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The Study Abroad Files

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A Day to Remember

by Erin Miskowski

On May 26th, my third full day in Florence, I unknowingly decided to participate in a challenge of will. My group of cockeyed English students and I decided that we must see the home of the Medici family. It should be light work after our expansive walking tour around the city the day before, right? As soon as we stepped into the Boboli Gardens, I knew that we were in for a steep adventure. Like an arrow pointing us straight to the top of the hill was what looked to be an Egyptian obelisk sitting in the center of the first level of the garden. The greenery was cut through with gray pebbled walkways all the way up to the top, with marble sculptures on the sidelines cheering us on.

Visually, it is a luscious, green hill that I'm sure the Medicis loved to sit upon and view the rest of the city from



A view from the Boboli Gardens overlooking the Pitti Palace and the city of Florence.

while sipping their morning tea—there wasn't yet espresso in fifteenth century Florence. We, on the other hand, didn't have servants to carry us up the hill, so we had to rely on our own shaky legs to keep us upright. Equipped with exactly two water bottles between a group of eight girls, we found the vertical walk excruciating.

We had started with the gardens, but after we had reached the end of that journey, there was still an entire palace to explore. Trudging through the palace truly felt like war, and with the military-themed artwork around us, it was easy to imagine gunfire chasing us out of the palace.

Our ticket also got us into the Bardi Gardens, so we eventually made our way over, naively thinking that it would be fine. According to my trusty Apple Watch, we walked up 130 feet of elevation to get to a garden we thought was going to have a gorgeous wisteria tunnel for us to take pictures in. We had put in the research and seen the beauty of what is there during this time of year. Our entire reason for enduring this rock-climbing expedition was to take cute pictures in the flowing dresses and skirts many of us had worn in this mystical tunnel. Said mystical, gorgeous, wisteria tunnel had shriveled up and died a week prior, taking my soul along with it.

Even after putting in all this legwork and ending up defeated, we still had a dinner reservation to get to. In hindsight, I see that my past self was overly optimistic about our ability to handle this all in one day. Sitting down at our table in Trattoria Boboli felt like we



Eight members of the EWM program at the Boboli Gardens. From left to right: Haydn Hubbard, Phaedra Mladenovic, Madelyn Luther, Erin Miskowski, Laura Guerrero, Marysue Burun, Megan Raams, and Emily Hancock.

reached the promised land. After spending six hours traversing the Pitti Palace, Bardini Gardens, and the trattoria's namesake Boboli Gardens, we were sure any meal would satisfy our dehydrated palates.

When the waitress came around the table and asked for our orders, I decided to choose a Florentine staple that I had come across when doing research before coming abroad. I ordered "Pappardelle al Cinghiale," also known as Pappardelle pasta with a wild boar sauce—a classic Tuscan recipe. I was hesitant because I am not the biggest pork fan back home, but I am known to try anything once.

As soon as the pasta was placed in front of me, I knew that I was in for a luxurious meal. The yellow, handmade pasta looked like ribbons ripped straight off a birthday present. The boar sauce was aromatic and thick, coating each equally

chewy noodle. I placed a single noodle onto my fork as best as I could and lifted it to my mouth. I chewed, I swallowed, and I experienced love at first bite.

Anyone at our table can attest to the way my eyes lit up from the taste. The wild boar sauce had whole peppercorns in it that had been marinating with the meat, which gave it a sharp yet cozy flavor. I devoured the rich, savory pasta within ten minutes of the plate being sat in front of me, and the dish was then wiped clean with a slice of plain, unsalted bread.

There is of course the chance that the meal sat so well with me because the rest of my day had been a recipe for disaster. But this has been proven false, as I have ordered the Pappardelle al Cinghiale at every restaurant I've seen it offered at since, attempting to recreate my almost religious experience. Just like all the travel guides say, Wild Boar Pappardelle is a must-not-miss meal to savor on your next Tuscan travels. And maybe the gardens and the Pitti Palace are worth viewing...but only if you've got some sunscreen, a gigantic water bottle, and good company with you.



A picture of Pappardelle al Cinghiale taken at the restaurant Trattoria Boboli.

Healing My Relationship with Food While Abroad

by Layne Schutte

Layne, I'm not so sure this is a good idea.
Layne, you have your whole life ahead of you to travel.

Layne, take this time to heal so you can study abroad later and enjoy it properly.

This may have been good advice.

I didn't listen.

I up and left right in the middle of treatment. I packed my bags a few pounds away from being transferred to an in-patient care facility.

I shouldn't be here.

But I am.

I've been struggling with food for three years now, and I was diagnosed with anorexia less than four months ago. Food is, in theory, supposed to be enjoyed, indulged in, and celebrated. It's not supposed to be dreaded, feared, and surrounded by guilt and anxiety. But for me, it's the latter. My eating disorder stole my experiences from me like the joy I used to feel when dining with my friends and family. I grabbed small, low-calorie snacks to replace meals. In an attempt to shrink myself, I was losing not only my health but my happiness and quality of life.

My parents were, understandably, nervous about letting me move across the world for over a month during the peak of my eating disorder. My mother gave me an ultimatum: she told me I was going to have to gain weight when I returned home. I could either start now, in Italy, by enjoying the wonderful food on my plate in front of me, or I could restrict myself while abroad and be put on a weight gain diet upon my homecoming. It was going to happen either way, whether I liked it or not. Rather than depriving myself now, missing out on the best food in the world and then being forced protein bars when I got home, I decided to try to enjoy food and take charge of my own healing process.

It's been hard: I'm not going to pretend this has been an easy journey for me and it's definitely far from over. The first couple of weeks here, despite eating more, I was still losing weight. Even though I was eating double the amount of my daily intake in the states, I went from not being allowed to exercise at home to walking over 20,000 steps a day in the streets of Florence. I had just bought a pair of jeans before I left and they're too big now. I had to eat even more. My parents have paid thousands of dollars to nutritionists and therapists in an attempt to communicate to me that "food is fuel." Who

I'm ready for food to be meaningful again.

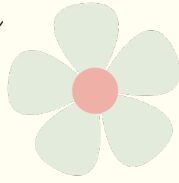
knew moving to Italy for a month would be the experience to finally get through to me? Using my lower body as my main form of transportation made me realize I wasn't filling my tank with enough fuel. I needed to try harder and attempt to actually enjoy the process.

Here, the culture surrounding food is completely different. I am not only encouraged but expected to eat. Meals are shared between loved ones. They are drawn out, full of wine and bread, laughter and good conversation.

Slowly but surely, my rice cakes turned to fluffy bread and salty butter. My almond milk coffees turned to milky cappuccinos. My teas turned to rich hot chocolates, soups to creamy pastas, and popsicles to cones overflowing with gelato. I no longer want to graze from snack to low-calorie snack. I want to live a fuller life in which food is cherished. When I get home, I'm excited to experience food in a similar way to how I am now. I'm ready for food to become meaningful again.

Flower Power Pants

by *Megan Raams*



I wear jeans.

They're comfortable to me so I wear them almost every day. I have received compliments about how "put together" I am and how I always dress "well."

I don't dress well.

I pair my jeans with a T-shirt. Apparently, this is the new "well" as opposed to the old "casual." When I put on any pair of jeans, I do so without the intent of being better dressed. I wear them because I think they look better on me than leggings do. So clearly, personal communication and others' perception of clothing have no control over each other. Personal importance is linked to personal style but that can be lost, or unclear, to viewers.

My favorite pair of jeans are ones I found in my mother's closet. They are embroidered with funky magenta, yellow, and light pink flowers, with bright green vines twisting around a calf and an opposite thigh. They are my "dress" jeans. I wear them to farmers' markets, when I want to look cute, or on days I want to feel more stylish. To me, they convey a uniqueness my American Eagle jeans are unable to present.

I stole these jeans about four years ago. They were suffocating on the very bottom of my mom's dresser, which was overflowing like always, so me finding them was like Columbus discovering America: accidental and unethical. These pair of pants have probably gone through three moves and twelve rounds of intense closet decluttering, yet they persevered. They must have known that a new life was waiting to fill them.

The jeans are over twenty-five years old, bought and worn by my super cool mom in her twenties. She hadn't worn them

in a time I could remember, so I took them, along with a pair of bootcut Levi's, which she would be appalled to know are now considered "vintage."

The flower power pants are made of actual jean material, not spandex and elastane, so being able to slide them on to my body must have been an act of God. These pants make me realize the plot for "The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants" was probably based on a true story. I have seen photos of my mom in her twenties and we are not the same size. I am very much appreciative of the trend that moves away from skin-tight pants. I much prefer the look of real jeans that are loose around the leg, or still tight in some areas, but contain a flare or stylish element.

Clothing has been a struggle for me since I was young. I am not fashionable, but I care about how I look to others. My choice in clothes is dominated by my insecurities. Being larger than the average woman, I always want to appear smaller, instead of embracing my size. I am not sure if my clothing conveys that, but the process of me selecting clothes in the morning does. My ability to destroy a room by seven a.m. with discarded items of clothing that don't look right for some intangible reason is impressive to say the least. The amount of clothes I have is alarming. The number of times I change before leaving the house is embarrassing. But what I love about my flower jeans is that they always make it easy. They are unique and sentimental to me, but to others, they probably just look cool.



Megan's flower power pants.

Archaeology in Italy: FSU Celebrates Their 50th Anniversary at Cetamura

by Haydn Hubbard and Madelyn Luther

Faculty and Students

The Chianti region of Italy may be best known to many of us for its fine wine, but several Florida State University faculty and generations of students have worked hard to reveal a different sort of treasure there. Cetamura del Chianti is an archeological site where FSU staff and students have toiled to excavate artifacts from as early as the fourth century B.C.E. In June 2023, the FSU Cetamura del Chianti project is celebrating its fiftieth anniversary. We were lucky enough to receive an invitation to the celebration with presentations from the leaders spearheading the project, a grand unveiling of the Cetamura exhibit in the Florence Study Center, and a dinner where we sat down and discussed the site's importance with some of those closest to the project.

What is Cetamura?

Nestled 695 meters above sea level atop a hill near Siena, Cetamura boasts a wealth of artifacts from both the Etruscans and the Romans. These pieces date back as early as the fourth century B.C.E.



and potentially even biblical times. The project's director, Dr. Nancy de Grummond, is celebrating her own milestone this month as she has been leading the Cetamura team as the director for forty years. Everyone involved with the project has made it clear that Cetamura del Chianti is more than a simple excavation. It closely entwines FSU students with Italian culture and history.

The crew of students and faculty from FSU have been studying the material remains at Cetamura to uncover the history of the people who lived there through the centuries. Archaeology is a unique subject—it draws on the disciplines of science, technology, history, and fieldwork to uncover hidden stories in physical artifacts. Even rock strata can convey an entire history when looking at them through an archaeologist's lens. Although the hours at dig sites are often long and the work is arduous, the outcome is tremendously rewarding for them.

Two archaeological students at FSU, Eve Rozier and Illeana Sanders, led the Cetamura Anniversary presentation. They spoke about how archaeology is a field of study about which the general public commonly lacks knowledge. Many question whether archaeology is still relevant or if it is still worth studying. However, Rozier, Sanders, and their teachers stress the enduring importance of the field. Life at Cetamura, they note, is about more than archaeology alone. It is about bridging connections between cultures.

Student and Director Introduction

Illeana Sanders is a rising senior pursuing a Dual Degree path at Florida State University in Classical Archaeology and Political Science with minors in Italian and Museum Studies. She is part of the internship program at FSU and has been heavily involved in the Cetamura del Chianti project. Sanders initially applied for the program because she wants to pursue museology (museum studies), and the internship has helped her develop skills for her future museum work. While participating in the excavation, Sanders learned not only archaeological skills but also important skills in museum preparation and installation. Her favorite memory from the site was learning how to reproduce physical artifacts into digital models through 3D printing. She also thoroughly enjoyed working with her fellow students in both Tallahassee and Florence to help curate this exhibit. Rozier is also interested in museology and studying classical cultures. Rozier is a double major in Humanities (concentrating on Art History, Classics, and History) and Classical Archaeology, with minors in Museum Studies and French. She is passionate about her time in Cetamura and the bonds she has established through the program.

Director Nancy de Grummond has led multiple crews of FSU archaeology students in her 40 years directing the

Life at Cetamura, they note, is about more than archaeology alone. It is about bridging connections between cultures.



Cetamura project. The small town students reside in during their time with the dig is a stark contrast to Florence, where most other students studying abroad but participating in other programs are located. During students' time in Cetamura, de Grummond states, they are on-site participating in many different hands-on activities. Her classes are not structured like the typical college class. De Grummond's role emphasis has been on giving students training that could potentially benefit their future careers and navigate real life problems. When asked what her favorite memory was not only from her time as an educator but from her 40 plus years working at Cetamura, she responded like a mother who is asked to identify her favorite child, replying that she had so many wonderful memories that she felt overwhelmed by the question and would struggle to identify just one favorite.

Student and Director Interview

We were lucky enough to sit down with Dr. de Grummond, Rozier, and Sanders to discuss their project after the presentation. Rozier emphasized how supportive the entire FSU system was of the Cetamura efforts, despite its somewhat remote location. She observed "the care and the commitment that the staff at FSU Florence exhibited for us

and back at the main campus with the innovation hub really helped strengthen the ties between the archaeological expedition and FSU in Florence.” When we spoke with Sanders, we asked her about their use of technology in the dig. We had gotten to see Sanders using the 3D printer in our classroom a few days prior to recreate some of the artifacts they found at the dig. When asked the significance of the grape seeds she was printing, she responded that they wanted to teach people about archaeology and allow them to hold the artifacts. She noted that “generally and traditionally, anything that comes up from the ground you are not able to hold because of conservation.” Their solution to this roadblock was to 3D print replicas of artifacts so that others might be able to learn about their work without the risk of damaging the original artifacts.

