



Join me and walk  
in the footsteps of  
**Claude Monet**

**HOW TO ENJOY  
YOUR FOOD AND  
WINES IN ITALY**

# **PAINTING HOLIDAYS IN ITALY**

## **7 days “plein air” workshops**

**A SHORT GUIDE TO  
EXPERIENCE THE BEST  
FOOD AND WINES**

Italian cuisine does not exist!!!  
It is different in every region,  
village or single family.  
Italy is the Country of a hundred  
cuisine and a thousand recipes



# Cuisine for Italians is A “KIND OF RELIGION“

that is why they get so mad when someone ask “to customize” it

*Ruggero Ruggieri - [www.ruggeroart.com](http://www.ruggeroart.com)*

In Italy cuisine is culture, an “evocative emotion”, a moment ... hours sometimes, when family or friends meet, talk and relax together. Obviously Italians love their own traditions in food and wine, waiting for lunch and supper as one of the most enjoyable time of the whole day. On the contrary, we have a quick breakfast in the morning (not unusual drinking just an espresso standing). Therefore, here, you find some suggestions to enjoy your holiday without disappointments. Forget about the Italian cuisine you are used to in your own Country. The most of Italian restaurants abroad quickly become a sort of “fusion cuisine” to please their customers. Expect “an authentic Italian cuisine” and enjoy just like it is offered it avoiding, hopefully, to “customize” your menu. Nobody will refuse to serve you what you ask for but, a disapproval expression will appear in your waiter’s face.

- **Many recipes you are used to are UNKNOWN in Italy.**

The first Italian immigrants in the United States or Australia could not find the same ingredients available in Italy. Therefore, they “modified” their recipes to the raw material available in their new Country. For this reason, some dishes are so different and, sometimes, even “invented” without having any origin from the Italian tradition. “Fettucine Alfredo”, “Chicken carbonara” or “Chicken parmesan”, these and many more, in Italy will be just unusual or even unknown requests.

- **Italian breakfast is ONLY sweet.**

An espresso or cappuccino together with any pastry, croissants, biscuits, bread butter and jam. No eggs, bacon, sausages and so on. An exception is the Riviera Ligure,

exactly where we are: we love cappuccino with “focaccia” a sort of crunchy salty bread.

- **Cappuccino is ONLY at breakfast time.** Italians consider cappuccino as “something nutritious” you may need in the morning for breakfast. If you ask for cappuccino after your meal, they will assume you have not eaten enough and you need to restart from your breakfast!

- **Italians drink ONLY wine or water while eating.**

Never ask for a cappuccino together with pasta or a tea with a steak. The only exception to this rule is while you eat pizza ... you can drink a soft drink or a beer. Normally white wines should go with fish or seafood, red wines should go with meat. Not even Italians follow this rule anymore.



- **In many Countries people are used to serve each cooking courses at once.**

In Italy we serve different cooking courses at different time. Antipasti (starters) first, followed by any sort of pasta, then meat or fish together with veggies. At last, a dessert and coffee. It is considered “polite” to wait for the other diners until they finished their own dish.



- **Never ask for Parmesan on seafood.**

Strange for someone, because abroad nobody will notice it. You can ask your waiter to grate some Parmesan cheese on your seafood dish. He will but, you can be sure, he will think you asked something weird ... just like asking ketchup on an apple pie!

- **Dressing for salads, meat, fish in Italy DO NOT exist.**

Italy is a Mediterranean country, we love our OLIVE OIL! Sometimes together with a few drops of lemon juice, or vinegar. That is “the only dressing” used on food. Olive oil taste is different in every region you will visit. Ligurian olive oil has very delicate taste, perfect for fish or any seafood. Tuscany olive oil has a stronger taste and it is better for meat.

These are the basics you should know to enjoy your experience! A good idea, to be sure you really are experiencing “the best”, could be ... always try the “regional cuisine” of the region you are visiting.

## THE LIGURIAN REGIONAL CUISINE

The beautiful, rocky coastline of Liguria, also known as the Italian Riviera, stretches from the French border in the east to Tuscany in the west, taking in fishing villages, famous resort towns and the historic city of Genoa. The maritime Alps separate Liguria from the northern Italian provinces of Piedmont and Emilia-Romagna, creating a narrow strip of land between mountains and sea. Olive trees stretch as far as the eye can see, and tiny ancient villages perch precariously on mountainsides.

The western stretch of the Ligurian coast (the Riviera di Ponente) is famous for its production of flowers; greenhouses sheltering all kinds of plants and fields of vegetables dot the landscape.

The mountains of western Liguria are filled

with wild herbs, which sustained the region’s farmers for millennia and are thus found in many traditional recipes. Familiar greens such as basil, rosemary, thyme, sage, dandelions, myrtle and watercress, grow in abundance, to name but a tiny selection.

The unique landscape of this region creates a warm microclimate that supports ingredients more typical of southern Italian climates. In Liguria, as in the south of Italy, produce such as garlic, citrus fruits, tomatoes, artichokes, pine nuts and basil grow abundantly and form the base of many dishes. In Albenga the production of aromatic herbs is 80% of the whole Italian territory.



