



F L O R

VIA GRAFIA

Exploring the City. Experiencing the Culture.

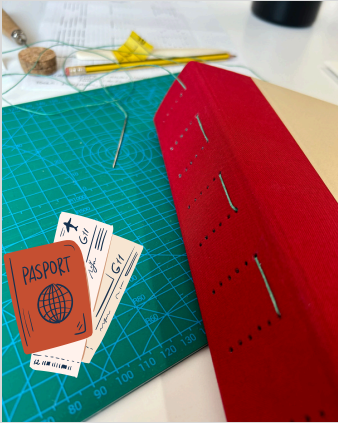
Florida

State

University

Table OF Contents

| | |
|--|-------|
| Inside Flor | 03-04 |
| Letter from the Editors | 05 |
| La Mattina | 06 |
| The Shapes of Florence | 07 |
| La Farmacia della Regina | 08 |
| Connections with Locals | 09 |
| Pasticceria: The Cafe on Ghibelina | 11 |
| Food from Home | 12 |
| Duomo | 13 |
| Know Before you Go: Museums of Florence | 15 |
| Street Art in the City | 17 |
| Il Pomeriggio | 18 |
| Garden Stroll | 19 |
| Chef for a Day at Gustarium Pizza | 20 |
| Beatrice: A Love Song | 21 |
| The Fruits of the Branch and the Vine | 24 |
| Italian Sweets | 25 |
| This Little Piggy Went to the Market | 26 |
| Impastably Delicious | 27 |
| Hidden Gems | 28 |
| La Sera | 29 |
| Our Italian Friend | 30 |
| The City of a Thousand Stairs | 31 |
| A Quest for Rice | 33 |
| Soft and Supple | 34 |
| Discount David | 35 |
| Fans Like No Other: Fiorentina | 36 |
| "We Have Italian Food At Home!" | 37 |
| Enoteca Marilu | 39 |
| La Notte | 41 |
| Drowning Architecture | 42 |
| Giunti Odeon | 43 |
| Tuscan Tunes | 44 |
| A "Spritz" Personality | 45 |
| Fountain of Youth | 46 |
| Discovering and Rediscovering Liberia Brac | 47 |
| New Faces in Unfamiliar Places | 48 |
| How to Love a Book | 49 |



INSIDE FLOR

Megan “Jubilee” Cotner is a twenty-year-old student at Florida State University, graduating in 2026. They’re majoring in Editing, Writing, and Media with a minor in Humanities. They are excited about the release of this issue of FLOR, as well as the upcoming release of the other projects they are currently working on. Studying in Italy was an easy decision, being especially interested in Italy’s history of arts and literature. However, immersing themselves in the culture has made the experience unforgettable.



Daniella DeMauro is a 21 year old soon-to-be senior pursuing a dual degree in Psychology and EWM here at FSU. She has wanted to study abroad, namely in Spain or Italy, since she discovered study abroad way back in middle school – the obvious choice was Italy – so when the opportunity to study EWM popped up, she took it. She is currently planning to go to school for clinical psychology and will hopefully be writing on the side.

Angelina Dobbs is twenty years old and double-majoring in English and Neuroscience. Hailing from Denver, Colorado, she hopes to either attend graduate school and begin her own neuroscience research or join a publishing house as a developmental editor. She chose to study abroad in Florence because she heard that a book binding workshop would be part of the EWM program curriculum.



Jordan Greenbaum is a rising junior attending Florida State University, and has recently come abroad this summer to Florence to study Editing, Writing, and Media. As a student pursuing a dual degree in Political-Science and English to one day study law, he is thrilled to gain experience in writing, traveling, and communications in a foreign place.

Jordan Hicks is a 21 year old creative writing student at Florida State University with a minor in social entrepreneurship. She will be a senior upon returning to school in the fall and is hoping to graduate in the spring of 2025. Jordan came to Florence with the hope to broaden her knowledge of other cultures and expand her writing abilities.



Kayla Moran is an 18 year old first-year at Florida State University majoring in Editing, Writing, and Media and Humanities. Kayla had come to Italy back in 2022, but was unable to visit Florence during that time. She decided to return to taste, once again, the culture and cuisine of Italy.

Gracie Rowe is a business marketing major and transferring to Florida State University in the fall of this year as a junior. Visiting Florence is something she's wanted to do since she was a little girl. Her inspiration came from her grandmother hosting a foreign student from Spain for a whole summer. Traveling is something she loves and cherishes the most. Visiting all of the fashion stores and seeing the way business is done here in Florence will be a major take away.



Annika VanDerlip is a double major in Creative Writing and Statistics at FSU. She is 20 years old and hails from a small town in south Florida called Hobe Sound. She plans to graduate in spring 2025 with a BA in Statistics, then return to FSU for graduate school where she will work toward an MFA in Creative Writing. She chose to study in Florence because of her family's Italian background, as well as the opportunity to do the EWM program.

Molly Hand, Ph.D., directs the Editing Internship Program in the English Department and teaches courses such as Renaissance Poetry and Prose, the History of Illustrated Texts, and the History of Text Technologies. She was fortunate to lead the Editing, Writing, and Media in Italy program for the first time in summer of 2024. As a scholar of early modern literature and culture, she was grateful to have had the opportunity to spend six weeks in Florence, the cradle of the Renaissance.





LETTER

from the

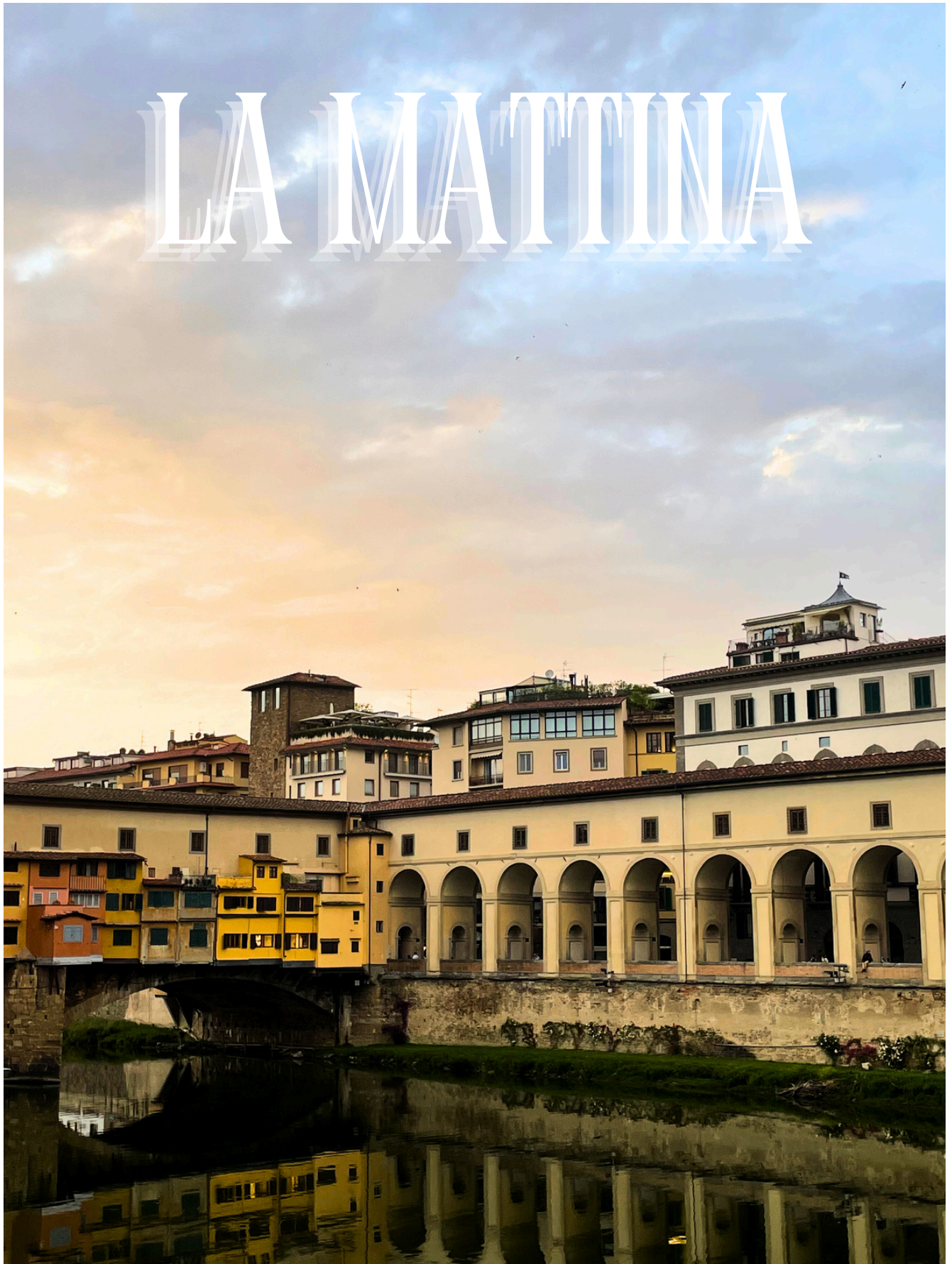
EDITORS

On behalf of the eight Editing, Writing, and Media students and our professor who took part in the creation of this magazine, we are beyond grateful to have had the opportunity to produce a new issue of *FLOR Magazine*. Collectively composing a body of work concentrated on our experience in Florence has been an unforgettable experience. We are privileged to participate in this study abroad program through Florida State University, and have poured our gratitude into creating a magazine we feel highlights the strengths of the Editing, Writing, and Media concentration in FSU's English Department.

As an amalgamation of many different interests and talents, all unified in our passion for writing, we each did our best to represent the bustling city of Florence for your reading pleasure. Our goal with this issue is to bring to life the experience for future or aspiring visitors, whether FSU students considering studying abroad or other readers contemplating an Italian vacation, as well as previous travelers looking to reminisce about their time here. Divided into four sections, one for each time of day observed in Italian culture, we have strategically placed the articles based on the hours for which they are best suited. Whether it's a place to eat, an activity to complete, or a site to tour, you will find something that sparks your interest in this edition of

FLOR

LA MATTINA



THE SHAPES OF *Florence*

By Annika VanDerlip

One of the first things someone probably notices when they come to Florence is the architecture. Vastly different from that in America, Florentine architecture is mainly of the Renaissance, with massive marble structures, intricate carvings depicting both religious and secular scenes, and high, domed ceilings. In addition to this, one can also see both the Gothic influences in older buildings like the Santa Croce (however, the front marble facade is more of a Renaissance style) and Baroque in the Cappella dei Principi. These styles blend together to create an impressive melange of structures that form the beautiful Florentine atmosphere which I have grown to love.



Upon seeing the city for the first time, I was immediately taken by the architecture—so much so that on the first free day I had, I packed up my sketchbook and made the short walk from my apartment to the Piazza Santa Croce with the hope of sketching the

building's stark marble facade. I sat on one of the stone benches, took up my pencil, and began to sketch the rough shape of the building. Starting out was easy enough. The facade is mainly composed of geometric shapes—semi-circles, triangles, rectangles and so on. Once I had the general shapes down however, it got much more difficult. With each new section I moved onto, there seemed to be more and more detail. Faces emerged from marble slabs, intricate patterns spanned the recesses of spare crevices, and somehow, despite my detailed outline, a dozen new structural lines seemed to have appeared out of thin air.



I stopped for a moment, completely shocked at how complicated this little sketch had suddenly become. By the time I had finished, the whole process had taken nearly three hours. Every time I thought I'd finished, I'd spot another minute detail, an extra cherub or cross I'd overlooked that needed to be added on.



This endlessly complex style is common in Florence, the most impressive example being the Duomo. While I haven't gotten the chance to draw the Duomo yet, I have gotten to sketch the Ponte Vecchio; and although it's not as grandiose as the Santa Croce, it still represents another beautiful piece of Florence. I hope you enjoy these sketches, as there was much love and time put into them—and next time you find yourself in the Piazza Santa Croce, or on the Arno river with a view of the Ponte Vecchio, take an extra moment to notice the little things in these beautiful structures; it's incredible just how much there is to see!





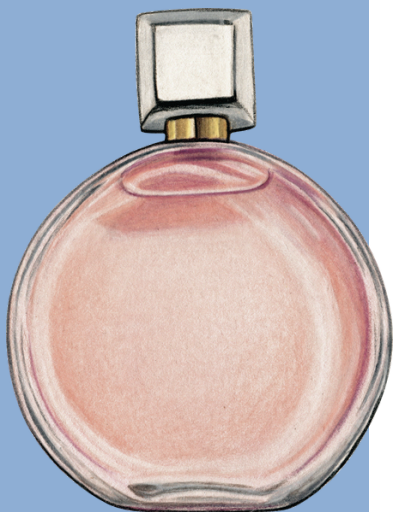
LA FARMACIA DELLA REGINA

By Jordan Hicks

If you are even remotely interested in historical beauty products and regimens, then the Officina Profumo-Farmaceutica di Santa Maria Novella should be on your list of places to visit in Florence. The origins of this historic beauty landmark can be traced back to the Dominican monks of the Santa Maria Novella monastery. Beginning in 1612 they established a retail operation with products ranging from perfumes, pot pourri, and toiletries, to liqueurs, medicinal balms, and foods. Later in 1866 the business was confiscated by the Kingdom of Italy and sold to a private owner, today they have over 75 shops scattered world-wide, with the original being in Florence. One thing that makes this perfumery stand out is a fragrance that was designed specifically for Catherine de Medici, Queen of France, who is the pharmacy's most notable patron. "Acqua della Regina" can still be found in their stores today and is highly sought after by patrons wishing to smell like the queen for whom the fragrance was originally created.



