



Gastronomic Campania

Food wine and history in the orchard of Italy

21-28 October 2026 (MM 220)

8 days

Speaker: Marc Millon

Gastronomic traditions shaped over millennia, from the Ancient Greeks to the working classes of the 20th century, in one of Italy's most fertile and varied regions.

Three contrasting bases; the bustling small city of Caserta, a peaceful oasis in Paestum, and a luxury hotel in Naples.

Home-cooking and simple traditions alongside Michelin star cuisine and producers pushing innovation and discovery.

Led by gastronomic expert and food writer Marc Millon.

Campania, the vibrant and exciting southern region that extends well beyond the Amalfi Coast and the Bay of Naples, has historically been the larder of Italy, an unstinting source of good things to eat and drink. Known as the *Campania Felix* – the fertile or happy countryside, this part of Italy has a rich and multi-layered history that extends beyond the Greeks and Romans, to the Lombards, Byzantines, Normans, Spanish, French, even the British and Americans, and all of this has had a direct impact on food and life here.

Much of what we know about food and wine in antiquity has been gleaned from excavations at Pompeii and Herculaneum, the small cities destroyed and buried by the catastrophic eruption of Vesuvius in AD 79. Depictions on mosaics of the vegetables, fruits, meats, cheeses enjoyed some 2000 years ago, reveal ancient dining habits, from lavish banquets to street food, many of which linger on. Over the succeeding centuries Vesuvius, the still-active volcano, has also brought fecundity and fertility, the mineral rich soil such a propitious habitat for the cultivation of wonderful produce.

This exciting journey takes us to the five provinces of Campania to gain a deeper appreciation of its cultural riches and gastronomic delights. In Caserta, we visit the Reggia, the magnificent palace of the Spanish Bourbons who ruled over Southern Italy until unification in 1861. Here we learn of the production of one of Italy's silkiest and most delicious cheeses, mozzarella di bufala. It was under the Spanish that such typically



Photograph: Olive groves in Campania © Margherita De Fraja

'Italian' foods as tomatoes, peppers, chillies and chocolate were introduced. In Benevento, we gain a glimpse of the Lombards who established an important Duchy in the sixth century, while in the province of Avellino – ancient Irpinia – we travel to the source of some of the world's greatest wines: Taurasi, Greco di Tufo, Fiano di Avellino. Salerno, in the deep south, has long been considered a 'blue zone' due to the longevity of the people, whose lifestyle helped to coin the phrase 'Mediterranean diet'. From Paestum and Velia, we discover the magnificence of Hellenic culture, sample outstanding fish, and some of Italy's finest extra virgin olive oil. To conclude the tour, we travel via the famous pasta town of Gragnano to buzzing and magnificent Naples itself, for a grand finale overlooking Vesuvius and the Bay of Naples.

Itinerary

Day 1: Caserta. Fly at c. 10.30am from London Heathrow to Naples (British Airways). Drive to Caserta, where the first three nights of the tour are spent.

Day 2: Torre Lupara, Casertavecchia. Spend the morning at a *caseificio*; see how mozzarella di bufala is made, how the water buffalos are kept, and taste the mozzarella as well as by-products such as ricotta di bufala. In the afternoon visit the medieval hilltop village

of Casertavecchia. Dinner this evening is dedicated to pizza, the most well-known of all Neapolitan cuisine.

Day 3: Villa Matilde Avallone, Caserta. Villa Matilde Avallone is a family estate whose owner's vision and tenacity has been focused on a search for ancient varieties, such as the famous *vinum Falernum* beloved by the Romans. Situated a few miles outside Naples, the royal palace at Caserta, begun 1751, is Italy's most magnificent and accomplished emulation of Versailles. An awesome absolutist statement, it is set within parkland and gardens equally magnificent in scale.

Day 4: Benevento, Sorbo Serpico, Paestum. Drive via Benevento, an elegant town with a wide-ranging history, to Sorbo Serpico. Here there is a visit, tasting and lunch at I Feudi di San Gregorio, an innovative and modern wine estate and restaurant. Drive to Paestum, where the following three nights are spent.

Day 5: Cilento. Drive south into the Cilento for a day focusing on the famed mediterranean diet. Visit an olive oil producer and experience a traditional Sunday lunch at an *agriturismo*. In the evening, a wine tasting in the hotel with the lecturer.

Day 6: Paestum. The morning is spent absorbing the entrepreneurial vision of the Pagano group: discover the San Salvatore wines, and the importance of local produce

Gastronomic Campania continued

and traditional home cooking techniques at the delicatessen. Paestum was a major Greek settlement and the archaeological site is one of the most interesting in Italy. Three outstanding Greek Doric temples stand in a remarkable state of preservation.

Day 7: Gragnano, Naples. Pasta di Gragnano is the most famous artisanal dried pasta in Italy, developed here due to specific climatic conditions. Lunch is at O Me o il Mare, a one star Michelin restaurant run by the husband and wife team chef Luigi Tramontano and renowned sommelier Nicoletta Gargiulo. Continue to Naples for the final night of the tour, where a final dinner at the hotel's rooftop restaurant overlooking the bay celebrates Naples' street food tradition.

Day 8: Herculaneum. The archaeological dig at Herculaneum has excavated less than a quarter of this town, and in the part preserved the emphasis is on private dwellings and their decoration, prime location for considering the importance of food and drink in ancient times. Fly from Naples to London Heathrow, arriving c. 9.00pm.

NB: at the time of going to print Naples Airport is due to close for resurfacing works from November 2026, so flight timetables are not yet published and late October flights may be affected. Should this happen, the return flight may be from Rome instead.

Lecturer

Marc Millon. Wine, food and travel writer. Born in Mexico, he was raised in the USA before studying English Literature at the University of Exeter. Together with his wife, he has pioneered a series of illustrated wine-food-travel books including *The Wine and Food of Europe*, *The Wine Roads of France*, *The Wine Roads of Italy*, *The Food Lover's Companion to France* and *The Food Lover's Companion to Italy*. He is also the author of *The Taste of Britain* and lives in Devon, where he is closely involved with the food scene of the West Country. Marc is a certified Vinitaly International Italian Wine Ambassador and has a weekly show "Wine, food and travel with Marc Millon" on Italian Wine Podcast. In summer 2025, a sub-series focused on Campanian producers, several of whom are visited on the tour. His latest book, *Italy in a Wineglass - the Taste of History*, was published in spring 2024.

Practicalities

Included: travel by private coach; hotel accommodation; breakfasts, 6 lunches and 4 dinners with wine, water, coffee; wine and food tastings, all admissions; all tips; all taxes; the services of the lecturer and tour manager.

Accommodation. **Hotel dei Cavalieri, Caserta** (deicavaliericaserta.com): a modest 4-star city centre hotel, centrally located in a pleasant square. **Esplanade Boutique Hotel, Paestum** (paganopaestum.it/hotel_esplanade): a charming 4-star luxury hotel, in a peaceful location. All rooms have balconies. **Grand Hotel Parkers, Naples.** (grandhotelparkers.it): a 5-star hillside hotel in a quieter area of the city, with spectacular views over the bay of Naples, Mount Vesuvius and the island of Capri. Rooms are all of a good size and have a sea view. *Single occupancy rooms are doubles for sole use.*

How strenuous? There is a fair amount of walking involved. Participants need to be used to walking unaided on uneven terrain, and surefootedness is also essential for the caseificio and archaeological site visits. The tour also involves walking in town centres, sometimes uphill and over unevenly paved ground. Some days involve a lot of driving through hilly terrain. Average distance by coach per day: 60 miles.

Group size: between 10 and 22 participants.