



LIVING ALL'ITALIANA

...how to live dolce vita anywhere

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Italians, Italy, *la dolce vita*... What comes into your mind when you hear these words? You have probably heard this question many times and it is no surprise that the answer usually is: pizza, pasta, long dinners with family and friends, evenings spent outside, driving Vespa, Aperol Spritz, lunch accompanied by wine, charming men, stylish women, great coffee, also after dinner, ice cream...

It seems like a lot of cliché, but these are really phenomenon that express the true essence of *dolce vita*. Time with our closest ones, respecting traditions, slower pace, food prepared from scratch, from ingredients from „our“ baker/butcher or from the nearby farm. Local. To stop. To enjoy the present moment. To be proud of your country and its treasures. And for Italians, that treasure might be not only culture, but also cuisine. Can you name the country with no Italian restaurant? That reflects its popularity. But to be honest, Italians worry about representation of their cuisine in the world and many people outside Italy have no idea of the real Italian gastronomy. That is the reason they do not understand

how it can be one of the healthiest on the Earth. How can be healthy eating pasta daily and having a three-course dinner? We will discover that soon.

Being like Italian doesn't mean to throw away your national habits. It means embracing them. But also learning from Italian way of drinking and eating, because they somehow have better results worldwide when it comes to diseases. But maybe they just don't admit them, since healthcare in Italy is quite expensive.

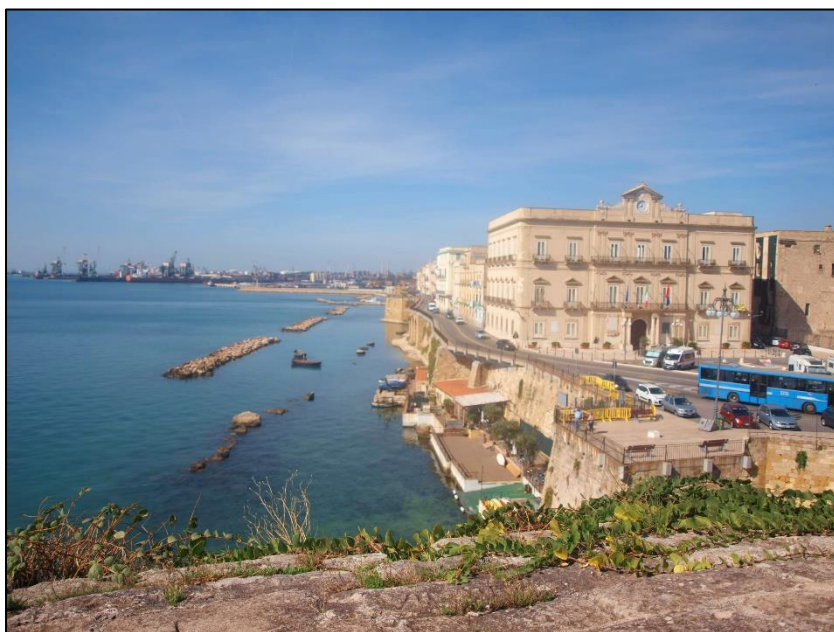
Even an Italian complains about practices in his country, about low wages, costly living, corruptness of politicians, humid winter, but still, he is convinced that there is no better place to live than his native country. Or even his native city that will always have a special place in his heart. No wonder that famous politicians and sports people thank for their success by contributing to ameliorate it, for example by repairing the stadium or fountain in *piazza*. And they come back at least once a year even if their fate took them far away from their place of birth. And it is no wonder that when an Italian falls in love with a stranger, they often end up in Italy. Italians, especially men, cannot live without the cuisine of their

mamma and her delicious dishes, lazy evenings, friends, best vegetable in the world, best coffee/wine...

Italians love Italy and its treasures. And they praise them all. Architectonic gems from antique times, history and artists, but also food, people, football. And even TV shows with almost naked assistants.

Why people all over the world admire Italian lifestyle? Why there are no books about German or English lifestyle? Yes, Sweden is famous for their Hygge and French lifestyle is known for its complexity and elaboration when it comes to fashion or food. But then there is Italian *dolce vita*, that people all over to world seek to have, too. And you can live it even if you were not born in Italy. There are several universal principles that form the basis of that lifestyle. It may be a generalization and as in Italian grammar, you can find exceptions also in culture. Italy is a lifestyle. And whether you plan to live there or you just want to implement few things into your lifestyle or you just want to prepare a great Italy-themed party, your life will be more *dolce*, if you learn something from Italians.

Since as many languages you know, so many times you are a human. And they say it because as you learn the language you cannot do it without learning something also about the culture of the nation who speaks it. You widen your horizons and so you learn new habits that will enrich your life.



Be like Italians

Being like Italian is not only about eating pasta and drinking wine. There are several concepts that characterize this Mediterranean nation.

Furbi e fessi

In Italy you are *furbo* or *fesso*, so you are clever fellow who can solve anything with any means and does not allow to be cheated, or you are a fool. One or other, there is nothing in between, as Giuseppe Prezzolini said: *“Italians are either sticklers for the rules or they skirt the rules.”*

(I cittadini italiani si dividono in due categorie: i furbi e i fessi.)

Being a fox is a virtue. If butcher gives you slices of ham that are too thick, you cannot leave it like that. He cannot afford to do that to you.

Carpe Diem

Latin saying. In Italian: *Cogli attimo*. In English, a little longer: Live each moment to the fullest. This is what *dolce vita* is about. When you drink your aperitivo after work, you do not hold your cell phone and you definitely do not drink too much to forget how horrible that day was. You are enjoying the moment. You sense bubbles of your Prosecco, you talk with your friends, you make great plans and make them come true. Or maybe you just dream about them. Words of an Italian are usually bigger than his actions. At least nowadays, you can find examples of great actions in history. It doesn't have to be something great, even a walk after dinner is an important event. The time to relax and just living in the moment. Italians don't complain about lost time after five hours of eating and chatting with friends. Italians appreciate these moments and live for them.

Dolce far niente

Dolce far niente, sweetness of doing nothing. This notion is common not only for Italians but also for other Mediterranean nations. In Germany, it is unknown concept. A lot of people in other countries were raised

with an idea that doing nothing means laziness and when we are just laying on the sofa and reading or we are sitting outside in the garden with a glass of wine, we should stop and do something “more useful”. And these moments should be just breaks between two activities. So, we cannot even enjoy them.



In Italy it is a whole different story. Doing nothing, enjoying the present moment, is necessary for health. Physical and mental health. An Italian would never feel guilty for doing nothing, these moments are precious.

And no one can take them from him. That is why Italians love to take a walk without having final destination, to sit in *piazza* and look at life around them. You can do nothing even when the work is not done yet. It is necessary to gain new forces so the work could be done. Sooner or later. That is why Italians do not like deadlines. It is more important to do a good work than to make it fast. And to make it good, one must be relaxed.

