



“American” Fall Festivities in Italy

by Lucy Gordan | Travel, Travel blog | 0 comments

The United States and Italy have always shared only three holidays: New Year’s Day, Easter Sunday, and Christmas, and one festivity Mardi Gras, not-to-be-missed in New Orleans and in Venice. Then, about two decades ago, for no apparent reason, but maybe because Italians are always game for a party, they started celebrating Halloween.

The medieval walled town of Corinaldo, northeast of Ancona in the Marche, known for being the birthplace of St. Maria Goretti and for its Verdicchio wine, calls itself the Italian Capital of Halloween.



Medieval walls in Corinaldo



Devil's Bridge in Borgo a Mozzano

However, the first place in Italy (since 1993) and still the No. 1 Halloween venue is at the Devil’s Bridge, a famous tourist sight, in

Borgo a Mozzano, a few miles north of Lucca in Tuscany.

Elsewhere, head to the small town of Triona in Liguria some 15 kilometers from San Remo, known as “The Salem of Europe,” famous for its 16th-century witch trials during the Inquisition. An Ethnographic and Witchcraft Museum contains artifacts from these trials, as well as reconstructions of the tortures and interrogations. Beyond the predictable museum however, you’ll find signs of witchy workings all over town – witchy souvenirs, signs, statues,



A view of Triora

and even tours to the former homes of the accused, Monte delle Forche, the mountain where many met their fiery fate, and the alleged location of the baby-eating and Devil worshipping, the dreaded La Cabotina.

A hotspot of spooky festivals, besides Halloween the town hosts two other major annual events: a

summer witchcraft festival and a mushroom festival in September.

Although, like Halloween, Thanksgiving originated to celebrate the end of a plentiful harvest, America's most heartfelt festivity isn't commonly celebrated in Italy. Italy's non-adoption is probably because the event was originally a Protestant affair; has always been a patriotic all-

American day without European origins; cranberries, sweet potatoes, and marshmallows aren't indigenous foodstuffs, not to mention that most Italian ovens still aren't big enough to accommodate a whole turkey, which may help to explain this bird's general lack of popularity. For roast chicken is served ubiquitously, duck especially in the Veneto, and pheasants and other wild birds wherever hunting is popular, but especially in Umbria and Tuscany.

My first Roman Thanksgiving experiences were at The American Academy where I was associate editor during the 1970s. In my day the arrival of the pumpkin pie was always a tense moment. That's because jack-o-lanterns didn't exist in Italy then and the pie filling, an annual variation on the theme, was usually a slightly watery, pale green, and peppery zucchini mush with a cinnamon additive.

Today, however, whether you're an expat living permanently in Rome, a temporary employee of an American company, a student on a junior year abroad, or a tourist, there are



Souvenirs in Triora

several places to celebrate Thanksgiving. Wherever you choose, it's always best to reserve in advance.

The most rustic and made entirely of KM. O organic ingredients, so most similar to Plymouth 1620, is the supertime buffet (after 8 PM) at Vivi Bistrot by an entrance of Rome's large park Villa Pamphili at Via Vitellia 102, tel. 06-5827540, cell. 392-9405100. Otherwise you can book its “Thanksgiving Lunch” at Palazzo Braschi just outside Piazza Navona.

Other informal celebrations are at two downtown pubs: Hard Rock Café, across the street from the US Embassy, at Via Vittorio Veneto 62, tel. 06-4203051, has a lunchtime seating from 12-2 PM and two supper seatings: 6:30-9 PM or 9-11:30 PM. Starting at 8 PM a Gospel choir accompanies the feast. Another, The Highlander near Piazza Fontanella Borghese at Vicolo di San Biagio 9, tel. 06-68805368, serves an all-you-can-eat buffet with a drink included from 6-8 PM. After dinner bonuses include The NFL football games on TV and post-11-PM Karaoke.



For a family ambiance and live jazz, if off-the beaten-track in the city's suburb called Labaro, at Via Bellagio 2, gastronomically-speaking the trip to Mamma's is well worth the long taxi ride, tel. 06-33614537.



Hassler Hotel on right

For gourmet food prepared by Neapolitan Michelin-starred chef Francesco Apreda in one of the Eternal City's most elegant settings, enjoy a relaxed fireside evening in the Salone Eva at the deluxe Hassler Hotel at the top of the Spanish Steps.



Salone Eva

For another evening feast fit for a king, there's also the Brunello Lounge and Restaurant in Hotel Baglioni Regina at Via Vittorio Veneto 70.

Instead, if you're the gourmet chef, you can usually find your turkey at the open-air markets: Mercato Esquilino, Mercato Testaccio, or Mercato Trionfale. For organic ones, head to the butchers, Macelleria Stecchiotti, on Via Panisperna or Bio Eno on Via Labicana. For sweet potatoes, ask for patate americane at the above open-air markets or at the more expensive Campo de' Fiori. As for all your trimmings: marshmallows, apple and cranberry sauces, and pumpkin pie filling, Castroni, Rome's historic "international" food emporium, carries them all. If anyone offers to bring dessert, suggest American-owned Homebaked at Via Fratelli Bonnet 21 in Monteverde Vecchio or Bakery House on Corso Trieste 151 b/c or on Via Riano 11 near Ponte Milvio, where half the proceeds will be donated to "Save the Children".



Halloween Cupcakes from Homebaked

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