

Eating Abroad: A Review of Food in Rome

BY REBECCA BEASLEY

THOSE WHO KNOW ME know that I have one food allergy, which seems inconsequential yet proves to be terribly obnoxious: corn. This means that I cannot eat anything with corn or corn syrup in it, not to mention maltodextrin and vegetable oil. This makes eating a little difficult for me in America, as we pump our food full of corn syrup. In Italy, I faced no such problem and ate a variety of foods to my heart's content.

Soda, for instance, is normally on my list of "do not ingest" because of the excessive amounts of high fructose corn syrup. However, in Italy, they simply use sugar, not corn syrup. The same goes for sweets and candies.

With this newfound food freedom, I decided to try as many different foods as possible. My first adventurous order was coda alla vaccinara, or oxtail stew, which is a dish that originated in Rome. Historically, employees at the slaughterhouses were often paid with the "spare parts" of the animal that the wealthier class did not eat. Thus, many new dishes were created by the working class, one of them being coda alla vaccinara.

The restaurant served the oxtail with a deliciously seasoned red sauce and vegetables. The meat was still on the round bone, to my surprise, and quite the battle ensued as I attempted to carve all the meat off. My efforts were worth it though, as the meat was tender and full of flavor.

My second food adventure was a mere accident. I was thinking that I wanted a pasta without tomatoes, as I had tomato sauces twice in a row. One item on the menu that didn't mention tomatoes was a ravioli and pajata. I didn't know this until after I received my order, but pajata is perhaps the most adventurous thing I will ever eat; pajata is veal intestine. It was difficult to eat, but it tasted wonderful. Something about the way it looked made it hard to swallow.

The least exciting thing I tried was raw salmon on toasted cheesy bread. The salmon was far superior to fish one finds in the states (except for the salmon I had at the Browns Point salmon bake in Washington, which still remains the best fish I've eaten). The strange thing about this salmon dish is that it was served with cheese--often a sacrilege. Nevertheless, I thought it was rather tasty with the tang of the fish and the crunch of the bread.

Apart from the food, one thing changed my life. The coffee. Espresso is often thought of as a terribly bitter shot of coffee that needs to be watered



Photo Credit: Megan Connelly

down in some way, but I am convinced that Italians simply do it better. I don't know what it is, but the espresso in Italy is smoother, less acidic, and bolder. It was simply mind-blowing, my first sip of Italian espresso. It was more enthralling than spritz, which is essentially an orange-flavored cocktail.

I ate freely in Italy, without worrying about ingesting corn. I truly enjoyed and was nourished by my food. I ate not only to enjoy but to be sustained. I return to the states with a new state of mind about food and what it means to eat.

A Look at the Renaissance Festival

BY LOUISA HAMMOND

WHILE PLENTY OF US are grateful to live in a time of more opportunities and indoor plumbing, that doesn't mean that we miss some elements of the past. However, in late summer and early fall every year, people get that opportunity to revisit the past and escape from their modern-day concerns by going back to the Renaissance, an era of gorgeous ballgowns, sword fights, jousting, and dragons! Okay, maybe the latter is a work of fiction, but I like to think they were real.

Also, no time travel is involved here--we're able to get the experience thanks to the Renaissance Festival. For about fifty years, a small area in Shakopee, Minnesota, gets turned into a similar recreation of what the Renaissance era was like with a bit of a fantasy twist. This magical event is filled with all of the best from the late 15th century to the middle of the 16th century

By visiting, you can get the opportunity to dress up in costume, either more classic Renaissance or fantasy-inspired, eat a lot of great food, like turkey legs or chocolate-dipped frozen cheesecake on a stick, have a few drinks (if you're twenty-one or older), and participate in Renaissance-inspired adventurous activities such as horseback riding and jousting on wooden horses. There are also stages throughout the festival that present stunt performers, like the Danger Committee or Tuby, the Juggling Rope Walker. But what would the Renaissance be without live stage performances and Shakespeare?

Something new that the Renaissance Festival added this year was the Shakespeare shorts, which would present shorten versions of Shakespeare's classic tales which were also performed on different stages throughout the festival. One of my favorite activities from my most recent visit was a performance of Pyramus and Thisby, which some of you may know as the show within a show that some of the characters performed at the end of A Midsummer Night's Dream. Something else that's a lot of fun about visiting the festival is all of the shops to buy souvenirs. The festival features dozens of stores throughout and sells jewelry, Renaissance costumes, mugs, stuffed animals, and so much more! Overall, the Renaissance Festival is an exciting and magical experience that everyone should experience at least once.



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