Dolce vita

Why we call Italian lifestyle *dolce vita*, sweet life? It is easy to guess the answer. Pasta, pizza, spending a lot of time with friends in bars or restaurants, sunny weather, both sea and mountains, good wine, even better food, beautiful architecture, art wherever you look... How would you call such a lifestyle if not sweet? But be careful when it comes to first impression. The life in place of your Italian vacation and ordinary life of Italian do not always match.



Superstition (La superstizione)

Italians are very superstitious nation. They do not underestimate bad signs and they are prepared for them. *Scaramanzia* is part of their life. This involves objects or gestures that will turn away forthcoming disasters, and thus they lose their power. It can be crossing fingers or popular amulet in form of red corn known mainly in Naples. Or knocking on iron, ideally on horseshoe. Even those who are not so superstitious will do some saving gesture. Just to be sure.

Which are these bad signs? Some of them are common for more nations, as seeing black cat passing the road or misfortune caused by breaking the mirror. Some are typically Italian.

Friday the 17th

This day is unhappy for the only nation in the world. Italians are not afraid of Friday 13th, but they are scared by Friday 17th. Why? Jesus died on this day. And the worst is Friday 17th in November, a month dedicated to the deceased.

Another explanation is that they are afraid of this day because Roman number XVII is anagram of Latin VIXI – it means “I lived”. It reminds them that the end of life is close.

Spilled salt, spilled oil

Both these commodities are very precious. Salt used to be costly during times of ancient Rome, the Latin word *il sale* gave birth to word *il salario*, the wage. To these days, olive oil is called liquid gold. It is not only essential ingredient of Italian cuisine, mostly in South, but also a medicine and

precious article. Spilling salt reminds them of the betrayal of Judas. He spilled salt from hands shortly before he betrayed Jesus. It is thus very dangerous to pass it to someone. If it happens to you, you will lose money. But if you pick it up and throw it behind your arm three times, you will be saved from misfortune. Not from cleaning it.

Passing under the ladder

In ancient Egypt ladder was symbol of Gods and their path to them. Ladders were found in pyramids. And the ladder placed against the wall forms a triangle, symbol of Saint Trinity. Invading this space means following Satan. But if you cross both your fingers and arms while passing under the ladder, you may be saved.

Not looking in the eyes during “Cheers!”

It is common to look in the eyes of the person during *cincin* (*il brindisi*). But do you know why?

This habit comes from dark Medieval times (*il Medioevo*), when it used to guarantee that the other person did not put poison into your drink. Few drops could accidentally

get to the other glass during *brindisi* and if someone refused to drink it, it was a sign of his bad intentions.

Looking someone in the eyes also expresses respect and loyalty. If you are looking at your glass trying not to spill it, Italian could become offended and he would take his glass away.

Opening umbrella inside

This myth has a very long history, too. It comes from the ancient Rome. *L'ombrello* protected against rain and sun. Opening it inside could offend God of Sun and thus bringing misfortune for the whole family. A few centuries later, an umbrella got another function. It was covering holes in the roof during rain, of course, in houses of poor people. Thus, you invite not only misfortune but also poverty.

Putting hat on the bed

Priests used to put hat on the bed of dying person during last rites. By doing this you are inviting death to your house.

How do Italians attract luck? Simply. They avoid above mentioned situations. They also believe in positive power of horseshoe in their homes. In Naples they love to wear a red corn. It is always better to secure your luck with these rituals and living your *dolce vita* without fear.

La festa

Italians do not celebrate just birthday, Christmas or Easter. Even less important days are occasions to meet the family and friends, to prepare an opulent feast and to have fun until late hours. Each festivity is connected to certain rituals, mostly the ones starting in the kitchen. That is why on May 1st Italians eat beans (*le fave*) with *pecorino* cheese, Carnival is dedicated to sweet fried pastry such as *castagnole* and *zeppole*. It is not necessary to celebrate the way the Italians do, you can celebrate your country's own traditions. That is the meaning of approach to life *all'italiana*. *Il Carnevale* is a show full of costumes, masks and allegorical cars. The most famous is the one held in Venice, but even smaller cities have their astonishing shows.



Italy is well-known for its festivals dedicated to certain meal or drink, such as festival of chicory plant or certain wine variety. And we cannot forget festivals dedicated to saints, mostly to the patron of the city. Also, the Christianity itself offers occasions to celebrate, so Italian children experience baptism, communion and confirmation. Even if the religion does not play the same role as in the past and churches are visited by less and less Italians, Christian festivals are sacred.

There is always a reason to celebrate. You can visit some festival every weekend, Italians have 2,000 each year. Participation is usually above-average, they are visited by locals and inhabitants of nearby villages. Don't be surprised if someone offers you free grappa or prosciutto from his production, mainly in small villages. Italians really know how to enjoy life.

In Italy the adjectives "obligatory" and "optional" are synonyms.

(In Italia gli aggettivi „obbligatorio“ e „facoltativo“ formano un sinonimo.)

Fabrizio Caramagna

Sacred August

Italians are looking forward to August for the entire year. Even if this is the month when Italy is visited by most tourists, many restaurants and shops are closed. Sometimes even for the whole month. But with the financial crisis, it is more common to close "just" for two weeks. August is the vacation time for every Italian. The weather is too hot, it is not reasonable to stay in town.

And working in such hot weather? No way. It is better to wait until it becomes little cooler.

Not surprisingly, the favorite destination of Italians is... Italy. There are beaches as well as mountains, each region has its signature dishes. This time culminates on August 15th with the most expected festivity of the summer known as *Ferragosto*. It is celebrated only in Italy. It is obligatory to go on a trip, to barbecue or have a picnic and watch the fireworks with a full stomach in the evening. On this day, tourists are the only ones who stay in the city.

This festivity was originally celebrated on August 1st and it represented the closure of summer agricultural season. But Christians were not happy that this festive day is pagan, so they have agreed that it is better to postpone celebrations on August 15th, Day of Assumption of Mary. Nowadays it is a day full of food and fun taking place outdoors, the day of *dolce far niente*. You can also visit some show, e. g. famous *Palio di Siena*, historical horse race, or concert. But you can also visit some Mass outdoors. *Ferragosto* is "outdoor" festivity.

If you really want to visit Italy during Ferragosto, forget about big cities, such as Rome or Milano, left by locals.

Join Italians on the beach or head to mountains and enjoy this festivity with them. And if you want to look like a local, take a blanket and basket filled with food and wine.

Easter

Easter (*la Pasqua*) is one of two most important Christian festivities. The second one is Christmas. In the South and in villages this is the time of visits to churches and of fasting. Easter Monday (*la Pasquetta*), in many countries the most important day, represents only the end of the Easter period. The most important day is Sunday celebrated with lot of meat and eggs, both real and chocolate eggs. Italians prefer huge chocolate eggs.

