, oh, I can't get enough protein in Italy or I can't get fruit and vegetables because, you know, all it is is pizza and pasta. And I think that, you know, anybody that spends some time here will know that Italian cuisine is so much more than that, and the produce is, you know, unrivaled. And I think that if you just go that little extra step, perhaps if you're in an area that you're finding is, you know, a little bit more tourist-driven and you're only seeing pizza and pasta. I think that you need to go a little deeper and, you know, you won't have to work too hard to find a lot of protein in Italy, a lot of vegetables, and a lot of fruits.

Katy Clarke:

I was recently in Lake Como. We had this steak and I'm telling you now, I think I had my protein intake for the year. It was crazy, crazy good steak. It was so well done. And but also people need to look at the Contorni like that is the golden part of the menu.

Maria Pasquale:

Yes. And some areas, you know, what's fascinating. And I actually didn't know this until I started researching some regions of Italy that I, you know, I visited them all, but there are some regions obviously that I know better than others. And through some of the research that I did to put final pieces of the book together, I found that, you know, one of the regions, Basilicata is one of the highest per capita vegetarians in Italy, which, you know, vegetarianism, isn't something that probably comes to mind when people think of Italy. It's not the first thing I'm guessing, But, you know, and this was because of, you know, historic ties to the land and this, you know, geographic dynamic of that region that meant that people couldn't afford meat historically. And so you've created this almost like a cultural dining DNA that is more focused on vegetables.

Katy Clarke:

It's just fascinating, actually. We had a guest on our Liguria tour that just finished up last week, and he's completely vegetarian. He's been on a few trips with us, and he was just absolutely delighted

Maria Pasquale:
I'll bet.

Katy Clarke:

By Liguria because so many vegetarian dishes and people don't seem to think of it yet. Unfortunately, I've been just been watching my Facebook and, a good friend of mine is going around Italy and France just eating pizza and I'm like - stop! I can't watch it anymore. But I mean, like, there's good reasons for that, but it's really interesting as you say to, and TikTok has got a lot to answer for. I have to say, because, you know, we can't believe everything we see on TikTok or any social media.

Maria Pasquale:

No. That's right. I mean, I think, you know, anybody that, looks at social media with the filter as we would, you know, appreciates and understands that, you know, nowadays, there's just so much content out there and people just want clicks and, you know, and that's okay, I guess. But I guess we're here to just, you know, put out some good and educated, ideas around what food is actually like in the country.

Katy Clarke:

Yeah. And it takes experience. And I feel like like one of these older ladies going, you should know what it was like when I'm back in my day or something like that. But it's true. You need the experience to discover these things. You can eat - one meal is not going to educate you about Italian cuisine.

Maria Pasquale:
That's right.

Katy Clarke:

That's why I risk totally respect your work is because I know you've been to all of these regions and you've done the very, very hard work of trying these dishes and enjoying them.

Maria Pasquale:

Yes. I've eaten a lot. A little bit too much, but that's okay.

Katy Clarke:

Oh, so, in Maria, in Mangia you've really outlined some of the core food experiences and dishes to try and the produce of each region. And one of the favorite bits of the book for me was that you included the Sagre or the food festivals that our listeners know I'm really obsessed with. So now that you've explored many of these experiences, and I'm gonna ask you a question that might be a little bit unfair, but do you have any particular favorites?

Maria Pasquale:

Oh gosh, you know that you've got kids that would be like me asking you to choose, but that's

okay. I'll allow that. No, I look, I think the thing with culinary experiences or, you know, festivals that you attend, yeah. You know, they're not, they're not all equal, but that's the beauty of, you know, whether it's a book like this or just the nature of Italy that, you know, there's something for everyone. So what you might find fascinating or fun might be different to what I do. So I think in terms of the culinary experiences, you know, dinners in vineyards, I mean, you know, look, a lot of them are pretty picturesque and pretty unforgettable, I would say as experiences, because I think in my view, and I've been saying this for years, I think that, you know, food has this power and ability to transcend borders and emotion, and it's about people, it's about place, it's about difference, it's about so many things. So I think that on your trip to Italy, you might go home and forget what year the Pantheon was built or, you know, when they put the dome on the, you know, the cathedral in Florence. But, gosh, you're probably not gonna forget what it was like biting into your first buffalo mozzarella or tasting your first torta caprese in capri or, you know, those sorts of things.