*The 80% of aromatic plants of Italy are produced in Albenga*

The olive oil, highly regarded of the area, is the primary cooking fat and is PDO protected. Together with a few drops of lemon juice is “the only dressing” used for salads, fish or meat.



*Olive oil from “Taggiasca Olive”*





***Albenga “purple asparagus”***

The region is home to its own breed of “cuori di bue” (ox hearts) tomatoes, of “purple asparagus”, “trombetta courgette”, “spiky artichoke” of Albenga, which are star in many of the local dishes.



***Albenga “spiky artichoke”***



***“Cuori di bue” (ox hearts) tomatoes***

With space to rear animals largely unavailable in this landscape, meat is used sparingly. Cheeses are typically imported from nearby regions and the cuisine is far more centered on grains, fruits, vegetables and nuts than in other parts of the dairy-rich north.

Vegetable-packed pies (torta verde) filled with chard, artichoke, spinach or courgettes and wrapped in a thin olive oil pastry, are available by the slice in every bakery, bar and café.



***A type of hundreds of vegetable pies***

Chickpeas also feature strongly here, as they do in nearby Provence, and are used in the local “farinata” (called “socca” in the south of France), a mixture of chickpea flour, olive oil and water that’s baked into a thin, deeply savory flatbread.



***The local “farinata” made of chickpea***



The locals often like to start the day with a crusty strip of “focaccia”, although it’s salty, dipped into a foamy cappuccino.

Ligurian focaccia has a crisp crust anointed with olive oil and salt, and a soft inner crumb. Focaccia is also served in the bread basket at lunch and dinner. It is a good snacking, at any time of the day, to satisfy a hungry stomach, too. You can find it plain, covered in onions, olives, tomato slices and more ...



### ***Different sorts of "focaccia"***

Something different is focaccia col formaggio. Wafer-thin layers of dough are stretched and stuffed with local stracchino cheese, the crispy baked crust shattering to release its oozy contents, nothing to compare to a simple cheese sandwich.



### ***It looks like a pizza but it is "sardenaira"***

The “sardenaira” and is also rooted in tradition. Although it looks like pizza it is different because typically thick, sold by the slice and topped only with tomato sauce, olives, anchovies, garlic cloves and oregano.

Speciality pastas have lots of kinds of shapes and fillings, are available in every restaurant menu or are served regularly at home.

The most popular Ligurian sauce for pasta is “pesto alla Genovese”, made with basil, pine nuts, olive oil and garlic. You can find a version without garlic as well, but the Ligurian don’t call it pesto, they would call it: “basil shake for tourists”.

Popular pasta shapes include “trofie”, thin, twisted spirals of pasta typically served with pesto, potatoes and green beans.



### ***The "trofie" with pesto***

Another popular sauce is the walnuts sauce (salsa di noci) made with walnuts, cream and parmesan cheese. It is used to dress “pansotti”, a sort of ravioli filled with ricotta



### ***Pansotti with walnuts sauce***

and spinach. The Ligurian cuisine reflects the history and people of its land. A history of hardship, but one which bore creative, healthy and delicious vegetable-based dishes. The traditional Ligurian food is a delight for those eating meat-free.



# LIGURIAN WINES

<https://www.thegrandwinetour.com> - <http://www.vinit.net/Liguria/Savona/Albenga>

The grapes grown in Liguria are, like anywhere, profoundly affected by the local climate and terrain. Sixty-five percent of the region is mountainous. Its altitude paired with the marine coastline makes this region more like Provence, France than its neighbor Piedmont. In fact, similar grapes do especially well in this region: granaccia (grenache), pigato (rolle), and rossese (tibouren). Then there are vermentino (said by some to

## Red Wines

Riviera di Ponente Ormeasco  
Riviera di Ponente Rossese  
Riviera Albenganese Rossese  
Riviera Finalese Rossese  
Dolceacqua  
Golfo del Tigullio rosso  
Golfo del Tigullio ciliegio  
Golfo del Tigullio rosso novello  
Golfo del Tigullio ciliegio novello



be the same as pigato and Piedmont's favorite but, many others, say it is a clone and vinify it separately) and ormeasco, a local variation of Piedmont's dolcetto grape.

Pigato is one of Liguria's most important grapes. Its wine is part of the denomination Riviera Ligure di Ponente, a DOC from western Liguria and the region's biggest. This is one name you'll want to keep an eye on when perusing the wine menu, if you're lucky enough to find it. Pigato wines of Riviera Ligure di Ponente are, in their best form, aromatically complex, mineral, long-lived, and with a saline touch that comes from the nearby coastline.

You will also find other labels under this same denomination: the red Granaccia and Rossese as well as the white Vermentino.

## White Wines

Riviera di Ponente Pigato  
Riviera di Ponente Vermentino  
Lumassina  
Cinque Terre  
Cinque Terre Sciacchetra  
Cinque Terre Sciacchetra liquoroso  
Colli di Luni bianco Vermentino  
Golfo del Tigullio bianco  
Golfo del Tigullio moscato  
Golfo del Tigullio Vermentino  
Golfo del Tigullio Passito

## Rosè Wines

Golfo di Ponente Ormeasco Sciacchetra  
Golfo del Tigullio rosato  
Golfo del Tigullio rosato frizzante  
Golfo del Tigullio spumante