On Monday they like to have a trip or picnic. In Italy they say: "*Natale con i tuoi, Pasqua con chi vuoi.*", so you should spend Christmas with family and Easter with whoever you want. But even during Easter, they prefer to spend time with family. Family always comes first.

Christmas

Christmas (*il Natale*) is celebrated in the pretty same way as in other countries. Only menu differs. They eat fish and

frutti di mare, often many varieties in many courses. The dinner lasts for hours. Some Italians make jokes that their dinner finishes on New Year. Santa Claus, here known as Father Christmas – *Babbo Natale* – arrives only after midnight, so Italians have plenty of time to finish their feast and children are not so impatient.

There is one obligatory decoration common for households and city centers, and this is not a Christmas tree, but Nativity scene (*il presepe*) showing the place where a little Jesus was born with all the people, Kings and animals around. You can even find a guy preparing pizza, known as *pizzaiolo*. Each family owns one Presepe and Christmas markets sell plenty of these small figurines. The father, head of the family, puts Jesus in the crib on midnight on December 24th.

Italians celebrate with their families. And if they are not together on 24th, they will surely visit each other during next days to have some five (or more)-course meal together.

Having fun

Italians are cultural nation, they love cultural events. From concerts and operas to theaters and football tournaments. And they can appreciate the arts. No wonder. They are surrounded by the most stunning artistic operas every day from their day one on this planet. Even small villages have some church decorated by famous artist or at least some ancient building. There is the joke that Italians are not able to build anything, because every time they dig in the soil, they find some precious relic. And this is then followed by months and years of archeological works.

Cultural events are associated with a dinner in a restaurant. They are used to eating late. It is not usual to go to a restaurant on a daily basis, unless you are in a romantic movie, it is something reserved for festive day or vacation. But coffee in bar is a must almost each day, because the price of an Italian *espresso* is very favorable.



Italians are proud of their artists and they love also concerts of singers from other countries. On radios, you will mostly hear modern Italian music. Italy is known for their opera singers, famous opera *La Scala* and summer outdoor concerts are very popular and they often take place in some historical site. And we cannot forget San Remo festival held each year in February. Italians watch it with same passion as football during World Championship.

Be like Italian

- ✓ No rushing. Enjoy every moment. Whether you are eating, you are outside with friends or just waiting for them. Each day of life must be enjoyed.
- ✓ Do not live for work, but vice versa.
- ✓ Stay in touch with your family and friends and often contact or visit them.
- ✓ Always leave a good impression.
- ✓ Do not underrate bad signs and have some amulet ready to get rid of bad forces.
- ✓ Celebrate. There is always some reason to celebrate. And if there is none, maybe you can find some sort of festival in your surroundings.



Eat like Italians

Eating like Italians does not mean eating same things as Italians during same hours. Even if it is advisable, their diet is one of the healthiest in the world.

It is more about adhering to similar concepts and these are: seasonality, local production, simplicity. It is being proud of the production of your own country, about the importance of food regardless of the fact if you eat alone or with others, about capability of taking three ingredients and creating quality and tasty meal.

Italians are sure that their cuisine is the best in the world as well as their production since it grew under the Italian sun. And Italian wines? The best, of course, since the composition of soil in Italy, whether by sea or volcano, is unique. They are proud of their cuisine and they are able to talk about it for hours. And to fight for its superiority. While eating. It is true that during meal Italians already talk about next meal.

Italian cuisine is very diverse. Not every Italian eats pasta for lunch and pizza for dinner. Inhabitants of mountains eat *frutti di mare* only during vacation at sea, and they prefer warm soups, cheese and grappa, while those living at the sea eat mainly fish and prefer to drink white wine. Italy consists of 20 regions united only in 1861. Italy extends from Germany known for its punctuality to sunny Africa with slower pace of life. This is reflected not only in culture, buildings, fashion, but also in the kitchen. Pasta, olive oil and seafood prevail in the South, polenta, butter and meat dominate the Northern cuisine. That is why you will never find *risotto milanese* or *pesto genovese* in all the restaurants in Italy. They are prepared in the place of their origin. If you find any “universal” dishes on the menu instead of regional specialties, then you are in a restaurant for tourists.

Rhythm and content of eating in Italy is quite unique.



Breakfast (*La prima colazione or la colazione*)

Breakfast is quite neglected in Italy. They do not believe it is the most important meal of the day. In fact, it is not even a meal. Coffee and biscuit or croissant known as *cornetto*. Or some other cake. Salty food is excluded as well as anything heavy such as eggs and bacon. When it comes to stomach, the heaviest part of breakfast is *cappuccino*.

If you plan vacation in Italy, you should verify the meaning of "*Colazione inclusa*" (Breakfast included). In big hotels, it may be international buffet, but in small hotels managed by Italian family you can expect just their typical *caffè e cornetto*. And why would you pay 3,50, when you can find the same "breakfast menu" in bar near hotel only for 2,30 EUR.

Why they don't like to eat big breakfast? It is due to the fact that Italians eat their dinner late, so they are not very hungry when they wake up in the morning. And we can blame it on the weather, too.

Lunch (*Il pranzo*)

Lunch is an important meal of the day, often comprised of pasta, *risotto*, salad or *panini*, kind of sandwich. You can also have some pizza, even if they usually eat it for dinner. A triangle is more a snack, Italians order a whole pizza per person. After all, they are already quite hungry after their small breakfast. But steak, *bistecca alla fiorentina*, or another meat is too much for the middle of the day, it is better to eat it for dinner.



It is normal to have a glass of wine during your lunch. In the South it is even normal to have one glass already in the morning. But in general, alcohol accompanies food. Aperitif or digestive, some spirit, is mostly offered before or after dinner. But older people living in mountains will not refuse it even in the morning. Just to stay healthy.

Alla salute!

The usual digestive taken after lunch is a small coffee. Never with milk, milk is enemy of digestion and they never order cappuccino after 11 am. This is the knowledge verified by ages and Italians never doubt it.

Aperitif (*L'aperitivo*)

Aperitivo in Italia is not just *cin-cin* at the beginning of celebration or festive dinner, as in many countries. In Italy, it is part of their culture. It is a meeting after work with some wine, Aperol Spritz or some other drink and some snacks. It usually takes place after 5 pm, so there is no wonder that Italians eat their dinner later. And they do not drink their alcoholic beverage without food. In Italy it is disgraceful to drink a lot and to look drunk. *Fare la bella figura*, making a good impression, is important also during the *aperitivo* time. Thus, they eat while they drink.

A bottle of wine on the table is always accompanied by water and by several snacks. It may be olives, nuts, little *bruschetta* or stuffed vegetables. Being drunk means *fare la brutta figura*, making bad impression, and an Italian would never do that in public, nor in privacy.