I went to the pharmacy for a visit myself and here is what I found: You will most likely have to wait in a line outside to get in as they try to keep the volume of customers inside at one time to a minimum to promote the feeling of a more luxurious shopping experience. My wait was fairly short, between 5-10 minutes, and in a shaded space, so it was tolerable. Once inside you enter through a very grand hallway and walk up a few steps to enter the pharmacy proper. The main room is opulent with marble floors and massive chandeliers hanging overhead. The staff are friendly and helpful, it feels like they truly want to find you something you will love. I will note, however, that the prices are pretty steep, but it is to be expected considering their previous clientele has been royalty. While I didn't end up purchasing any of their products, I did thoroughly enjoy my visit. I now feel as if I have historic beauty bragging rights after having visited such an iconic site, and I would recommend a visit to anyone who is even slightly curious about it.



CONNECTIONS

With

LOCALS

By Jubilee Cotner

It was a sleepless night on May 26th, and I was buzzing with anticipation for the day to come. I had tickets for a one day trip to Rome, where I would be meeting a friend of mine in their native city.



After the brief train ride, I arrived in **Roma Termini**, with my friend Angelica waiting for me at the gate. We walked and talked quickly, a mix of excitement and pinpointed focus on how we knew we wanted to fill the day. Since Angelica is a local, she already had a good idea of all the things she wanted to show me. Blind to the quiet bustle of people around us, we discussed our plans as we departed to **Porta San Paolo**. Now towards the edges of Rome's city, I got to experience the Sunday market—and it was overwhelming. It was a labyrinth, it had to be miles long with several columns to explore. We were there from the entire morning, and there was still no way we saw every stall, even as we did our best to explore the entire market.

In the end, we both walked away from the market with mementos in hand as we set our sights on a new metro stop: **Lido Nord il Pontile**.

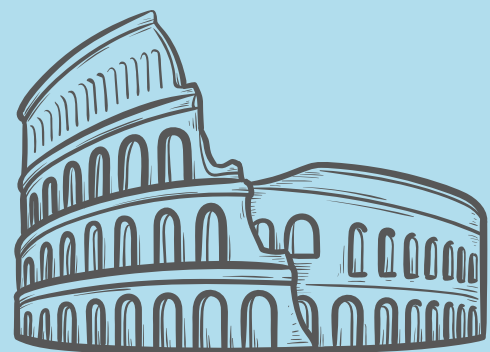
This is where we went to see the coast of Rome, now joined by another local named Max. I'm somebody who loves the ocean, and being from Florida I was excited to see how Rome's beaches differed in comparison to ours. We all stood on the **Pontile Di Ostia**, a large stone pier, as we watched the calm ocean. The tide was low, allowing me to revel in how many rocks were lining the clear ocean floor, which Florida is notably devoid of. With rockier sand and surprisingly much fewer fish, I held them on that pier in the whipping wind for far longer than I probably should have, my eyes scanning the water and the boat port far in the distance.



After a while, I was content with my experience of the ocean, and so I pulled them into the “main” area of Rome for my final few hours so that I could see some of the ruins. It was, as predicted, significantly more crowded than the other places we had gone to, and was flooded with curious tourists. Unanimously intimidated by the crowds, the lines, and the ever-ticking time, we decided to sit on a hill across the street from the **Colosseum**. We spent the rest of our time drawing together and chatting away while the ancient wonder loomed over us, the crowd buzzing pleasantly in our field of view.



I’m so thankful I was able to spend the day with my friends, and they were monumental to me enjoying my visit to Rome—not just because I knew them prior to my visit, but because they were able to give me an experience unlike any I would have had on my own, due to their knowledge as locals and excitement to share their city with me.





PASTICCERIA

THE CAFE ON

Ghibellina

By Kayla Moran

Florence is a melting-pot of people. Be it the locals rushing around trying to go about their days, or the tourists from all over the world getting a glance at this historic city, Florence, day-in and day-out, harbors people from all walks of life. With this ocean of cultures gathering in one city, people like to experience things that are different from their day-to-day lives, and a majority find themselves congregating in cafes.

Littered all over this city, cafes house quick and easy meals that get people started on their day. One such cafe is Ghibellina Forno Pasticceria Bakery, residing in Florence since 1890. I've been frequenting this cafe quite a bit, enjoying everything from delectable pastries to their filling sandwiches and mini-pizzas, and each time I visit, I want to come back and continue to try the different things they offer. The staff greet you with a smile every time and efficiently serve the waves of people that come in. It has become my place of escape.

The first time I went to this cafe was out of curiosity. I had gone to a corner store across the way to pick up a few necessities and wanted a little treat, especially with how close it was to my apartment. It wasn't very crowded, being as it was between lunch and dinnertime, but there was still a small crowd of people sitting and enjoying a mid-day treat. I was graciously welcomed up at the counter and quickly ordered a brownie. Alongside me, though, were two other American women who noticed my speaking of English and struck up a conversation with me. In the end, I ended up sitting down with them and we talked about what our Florentine visits would entail.

The cafes in Florence, most of the time, aren't very big, and can become crowded pretty fast. Since most of the buildings are packed together, shops and food establishments take up station in narrow spaces. The cafe on Ghibellina can be considered bigger than most I've seen, but when crowds come through, the place fills up quickly.

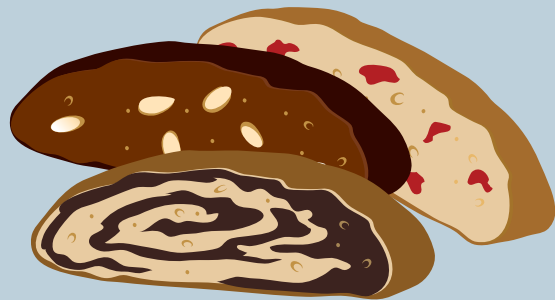


I was living in an apartment a couple of doors down from the cafe, and every Tuesday morning, a cleaning service came through, so we had to leave our place. For one of these mornings, I brought two of my roommates to the cafe on Ghibellina. We took our books, ordered drinks and pastries, and hunkered down at a table. As time continued to pass by, more and more people were floating in and out, like a wave. They drank their cappuccinos, ate croissants at the counter, and left as quickly as they came in. That morning, we saw a myriad of people come through—Italians on their way to work, tourists seeking a typical Italian breakfast, an entire class of school children getting their morning fill. This cafe catered to them all. If I want a quick meal or just a sweet treat, this cafe has become the first place to pop into my head. Cafes are a big part of Italian culture, and through the cafe on Ghibellina, I have been able to immerse myself in this life and come to feel right at home.

FOOD

From

HOME



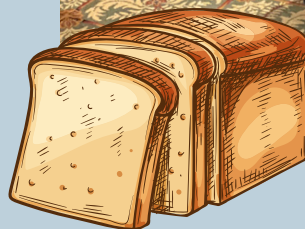
By Jordan Greenbaum

While the food of Florence is unique, most of the dishes can be compared to a meal from home. The average prosciutto sandwich isn't too far off from a Pub Sub, the Florentine steak uses the same meat as an Outback, and while the pizza is certainly prepared differently, the staples of sauce and cheese are universal. However, one varied dish stands out to me not in its makeup, but in the variation in memories I have from tasting it here versus tasting it back home.

For as long as I could remember, my dad has always enjoyed having me in the kitchen with him, as his mother did when he was my age. However, while I have always taken an active role in our preparation of snacks, breakfasts, and dinners, he tells of a time in which he would watch my grandmother, or "bubbie" in Yiddish, cook for hours on end, only eventually learning the recipes by watching and learning. Time and time again, he would survey, never getting to touch the tools of the kitchen, until he could prepare the recipe blind. This ended up being a blessing in disguise: while my bubbie has never written her recipes down, they are now able to live on through him. And I am exceptionally grateful, because one stands above all the rest: my bubbie's mandel bread.

However particular it may be to me though, my Bubbie did not invent this treat. It dates back to the early 19th century and was common among Eastern European Jews, especially at holidays and gatherings, but was also eaten all year round as a light snack. Very similar to the Italian biscotti, it's a baked treat cut into strips that have a long shelf life and travel well. However, mandel bread differs in its consistency, and is now a lighter, softer cookie that lacks the rigidity found in a biscotti, due to a higher fat content and variation in ingredients. The term itself, mandel bread (or more accurately mandelbrot), comes from mandel, meaning almond, and brot, meaning bread in Yiddish and German. While the compound word we all use to name it now is almond bread, it really is more of a cookie. And it doesn't necessarily need to have almonds in it either. Different variations include chocolate chips, raisins, peanuts, or cinnamon. With so many different cultures taking on the recipe, there are countless ways to make it, each with their own special group of fans.

While I'm in Florence, it's nice to try the Italian biscotti. It's good, it really is. But when I do, I can't help but think of my Bubbie's simplistic, strictly almond cookie best served dunked in a glass of cold milk.





By Jordan Hicks

The Duomo is arguably the most iconic landmark of Florence, so much so that the two have almost become synonymous with one another. If you're planning to visit the city, you have more than likely been told by at least one person to go and visit the Duomo, so let's go over everything you need to know before you go.

The construction of the Duomo began in 1296 and was completed in 1436. The main dome was engineered by Filippo Brunelleschi. The golden ball, added in 1471, was the work of Andrea del Verrocchio. In 1601, the golden ball was struck by lightning and fell from its pedestal; where it landed is still marked in the square today by a medallion indicating the exact position where it fell. When visiting, here are the basics. Depending on the ticket that you buy, there are four sites to see: the cathedral, the baptistery, the museum, and the bell tower. You need to be dressed appropriately to enter the cathedral (shoulders and knees covered), but not the other three places. Comfortable footwear should be a priority, especially if you intend to climb the bell tower and all of its 414 steps. I wish I had known what the climb would entail before I went myself: if you have any medical conditions, are scared of heights, or are claustrophobic, the climb may not be for you. I will say, however, that the view from the top was breathtaking and, in my opinion, worth it.



For the cathedral, the upstairs area has many stained glass windows for you to admire, as well as candles that you can light and say a prayer. They also still have mass on most days of the week. For me, the most interesting part was beneath the cathedral: the crypt. There are layers of medieval mosaics and tombs, as well as relics that have been uncovered throughout many periods of excavation. Things like belt buckles, a crucifix, and spurs from a member of the Medici family can all be seen on display. It was fascinating to walk around underneath the cathedral and see the parts of history that have been buried for centuries. Some might worry about this being a little spooky, but I did not get any creepy vibes and the area is very well-lit, not scary in the slightest.

Lastly, the museum had the most to see with three floors full of artifacts. There were statues of Saints, robes of previous Popes, giant golden doors depicting biblical scenes – and, as in most religious sights, a lot of bones. If after leaving the cathedral you were left wanting more, look no further. I could have spent hours wandering these three floors, but I made the mistake of visiting the museum last and was exhausted by the time I entered. I did enjoy what I got to see though, and it definitely had the most to look at, as well as informative plaques to tell you more about each piece on display.

If you're considering visiting the Duomo, I would suggest climbing the bell tower first, if that's something you want to do, and then visiting the museum. You can do the rest afterwards. It is definitely something you should see for yourself when visiting Florence, and if you think it's impressive from the outside, just wait until you see what's on the inside.



KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Museums of Florence

Galleria degli Uffizi

01

The famous Uffizi is a known treasure of Florence and exhibits a variety of interesting art through the lens of their artists and sculptures. The massive structure itself was originally intended for governmental usage; however, it proved the perfect space for displaying art. Inside the Uffizi is a myriad of mostly Renaissance artworks including portraiture, depictions of classical mythology, and religious iconography. The collection of illuminated religious friezes would be incomplete without the staples of Italian religious works, such as the arrangement of golden crosses and friezes depicting Jesus and images of the Madonna and Child located throughout the museum.

The Uffizi showcases paintings and sketches, famous pieces such as Botticelli's Birth of Venus and less well-known work by important Renaissance artists, all within multiple genres and time periods. Have you ever seen an unfinished painting by Michaelangelo? Or the sketches before the painting? Well, now you can. My personal favorite exhibit was the Niobe room, which included twelve statues of Niobe's children. Niobe is a figure from Greek mythology meant to warn against hubris, whose children were murdered by Apollo and Artemis due to their mother's hubris. The room shows them posed in the moment before their death, creating a somber and emotional feel to the room. Although well known, the Uffizi exceeds expectations with its extraordinary art collections.