We asked Dr. de Grummond what she considered the most memorable find. She immediately recalled the discovery of an ancient pot filled with Ro-



(From left to right) Dr. Perry Howell, Dr. Judith Pascoe, Haydn Hubbard, and Madelyn Luther at the Catamura dinner.



man silver coins. She said that “everyone wants to find something cool, and we did a number of times.” The coins had been found by a graduate student who had not been having much luck on her portion of the dig site. Near the end of the season, she had found this vessel that was face down in the dirt. There was trouble getting it out and the spout was chipped. After some time, however, they discovered that there was quite a bit of lead in the pot, then noticed that there was writing on it. After further investigation, 194 Roman silver coins were pulled from the pot, which were all Roman. Dr. de Grummond noted that they believe the coins might be Denarii, a coin that is widely known for its use in the Bible.

Wine and Culture

The Cetamura excavations took place in the Chianti region, which is famous for its DOCG-certified Chianti Classico wine produced in a nearby town called Radda. DOCG is the highest certification that can be granted to Italian wines, meaning that they are of the highest quality, and it is truly the best wine that Italy has to offer. The Chianti region has a rich history of wine production and today is home to more than five thousand vineyards. Part of the excavations in Cetamura focused on this aspect of Tuscan culture. The faculty and students of FSU have discovered strong



A 3D printed replica of a grape seed found at Cetamura.

evidence, such as the remnants of grape seeds, that suggest that wine had been produced near the excavation site since ancient times.

Conclusion

Through hard work and devotion from generations of FSU students, many important archaeological artifacts have been uncovered at Cetamura. The decades of work culminated in the Museo Civico alle Origini del Chianti, or the Civic Museum at the Origins of Chianti, which features the most compelling findings from the site and which opens this month in the nearby town of Gaiole. Findings from the Cetamura project have allowed FSU professors and students to construct important stories that explain life in ancient times. The new museum, and the ongoing work at Cetamura del Chianti, help to bring this knowledge of the everyday life of past cultures into the present day.



Ramen from Hell

by Marysue Burun

Spicy foods have never been my forte. More often than not, high-level spice deters me from eating most foods. Don't get me wrong, I love a little Tabasco on a breakfast burrito or buffalo sauce on wings. However, I never expected to run into the Asian food mart near our apartment and eat the hottest food I have ever tried. Buldak Ramen is a Korean brand that is known for their notoriously spicy noodles. I had never heard of the brand until my roommate Erin mentioned that Buldak was an Internet sensation. As someone who isn't well educated about the different kinds of ramen noodles, I decided to take a chance on the innocent-looking chicken gracing the front cover of the shiny, plastic packaging.

After arriving home, I jumped right into cooking the ramen. I boiled the water as I would for any pasta, naive to the disaster that was about to occur. Once the water was bubbling in the stainless steel pot, I submerged the dry, compressed noodles. About seven minutes passed before I drained and plated my noodles. Unknowingly, I thought it would be best to add all of the sauce and seasonings that came with the package because I thought it would be best to get all the flavor. The Buldak mascot on the packaging, a sweet and charming chicken, glanced at me one last time before the war began. After setting my plate out with only one slim glass of water ready, I took my fork in my hand and bravely took an enormous bite of the ramen. Within seconds I knew I had made a big mistake.



The Buldak ramen packet with the innocent-looking plastic chicken.

Until now, I have not been able to describe something as setting my mouth on fire. The seasonings filled every sense. My nose began to run as if I had just walked under a pollinating tree. My eyes watered as if I was watching the end of a romantic comedy. The taste was so overwhelming that it felt like my mouth had gone numb to any taste at all. The spice was so heavily present that my mouth felt burned from the heat. The area around my mouth burned just from touching the spicy, sticky sauce. After first bite, I immediately informed Erin that it was the spiciest food I had ever eaten. The spongy, yellow noodles soaked in the dark, evil sauce, somehow absorbing even more spice as I continued eating. If I stopped to drink water, the heat only returned with revenge in

It was almost as if I had developed an addiction to the ramen's abilities.

mind. I suffered through each bite, astonished at the power that the innocent chicken on the label had over me. After finishing my bowl of noodles, my face now dotted with sweat and my nose still running, I made a promise to myself that I would not only research ramen ahead of time, but also never buy that brand again.

However, something about the extent to which the ramen made me feel every sense in a deepened way left me wanting more. I had never experienced a food that produced that many sensory experiences. It was almost as if I had developed an addiction to the ramen's abilities. Two days later, I walked back into the Asian food mart and bought two more packages, falsely trusting the chicken once again.



A series of ramen packets in the Asian market.

Why I Wear a White Top and Jeans

by Anjolina Ukmar

I have aged and gone through many phases of my life thus far, and with that, my style and my go-to piece of clothing have changed many times throughout the years. At age 5, I had a Hannah Montana nightgown. I would throw myself on the floor in a full-blown temper tantrum when my mother told me I couldn't wear it to school. At age 10, my mom let me put a red feather in my bobbed hair. I kept it there for a year, or at least it felt like a year to my 10-year-old brain; it could have very well been a week. As an extremely self-conscious 15-year-old who had spent the past five years struggling with her weight and

wanting to fit in, I wore my school uniform. I only went to school and came home, not to leave until I had school the next day. Now today, twenty years of dressing and accessorizing myself have taught me that many items of clothes I have worn communicate something about me at that phase of my life.

Today, you can usually find me in a white top. There are long-sleeve, short-sleeve, tank tops, strapless, and various other forms of white tops hanging in my closet. In a store, I will see the plainest white top and walk over, thinking of how easy it is to pair this with something. I notice a girl who walks past me in a jean skirt and white T-shirt, and want to recreate what she's wearing. I open my closet and see a majority of one color. I scroll through TikTok and buy the white going-out top I see some girl wearing. The color white shows everything and stains easily, but it goes with everything. My 5-year-old self just wanted to wear Hannah Montana's face everywhere I went, my 10-year-old self loved feathers, and my 15-year-old self only wore what I had to wear, not wanting to be seen at all.

When I was 16, I watched a YouTube video of Emma Chamberlain doing a clothing haul. I would always watch videos like that. She said she always has a good white top to pair with any pair of jeans. Emma made it look so good. It was such a simple pairing, but on her Instagram, it was a look I wanted to achieve. I tried, but it didn't look the same on my body as it did on hers. That drove me crazy. Just wanting to achieve



A plain white top and jeans is a simple statement look.

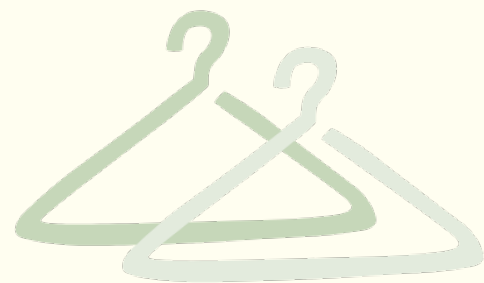
a simple look like her. The jeans didn't fit right, the white showed everything, and I didn't feel comfortable enough to show everything. So I stuck a pin in

My white top and jeans complement me, I don't complement the white top and jeans.

that for the time being. I'm influenced by wanting to fit in, and if I can't wear the one thing that made me fit in, then I guess I will wear my uniform every day until I can. My body has changed since then, and my personality and fashion outlook have also changed. But Emma Chamberlin's influence was the origin of my staple piece, and that feeling of being unable to pull off something as simple as a white top and jeans has stuck with me. Years later, I am not that growing teenager anymore. I am 20, about to be a senior in college, and I have found myself very fond of any white top I come across. I wear a white tee and jeans and think I look sophisticated; I put so much thought into what I have on. With any kind of denim, a white top pops, and I truly feel comfortable in that. It is a good base to start with, too. You can accessorize to change the vibe of what you wear, and accessorizing says don't look at my clothes, notice anything else.

My white top and jeans are my comfort zone. No one thinks what I am wearing is out of the ordinary. They probably won't even look my way. I'll blend in with the crowd, maybe be completely invisible. That way, if someone notices me, it will be for a more substantial reason than for what I have on. If their eyes were on me, they could go to my eyes or my hair that my father and

mother gifted me. As if inflicting a compliment would leave its footprint on my day, because I like my hair and eyes, too. Or maybe someone's eyes would go to my neck, where I usually have on the gold cross necklace my grandmother gave me, and this would communicate how much I miss her. My white top and jeans could go completely unnoticed, and I would be fine with that because there is still the teenage girl inside of me that wants to stay hidden. But I'm not hiding from myself or others but from moments of insecurity. It has taken me years to no longer need to be defined by the clothes I wear. With my white top and jeans, I can choose what story I want to tell and what features I want to emphasize. I go to dinner in my white top and jeans. I go to class, I go to the bar, and I hang out with friends and family in the white top and jeans. I take comfort from knowing that on these occasions, what I am wearing is not what will stand out to someone about me. At dinner, I want you to remember that I stained my white shirt with pasta sauce. In class, I want my professor and peers to think of the super intelligent statement or question and look at my face rather than at my clothes. At the bar, I want to be approached by a man who, yes, thinks I'm pretty, but is shocked to find out how well I can hold a conversation. With my friends and family, I want them to remember the story I told them that made them die laughing. My white top and jeans complement me, I don't complement the white top and jeans.



Home-Cooked Pasta Dinners

by Madelyn Luther

Most people look forward to eating out when visiting Italy, a country known worldwide for its cuisine. While studying abroad, I do enjoy the occasional restaurant meal. However, eating out every day is expensive, tiresome, and monotonous. Restaurant etiquette requires acting properly, dressing nicely, and using the right utensils when my sweatpants at home are calling my name. Instead, my like-minded, homebody roommates and I often enjoy cooking our own meals in our apartment. Home cooking offers not only its relative affordability but also grants us solitude from the bustling Tuscan city streets.

One meal we repeatedly make is pasta with red sauce and salad. Perhaps we cook this to embody the Tuscan setting we find ourselves in, or maybe it's because it requires the cheapest ingredients available in our neighborhood grocery. The meal's relative simplicity is enticing to four tired students after a long day of school. Admittedly, higher quality pasta and salad are likely available around every corner of the cobblestone sidewalks of Florence. However, I would contend that no restaurant beats the atmosphere of home cooking. A home is a place of comfort and familiarity, which exists in stark contrast to the stuffiness of a restaurant.

When preparing the meal, we first boil the pasta. Our favorite pasta to use is Conad brand, labeled "Spaghetti No. 5," which my roommate Megan so lovingly stated is "just like Chanel." While the pasta is cooking, someone else is in charge of preparing the pasta

sauce. The four of us all try to contribute to making the meal. In our small, sparsely equipped kitchen nook, there is but a single power outlet, one compact cabinet for food storage, and little counter space, so four is a crowd. As everything is cooking, someone is assigned the role of D.J. and throwback 2010s-era pop hits play aloud. The



The aforementioned "Chanel No. 5" spaghetti, a pasta variety available at Conad City in Florence

sound of shuffling feet, clanging pots, and boiling water fills the small kitchen as we sing along to the music. In the end, after we finish preparation, there is a palpable—though unstated—sense of accomplishment. We finish cooking, plate the final product, and gaze upon it in anticipation. The aromas of garlic, basil, tomatoes, and starch fill the air. As we sit, my roommates and I hope that we are not stuck with the squeaky chair while we eat, although (spoiler alert)

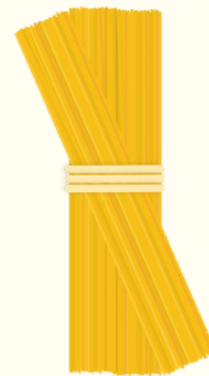
I have intentionally scouted it out and moved it to someone else's spot already.

We all dig in. The pasta sauce is pleasingly sweet and savory at the same time, thick with the consistency of fresh tomatoes and spices. We have cooked the pasta al dente, and my other roommate Laura always taste tests it before-

Upon finishing the meal with our plates scraped clean, none of us want to leave the table.

hand to ensure proper preparation. The thin spaghetti and rich sauce blend together pleasingly well. The pasta twirls around my fork as I spin the handle and try to collect every last lingering bit of sauce. A salad accompanies this main dish, mild and slightly bitter with iceberg lettuce, carrots, and radicchio. We top the salad with a simple mixture of balsamic vinaigrette, olive oil, salt, and pepper, which is how many Italians traditionally enjoy their salads as well. The vinaigrette adds an acidic kick to the salad. The acidity of the vinaigrette and the spice of the pepper in the dressing is so strong that it leaves a lingering stinging sensation on my lips.

Upon finishing the meal with our plates scraped clean, none of us want to leave the table. We stay and talk for hours after the dinner is over, absorbed in everyone's recollection of exes and siblings and embarrassing stories. We fail to notice as the hours pass by, and before we know it, someone looks down at their phone to realize it is past midnight. It's now time to wrap up the conversation while finishing the dishes. Our bellies are full and hearts warm as we retire to bed.



Culture Shock!

Section 2

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Un Caffè, Per Favore

by Megan Raams

When I drank my first espresso from an Italian bar, I tried to take in every detail of its velvety embrace.

I first noticed a quaint porcelain cup with a handle so small you can't quite fit your fingers through it. Instead, you are forced to pinch it with the might of your thumb and index finger, resting the warm body of the mug precariously on the remaining three for support. Accompanying the cup is a little spoon that rests on a matching white saucer. The silver utensil is placed there in case you want to add crystal white sugar to

As an American visiting Europe, I always feel like I am tiptoeing in a field of glass, which is then layered on eggshells.

your espresso, which lowers the burning intensity to make it taste sweeter.