Dinner (*La cena*)

Dinner is served late, usually after 8 pm. Also for children who live in the rhythm of their parents. Dinner consists of meat and vegetables. In general, Italians do not eat side dishes, such as potatoes or rice (and they never eat pasta with chicken). They prefer one or more vegetables, usually fresh salad or baked veggies. And if they have potatoes, they take just a few. They can also form a separate course. That is one of reasons why they are able to eat more courses and they do not feel sick after eating dinner.

But maybe it is also thanks to digestive, such as soft *limoncello* or sharper *grappa*. And thanks to their walks. *Passeggiata* in the evening is part of Italian lifestyle. And the usual destination is *gelato* in the summer or a glass of wine any time of the year.

Dessert (*Il dolce*)

How it could be called *dolce vita* without having some sweet treat from time to time? Thanks to good upbringing of *mamma* and stomach used to light meals the fruit is often eaten as dessert in Italy. Or dessert made from fresh fruit of the season. Peaches with mascarpone in the summer, figs pie at the end of the summer, cake with grapes (*schacciata all' uva*) in the autumn. *Macedonia*, fresh fruit salad, is one of the most popular desserts. But even a sliced watermelon is seen as dessert. And, of course, ice-cream, that can solve any mood problem or a classic *tiramisu* or *panna cotta*.



And then there is a cake. But *la torta* in Italy means any cake, not a huge birthday cake with lot of cream and sugar. Nobly sounding *torta della nonna* is in fact ordinary cake with cream sprinkled with pines. *Crostata*, grid pie with jam, is another favorite option. And believe it or not, Italia women are able to make pasta from scratch (mainly during festive periods), but they do not care so much about baking. They would tranquilly buy a cake in the supermarket. But side note: shops are aware that Italians would never buy some low-quality or not so tasty food, so cakes in supermarkets taste really good. And similarly to France, some more complex dessert is reserved for celebrations, big *festas*, and it is not something they would eat daily with their coffee. Italians do not overeat.

A festive dinner is usually composed of more courses with *caffè* at the end, so there is no more place for some heavy cake. So, they keep it light. And then, again, the warm weather is responsible for their love for fruit.

Coffee (*Il caffè*)

In Italy it is almost impossible to find bad coffee. You can find great coffee even at the gas station. It doesn't cost

much, since Italians drink it daily and they would not come back in case of higher price. They drink it in the morning, after lunch, even after late dinner. Cappuccino is reserved only for morning, with some biscuits, since milk is not good for digestion after a meal. If you order it after 11 am, you can speak a fluent Italian, but they know you are definitely a tourist.

Italians get really mad when they see modifications of their traditional recipes abroad and when the world “Italian” is associated with ingredients or preparation that are unknown for an Italian. Foreign chefs tend to simplify or complicate their dishes. Not to talk about social media trends showing recipes where you break spaghetti or put them uncooked in the oven with some sauce. Some things should never be done. Italians are very proud of their national (mainly regional) cuisine.

What will not please an Italian?

Seasoning

Pizza spices, salad dressing, mixture of herbs... These are common ingredients used to prepare “Italian” recipes abroad. Italian would never ever use them. Spices?

The only spice you can find in Italian kitchen is black pepper. In the grinder. For pasta dishes like *cacio e pepe* or for salad. The basis of the pizza is *passata*, maybe with some dried oregano. Or basil, but this is added only at the end. It is not good to bake or cook it, since it kills its taste. And salad dressing from the supermarket: Never. The only seasoning used for salad, Holy Trinity, is: extra virgin olive oil, vinegar (wine vinegar or *balsamico*) and salt. Or lemon juice instead of vinegar. And black pepper (*il pepe*). The ingredients are fresh, of high quality, vegetables grown under the sun. Everything is so tasty that there is no need to cover their original taste.

Seasonality

Have you ever noticed that Italian diet characterized by quality, simplicity and seasonality, reflects all modern diet trends? Mediterranean diet is one of the healthiest on the planet. It is no coincidence that Italians have good health, healthy veins, shiny hair and flawless skin. Their diet is responsible for all of the above. They don't have to follow any weight loss or beauty routine, this way of eating is natural. No Italian will tell you that salad is for rabbits, not for people. They eat vegetables with almost

every meal. Eating well means feeling well. And looking well.

But back to seasonality. In 2022 Italian food bloggers on Instagram started a „war“ when they noticed that someone added a recipe from ingredients that were not seasonal. Tomatoes in winter? Only possible in the form of *passata* prepared in summer. Grapes in spring? *Mamma mia!* Grapes are celebrated in autumn (and with wine all year long), but anything with fresh grapes should be prepared only in autumn.

La cucina povera

And talking about how Italians embrace simplicity and use local products, we have to mention “poor cuisine” (*la cucina povera*). This concept reflects our “modern” zero-waste style. But for Italians this is not a trend, they have always lived zero-waste. Mostly after World War, the period characterized by scarcity of production. They have learned to utilize each part of the ingredient. Old bread was used for *bruschetta* or in soup and salads. This is how the famous soup, *ribollita*, or salad *panzanella* were born. They also use entrails, meat is minced to get *polpette*. In that period dried food, such as legumes and pasta, were

used a lot. Dishes were filling and cooked for more days. That is why dense vegetable soup *ribollita* has its best taste when you reboil it and *panzanella* salad with tomatoes, onion, vinegar and old bread has the best taste on the second day. Or third.

Recipes of *cucina povera* involve mostly the ones with old bread, like bread pie (*torta di pane*), thick tomato soup with bread *pappa al pomodoro*, but also recipes using less processed ingredients like entrails. For an Italian it is normal to gather herbs or dandelion leaves for a salad in his surroundings.

Wine

Wine is one of the most characteristic traits of Italy from ancient times. In ancient Rome they used to drink it more than water because of pollution (that may explain a lot of surprising actions of Romans in history). But even international competitions prove that. In Italy they grow hundreds of varieties and each region has its own wine that, unlike well-known ones as Barolo or Primitivo, never leaves the borders of the country and it is sold mainly in that region. It is known as *vino da tavola* that you

can find on menu for low price and Italians can drink it daily.

An Italian drinks his wine with food and water is always on the table, so “hangover” is not typical for them. It is natural to respect deep-rooted procedures, so you pair white wine with vegetables or fish and red wine with more dense foods as meat. And there is a special place for Prosecco. If the day is special, it can be poured from the early morning, it follows coffee in the afternoon and it is possible to drink one glass even without food.

Eating at restaurant

Ten years ago, it was hard to find a good Italian restaurant abroad. Nowadays it becomes better, even if an Italian is sometimes very surprised when he visits some of them in foreign country. Grammar mistakes in menu, so called Italian recipes that you will never find in Italy, such as pizza Hawaii or Spaghetti Bolognese, and mainly, permanent menu. If you want to visit Italian restaurant outside Italy, look for the one owned by an Italian. Or someone who understands them.

