



Piedmont On The Market

by ELYSE GLICKMAN

PHOTOS THIS
SPREAD FROM LEFT
Eataly cheese
station; Mercato
vegetarian food.



THERE'S A TIME AND A PLACE FOR EVERY TYPE OF Italian regional cuisine. The cuisines of Puglia and Calabria, for example, are tailor made for summer with bright citrus, seafood, tomatoes and spicy peppers making up Nonna's culinary tool kit. Umbrian pastas, risottos and roasted dishes, with their emphasis on saffron and mellower seasonings, shine during the autumn months. And as we discovered in a visit to Piedmont just before Christmas, this northeastern region's cuisine is a perfect fit for winter.»



SERVES 6-8

Vitello Tonnato

VEAL IN TUNA SAUCE is a classic Piedmontese dish. It is served cold or at room temperature and is a perfect make-ahead dish for entertaining. If veal is hard to come by, pork loin makes an excellent substitute.

Boneless Veal or Pork Loin Roast
1 kg piece

White Wine
1 cup

Celery
1 stalk, chopped

Bay Leaves
2

Onion
1, chopped

Garlic
2 cloves, bruised

Black Peppercorns
1 Tbs

Lemon Slices
for garnish

Fresh Herbs
for garnish



- PLACE** the meat in a Dutch oven with the wine and enough water to barely cover. Add the celery, bay leaves, onion, garlic and peppercorns. Bring to a boil then lower the heat to a simmer and cook, covered, until the meat reached an internal temperature of 140°F and is tender when pierced with a knife, about 90 minutes. Allow the meat to cool in its stock for about 45 minutes.
- DRAIN** the tuna and place it in a mixing bowl, reserving the oil. Put the oil in a measuring jug and add olive oil to make a total 200 ml.
- USE** a stick blender to combine the egg yolks, olive/tuna oil and lemon juice into a mayonnaise. (If making by hand, whisk the yolks and lemon juice, then drizzle the oil in very slowly, while whisking constantly).
- ADD** the mayonnaise to the tuna and mash with a fork until the tuna is completely broken down. Add the capers, anchovies and parsley. Stir well to combine. Season with black pepper. Cover and chill in the fridge for 15-20 minutes.
- REMOVE** the meat from the pot and pat dry with paper towel. Discard the stock or strain it and reserve for another use. Slice the meat thinly and place in overlapping layers on a large platter. Spoon the sauce over the meat. Garnish with lemon slices and fresh herbs if desired.
- SERVE** immediately at room temperature or refrigerate for up to 24 hours and serve chilled.

« Every single restaurant we visited throughout Piedmont, which abuts the South of France and the Alps, offered similarly substantial fare — veal dishes, veal and beef-stuffed *agnelotti del plin* (the smaller cousin of ravioli), buttery *tajarin* (think of it as an egg-ier angel hair) pastas, *bagna cauda* (a hot appetizer made with sardines and olive oil) and petite gnocchi crafted from root vegetables.

Although there are several restaurants in the regional capital, Turin, and surrounding area that have or are poised to receive Michelin stars, to truly appreciate what lies at the heart of Piedmontese cuisine (or any regional Italian cuisine for that matter), the first stop should be at a market.

One can get a sense for what people eat on a regular basis by heading to the supermarket nearest your hotel, although some may argue that here you're just getting the meat and potatoes without the sauces and sides. In the last two decades, however, neighbourhood markets have given way to farmers' markets as tourist attractions, with space set aside for gourmet groceries and trendy food courts.

Before that phenomenon took hold, visiting a 'regular' supermarket during my travels was a must for a variety of reasons — fresh take-away food for hikes and bike trips, for hotel stays without free breakfast, can't-miss edible souvenirs for friends and the sheer entertainment value of viewing interesting labels and merchandising and getting a few tasty food samples.

Apparently, Alba-born entrepreneur Oscar Farinetti felt the same way about food shopping, and wondered how it could be rethought as entertainment on a par with dining out. What began as an idea sketched out on a piece of paper in 2002 took flight as Eataly in 2007. The flagship location, in Turin's Lingotto neighbourhood, was built into the former Carpano distillery, a few steps from the Fiat Lingotto Factory, which is itself repurposed as a mall with its own food court. Although it requires a half-hour commute on Turin's subway, Eataly is worth a visit to see Farinetti's first version of an emporium containing "high-quality, sustainable food" that "celebrates Italian biodiversity and creates an informal, natural and simple place to eat, shop and learn." The formula is quite effective, with the food-as-entertainment complex becoming an international juggernaut, with more than 35 locations throughout Italy and the world, including as of this past November, Toronto's Manulife Centre.

Eataly v1.0 in Lingotto does not disappoint visually. The market side of the former distillery is fashioned as a culinary department store,

PHOTOS THIS PAGE FROM
TOP Martini Bar;
Eataly Food Hall.



