

ITINERARY: 'CHEZ CHERIE IN SICILY'

This October join Chez Cherie for a fantastic trip in Sicily, staying at two beautiful farmhouse estates where we will learn the secrets of cooking traditional Sicilian recipes from

local chefs, explore the wonders of ancient Sicily, and see its vibrant markets and meet local food heroes. This is a lovely time to visit Sicily to enjoy autumn's bounty from the green fields, forested hills and blue seas. Sicily is a land of sunshine, where you can sit outside and enjoy the views even on an autumn day.





Our first base is located in a nature reserve on an estate which produces entirely organic food and wines close to Etna. We will be staying at a charming Sicilian farmhouse for **three nights**, chosen for its friendly service, beautiful views and good food. Close to the farmhouse there is a lovely walk through the reserve to the waterfall for which the valley is famous.



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Day 1 & Day 2: Arrival: Sunday 25th October 2009 (Borgo Alcantara)

Departing the US on Saturday we fly through the night to Catania where we arrive the next day to meet our Sicilian trip leader, Pietro. We transfer by coach to the Borgo Alcantara farmhouse to freshen up and enjoy the beautiful scenery. We will meet cooks Concettina &



Pina (pictured) to learn some wonderful dishes inspired by the great local ingredients, such as a delicious salad of Etna oranges prepared with Bronte pistachios. This will be a great way to meet everyone and enjoy some of the estate's own wine before sitting down to dinner (included).

Day 3 - Monday 26th October 2009 (Borgo Alcantara & Catania by night)

After breakfast Francesca, the estate manager, will show us around the estate and explain all about the organic food and wine, produced here. Afterwards we return to the kitchen to prepare more classic Sicilian dishes, such as "Caponata" a sweet and sour blend of eggplants and tomatoes, followed by lunch (included).



Later this afternoon, there will be an excursion to the historic city centre of Catania. The centre has many beautiful Baroque buildings created during the rule of the Spanish in the 18th century. There will be a visit to the Cathedral and the main shopping area, including the best food shops.

This evening dinner is independent. We have made a reservation for the party at a restaurant in the historic centre, located in a former art gallery, Il Sale Art Caffè. The restaurant is run by the young and charismatic Andrea Graziano (pictured) who is passionate about using local ingredients.



Day 4 - Tuesday 27th October 2009 (Taormina)

This morning there will be an excursion to Taormina for a guided tour in the morning followed by free time for lunch (independent) and shopping in the afternoon.



Taormina sits high up on a cliff top overlooking the Bay of Giardini Naxos with views up to Mount Etna. The resort became popular in the early 1900s, with Victorians searching for warmer climates to spend the winters. Taormina is particularly celebrated for its Roman theatre which has spectacular views. This evening on return to the farmhouse there will be another cooking lesson with Concettina & Pina and dinner (included).

Day 5 – Wednesday 28th October 2009 (Enna & Agrigento)

After breakfast we check out from the farmhouse and depart by coach for Agrigento. En route we will stop at Enna, Sicily's highest city (931m) which has stunning views over the plains of central Sicily. Enna is one of the oldest cities in Sicily, and the castle is located on the site of an ancient temple.

Continuing on to Agrigento we first stop in San Leone, which is by the sea for lunch (independent). Afterwards we will visit the Valley the Temples with a guide to see the stunning remains of the ancient Greek city.

Agrigento is located on the south-west coast of Sicily and was founded by the ancient Greek under the name of Akragas. It became one of the most important centres of the island. In the eastern part of the valley are three ancient temples which sit in a row. The Temple of Concord is one of the best preserved buildings from ancient times.



In the west of the valley are the remains of the temple of Zeus, the largest temple in antiquity. It is an unforgettable experience to pick your way through the fallen masonry and magnificent columns which must have once dwarfed worshippers.

After the visit we will continue by coach to “Tenuta Stoccatello”, a farm estate situated in the countryside outside Menfi where we will be staying for **four nights**. The farmhouse is run by four friends and is particularly well known locally for its great restaurant.



Tenuta Stoccatello
C/da Stoccatello
92013 Menfi (AG)
Tel. (+39)333.9035428



The Stoccatello estate produces a variety of citrus fruit, cereals and vegetables. The farmhouse includes a small spa where it is possible to enjoy massages, beauty treatments and the steam room and sauna. A special discount has been negotiated for all guests of Chez Cherie for use of the facilities and on treatments.

Enjoy dinner (included) at the farmhouse restaurant.