After seeing Italians do so themselves, I have now learned adding sugar is an acceptable way to take your espresso. I wrongly thought you had to down the drink plain and welcome the bitter flavor for the sake of being tough—for the sake of being authentic. As an American visiting Europe, I always feel like I am tiptoeing in a field of glass, which is then layered on eggshells—observing how others sit, drink, and talk, and overanalyzing every move they

make in an effort to not stand out and appear different.

You warm your center finger as you tip back the shot quickly, wanting to get all the bitter brown liquid down in one go because you heard that's how Italians do it. The espresso is nutty and tart, warming your ears with comfort as you swallow. This sharp primary taste is consoled with a welcoming hum of lush golden flavor that stays with you even when you finish drinking it. With every breath, flames of coffee re-enter your throat, making you a bittersweet dragon.

As you look into a downed cup of espresso, a frothy golden circle forms a rim where the coffee used to rest. It exists as an indication of your bold and robust journey through a passionate dance of bitter and sweet notes that swirled together in a symphony of flavor.

To leave, you set the plate, cup, and spoon on the counter, and you walk away with a quicker step than you entered with.



Il Mio Amore: Coccoli

by Layne Schulte

I sit across the table from my dinner date. She looks absolutely delectable tonight. Her skin is a perfect golden brown and truffle flowers adorn her pecorino hair. Her pleasant aroma wafts towards me. I can no longer wait another second to kiss her, to taste her. I hold her in my hand; she's so warm. I lean in and...take a grotesquely big bite. My mouth is instantly full of cream, fried dough, and hints of truffle. Swallowing is disappointing because every bite ingested is an indicator that she'll soon be gone. She tastes divine. I savor her exotic and salty essence on my tongue. Her name is Coccoli. I met her at a restaurant in Florence and we've only been seeing each other for a few weeks, but I think I'm in love with her. I've gained a healthy "relationship weight" because of her strong influence. I take another bite. Flaky truffles dissolve on my tongue and

**Until tomorrow, my love.
Buonanotte, coccoli.**

every sinful bite draws me closer to her. It's just the two of us here in the restaurant. I see people looking over at us, but I don't care. I'm in love and I don't care who knows it. I look down and see there's only enough of her left for one more bite. The night is nearly over. Reluctantly, I shove her in my mouth, pay the bill, and leave the establishment. Until tomorrow, my love. "Buonanotte, Coccoli."



Layne Schulte's Coccoli with shaved truffle.

The Transformative Power of the Tiramisu

by Laura Guerrero

Few desserts can claim the elegant yet dazzling appeal of the tiramisu. Small and dainty, the tiramisu barely takes up an entire tea plate. It lays like a gentle tower over a lightly designed square napkin—perfectly centered and beautifully aligned. The pieces of the tiramisu fall one over the other, giving way to the dry cocoa powder, sweet mascarpone, and crunchy ladyfinger cookie layers.

There are many origin stories for how the tiramisu came to be. According to the Academy of the Tiramisu, a preeminent food and wine association focused on retelling the tiramisu's true story, its real beginnings come from a small province in Venice: Treviso, Italy. The academy introduces many theories of the tiramisu's conception, but perhaps the most intriguing one is the theory that the sweet treat was born out of a brothel sometime in the 20th century. The alluring mistress who ran the brothel wanted to create a dessert for her patrons to ensure they had enough vigor to continue their arrangements. Whatever

Tiramisu hides many secrets within its layers.

its true origins may be, anyone with elite taste considers tiramisu an exceptional dessert.

Though it appears to be an unassuming cake from the outside, tiramisu hides many secrets within its layers. The top layer covers the cake in a fine film of cocoa powder, allowing for a slight pinch



of dryness to the fluffy interior. A thick, buttery layer of mascarpone cream follows, which invites sweetness and an indescribable richness back in. A bottom layer of crumbly yet chewy ladyfinger cookies, coated in a bittersweet coffee mixture, pieces everything together. While the three elements are separated by their diverse textures, they manage to seamlessly work together to create a remarkable pastry that mixes the hints of bitterness from the coffee, the overpowering creaminess of the mascarpone, and the crispy delight of the cookie. No better dessert exists in Italy.

Biting into a piece of tiramisu evokes the emotions of sitting in a quaint Italian coffee shop. It teleports you to a brisk Italian morning at 7 am. You can almost hear coffee machines brewing and the tap-tap-tap of the espresso portafilter in the background. All around, people talk about their grand plans and future dreams. Cool breezes pass by, and the mouth-watering scent of espresso and chocolate croissants escapes outside. A delightful tiramisu slice catches your eye from the corner of the stand, pulling you in and begging you to try a taste.

Fabulous Foods of Florence

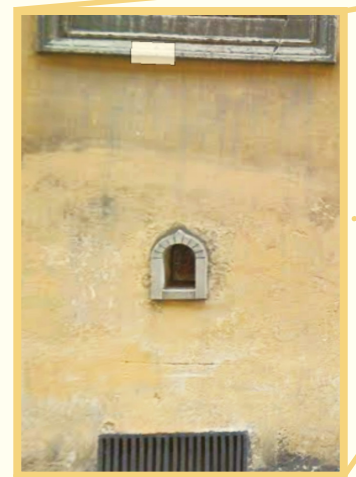


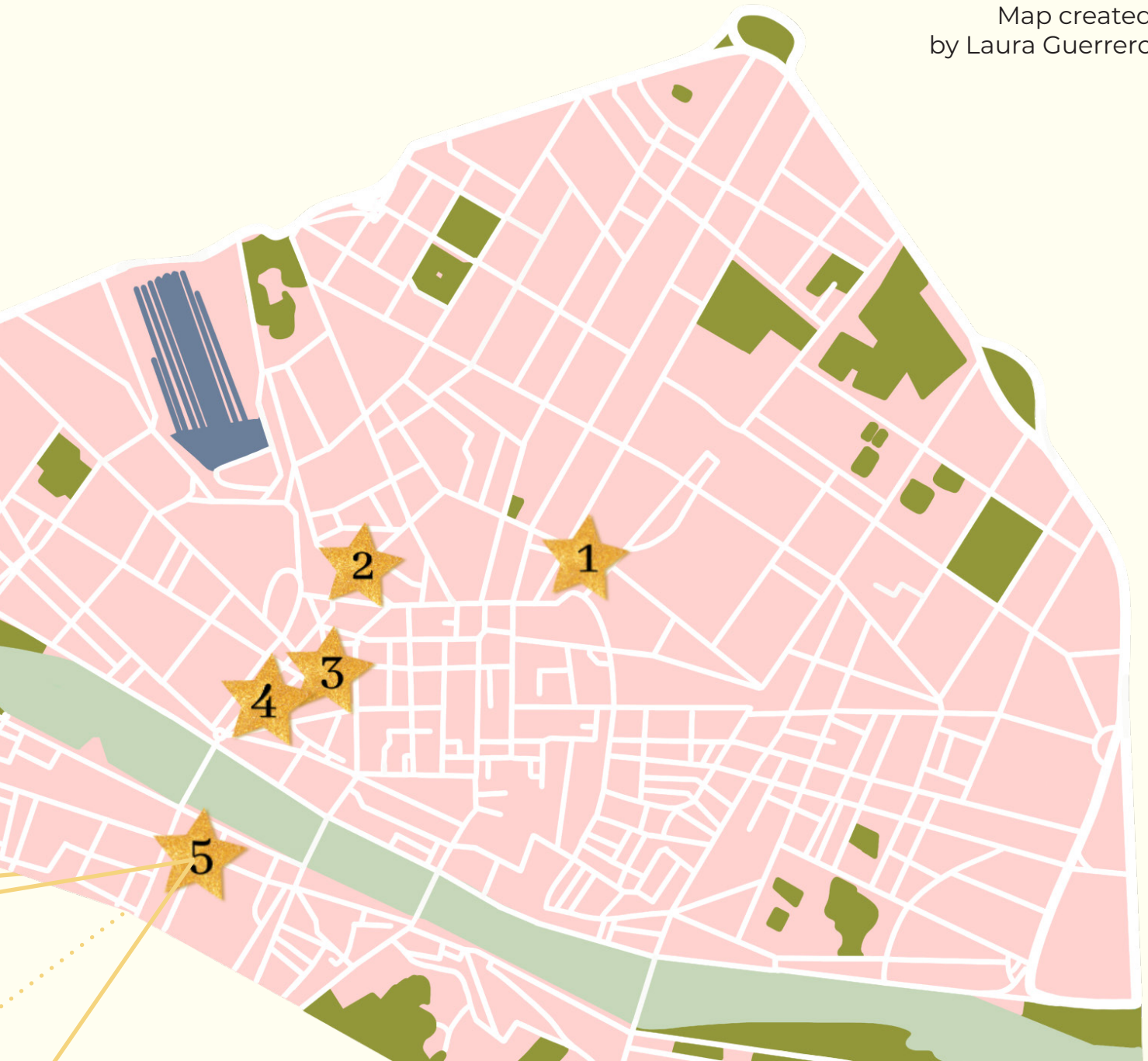
Wine Windows

by Hayden Hubbard of Florence

When wandering the picturesque streets of Florence, Italy, you might stumble upon small windows carved into the stone walls lining the roads. Wine windows originated in the 1500s to allow wealthy nobles to sell their wine without having to pay tax on the storefront. However, they rose to fame in the 1600s when the Bubonic Plague ravaged Europe. In order to avoid contact with customers and lower the risk of contagion, wine was sold through these windows. In a more modern context, they were also used for the same purpose during the Coronavirus pandemic. Nowadays, the Bubonic Plague is far from the average person's mind, but some wine windows remain open for tourists and natives to stop by for their wine fix.

During my time in Florence, I was able to stop by some of these wine windows and compile a list of addresses so you do not have to waste time searching for them. Below you will find addresses that will take you into the heart of the Florentine experience as you tour the city hopping from wine window to wine window.





- 1.** Via de' Pucci, 4, 50122 Firenze, FI
- 2.** Via del Giglio, 2, 50123 Firenze, FI
- 3.** Via delle Belle Donne, 11/13r, 50123 Firenze, FI
- 4.** Via dei Palchetti, 6r, 50123 Firenze, FI
- 5.** Via Santo Spirito, 21r, 50122 Firenze, FI

A Night at the Opera

by Emily Hancock

As a classical music connoisseur living in Florence for six weeks, I made it my primary mission to see a live concert at least once. After nine years of playing bassoon and growing up with both of my parents being established musicians, it would have been a crime to not see something operatic here. While summer tends to be the off-season for most professional opera companies and orchestral ensembles, I was pleasantly surprised when I came across a wide selection of both vocal and instrumental programs. I settled on a performance of arias featuring works from Verdi, Rossini, Mozart, and, of course, Puccini. I was thrilled at the idea of hearing some of my favorite pieces sung in the stunning venue where art, architecture, and music intersect to reflect the rich and storied history of some of Italy's greatest artists of all time. Entering St. Stephen Auditorium, I had high hopes for an awe-inspiring program that American concert venues typically fail to deliver. I was pleasantly surprised to find that my experience exceeded my expectations, not only in the performance itself, but also in the underlying musical style, and in the conventions guiding audience etiquette.

The dress code remained as expected for an opera: men wore long pants, dress shoes, and crisp button-down shirts while women wore below-the-knee-length dress-

The privilege of hearing music history come to life through this truly magnificent city is rapidly becoming atypical.



A pamphlet of the opera arias that were performed.

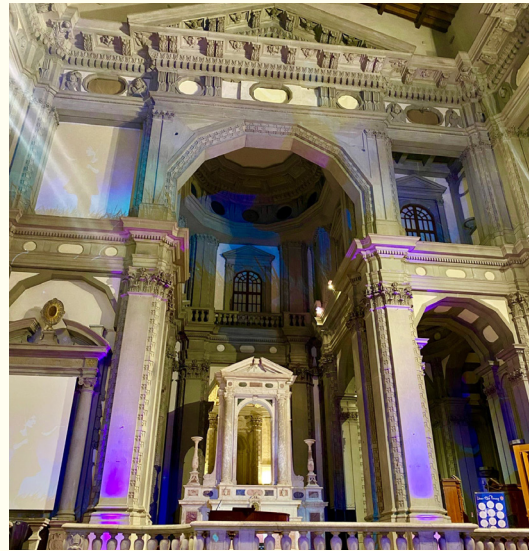
es or pants with a blouse. No shorts, tennis shoes, jeans, or T-shirts were to be seen in the crowd. In the modern age, we have become more lenient with what is acceptable dress wear. I found that the audience here in Florence kept the standard high as they represented this evening's attendees in a dignified manner.

Another typical rule of thumb for any live artistic performance is the prohibition of flash photography. It came as a bit of a shock when I saw numerous people lift their phones in the middle of a duet to take a picture. It was even more blasphemous when the man next to me took a video using the flash on his camera. Although it is plausible that a greater number of uneducated tourists just happened to attend this particular showing, the audience etiquette was quite jarring.

Another difference I noted between typical opera protocol and my evening hap-

pened to deal with different musical interpretations. In the very first selection, 'Non più andrai, farfallone amoroso' from Mozart's *Marriage Of Figaro*, the leading tenor not only began his performance from within the audience, but the pianist joined in singing the final note in a comedic ending to the piece. I found these actions to be not only astonishing but out of character. Beginning an opera from within the audience as opposed to directly on stage told me that first, this was going to be a more casual affair, and second, that I should be prepared for other choices that I would not regularly find in an opera house (the pianist line for example). Since this was a smaller, more intimate performance of selected arias, it did not take long to accept even the most stark deviations from classic performance traditions. Had this been a full production of, let's say, *Madame Butterfly*, none of these more whimsical and expressive ideas would have made it past the rehearsal staging phase. However, I decided that this was indeed a unique program where I was undoubtedly going to experience the unexpected, so I should just sit back and enjoy it.

