

## Hotel Highlights: Excelsior Victoria Hotel in Sorrento

This place is outrageous. Its long driveway from Piazza Tasso to the main building is adorned with a variety of exotic trees plants and flowers. It has a beautiful pool, relaxing spa with many services for you to take advantage of, ( I did while I was there and it was well worth it!), an excellent location, gym beautiful gardens, and a fantastic chef who prepares delicious meals. A peaceful and relaxing atmosphere characterizes this 5-acre gem in the center of Sorrento.



As for accommodations, you can either stay at a classic garden room or a sea view room, and of course there are suites! You will not be disappointed as every room here is beautifully decorated and the helpful staff will make you feel like royalty!

What makes this hotel stand out to be my favorite in Italy is the manager, Nicolino Grigio. He is always there and always working hard to make sure everyone is well taken care of. You can tell that he loves what he does.

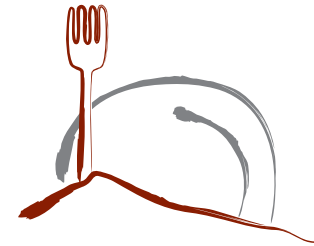


This hotel was originally build in 1834 and is operated by the same family. This hotel is perched above the marina and has a private elevator for easy access to the ferries that will take you to Capri for the day. So if you plan to go to Sorrento you should make this your base and enjoy everything it has to offer!

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# GOURMET GETAWAYS NEWSLETTER SPRING SUMMER 2011

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## Upcoming Events and Tours

Gourmet Getaways is busy with the final details on the upcoming tour to Umbria and Rome. Sorry everyone this tour is sold out but do keep in touch, as I will be planning other exclusive Gourmet Getaways.

**G**ourmet Getaways was off on another exclusive tour this spring. This time we started in Sorrento and explored the Amalfi Coast for four days and then we were off to Rome with a quick stop in Naples. We stayed at the majestic Excelsior Victoria in Sorrento Italy, which was outstanding! This is due to the expert management of Nicolino Grigio. More about this hotel later!

Upon everyone's arrival, and of course after check-in, we gathered poolside for a pizza cooking class, where the hotel has a wood-burning oven in the outside kitchen area. The outdoor oven was burning for about 2 hours in preparation for our class. The chef and head chef of the hotel, Vincenzo Galano, instructed everyone on how to prepare the dough. After a 3 hour rise everyone was instructed on hand pressing the dough then preparing the shell with simple tomato sauce, mozzarella cheese and some grated parmesan and a little olive oil. Then off to the wood burning oven for 2-3 minutes. Result: A piping hot, perfectly charred pizza with melted cheese. Basil leaves were then added! Now time to eat! We gathered poolside among the lemon trees and sunshine and enjoyed our delicious pizza!

The remaining days in Sorrento were filled with wonderful food and tasty excursions. One day was off to a limoncello factory followed by a tasting and lunch at a mozzarella factory, then off to visit Capri. During our quiet times in the afternoons and evenings we had the pleasure of wandering the streets of Sorrento shopping.



Before leaving the Amalfi Coast we did have the ultimate cooking experience at Mamma Agata's cooking school in Ravello. We left early in the morning as it was going to be a long ride to Ravello. Upon our arrival, Chiara cheerfully

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## Restaurant Highlights:

### Roma Sparita in Rome, Italy

Tucked into a corner of Piazza Santa Cecilia and next to a beautiful church in Trastevere is a wonderful place to have lunch or dinner. This restaurant, Roma Sparita in Rome, serves typical Roman dishes. My favorite is the tagliolini al cacio e pepe and their Jewish fried artichokes. Just wonderful! What better way to spend a sunny day eating outside in the piazza enjoying this dish with a glass of white wine.



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## More than just a cookbook!



Everyone that came with me on this tour was presented with Mamma's cookbook. It is a beautiful cookbook and a wonderful tribute to Mamma Agata. Chiara has done a fantastic job. The pictures are beautiful and I will cherish this book forever.

It is a beautiful cookbook and has won many awards. Chiara may be doing a US tour in the fall and may be doing cooking lessons in the city. So for those of you that cannot get to Italy then perhaps you can come to NYC and have an ultimate experience there. There will be one thing missing however, and that is the beautiful view from her terrace in Ravello. Sorry! You will have to come with me the next time to have the total experience. I am ready to go back NOW!



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greeted us and we sat down on the terrace and enjoyed Mamma's famous lemon cake. Then it was off to the kitchen with aprons on and notebooks in hand. Some participated and everyone watched as Chiara explained Mamma's techniques for preparing eggplant parmesan, eggplant rolls, tomato sauce, sausage and red pepper pasta, Mamma's famous lemon chicken, and Mamma's coccoli, which is a fried pastry filled with herbs.

Mid morning we did take a break and many of us explored the property and admired the lemon trees, which were abundant, the herb garden, vegetable garden and the beautiful Bay of Salerno below. After our cooking class we gathered around the table on the terrace and enjoyed the delicious meal, which was served with wines made by Chiara's husband Gennaro. Of course we finished the meal with another helping, and who could resist, of Mamma's famous Lemon Cake and also her delicious limoncello, which she makes herself.

No need for a dinner that night as we were full of the most delicious food! Of course the vista from the terrace was breathtaking and cannot be replicated anywhere else!

On to Rome the next day with a brief stop in Naples and lunch in Naples at a local restaurant. We arrived in Rome in time for our wine tasting with Katie Parla at a local bar in Rome with a light fare. Here we sampled 5 different wines, which were accompanied by local food. Katie was careful to select wines that we could purchase back home. A great plus since many wines that we sampled while in Italy cannot be easily purchased here! We also had a guided tour of Rome with Katie the next day and finished our tour with lunch at a local restaurant in the Trastevere section of Rome, Roma Sparita. The rest of the time in Rome was spent shopping, sampling gelato, touring the Vatican Museum and Sistine Chapel, the Borghese Gallery and more!

The weather in early April was beautiful and everyone enjoyed themselves. Great food, and great experiences equal a great tour!

## Travel Agent vs Internet Bookings

When the consumer books a hotel through the internet, the booking drops to the bottom of the hotel's priority list for upgrades and special attention. When you use your travel agent and he/she uses her favorite supplier that booking goes to the top of the list. The hotel managers know that when the booking comes through the internet they assign to these consumers the least desirable rooms since this traveler is more or less a budget shopper rather than a serious traveler.

## Your trip! Your way!

For those wishing to explore Italy on their own, Gourmet Getaways offers custom trip planning throughout Italy and Sicily.

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