Day 6 - Thursday 29th October 2009 (Sciaccia & Vittorio)



After breakfast we will visit the harbour of Sciaccia to see the vibrant fish markets with local chef Vittorio (pictured left).

Vittorio runs a family fish restaurant Da Vittorio in Porto Palo, on the edge of the beach. In spite of the humble rustic style of the restaurant, it is a temple of gastronomy which draws gourmets from all over Italy and the world to dine here.

Sciaccia is also celebrated for its ceramics and wood carvings. The name Sciaccia derives from the Arab term **As-saqah** (a fissure) referring to the ancient thermal baths, once enjoyed by the ancient Romans.



After some free time in Sciaccia, we follow chef Vittorio to his famous restaurant for lunch (included) overlooking the beach.

After lunch we return to the farmhouse for a cooking lesson with Giuseppe Barcellona (pictured left - he is on the far right), head chef at Stoccatello, followed by dinner (included).

Giuseppe Barcellona was born in Palermo into a family of seven brothers and sisters. He was inspired to work as a chef through his experience at the family restaurant. He completed his professional training at Palermo's most famous luxury hotel, the 5-star Villa Igiea, before embarking on a career which has taken him around the world, including jobs in Turkey, Egypt, Mexico, Zanzibar and Kenya.

Day 7 - Friday 30th October 2009 (Vucciria - Monreale)



This morning we will depart by coach to Palermo to visit Vucciria market. This famous street market is one of the best places to feel the pulse of Sicilian cooking.

Under the red sun-bleached awnings, enjoy the wonderful displays of fresh fruit, citrons, octopus, tuna and chilli peppers surrounded by the raucous voices of marketers selling their wares. Vucciria means 'chaos' in Sicilian dialect!

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We will also explore the Cathedral Square to see the porphyry tombs of the Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick Barbarossa who once ruled Sicily.



Lunch (independent) will be reserved at "Antica Focacceria", an historic 'fast food' restaurant in the historic centre, famous for its delicious street food, such as *arancine* (rice balls stuffed with a variety of meats, vegetables and cheese), *panzerotti* (little stuffed pasties) and *panelle*

(chick pea fritters).

In the afternoon we will visit Monreale, high up over Palermo for the view and beautiful golden mosaics within the Cathedral, which was founded by the Norman King, William II in 1174. Adjoining the vast Romanesque basilica is a wonderful cloister surrounded on all sides with finely decorated columns – surely one of the wonders of Sicily.

On return to Tenuta Stoccatello, enjoy dinner (included) at the farmhouse.

Day 8 – Saturday 31st October 2009 (Selinunte & Ravida)

This morning we will visit the romantic seaside ruins of the ancient Greek city of Selinunte and its quarries at Cave di Cusa.



The archaeological site of Selinunte was effectively destroyed in 409 BC after a glorious heyday of nearly two centuries, which saw a massive program of building. We enjoy a visit here with a guide before continuing to the nearby beach at Marinella for a light lunch (independent)

before returning to the Stoccatello estate.



This afternoon we will visit the 16th century farmhouse overlooking the sea on the Ravida Estate which produces premium quality olive oils, which are particularly acclaimed for their aroma and taste. The historic family estate is organically farmed with hundred-year old olive and cork trees thriving alongside vineyards, lemon groves and other crops.

Here we shall meet Natalia Ravidà (pictured above), who is passionate about cooking traditional Sicilian recipes.

Natalia was born in northern Italy but returned to Sicily, the land of her ancestors to take the helm of the family estate, after a successful career as a journalist in London and Paris with her husband and young son, Alfredo.

We will visit the olive groves and press, before learning the secrets of how to taste olive oil. Afterwards we will return to the farmhouse for a cooking lesson, concluding with a celebratory dinner (included).

Day 9 – Sunday 1st November (Segesta)

After breakfast we check-out from the Tenuta Stoccatello and bid farewell to our hosts. En route to Palermo airport we will stop to visit the ancient Greek temple of Segesta – perhaps the most beautiful of all the ancient Greek temples, situated in a tranquil setting amid rolling green hills.



Lunch has been arranged at a vineyard nearby which produces the excellent white Alcamo wine (included) before continuing to Palermo airport where the trip ends.