Maria Pasquale:

I think that those sorts of memories stick with you. So culinary experiences, I think some of the most fascinating ones for me that I included in the book were about the regions that are a bit lesser visited. You know, Basilicata, I mentioned that earlier. I mean, I've put in this wonderful experience that is a tie to the Francis Ford Coppola family. You know, I don't know if many people know the Coppola family have a series of boutique hotels, but these boutique hotels, which, you know, dotted around Europe, I think there's maybe 5 or 6, but we're fortunate to have one in Italy. And it's in Basilica through about 40 minutes south of Matera and what they do, which is I thought was fascinating is, they offer these multi day cooking classes. And so you get to not only cook with the chef on-site, but you get to visit the markets and, you know, anything that you can kind of imagine what a 4 day cooking class would look like. It's about, I guess, immersing people into the local food culture.

Maria Pasquale:

And so I think experiences like that in an area that perhaps, you know, might not be the first region that comes to mind is fascinating. Also, Sardinia, when you think of Sardinia, at least when I did, you know, I've traveled around that region a number of times, and you think of all the wonderful beaches because they really are incredible, but I've included some of these culinary experiences in Sardinia that are inland, which are fascinating.

Katy Clarke:

We had someone on the podcast, Angela, actually, and she's from Sardinia, and she's always saying how amazing the mountains are in Sardinia and that people really need to get away from the beach even just for a day just to really experience the true essence of

Maria Pasquale:

Yeah. And a lot of, you know, Sardinian people will say that that, you know, their food traditions and, culture is, so much more prominent inland and you really get to experience that. I kind of describe Sardinia in the book as an area that, you know, has this, like, luxury tone, but then shepherds are the thing. Like, it's like from sheep to luxury designer stores,

and that might sound a bit strange for people that don't know Sardinia, but, you know, it's this rugged, beautiful, dynamic land. And some of the experiences I think for Sardinia that are really cool with it, you know, glamping in an ancient olive grove or luxury eco resorts where garden and farm to table is really just the norm. Like, we talk about farm to table about this, you know, sometimes this, you know, far away distant concept that we go chasing, whereas in Italy, it's just such a daily norm. And then another experience actually was meeting, yeah, meeting the shepherds on shepherds, you know, doing an experience where you get to not only taste cheese, but meet shepherds and learn how to make the cheese, which I think is probably something people won't soon forget.

Katy Clarke:

No. Those traditions have gone on for a very long time, and they refined them and they make them better and they tweak them and, you know, you have this innate connection into the land when you're doing that. It's not just picking something off the shelf at a supermarket. You've actually taken the time to make it, and so it's something that's more special to you.

Maria Pasquale:

I agree. I think these, you know, these culinary experiences and, you know, similar to even the tours that you guys offer are about providing people with meaningful experiences. So, yes, they're fun. Yes. They're great. They might be educative, but they're meaningful. Like, you know, yes to you and also to the people that are delivering them.

Katy Clarke:

It's really interesting because what I always say to people is they said, "what should we do in Italy?" And I said, well, what do you like to do? Because, you know, there's so you can do anything there, you know?

Maria Pasquale:

Yeah. How long is a piece of string? That's right.

Katy Clarke:

So it's really about tapping into our interests. And I think people are almost even scared to admit what they're interested in almost, but we really should just open up and try and find that for me. I love fragrance. I like going to see, you know, where the the flowers are grown and and then how they get the essence out of the flower and how they create the fragrance. That for me is really fascinating, and one of my favorite books is called Perfume, which is about similarly about that. But so for me, I like to go and seek that out. And I mean, it has taken a while to get down to that understanding that that's what I wanted. But I feel like if we can really tap into that and also, like, specifically around food experiences, then we should definitely do that.

