



Seasoned Solutions

A CULINARY TOUR OF SICILY: October 9 – 20, 2010



Sicilian cannoli

Sicily is a history lesson on a plate. The best way to understand the island's colourful history is to immerse yourself in its cuisine. Sicily is fascinating, delicious and paradoxical. It has been influenced, beautifully, by the parade of Phoenicians, Greeks, Normans, Moors, Romans and Spanish who have left their mark in temples, cathedrals and palaces but also in language, social attitudes and, above all, food.

Together we'll travel from grilled mackerel with bitter chicory in Palermo to sublime pastries in Erice; from fragrant olive oil in Agrigento to seductive almond ice cream in Noto. We'll have cooking lessons in a country farmhouse, taste passito wine on Mt. Etna and experience a chocolate epiphany in Modica. Join Gail to taste Sicilian history!



TOUR HOST:

Gail Hall

Gail Hall is a food maven, culinary personality and owner of Seasoned Solution's Loft

Cooking School which focuses on the use of local and regional Alberta ingredients. Gail organizes and hosts Culinary Tours, taking groups of discerning gourmets on food adventures worldwide. Join Gail on this, her 12th culinary tour.

ITINERARY IN BRIEF:

- Day 1:** Arrive in Palermo, Sicily
- Day 2:** Cooking in Palermo
- Day 3:** The Salt Road to Erice
- Day 4:** Wine tasting
- Day 5:** Olive oil harvest
- Day 6:** Cheeses at Sant Angelo
- Day 7:** Chocolate and the Baroque
- Day 8:** Sweets in Noto
- Day 9:** Cooking on Mt. Etna
- Day 10:** Taormina
- Day 11:** Honey and Passito
- Day 12:** Depart Catania



SIGNATURE MOMENTS:

- Tasting *panelle* with Chef Clemente in Palermo
- Joining in with the olive harvest
- Staying in an elegant country house near the Valley of the Temples
- Tasting with master confectioner Corrado in Ragusa
- Cooking with Eleonora on Mt. Etna
- Barrel samples with award winning vintners

COST INFORMATION

START: Palermo, Sicily

FINISH: Catania, Sicily

TOUR COST (per person): \$4,995 CAD

Based on a minimum of 22 participants.

TOUR COST INCLUDES:

- Accommodation on twin share basis in hotels listed or similar
- Airport transfers for passengers arriving and departing as per the group itinerary
- Meals as specified in the detailed itinerary
- Visit to food producers as specified in the detailed itinerary
- Sightseeing with qualified English-speaking guides
- All transportation by deluxe coach
- All entrance fees

TOUR COST DOES NOT INCLUDE:

- International flights and departure taxes
- Airport transfers if arriving / departing separately from group itinerary
- Travel insurance
- Gratuities
- Items of a personal nature
- Visa fees
- Additional transport required due to emergency situation



For more information and to book this tour, please contact:

Kerry at the Worldwide Quest office
1.800.387.1483 / 416.633.5666
kerry@worldwidequest.com

Or contact:

Gail Hall
780.437.0761
gailhall@shaw.ca, www.seasonedsolutions.ca

Your deposit to guarantee your space is required by March 1, 2010.

For additional information about Worldwide Quest's terms and conditions, please refer to the current Cultural Explorations brochure. All participants on tours operated by Worldwide Quest are covered by the terms of the Ontario Travel Companies Compensation Act. Worldwide Quest is licensed in Ontario: #2667946.



A CULINARY TOUR OF SICILY

October 9 – 20, 2010

ITINERARY IN DETAIL:

October 9: Arrive in Palermo, Sicily

Sunny Sicily greets our arrival today. After settling into our hotel in the historic centre, we'll explore the city on foot. You'll be enchanted by Palermo's wide boulevards, traditional Sicilian Old Quarter, and baroque palaces. You'll see the city's main sights, including Quattro Canti di Citta' (the Four Corners of the City), Palermo's extravagant baroque square and the twelfth-century Cathedral of Palermo, which houses a pantheon of royal tombs. Our dinner this evening is a splendid introduction to Sicilian cuisine.