Museo di San Marco

02

San Marco was home to a Dominican monastery, where monks used the space for praying, gardening, and taking in those who are in need of a home. Their obsession with the idea that pain, suffering, and guilt would make them closer to God allowed for a space filled with art, including iconic pieces by Fra Angelico, and architectural styles. Paintings of Jesus bleeding on the cross, meant to remind monks constantly of Christ's sacrifice, are scattered throughout the cloisters, including in the friars' small living chambers. The rooms themselves were extremely small with one singular small window; the stifling nature of the room accompanied by the gory imagery was intentionally made to inspire a sense of guilt and a hope for redemption. San Marco also contains manuscripts, including antiphonals, containing songs to be sung during worship.



Galleria dell'Accademia

03

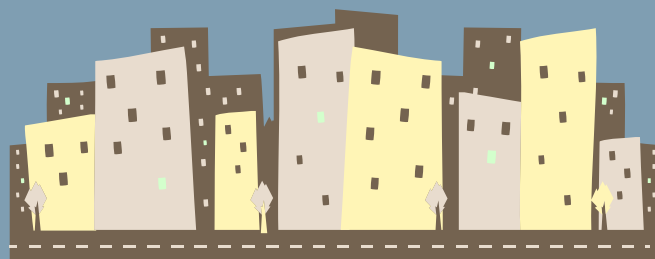
I heard so much about the Galleria Accademia before coming to Florence, understandably, as Michelangelo's David is inside. After waiting in line to get inside for about two hours, I was surprised to see that the museum was significantly smaller than I originally believed. The main attraction, the David, was a beautiful work whose path was paved with a myriad of Michelangelo's other statues. Michelangelo's David stands at a whopping 17 feet tall and was centered in a frame of arches, which highlighted the sheer size of the piece. Michelangelo's David was surrounded by tourists and artists waiting to capture David's magnificence, whether that be in photo or sketching. Being in the room with a sculpture as famous as the David, along with the way the architecture framed the David, created a space with a feeling of reverence. The few other rooms mainly contained two mediums of art: sculptures or religious artwork. These two mediums were intriguing as they ranged in topic and style while still remaining timelessly beautiful. Compared to the other museums I have been to, the Accademia, while containing amazing work like the David, was actually smaller than I'd originally anticipated.



Palazzo del Bargello

04

In the days before it functioned as a museum, the Bargello was a prison where executions would be held, though the only markers of this lie in the architectural resemblance. Nowadays, this museum is best known for its famous sculptures by Renaissance artists, including Donatello, but it also hosts a plethora of other medieval and Renaissance religious artifacts and art. There are endless depictions of religious scenery and ancient Roman iconography. One of my personal favorite artifacts at Bargello was an ornate game board. The artifact functions as a dual chess and backgammon board, and is made with multicolored marble. Each marble square or triangle is filled with intricate designs with an outside border consisting of carved friezes. For as little as I had heard about Bargello before going to see it, I have come to the conclusion that with all the art and artifacts inside, it is a hidden gem that would be a shame to miss.





STREET ART

FLOR

Graffiti is a worldwide art form. You can find it on the streets, the walls of buildings, and even street signs anywhere you may travel to. Here in Florence, street art is especially prevalent throughout the city. The graffiti ranges from political statements to lighthearted whimsical pictures, all of which are occupying room on nearly every wall. I have seen graffiti depicting people, animals, phrases, and even posters plastered among the crowds of spray-painted pictures. This style of art, scattered throughout Florence, is a staple of the Florentine streets.

As someone who enjoys art in all forms, the graffiti here was strikingly beautiful in comparison to the graffiti I had been used to. When thinking of graffiti and street art, the most recognizable forms tend to be the spray painted images and phrases that can be seen worldwide. Upon first arriving in Florence it's quick to notice—and easy to miss—the modern art in the streets. On doorways I have found a vibrant window into an ocean view stuck in the middle of a city, dogs next to air vents, and even portraits of people you will never know.

In The City

By Daniella DeMauro



Even Michelangelo has taken part in this tradition, leaving his mark on the front of Palazzo Vecchio. While waiting for a business partner, the famous artist carved a man he found interesting in the square onto the stone of the Palazzo Vecchio. It's still visible on the palace today, and though this local tale had been under scrutiny, it is still believed to be Michaelangelo's due to a comparison made between a drawing currently located in the Louvre, which showcases an identical man.

A less recognizable form of street art can be found as sculptures and posters. One famous statue made by Clement Abraham, more popularly known as Clet, stands across from the Ponte Vecchio, and is named "Common Man". The current 2024 installation of the statue is the fourth of its kind, the first three resulting in fines for violating the cityscape. The man is meant to be a sign of hope, courage, and bravery for the people who pass as he walks courageously into the nothingness ahead of him.

IL POMERIGGIO



Garden Stroll

By Gracie Rowe

One afternoon, our class took a trip to Orti Di Pinti: a beautiful local garden full of herbs focused on being accessible to its community. There, we learned about agriculture, the benefits of farming without pesticides, and how those pesticides and other chemicals affect plants as well as our health. Overall, it was a very interactive experience, being able to walk around to see, smell, and touch each of the individual herbs while being informed about their various properties.



The owner stopped at every herb to tell us about their various benefits, and encouraged us to smell them ourselves. It seemed all of the different herbs had various health benefits and could help you in one way or another. In fact, a classmate, Jordan Greenbaum, had a personal experience with the herbs healing him. Jordan was bitten by a bug, which made his arm start to turn red and swell. Our guide ripped off a leaf from a plant and rubbed it onto his arm. Within 30 seconds, the swelling was resolved and redness disappeared. I talked to Jordan afterwards, and he commented, “while skeptical of health benefits, I am somewhat convinced after using natural plant juices to heal my bug bite. I was absolutely shocked at the effect that had.”

During the visit, we were also able to wander around the garden on our own and take in its nature and its beauty. Our host handed each of my classmates and I an empty tea bag and encouraged us to pick our favorite herbs to curate our own personal tea. We were told to pack them to the brim and pick as much as we would like. Most of us were shy at first, but eventually, everyone spread out, touching, smelling, and creating our teas.. The whole garden, from head to toe, was so luscious, green, and beautiful. It also featured a special resident: a chicken who wandered freely during the day. It was a unique experience, and one I would recommend to visitors of Florence looking for something less touristy to occupy an afternoon.



CHEF FOR A DAY AT GUSTARIUM PIZZA

By Gracie Rowe

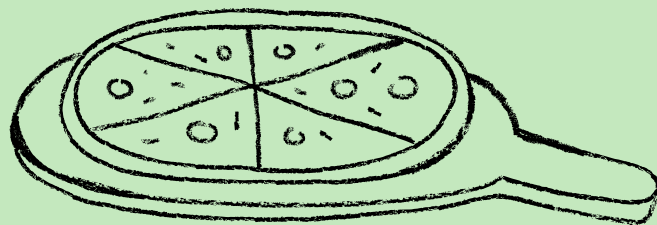


On Wednesday, June 5, our afternoon class visited a local pizzeria called Gustarium. This was by far the most exciting and entertaining class I've ever attended. The owner/operator welcomed our class into his restaurant to teach us about his process and let us create a pizza ourselves. The normal layout of this restaurant is set up to walk in and the pizza is displayed behind the glass for you to order. This specific day, the tables were in a line for us to sit and all have a clear view through the glass to watch him make the dough. We were immediately served prosecco to sip on while he demonstrated how he makes his pizza dough. His dough is like no other because he does not use yeast or salt. He simply added water and wheat and gently mixed them together with his hands. When making the dough with such simple ingredients it takes multiple hours for the dough to rest.



During the demonstration, we dined on a variety of pizzas including margarita, truffle, zucchini and onion, along with prosciutto and burrata. These pizzas had such a rich flavor but were very light tasting because of his unique dough ingredients. The vegetables used for toppings were very fresh and smelled like they had just been picked from a garden. My favorite pizza was the veggie pizza with cheese, onions and zucchini. Prior to our visit, I'd never thought to put zucchini on my pizza, but when I tasted it I knew I'd be making it that way myself.

After learning the ingredients used to make this light, fluffy, flavorful pizza, we were able to roll out our own dough and add toppings to a personal-sized pizza. The dough was sticky, so to prevent it from getting stuck on the baking sheet we added more wheat flour from the table. For the tomato sauce, there was a bowl filled with fresh tomatoes and red sauce, so you could spoon out the sauce to place on the dough or grab a tomato and squeeze it to get the juices out on your dish. This was a very weird feeling, it felt cold and mushy but the flavor that was added to the pizza was impossible to miss. I definitely could tell a difference in this style of pizza sauce. I have made pizza at home before, but this experience was completely different. The elasticity and consistency of his dough was very good and made me realize that there is a huge difference in the pizza dough we use back home. Makes sense as to why Italy is known for such amazing pizza! We enjoyed our time here and the pizzas we each prepared. This restaurant is one I would recommend to any pizza lovers looking for a personal experience and delicious food.



Beatrice : A Love Song

By Molly Hand

There are many dogs in Florence, but one is missing, and that's my dog, Beatrice. Yes, Beatrice, after Dante's muse. Bay-ah-tree-chay is how to pronounce it in Italian. I say it that way when I want to savor every syllable of her melodious name.

I miss Beatrice terribly. I feel a sense of loss. I confess that the hardest thing about teaching abroad was leaving her behind. Dante experienced longing for his Beatrice, too. His love was unrequited, so he wrote an epic poem, *The Divine Comedy*. I'm not that ambitious, but I have felt both heartache and inspiration as I see the dogs of Florence, happily trotting along down the stony streets of the city. While none of these Florentine dogs is as perfect as my Beatrice, they are, nevertheless, wondrous creatures themselves.

The dogs of Florence are mostly small breeds, and many are pure bred. I hope people are adopting through breed-specific rescues, but I don't know. I see daily: toy poodles, terriers, Italian greyhounds, Frenchies, Dachshunds, Yorkies. Yesterday, I saw a pup so tiny – a teacup something, I guess – that I could not actually identify it from afar, and thought maybe the owner should just pick it up instead of having it walk where it might be injured by an approaching wave of tourists.

I love seeing larger breeds, though there are fewer: labs and retrievers, standard poodles and doodles, Weimaraners, American Staffordshires, Great Pyrenees, huskies. They lie at their owners' feet at cafes, smugly ignoring the small yapping dogs that pass by.

I've never been a small-dog person. Beatrice is not a small dog. She is a Weimaraner, lab, and pit bull mix. She's gorgeous, of course. I adopted her from the city shelter in August of 2016 and my life has been dramatically improved every day since. My husband and I call her our canine daughter and dote on her in the extreme.



THE Beatrice





For example, we have never boarded her or left her overnight with a sitter. She travels with us everywhere. So while I'm here in Florence, my husband and Beatrice are back home. I miss them both. But I don't worry about my husband - I worry about Beatrice. The difference is that, unlike Beatrice, my husband understands where I am and when I'll be back.

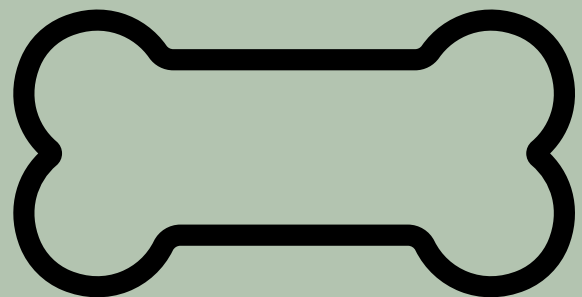
I recognize that Beatrice would not really thrive here in Florence. These Florentine dogs are accustomed to the lack of green space. They do their business on the streets and wait patiently as their humans clean up after them. (Most humans are good about this, though one does have to watch for the occasional land mine.) These dogs are, if not socialized, at least able to pass one another without incident in narrow alleys.



Apparently, there are dog parks in Florence. You can find these on a map, though sometimes what is marked seems to be just a tree, not necessarily a park. Trees are rare enough in town on this side of the Arno, though – landmarks in their own right.

The dogs of Florence have more freedoms than dogs back in the states. As in much of Europe, dogs accompany humans practically everywhere. Their personhood seems to be acknowledged. They are companions, not accessories.

Florentine dogs have evolved, as dogs do, to accommodate their humans. They move about in crowded, built spaces that were not designed for their species. They've learned to make it work. I take heart as I miss the green of my backyard, my morning walks down tree lined streets with Beatrice, and the ease of escaping to a state park or shaded trail. The dogs of Florence have adapted to the city, taking joy in simply being with their human companions, adjusting to the lack of flora, putting up with ever increasing numbers of tourists, and the temperature gauge creeping upward day by day. If Florence's canine citizens can adjust to such things, I suppose I can manage. In Beatrice's absence, I look to the dogs of Florence for encouragement and delight.





