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Waiting to Travel to Italy, These New Cookbooks Will Whet Our Appetite

Exploring new trends and celebrating chefs and regional cuisine, one of these projects will even donate its proceeds to healthcare workers

Italian Hours

by Lucy Gordan

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Spaghetti alla Carbonara, a culinary classic. Photo: Wendy Holloway

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Sadly, Covid-19 is still blocking travel for pleasure from the United States to Italy (down 90% in 2020), but I can recommend three new books in English about Italian cuisine to whet your appetite and help you plan your next trip. In the meantime, you can comfort yourself by enjoying their recipes.



AWAR'S Roman Kitchen. The American Women's Association was founded in 1955 by Clare Boothe Luce, still the only woman to have served as US ambassador to Italy. "During the lockdown last spring, we needed an initiative to keep the nearly 200 members of AWAR involved and in touch..." wrote Manhattan-born Maureen Fant in her January 26th press release.

An archeologist, tour operator and guide, an award-winning cookbook author and translator, Maureen headed the 256-page volume's team of eight authors, artists, and photographers who collected the recipes, memories and artwork of more than 40 AWAR members. "Since we hadn't published a cookbook in 50+ years," Maureen explained, "my idea was a no brainer. But there's more to it. Every day, we read stories and saw news reports about the courage and dedication of brave doctors, nurses and healthcare workers in Italy...We wanted to show our solidarity."

Thus, **AWAR's Roman Kitchen** is technically not for sale, but available for a donation of 20 euros as a spiral-bound paperback or e-book, by clicking on www.awar.org/cookbook or awarcookbook@gmail.com. The proceeds will go to Italy's National Department for Civil Protection for PPE (personal protection equipment) for frontline health workers.

Its recipes are divided as in most cookbooks: starters, soups and pasta, main dishes, vegan and vegetables, breads, sauces, sweets, and drinks: *aperitivi*, wines and *digestivi*.

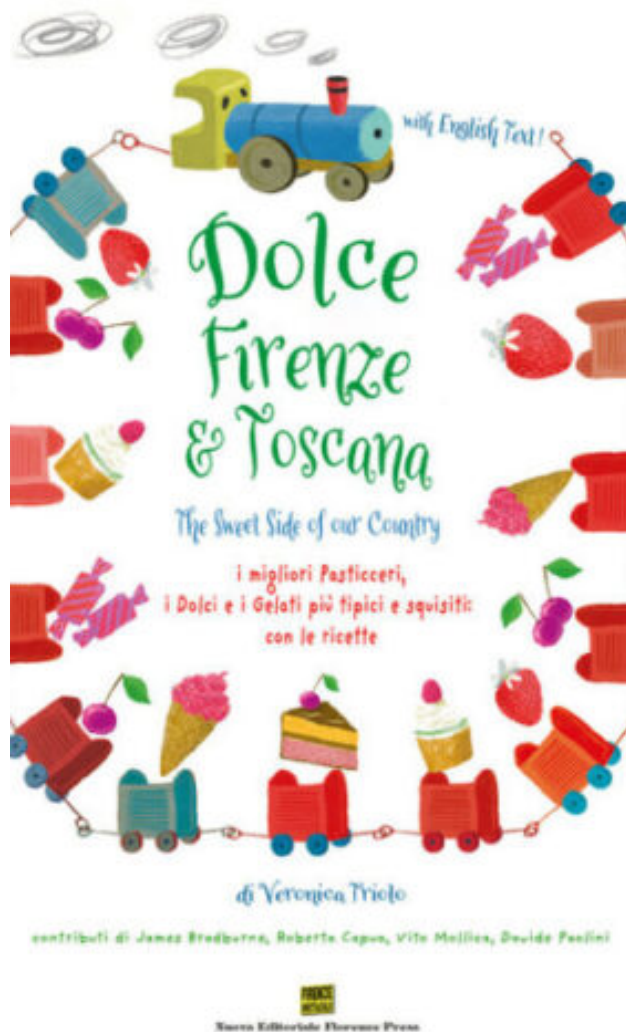
About half are Italian, especially Roman, and the others are worldwide because although almost all AWAR members are American, several were born in Asia or Central or South America. Most measurements are given in both metric and US units. The recipes are interspersed with how-to-prepare advice: best way to cook pasta or trim a Roman artichoke; the locations of Rome's several open-air markets; a list of ingredients, probably unfamiliar at first to non-Italians, like rabbit, capers, the many varieties of olives and vinegars; Italian table manners (don't serve yourself wine and always peel fruit) plus common linguistic misunderstandings.



