



GOURMET GETAWAYS NEWSLETTER 01.2009



THIS FALL I COMBINED BUSINESS WITH PLEASURE AND TOOK MY FAMILY TO ITALY.

Having been to Sorrento and the Amalfi Coast last year I thought I would repeat some of those exceptional days again, however this time we would all take a cooking class with Mamma Agata in Ravello. We arrived in Sorrento on a Sunday and checked into our hotel. (More about that later!) Early Monday morning we left the hotel and arrived at Mamma Agata's about 10:30AM. Before I begin telling you about the lesson, let me first describe this magical place perched high on the cliffs above Amalfi.

As the door to Mamma's house opened and we walked down the steps we were greeted with a panoramic view of the Bay of Salerno, Italian music, and Chiara, Mamma Agata's daughter and translator.

The morning began with a tasting of Mamma Agata's famous lemon cake. Every mouthful was bursting with the taste of lemons. After we introduced ourselves to the other members of the class we began our demonstration cooking class in a state-of-the-art kitchen overlooking Ravello. As we all watched, with notebooks in hand, we also tasted different

cheeses, pickled pumpkin, and olives and sipped local wines.

Everything that was to be prepared was grown in their organic garden. Mamma Agata's demonstration consisted of: eggplant parmigiana, herbed fritters made from a yeast pastella, pasta with sausage and roasted pepper sauce, Farmer's Spaghetti, lemon chicken, and stuffed eggplant rolls, and of course, all of Mamma's secret cooking tips, which I will not reveal in this newsletter. You must take the class yourself!

After a few hours we took a break, with wine glasses in hand, and were allowed time to enjoy the garden and the view. We took time to relax, enjoy each other's company and take numerous pictures of the beautiful surroundings. Although it was early November, the trees were abundant with lemons, flowers still blooming, pumpkins growing in the garden, and potted herbs decorating the veranda. Then it was back to the kitchen to finish the cooking demonstration and taste more wine.

When the demonstration was concluded, about 2PM, we sat down to a beautiful table set among the gardens and enjoyed a 5-course meal accompanied by the special wines of Ravello. To top it off, we again had Mamma's delicious lemon cake followed by her home-made limoncello, which we all decided was the best! We exchanged emails and left with a stomach full of delicious food, fond memories, and recipes to try when we would return home. We descended Ravello's winding roads and the driver took us back to Sorrento and the Excelsior Victoria Hotel.

This grand hotel is not to be missed. We previously stayed at this hotel eight years ago and the same concierge is still there today. He remembered us and gave us a very welcome hug. The staff at this hotel is extremely helpful, professional and courteous. One evening, as we were relaxing in the parlor, listening to music and enjoying an evening drink, the bar



attendant presented us a tray of chocolates, which I later learned were made by the chef of the hotel. These chocolates were outstanding. Take it from someone who is a chocoholic!

I will close this part of the tour for now. However, I will write about Rome, restaurant reviews and Orvieto in my next newsletters.

If you are looking to celebrate a special birthday, honeymoon or anniversary and would like to do it in Italy or elsewhere please give me a call and I will help to make your experience a special one!

Travel Tip: Tip the concierge if he/she has helped you during your stay. Depending on the complexity of the service you may want to tip between \$5.00 and \$15.00.

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*“We wanted fabulous food and wine —
We were not disappointed!”*

TESTIMONIALS: *Bev and Andy’s Italian Adventure*

We contacted Marlene to help us plan an Anniversary Gourmet Getaway to Italy. We wanted friendly, family owned Hotels and Villas with comfort, relaxation and fabulous food and wine. We were not disappointed! The Hotel San Luca, in the town of Spoleto was gorgeous with too many special appointments to even mention them all. We drove to Gubbio where the town is built up the side of a mountain and stayed in the Hotel Relais Ducale overlooking the red rooftops and countryside. Divine Cuisine!

We drove out into the countryside to the Villa Monte Solare. This is a converted Villa located at the top of a vineyard and olive grove. It has spa facilities and two spectacular pools overlooking the countryside. The dining was beyond gourmet and the service incredibly attentive, caring and high grade. The comfort level was the highest and the beautiful surroundings incredible. We drove to Orvieto, dropped off our car at the bottom of the hill and spent three wonderful days in this delightful town.

Ours was a true “Gourmet” “Getaway”. Thank you Marlene and JDB (NJ)



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