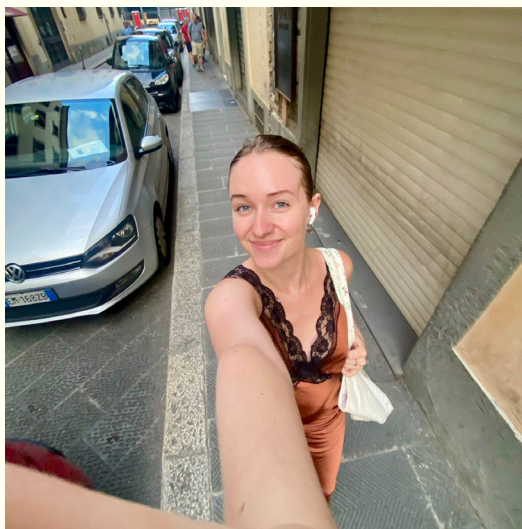
In a matter of moments, I found yet another dramatic difference in the evening's program. During the second selection, the soprano took multiple artistic deviations from the original score. While it is common



Inside the St. Stephen Auditorium.

to find a conductor or singer interpreting certain elements of a piece differently from traditional interpretations, I found it quite interesting the frequency with which this soprano chose to take liberties with the original aria. Numerous endings to sustained notes were embellished and tapered in ways that I have not heard before. Overall, many liberties were taken by both vocalists, often introducing innovations that I found disconcerting. These particular changes found little favor with me but were nonetheless a part of this fun and lighthearted night.

If I must reduce this evening's festivities to one common denominator, I would say that it was a lovely evening full of surprises that left me with the fondest of memories from my first venture into the realm of historically significant art, architecture, and music. I hope that everyone has the chance in their lifetime to engage with music in this way, whether by concert in America or choir in Italy. The privilege of hearing music history come to life through this truly magnificent city is rapidly becoming atypical. Therefore, I would implore everyone to seize the opportunity to attend a live performance in a historically significant setting if ever offered the chance.



Emily Hancock walking to the opera house.



Guide to Italian Cinema

by Phaedra Mladenovic

At home in Tallahassee, I am lucky enough to work at Florida State University's Student Life Cinema, which makes my film buff dreams of sharing my favorite pictures with huge crowds a reality. Now, I would like to do the same thing with this magazine. So to the tired traveler who has ventured all the way to Italy: here's what you need to watch.

Film, along with music and television, is an essential medium within which one can pick up the language and customs of any foreign place. A film may aim for high drama, revealing cultural values in its tropes and depictions, or differently, showcase the everyday life in that country. This allows the film to familiarize a new audience to its country. In any sense, movies are a vital gateway—a portal even—into a new world. Even if you are not a film fan, for the sake of your time here, I recommend the following challenges:

1) Watch a Film in Italian

I accidentally bought a ticket for Disney's 2023 remake of "The Little Mermaid" in Italian. I was within my right to refund my ticket and head home upon figuring out that the Italian dubbing would not stop when the opening credits rolled, but I decided to stay. After all, "La Sirenetta" was a faithful remake of a story, songs, and dialogue I was already intimately familiar with. I stuck it out in the sleek, modern theater and had an incredible time seeing how my favorite musical numbers would translate (and may I add that the Italian voice actors

did a magnificent job with the material, perhaps even better than some American cast members). With the visual aids, I even picked up some key vocabulary words and better understood Italian grammar. If you ever have the chance to venture to the nearest theater and completely immerse yourself in a new language, take the plunge.

2) Watch a Film with Italian Subtitles

I was far less willing to roll the language dice with Sony's "Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse." I doubted my Duolingo streak would be much help with terms like "radioactive spider" or "trans-dimensional collider device." I frantically sought a screening labeled "O.V." (original version) and triple-checked before I hauled myself across town to the theater. While the dubbed "La Sirenetta" crowd was mostly small Italian children, "Spider-Verse" was almost all English-speaking study-abroad students cramped in a flat, homely local auditorium. When the film started with Gwen Stacy's opening monologue revealing that we had

Film has a way of embedding itself into your soul, and by extending the courtesy to Italian film, you allow a bit more of Italy into your soul as well.



Image taken by Phaedra Mladenovic from inside the movie theater "La Fiamma Multisala."

all bought the right ticket, someone unashamedly yelled, "YES!" While the movie was incredible as it was, the Italian subtitles underlining the display added to the great experience. Despite the visual overload of this kaleidoscope of an animated feature, I found myself reading below during scenes of casual dialogue. I liked reading Italian translations of common English sayings like "what's up?" ("*che succede?*") or "see you around" ("*ci vediamo in giro*"). Even if I signed myself up for a wild, colorful ride of a film, the chance to learn something enriched me in an equally satisfying way.

3) Watch These Italian Classics

The Film Nerd is back, but more for appreciating Italian culture than for imposing my own taste, I promise. You've been to the Uffizi by now; Italians clearly love their art, and film is no different. Italy's most famous movies influence their culture the same way American films do, so for the sake of navigating Italian pop culture, I recom-

mend any one of these five hallmarks of Italian cinema:

"Le notti di Cabiria" ("Nights of Cabiria") (1957)

"La Dolce Vita" ("The Sweet Life") (1960)

"Suspiria" (1977)

"Nuovo Cinema Paradiso" ("Cinema Paradiso") (1988)

"La Vita e Bella" ("Life is Beautiful") (1997)

I decided to watch these five films before heading out to Florence. As a genre film lover, the ballet horror classic "Suspiria" is what first opened my eyes to the wonders of Italian filmmaking. Although I was not in an authentic theater with friends (I was actually alone in my room past midnight), I could feel the excitement for my time in Italy igniting. Immersing myself in these pictures felt as though I was transporting myself there every night I binge watched them. Despite having never set foot in Italy, once I arrived, it felt as though I was returning to somewhere I had been before.

Film has a way of embedding itself into your soul, and by extending the courtesy to Italian film, you allow a bit more of Italy into your soul as well.

Oh, and a quick heads up: movie theaters pause in Italy. Yes, the movie stops halfway, fades to a loading screen, and the lights go back on for an eight-minute intermission. Adults went to the bathroom and kids ran around in front of the screen as I shook my head in wild confusion. Yes, it was the weirdest thing ever.

Have fun!



Gluten-Free Guide to Florence



by Layne Schutte

If you're a celiac sufferer like myself, pack your bags, we're moving to Italy. I have never been so well fed as I've been during my time abroad. Not only have I been physically able to tolerate the food here, but I've actually been able to enjoy it. I may not be the best reference, considering I have been gluten-free for a few years and the taste of wheat is a distant memory, but the food here doesn't taste as gluten-free-chemical-substitute-y as it does back home. I've force-fed a few things to my non-celiac-friends and some of the most delectable items have become part of their favorites. The gluten-free substitutes I've suffered through in the states don't hold a candle to the meals I've enjoyed here. I've been able to indulge in gluten-free bread, pizza, pasta, sandwiches, pastries, and gelato cones. Is your mouth watering yet? Not to worry, I won't keep you waiting any longer. Here are my favorite gluten-free spots in Florence:

Sgrano

I will scream Sgrano's praises from the rooftops of Florence. I can honestly say they have the best gluten-free bread and pasta I've ever had. They have three locations, all with different options, and all 100% gluten-free. The first location is a sandwich shop. They use gluten-free focaccia bread that is two times the size of your face. The bread is fluffy on the inside and crunchy on the outside. Filled with a variety of options like fresh tomatoes, greens, mozzarella, meats, and then doused in rich olive oil, Sgrano's sandwiches reign supreme in the glu-

Is your mouth watering yet? Not to worry, I won't keep you waiting any longer.

ten-free streets of Florence. I dragged my roommates there in between classes one day and they both agreed they would have no earthly idea their meal was gluten-free. My favorite sandwich at this location is the "Classica": it has tomato, mozzarella, olive oil, and rocket (arugula). Although basic, its simplicity and freshness makes every mouthful delightful. But what if you're in a hurry and don't have time for a sit down meal?

The second location is perfect for



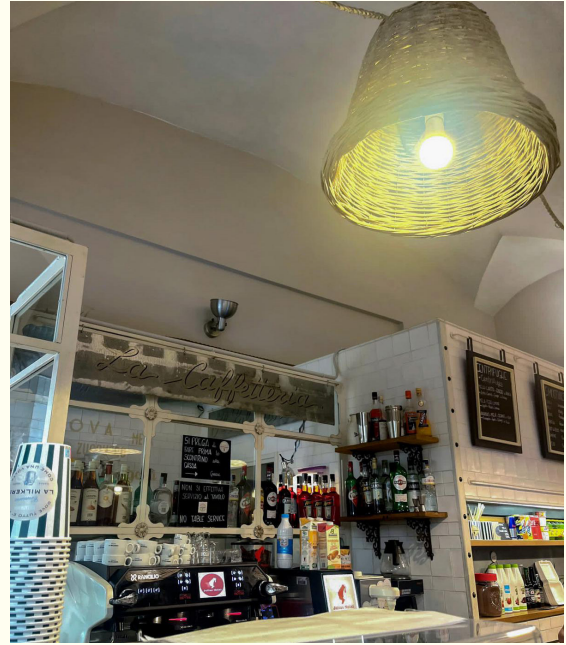
Sgrano, located outside the FSU study center in Florence. Image taken from sgranoglutenfree.it.

you. It's a street sandwich shop located right next to the restaurant. You can walk up to the window, order your sandwich, and eat it on the go or like the locals do: on the curb. They have a narrowed-down menu with slightly different options. The bread is also smaller and a different consistency than the beloved focaccia, but just as enjoyable. My go-to order at this location is the "Number 3:" pecorino cheese, raw ham, and truffle.

The third location is about a five-minute walk away and has a slightly more sophisticated feel to it. Sgrano predominantly serves pasta. I can't speak for all of the menu options, but the truffle pasta is absolutely to die for. There, I insist you order the Coccoli (fried pieces of dough) drizzled with pecorino cheese and topped with fresh truffles. It also comes with extra pecorino cream and truffle for you to dip the treasured appetizer in. My friend, who isn't gluten-free, described it as "the best thing she's ever put in her mouth."

La Milkeria

After being in Italy for a few weeks I guarantee you'll be craving an American breakfast. Italians tend to have coffee and pastries as their morning "meal." I personally, like to start my day with fruit, veggies, and some kind of protein because otherwise, I crash around 11a.m. Having a croissant or a cup of yogurt before my three-hour class doesn't always cut it. On those days, you can find me at La Milkeria. They have everything from eggs, bacon, and waffles to parfaits, avocado toast, and coffees. The downside is they don't have an explicitly gluten-free menu and there is a possibility of cross contamination, so if your allergy is very severe, I don't recommend risking it. However, my allergy is pretty serious and even I have had no problems eating there. The eggs with cheese and bacon were perfectly fine. The yogurt parfait



Inside La Milkeria.

was good, but they were very stingy with the fruit. It would have been better with granola, but unfortunately granola is not gluten-free. The *pièce de résistance*, however, was their gluten-free Nutella waffle. I was actually concerned that it may contain gluten because it was so similar to the non-gluten-free waffles my mother made for my family as kids. The Nutella here is also superior to the Nutella in the States, and this made the waffle a 'chef's kiss.' As for the drinks, their iced cappuccino is good and their Nutella iced coffee is incredible (you can probably guess at this point that I'm very fond of Nutella). But whether you're 7 or 77 years old, you must order the hot chocolate with fresh cream. It is hands-down the best hot chocolate I have ever tasted and the cream is a must. It's the closest thing in my mind to experiencing the famous hot chocolate in Paris at Angelina's. If you can stomach the possible traces of gluten, I definitely recommend La Milkeria.

Mister Pizza

Mister Pizza is known for its gluten-free menu and allergen precautions. Their menu isn't gluten-free but they can make any of their options celiac-friendly. The staff is incredibly friendly and always make dining there a fun experience. My personal favorite pizza is the "Pugliese." It's made with their fresh tomato sauce, black cherry tomatoes, and mozzarella, and is topped with raw burrata. I've also had the "Tartufi" which is almost twice the cost of the Pugliese but very good nonetheless. It has tomato sauce, burrata and fresh truffles. Mister Pizza happens to be one of the few restaurants open late in Florence, making it my go-to meal day or night.

Ristorante Lorenzo de' Medici

Ristorante Lorenzo de' Medici is known for having the best gluten-free pizza. There, I had the "Caterina," which had tomato, buffalo mozzarella, porcini mushrooms, parmesan cheese, and truffle cream, which was phenomenal. They also have gluten-free pasta, which I will definitely be back to try. I'm not 100% sure that it was the best pizza I've ever had or that it was better than Mister Pizza, but I can confidently say that I enjoyed it thoroughly.

Quinoa

I've only dined at Quinoa once, but it was absolutely delightful. Their entire menu is dedicated to being gluten-free. I ordered the fried chicken and french fries and it was better than any non-gluten-free fried chicken I've had in the U.S. The french fries were perfectly seasoned fresh potatoes, and I dipped them and the chicken in the tartara sauce that came with it. My mother got the veggie burger, which came without a bun. I was disappointed that they didn't have a gluten-free bun for the burger, and thought

Italy is home to some of the best celiac-friendly restaurants, which makes it the perfect place to enjoy your favorite dishes *senza stomach ache.*

that was interesting considering that they specialize in making gluten-free substitutes. If I was to go back, I would love to try their pad thai, which looked divine. Overall, I recommend it.