THE FRUITS OF THE BRANCH & *The Vine*



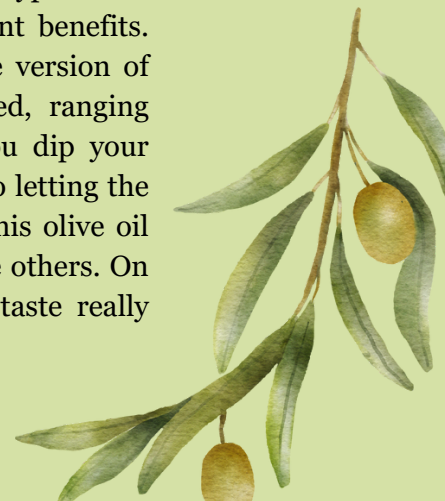
By Kayla Moran

Lining the mountainous Tuscan region are fields upon fields of farmland, procuring ingredients for some of its most infamous exports: wine and olive oil. I have had the pleasure of being able to taste some of these delicacies right from their source, and was able to learn some tips to determine “good” wine and olive oil from the “bad.”

With different types of grapes and olives being grown all over the region, some farms— especially when they are just itching to get any old wine out into the market— will mix the different variations together, taking the distinct flavors of either liquid and merging them, changing the taste from its most authentic form. To avoid this, what one needs to do is look at the address where the product came from; the more specific the address, the more reliable the wine or olive oil will be, giving more assurance that the many different types of these fruits weren’t mixed together. There may be struggles sometimes with harsh seasons or generally bad harvests that may drive some to mix their grapes or olives together, but most of the farmers of Tuscany strive to stick to the authenticity of their products and produce the more sincere quality promised.



Olive oil can be extracted and created into a couple different types, all depending on the time they take to settle: raw olive oil, virgin olive oil, and extra virgin olive oil, to name a few. Each type has a different taste to it, as well as different benefits. Extra virgin olive oil is the most pure version of olive oil, and the one most consumed, ranging from what you cook with to what you dip your bread into. In the past, when it came to letting the mixture settle in big terracotta pots, this olive oil took the longest to set compared to the others. On a spoon or on a piece of bread, the taste really comes through.





On my first experience of tasting olive oil here, the farm had already drenched the bread in it. For me, the flavors were brought out more, with an aromatic scent and a smooth taste. I kept wanting to go back for more (and it didn't help that they set a spread for eight people when there were only three of us). Then, there is the less-common virgin olive oil, with its composition time falling between that of extra virgin olive oil and the raw kind, and its taste a bit harsher than that of extra virgin olive oil. This olive oil is mostly used for cooking, with just a higher smoking point than extra virgin olive oil and a bit of a lower one than raw olive oil. This and raw olive oil generally tend to cook in the same fashion, though. And with raw olive oil, there comes a bit more of a smoky taste to what's been cooked. It spends the least amount of time in the terracotta pots and is not meant for direct consumption, being followed with a more crude, fowl taste.

Grapes are one of my favorite fruits, with their sweet, juicy taste, they have come to be the perfect snack for me. I tried wine for the first time back in the beginning of May. Having a grape base to it, I expected myself to like it, but I didn't. One thing I always hear is that drinking wine is an "acquired taste," but with me properly tasting wine for the first time, it was hard for me to tell the difference between all of the various types (I still can't fully differentiate between them all). Even between the whites and the reds, they all tasted pretty similar, with maybe some differences in the acidity of their taste. Just smelling them, the acidity was sharp. To me, they all had a woody taste to them, with a bit of a bland kick afterwards.

What is so fascinating about wine, however, is the time it takes to ferment in order to get it out to the market. For years and years, they sit in barrels, collecting very little oxygen (and this is where that woody taste comes from) as the yeast collects carbon, nitrogen, and various other elements to become alcoholic. As with olive oil, the barrels are kept underground in a cool cellar, with the temperatures varying depending on what kind of wine is being produced. For winemakers (and connoisseurs, at that), the longer the wine is fermenting, the better it will taste.



ITALIAN

Sweets

By Jordan Hicks

While exploring the city of Florence, anybody would quickly realize that there is no absence of options when it comes to finding a gelateria. If authentic Florentine gelato is your goal, here are some general guidelines to point you in the right direction.

If you see bright neon piles of “gelato” with embellishments on top, run the other direction. These are tourist traps, and can be mostly found distracting the crowds surrounding most large landmarks. If it’s an authentic experience that you’re looking for, try and find a gelateria that stores their gelato in metal containers with lids. This is how they keep the gelato cold, and since this is gelato that’s being made fresh frequently, there’s not going to be any plastic containers or ability to keep the gelato tins open for people to look in. Real gelato is also not as colorful due to its lack of artificial colors and flavors. You can also listen to the workers to tell if they’re speaking in Italian. If the other customers seem to be mostly native Florentines then you can presume that the gelateria is authentic. Lastly, if you are able, check to see if their gelato is made in-house or offsite, because in-house gelato would be the best option for authentic Italian gelato.

My personal recommendation would be Rivareno, Located at Borgo Degli Albizi 46. After many personal trips there and a class excursion, I can confidently say that Rivareno has the best gelato that I have had in Florence (and trust me, I’ve tried a lot). The creamy texture, kept perfectly cold so as to not melt too fast, and the many natural flavors to choose from make the experience one of the best in Florence. The staff is friendly, they’re open until midnight, it’s affordable, the flavors are delicious, and all of their gelato is made in-house in a kitchen visible from the dining area. It uses the traditional metal tins with lids as their storage vessel and all of the flavors taste deliciously un-artificial. You truly cannot go wrong with a trip to Rivareno.

OUR FAVORITE FLAVORS



Molly Hand - Fragola and Vaniglia



Jubilee - Caffè and Caramello Salato



Daniella - Stracciatella, Cioccolato, Morena



Gracie - Limone and Nocciola



Jordan H - Nocciola and Banana



Angelina - Lampone and Limone



Kayla - Vaniglia and Cioccolato



Jordan G- Stracciatella



Annika- Lampone and Cremino Rivareno

THIS LITTLE PIGGY WENT TO THE MARKET

By Annika VanDerlip

When wandering through the winding alleys of Florence, one of the last things a person may expect to stumble across is the hulking shape of a wild boar. The massive creature sits reclined on his haunches amidst the bustling Mercato Nuovo, water dripping from his jaws as though he has just taken a drink from the pool of water before him, like something straight out of the Tuscan countryside.

Despite appearances, this creature is not lost. No, he is a local symbol, which Florentines and tourists alike refer to fondly as “Porcellino,” or “little pig” in English. The story goes that if you place a coin in his mouth, and let it fall into the grate below, he will bring you good luck— and if you go so far as to give his shimmering-gold snout a rub, legend has it that you are bound to someday return to Florence. Whether or not he will actually bring good luck seems of little concern to the thousands of visitors that flock to see him everyday. Porcellino is a very popular pig, and even late into the night can be found with a crowd of people surrounding him, hoping to bring a little bit of Florentine fortune home with them.

As famous as this bronze statue is, however, it’s not the original Porcellino. The first version of the beloved boar was in fact Roman marble, and can be seen lounging in the same pose in the halls of the Uffizi gallery, just a few streets away. He was carved by the Baroque master Pietro Tacca in 1633, and soon thereafter, the first bronze casting of him was made (which now resides in the Bardini museum, across the Arno from the Uffizi). It’s rather endearing how the three main iterations of Porcellino all live only a few blocks away from one another.

So if you ever happen to find yourself near the Mercato Nuovo, or perhaps down the street in the Piazza Republica, consider paying Porcellino a visit—who knows: if the legend is true, you may even be back again to see him in the future!





Impastably Delicious



By Daniella DeMauro

If you are visiting Florence, I am sure you have heard of all the sites to go see. There are a plethora of museums, restaurants, and shops that tell a story about the rich history ingrained within this wonderful city. From marveling at famous sculptures like Michelangelo's David to searching for the perfect Florentine souvenir in one of the many leather shops, you can stay busy for weeks. But have you ever thought about changing up these normal Florentine activities by taking a cooking class?

I had gone to just about every museum in Florence that I could fit into my trip and was looking for something to switch up my time. Looking on the GetYourGuide app, I found plenty of more museums, but needing a change of scenery, so I looked into a cooking class. I discovered one with three pasta recipes, three sauce recipes, a meal, panna cotta, and wine. Where better to learn how to make a myriad of local dishes than a center of culture and cuisine! Luckily, my high expectations were exceeded.

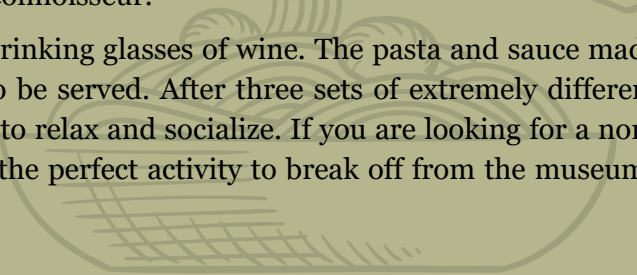
We met up the block from the Chefactory Cooking Academy Florence, which was right near the Galleria Academia, with a small group of about ten people. The staff greeted us with our vouchers for the experience, leaving us with nothing to worry about.



The panna cotta was a simple blend of heavy cream, sugar, and vanilla, which was processed while we prepared the ingredients for pasta and sauce. We learned to make fettuccine pomodoro e basilico, ravioli in butter and sage, and a gnocchi bolognese - with my favorite being the fettuccine pomodoro e basilico. We learned from a chef at Chefactory Cooking Academy Florence who taught us to make pasta from scratch. Unlike cooking classes where the chef does the cooking while the attendees watch, we were able to have hands-on experience the entire time. Our chef showed us an example of what to do and from there all we had to do was replicate.

The two most simple recipes were the fettuccine pomodoro e basilico, which consisted of tomatoes, browned garlic, basil, and the ravioli in butter and sage, whose sauce is self descriptive. The most fun pasta to make may have been the ravioli, whose filling we made ourselves from blanched spinach and ricotta. The gnocchi bolognese sauce was a thicker red wine base with carrots, onions, and tomato sauce mixed together with the gnocchi. The pasta itself for fettuccine and the ravioli was made with semolina and white flour with one egg (gnocchi was the same but with potato starch added). Overall, I now feel like a professional pasta connoisseur.

Once we were finished cooking we walked into the dining room drinking glasses of wine. The pasta and sauce made individually were combined into one tasty dish that was ready to be served. After three sets of extremely different styles of pasta, we were served our panna cotta and we were able to relax and socialize. If you are looking for a non-academic experience while in Florence, a cooking class might be the perfect activity to break off from the museums and churches that are scattered around Italy.



Hidden Gems

"A CHARMING NEW LOOK"

By Gracie Rowe

During a stroll around Florence exploring the Oltrarno, on the other side of the Ponte Vecchio, I stumbled upon a tucked away jewelry store. There are many jewelers in Florence, and the Ponte Vecchio itself is a bridge full of gold jewelry. This jewelry store is named Guliliano Ricchi after the man who creates the jewelry and works there himself. Since the staff was not fluent in English, and we were not fluent in Italian, we were on our own to browse. Some other girls told us we could customize our own charm bracelets, we watched a few being made and then proceeded to pick the charms and chains we liked best.