Veronica Triolo, principal author of ***Dolce Firenze & Toscana: The Sweet Side of our Country***

Like **AWAR's Roman Kitchen**, *Dolce Firenze & Toscana: The Sweet Side of our Country* was written during the pandemic and by several authors. With only a few recipes at the end, this charming volume of 178 pages, is more a sweets guide to Tuscany than a cookbook. Its text, both in English and Italian, is divided into chapters: "Signature Desserts", "Select Desserts from Eateries and Inns", "Delectable Bakeries", "Gourmet Ice Cream", "Bread and Baked Goods", "Schools of Sweets", "Wedding Day, Birthdays and Events"

Each entry is a short profile of the chef, baker, *gelataio*, or cooking school, with a description of their specialties. Their locations cover all of Tuscany, but some of the protagonists are not Tuscan-born, but Neapolitan, Bolognese, Sicilian, as well as Austrian and American.



Dolce Firenze

Its principal author is Roman-born Tuscany-adoptee PR executive and blogger (Fragolosa) Veronica Triolo; the contributors are Canadian naturalized-British James Bradburne, Director of Milan's Brera Art Museum and adjacent Braidense Library; Neapolitan Roberta

Capua, former Miss Italia and now TV-Star; Lucano-born, Varese-bred Vito Mollica, the executive chef of “*Il Palagio*” at Hotel Four Seasons Florence; and journalist and gourmet Davide Paolini from Galeata in Emilia-Romagna.

Well-illustrated with photographs, the volume’s common denominator is a love of Tuscany and of the splendid sweets to discover there; it’s available on IBS, Amazon, and Feltrinelli for 18 euros.

The third of these books is hot-off-the-press, ***The New Cucina Italiana: What to Eat, What to Cook & Who to Know in Italian Cuisine Today*** by Laura Lazzaroni with a publishing date of March 2, 2021, by Rizzoli New York. Price: \$40 US. Available on Amazon.

An award-winning journalist and author, Laura Lazzaroni was the first Editor-in-Chief of *Food and Wine Italia*. Previously the New York correspondent of *La Repubblica*’s weekly, then features editor of *L’Uomo Vogue* in Milan, where she lives, she’s the author of *Altri Grani Altri Pani* (Guido Tommasi Editore, 2017) and co-author, with her mentor, the three-Michelin starred (the only one south of Rome) Abruzzese Niko Romito, of *!0 Lezioni di Cucina* (Giunti, 2015). She’s also an accomplished bread consultant, specialized in heritage wheat.

Purposely written for the American market, *The New Cucina Italiana* is both a cookbook with recipes and a travel guide, with splendid photographs by renowned food photographer Alberto Blasetti.



Available only in English for now and with its cooking measurements foolishly only in imperial units (ounces and pounds etc.). It's divided into six chapters. The first is "Mentors". One is once painfully shy, self-educated Niko Romito. According to Lazzaroni, he "is the champion of a new league of extraordinary restaurateurs who are shaping the movement of a 'new cucina italiana'".

The other is "self-proclaimed grouch", Paolo Lopriore, a "Marchesi Boy" and owner of "Il Portico" in Appiano Gentile, 11 miles south-west of Como. The other chapters are, "Farmers and Foragers", "Sunday Restaurateurs"; "Fine Dining Creatives"; "Pizzaioli" and "Forces of Neo-Osterie & Neo-Trattorie".

Lazzaroni's aim, while not demeaning Italy's already well-known and pluri-starred chefs, is to explain to Americans (but if the measurements had been added in metrics to all English-speakers) where they can find new young talents.

They include more than 30 chefs and restaurateurs from ten regions of Italy: Piemonte, Lombardia, Veneto, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Emilia-Romagna, Toscana, Lazio, Campania,

Abruzzo, and Puglia. In her words her entries are “reinterpreting the greatest hits of Italian dining”, but they are not yet known abroad.



Laura Lazzaroni

As a long-time eno-gastromomic journalist who has traveled extensively and enjoyed the food in all 20 regions of Italy, I’ve only eaten in two of her locations so I’m not sure how well her entries are known even in Italy. Thus, I hope Rizzoli soon publishes this book in Italian.

Each entry includes a biographical profile and recipes. At the end of the book’s 255 pages is a list of Lazzaroni’s suggestions by region, a useful tool for future travelers. In the meantime, until we in Italy are allowed to travel between regions, I will visit her three recommendations in Lazio and publicize others to my friends in other regions.

However, I’m curious as to why she covered only half of Italy. I find it particularly hard to believe there are no young talents awaiting her discovery in the Marche, a recently

appreciated touristic venue, or in gastronomically unforgettable Sicily. So hopefully, Lazzaroni is planning to write a sequel.

[Lucy Gordan](#)

Lucy Gordan

Italian Hours

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