

VNY *La Voce di New York*

The First Italian English Digital Daily in the US

Editor in Chief: Giampaolo Pioli

English Editor: Grace Russo Bullaro

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News

October 26, 2024

Archeology à la Carte in Rome: Restaurants for Ancient History Buffs

Take in a meal where even McDonald's is located in a historical site



Italian Hours

Lucy Gordan



Ristorante Da Pancrazio's Roman-era arches

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ruins of ancient Roman monuments but downtown.

Julius Caesar was assassinated on March 15, 44 BC during a session of the Roman Senate. At the time the *Curia* or senate house, still today in the Roman Forum, was being rebuilt so, instead, the Senate met in the courtyard of the Theater of Pompey. The original one had been built between 66-55 BC by this great general and statesman, also the husband of Julius Caesar's daughter Julia. Since 1922 it's been the location of **Ristorante Da Pancrazio**. Be sure to ask for a table on the lowest floor, where you can eat among the arches and walls made of "*opus reticulatum*", bricks dating from the Roman Republic. Although the delicious reasonably-priced fare here is very Roman, even including a few dishes of innards, the menu doesn't include recipes by Apicius. I especially recommend the *tonnarelli cacio e pepe* followed by *saltimbocca alla romana*. Open every day for lunch and dinner.

Ristorante Traiano, originally named **La Taverna Ulpia**, is at the far end of the *Via dei Fori Imperiali* near *Piazza Venezia*, with a terrace overlooking Trajan's Column, Forum, and Markets. A popular hangout since the 1880s, it's the only restaurant in Rome owned by the Ministry of Cultural Patrimony. Built into the *Basilica Ulpia* or law courts of the Emperor Trajan's Forum, the last and largest imperial forum, ask for a table downstairs where the *opus reticulatum* brick walls and mosaic floors date to the second century AD.

Before becoming "Il Duce", Mussolini dined here regularly with his brother Arnaldo, and afterwards arrived here via a secret tunnel (now blocked, but still visible) from his headquarters in *Palazzo Venezia* for nightly meetings. Closed Monday. On Saturdays it's open for lunch and supper, otherwise only for supper.



Ristorante Traiano

On September 30, 2012 Alfonso Francia published "Il Passato in Tavola" in the Italian edition of *La Voce* about **Apuleius** founded in 1959 by Spartaco D'Itri, a waiter and well-known amateur boxer. With winnings from an early TV quiz show, *Il Musichiere*, D'Itri bought the space above the ruins of the once opulent Temple of Diana and built a restaurant which he named *Il Musichiere*. Located on the Aventine hill near the Circus Maximus and the Baths of Caracalla, according to the early semi-legendary history of Rome, the Temple had been built in the 6th-century BC during the reign of King Servius Tullius.

A close friend of the very Roman comic actor Alberto Sordi, D'Itri decorated *Il Musichiere* with ancient artifacts dating from 600 BC to 200 AD. Some were found *in situ* during construction, but the majority had already been collected by D'Itri. He registered them all with the *Soprintendenza dei Beni Archeologici*, a state artefacts registry.

In 2003 the Italo-Korean family Ferretti-Min, still the owners today, bought *Il Musichiere* at a government auction and changed its name to **Apuleius**, the 1st-century AD Numidian Latin-language prose writer, whose most famous work is the bawdy *Metamorphoses*, otherwise known as the *Golden Ass*, the only Latin novel to have survived in its entirety.

Today one of the few Roman restaurants with a peaceful atmosphere and well-spaced tables, **Apuleius** is a favorite venue of the diplomatic corps. The seasonal dishes, predominantly fish although the house specialty is rabbit, are refined and artistically plated. The accompanying wines are mostly from Latium. The service is attentive and courteous. Reservations are obligatory. Closed Sunday evenings and Monday.

The **Ristorante Terme di Diocleziano** or Baths of the Emperor Diocletian, who reigned from 284-305 AD, is one circular chamber within Diocletian's sprawling bath complex, which also includes a splendid archeology museum and the Church of *Santa Maria degli Angeli e Martiri*, designed by Michelangelo. Its extensive menu includes all the modern Roman classics as well as dishes for a celiac diet. Closed on Sunday and holidays and open for both lunch and supper, it's a short walk from both Rome's Opera House and railroad station. However, the highlight here is the roof terrace perfect for a romantic evening.

McDonalds in the *Stazione Termini* (Rome’s main railroad station), open every day from 8 AM to 11 PM. They’re the remains of part of a city wall said to have been constructed, like **Apuleius’s** Temple of Diana, during the reign of King Servius Tullius, the legendary sixth king ancient Rome, who reigned from 578-535 BC.



Rabbit stew from Apuleius.

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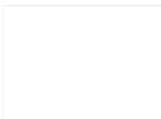


Lucy Gordan

Italian Hours

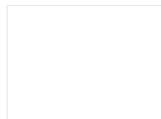
Former editor at the American Academy in Rome and at the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization, with journalistic accreditation in Italy and the Vatican, I'm culture editor of the US monthly *Inside t...*

DELLO STESSO AUTORE



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As 2025 Jubilee Approaches, Three Notable "Religious Places to Stay" In Rome

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Editor in Chief: Giampaolo Pioli

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Founded by Stefano Vaccara



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