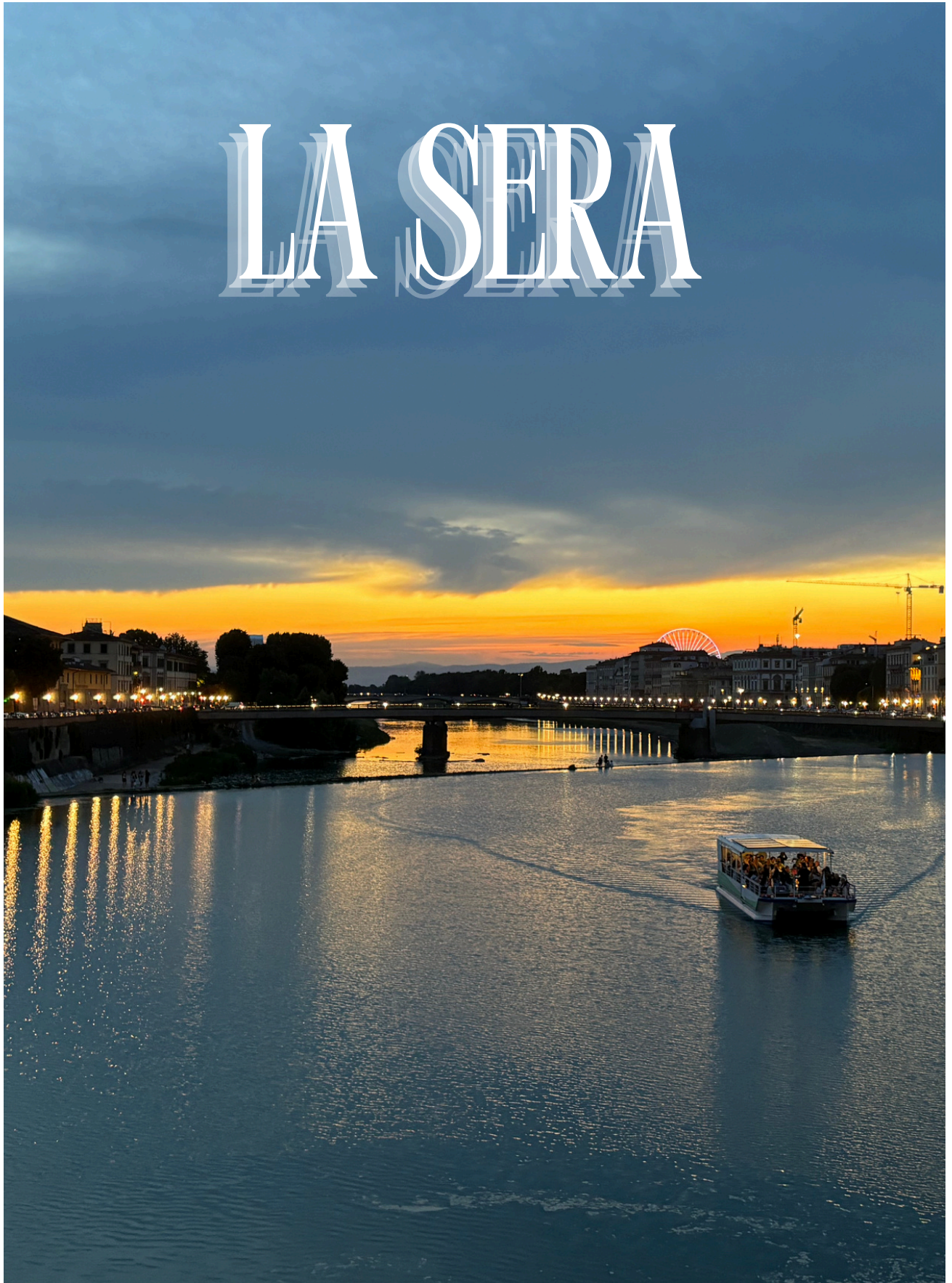
I chose a gold rope chain that was sized to fit my wrist. The four charms I chose were a euro coin, the flag of Florence, a cross, and the Ponte Vecchio, all prominent features of Florence. As I stood in line and was next up to get the charms placed on the chain, a man sat in the chair.

At first, I believed him to be an employee of the shop. As I glanced over and began to read a magazine that was opened to a page with the name of the jewelry shop on it, I realized the man was Guilliano Ricchi himself. He owned the jewelry shop, and I was lucky enough to have him make my bracelet personally, which made it feel even more special.

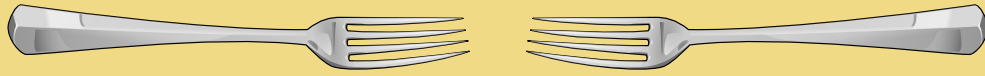
Guilliano has been in the jewelry business and working in his workshop since he was 15 years old. His clients consist of designer brands like Gucci, Dior, Neiman Marcus, and Ferragamo and his pieces are sold all over the world. Readers who appreciate fashion will understand how this experience was so meaningful. This is a very skilled man who specializes in the "lost wax" technique, which he explained and demonstrated while we were in his shop. The small and detailed wax molds that he creates with such care and detail are beyond impressive. Guilliano is a man who works for himself and creates every piece throughout the process in his workshop below the store, which means this shop will be passed on as a family heirloom for generations to come. To have gotten the chance to design my bracelet, talk with Guilliano himself, and watch him at work was so special to me. This is my favorite souvenir to take home and a valuable keepsake that I'll always hold near to my heart.



LA SERA



OUR ITALIAN FRIEND



By Jordan Hicks

When leaving a night class at the study center, my first thought is almost always “I’m hungry.” Due to this fact, my gut reaction is to find the closest restaurant to me and sit down. This is how I stumbled upon my friend’s restaurant. If you turn left leaving the FSU study center and walk down to the corner, on your right you will find Osteria dei Leoni. In the first week of classes, my roommate and I ventured into this restaurant out of convenience, but since then we’ve found ourselves returning at least once a week. On separate occasions, I’ve gone by myself, with my roommate, and with all three of my roommates, and I’ve enjoyed my experience every time. What keeps me coming back to this place out of all of the other restaurants in Florence? After all, they don’t accept meal vouchers, so I’m spending my own money to be able to eat here. To me, it’s 100% worth it. Not only is the food high-quality, the drinks are as well. They have the friendliest wait-staff that I’ve encountered since being in Italy and experiencing numerous other restaurants.

On our first visit, my roommate and I were waited on by a very nice gentleman, and on the following visit, he remembered us. After dining there several times we finally learned that his name is Guilliano, and he has since become our friend. Having now gone there so frequently that he has memorized our orders, it is always a pleasure seeing him. Guilliano obviously doesn’t work everyday, and since we are loyal customers and support his business on the regular, the staff has also begun to recognize us. This kindness is what sets their restaurant apart. We even have a specific table where they always seat us and refer to it as “our table.” On any given night of the week, I know that my roommates and I can walk into Osteria dei Leoni to enjoy a delicious meal and be greeted like old friends. We’ve tried most of their pasta dishes at this point from their carbonara, to their spaghetti pomodoro, to the cacio e pepe. We have yet to try something that we don’t like. So, if you find yourself hungry after a long day at the study center, walk less than a block and satisfy your appetite with some of the best food in Florence, and be sure to ask for Guilliano.





THE CITY OF *a thousand stairs*

By Daniella DeMauro

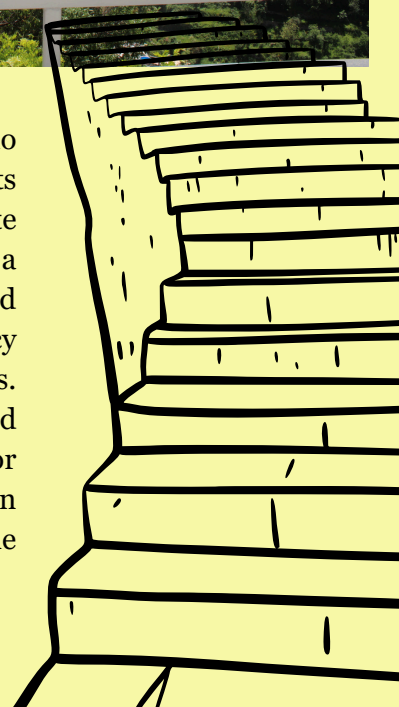
Positano: The Italian town with the steepest hills and most beautiful views. While it may not have the historical sparkle of Rome and Florence, Positano is rich in culture and beauty. The region is known for three main things: lemons, seafood, and beaches, aspects prevalent throughout the town.

Located on a mountain, Positano's stairs and hills are unavoidable. My residence was quite high, which resulted in constant trekking up and down stairs—a fact that led to plans being tailored around them. Taxis and buses are available, but I did not bring enough cash to spare since I was not expecting the physical demands of the trip. Yet, even with all the hiking, there were plenty of opportunities to stop and rest while looking over the view of the mountain that meets the Mediterranean Sea (a sight especially welcomed while struggling to catch my breath on the stairs). Thankfully I brought a bottle of water while walking around, but each trip up those stairs required at least four stops, and left my legs shaking by the end of each hike.

Despite the unexpected workouts, Positano has still been my favorite site to visit. The display of culture along with the beautiful scenery that accompanies it made the trip worth all the stairs on that mountain. As is customary of the Italian towns and cities I have been to thus far, Positano excels at the inclusion of brightly colored buildings, which contrast nicely with the greenery and crystal waters that lay in the background. The black sand beaches vary from smooth sand to rockier points in front of the turquoise waters and a beautiful view of the colorful mountainside. As you can imagine, this is a perfect location for photos, which many visitors take advantage of.



While the pasta in Italy has been flavorful in every restaurant I have been, Positano offered a much needed break through its local cuisine. If seafood and lemons are treats you enjoy, then the cuisine in Positano will be just what you are looking for. My favorite food from my trip had to be the fried calamari, which was both fresh and flavorful with a hint of lemon. The lemons in Positano are enormous and a delectable blend of sweet and sour. Their lemon trees, grown in soil enriched by volcanic ash, are known for their juicy and semi-sweet fruit and have been growing in the Amalfi Coast for hundreds of years. Because they are grown on terraced soil, they are still mainly harvested by hand. Paired beautifully with this is local seafood which, being freshly caught, creates a clean flavor that can only be found in a coastal town. Lemon-themed treats like limoncello and lemon sorbet can be found in shops all over and alongside the winding roads leading into the mountain town.





The picturesque scenery, with its colorful buildings, lush greenery, and stunning coastal views, provides endless opportunities for activity, whether it be shopping, cooking classes, boating, or beach trips. The local cuisine, particularly the fresh seafood and distinctive lemons, is a delight for the taste buds and can be found in most restaurants in the area. The duality of this location, exemplified through the agriculture and trees on the mountains in contrast to the calm turquoise sea below, created a backdrop for the trip which were only highlighted through the fiery sunset skies which can be seen from just about every angle of the island. Positano's beauty and local charm truly justify the demanding terrain, making it a must-visit for anyone traveling to Italy.



A Quest for Rice

By Angelina Dobbs

What do you do when you find yourself alone in a new country? I usually look for the comfort of familiarity. Just the small things like cups of chamomile tea before bed, dogs on the street that remind me of my own, or white rice like the kind my twin sister makes for me. That last item is the hardest to find, you see, if you know the horror stories of rice in Florence. In my experience, it has always been too plasticky, too crunchy, or an unfortunate mix of both.

On my quest for delicious rice, I've been severely disappointed. I tried a couple Mexican restaurants and several Asian restaurants to no avail. I even gave some traditional Italian restaurants a try, though they only succeeded when the rice was put into pastries or made into risotto. Certainly, in Florence where everything tastes good, someone must be able to cook it correctly, right?



Then, one night, I found my answer: tucked between two taller buildings was an inconspicuous storefront called Ristorante Mr. Z 辰午巷. If it wasn't for the blaring music in the crowded shop next door, or the sudden appearance of Hanzi amongst the *Trattorias* and *Osterias*, I might have missed it; what a sorrowful mistake that would have been.

The arched, Florentine style walls, painted with calming shades of gray and white, arched almost lovingly over the minimalistic décor of the dining room. Lightbulbs enclosed in teardrop-shaped bird cages glowed with pristine elegance, and a refrigerator of ice-cold drinks buzzed happily in the corner. The woman at the counter showed me to a table set for one with delicate blue and white China. I usually have a problem with booths, but I settled in quite comfortably here. Indeed, it was an introvert's paradise; there were no other customers, and the polite staff glided silently through the restaurant like ghosts. The only sound was the soothing voice of the singer on the radio, lazily winding its way throughout the room.



The food was straight from a dream. Yellow custard buns, shaped like bunnies with tiny red eyes, sat soft and sweet in their bamboo basket.

Flat, chewy circles of rice cake came served on a bed of sliced mushrooms, softened carrots, and fresh green onion. Salty, garlicky pieces of pork crowned the top and dripped juice into the bottom of the plate, flavoring the rest on the way down. Above all, in the center of the spread, like the sun with everything in its orbit, was a bowl of fluffy, white rice. It was perfectly cooked and had just the right amount of stickiness so I could pick it up with chopsticks. It was flavorful in its simplicity and precisely what I had been searching for.

I sipped Coca-Cola from a Chinese teacup and savored every bite of my meal. If not for propriety, I would have licked the plate clean. That dinner was truly the best 13.50€ I ever spent and a most satisfying conclusion to my quest for comfort. Thankfully, I now have a new mission to take me through the end of my time here: try the whole menu.



SOFT AND SUPPLE

By Kayla Moran

When you think of Italian products, your mind immediately turns to that of olive oil and wine, right? Well, that is true, but Italy also has a substantial supply of leather. Dispersed all over Florence are shops selling bags, jackets, wallets, and an array of other leather products. Despite their frequency throughout the city, they all carry a consistency: their leather is soft and supple.

Not far from Piazza della Repubblica, on Via Ferdinando Bonaventura Moggi, you can find the leather market. Collected on a raised, rectangular platform, dozens of leather vendors smush their stalls under a cover to sell you their products. Upon first look, there comes a question about the authenticity of their items, but upon further inspection, you will be able to discern which pieces are authentic leather—the same that can be found in other storefronts. Plus, as with all leather shops, you can haggle. Most of the time, you can pay a lower price for a product in cash as opposed to with a credit card, and from there, you can barter for an even lower price. Keep in mind that, the less cash you have, the lower vendors are willing to take the price. You still have to keep it within reason, of course, or they will choose not to sell it to you. Shuffling through the compact stalls, you can find any piece of leatherwork you may be hunting for, all while being immersed in a true Italian product.

