

Florence the food lover's paradise!

If food is your forte then then Florence is the city for you!

Florentine food is influenced by its medieval history and geography. Their most famous dish is Bistecca alla fiorentina (Steak Florentine), which is a t-bone cut of steak weighing between 2-8lbs. It's cooked on a grill, over roasted chestnuts to provide a smoky flavour and it's seasoned with salt, pepper and a squeeze of lemon. Chargrilled on the outside and pink in the middle. It should always be cooked in this fashion and the chef would be offended if you request it to be cooked to your liking, we would therefore not recommend this dish if you do not like your meat on the rare side. If you fancy trying this local delicacy then, due to its size, you might want to share this with a friend or colleague.

If you do order this dish in a restaurant then don't be alarmed if your server shows you the meat, prior to cooking- this is all part of the experience. It's an opportunity for you to admire the cut of meat before it's cooked.

Another Florentine dish is Lampredotto, this is one that might not be to everyone's taste- it's a sandwich made of tripe. You can order it with a spicy sauce or green sauce. You will find this dish served at street vendors and outdoor markets around the city.

As you would expect in Italy there are many great pasta dishes to try. Local pasta dishes worth noting are:

- Pappardelle al Cinghiale, a wild boar ragu served on flat pasta, similar to wide fettuccine.
- Pici al Ragu Di Cinghiale, similar to the above but served on a traditional Tuscan pasta, known locally as 'pici'. Pici are thick, hand-rolled pasta, like fat spaghetti, normally it contains no egg and is stretched by hand.
- Tagliatelle ai funghi e tartufi, a rich and creamy truffle mushroom and porcini mushroom sauce, served on tagliatelle.

Tuscan bread is called pane toscano, but be warned, Tuscan bread can be a bit bland and very dense. This is because, historically, it's always been made without salt. Why you ask? Well there is some debate on this subject, but the common explanation is that in 1100, during the war with Florence, Pisa blocked the trade of salt. Which became so hard to find and so expensive to buy, that those who could afford it would only use it to conserve food but not for making bread. Due to this Florentians got used to making bread without salt and a tradition was born!

If you like your bread well-seasoned then order Schiacciata. Similar in consistency to focaccia, this break is made with salt and oil. It is a thin bread, its name literally means 'squashed', and you will find this will often be used for sandwiches or served as a snack.

You can't got to Italy without trying their amazing bruschetta or crostini. A traditional version served in Florence is known as Crostini Toscani, a chicken liver pate served on a crostini. If you order an agliere, which means cutting board, you can try this delicacy with a selection of meats and cheeses.

Desserts

No meal would be complete without a dessert to finish. If you have a sweet tooth then Florence will not disappoint you! Why not try the schiacciata alla fiorentina, a soft sponge cake covered in powdered sugar. Or the Florentine taken on a classic Italian dessert, tiramisù, known as zuccotto.

Zuccotto is a semi-frozen, chilled dessert made with brandy, cake and ice cream. Traditionally made in a dome shape, which it is widely believed to have been inspired by the dome of Florence's duomo.

Finally, you cannot go to Italy and not try the gelato. Florence is the birthplace of gelato, so it's no surprise that many of the best gelaterias are here. Locals swear that La Carraia, located on the Oltrarno side of Ponte alla Carraia, is home to the best gelato anywhere. How many flavours can you try whilst you're there? Let us know or better yet, tag ICS in your pictures #ICSMeting.

Vegetarian and vegans

Although Italy is known for its meat and cheese dishes, they do offer many vegetarian and vegan options and there are a variety of restaurants to choose from.

Brac- They offer a varied menu of vegetarian and vegan food. It is also a bookstore- so you can peruse the books before sitting down to lunch or dinner in their quaint courtyard.

Address: Via dei Vagellai 18r 50122

Website: <http://www.libreriabrac.net/>

Ruth's- A kosher-vegetarian restaurant known for its Israeli vegetarian cuisine. They also offer kosher wines.

Address: Via Farini, 2a; 055/2480888

Website: <http://www.kosheruth.com/>

Here are a few suggestions for restaurants to visit whilst in Florence:

Caffè Giubbe Rosse- If you love art and food then this is the restaurant for you! From its beginnings, the cafe was known as a home to the Futurist Movement, with numerous literary figures frequenting Giubbe Rosse. The coffee regularly hosts authors, poets, and artists-performances are held in the caffè and the paintings on its walls, made by recent artists, are up for sale.

Address: Address: Piazza della Repubblica, 13/14r, 50123

Website: <https://www.giubberosse.it/>

Art bar- They are known for their beautiful (Instagram worthy) cocktails. If you love taking pictures of food and drink whilst you're out and about then this is the place for you. They are also known for their fantastic beer and wine selection. Plus check out the art on the walls or look out for local artist exhibitions, which are hosted at the venue. But please note, don't expect a quick drink, service is notoriously relaxed- but then it takes time to create a piece of art you can drink.

Address: Via del Moro 4r, Florence