Italians like to go to the restaurant. In case of important event or Sunday lunch. On the menu, in a good non-touristic restaurant, there is always something new, depending on the season and availability. Going to a restaurant is not only about filling the stomach, but also about senses. About tasting something new and, of course, about spending time together. Italians traditionally go on vacation in August and they try local food from other regions, since they often visit their own country during holiday. You can notice that during your holiday in Italy because in restaurant you can hear Italian very often. And these are not locals. Locals are working, the Italians in restaurants are those who are on holiday, too. Another sign that they are Italians is that they are not disappointed when they come to the restaurant soon, they never come sooner than 8:30 pm, knowing that restaurants here usually open later. And they come not sooner than at 9 pm, with their small children. An Italian learns to live the Italian way from the early age.

„I am not Italian, I am Neapolitan. There is a difference!“

(Non sono italiana. Sono napoletana. È un'altra cosa!)

Sophia Loren

And what an Italian chooses? He likes to try local food of the region. But even pizza is a good option. One per person, not one for the table of four. And then he compliments, but also growls that food in his region is better. That pride. Italians are divided not only to people from North (*settentrionali*), mockingly called by people from South *polentoni* (since they eat *polenta* a lot), and people from South (*meridionali*), called by people from North *terroni* (since they are mostly farmers, *terra* means land), but also according to 20 regions. Veneto and Apulia have very few things in common when it comes to architecture, language or gastronomy. That is why visiting their own country is as much interesting as going abroad. Plus, they can still use their own language. Italians find it hard to learn foreign language. And they are reluctant to do it. Composition and melody of Italian is incompatible with English or German. So, if an Italian does not plan to move to another country, he will be probably happy speaking just Italian.

But Italians are not puritans. They like to try different cuisines, Asian food is very popular. But foreign fast food chains do not have a lot of success here. They do not reflect Italian approach to food. Eating on the go? No. It is

disgraceful. It doesn't bring peace that you deserve during your lunch break. Even if young generation may visit McDonald from time to time. But the older one prefers local *trattorie*.

So why are Italians, who love flour, cheese and wine, examples of good health? The reason is not only simplicity and quality, but also portion size. Italian would never eat 300 g of pasta with cheese sauce or family pack of anything. He would be terrified. Portions are small. Then there is always space for another small course.

What should you know about Italian cuisine:

- Cappuccino only for breakfast. Digestion after lunch, and even after dinner, is improved only by strong *caffè*.
- Never put *parmigiano* or any other cheese on fish or seafood (and pasta prepared with them).
- Creamy *risotto* is made with butter and grated *parmigiano*, do not add cream.
- Also, creamy pasta sauce is obtained by adding a little bit of water in which the pasta was cooked.
- Prepare Carbonara only with yolks and cheese, never with cream.

- When cooking pasta, add it only to the boiling water.
- You should never add oil in water in which the pasta is cooked and never rinse the pasta after cooking. Put them in the sauce or add a little olive oil immediately after cooking.
- You should never choose shape of pasta arbitrarily. Each type perfectly merges with a particular sauce or ingredient. *Spaghetti* should never be paired with big pieces that will slide off, but rather with oil or light sauces, such as *spaghetti aglio, olio e peperoncino*. If you serve *aglio olio* with penne, garlic could slide off and pasta would be very oily. That is why Italians have their traditional recipes and it is always prescribed which shape you should use. Never alter that.
- Salad accompanies every meal. Or other type of vegetable side dishes.
- No salad dressings from supermarket. Just oil, vinegar and salt.
- Aperitivo time? Eat something. *Crostini, bruschetta*, pickled vegetables, cheese. Or at least nuts.
- Offer some digestive after dinner in company. Bitter herbal one or sweet one like Limoncello.

- Wine is a national treasure. The Italian wine is the best, of course.
- In fact, everything grown in Italian soil is absolutely the best.
- Olive oil is liquid gold. It forms the basis of the Mediterranean diet that is considered one of the healthiest on the planet. People from southern Italy owe their glowing skin and healthy heart to high consumption of olive oil. Extra virgin olive oil is not suitable for frying and people in Italy do not use it for that. They eat quite a few fried meals.
- Frying is not the usual type of preparation. Meals should be digestible. Meat is stewed or grilled and vegetables are baked or pickled. Or fried in olive oil.
- When you cook thick vegetable soup, add the hard end of parmigiano. It will give soup a better taste.
- Italian women never leave market without their mixture for *soffritto*: onion, carrot and celery. Chopped and toasted vegetables are the basis for almost every sauce including the famous *Bolognese*.
- They also like *aromi*, tied mixture of herbs for soups.

Eat like Italian

- ✓ Even if you eat home alone, take care of yourself like you are in a good restaurant. Set the table, serve your meal and enjoy it. No hurry.
- ✓ Having a glass of wine with your meal is fine. Having two without a meal is not.
- ✓ Cook from local ingredients. Buy them at farmer's market around you.
- ✓ Forget French complexity and learn basics of Italian cuisine.
- ✓ Menu should change according to the season.
- ✓ Add salad to every meal. Season it with oil, vinegar (or lemon juice) and salt.
- ✓ Use olive oil as much as you can. For taste, but also for your health and beauty.

Take care of yourself like Italians

“Sex appeal is fifty percent what you’ve got and fifty percent what people think you’ve got.”

(Il sex appeal è composto per il cinquanta per cento da ciò che uno ha, per l’altro cinquanta per cento da ciò che gli altri pensano uno abbia.)

Sophia Loren

Italian women usually don't win international beauty contests, even if many of admired models and actresses like Sophia Loren, Monica Bellucci, Bianca Balti were born in Italy. According to idealized picture, Italian women are healthy, slim, tanned, with glowing and soft skin, long shiny hair, distinct eyebrows and full lips with red lipstick. This ideal is not far from truth, and they owe their

glowing beauty to Mediterranean way of eating and mainly to the liquid gold, olive oil.

Mediterranean diet

An Italian woman looks rather healthy than skinny. Typical Italian woman from golden era of Hollywood was curved. Italians hardly suffer from obesity or diseases associated to it. And that is due to their diet, full of olive oil, vegetables, fish, but also carbohydrates. Even if they consume pasta, rice or polenta quite often, portions are small. And they always eat fresh or stewed/pickled vegetables with them. And a glass of wine. It is said that stress is responsible for premature aging. In the country of *dolce vita* they know how to avoid it.

And even if Italians, as well as French people, eat quite a lot of bread and pastry and pizza, they do not have to be afraid to lose their healthy curves. Pizza must be digestible, so the dough usually rises for long. Even for 24 hours. It doesn't matter if the dough is thick as in Rome or thin as in Naples, it is important how you feel after eating it. Pizza in Italian pizzeria abroad hardly ever fulfills these criteria, and that is why we cannot imagine ordering a whole pizza for one person. Italians do not

exaggerate when it comes to ingredients and their combinations. Our “specialties” like pizza with meat, sausage, cheese and pepperoni does not exist in real Italian pizzeria. The simpler the better.