Walking past the Ponte Vecchio and all of its jewelry shops, you can find a great collection of quality leather stores. Be it a leather jacket, a belt, or a wallet, or whatever else you desire, you can find it there. When I first arrived in Florence with my mom and my aunt, we were waiting for our AirB&B to finish being prepared for us, so we headed down to the Ponte Vecchio. We gawked at the collection of jewelry shops lined up on the bridge and admired the view. What we were really keen on exploring, though, were the leather shops just on the other side. At every store we found, we stopped in, feeling the quality of the leather and smelling its earthy aroma. Finally, we entered one store with a wide display of products. The white store had bags lined up all along the wall, and close to the entrance were crossbodies hung on a pole. Even when some of the bags had a color to them, they were still soft and pastel-looking, and they caught my aunt's attention. But, as it was our first day there, we opted out of buying anything and left the store. For the rest of the week, we could not find the shop again. Time and time again, we went down past the Ponte Vecchio and looked in all of the leather shops we could find, but still we could not find it, and my mom and aunt had to fly back to the US. Every time I went down to the Ponte Vecchio from there on out, I would keep my eyes open for the leather shop that carried those crossbodies, and finally, after several tries, I found it and bought the bag my aunt was looking for.



There are many leather shops in Florence that are gaining traction for their attentive service and the quality of their products. Massimo's is one of those shops. He posts videos on Tik Tok showcasing his products, and he draws in flocks of tourists, selling out of products fairly quickly. Another notable shop is the School of Leather. This school consists of leather artisans from all over the world who have come to Italy to perfect their craft. The products here are more on the expensive side, but their look and quality can be wholly worth it, knowing that you bought from a learned artisan.

As leather shops can be found all around Florence, there are certain types you may want to steer away from. Small shops that crowd themselves with brightly colored handbags at their front or in their windows tend to sell leather of a lower quality, and charge them for a higher price as well. When shopping, look for stores that draw you inside, not the ones that blast their products on the streets. You can find many different, amazing leather shops all throughout Florence, so whatever you may be looking for, one of these shops will be bound to have it.

DISCOUNT DAVID

By Jubilee Cotner

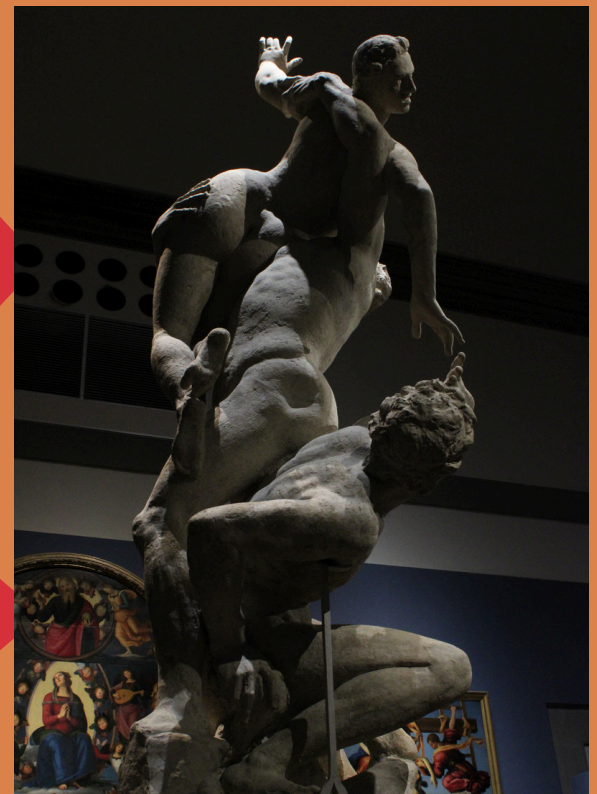


While studying abroad, it's important to balance your exploration of the country and its culture alongside doing your schoolwork. This means that whenever I begin my weekends, I usually have a plan in place for what I'm going to be doing within those days. However, on one weekend of the semester, many study abroad students and tourists all have the same plan: on the first Sunday of every month, many popular museums are free to enter.

As expected, this is a day that has to be well accounted for. Seeing sights like the Uffizi and Michaelangelo's David for free draws in large crowds, meaning that, unless you want to spend hours baking under the sun in the museum's lines, you have to be strategic about your plan. If you want to go to the Uffizi, you have to get up early. You want to be in that first opening line, so you can get in without worrying about the wait. Luckily, most of the museums, in my experience, have lines that move pretty quickly. You don't have to be first in line, but it's still a good idea to get in early.

The rules that determine what counts as a museum, as well as which museums are successful enough to justify having the free entry, are a bit murky. I had at first planned to hit many of the smaller museums one after another to tick them off my list, but many of them also still required me to pay. For example, I had intended to go to the Santa Croce first, right when it opened, but when I got there it was suspiciously empty of anybody waiting to get in. That was when I found out that despite its popularity, the Santa Croce, like many churches, is not free on the first Sunday of each month.

I ended my first Sunday by visiting the Galleria dell' Accademia, to see Michaelangelo's David. The line was completely wrapped around the building, but don't let that scare you off. The look of the line was far scarier than the wait, with the line moving very quickly. It was especially worth it to see Michaelangelo's David for free, and I recommend taking advantage of this day to experience any famous pieces you're interested in as well.



FANS LIKE NO OTHER: FIORENTINA



By Jordan Greenbaum

As an American, I'm used to the borderline obsessive culture around college football and the drive to win an NCAA championship. With that in mind, tailgating with my friends, sporting our team's garnet and gold, and watching my roommates bet way too much money on a toss up game are core memories of mine. So, when I came to Florence and was advised to check out a football game, I thought I knew what I was getting myself into. I was wrong.

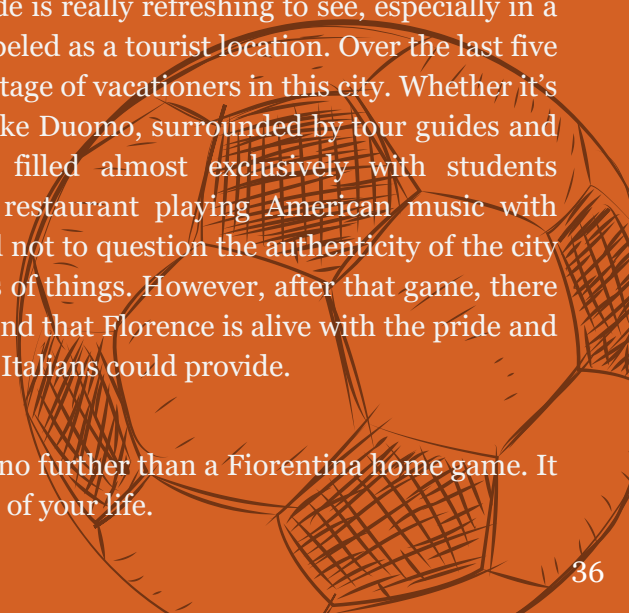
The surprise wasn't that football here was played with your feet instead of your hands—I was well aware of that before I arrived at the stadium. What I was not expecting was the ratio of fans to the volume of support that I saw. With just a few thousand viewers for a regular season game, you might expect a mild crowd and a couple of super fans. I was, again, wrong.



There was something about the way that fans from Florence donned gallons upon gallons of purple paint prior to packing the stadium. There was something about the way for over ninety minutes straight, fans cheered and chanted all game long, regardless of what happened on the field. There was even something about the way I was welcomed in as a clear foreigner, just because I had a purple jersey on and could be identified as one of them. It was clear to me after only two hours in one of the most electric stadiums I've ever seen that this was more than a game to these Fiorentina supporters.

Such a level of local pride is really refreshing to see, especially in a city that is now sadly labeled as a tourist location. Over the last five weeks, I've seen no shortage of vacationers in this city. Whether it's at landmark locations like Duomo, surrounded by tour guides and groups, a college bar filled almost exclusively with students studying abroad, or a restaurant playing American music with English menus, it's hard not to question the authenticity of the city when seeing these types of things. However, after that game, there wasn't a doubt in my mind that Florence is alive with the pride and culture only real, native Italians could provide.

So, if you're ever questioning where to see the real Florence Italy, look no further than a Fiorentina home game. It might not be pretty, it might not be in a postcard, but it will be the time of your life.



“We have Italian food at home!”

By Annika VanDerlip

There’s something about home-cooked Italian food that can warm a room—and no, I don’t mean the temperature. While it may not be on the same level as what we’ve had abroad in Florence, my mother’s lasagna will forever hold a special place in my heart. What used to be a rare treat in my childhood—something saved only for the most special of occasions like birthdays or holidays—has now become a staple of my visits home from college.

It started the week before I was set to move into my freshman year dorm; like many people, it would be my first time far from home, and I was nervous. My parents however, seemed to be even more nervous than me. They hid it as well as possible by offering to help me pack or buy any last-minute dorm decor, and my mother in particular, despite her work schedule, asked if there was anything I’d like her to make for my last dinner at home. Now, my mother, being half-Italian, is an excellent cook. She’s well-versed in the method referred to as ‘eyeballing it’ and measures many ingredients by trial and error. Add a bit, taste, add a bit more, taste again. Her offer, limitless as it was, got me thinking. We hadn’t had lasagna in a long time.

She promised to make it, and somehow, what was originally going to be a simple lasagna dinner became a feast of American-Italian cuisine, for which each person in my family brought an offering. My father made grilled chicken, my sister prepped a Caesar salad, my boyfriend and I assembled bruschetta, and at the heart of it all sat my mother’s lasagna. When we ate that meal, I felt like an empress with a grand banquet spread before her.

In the time since that night, now nearly three years ago, lasagna has solidified its place in our household menu every month or so when I come home. Each visit, we crowd around the kitchen table, fighting for space against the mountain of intoxicating food. That meal has become a sort of binding agent for our family, and is something that I now look forward to when I’m making the grueling six-hour drive from Tallahassee. Even now, after having eaten countless pasta dishes in Florence, I still look forward to eating my mother’s homemade lasagna upon my return.

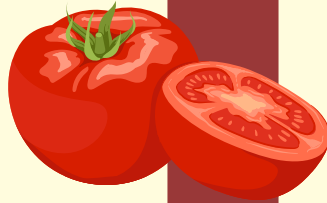
So, if you’re shopping for a lasagna recipe, or are looking for a little slice of home, this recipe should prove to be an excellent candidate.





VanDerlips' Homemade Tomato Sauce:

- 2 cans organic crushed tomatoes
- 1 bay leaf
- red wine
- olive oil
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp pepper
- basil
- oregano
- sugar



Heat the olive oil in a large pot, add minced garlic and saute. Once the garlic is lightly browned, add the crushed tomatoes and season with salt and pepper, basil, oregano and a splash of red wine to taste. Bring to a low boil and let simmer for two hours. Taste sauce before removing from heat: if bitter, sprinkle a pinch of sugar. Taste and enjoy!

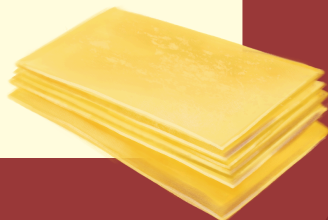


VanDerlips' Homemade Lasagna:

- 1 box of lasagna noodles
- 16 oz mozzarella
- 32 oz ricotta cheese
- 1/4 cup Parmesan cheese
- 1 egg (beaten)
- tomato sauce
- salt and pepper to taste



Dice mozzarella, then mix all cheeses, egg and seasonings in a large bowl. Preheat the oven to 350, and coat the bottom of a 13x9 baking pan with your tomato sauce, then layer noodles, then sauce again. Then add a layer of cheese mixture over sauce, and repeat this process until all noodles and cheese have been used, then coat the top in sauce. Cover the baking pan with aluminum foil, then bake for 45 minutes. Remove foil and bake for 10-15 more minutes. Remove from the oven, cover with foil, and let sit for 10 minutes before serving. Enjoy!



*Wine Bar
Cooking School
Author's Workshop
Worthwhile Experience*

ENOTECA MARILU

By Jubilee Cotner

On May 27th, our class went on a trip over to San Miniato, Pisa in order to meet Emiko Davies, the renowned author of *Florentine*, among many other cookbooks, and co-owner alongside her husband of the charming Enoteca Marilu. Emiko Davies was inspired to live in Florence after an experience just like ours, where she had studied abroad as a college student in the city, and decided that she would like to stay. She worked on art restoration projects here, finding excuses to stay within the city, before eventually getting married and putting down roots in the nearby town of San Miniato.