Katy Clarke:

Like, if you like truffles, go to Piedmont and truffle yourself crazy. You know?

Maria Pasquale:

I agree. And, yeah, and on the topic of truffles, I mean, you've done them you know, you've done a truffle hunt. I've done a truffle hunt. I mean, these sorts of experiences, I still remember that moment where I was with this truffle hunter in, Piedmont in the Langhe region, and he was speaking dialect to his dog, Luna, the dog's name, was - I still remember it. You know, and this is a perfect example of how, you know, these food experiences years have passed, but I still remember that moment of him, you know, interacting with that dog and, gosh, probably going to get pillaged, but I'm not, I'm not a huge dog lover, but I still appreciated the, you know, the relationship that he had with this dog and how this dog was able to help him, uncover the truffles. Like, you know, it seems like maybe such a simple experience for somebody that hunts truffles all year round and has been doing it for generations. But for us, we don't get to see those things every day. Often you're just having a plate of pasta with truffles in some faraway place and not knowing where they came from and how they were, you know, hunted.

Katy Clarke:

When you get to that close to the source, I think that's when it becomes real and very special. I was thinking about that today, actually, because all these photos are popping up from my trip last year where we were in the Dolomites, and we went on this beautiful walk through the vineyards, which is in that area. It's all very steep and hilly, and the vines grow on the hills. And they use leftover grapes to make grape juice, and so you just stop at this little shack along the way and just get some grape juice, and it's so fresh and tasty.

Maria Pasquale:

Wow.

Katy Clarke:

And, yeah, I love wine, but the grape juice was good too.

Maria Pasquale:

And that's the thing. At any point of the year, this is the other wonderful thing about all of these food experiences and the food festivals is that it doesn't matter whether you're here in autumn, Spring, you know, Winter. You know, so many people concentrate on, you know, I mean, high season is using that term loosely because it's changed so much over the years, but Summer is not the only time to visit Italy. And, there is so many things to do all year round.

Katy Clarke:

And so, yeah, on that point and, you know, we really love the seasonality and that's why you can go back to each region in each season and have a totally different experience and have different food experience, too. So, Maria, do you have a particular season that's your favorite that you like to explore or do you just love all of them?

Maria Pasquale:

I will say Winter. I think that for me, in terms of culinary experiences at that time of year, I

think, you know, anything north, I mean, spas and strudels in the Dolomites, how does that sound? I mean, you know, or at least for me, spas again, and cheese and fondue in the Valle d'Aosta. You know, the other thing that Winter screams for me is, you know, anything meat based or heavy. So I would recommend even visits around, you know, the Emilia part of Emilia Romagna. So, you know, the cities like Bologna and Parma, whether it's, you know, doing a food tour or cooking class. I mean, I can't think of anything better than sitting down in front of a hot plate of lasagna or tortellini in Brodo, you know, in Bologna or any of those, cities. And then another experience actually that I included in the book, which is really cool, and I might just do a shout out to Ashley and Jason at La Tavola Marche. They actually run, you can become a butcher for the day. Now that might sound a bit hardcore for someone or for your listeners.

Maria Pasquale:

I don't know, but you know, if you'd have to be a big meat lover, but you know, Winter is the time of, you know, this is when the the pigs get slaughtered and a lot of other animals do and they make, you know, all those salumi, and you can actually get into the, you know, the mind of, the mind and the hands of a of an Italian butcher. And they run these butchery experiences, which like I said, you know, you, you mentioned fragrances before. I'm sure not many people have thought about butchery in Italy, but you know, this is just a reminder that there's this wonderful wide gamut of experiences that you can do here. So don't be afraid to, to kind of say, oh, that's what interests me.