Breadstuff can be found on the table both in restaurant and during the family lunch/dinner. They do not eat it as appetizer with herbal butter, as some nations do, they wipe the plate after meal with it. They call it *fare la scarpetta*. But still, vegetables and quality proteins prevail. People are surprised that Italians are such a healthy nation with all their pizza and pasta, but they usually imagine oily pizza and 300 g of pasta in creamy sauce. This is not Italian way of eating. This is their representation abroad. So if you have pizza, quality dough is the basis, if you eat *la pasta*, portion is small and preparation is simple.

Olive oil

Olive oil is an answer to health inside and out. Sophia Loren once said that she owes her skin to the occasional bath in olive oil. Olive oil nourishes the skin, and it is also good as a hair mask. You just need to rinse it off well.

Kamin Mohammadi in her book *La bella figura* during her stay in Florence finds out that the secret of youthful and healthy skin of Italian women is consumption of olive oil. And as her friend suggests, she starts to eat four spoons a day. In Italy, olive oil is a medicine. Salads, pasta, pizza, *focaccia*, *bruschette*, they all contain enough olive oil, so they consume even more than these four spoons.

Hydration

Italian women put not only oil on their skin. They love lotions, mostly more expensive ones. The skin must shine, so the consumption of hydration lotions in Italy is quite high. Ideal of beauty is not some unreachable image, having facial traits in accordance with some mathematic formula and not even looking alike, looking the same as everyone else, as surgery trends suggest. The ideal is health. And thus, healthy and glowing skin. And since Italian women take care of the foundation, they don't need to put a lot of colorful creams on the top. Bath and hydration. This was a habit already in ancient Rome and Italians continue to keep this habit alive. Even if you don't have opportunity to take bath in beneficial sea water, you can pour some sea salt into your bath. And add some oil

so the water will not dry your skin. But the first thing responsible for good hydration and firm skin is a diet full of olive oil and fresh vegetables. But securing it with a good lotion is never a waste of time.

Move your body like Italians

Italians are known for their resistance to gyms and more strenuous physical activities. They love football and cycling races *Giro d'Italia*, but only as spectators. They prefer more pleasant forms of movement. *La passeggiata*, the walk, guarantees them thousands of steps daily. But Italian does not walk to achieve any milestone, but for the joy it brings. And it has the best effect after dinner, mainly during the summer, even if the goal may be their evening gelato or aperitif. And again, in small amounts, these can be seen as medicine. Italians are moderate. At least when it comes to alcohol and sweets. And movement.

Dance is another favorite form of movement. And moving in the kitchen. And young people also like pole dance. In other words, sensual and traditional forms of movement, not sweating in the gym. They even like seemingly simple Pilates that tones the muscles. The body is rather feminine than muscular. Bodybuilding is not an Italian ideal.

Women like to look like women. And they are known for their confidence. Feeling good in their bodies makes them confident.

Take care of yourself like Italian

- ✓ Add more olive oil to your diet. And on your body.
- ✓ Have a salad or some vegetables with every meal.
- ✓ Don't be scared of pastries or pasta. Just pay attention to quality and amount.
- ✓ Put a lotion or olive oil on your skin after bath.
- ✓ Add sea salt to your bath to enjoy the beneficial effects of sea at home.
- ✓ Don't move in excess, just be active in your everyday life. Taking a walk is good for body and mind.
- ✓ *Tutto con calma!* No hurry, always find time to enjoy good food, have a glass of wine, learn to do nothing. Or enjoy shopping at the market, working in the garden, reading. And meet your friends often. In person. Your inner satisfaction will be seen on the outside.



Dress like Italians

Italians are stylish. No discussion. In Italy you can find one of the main fashion cities, Milan, and the fashion week is held here every year. Fashion and luxurious goods from Italy are appreciated in the world for decades, as well as fashion houses represented by names such as Versace, Missoni or Schiaparelli. Not to talk about breathtaking lines with Italian theme from *signori* Dolce and Gabbana. If there is anyone who personified dream about Italian lifestyle in its line and advertisements, it is them.

Beauty comes in the first place. Functionality follows. Italians are born surrounded by beauty and people trying to make good impression and they can find beauty in ordinary moments. And thus, the concept of *bella figura* is reflected not only in their behavior, but also in clothes. Always look as good as you can, no matter if you have a fancy dinner or you just go to the supermarket. Presenting your best self is simple when you use some stage properties, as your clothes and accessories. Italians

do not express their individuality, but rather affiliation with their nation, considered to be the most stylish in the world. And rightly. As well as in the kitchen, they prefer simple and local clothes. And even if French people consider their fashion to be the most stylish, too, it is the same as battle between these two cuisines. While French cuisine is known for more complex techniques and usage of more ingredients, Italians love their simplicity. Same for the fashion. French woman adds one accessory before leaving the house, on the contrary, Italian woman takes one off. In general, they do not exaggerate when it comes to accessories, but they also like to wear massive pieces.

Italian style is timeless, elegant and simple, but at the same time, it is not annoying nor predictable. You can tell a difference between an Italian and a tourist at the first glance. It is a well-known fact that Italian men always wear elegant shoes, they wear flip-flops only when they go to the beach, they wear shirt even during hot summer and they would never wear undershirt on the street. Sweatsuit is only for the gym or sports and they never wear it even in leisure time. Not even when they are going to the shop. And now, reality. The above-mentioned

information is idealized image of Italian nation presented in books and movies. It may be true that you can find many women with stunning style in progressive Milan and there are many grandmothers in the South who leave their house only with perfect hair and they really look like those from pasta advertisements. And if the woman does not have her eyes done, she is invisible. But on the other hand, younger Italians tend to be subordinated to trends on social media and they can wear jumpsuits or even undershirt and trainers when going on their evening *passeggiata*.

Italian women are among top influencers in the field of fashion. Chiara Ferragni, known worldwide, destroys traditional image of Italian style, but it is kind of expected. But she supports Italian fashion brands, she collaborates with a famous lingerie brand, she accentuates her femininity and, as many Italians, she always takes care of her hair and body. No running or gym, she prefers more gentle Pilates.

Woman is feminine, man is masculine... and children is a little adult

Women love to accentuate their femininity with tight clothes and tender patterns and colors and men prefer to wear shirts and quality watches. Both genders like to look neat.

And when it comes to clothes, a child is a little adult. Yes, they can wear T-shirt with Mickey (in Italian: *Topolino*) from time to time, but they wear mostly simple cuts and colors and shirts... just as their parents. And each little Italian has a football shirt at home. Each child is beautiful, wonderful and unique and his mamma, but even random passer-by, reminds him of that every day.