As a child, Davies loved food writing; sitting and flipping through food magazines just to look at the recipes and dishes, even before she could fully conceptualize them. She read many iterations about Italian food from British and American magazines, and began to notice that a lot of the recipes shown in these magazines were not a good representation of the Tuscan region; they'd been changed into recipes more suited for the United Kingdom and the United States. That was when she decided to create her first cookbook, titled *Florentine*, because she realized she was uniquely positioned to share the true recipes of Florence. Her understanding of both English and Italian, as well as her experience in food writing inspired her to take the matter into her own hands, and create *Florentine*.





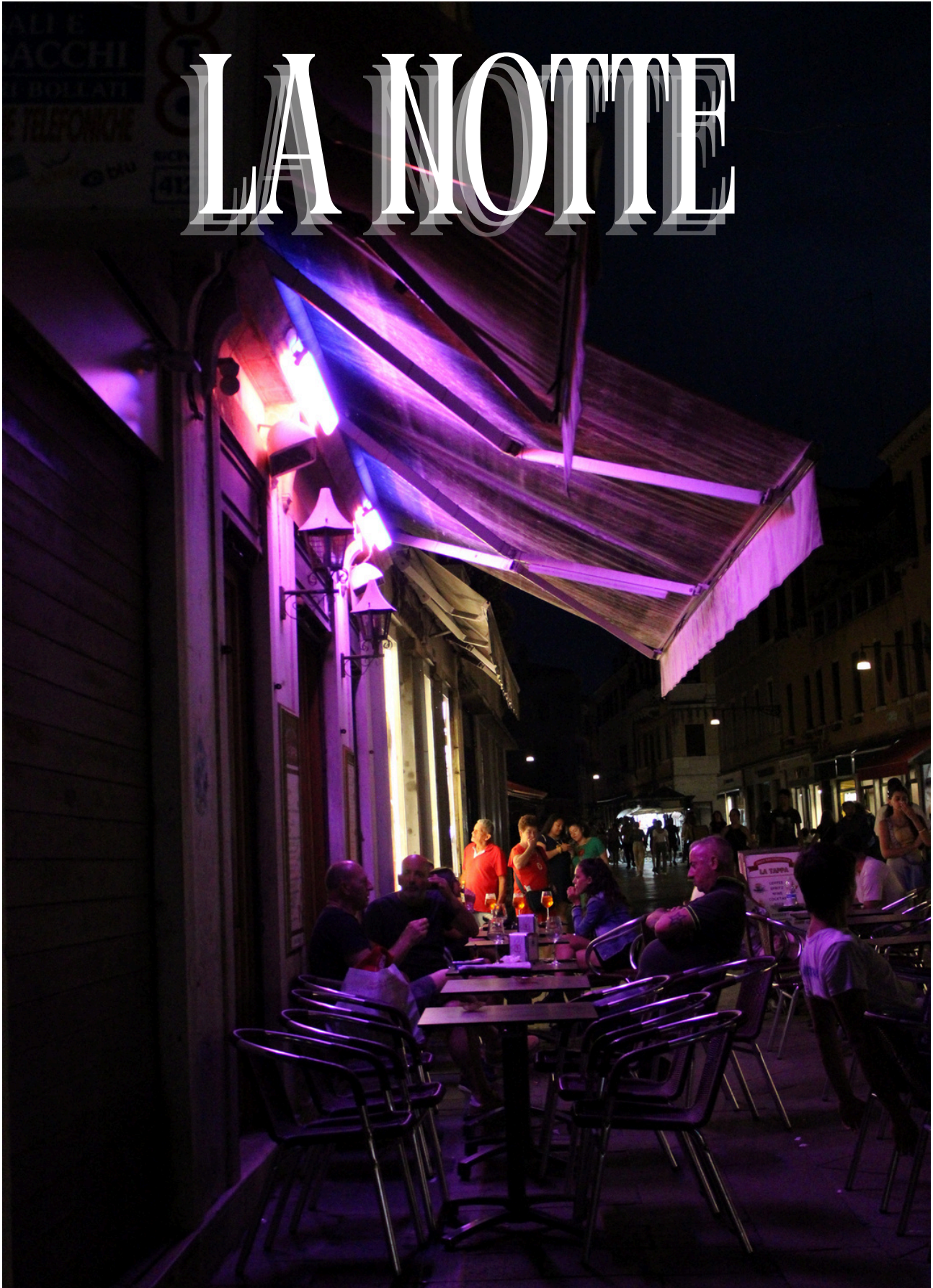
She had initially started “food writing” with a food blog, already very familiar with this genre of writing before beginning to dive into Florentine. The cookbook built on her work in the blog, with a wide selection of recipes written throughout. During our visit to her cooking school, Davies not only shared her experiences and history regarding her cookbooks, but she also prepared a recipe from Florentine, one that she remarked seeing specifically highlighted in her mom’s cookbook where the spine creased along that specific page: an apricot pie, made with a very simple list of ingredients, and yet one of the best I’ve ever tasted.



When creating Florentine, Davies researched many recipes from Florence’s history, wanting to gather together a collection of some of its best. The issue with those older cookbooks, like the well-known compilation by Artusi, is that they date so far back many of them were missing key information we need to cook nowadays. There was no information given on things like the cooking temperature or the times since they didn’t have ovens where you could manipulate the temperature like we do in the modern age. Emiko Davies went through each of these recipes, testing them to find the correct information for the best version of each recipe to combine into Florentine as we know it.



LA NOTTE



Drowning Architecture

By Jubilee Cotner

While exploring the country of Italy, I quickly found that, while each city has some differences—such as wider streets or more piazzas—than Florence, all of them have more or less the same look. The buildings pressed together side by side, the narrow roads and narrower sidewalks that have normalized walking directly on the street, and the iconic yellow tones of the building accompanying red or green terracotta roofs. All these aspects are iconic to Italy, no matter where you go. That is, unless you're going to Venice.

Venice was constructed in a unique way, being built out on the ocean lagoon itself. Supporting the ground of Venice are many large tree stumps submerged in the lagoon and covered by packed clay to hold up the city. Venice was originally more like a swamp, covered in trees among the salty Mediterranean sea. When they cut down the trees, they left the stumps with the intention of using them as the support beams of the city. This structural oddity led to the most notable aspect of Venice:

the canals. Spiderwebbed through the streets are long stretches of water, with gondolas, personal boats, and water taxis passing by. These replace the typical roads in a city, with Venice using boats instead of cars. Above all else, this is the most impressive architectural difference between Venice and the rest of Italy.

Aside from that, the buildings are also different. While other cities typically have yellow or cream-colored buildings, the buildings of

Venice were made in a variety of colors. There were plenty of pinks, reds, greens, and blues covering each building, making the color palette of the city really pop. While other cities feel cohesive due to their synchronicity of the colors, Venice feels cohesive due to the large variety that still works into a clear color palette. It all connects, not by being monotone, but because a majority of these buildings were these bright colors. This was also present on some of the smaller islands off the coast of Venice, such as Burano, but when comparing major cities, it's clear that Venice has many unique architectural features that make it a sight to behold.



Giunti Odeon

By Angelina Dobbs

For one hundred years, the Odeon Cinema has entertained tourists and locals alike with stunning theatrical productions and vivid motion pictures. Built in 1457 in Palazzo dello Strozzi, this historic landmark became a movie theater in 1922. Now, a year after their centennial anniversary, the Cinema Odeon has combined forces with Florentine publishing house Giunti to create the Giunti Odeon, a multicultural space for music, art, writing, and film alike.

When I walked through the grand front doors, I was greeted by warm, soft lighting and the vanilla smell of paper. The bookshelves beckoned me with their array of pristine, uncracked spines and quietly tempted me to open each one. There was Carl Jung's *Psychology* and French classics, tourist guides and Percy Jackson. To my delight, there were even ornate Harry Potter box sets.



Three bronze Greek women held court from the top of the room, and the books were protected by the original dome ceiling, a stained-

glass sea of blues, greens, and purples. The golden words of Lorenzo de Medici mounted on the wall encouraged patrons to enjoy the space through his message: "Whoever wants to be happy, let him be: there is no certainty of tomorrow!"

Indeed, there are many ways to enjoy the Giunti Odeon during the day like the live readings, concerts, and exhibits on the one-hundred-year-

old stage, an original piece from the theater.

Inside the building, tucked away in a corner near the

entrance, you can enjoy a treat in Café Odeon or take it up blue velvet staircases with grapevine-wrapped banisters to the second and third floors. Here, patrons can work at tables or chat with friends



within the refined luxury of the old theater balconies. Visitors can relax in rows of plush, yellow movie theater seats if all these tables are inevitably taken. The chairs might be my favorite part (after the books, of course).

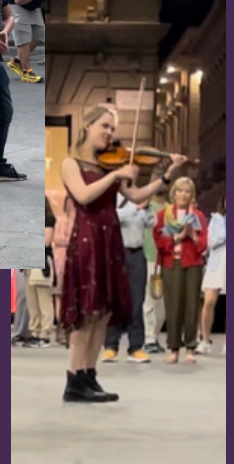
At night, when the bookstore is closed and devoid of the coffee shop chatter, these seats are filled by moviegoers. A screen spanning the entire front wall plays one movie a night in English with Italian subtitles. The studio lights and cables are hidden behind ornately-carved columns and gilded light fixtures, creating an unobtrusive mix of modern technology and original architecture. I saw *Challengers* here a few nights ago, and it was unforgettable. When the lights dimmed, the vivid pictures and crisp sound created a divine sensory experience. I found the open air of this cavernous space far more relaxing than a regular, stuffy movie theater. So, if you ever find yourself in the mood for a movie or a book (or both) visit the Giunti Odeon, grab a coffee, and relax under the historical roof of this local gem.

Tuscan Tunes

By Annika VanDerlip

As one of the best cities in Italy for nightlife, Florence has much to offer. From active bar scenes to gelaterias that stay open late into the night, there's a plethora of options for after the sun goes down. One of the biggest appeals of Florentine nightlife however, is often overlooked by most travel websites—and that's the live music, played from a thousand different hands and sung from hundreds of different voices that drift through the city's streets.

Of course, there are the extravagant, full-scale productions like the opera, but the music I'm talking about comes from a man and his violin on the side of the street, or a small band with tambourines dressed in Renaissance-era garb. They require no reservation or ticket; just the ears of late-night wanderers.



The sheer breadth of options is staggering. In the span of one night, I can recall drifting from a guitarist on the Ponte Vecchio, to a violinist and dancer in the Mercato Nuovo, to an opera singer near the Guinti Odeon. Each area that had been voided of its daytime attractions—whether that be shopping, dining or anything in between—was replenished by a slew of musicians from all different backgrounds and styles.

Unlike in America, where some street musicians are avoided because of their propensity to ask for money, here there are great crowds gathered around each man, woman and band; and while the collection cap or guitar case isn't suggestively passed around, it's never left empty. One particular experience I remember fondly was a Tuesday night a few weeks ago, around 10:30 p.m.. I was wandering around with a friend after finishing some homework in the library, when we stumbled across a string band beneath the pillared structure of the Mercato Nuovo, just a few yards away from Porcellino's statue. A sizable crowd was gathered around them as they strummed a light tune, and closer to them, in what would be considered the "stage area," an older gentleman danced with a young woman with shocking grace. The crowd clapped along, and soon enough two more couples had joined in dancing. One song blended into the next, and now a conga line snaked out of the myriad of dancers, looping its way around the band. The dancers, who were just ordinary passers-by themselves, beckoned more viewers forward, and soon, almost the entire square was alive with bright, vibrant music and dancers from seven to seventy. It's hard to even describe the atmosphere—the world felt like it had new life in it.

While these scenes are usually quite populated, they're often completely missed by most tourists, who seem to retreat to their hotels and Airbnbs as the sun sets. If you visit Florence at all, I urge you to stay out just a little later than you think is good to wake up for your early tour in the morning; I promise it'll be worth it, because you'll inevitably find yourself before a musician who will no doubt give you an unforgettable night.

A “Spritz” PERSONALITY

By Angelina Dobbs

Italy is teeming with personality. Colorfully painted houses and street art abound, next to blooming gardens and ancient Renaissance statues. Every bite of food flavorfully exceeds expectations; even the drinks have their own personas. Take the famous Spritz, for example.

You have Limoncello Spritz, the Serena Vanderwoodsen of Italy. Sunshine personified, this it-girl is bright, fresh, bubbly, and fun. She is a vision in yellow, made for silk sundresses, big, floppy hats, and even bigger sunglasses. Think summer breezes, window shopping in the Hamptons, and painting landscapes in the park. She knows everyone, but no one knows her. Daisies, diamonds, and pearls, she is classically elegant with a citrus twist. Limoncello Spritz aims to please and pulls it off every time.



Her exact foil, Campari spritz, is more like Roz from Monsters, Inc. Bitter with a touch of penicillin, Campari Spritz makes Ebenezer Scrooge look like a peach. She is powdery perfume and acrid cigarette smoke, soap operas viewed from a floral-patterned couch in a plastic slipcover. She is the tart bright red of lipstick-stained teeth inside a mouth that just finished yelling at the neighbor kids. The orange slice is merely costume jewelry, like pearls made of paste. Campari spritz is an acquired taste, and only nice to some.