Shake Café

Shake Café has become a daily staple for me. They have smoothies, smoothie bowls, parfaits (again, sadly, the granola is not gluten-free), salads, gluten-free bread and protein bowls, coffees, and juices. The parfait without granola is simply inadequate; they put what looked like half a kiwi in it and the yogurt wasn't good enough to eat without fruit. The smoothies tasted more like juices due to a lack of ice (it's like that everywhere in Italy) but the chocolate banana "nice" cream bowl was fantastic. I added coconut flakes, chia seeds, and fresh fruit (with no upcharge), and it was the perfect start to my day. Their cappuccinos are also very good and their iced latte with homemade vanilla syrup has become my favorite sweet treat to grab on my way to class. Their avocado toast can be made with gluten-free bread too. It was fine but the bread tasted very whole-wheat-cardboard-y. The poached egg, avocado, and microgreens were great and the bread was just the vessel for it.

Tijuana's

Tijuana's quickly became my friends and my favorite Mexican restaurant in Florence. They have the most amazing margaritas (but they're very strong and you WILL get tipsy after one). They include a list of allergens at the bottom of the menu that correspond to the food options, which makes it easier to decipher what is safe to eat. They have gluten-free tacos, quesadillas, nachos, and more. I've had the nachos and the quesadilla, both of which were gluten-free. I honestly don't have a lot to say about Tijuana's. Although the food isn't overly special, it will satisfy your craving for Mexican food while abroad. The drinks and atmosphere make it a lovely dining experience.

Base V

Base V is another relatively healthy pit stop I make on my way to class. Fruit is not a hot commodity here and occasionally I get the feeling that I'm severely malnourished and developing scurvy. Base V is my fix in this situation. They have a variety of smoothies, salads, and gluten-free baked goods. The gluten-free banana bread is okay, but the peanut butter chocolate chip cookies are delicious. The Fiber Blast smoothie, in contrast, was disgusting in contrast and tasted like a mouthful of grass, but still felt very healthy. Having worked at an açai shop for almost two years, I'm a harsh judge when it comes to açai. The açai bowl was incredibly disappointing. It was in a small cup, not overly sweet, didn't fully taste like açai, and felt like a waste of my precious euros. Everything else was very good and the atmosphere makes it a perfect study spot.



Base V Juicery. Image taken from maintown.com

Although maintaining a gluten-free diet while traveling can be difficult, Italy is home to some of the best celiac-friendly restaurants, which makes it the perfect place to enjoy your favorite dishes *senza* stomach ache. Enjoy!



Section 3

Pages Of Wonder

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Inspiration in
Italy



God is a Mango

by Phaedra Madenovic

Mangos are the most compelling evidence that a God exists. Their sweet tang, velvety texture, and everlasting aftertaste leave any blessed taster pondering how nature could produce something so divine. Vividly orange and preposterously delicious, these bountiful fruits are native to tropical regions near the equator and a staple in many vibrant cultures. If someone dares to utter their delusional dislike of mangos, it is safe to assume they are from a region incapable of growing and preserving them well. Thus, their uninformed opinion shall be immediately dismissed.

On the other hand, the enlightened who choose to cultivate a fulfilled life can grow mango trees (*Mangif-*

sun-kissed microfiber brings a new element to each sweet morsel. The mango's symphony of fruity sensations can heal wounds, strengthen bonds, part the seas, and actualize the soul. A single tentative bite reveals paradise.

It matters not how the mango is prepared: cubed or sliced, with cinnamon or sugar, (although those with refined palates appreciate the simplicity of an unadulterated specimen), a mango guarantees color on even the dullest of days. That is why those who embrace the Mango Doctrine lead such serene, gratifying lives. While others turn to yoga or the Bible, only the mango-ers understand the illuminating flavor of life.



era indica) in their backyard. They will find over twelve hundred mango varieties worldwide, varying in size, color, and sweetness. A mango's flavor also depends on its ripeness, which ranges from a punchy sourness when young to honey-like nectar when mature. Experienced mango connoisseurs will find that there can often be a myriad of tastes within a single fruit and each

That is why those who embrace the Mango Doctrine lead such serene, gratifying lives.

Shrimp Salad

by Erin Miskowski

For every holiday or special occasion, my grandmother would make her famous shrimp salad. She would take peeled and steamed shrimp, drench it in Old Bay (like real Marylanders do), put it in a bowl with some mayo, and finish it off with cooked macaroni pasta. Served cold, it was a simple dish to make, and she would have every member of the family contribute to its creation.

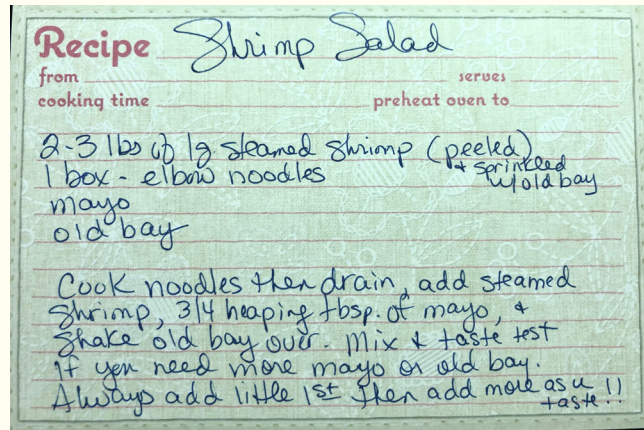
We would help with preparing the ingredients while she sat at the head of the table, mixing it all together. When tasked with writing about a food that was special to my family, I thought immediately of this shrimp salad. My grandmother always made enough portions for us to take home leftovers.

Having raised five children alone after my grandfather died in the Viet-

To us, the dish itself isn't what matters. Shrimp salad is family, it is nostalgia, and it is love.

nam War, my grandmother was the matriarch of our family. She was born and raised in Baltimore in her Polish immigrant family's bar. The one thing Dolores Miskowski passed along to all her children and grandchildren was a sharp wit.

I grew up in a different part of Maryland from the rest of my extended family, so I didn't have the same type of connection to her as my cousins had.



The beloved Shrimp Salad recipe.

Making this dish with her made me feel included and more like one of the team. While she wasn't a particularly doting grandmother, she always made sure that we were well fed. Christmas and Easter were full of fights over the beloved shrimp salad; everyone knew it was the best dish on the table. I detest most seafood, but her shrimp salad was the exception.

When she passed away in 2020, the holidays felt like unscrewed Christmas lights. How could Easter be the same without her satisfyingly peppery specialty? Even in her obituary, they mentioned this shrimp salad. Since her passing, my cousin, thankfully, has taken on the title of "shrimp salad chef." I know without a doubt that Grandmom would have come back from the grave to haunt us if we hadn't continued to make it for the holidays.

To the average person, shrimp salad might sound a bit lacking in the side dish department—I mean, it's nothing like mashed potatoes or green bean casserole. It's slathered in mayo, slightly fishy, and ice cold. Most people don't really want to have that as a side for their carved turkey or candied ham. To us, the dish itself isn't what matters. Shrimp salad is family, it is nostalgia, and it is love.



A Flourless Christmas

by *Layne Schutte*

If you could only eat one thing for the rest of your life, what would it be? If you had posed this question to me in my early adolescence, I would have replied “cake” without hesitation.

My love for cake most likely stemmed from my adoration for my mother and the pleasure I got both from watching her cook and eventually helping her in the kitchen. I was hired as my mother’s pseudo-sous-chef at the ripe age of 7 and have held the position ever since. My qualifications and specialties have advanced with time. By the age of 12, I was actually allowed to use the beaters instead of just licking them clean once their purpose was filled. Cake became even more delectable when I was able to run around the room and tell anyone who would listen that “I helped!”

The holiday season is hands-down my favorite time of year. Despite that many platters were filled with peppermint hot chocolate, creamy cheeses spread on flakey crackers, ooey-goopy chocolate chip cookies, potent apple ci-

This cake is far from healthy: it’s filled with almost a dozen ounces of dark chocolate, heaps of sugar, and sticks of rich butter, and is completely coated in a layer of powdered sugar.

der, and sludge-like eggnog, I’ve always made a beeline toward the cake platter instead.

Christmas, my favorite day of the year, started with my mom’s coffee cake. It was crumbly on the top but soft and delicate on the inside. The process of its creation filled our house with the pleasant aroma of cinnamon and nutmeg. A slice of it paired with a mug full of a fluffy cappuccino signaled the start of yet another perfect Christmas day. However, the main event was yet to come.

My favorite cake is my mother’s flourless chocolate cake. Now, I’m aware that the name of this dish alone may make my mother sound like a diet-obsessed “almond mom.” However, I assure you, she is nothing of the sort. This cake is far from healthy: it’s filled with almost a dozen ounces of dark chocolate, heaps of sugar, and sticks of rich butter, and is completely coated in a layer of powdered sugar. Sugar that resembles the snowfall I always wished we’d miraculously get in Florida one day.

Every Christmas day, my parents host a huge party for all of our friends and family. We share food, play games, and enjoy the holiday together. The hit of the event has always been the famous flourless chocolate cake. However, to our guests, we usually just call it “chocolate cake” out of fear of them knocking it before they try it.

About three years ago I found out that I was allergic to gluten. This may sound melodramatic, but this was the



The Schulte family's "flourless chocolate cake."

closest thing to a tragedy for me. Most of my favorite foods were deemed inedible (including my beloved cakes). Blowing out candles on your birthday flan is a tad depressing. My love of food and baking began to dwindle. Meals became blander and baking became more expensive and challenging.

My mother found a way to make most of our food free of wheat so I could enjoy it as well. However, the one dish that needed no alterations just so happened to be my favorite of them all. The flourless chocolate cake wasn't made to be celiac or diet-friendly. It just did not require the use of flour.

My mother and I used to bake this dessert together, however, the past couple of years she has allowed me to assume her position of head chef in the Schulte kitchen. She passed down a recipe full of memories, tradition, flavor, and love. I am not only able to enjoy my favorite dessert with my loved ones, but I'm able to create the dessert that, to so many of us, is a beloved almond-coated Christmas tradition.

Recipe

Ingredients:

- 1.5 tbsp ground almonds
- 10 1/2 oz dark chocolate
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 1 1/4 sticks unsalted butter (to make dairy free use vegan butter)
- 5 large eggs
- Cooking spray/oil
- Pinch of salt
- Powdered sugar

Instructions:

1. Preheat your oven to 350°F.
2. Spray your 9 inch springform pan with cooking spray then dust with excess ground almonds and shake off excess.
3. In a double boiler set at a low simmer, melt chocolate, butter, & sugar - stir frequently.
4. Remove from heat.
5. In a medium bowl beat eggs and ground almonds.
6. Fold egg mixture into chocolate and stir until thickened.
7. Pour batter into pan & smooth on top.
8. Bake for 45 minutes until the top is set and begins to crack.
9. Remove the side of the pan and let cool.
10. Dust with powdered sugar.
11. Enjoy!

The Art of Never Knowing What to Wear

by Laura Guerrero

With a new day comes a new outfit and the same daunting question: what will I wear today? No matter what outfit I chose, after countless changes and much deliberation, I was never attached to my clothing. They were just things I wore to escape being naked, and as a child, I was always told to cover up and dress accordingly. I like to stick with the trends and have certain brands and styles I like. Despite all this, no one piece of clothing ever outshined the rest.

Ever since I was little, I was either dressed by my mom or I was forced to wear a uniform for school. I never could express my personality through clothes. There was a set guideline and individuality was not part of the rules. This posed many problems once I reached adulthood and was expected to know how to dress and what clothes were appropriate for certain occasions. I had only a vague idea of what to wear to a gala or a job interview but I did not own such fancy clothes; I had no need to. Throughout my life, I have mainly stuck with the basics like jeans and a T-shirt, only ever adding a soft sweater to complete the look. So picking outfits felt stressful and I never thought my clothes specifically said anything about me. Jewelry, on the other hand, did.

I loved how my mom always paired her clothes with necklaces, bracelets, and earrings. She perfectly matched gold with her warm skin tone, which made her look like a bright shiny star from miles away. She always knew how to dress, but what always

made her outfits breathtaking was the jewelry she chose to accompany them. When I turned 10, my mom decided to pass on the gift of accessorizing to me. She bought me a pair of small silver hoop earrings with tiny circular diamond pieces outlining them. Before this present, I had lost every pair of earrings I owned. Other earrings were too itchy, too heavy, or too bulky. I could feel them weighing on my ear and sometimes they left scratchy red circles behind. But not these; these earrings were perfect.

I wore them with every outfit until they became part of my identity. After I received the earrings, I gained a greater sentimental value for gifted jewelry. I would wear every piece of gifted jewelry I received until it seemed to fuse into who I was. For me, the impor-



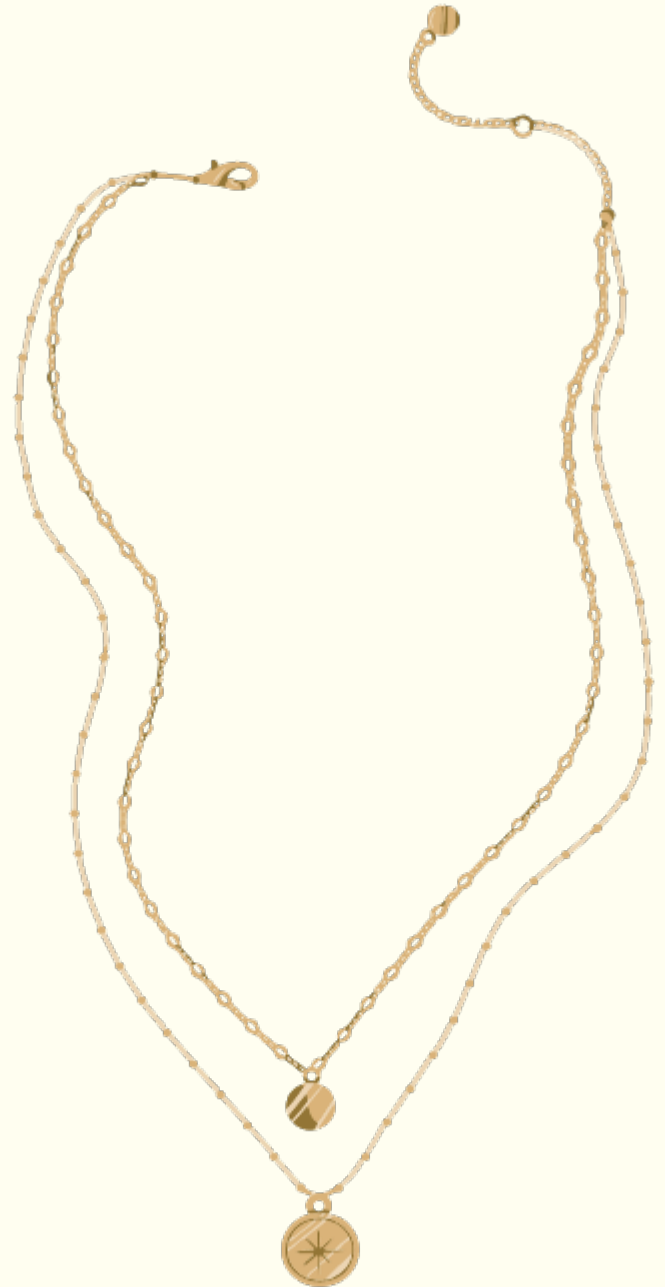
Graphic of the Strawberry earrings.

tance came from the meaning behind the jewelry, not so much the jewelry itself. Although clothes never held a significant meaning in my life, jewelry and what I chose to decorate my personality with did.