Stereotypes are recognized and maintained in Italian fashion. As well as their love for quality lingerie. *La bella figura* means doing everything the best we can.

And looking the best we can. Women love to exaggerate in fashion, so they love big belts, too voluminous cut, too provocative lace. Men's fashion is better characterized by simplicity and classics. But in more courageous colors.

They are not afraid of colors

Italians (and mainly men) are not afraid of colors. If you spot an elegant man in white shirt and green or yellow trousers on the street, you can bet he is an Italian. Italian women like to wear colors on their trousers or costumes, too. They even like extravagant color combinations, such as green costume with pink handbag or blue dress with orange shoes. Mainly in summer. Winter streets are dominated by muted shades. And covered neck.

And even if Italians are not afraid of colors, they keep it simple. Black, beige, white and dark blue prevail in their wardrobes. Timeless and infinitely combinable pieces.

Rules come first

They do not opt for T-shirt even during hot summer days, they prefer elegant shirt. A good impression comes first, and they would rather sweat a little than wear something unsuitable. Italians are quite strict when it comes to fashion. And not only those from fashion industry or from older generation. They would never wear flip-flops to the restaurant, because only tourists wear them, and approach of waiter is definitely different. And you should

never ever go to the shop in your swimsuit, not even when it is next to the beach. They can send you out. Tourists do it a lot, but this dress code is very offensive for Italians and mostly for workers in shops. You can wear swimsuit in beach bar, but even there it is better to take some poncho. Of course, a quality one and in matchy color.

Make-up

Italians prefers classic when it comes to make-up. They rarely go out without their eye make-up. In fact, almost never. They do not like experiments. Black eyeliner, brown or beige shadows, red or brown lips. You would never see an Italian woman with blue shadows and pink lips, maybe just in case of millennial party. And it is the same for nails. Red or beige. Or something classy. Classy is the key. The most colorful ladies in Italy are Italian *nonne*. Not the ones making *orecchiette* in Bari, but older ladies from Northern cities and villages with extensive villas. They represent characteristics of typical stylish Italian woman.

Accessories

Italians love accessories. Mainly the classic ones. Quality watch, bracelet, tiny or huge earrings or scarf on their handbag or head. Italians love their jewelry, but never wear too much of it. One is fine.



It is important to protect your eyes under the Italian sun, so quality eyeglasses are a must. And in case of any eye issue, it is normal to invest in some quality glasses.

And a scarf in hair is a symbol of Sicilian woman passing through the market with her basket filled with fresh vegetables in flower printed dress or riding a Vespa in streets of Naples. It is not used that much in the North, here, women prefer to tie it on their handbags or around neck to protect themselves against cold. Because cold is the biggest threat that causes flu, back pain, headache and much more. They protect their neck already from September when tourists are still swimming in the sea.

Also, Italians are very superstitious, so they like to wear pendant with cross or red horn to protect themselves against evil forces. And they rarely put these amulets down.

Dress like Italian

- ✓ Have timeless pieces in neutral shades in your wardrobe.
- ✓ Don't be afraid of noticeable colors and patterns. It may be on one piece or from head to toe.
- ✓ Always wear quality shoes. Wear lip-flops only on the beach, trainers only for running.
- ✓ Quality lingerie is important every day, not only when someone else is going to see it. Italians are not afraid to dry it outside.
- ✓ Do not underestimate the power of the sun and wear quality sunglasses.
- ✓ Wear chain with cross or some protective amulet.
- ✓ Always protect your neck against cold. Use scarf or shawl.



Live like Italians

What is an ideal image of the Italian style of living? Orange villas in the middle of Tuscan wineries with romantic forged banisters on the terrace and a big table under the olive tree in the garden? This may be reality, but only for those few people who actually live in these houses from postcards. You can try it, too, these places often serve as *agroturismo*, hotels in which you can enjoy this type of lifestyle and local production, such as wine from local winery, or cheese from milk of the sheep you can see from your window. Romantics. But this far from reality of an ordinary Italian.

How Italians live is also influenced by the fact if they live in the North or the South, since buildings and cities are defined by the cultures which influenced them in the past. Another difference is the one between cities and villages. Italy has almost 60 millions of inhabitants and only 24% live in the villages. Big cities are known for their apartment buildings, but they are not very tall. And even

in cities, there is a sense of community. These *condomini* are low, three-storey buildings with balconies and sunshades above windows. There are clotheslines in the windows and basement is often reserved for some shop with fruits and veggies or a bar.



But sincerely, this is another romantic image, because in big cities these buildings can be higher. But the sense of community lives even there. And parks, trees or other green areas add warmth. Italians cherish these green areas, they often have flowers or herbs in the window,

on the streets or next to the door. And the sun makes it all look just better.

But life in countryside or in small cities is truly magical. Here, neighbors always greet each other (not only because of the good impression) and everyone knows everyone and knows everything about them. And he can complain. Complaining is a typical trait of Italians. But they do not seek for argumentation, understanding and nod is enough. And in small cities, as well as in touristic centers, you can still find women on the street making home-made pasta and in *piazza* there are people of every age drinking their aperitivo or just sitting on stairs to chat.

So, if an Italian does not live in rustic villa, he usually lives in a flat with kitchen, living room and bedroom. And pantry full of tomato sauce. And he often lives there not only with his family, but also with his parents. If they do not live with him, they probably live next door or very close. Family is everything. In fact, there is nothing more important than the family. We must help each other, that is the way of life for Italians. And if an Italian doesn't move to another city, he usually does not go too far. Having *la mamma* near means not only having a daily

supply of warm meal, when the wife is too busy, but also free care of children.

And when an Italian does not have wife, he has absolutely no reason to leave parent's house. That is why Italians are known as *mammoni*, but it is advantage also from economical point of view. An Italian man can work, he does not spend a penny on living or food, and thus it is more probable he will find a woman and own house later. But parents are willing to help. Still, an Italian living with his parents has some important expenses, like shirts and sea trips in August.

Furnishings of Italian household

Here, it is very individual. But we can find some similarities, archetypes common for every Italian household. Such as red and white check tablecloth in Italian restaurants that can be often seen also in households or patterned floor tiles in Sicily that can be found in kitchen or bathroom or on the stairs.

You can see them even as pavement of Roman temples, what shows southern influence on architecture. In the South, you can find them everywhere, from tables and

plates to clothes and scarves. And in a very famous line of Dolce and Gabbana dedicated to this pattern that is reflected even in more affordable fashion.

Lemons grown in the South are another favorite pattern. Do you know these cheesy photos of marble tables with lemons on them and blue lining and lemon trees above them, with sea in the background? Another typical image of Italy. Lemons can be found on tablecloth, kitchenware, on scarves and clothes, as well as on accessories.