Her peer, Hugo Spritz, is much more mysterious. Distinguished in every way, Hugo Spritz is luxurious velvet suits and premium cigars. Refined, high-class sweetness with a touch of mint, he has all the assurance of self-made wealth and ambiguity. His intentions are golden, but his methods, questionable. Silent but powerful, he commands a room with few words and deals largely under the table. The refined, purple aura of Hugo Spritz intrigues all who meet him (and his basset hounds).



At last is Aperol Spritz. Red in her bottle, but Nickelodeon orange in her glass, Aperol Spritz is the love child of the ‘70s and the 2000s. Find her in mood rings and conversation pits with shag carpeting, or in the clang of a dropped hydro flask and groovy patterned leggings. A saccharine shot of cough syrup with an orange peel, Aperol Spritz is often the first choice and the most popular one. She’s loud, outspoken, and delusional to boot.



With any of these flavors you can have both a drink and a friend (or an enemy) for only seven euro. Each of these are made with a base of Prosecco and soda water, yet they are distinct. As the spirit(s) of this colorful country, they offer a taste of Italy’s personality in a glass.

Fountain of Youth

By Jordan Greenbaum

When asked what the coolest thing to equip onto your wrist is, most people might say it would be Wonder Woman's bracelets or Ben Ten's watch. But, if you ask any FSU Florence student what their magical accessory is, there's no question as to what they'll say: the Lion's Fountain bracelet.

When you generally hear FSU students talk about "the fountain," they're talking about Westcott, where you get thrown in for your twenty-first birthday. But, if you leave Tallahassee and hear Florentine students talking about "the fountain," they're talking about The Lion's Fountain. A well-known college bar boasting a history of countless college visits, endless young kids coming to drink legally for the first time out of the States, and, most notably, a purple bracelet that, for only one euro, earns you a free shot with any drink you order.



For some, getting homesick is a natural part of travel. This is where Lion's comes in and saves the day. What you miss out on in cultural authenticity, you gain in the familiarity and comfort of home. The music played? The same as back home. The drinks offered? The same as back home. Every patron and customer of the bar? The same as back home. Lion's serves as a place to kick off the night and get comfortable with people you know in an environment that feels like home.

Lion's Fountain is by no means the nicest bar you'll see in Florence. Honestly, you might find yourself surprised at why you're there so often. Yes, the drinks are cheap, but it's an average college bar no different than Clyde's or Pots; everyone speaks English, and there's almost no indicator once you're inside that you're even in Italy anymore. But, that's where Lion's really thrives.

DISCOVERING AND REDISCOVERING *Liberia Brac*

By Molly Hand

I arrived in Florence on May 5th, and within a few days, I got sick. Very sick. It was terrible timing. I was in no shape to meet my students when classes began and had to forego meeting up with my friends the day they arrived in Florence. But I rallied and met up with them the next day to visit Uffizi, coughing all the while (and wearing a mask).

Uffizi was marvelous, of course, though crowded, and I certainly was not at my best. After the museum, my friends wanted to walk across the river up to Piazzale Michelangelo. I thought I could make it, but gazing up at the hill on Oltrarno, I realized I didn't have it in me. We parted ways. On my slow walk back to my flat, I cut down a side street where not another soul was walking by. I happened, just happened, to look to my right – and there: a bookstore, hidden away. I poked my head in. Not only a bookstore. A cafe. To the left in another area, a wine bar. Beyond that, a hidden shady courtyard. In other words: heaven.

But a heaven that would have to wait until I had energy and could smell and taste again. I stepped back outside, looking for a sign or landmark. Finding none, I dropped a pin on my map so I could make my way back to this secret paradise.

And I did just that weeks later, fully recovered, ready to enjoy all that Libreria Brac – or just Brac, as it is known – had to offer. I went in one afternoon and perused the books: all Italian, a nicely curated selection, and I also saw posters for events – guest lectures and readings. I ordered my standby, an Aperol spritz, at the counter. I passed by the wine bar and by baskets of produce as I made my way to the courtyard. “Interesting, I guess they also sell fresh fruits and vegetables,” I thought to myself. In the shaded courtyard, I found a seat, opened my own current read, and sipped my spritz.

I was also taking in my surroundings, as one does. When I looked in on that fateful day a few weeks ago, I hadn't realized there was also a larger dining room beyond the courtyard, a kind of wine library set for formal dining. “They must have dinners on occasion,” I mused. And then a man arrived, and walked into the back of the place, emerged in his chef's whites, and stopped by the produce baskets where he selected an array of vegetables and entered the small kitchen dinner for this evening! I wondered if I could get a seat. The answer was no – they were fully booked, and I learned why. Brac is also an all-vegetarian farm-to-table restaurant, and an affordable one at that: a three-course tasting menu is only 20 euros (wine additional). The dishes are inventive yet simple, emphasizing seasonal flavors and letting the ingredients speak for themselves.

While I'd fallen in love with Brac at first sight, even when I was still foggy with congestion and could not stay and enjoy, I discovered even more to love on this visit. It's worth noting that every other patron in the place was Italian, or at least Italian-speaking, and I seemed to be the only American there. It is not a place easily discoverable – by anyone, much less by tourists, tucked away as it is. But Brac's humble exterior conceals one of Florence's best kept secrets.

In my excitement, I tried to explain Brac to friends: it's a bookstore/cafe/wine bar/vegetarian restaurant. It is all of those things, but the sum is greater than the parts. Brac is a place one should experience for oneself. A little literary nook, a sommelier's dream, a vegetarian's oasis in what is, after all, a fairly carnivorous city: a multi-faceted hidden sanctuary.



NEW FACES IN UNFAMILIAR PLACES

By Jordan Greenbaum

It's pretty remarkable to think about how many life-changing circumstances are left to a roll of the dice. This is not a story of board games, but one of real-life luck. In real life, chance has affected the street I grew up on, the neighbors I had, the people I sat next to in class, and the members of my family that I was given. I didn't think that, at twenty years old, I'd roll the dice again, but I did.

Coming to Florence, I knew only a handful of people in my cohort. This is common, of course. Most people who come here don't know the majority of their peers in the program, but typically people come with a few close friends or have someone to put down for a roommate request. I had neither. If you combined the short list of people I knew into one singular person, you'd be hard pressed to call them more than an acquaintance. That changed quickly.

While they had all known each other previously, I was a newcomer to the apartment, but couldn't have imagined a better place to find myself. Within twenty-four hours of meeting my four roommates, we had booked a trip to Amsterdam. This wouldn't slow down, and I spent the following four weeks seeing everything in Florence, swimming in Cinque Terre, cooking in Amalfi, partying in Ibiza, and sleeping under the stars of the Moroccan desert with these guys. While it's easy to chalk this all up to the rush of endorphins that comes from being in a new city or experiencing events where everything is fresh and exciting, what I've been fortunate to find is more than just people to see the world with; these are people whose friendship will remain with me when I leave this program. With hindsight now being 20/20, it's easy to say that the most important part of this trip, or any trip for that matter, isn't the food you eat, or the pictures you take; it's the connections you're able to walk away with.

While the adventures I've taken and the impressions I've collected over the course of my lifetime are important to me, they aren't the things that bring me value or joy in the years that follow. But, when I'm able to look back upon these moments fondly with a friend who shares those memories with me, the taste in my mouth isn't a bitter nostalgia, but a warm sense of appreciation for a time of my life that made me who I am.



Dr. Seuss isn't wrong when he says Oh, The Places You'll Go, but I'd be a lot more impressed if he said, "Oh, the people you'll meet." To everyone reading this who doesn't live in Via Ghibellina 57 apartment A1, I urge you to put yourself in a position to roll the dice. Whether you get lucky or not, you'll move forward on the board. To Jack, Jack, Frankie, and Foody, I have nothing to say but thank you.

How to Love a Book

By Angelina Dobbs

They say that to be loved is to be known. To book lovers, the way to know a book is to understand its creation, inside and out; past, present, and future. For the last six weeks, as both Editing, Writing, and Media students and readers, we tirelessly devoted ourselves to this task.

Book Binding Workshop

We first learned to judge a book by its cover. Erin Ciulla from Il Torchio, a Florentine bookbindery, oversaw our workshop. She brought colorful book covers with swirling marbled paper in-lays, an array of delicate tools, and



a large stack of smooth, white paper. New to the program, we were all still strangers, but Erin's humor and wit alleviated the tension.

First, she presented each tool as though she were introducing old friends, and showed us how to interact with each one. We held the small, sharp awls and lightweight straight edges, adapting to the feeling, and listened intently as she began to walk us through the process. Thorough in her explanations, Erin demonstrated the steps with the practiced ease of an expert. We followed along, unsteady but enthusiastic.

With our straight edges, we pressed and creased the papers until we had six neat signatures. We punched holes in the spines of the covers and pages with our awls, and lovingly stitched it all together with designs we created. What better way to love the books than to sew our individuality into the spine as though we were holding the pages together ourselves?

We certainly made mistakes during the process, and many fingers were pricked by the sharp needles. Erin patiently helped us correct our missteps, and in the end, we all had brand new books with blank, empty pages; concrete evidence of our time and effort. We left class that day with a new appreciation for past artisanal tradition, and a renewed excitement for everything we had left to learn.

Marble Paper Workshop

Four weeks later, when we were entrenched in theory and antsy to work with our hands again, we ventured to Riccardo Luci's Paper Marbling shop.



The store was awash in pastels, and dripping with ribbons and butterflies. Vases of rainbow flowers on shelves of carefully marbled notebooks and trinkets surrounded a paint-splattered workstation.

We gathered as Riccardo explained four generations of his family's book bindery and the expansion to include the marbled paper. Like Erin, he showed us the magic first. He tapped two paint covered brushes together over a pool of carrageenan and water, dotting the mixture with lily pads of purple, green, and blue. Once the colors sufficiently diffused, Riccardo taught us the techniques to draw waves, swirls, and peacock feathers. After, he gently soaked up the paint with a plain piece of paper, then dragged it over the edge of the container, producing beautifully marbled artwork. The colors dipped and swirled like sea foam, appearing just as vibrant as they were in the water.

Ready to try our hand, we mixed colors and splashed paint, trepidation fizzling out as we gained confidence in the motions. It was more difficult than expected, and our technique was clumsy; but the pieces were striking all the same. Often, we found the papers matched their creator's energy, another signature of individuality. Some of us chose to have the papers bound into journals, and others left them in pure, unfolded states. We left the shop with smiles and paint-stained fingers, asking ourselves how modern machines could ever hope to match handmade methods and reflecting on what is lost when they try.



Book Restoration Seminar

After learning about the materials of a book inside and out, we went to the *Biblioteca Nazionale* to see books that had been known and loved for centuries. Unfortunately, after the flood of 1966, many of these beloved ancient texts were

waterlogged and encrusted in mud. At the *Biblioteca Nazionale*, conservationists were saving the books one by one.

Restoration expert Dr. Alessandro Sidoti met us at the back gate, inviting us into a secluded courtyard. We dropped off our bags by the door, and he gave us a prefatory overview of the books' history. Flood waters had damaged close to one million texts, many of them rare and precious. "Mud Angels" had swooped in to rescue the books, but unintentionally caused more damage. They did not know books or how to care for them; no one did. The Mud Angels had piled texts, swollen with water, until the stacks exploded from pressure, and had dried the precious leather covers until they shrank and cracked. Mechanical damage and a lack of organization led to many of these books getting lost or destroyed.

Dr. Sidoti led us to the washing room as he continued to explain the years and years of mistakes. Luckily, Peter Waters, a British book binder, came to Florence and revolutionized the field. We stood entranced as our

guide recounted Waters' progression through trial and error. Indeed, surrounded by innovative sinks and drying racks, we could see proof of his success. In the next room, we saw blocks of books frozen solid, and a freeze drier from NASA for stopping the spread of water-soluble inks. Our guide beguiled us with the scientific processes and asked us to consider the materials.

"Books are not just paper," Dr. Sidoti advised. Each cover, as we learned in our binding class, is individualistic and behaves differently from others. No handmade book is quite the same as another, which makes the job of saving them that much more complicated.

In the final room, we gazed upon rows and rows of workbenches with tools, presses, and weights. The guide showed us a few exemplary books and their unique damages. One was crumbling, another was moldy, and still another was missing pieces. Under microscopes, conservationists in white lab coats were absorbed in the fine details, guided by the book's intentionality and the philosophy of purpose. It was truly a fascinating, monumental effort, and a budding new field of study. From this tour, we left with an atomized perspective of the books and a healthy respect for those striving to rebuild these historical texts.

We concluded this six-week labor of love as insiders to the secrets and intricacies of books. Our intimate experiences with their production processes rounded out our study of texts and instilled in us a reverence for these masterpieces of parchment, paper, and ink.



