

Sample programme for the cookery courses at Rendola

Saturday Own arrangements to reach Florence. At 17.50 meet Jenny Bawtree (middle-aged, white-haired) at the main bar of the main Florence station (Firenze Santa Maria Novella), under the SELF-SERVICE sign. You will be accompanied on a forty-minute train journey to Montevarchi and a short drive to Rendola, the seventeenth-century typically Tuscan home of your hosts. Settle in and enjoy a chat and a glass of *Chianti Classico* wine before being called to the dinner-table.

Sunday During breakfast an introductory talk by Jenny about traditional Tuscan cookery. Some years ago she wrote "**Pietro's Book**", the biography of a Tuscan peasant and in doing so she learnt about a typical farming family's diet before the economic prosperity of the sixties. Then Franca will teach you how to prepare a meal using local produce: *pasta alla pomarola* and *involtini*. You will also prepare *panna cotta* for the evening meal. After lunch Jenny will give you a light-hearted lesson in the pronunciation of Italian, at the same time teaching you the Italian words you may come across during your cooking lessons. For dinner, freshly made truly Italian *pizze* followed by your own *panna cotta*.

Monday At breakfast Jenny will give you a short talk about olive oil. Franca will teach then you how to prepare a variety of *antipasti* (starters) which we will then sample at lunchtime. After the meal Jenny will accompany you to her beloved Arezzo, a city little known to the average tourist and will show you some of its most interesting sights. We will also visit there a shop selling local produce. Dinner at Rendola.

Tuesday At breakfast Jenny tells you about the Tuscan farmhouse. Then help Sergio, Pietro's son, prepare a meal such as his father's family might have eaten, ending up with *tiramisù* for which he is rightly famous. After lunch you can either help to pick olives (only in the autumn, of course!), or go for a leisurely guided walk in the woods. Later you will either visit a wine farm for wine-tasting or a sommelier will come to talk about Tuscan wine and we will all do some wine-tasting at dinner.

Wednesday Breakfast and then a free day to make your own arrangements for sightseeing, perhaps to visit Florence, or the hill towns of Cortona, Assisi or Orvieto – take your pick. All are an easy train journey from Montevarchi. For those who prefer to hike, maps of local trails can be provided and also a picnic lunch. If any of you would rather stay at Rendola and take a further lesson in cooking Franca is happy to oblige: her repertoire is endless and you may like to choose the subject of the lesson. Dinner at Rendola.

Thursday After breakfast visit the market at Montevarchi and help Jenny to make our purchases for the evening meal. Have a light meal at a delicatessen in the main street and sample the local cheeses and *salami*, before being driven to a bar where you can try some delicious home-made icecream. Visit a medieval village built round a ravine before returning home to help Franca prepare dinner.

Friday After breakfast Franca will teach you how to make home-made *tagliatelle* and a sauce, and then *cantuccini*, a typical Tuscan biscuit. Next Sergio will take us to purchase organic meat and then on to a boarhunters' cabin in the Chianti hills to sample varieties of olive oil on *bruschette* before a barbecue. On the way home we will visit either an olive mill or a honey farm before joining Franca for your last lesson. At our farewell dinner we can dip your *cantuccini* in *vinsanto*, a Tuscan liqueur, to round off the evening.

Saturday At breakfast you will receive a booklet containing the recipes you have learnt to cook during the course. Then we take you to Montevarchi train station for your return to Florence. Buon viaggio!

Cost of the cooking course: 1290 Euros, 1200 for groups of 4-6 people This includes: transport to and from Florence, accommodation, meals (including wine), tuition, transport and excursions, with the exclusion of train fares and lunch on the Wednesday, your free day.

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