Kitchen of Italian woman is usually perfectly furnished and relatively small. Northern and southern kitchens have a lot in common, just a few things change according to the dishes that are typical for a given region. So, in the southern kitchen there are big pots for tomato *passata* and in the northern one big pans for *ragù*. Home-made pasta is cherished in all regions of Italy. But during an ordinary day, it is common to buy it. In Italy the price is good and quality even better. But during festive days they make the effort and make it at home. Pasta machine is another common appliance in the kitchen. Although many shapes can be done with just a knife. And hands. Pasta machina is a heritage.

Another heritage is an essential decoration of kitchen, too. Moka coffee pot. It is not common to own a coffee machine as you can see in bars. If you want it, you can go to the bar. Bar in Italy is a small coffee shop offering mostly coffee, aperitivo and maybe some *focaccia* or *panino*. But at home Italians use their three-pieces moka pot. You pour water to the bottom part, then you put a coffee in the middle, and in just a few minutes, the best coffee comes to the top. Italians own more than one. Different sizes are for different number of portions. So, an Italian owns a moka for one, two or four coffees. And then there is certainly one old, inherited. Or some new designer piece. The one in colors of Italian flag is very popular.

Moka pot is usually always on the stove. The real Italian always expects someone to come over. It can be just the neighbor coming back from the market. This happens quite often in villages in mountains and in the South, in big cities friends meet at the bar to have their third/fourth/fifth coffee of the day.

Italians take good care of their homes. Italian *mamma* manages to have her coffee always ready, cook few courses of meals and her house is always clean. Italians

always keep their houses clean. And they don't clean just superficially, as they say, „*per la suocera*“, for mother-in-law. They pay attention to every detail and they maintain their house daily, not only when it is time for week-end, spring or Christmas cleaning. Beds not made and clothes everywhere *fanno la brutta figura*, and the impression is more important than anything. What if someone comes over? And he/she usually comes.

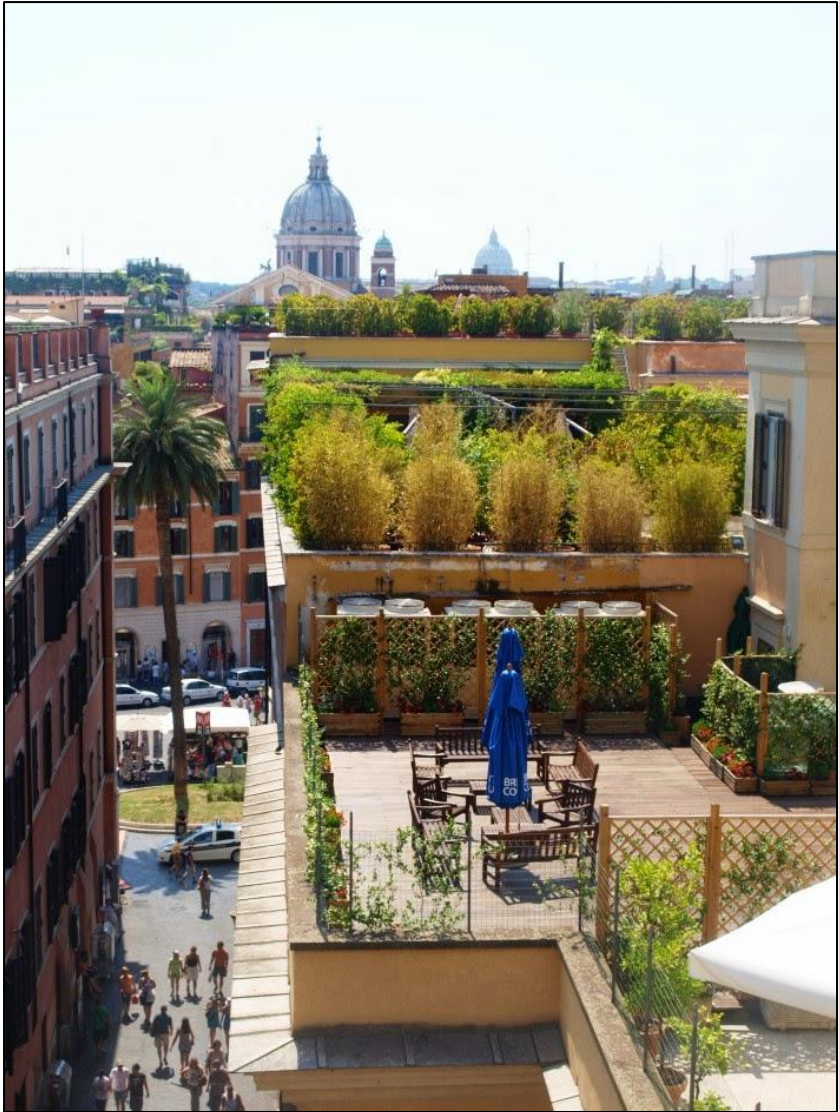
And since Italians are Christians, even if not as much as in the past and they do not visit church as often, they at least keep their religion live in their homes. Objects with Christian symbolism are present everywhere, usually they are given as a gift from mother or *nonna*. And then, there are amulets against malediction and misfortune. There are crosses and heads of Jesus with crown of thorns on the wall and prayer beads hanging on the door. Older generation likes statuettes of Virgin Mary and Saints or even model of Vatican or Nativity scene. The former one can be found in each family, it is a common Christmas decoration and belongs next to the tree. Italians like to buy characters to add it in their *presepe* each year.

Italian cities and villages have the best atmosphere during festivities. Decorations are in *piazza* and parks during Christmas, spring festival, festival of their Saints or some food festival. Italians decorate their homes, too. And not only during Christian festivities, they celebrate also commercial ones, like Halloween. And the Italian flag hangs from window often. Italians can celebrate as well as they can decorate. And if they do not exaggerate when it comes to clothing, they definitely like to exaggerate when they decorate.

Another typical trait of Italian household is green. From herbs used in kitchen and flowers to oleanders on roof balconies in old buildings. Aloe vera welcomes you from the gate. And if an Italian has a garden, he uses it not only for gardening and growing veggies, but he certainly has some oasis for relaxation there, too. Italians do not only decorate their houses and gardens, they like to plant flowers and bushes in big terracotta pots on the streets. And not only in small villages.

In houses and big apartments of wealthy Italians you can even find *salotto* with beautiful sofa and artistic pieces, but it not commonly used, it is reserved for special occasions

such as Christmas or big family gatherings. Otherwise, they prefer to gather around a small kitchen table, even for their three-hour long lunch. So do not be offended if they do not invite you to salotto and you end up hustled in the kitchen. They take you as part of their family.



Live like Italian

- ✓ Keep your house tidy and clean.
- ✓ Find a special place for your moka pot. And use it daily.
- ✓ Herbs belong to the kitchen. Use them while cooking, they are not just for decoration.
- ✓ Have plants in your home, and if you have a terrace or garden, create your own green park.
- ✓ Decorate your house during festivities.