Although clothes never held a significant meaning in my life, jewelry and what I chose to decorate my personality with did.

Earrings expressed my emotions. A bold pair of strawberry dangly earrings meant that I was in a good mood because they were bright and whimsical. But my small pair of silver hoops represented me at my most basic level. They understood me. My earrings illustrated my spirit and my sense of being. I can seldom go a day without them.

Clothes can tell the world much about ourselves. They convey where we come from, who we are, and where we can go. While clothes can communicate parts of ourselves, they are not the only form of communication. Jewelry communicates by allowing me to express my feelings and experiences. Jewelry can also convey the sentimental value of a gift, because the person who gifted the jewelry to me put thought and care into choosing something that I would enjoy. Even a pair of simple earrings can transmit those feelings. That is what is important to me about my special pair of earrings. Not that they are accessories, but that they are my form of expression. Not that they are earrings, but that they represent my mom.



Flat-Headed

by Phaedra Mladenovic

Springy like a coil and light as a feather, my hair first comes to mind when I hear the word “poofy.” When I let it roar untied and untamed, its volume overwhelms my silhouette like the canopy of an aged oak tree. Its hue lies perfectly centered in the ranging shades of brown with subtle sun-kissed streaks that come and go with the seasons. Some strands are longer with looser curls than others, making it difficult to style symmetrically. I like to think each obstinate streak has its own personality. To tame them, I wear my hair in a middle part that has never reached past my collarbone, where it is wider than long.

Sometimes, out of morbid curiosity, I look in the mirror and smush the fluff down against my face and scalp to look more solidly compact. I’m flat-headed, I think, as I see myself “wearing” my hair.

I long to live in a world where hair is just stuff that grows from the top of my head. However, genetics, ethnicities, and races exist, and, suddenly, the kind of stuff that grows on my head becomes much more complicated.

Thanks to my Serbian father and Bahamian mother, I fit the Western world’s criteria for a biracial person. My locks directly express my mixed identity, where my mother’s tight Afro kink blended with my father’s silky soft waves to create the epitome of Curly™ hair. These boasts are not unfounded, as anyone familiar with the hair type scale, ranging from Type 1 (straight and thin) to Type 4 (kinky and thick), would know I am not exaggerating. Within this met-

ric, I rank the highest amongst the Type 3 (Curly) tier. In its full majesty, my 3C mane is the curliest hair can be before entering Afro territory.

As a vaguely brown kid growing up in Miami amongst a sea of vaguely brown kids, my hair was the only indicator of my individuality. Everyone’s hair was dark and direct, mine was a twisted nest of multicolor coils. When the girls would sit in a line to braid each other’s hair, I was left out. When they needed a ponytail done, I was no help. When they were experimenting with trendy new styles, I was woefully inexperienced. I grew up stranded on a distant moon of the expressive world of girl’s hair.

The typical teenage phases of cuts, dyes, and straighteners could only amount to a Tumblr-inspired fantasy as my mother forbade any “tampering” with my appearance. My mother envied my hair; its looser curls and softer texture made it arbitrarily worthy of “good hair” status in the Black community. She could not go a day without reminding me of her jealousy and recounting her tragic tale of tormenting her kinks with heat and chemicals before settling for the dreadlocks she’s had for twenty-five years. As odd as it was to listen to my mom project her insecurities onto me, her constant praise instilled some semblance of pride.

Of course, like many children who once benefited from a never-ending well of confidence, mine dried up by eighth grade. The boys always preferred girls with straight hair, girls I spitefully started to call “flat-headed.” My Norwe-

gian half-sister, Sara, who had already grown into her looks (basically just mine with the last drops of melanin squeezed out), was a huge source of my insecurity. Her sleek Brunette hair deluded me into thinking my coarse weaves were why I wasn't pretty. One time I was foolish enough to say this out loud. It broke my mother's heart.

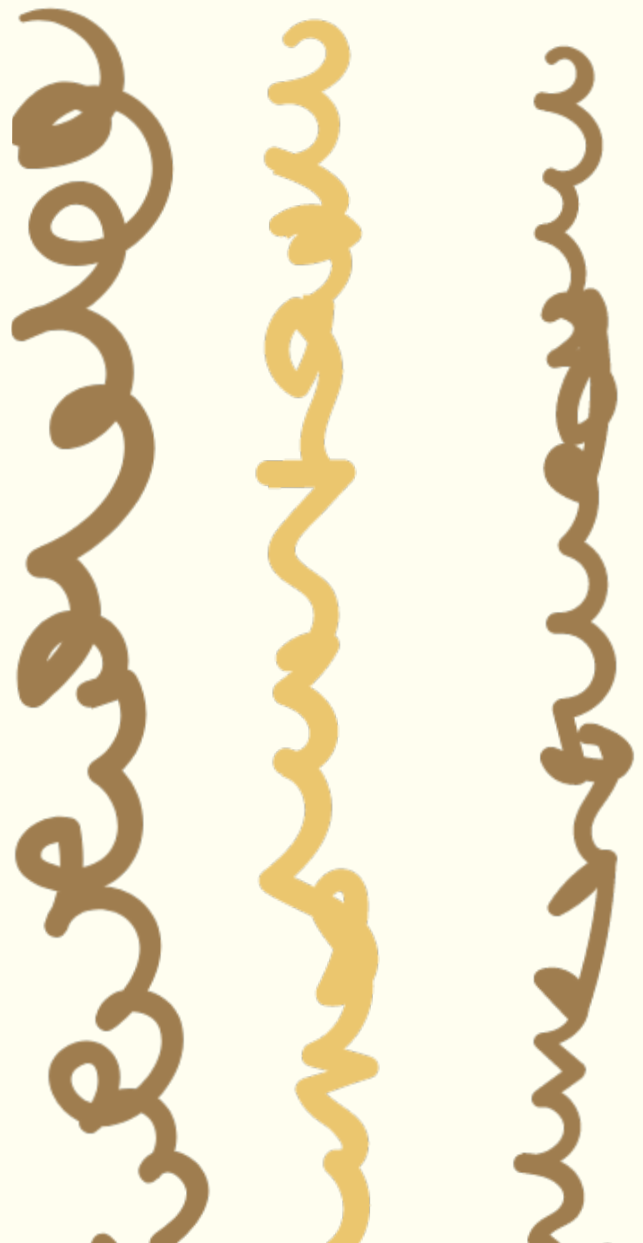
Thankfully, her insistence that I leave my crown alone paid off as my self-hating phase fizzled out. Maturity allowed me to realize that Eurocentric beauty standards and adolescent awkwardness caused my unease. I put into perspective the contradictory stance of my curl pattern, both privileged to be preferred over kinkier types, yet also "loud" enough to be routinely patted down at airports (the biracial experience in a nutshell). It also opened my eyes to the gender imbalance of aesthetics and to how my brother grew up with the same curls and an even shaggier texture but not needing to care. Though it was easier to sit back on my rocking chair and critique society, what mattered most was the ability to appreciate my hair as my defining feature. My twists convey who and what I am, down to each genotype. It is my family history, my identity. It saves me from anonymity.

My curls are so entangled with my sense of self that when I finally joined the flat-heads at age nineteen, it was akin to an out-of-body experience. I always thought that straight hair seemed "easier" compared to the wash day, silk pillowcase, and ultra-conditioning maintenance of my natural

hair. But fake straight hair? Thank God it only lasted a week.

After smushing my poofs down, I let go and my strands spring back to their most authentic, swirliest state. I feel like myself again, but the questions begin tumbling in. I don't dress lavishly or expressively; is my hair alone a true accessory? Am I proclaiming anything grander than "Here I am? I exist?" How bold of me. My grand ambitions and the daily minutiae of life drown out existential fodder like this. Perhaps it is best left cast in my recognizable shadow, where my puff can speak for itself.

My twists convey who and what I am, down to each genotype.



Pebbles for Petals

by *Haydn Hubbard*

Death never stood too far from my hip. He lingered behind every shadowed corner and in every winter breeze that licked its way up my spine. He stood with his hand on my father's shoulder when I boarded my final plane from the States to Italy and laid in wait when I received "the" phone call. That was seven years ago. Seven years and he still shadowed my motions.

I'd made my peace with our routine by now. The first year I raged against it like a stallion, frothing and chomping over its bit. These days he was only a shadow, and if I stayed in the daylight, I could try and ignore his presence.

When night came and shadows coated the tree line in dark ink, Death would crawl into my bed and lay at my back. His cold breath would blow the hairs away from the nape of my neck when bile would climb up my throat. Nightmares were memories and waking hours bled into the ether.

No one else seemed to notice the shadow stalking me, and upon mentioning it most would only offer wide-eyed stares and sincere condolences. Placating and pitying. After a year of chasing "what ifs" away, I settled for sealing my lips and ignoring him. I set rules for myself: smile brightly, don't tell people I can see Death, stick to well-lit paths, and avoid graveyards at all cost. Four simple guidelines to ignoring the abnormal. Most of my rules felt like safety tips gifted to naive students living on their own for the first time. I stuck by my rules for seven years, a holy number.

Today I broke my rules.

There was no sunshine, no smiling friends, and no cabs home to avoid the rain. No smile could itch its way up my face no matter my efforts.

My first mistake was wearing black. I usually choose bright, sunny colors, but I had done my laundry too late in the night after a bout of insomnia and my apartment complex did not have a dryer. By the time I dragged myself to my closet to dress that morning, all of my colorful clothes were still dripping from the clothes line. The black dress shoved to the back of the closet called for me with a breathy whine, and I slipped it off the worn coat hanger.

My next mistake was leaving the house knowing it was going to rain. I did not have an excuse for this one. Maybe it was because my apartment was sweltering, or because I loved the smell of rain. Or maybe it was the fact that Death had sprawled himself across my couch and encroached on all my personal boundaries until I was suffocating. Soon enough I was drenched and searching for a cab home, only to find none and having to walk.

My final mistake was stopping at the iron gates of the city cemetery. My father was buried in the States. I had no reason to pass through. I had no reason to follow Death's tug through those gates corroded by years of rain and use. I had no reason at all to pass by rows and rows of marble memorials.

I should not have read the names that littered the grave stones. I should not, I should not, I should not. My life is a mantra of should nots and opportunities passed.

I stopped at one grave.

It was too small, much too small for a grave.

The headstone was obviously unpolished after years, at least compared to more recent ones near the front, but it was elegant. Someone a long time ago had loved them very much. Loved them enough even in such a short span of time.

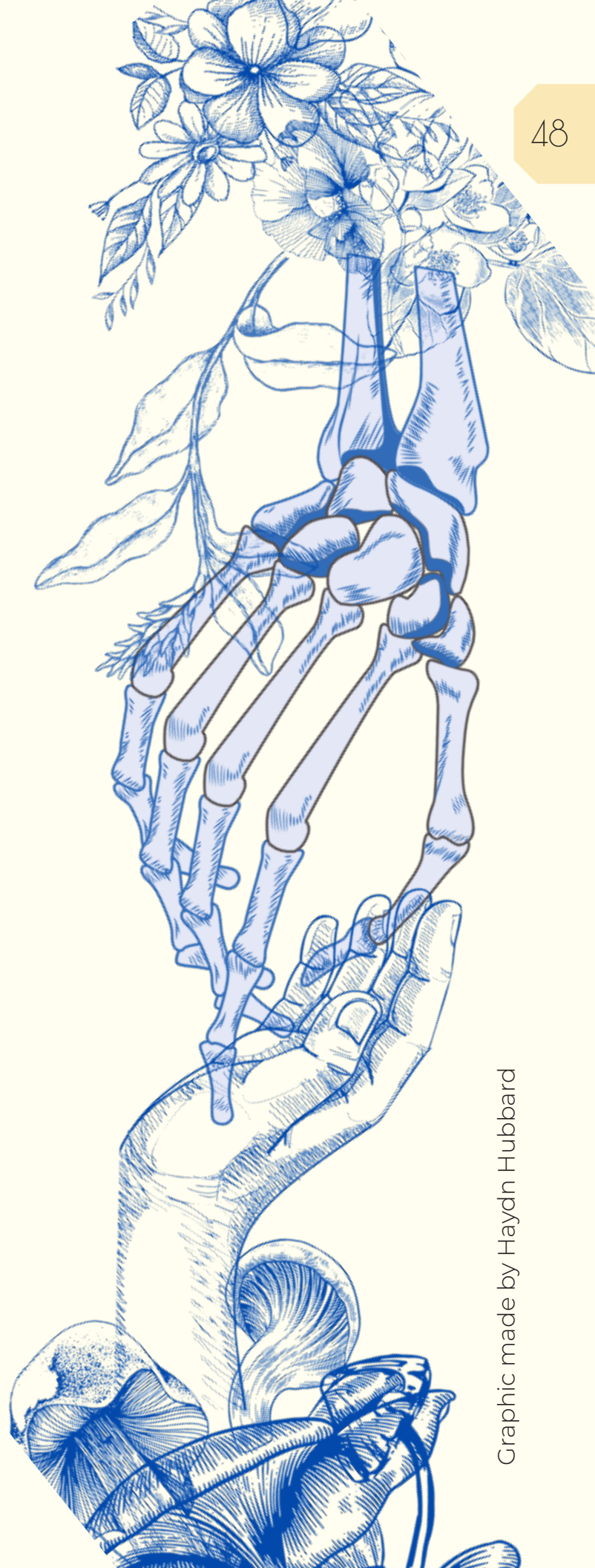
The smiling face in the picture frame was toothless. There were no screaming nights of baby teeth coming in, no first steps or clothes purchased past a few weeks.