Katy Clarke:

Yeah, absolutely. I would agree. And I'm really tempted to... I think the coldest month I've ever come is in November February. So I have really missed out on the December, January experience in Italy, and I'm really thinking I might come this year. But, also, you're right. When you wanna eat, you know, the hearty dishes, you really want it to be not hot.

Maria Pasquale:

No. That's right. Don't get me wrong. I mean, I love, Summer in Italy. I'm a big fan of the Italian Summer. I love August. I travel in August against some of the dismay of, like, many Italian friends who will be like, oh, don't travel in August because it's so crowded. And, you know, look, I love it.

Maria Pasquale:

And, for me, August, and again, on the culinary front, it kind of makes me think of watermelon and, you know, Ferragosto. And there are some wonderful experiences you can have in Summer. I mean, whether it's eating spaghetti on a boat, which, you know, might sound like, do they know how to cook spaghetti on a boat? Yes, they do in Italy. And you can have a wonderful meal, you know, like sailing and, you know, all of those things. Summer is a great time of year, but I think not to, I don't know, you know, Spring, I don't know. I think, look, I don't think there's a bad time to visit Italy. Let's just say that, but it just really depends on what you're looking for.

Katy Clarke:

Yeah. I have to say, you know, having a easy bit of mozzarella dribble down your chin while you're bopping out in a boat out on the Tyrrhenian Sea is not a bad experience either.

Maria Pasquale:

No, no, nobody's gonna regret that. I don't think.

Katy Clarke:

One of the most excellent experiences I had last year was, in Campania near Paestum or past Paestum actually. And they had this fig place, which is like the Cartier of fig production. It was just absolutely outstanding.

Maria Pasquale:

Wow.

Katy Clarke:

Just carpaccio of figs, everything made with figs, like these sort of fig dried fig sculptures. When you see Italians take the innovation and they add it to tradition, I just think for me, that's when the magic all happens.

Maria Pasquale:

Match made in heaven, isn't it?

Katy Clarke:

Yep. They just know how to do that stuff. You know? And they have because there's so much respect for ingredients, produce, and then that, you know, they would take it to another level when they innovate around it.

Maria Pasquale:

I think that's really unique about the Sagre in Italy. So, you know, the feast days that we have and, the festivals. Like, you know, anytime I travel and even, you know, when whether it's Summer, Winter, you know, in any of those seasons, like I said, you know, Sagre happen all year round, which is the beauty of these food festivals. But what is even more important about them is that, like you said, they they focus on one produce perhaps. You know, whereas we might in Australia or in the States or, you know, often we have, like, a food festival where you'll or you have a, you know, a farmers market or you'll have like a fair where you can kind of, you know, try a little bit of everything. And I mean, that happens in Italy as well, but for the most part, they Sagre are about one item, one produce. So you'll have the chestnut festival, you'll have the beer festival, you'll have the, you know, the roasted cheese festival. And literally that's all you'll do at that festival is eat roasted cheese or eat chestnuts or, you know, whatever it is that is on display for that day.

Maria Pasquale:

And they're seasonal. And I think they're, you know, they're great events to plan your holiday

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around or wherever you're traveling. Like 1 year, I was in Sciacca in south of Sicily, and I kind of was just looking up local festivals. I was like, oh, what's on? There's gotta be something on because there always is. And we went to a fish festival. So good.

Katy Clarke:

I love it. They're the best. And a lot of the times they're not advertised very well, are they? No. That's right. You know, a lot of these are small very well, are they?

Maria Pasquale:

No. That's right. You know, a lot of these are small budget, local events happening in very small municipalities. And so I think, you know, yes, do your research and, you know, Google your way through, but, also ask, locals. You know, if you're staying in a small town or in an area, ask people at the bar or at the newsstand if there's anything going on or look up for probably, you know, signs and posters, like, kind of up around the town.

Katy Clarke:

That's how I found out about my first one. All I saw was a sign and I was, what is this magical food festival all about?