...Eataly also has its own behind-the-scenes food tour...



filled out with beautifully presented charcuterie counter, cheese monger, pasta area, bakery and an achingly photogenic display of produce running half the length of the first floor. It's easy to miss the entry to the Carpano Museum, detailing the birth and evolution of vermouth. There are stylized chalkboards in strategic places, listing upcoming in-store events as well as book displays reminiscent of the old Rizzoli booksellers in New York City. And there are actual residents (albeit a well-heeled group) buying their groceries for the week. While Piedmont's bounty is emphasized, other regions of Italy are also highlighted.

First-floor restaurants run the gamut from aromatic pizza and pasta stalls with open-concept kitchens to a 1-star Michelin restaurant (Casa Vicina) and Bistrot La Taverna del Re, an offshoot of 1-star Michelin restaurant Guido in Serralunga d'Alba — the former serving a delightful three-course, truffle-centric meal when supplies allow. Eataly also has its own behind-the-scenes food tour, meeting and greeting the resident food artisans, as well as bigger tours around Turin. There is also a steady stream of workshops, full-on cooking lessons upstairs and tasting sessions in the impressive basement enoteca (wine shop). There, you will find 5,000 labels from wineries throughout Italy, 50,000 bottles of international wines, and special areas dedicated to Piedmont's signature wines (Barolo and Barbaresco) and Italian craft beer. Wine bar Pane Y Vino and a Martini & Rossi-themed cocktail bar complete the lower floor.»



PHOTOS THIS SPREAD CLOCKWISE
FROM TOP LEFT Mercato gelato;
Interior; Rotisserie; Entrance.



Those looking to start their Piedmont culinary journey in a more 'local' fashion should plan a visit to Mercato Centrale Torino at Porta Palazzo, a few blocks from Turin's city centre. This Mercato is part of a chain (with other locations in Rome and Florence), and the design is a bit more upscale than your average supermarket. However, what surrounds the modern glass building — a market of no-frills produce, foodstuffs and dry goods vendors established in 1835 — adds a welcome dash of authenticity.

Porta Palazzo ("Palace Gate") was the original front door to the city that over time ushered in immigrants from Southern Italy, and from the 1980s forward, merchants and future residents from the Middle East, Eastern Europe, South America and Asia, putting their cultural and culinary stamps on the city's character and cuisine.

In contrast to Eataly, which has a general checkout section in the front, every shop inside the Mercato is independently operated, sells its own products and has its own cash register. The emphasis on Piedmont-crafted ingredients and finished products is more pronounced. One of the centerpieces of the modern indoor market is a small group of preserved cold storage rooms built in the 18th century that allowed royalty and market vendors to conserve perishable foods. These early "refrigerators" (which one can tour with an advance reservation) functioned by adding snow through open drains in the roof to small compartments inside the structure that would turn to ice. The floor is sloped towards the centre, allowing the water to drain away from the perishables as the ice melts.

The 26 vendors occupying the first floor include casual outposts of top tier Turin restaurants Farmacia del Cambio and Mare Nostrum, Alberto Marchetti gelato, Beppino Occelli's cheese and butter, Trapizzino by Stefano Callegari; Girarrosto, The Sicilian Specialties, and others laser focused on vegetarian fare, fried "street foods," Tuscan beef, a chicken rotisserie, high-end hamburgers, Piedmontese pastas, breads, pastries, truffles, wine shop and even a flour mill. In addition to the Lorenzo de' Medici cooking school on the second floor (with a regular docket for classes, workshops and market tours for adults and kids), there are open spaces for live performances, demonstrations and community events.

After hours, anybody into the cocktail scene can grab a seat at the recently opened upstairs lounge bar, The Distillery, distinguished with floor-to-ceiling windows looking out to Turin's dramatic skyline and historic landmarks from Roman times to the Renaissance.

Once you become familiar with Piedmont's culinary landscape at either emporium, it is time to visit time-honored Turin eateries, including Porto di Savona (operating since 1863), Pastificio Defilippis (flanked with its own boutique of specialty foods), Tre Galline and Restaurant Pepino (birthplace of The Pinguino ice cream bar in 1939). Cocktail bars D.One and TR3ND are worth a look, with their menus of updated

classics and original cocktails served with inspired bar snacks. Essential spots for chocoholics and sweets aficionados include the original Café el Bicerin, Guido Gobino, Il Gianduiotto, Cioccolateria Giordano, Peyrano and Guido Castagna. MiaGola Caffè (Italy's first Cat Cafe) and Caffè Mulassano whip up vegan variations of the Bicerin drink (a velvety blend of chocolate, coffee and cream). 



Eataly

www.eataly.net/it_it/negozi/torino-lingotto

Mercato Centrale Torino

www.mercatocentrale.com/turin



ELYSE GLICKMAN is a regular contributor to **TASTE&TRAVEL**.