



Triangle  
Lodge 2817



Serving the North Carolina Triangle since 2004

# IL GIORNALE DI TSDIA

## Gennaio, 2026

### Table of Contents

TSDIA Calendar of Events .....	2
Letter from the President .....	2
January Birthdays .....	2
Don Cimorelli Honored at TSDIA Christmas Dinner .....	3
110 Celebrate Christmas at Maggiano's .....	3
Limoncello Making .....	4
USO Hanger Party .....	4
Family Promise Gifts .....	4
7 Fishes Dinner At Cape Fear Restaurant .....	5
Cookie Exchange .....	6
New Members .....	7
Laura Morelli Italian Art Historian or Historical Fiction Writer .....	7
Major Holidays in Italy .....	7
History, Traditions and Events for the Epiphany .....	7
Beyond the Saints Italy's Most Captivating Festivals in 2026 .....	9
Befanini - Tuscan Epiphany Cookies .....	12
Abruzzo Ravioli .....	14
Burrata with Pesto and Frizzled Prosciutto .....	15
Italian Chicken Soup .....	14



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"Triangle Sons & Daughters of Italy"



And on our YouTube Channel  
[youtube.com/@tsdointer7441](https://youtube.com/@tsdointer7441)

Please note that we take photos and videos at our events. If you do not want your image to appear on either Facebook or YouTube, you must tell the photographer at the time.

Il Giornale di TSDIA

Editor Nick Verna

Send comments or suggested materials to  
[nickverna14@gmail.com](mailto:nickverna14@gmail.com)

# TSDIA Calendar of Events

**Jan 24** – Battle of the Reds

**Feb 1** – Madama Butterfly Opera

**Mar 28** – St. Josephs Table Celebration

**Jun 7** – Annual Picnic

**Oct 10** – Italian Heritage Celebration

**Dec 5** – Christmas Dinner Maggiano's

## January Birthdays

Ray Rooney (1), Joseph Jack (1), Giuseppe Monaco (3), Antonino Randazzo (3), Lauren Spinelli (4), Hudson Elliott (6), Marie Federico (6), Bonnie Kunath (6), Anne Magnini (7), Peter Zelek (7), Jason Damico (11), Mastroianni Maria (14), Alexander Rao (15), Alysia Matteucci (15), Cece Peterson (16), Susan Denman (18), Maria Wolf (13), Shyamini Monaco (21), Donovan Rao (21), Jenn Weierick (21), Katherine Jennings (23), Raymond Ophof (23), Diane Damico (23), Karen Bledsoe (24), Sandra DePalma (24), Gina Trombley (25), Mary Ann Gilbert (26), John Vitale (29), William Binder (30), Joseph Calabretta (31), Denise Loeb (31).



## Letter from the President

Dear TSDIA Brothers & Sisters:

I sincerely hope that you enjoyed a wonderful holiday season. While the post-holiday period can seem a bit more serene, our Lodge will continue to announce a steady stream of events.



You can expect to see our usual monthly Conversational Italian Meet-Up and SCOPA Night. We also plan to offer increased opportunities for bocce, bowling, cooking classes and demonstrations, and we have some special topic seminars in the works such as how residents of Italy helped to keep people of the Jewish faith safe during World War II.

The dates have been set for our 5 largest and most popular TSDIA sponsored events of the year. **Please block your calendars now** so that you will have the schedule flexibility to attend. These programs typically sell out and reach full capacity.

- **Saturday, March 28th:** Italian Coffee House with Entertainment and St. Joseph's Dessert Extravaganza
- **Saturday, May 2nd:** Tia DeMaria Memorial Bocce Tournament for Pancreatic Cancer Research
- **Sunday, June 7th:** TSDIA Catered Family Picnic & Scholarship Awards
- **Saturday, October 10th:** TSDIA Italian American Heritage Celebration with Entertainment and Enormous Buffet
- **Saturday, December 5th:** TSDIA Christmas Luncheon Party at Maggiano's Restaurant

There is so much more to be announced, but I want to provide you with as much heads up as possible so that you make note on your busy schedules.

I am looking forward to seeing you soon.

Don Cimorelli

TSDIA President

# Don Cimorelli Honored at TSDIA Christmas Dinner

Members of the board presented a special award to Don Cimorelli for his dedication and support of our lodge. He is a leader whose passion, dedication, and heart have transformed the Triangle Sons and Daughters of Italy into the vibrant, thriving community we are so proud to be part of today. Because of his leadership, we stand as a community of 408 members, with over 50 events each year bringing people together, celebrating our heritage, and strengthening the bonds of family and culture.



# 110 Celebrate Christmas at Maggiano's

There was great food, singing, joking and lots of community as we celebrated the season at Maggiano's.

See our Facebook page "[Triangle Sons & Daughters of Italy](#)" for a complete set of photos from this event.