Even the name was young, like their god warned the parents to not give the babe an aging name. So they knew it wouldn't be needed. Perhaps it was my Death that had cautioned them with gentle hands and soft words.

Some of the surrounding graves had flowers on them, whether they were wilted or still imbued with virility. Dead or alive, flowers on graves were one of humanity's more foolish notions. Who were they for? Surely the person six feet under the soil did not care if someone left roses from the grocery store atop their memorial. Death brushed a cautious hand over the soft petals and I watched as they shriveled in the rain.

Even though I found the notion ridiculous, my heart dropped at the flowerless grave. I had no flowers to offer. There were none to pluck on the outskirts of the cemetery, and the sun had crept low enough in the sky that no shops would be open.

Some cultures believed in leaving stones on graves. Or maybe that was something my grief-stricken mind made up to mollify me for my lack of flowers. Either way, it didn't matter now,



not as the wet earth soaked through the knees of my black dress. Not as I searched through the cemetery for the prettiest stones I could find and laid them lovingly upon the small memorial. My heart gave an audible crack with each stone I laid to rest and memories of warm hands ghosted my shivering arms.

The bluish pebble I found near the entrance.

Crack.

The brittle rock littered with black speckles.

Crack.

A smooth white stone that was nestled in the root of a willow tree.

Crack.

I scoured, dug, and decorated until my hands were raw and bleeding. My back burned as I rocked back on my heels and pressed my palms into my eyes. The rose petals had fallen under the scrutiny of the rain and scattered across the earth. One of the pebbles had crushed a stray petal.

My face burned with shame. Why bother with pebbles, when they were just as foolish as flowers? The buried babe would not see the sentiment or smile, and neither would the elderly woman buried next to him. Who would see and who would care?

It was never for the lost that we build grand memorials, I realized with a shuddering sob, but the ones who the lost leave behind. As the first bolt of lightning streaked the sky, a strike of fear shot through me. I wondered if my father's grave had flowers.

Death stepped forward, a small black pebble in hand. He unfurled his shadowy fingers and let it fall atop the memorial, kissing the gravestone.

I came undone. I sobbed and thrashed and raged.

Death only watched with patient eyes then snaked his shadows around my shoulders, shielding me from the rain with his embrace.

Saltwater Lungs

by Megan Raams

As you stand in the center of Piazza San Marco, you close your eyes. You focus deeply, taking in your surroundings. The breeze lifts and plays with the tendrils of your hair. The bodies of people walking by manipulate the air's natural current. From above, the sun warms your skin with a perfectly moist heat. From beneath, the cool stone shifts almost undetectably, but the realization is ineffable. You feel the hum of the ocean as it breathes on the soles of your feet. Music from skilled violinists fills your ears to distract from the lack of foundation you put so much trust in, that St. Mark's Basilica puts so much weight on. You wonder how droplets of gold don't constantly rain from the ceiling and how the bell tower, which is now leaning over to pet the lion, doesn't make anyone else nervous.

You wonder if even then they will continue to act like everything is fine.

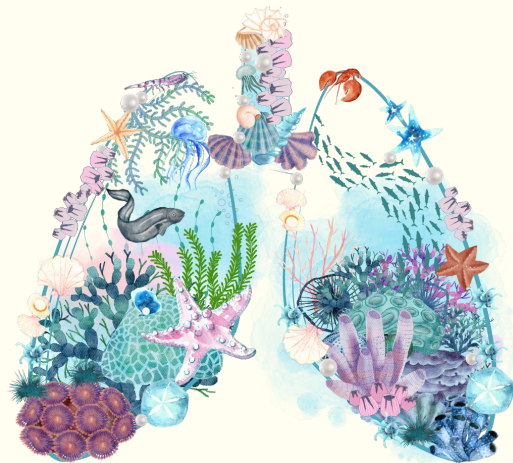
As the sun goes down, the water rises through the drains. You imagine that one day the tide will come up to people's necks. You wonder if even then they will continue to act like everything is fine. You realize the flaw of humanity is that everyone is an actor, playing the part of a blind man, until the day they quietly die.

You see yourself wake up to water kissing your cheeks, and your mother warning you of the fish nibbling at your toes, as she wades through the kitchen

to make breakfast. You imagine swimming to work where you rescue religious artifacts now waterlogged and damaged because people didn't anticipate the ocean rising as fast as it did. Your skin is in a constant state of pruning and your eyes no longer burn from the salt but instead stay a constant shade of red. Fish choke on Murano glass beads and float and bloat to the surface, continuing the legacy of Venice's stench.

You imagine how people from far and near will swim beneath the surface and take pictures riding the horses on top of the church. The flashes of their underwater cameras will scare the fish away and the water will be dyed to hide the ugliness from human filth. You imagine how dive teams will lead tours through the Basilica and how, even then, people will be pickpocketed and rise to the surface with roses in their hands.

You then take a deep breath of air, and wonder how no one else feels the saltwater in their lungs.



Graphic made by Megan Raams.



To Italy and Beyond

Section 4

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12 Hours in Paris

by Anjolina Ukmar

As the plane takes off, I put in my AirPods and queue Taylor Swift's song "Paris."

7:30 p.m.

The whole flight, I'm looking out the window to try to catch glimpses of places I've never seen before. I'm eager from when the plane begins to take off to when it lands, and I look out the window as the plane begins its descent into Paris. From a distance, I see a tall figure rising from the clouds, and the Eiffel Tower mesmerizes me in all her glory. While studying abroad, I have felt pressure to travel and see as much as possible, even for only 12 hours. "It's worth it; I'm only young once; my body can handle it," I keep telling myself in



Anjolina at 11:40 pm in front of the Eiffel Tower.

order to negate all the doubt running through my head. My four friends and I hop off the plane, head straight to baggage claim, and order an Uber to our Airbnb in the heart of the city of love.

We sing, we dance, and we are in PARIS.

9:15 p.m.

Our Uber driver was kind enough to let us play our music during our twenty-minute drive into the city. We sing, we dance, and we are in PARIS. The sun does not set in Paris until 10 p.m., and our plane takes off the next day at 11 a.m., so we know our only chance to see Paris will be that night.

10 p.m.

We check into our Airbnb, climb the five flights of stairs, and admire the Parisian design and architecture of the home. By the time all five of us were ready, it was 11 p.m., and the multiple Google searches my friends had done told them that the Eiffel Tower sparkles at 11:45 p.m. We did our hair and make-up and chose our outfits that would live forever in our pictures of tonight. Once all five of us were ready, we ordered another Uber to embark on our night.

11:30 p.m.

Five girls took a little while to get ready, but our Airbnb was only a ten-minute drive from the tower and we will make it just in time to see the



Breakfast at the Carette Café in Paris.

tower's lights transition from their harmonious glow to their harmonious shimmer. Bearing in mind that Google is not always the most reliable source, my friend, who spoke a bit of French, asked our French-speaking Uber driver when the tower begins to sparkle. He told us that once the lights begin to shimmer they continue to do so for an hour.

11:40 p.m.

We are dropped off right in front of the tower. Stepping out of the car, we all immediately break our necks to look up at the monumental figure in front of us. As we stand admiring the sight of the Eiffel Tower, which we have only seen on pages or through screens, we are in complete bliss. None of our phones move, our gazes remain overhead, and no words are exchanged for a minute.

11:45 p.m.

The clock changes from 11:44 to 11:45 p.m. The Tower's lights go dark. They will be back any second now, I tell

myself. When they turn back on, they will glisten. The next minute feels long as every last drop of hope is exiting my thoughts.

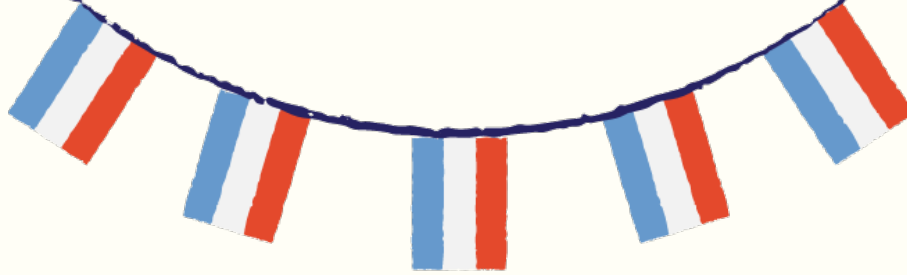
11:46 p.m.

The lights aren't coming back on. I pulled out my phone to do my own Google search, which reveals that the lights turn off at 11:45 p.m. and back on at 9 a.m. You would think that would have been enough to break our spirit. We took a second to say "I can't believe that just happened," then looked around at one another and realized we were in Paris and standing in front of the Eiffel Tower.

12 a.m.

We gathered ourselves almost immediately. Even though we expected this to occur differently, that would not ruin our next eight hours. We walked around the tower until we found the perfect spot to take pictures. Near the spot across the street from where the tower stands, there is a spacious curb. We lost track of time there on that curb as we sat together and watched the tower, observed the people, and laughed about how we flew all the way to Paris to see the Eiffel Tower lights twinkle at night and how they didn't.





2 a.m.

After what turned into the late hours of the morning on that curb, we were hungry and wanted to get some food before heading back to the Airbnb. It was 2 a.m., nothing was open in Paris, and open places were not serving food. On our way home, we passed an open McDonald's. Looks were exchanged, and we headed to try the French take on the food chain. After our meal at 2 a.m., we made a plan for the next day, even though it was a plan that needed to take place in the next five hours.

7 a.m.

I only got two hours of sleep that night. It didn't feel like that, though, because I knew what awaited me: a croissant, a coffee, and the sight of the Eiffel Tower the next day. We went to Carette Café, which has a divine view of the Eiffel Tower, and enjoyed our second and last French meal of the trip. This was better than McDonald's, but McDonald's did hold its own and tasted fresher than what I have had in America.

8:30 a.m

As we hopped in our last Uber, not ready to leave this city that had already left its impression on us in such little time, we headed back to the airport. I looked out the window and replayed the night—from getting ready to asking the Uber when the lights sparkled to noticing when the tower went dark. Then I thought to myself, that didn't go as planned. But I didn't care. What fun comes from things that go as planned? If the lights of the Eiffel Tower did shimmer, would I still experience my friend's

genuine laughter, would the conversations that made us lose track of time still occur, and would I have tried McDonald's in France? For me, my favorite moments from that night were after the lights went dark, that humbling feeling we all felt in unison, the walk we took until we found the perfect spot to settle, and the little-to-no sleep. Upon reflection, I realize that the Taylor Swift song I had on repeat during the flight there was not actually about being in Paris. Paris was used in this song as a metaphor for something you make or find beautiful. Most people may find the Eiffel Tower beautiful when it glistens, but to me, it is most beautiful when it is dark and you are forced to see what shines around the exterior.



A picture of the Eiffel Tower at night from across the river.

The Best Burger

by Carly Ellis

During my weekend trip to Venice Italy, I experienced the best burger I have ever had in my life. You know that feeling when you have been craving something for a long time? After being in Italy for almost a month, the only thing I wanted was a cheeseburger. This place hit the spot. At the Devil's Den Pub, I ordered the most spectacular cheeseburger, greasy and perfectly American. One of my friends who was also on the trip told me to go check the pub out, order a burger, and that I would not be disappointed. Getting to the restaurant was a little tricky; it is definitely a place you would call "a hole-in-the-wall establishment." However, once you find it and you take your first step in, you will find a nostalgic American-style sports bar. Coming to Italy for the first time was fun and life-changing, but I do miss being back home from time to time. Being in that restaurant was what I needed: a comforting, familiar space. I already knew what I was going to order, but I still looked over the menu. I ordered a cheeseburger with only ketchup. I am a very plain person when it comes to toppings, and the restaurant had no problem accommodating me. The staff was polite and swift, and overall, there was a strong happy feeling consuming me.

Once the burger came out my mouth was watering and my eyes lit up as if I had won a million dollars. I had a huge grin on my face, smiling from ear to ear. This was my first burger in Italy and I think the whole restaurant could feel my excitement. Once the burger was in front of me, I did not waste any

time. I slashed it in half, held it up to my face, and bit into it, the grease hitting my taste buds. Even after the first bite, the burger was still bigger than my face. I began to cry from tasting the grease and I started to feel the wholesome feeling of comfort filling my whole body. The temperature of the meat was exactly what I asked for, the cheese dissolved on my tongue, and the flavor was exactly what I expected. The meat was tender, not tough, and it melted in my mouth. The bread was nice and soft and tasted fresh. My experience there was everything I needed. It took just a little bit of my homesickness away.