The price of **\$2245** per person is based on shared accommodation of a double room, including:

- 3 nights bed and breakfast at Borghi Alcantara
- 4 nights bed and breakfast at Tenuta Stocatello
- 5 cooking lessons
 - 3 cooking lessons at the Borgo with organic food
 - 1 cooking lessons at the Stocatello restaurant
 - 1 cooking lesson at Ravida with celebrity chef Natalia Ravida
- 4 lunches with wine and mineral water
- 6 dinners with wine and mineral water
- Food visits as listed:
 - Borghi Alcantara organic estate
 - Sciacca fish market with chef Vittorio
 - Ravida award winning olive oil estate
 - Vucciria market in Palermo
- Excursions as listed:
 - Gole di Alcantara waterfalls
 - Taormina shopping
 - Catania by night & shopping
 - Enna and Valley of the Temples (Agrigento)
 - Sciacca & shopping
 - Selinunte and Cave di Cusa
 - Segesta
 - Palermo & shopping, and Monreale
- Coaching throughout including driver lodging and meals
- Tastes of Italy tour host, Pietro Molica

Not included: Flights, Insurance, Meals not listed, Extras and personal spending such as bar bills and optional excursions.

Supplements

Single room: \$175 pp

Minimum number: 13 people

Maximum number: 20 people

US flights to Sicily will usually be via Rome or Milan. Please note that we have based the trip around your arrival at Catania airport and departure from Palermo airport.

BEFORE YOU GO....

What will the weather be like?

The weather is likely to be mild with chances of showers - the average maximum temperature for Sicily in October is 25°C and the average minimum 14°C.

What should I pack?

Sunglasses - hats for those thinning on top - casual smart for dinner-swimming costume for Jacuzzi - warm clothes - waterproof and stout shoes for walking - dressing gown if you wish (useful for breakfast and the hydromassage tub) - slippers (the bedroom floors are tiled or terracotta). Electricity supply is 220V. Remember a standard European adaptor if you are bringing electrical items, such as a mobile phone recharger.

What travel documents do I need?

Your **flight tickets**, **passport**, a copy of your **travel insurance** policy making a note of the number for medical emergency overseas.

What about the accommodations?

“Bargo Alcantara”

The first place we are going to stay is a refurbished "baglio" (Sicilian Estate House), located on a hill in the Alcantara Park which overlooks the valley. There are 16 air-conditioned rooms with en-suite bathroom, TV, mini-bar and safe deposit box. This is a great place to enjoy the locally produced organic food and wines. Weather permitting we may even be able to use their spacious terrace for dinner overlooking the view.

“Tenuta Stoccatello”

The second place we are going to stay is a fully restored 19th century “baglio” (Sicilian Estate House), located just outside Menfi town. It’s a perfect place for relaxing after a day out. The 18 comfortable rooms are furnished in traditional Sicilian style with en-suite bathroom, air-conditioning and TV. We will also be able to use their fantastic garden area to spend some quality time together after dinner or taste some of the finest Sicilian wines available at the bar.

We have also arranged a discount of 15% off prices to use their in-house SPA equipped with Jacuzzi, Turkish bath, waterfall shower for chromo-therapy, massage rooms and a relaxing area for infusion tasting.

What about meals?

Breakfast is included daily.

Meals are included as described in the itinerary.

What if I need to change money?

Italian banks open 08.30am -13.30pm and 15.00-16.00pm Monday to Friday. You also have the opportunity to change money at exchange bureaux in the airport. Alternatively you can use cashpoints in Italy, using bank cards with a valid PIN.

What if there is an emergency?

In the event of an emergency (medical or otherwise) in Italy in the first instance call Tastes of Italy on (+44) 20 8874 3490. Out of hours (17:30 - 09:30) please try the mobile (+44) (0)7867 797890 and leave a message for William Goodacre, stating the nature of the emergency and your contact details for us to return your call. You can also call your Italian host Pietro Molica on +(39) 333 3908 140.

How do I stay in touch when I am away?

To call Italy (country code 0039) from the UK: Dial the '0' of the area code.

To call US (country code 001) from Italy: Omit the '0' of the area code.

If you bring your mobile please note call charges for 'roaming' can be excessive.

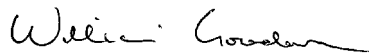
The cheapest way to make calls in Italy is to buy a pre-charged phone card (*carta telefonica*) which can be used in public pay phones. Phone cards and stamps (*francobolli*) are available from tobacconists.

Who are Tastes of Italy?

Since 2000 Tastes of Italy has been creating bespoke trips in Italy for corporate parties, wine clubs and individuals.

Tastes of Italy specialises in gourmet arrangements, VIP experiences and shameless luxury. Our aim is to provide excellent service, genuine hospitality and enriching travel through careful selection of the people we work with.

It has been a pleasure to work together with Chez Cherie to create this bespoke itinerary, which I trust you will enjoy.



William Goodacre

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