Maria Pasquale:

Probably without a website.

Katy Clarke:

No website, not, it's not online. This is what I love as well.

Maria Pasquale:

Absolutely.

Katy Clarke:

Because the Google algorithm cannot come for these people.

Maria Pasquale:

No.

Katy Clarke:

And if they do have a website, they probably put it up 2 days before. I think for me, one that's on my list is actually the pistachio festival that's in Bronte.

Maria Pasquale:

I haven't been to that, and I think that, yeah, maybe we can do that together.

Katy Clarke:

Let's do it. Twenty different ways with pistachios.

Maria Pasquale:

I mean yeah. I'm sure we can find a way to handle that.

Katy Clarke:

That green oh, the pistachio granita. I don't even

Maria Pasquale:

I love the, one of the first, when I first moved here, I'd been to many Sagre day when I was a kid and, in a brutal, so we used, you know, I spent many of my Summers there. And so in August, there would always be some sort of festival on, you know, during the day or at night. But when I first moved here, one of the first festivals that I traveled for was the chocolate festival in Perugia. And I've got there and I'll never forget it rained, but it couldn't rain on my parade. Not once. Like I just literally went from stand to stand, eating chocolate. Yeah. Not that healthy, perhaps, but one of the memories that remains etched in my mind.

Katy Clarke:

I'm up for that one too, because the thing is Italians are excellent at chocolate, and they just do a terrible job of marketing it. I mean, everyone knows Nutella.

Maria Pasquale:

No. That's right. I agree. Well, what about, like, the gianduiotto, which I love in Northern Italy? I mean, in Piemonte, I mean, anything with hazelnuts up there is just outstanding.

Katy Clarke:

Well, Olivia gets me a stash when she goes she goes up there to Piemonte because she used to live there and her in-laws are up there. She comes back with these whole bags full of gianduiotto. And I'm just like, oh, just have 1.

Maria Pasquale:

Yeah. No. No. And you can never, you can never stop at 1. Piedmont is one of the, you know, actually is a good example for a chapter in my book, which has drinks as well. You know, often we don't think about the different drinks around Italy, you know, yes, we think of wine, but I speak about the Bicerin, in that chapter, which is the, you know, hot chocolate with a dash of coffee and whipped cream. And it's just what I would give to have a Bicerin in right now in Piedmont. I love that cafe culture up there. It's just gorgeous. But, you know, those drinks, whether it's almond milk in Sicily or the freshly squeezed red blood orange, you know, all of those drinks that are also part of Italy's cultural identity.

Katy Clarke:

Absolutely. Well, my family's got a tradition when we're there to go and try all the local Chinotto.

Maria Pasquale:

Oh, fantastic.

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Katy Clarke:

I love trying the different types of Chinotto. What actually is it? It's made of Bergamo, isn't it?

Maria Pasquale:

It's a mix of herbs and it's carbonated. I don't like, I'm not a huge fan of Chinotto, but my mom is so every time they're initially, we're always, again, you know, we're endeavoring to find as many different Chinotto as possible. And they don't have it like, they don't have it everywhere. Like I find, but I mean, like any bar will have a Chinotto. It's more the restaurants that you'll, you know, sometimes you'll find it, sometimes you don't, but Chinotto is, yeah, very popular. As is, you know, in south Italy, you'll find a lot of, you know, flavored carbonated drinks. Yeah, I mean, look all over the place, I should say, but I find, you know, Sicily, Calabria, like, whether it's lemon or, yeah, like you said, you know, or, you know, lime and all of those, citrus kind of, you know, where they reign supreme in southern Italy, and they, you know, they turn them into drinks, which is great.

Katy Clarke:

Yeah. And for some reason, you know, like here, I would never allow my children to have that many sugary drinks, but they just have them nonstop in Italy.

