

Food

WORTH TRAVELING FOR

In Southern Italy and Sicily, food is the heartbeat of local life. To eat here is to experience the region's soul. Recipes are passed down, and hospitality is second nature. Southern Italian cuisine focuses on simple dishes featuring vegetables, seafood, and pasta.

PALERMO

In Palermo, the city's Moorish and Norman influences are evident in the bustling markets. Visit Ballarò, Capo, or Vucciria to experience daily Sicilian life. These markets are social hubs where locals shop for produce, meats, spices, seafood, and street food. Follow your senses through the corridors, where sizzling *panelle* (chickpea fritters) and crisp *arancine* (also known as arancini) fill the air with the fragrance of fried herbs and saffron. In Palermo, consider sampling *caponata*, Sicily's beloved sweet-and-sour eggplant medley, often served as an appetizer or side dish.

AGRIGENTO & THE ANCIENT COAST

Down along Sicily's southern edge, seek out a meal that reflects the land's abundance. Try *pasta con le sarde*, a signature dish of wild fennel, sardines, and toasted breadcrumbs.



MOUNT ETNA & TAORMINA

On Sicily's eastern coast, life plays out between sea and volcano. A day on Mount Etna offers a taste of the island's wilder side. Lava fields feed the vineyards, where grapes like Nerello Mascalese, Carricante, and Nerello Cappuccio thrive in mineral-rich soil. We recommend having lunch at a winery to experience how the mountainous terrain influences the wines' tasting notes. Also, be sure to try the local seafood.

MATERA & BASILICATA

Though traditionally from neighboring Puglia, *orecchiette con cime di rapa* (pasta with turnip greens) is also enjoyed in Basilicata, where rustic meals reflect the rugged terrain. Pair it with regional wines and strike up a conversation with a local.

SORRENTO & THE AMALFI COAST

Stroll through Sorrento's winding lanes and stop at a café for a *delizia al limone*, a lemon-scented cake created in Sorrento in the late 20th century. This dessert captures the essence of this coast in one bite.



Recipes To Try:

PASTA ALLA NORMA

Pasta Alla Norma is a Sicilian staple that dates back to the mid-1800s. According to legend, it was named after "Norma," the famous opera by Sicilian composer Vincenzo Bellini. The story goes that a local chef created the dish in Bellini's honor, and it was one of his favorites.

Today, you can find *Pasta Alla Norma* on menus across Sicily as a *primo piatto* (first course).

Serve the dish at home with this easy recipe from **Luigi A.**, one of Collette's local Tour Managers in Italy.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 small eggplant (about 8 oz)
- 1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 ¾ oz chopped onion
- 1 small garlic clove
- 12 oz canned tomatoes, crushed
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 10 oz penne pasta
- 5 basil leaves
- 5 oz ricotta salata (salted ricotta), grated*

DIRECTIONS

1. Cut the eggplant into small cubes. Lightly salt them and let them rest to sweat excess water.
2. Place olive oil in a frying pan and sauté the chopped onion and the garlic clove.
3. Add the diced eggplant, crushed tomatoes, salt, and pepper and cook for 20–30 minutes. Remove garlic clove.
4. When the sauce is almost ready, cook the penne in salted boiling water, according to the package directions, until *al dente*. Drain pasta.
5. Toss the penne with the sauce in a serving bowl.
6. Add the basil and grated salted ricotta.

*Recipe Notes: Ricotta salata (salted ricotta) is a firm cheese. If you can't find it in your local market, Pecorino Romano cheese is a good substitute. You could also try chopped mozzarella or sheep's milk feta. Adjust the salt to your taste preferences.

CONTRIBUTORS



Nicole Diebold

Nicole Diebold oversees Brand + Creative at Collette. A lifelong storyteller and traveler, she worked in television and media before joining Collette 19 years ago. She's the author of *Honeymoon Alone* and spends her days balancing creative campaigns, iced coffee, and life with her four energetic sons.



Liz Lee

Rhode Island-based writer and editor Liz Lee spends her time balancing deadlines, daydreams, and the unpredictable adventures of parenting. She's never been to Stonehenge, but has fond memories of visiting Foamhenge, a full-scale replica located somewhere in Virginia.



Mohamed Merri

Born and raised in Morocco, Mohamed is a Collette Tour Manager who brings his home country to life for travelers. He began his guiding career with hiking and climbing adventures 18 years ago. Whether pouring mint tea, swapping stories, or leading guests down 9,000 alleyways in Fez, he brings humor, warmth, and genuine connection to every journey.



Jodie Day

Jodie Day is an adventure seeker and copywriter who thrives on creativity and the thrill of a new discovery. When she's not writing or exploring her favorite places, you'll find her carving down New England's mountain slopes or cruising the city streets in Providence when the snow melts.



Megan Monte

Megan Monte lives for adventures — those found abroad, at home, and in the pages of a book. As a marketing copywriter and fiction author, she brings her love for discovery and storytelling to everything she writes. When she isn't at her keyboard, you'll find her surfing, reading, or cooking dishes inspired by her travels.



Jessica Ward

After studying music and art in København, Jessica could not stop dreaming about travel. As a lifelong writer, it quickly became another muse. When she's not writing or reading her friends' horoscopes, she's on the hunt for her new favorite song and planning her annual pilgrimage to Red Rocks Amphitheater.



Jason Suchite

Jason Suchite brings the world to life through design. As Collette's Art Director, he merges creativity with wanderlust, shaping visuals that celebrate exploration and cultural connection. His work invites travelers to see the world not just as destinations, but as stories waiting to unfold.



Stephanie Blanchard

Stephanie Blanchard is a writer, editor, and adjunct communications professor. Stephanie is also the founder of Artisan Joy, a nonprofit media outlet that celebrates creative entrepreneurs. She especially loves uncovering the stories of artisans she meets while traveling.

COVER

Vila Franca Islet, Azores, Portugal

CONTACT

Phone: 800.611.3361
Web: www.gocollette.com
Email: Magazine@collette.com
Socials: @gocollette

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