

All Roads Lead to Rome

by Lucy Gordan

I recently read in a readership poll of a leading American travel magazine that the popularity of cooking-school vacations in Italy is at an all-time high. The choice is vast, with the majority located in idyllic cypress-and-olive-dotted rural

Tuscany and Umbria, as well as in 5-star Venetian hotels in the off-season months. However, Rome wasn't nicknamed *caput mundi* without reason.

Here, in the hometown of wealthy and decadent gourmet Marcus Gaius (better-known as Apicius, who in the first century wrote *De Re Coquinaria*

— *Concerning Culinary Matters* — the world's first cookbook), it's possible to learn his and other Roman recipes from either a fellow-cookbook author or from a team of chefs at the Eternal City's only professionally-accredited cooking school.

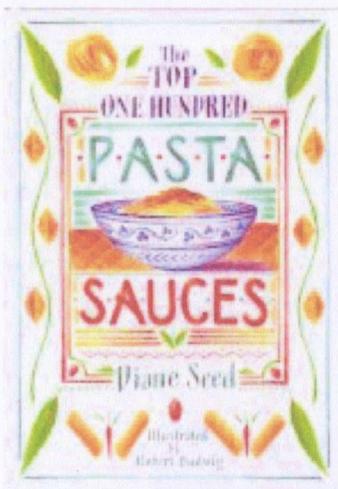
Diane Seed, English author of best-sellers *The Top One Hundred Pasta Sauces* and *Roman Kitchen*, as well as several earlier books on Italian cooking, has lived in Rome for nearly 30 years. She holds her classes in her own home on the top floor of the



Renaissance Palazzo Doria Pamphili. Through a round window her kitchen looks out over Piazza Venezia, to the Forum and the Colosseum; from the back terrace the backdrop is St. Peter's.

During her informal and relaxed weeklong class, Monday through Thursday 10:30 AM to 2 PM and Friday evening, open only to 12 students at a time, you'll visit specialty shops and markets, in particular the nearby *Campo de' Fiori* — a flower, food, and vegetable market since the Middle Ages; prepare meals with regional recipes from all over Italy using fresh, seasonal produce, and learn about matching food with wine. Upcoming 2003 dates: August 24-29, September 21-26, October 19-24, November 9-14, and November 30 to December 5. 2004 dates: January 25-30, February 15-20, March 7-12, April 4-9, May 9-14, June 6-11, September 19-24, October 3-8, November 7-12, December 5-10. Fee: \$1,000 not including airfare from USA and Rome's hotel accommodation (Via del Plebiscito 112, 00186 Rome, tel. 011-39-06-6797103, FAX 011-39-06-6797109; website: www.italiangourmet.com, e-mail: infoitaliangourmet.com).

In 2002 Diane decided to extend her Roman kitchen to Campania and Puglia. In Campania, five days of lessons are held in Sant'Agata sui due Golfi, a small town between Sorrento and Positano. Upcoming in 2003: October 26 to November 1, and upcoming 2004 dates: May 16-22 and





Il Melograno

October 10-16. Fee: \$2000, all-inclusive except airfare from the USA. In Puglia, the four-day course takes place at one of her favorite hotels, "Il Melograno," a Relais & Chateaux property with a spring fed saltwater swimming pool and tennis courts, once a 16th-century farmhouse.

Upcoming dates: still-to-be-decided in July and September. Fee: \$2,500 all-inclusive except airfare from USA.

Back in the Eternal City near St. Peter's, "A Tavola con lo Chef" offers *in situ* numerous courses or specific workshops on Italian regional cooking, taught in Italian and English, and at several levels; for the amateur, the young chef who wants to start a restaurant, and the professional who wish to update his or her technical know-how. "Made-to-order" one day or one-week courses, usually lasting four hours a day, can be arranged. Contact Danish-born, fluent English-speaking "professor" of "Cuisine for Singles," Helle Poulsen.

The school, equipped with two state-of-the-art kitchens, was founded in 1989 by world-famous chef Antonio Sciallo to train aspiring chefs. An Abruzzese



Antonio Sciallo

from a tiny mountain village near the ski-resort of Roccaraso, Sciallo began his career working in a local pastry shop before moving on to hotels in Puglia, Venice, France, Switzerland, Germany, and the United States.

In 1983 he came to Rome as Executive Chef of "Relais le Jardin" at the Lord Byron Hotel, where he achieved national and international renown: two stars in *Michelin*; 19.3 in

Espresso; 19/20 in *Veronelli*; and 85 in *Gambero Rosso*, before resigning to teach and "food" consult for several restaurants and major hotel chains, including Hotel Parco dei Principi, Café Veneto and Café de Paris.