Maria Pasquale:

Look, and don't quote me because look, I'm not a food scientist, obviously, but from what I read and from what people tell me, a lot of the sugary drinks in Italy do have less sugar than they generally do, like in America or in Australia. But again, don't quote me, so I don't know about that because Coca Cola apparently doesn't have particular sugary syrup that Coca Cola in the United States and in North America uses, and it doesn't have it - it's an illegal substance in Italy.

Katy Clarke:

Goodness. Yeah. I mean, there's just so many different things and experiences and different foods to try different dishes and your book, you can just take it and you can dip in and out. If you're planning a trip to, say, Veneto, you can go and look at that chapter and know what foods to eat and what festivals are on. And it's a beautiful insight into the region as well because Marie's books, she always includes many, many beautiful photos. So it's not just a reading book. It's a sensory experience. You can almost taste that pasta coming off the page.

Maria Pasquale:

Thank you so much, Katy. Thank you very much for that feedback, which is good. I'm very excited for people to see it.

Katy Clarke:

Yeah. Absolutely. So, Maria, thanks for joining us today, and I know many of our listeners would love to get their hands on Mangia and your other amazing publications and take a peek into your life in Rome. How can they follow you and find your books?

Maria Pasquale:

Well, people can follow me on Instagram at @heartrome and on X as well. It sounds strange saying X, but, you know, for Twitter, for those who are still not using that name and I'm @HeartRomeBlog on Facebook and my books are on sale anywhere where books are sold. But if you want to buy them through me in Australia at the moment, you can purchase them on my shop at heartrome.com, and they will be mainly signed copies. And, yeah, I really can't wait for people to see the book.

Katy Clarke:

I feel like I've been let into a little amazing secret, actually, having been able to browse it myself. And so I can't wait to get my hands on that hardcover copy because all your books are hardcover, aren't they, Maria?

Maria Pasquale:

They are. They're all hardcover, which is nice. You know, they're kind of like those coffee table books. Mangia is kind of like a smaller compendium at a, for anyone that has a copy of how to be Italian, it's probably a little bit bigger than that, but it's, you know, almost like a travel size, so that you can throw it in your suitcase, as well and have it with you while you're traveling. Or like you said, you know, it's the perfect size to use as armchair travel while you're at home. You know, you wanna flick through a chapter and you can kind of travel through that region. I hope that's the feeling that people have when they read it. And I should just remind your listeners that it'll be out in Australia on the 29th October, and then it'll be out for the North American and European Summer and everywhere else in the world in March 2025.

Katy Clarke:

So if you wanna discover how to eat your way through Italy, and let's face it, who doesn't, look out for Maria's book, Mangia, out in Australia, as she said, just in time for Christmas, and the rest of you will need to hang on until next year. Grazie, Maria. Thank you for joining us again on Untold Italy.

Maria Pasquale:

Thanks so much, Katy. All the best to you and see you hopefully soon in Melbourne.

Katy Clarke:

Or Rome. I'm not sure which. We'll figure it out. Grazie!

Katy Clarke:

We talk a lot about regional Italian cuisine here on Untold Italy and that's because it's so varied and delicious. One day you can be eating buttery egg pasta with lashings of shaved truffles in Piedmont while the next day you can be tasting the freshest seafood straight from the catch of the day in Puglia.

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In Mangia, you'll find fantastic information about each region of Italy, its produce and dishes as well as local festivals and more. It's a beautiful hard cover book I would recommend to anyone with a passing interest in regional Italian food and would make a wonderful gift for Christmas or any time.

Of course, We've put the details for where to buy "Mangia", the places Maria mentioned and all the ways you can connect with her into the show notes at untolditaly.com/248 Since recording we've learned that the US release date is now March 4th so you'll have the link to preorder the book in the show notes too.

Thanks for your ongoing support of Untold Italy. We truly appreciate all 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 and the best way you can do this is by leaving us a 5-star rating or review on your favorite podcast app.

That's all for today, next week we're chatting about the diversity of Italian interior design and you'll discover some favorite places to shop for beautiful handmade Italian goods.

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