Overnight – Excelsior Palace, Palermo

Meals – Dinner

Please note that flights from Canada to Italy are overnight flights. Your flight will depart Edmonton in the morning of October 8, travelling overnight to Sicily.

October 10: Palermo

Early this morning, we'll meet Chef Clemente and venture out to one of Palermo's historic markets where we will purchase all the ingredients necessary to prepare lunch. Along the way, we'll taste some of Palermo's most typical foods, such as "panelle" and "pane con la milza". The hands on cooking class are held in a typical restaurant. The dishes you've prepared will be served with just the right Sicilian wine, and dessert accompanied by local biscotti and Sicilian dessert wine.

In the afternoon we'll visit Monreale to discover the Arab-Norman splendour of the Monreale Cathedral and the Cloister. This treasure dates from the 12th century and shows the diverse architectural influences of both the Normans and the Arab population.

Overnight – Excelsior Palace, Palermo

Meals – Breakfast & Lunch

October 11: The Salt Road

This morning we'll drive out to the Salt Pans located on the coastline between the cities of Trapani and Marsala. Locals extract salt from seawater following the same procedure used by the ancient Greeks and Phoenicians who once colonized this part of the Sicily. We'll visit the historic windmills used to move the salt through the pans.

Later in the afternoon, we'll visit Erice, a wonderful and mysterious medieval town made famous in ancient times as the birthplace of Venus.

Walking through the cobble — stoned streets of the town, smelling a variety of aromas emanating from the numerous pastry shops for which Erice is famous. We'll visit Maria Grammatico's shop — a former nun who became famous in Italy when she wrote Bitter Almonds, a story of her life. Her almond creations are celebrated in these parts; they are works of art, shaped into a variety of whimsical animal shapes. We'll have dinner this evening with at the restaurant of Chef Carmelo Tilotta who'll share some wonderful recipes with us.

Overnight – Hotel Elimo, Erice

Meals – Breakfast & Dinner





October 12: Country House Stay

Today we leave for Sambuca di Sicilia and our appointment with the oenologist of the Planeta winery. Founded in 1995 on the banks of Lake Arancio, the winery has won numerous prestigious awards. We'll visit the presses and witness the bottling process. Finally, we'll visit the barrel cellar, which consists of around 1,200 barrels and taste with the oenologist. In the afternoon we'll travel to Agrigento to explore the Valley of the Temples. Along the "Sacred Way" we'll see the magnificent Ancient Greek temples, standing on a hill overlooking the sea. We'll walk in the wonderful Garden of Kolymbetra, an old water reservoir of the Greeks now used as an organic fruit orchard, reviving heirloom oranges. The end of the day brings us to our Country House for a three night stay.

Overnight – Mandranova Country House, Agrigento

Meals – Breakfast & Dinner



October 13: The Olive Harvest

The farm stands out among the colors and fragrances of the immense olive groves which surround it. In Sicily, the olive harvest begins in late autumn when the olives are mature but still green. They are picked by hand or with the aid of a baton. We'll take part in the harvest morning; nets are placed under the trees, and baskets are brought to collect the olives (subject to harvest conditions). It's a wonderful way to learn about this timeless feature of Sicilian life. And if you prefer to relax, the setting is absolutely delightful. In the afternoon we'll bring olives to the oil press to see how oil is produced. Our work is rewarded with a tasting of oil with bread, garlic and oregano. In the later afternoon, we'll join our hostess for a cooking lesson preparing "anelletti al forno" with eggplant, sauce, and fresh basil, the traditional *polpettone di carne* and some of Sicily's wonderful vegetable dishes, fresh from the garden.