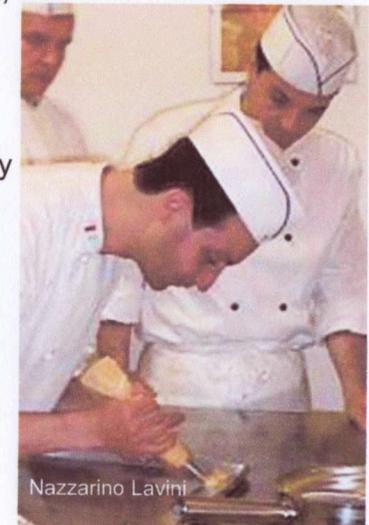
Besides Poulsen, Sciallo's "academic" staff includes one of his mentors, Roman-born institution Alberto Ciarla, owner/chef of the eponymous Trastevere restaurant, famous for fish, (15 in 2003 *Espresso*; Salvatore Tassa, owner/chef of "Le Colline ciociare" in Acuto near Frosinone (considered the best restaurant in Italy outside a major city, one star in *Michelin* and 16 in 2003 *Espresso*); Agata Parisella Caraccio, owner/chef of "Agata e Romeo" near the Colosseum (one star in *Michelin*, 16 in 2003 *Espresso*); and Nazzareno Lavini, pastry chef at Rome's "Caffé Vigna Stelluti," among other consultants.



Leonardo di Carlo

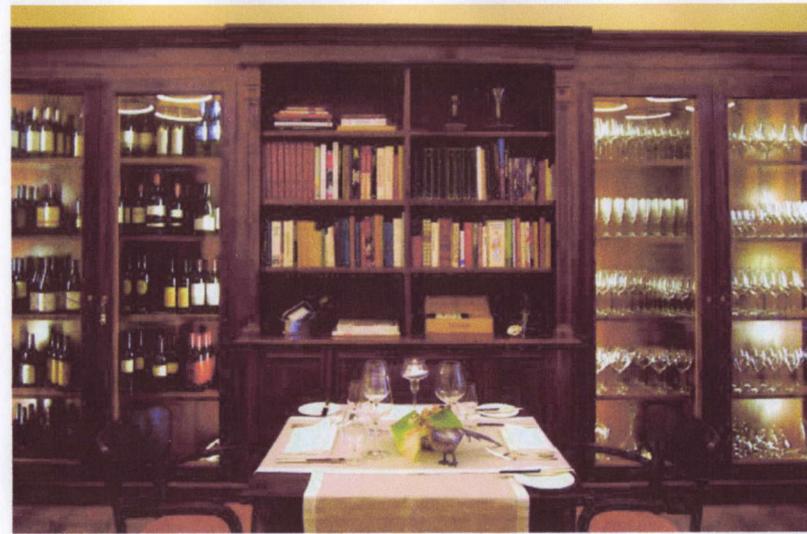
Due to the wide range of courses, hours, and fees, it is best to consult the website: www.atavolaconlochef.it or send a specific request by e-mail: atavola@pronet.it. ("A Tavola Con Lo Chef," Via dei Gracchi 60, 00192 Rome, tel. 011-39-063222096, tel/fax 011-39-063203402, office hours: 10 AM-1 PM, 4 PM-8 PM).

Combine either Seed or Sciallo, with courses at Rome's new International Wine Academy, the only one in Italy. This peaceful and luxurious oasis at the foot of the Spanish Steps, founded in the fall of 2002 by Roberto E. Wirth, the General Manager and owner of the world-famous Hassler Hotel just above, and run by his step-daughter, Valentina Morriconi, the Academy offers both courses and hospitality.



Nazzarino Lavini

Above its groundfloor classroom, Wirth's *Palazetto*, set of Bertolucci's last film *Obsession*, are the four "rooms" of chef's Antonio Martucci's restaurant: the "Library" lined with eno-gastronomical literature, the "Wine Bar" with its welcoming fireplace and over 400 different wine labels to choose from, the "Wine Storage Room" for intimate private parties, and the out-door "Terrace" with its sensational view over Rome's rooftops. Also overlooking the Spanish Steps on the two upper floors are four very elegant "guest rooms."



answer each and every question that you have always wanted to ask...about wine!
Price: 20 euros per person.

Again due to the wide range of courses, hours, and fees, as well as for accommodation rates it's best to consult the Academy's website: www.wineacademyroma.com or e-mail: info@wineacademyroma.com. (International Wine Academy, Vicolo del Bottino 8, 00187 Rome, tel. 011-39-066990878; fax 011-39-066791385).

The Academy offers a half-day intensive (either morning or evening) course on Italian wine for visitors to Rome, courses on wine in general (beginning, intermediate, and advanced) for Roman residents, and master classes, all taught by fluent English-speaking Master Sommelier, Andrea Sturniolo, as well as one-day wine tours to Frascati, Montepulciano, and Chianti. Besides these courses on Italian wine, the Academy offers a course on French wines



and another on wines worldwide. All lessons are followed by either a lunch or dinner at which Sturniolo and Martucci explain the art of combining a delicious meal with elegant wine.

Every evening from Monday through Friday, between 6 and 7 PM, at the "Wine Bar", Sturniolo presents a tasting of four wines called "Tell me what you have in your glass and I will tell you who you are!" After accompanying you through the tastings, he will



International Wine Academy



View of the Spanish Steps from International Wine Academy