A perfectly American cheeseburger.

travel [^] GALLERY



Carly Ellis in Florence



Pompeii



Trevi Fountain, Rome



Emily at the Leaning Tower of Pisa



Burano



Haydn Hubbard on a gondola in Venice



Anjolina Ukmar in London



Cinque Terre





Pics, or It Didn't Happen



by Phaedra Madrovic

At any envy-worthy destination, the modern traveler is tasked with acquiring as much “evidence” that they were there as possible. Photos, videos, and memorabilia are compiled into a cluttered collection of souvenirs. Goods stamped with “Made in [insert location here]” are hoarded as if people wouldn’t believe you were there otherwise. “Pictures or it didn’t happen” is the norm.

For my twenty-first birthday, I staged my own Mardi Gras weekend in New Orleans. The scenic trip combined with the milestone year meant the pressure for good pictures elevated tenfold, to which we Gen Z-ers obviously caved. From what I can remember of it, my ability diminished for obvious, festivity-related reasons. We wasted a ludicrously large amount of time with impromptu photo shoots. We could not walk ten feet down the French Quarter without at least thirty new selfies of unnatural “candids” bloating our camera roll. The visual of myself in any slight change in scenery: the light changing when the sun ducks behind a cloud, the tightly-packed street behind me clearing, the next doorway being slightly prettier than the last—it all needed to be documented. This compulsion colored my entire perception of the slightly city. Instead of admiring the beauty of the colonial buildings (a novelty to my Miami Art Deco-saturated eyes) I was only concerned with how I would look in front of them.

The futility of trying to “capture” an artificial moment was hilarious when you factor in how my own insecurities arise when my picture is taken.

After treating New Orleans like a plain white backdrop, I trudged through the cramped alleyways to our hotel with hundreds of new snaps weighing my phone down like a brick in my hand. On the elevator ride up, I realized I had not enjoyed my day as much as I should have. I foolishly made an aesthetic Instagram post as the end goal of my 21st birthday.

I vowed to arrive in Florence with a present mentality. I craved immersion and authenticity. However, I soon found authenticity in a modernized, tourist-dependent Italy a rarity. A collector at heart, I hoped to amass a gathering of “native” trades items. Instead, the Florentine streets bombarded my eyes with domineering, overstuffed stands of “I Florence” shirts, leather bags made of leftover scraps, and underwear prints of David’s “crown jewels.” The exotic, mystical quality of “Made in Italy” was stripped away with each forced glance of a phallic fridge magnet.

Worldly desires would be easier to fight if Italy was not begging me to give into them. Want to add to your clutter? Here’s a shop stuffed with meaningless junk painted red, white, and green. Obsessed with taking pictures? Here’s a tour specifically routed for the best “panoramic views.” I speak as if I’m above these mechanics, but I’m not. I’m a mass consumer with an unquenchable thirst for documentation. I want pictures. I want things.

These yearnings sacrifice my engagement wherever I go. Like how I became the focal point of New Orleans, our everyday rituals of social media

validation create a distance between us and the experience we are meant to have. The dissonance is especially notable in Italy, where the grandest tourist attractions happen to be some of the holiest structures in the world. Now, I am neither Italian nor religious, so the world “holy” means very little to me, but I couldn’t help but think it was odd to see a group of students taking selfies in front of a crypt filled with San Marco’s bones. At first, I admit, I thought it was funny as a casual form of punkish rebellion, but then the reality of where I was and what I had come there to do sank in. Is this not a place of reverence, a time for pensive thought—instead of your trivial Instagram story? Could respecting the original intent be the least we can do after traveling all this way?

Even without the spiritual pretense, taking subpar photos of places millions of others have taken before still feels trivial. That begs the question of what fuels these desires. Why is simply being there not enough? What are we trying to prove by all buying the same items and taking the same photos? What do we gain?

I compare the question of taking pictures while traveling to recording at concerts. Most artists nowadays perform to a sea of screens rather than faces, with fans being more concerned with collecting footage to watch later than the current show. Perhaps our dwindling attention spans have also made us fearful of a rapidly fading memory. You have fun now, but in a few weeks, you are left with nothing to remember. “Pics,” or it didn’t happen. It could be narcissism, and social media’s doctrine of self-aggrandizing promotion makes it so that the lavish trips are no longer about being there, but showing off our exotic location. Or maybe this is an innocent, cheap souvenir readily avail-

able to people of all creeds and classes that fulfills sentimental needs. Taking a photo for Instagram feels different than taking one because your mom misses you and wants to see what you’re up to.

Hyperactive media consumption and an overactive mind have not blessed me with clarity, so I may need more answers, but I do have suggestions. Go somewhere to be there, not to say you’ve been there. Don’t make that magical post the objective of your journey where the long, arduous venture could be ruined by a bad hair day. When you do take photos, employ restraint and moderation. Take in the reins and pull back; instead buy one or two things that are special to you. Rather than a handful of small gifts, I am content with the gorgeous, hand-carved wooden chess set and leather photo book I bought. When it’s photoshoot time, get your “cover picture” and call it a day. Know where you are, have fun, and be present. The moment is not going anywhere, so long as you savor it.



*Madelyn Luther (foreground)
taking photos for Phaedra
Mladenovic (background).*

Finding Community Abroad: Pride in Italy

by Haydn Hubbard & Madelyn Luther

We had been looking forward to Roma Pride for weeks. But when the day of the parade finally came and we began walking down the streets of Rome to the starting point, some of those in our group of five felt apprehensive. Decked out head to toe in rainbow garb, we stood out in a city that values religion and tradition. Rome houses the capital of Catholicism, a religion in which homosexuality is sometimes frowned upon. We felt each pressing gaze burn our backs as onlookers broke their necks to stare at our colorful display as we passed.

Then, as we approached the starting point of the parade, any semblance of judgment was gone. It was replaced by the thundering of loud music and cheers as we rounded the final corner to enter the Piazza Della Republica. The air around us thrummed with electric energy as the bass speakers rattled the cement. Excitement was palpable from a whole block away. We saw color streaming behind the spray of water droplets from the fountain at the center of the Piazza. Any hesitation we had felt melted away immediately at the first notes of Katy Perry's iconic "I Kissed a Girl." Although we may have been outsiders in Italy both as Americans and as queer women, within the masses, a warmth of belonging at Pride enveloped us.

In the mass of glitter and rainbow were people each adorned in their own unique outfits, which ranged from a man who had decorated himself entirely in metallic glitter to a girl who wore plain clothes and simply held a sign that read: "Mitski fan." There was an overwhelming



Haydn Hubbard (left) and Madelyn Luther (right) taking a selfie with their Pride accessories.

feeling of belonging among the paraders which provided a stark contrast to the otherness we had felt wandering the streets of Rome only minutes before.

Children ran by covered in sparkles, full of joy and youthful spirit. We were offered free goodies and caught glimpses of couples kissing by the fountain, their flag capes streaming behind them like badges of honor. In the center, a woman handed out cards with an LGBTQIA+ helpline number on them for anyone who may be struggling with the trials that often go hand-in-hand with queerness.

As people got moving, our group marched in the parade through the heart of Rome without fear. Openly embracing our identity in such a public way was foreign to us, and, filled with elation, our cheeks hurt from smiling so much. People threw open the windows to their houses as we passed, dancing to the music and celebrating with us. Police officers milled about, protecting the riotous peace we had found. Local businesses set up rainbow-colored balloons and decorations outside to show their support for the parade. The streets were packed full of people celebrating their queer identities. The streets were so full, in fact, that our group of five got separated quite a few times, though each time we eventually found our way back to one another. And though some of our party did not identify with the LGBTQIA+ community, they still danced and celebrated with us, which warmed our hearts.

The most striking and memorable moment of the parade occurred when we approached the Colosseum. The sheer quantity of people in attendance with brightly colored outfits, Pride flags and loud music, juxtaposed with such an ancient wonder of architecture, was incredible. It was hard to believe that we had the opportunity to create our own memories in a place that is already so rich in history. The beauty of the scene felt unreal at that moment, almost as if we were characters starring in a film. As the sun began to set over the Colosseum, it cast a wondrous golden glow over the sea of people and our surroundings.

Going to Roma Pride was such a remarkable experience for us not only because of our own ties with the LGBTQIA+ community, but because of the importance Pride parades have for members of the queer community. In America, Pride month holds great cultural significance and occurs each year

None of us could have expected the explosion of joy and color that was waiting for us.

in June to commemorate the Stonewall riots, which occurred in June 1969. Cities in other countries emulate this cultural tradition in their own way and host Pride parades in June as well. Attending Pride as queer people gave us a sense of belonging as we knew we were a part of something bigger than ourselves and where we came from. We felt unified and, more importantly, safe to be ourselves among an international commu-



A photo of the Pride flag in front of the colosseum.

nity of queer-identifying individuals and allies. Queerness is one of the few aspects of a culture that can extend beyond the borders of almost every country.

In Italy, societal attitudes toward the LGBTQIA+ community are mostly positive, especially among the younger generation. However, gay marriage has yet to be legalized and a great deal of the country continues to maintain a conservative outlook on queer rights and acceptance. Instead of marriage, queer couples can pursue an arrangement called a civil union. On top of this, same-sex couples are not allowed to adopt children. Anti-LGBTQIA+ policies have been pushed further by the current prime minister Giorgio Meloni. AP reporter Frances D'emilio notes how the parade stood as a colorful counterpoint to the Meloni administration's crackdown on LGBTQIA+ rights. Overall, progress tends to be slow and many rural communities hold more oppressive values than larger cities.

According to Marco Tribuzi, a reporter for the Italian news source "Dire," tens of thousands of people turned out for the parade. Roma Pride had organized the parade and the route, which boasted 13 different stops. It started in the afternoon at the Piazza della Repubblica and stopped at the Piazza Santa Maria Maggiore, Via Labicana, the Colosseum, and other famous sites. Major roads were blocked off in the city to make way for the multitude of people celebrating Pride. The event featured many well-known public figures such as Italian pop duo Paola & Chiara, drag queens, and other performers. The festivities also featured passionate speeches from various LGBTQIA+ activists. An afterparty was thrown on Via di San Giovanni in Laterano, known by some to be Rome's 'Gay Street,' an area that is queer-friend-

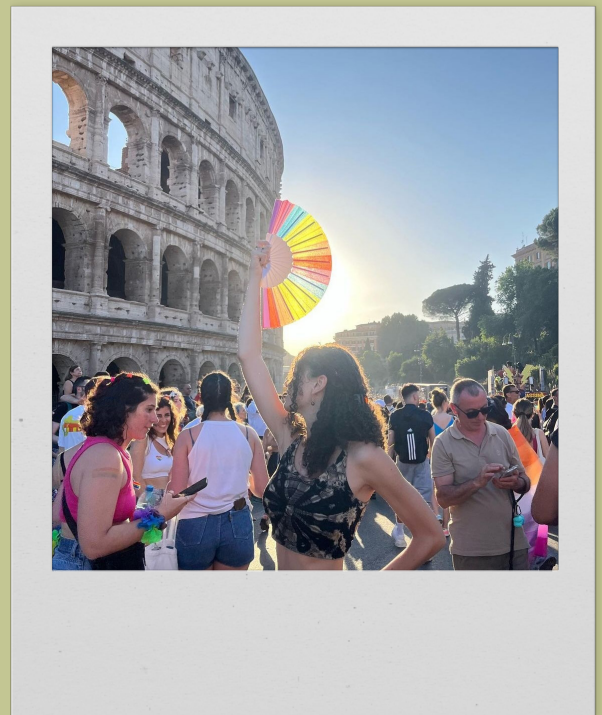
ly with many gay bars and restaurants. Being even a small part of such a large event was an honor and a privilege for us.

When we finally folded our rainbow fans and began the long trek home from the parade to our hotel, we were filled with not only exhaustion but pride (the pun is fully intended). Our feet were sore and our clothes were soaked with sweat and multicolor face paint, but we were fulfilled in a new way knowing we had a place in this community. While we are sure we will take home many tangible souvenirs from our time in Italy, this memory will be the one to never break or rust.



A photo of a rainbow flag flying in the heart of Roma Pride.

A Day to Remember



<3 Thanks for all the memories, Florence was definitely an adventure!
#myapplewatchistired
- Erin

Thank you for the food, the experiences, the friends, and more—
ciao Firenze!
- Madelyn

I had so much fun this summer!
Live, Laugh, EWM
- Marysue

HAGS (Had A Great Summer) in Firenze!
-Layne

Don't be sad that it's over, be happy that it happened! Ciao!
-Anjolina

Oh, Florence, how I will miss your Papardelle pasta. You guys were pretty cool too. Love you all! <3
-Phaedra

I had so much fun working on the magazine with everyone! I'll miss everyone in this wonderful city. <3
-Laura

Yeah, the city was cool, but the people were better.
-Megan

Dr. Howell and Dr. Pascoe,

Thank you endlessly for your guidance throughout these past four weeks abroad. Your feedback on assignments has made us better writers and editors. Writing about food and learning about texts through class excursions and hands-on examples gave us unique opportunities to engage with Florentine people and culture. With your classes, we attended Emiko Davies' cooking school, learned about book restoration from the National Library of Florence, and more. Through these excursions, we learned much about diverse subjects while abroad. Your patience, advice, and enthusiasm about the city we found ourselves in and the subjects we studied enriched our academic experiences. We extend heartfelt appreciation again for all you do.

Best wishes,

Your students from FSU's Summer 2023 Editing, Writing, and Media in Florence Program,

*Marysue Burun, Carly Ellis, Laura Guerrero,
Emily Hancock, Haydn Hubbard,
Madelyn Luther, Erin Miskowski, Phaedra
Mladenovic, Megan Raams, Layne Schutte,
and Anjolina Ulmar*



Ciao . . . for now.