Overnight – Mandranova Country House, Agrigento

Meals – Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner



October 14: Sicilian Cheeses

The whole day will be devoted to Sicilian cheeses! We'll drive to Sant'Angelo Muxaro, an enchanting little village near Agrigento. We'll start where cheese begins; visiting a shepherd to see how ricotta cheese is made and taste the still warm ricotta cheese as it is finished. We'll learn all about the distinctive characteristics of Sicilian cheeses and have lunch at the farm. This afternoon we'll travel back to Agrigento with some free time to enjoy the historic city centre.

Overnight – Mandranova Country House, Agrigento

Meals – Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner



October 15: Sicilian Chocolate and the Baroque

The Baroque towns of eastern Sicily have been designated as UNESCO World Heritage Sites. These are dramatically beautiful streetscapes with exuberant architecture. We'll start off in Modica, strolling the picturesque lanes and narrow streets. Modica is as famous for its chocolate as it is

for its architecture. No butter is used; the only ingredients are cacao and sugar. We'll meet with Pierpaolo Ruta who'll show us how the chocolate is prepared.

The end of the day brings us to Ragusa. The landscapes here are among the most memorable (and eerie) in Sicily. Many are crisscrossed with low-lying stone walls, pieced laboriously together without mortar, and lying in impoverished solitude beneath the punishing sun. These are the landscapes most often evoked in Sicilian literature and cinema, an oft-filmed terrain that has positioned Ragusa and its outlying districts in the forefront of Italian filmmaking.

Overnight – *De Stefano Palace Hotel, Ragusa*

Meals – *Breakfast & Lunch*

October 16: Sicilian Sweets and Noto

In the early morning we'll set off for Noto, destroyed by earthquake and now one of Sicily's most beautiful baroque cities. The town appears like a stage set, with curvilinear accents and exuberant wrought-iron balconies. Many Sicilian artists and artisans have worked hard to rebuild Noto into a baroque gem, with uniform buildings of soft limestone. Here we'll meet with master confectioner Corrado Assenza who will dazzle us with a tasting of his many products (ice creams, jams, sauces).

Overnight – *De Stefano Palace Hotel, Ragusa*

Meals – *Breakfast & Dinner*

October 17: Cooking on Mt. Etna

This morning we make our way to Viagrande on Mount Etna. Here we'll meet Mrs Eleonora Consoli in her La Cucina del Sole (The Sun's Kitchen). Eleonora has written several cookbooks on Sicilian gastronomy. She will lead a hands-on cooking class, featuring several classic Sicilian dishes including appetizers, pasta alla Norma (with eggplant, tomato sauce and salted ricotta cheese), breaded veal rolls or meat-balls Sicilian style, Cassata Siciliana. Lunch is served at Eleonora's home. In the late afternoon we'll visit with the owner Pietro Scammacca and you will taste their best wines and olive oil from their organic orchard.

Overnight – *Hotel Murgo, Mt Etna*

Meals – *Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner*

October 18: Taormina

This morning we'll visit Taormina to admire the amazing Greek Theatre set on a hill overlooking the sea and the Duomo. The historical centre is a wonderful place to stroll, shop and enjoy the views over the Mediterranean. In the evening we return to our Mt. Etna farm to enjoy a special dinner this evening.

Overnight – *Hotel Murgo, Mt Etna*

Meals – *Breakfast & Dinner*





October 19: Honey and Passito

We'll spend the day discovering the gastronomy of Mt. Etna. This still active volcano yields a rich soil that has spawned vineyards and plantations. Pistachio trees and prickly pears are common place. We'll travel up to 1900 metres to visit the inactive Silvestri craters — it's an incredible lunar landscape of transcendent beauty. We'll visit the Honey House where organic honeys are produced and the Scillio family winery to taste the olive oils from their organic orchards and their famous *Passito dell'Etna*.

Overnight – Mt Etna

Meals – Breakfast & Dinner



October 20: Depart Catania

This morning, we'll drive to Catania airport for homeward flights. Or continue on with Gail to Torino where the second part of our Culinary Adventure begins: Slow Food's definitive Salone del Gusto.

Meals – Breakfast

Itinerary and accommodation subject to change.