## Limoncello Making

Members got together and learned to make Limoncello, the lemon-flavored liquor from the Amalfi Coast.



## Family Promise Gifts

Through the generosity of our members we purchased 53 gifts and over \$2,000 in gift cards for families at Family Promise. They are going to have an incredible Christmas thanks to all of you!



## USO Hanger Party

Our members donated money so that we could purchase desserts for children at the USO Hanger party. This was the highlight of the entire event.



## 12 DAYS OF ITALIAN CHRISTMAS

**TWELVE ZAMPOGNARI PIPING  
ELEVEN HAND GESTURES  
TEN BEFANAS FLYING  
NINE PANETTONES  
EIGHT HANDMADE PRESEPI  
SEVEN GLASSES OF VINO  
SIX LASAGNAS BAKING  
FIVE GOLDEN HORNS  
FOUR FRESH CANNOLIS  
THREE BACCALAS  
TWO DOMINICK THE DONKIES  
AND AN ESPRESSO IN NAPOLI**

# 7 Fishes Dinner At Cape Fear Restaurant



# Cookie Exchange

60 people signed up for the cookie exchange this year and it was a sugar rush like you have never experienced in your life. If were not able to make it you can view the recipes at <https://www.tsdia.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/TSDI-Cookie-Exchange-2025.pdf>.



# FOOD & CULTURE

Interessante | Web Sites | Food | Culture | Places | Stories

**Food & Culture** highlights our Italian culture. If you have suggestions we can put it in a future newsletter, please email Nick Verna at [nickverna14@gmail.com](mailto:nickverna14@gmail.com).

## New Members

Please welcome **Teresa Johnson** who heard about us from TSDIA members while attending Italian Speaking Classes over the past years. She mentions, Mary Muth, Suzy Fanucci Schmidt, Maria Knall, Becky Stinnett and Christina Ziller. Thank you. Teresa is originally from Fayetteville, NC and lives in Apex. She is a retired Career Consultant and enjoys traveling, skiing, hiking, reading, cooking and studying Italian. She is joining as a Social Member and looks forward to being part of our Italian family. Welcome Teresa [teresajo428@gmail.com](mailto:teresajo428@gmail.com).

Please welcome **Natalie Saitta** who heard about us through Facebook. She is originally from Kitty Hawk, NC and lives in Durham. Her heritage is from the Molise region. She is a Recruiter and enjoys travel, reading, food and exercise. Welcome Natalie [nataliesaitta@yahoo.com](mailto:nataliesaitta@yahoo.com).

## Laura Morelli – Italian Art Historian or Historical Fiction Writer

<https://lauramorelli.com/>



*Laura*  
**LAURA MORELLI, Ph.D.**  
Art Historian  
USA Today Bestselling Historical Novelist  
• Buy a book  
• Take a class  
• Subscribe  
• Become a patron  
[lauramorelli.com](http://lauramorelli.com)

Laura Morelli is an American art historian and a USA Today bestselling author of historical fiction set mostly in Italy. She blends stories of famous artists like Michaelangelo and DaVinci with modern history to create a compelling narrative that you will not be able

to put down. If you like her books she offers ongoing online programming related to Italian art history and

## CULTURE

historical fiction, as well as book club options on her web site. You can subscribe to her weekly email newsletter ([lauramorelli.com/subscribe](http://lauramorelli.com/subscribe)) and be notified when she has openings in those programs.

## Major Holidays in Italy

These holidays are celebrated nationwide and often have strong cultural and religious significance.

- New Year's Day (Capodanno) - January 1
- Epiphany (Epifania) - January 6
- Liberation Day (Festa della Liberazione) - April 25
- Labor Day (Festa dei Lavoratori) - May 1
- Republic Day (Festa della Repubblica) - June 2
- Assumption Day (Ferragosto) - August 15
- All Saints' Day (Ognissanti) - November 1

## History, Traditions and Events for the Epiphany

Are you ready to discover Italy over the Epiphany weekend? Learn about the history and origins of the Befana (old witch) and the main events for the Epiphany in keeping with Italian traditions.

Will you be getting sweets or coal? It all depends on how you have behaved during the year. The Christmas festivities in Italy come to a fitting close with the arrival of the Befana, the world's most famous old lady, who will fly over Italy on her broomstick in to fill the stockings hanging in homes all over the country. Let's find out everything there is to know about the history and origins of the Befana, the meaning of Epiphany and the traditions linked to this mysterious and fascinating character.

If you're planning to visit Italy on the Epiphany weekend, 6 January, get ready to discover a unique side of Italian tradition. Here are the main Epiphany events, from north to south.

### The significance of the Epiphany, amid Christian and pagan celebrations

The Epiphany is a Christian festival celebrating the arrival of Jesus Christ into the world, the moment when the three Wise Men came to Jerusalem from Asia, Europe and Africa to worship the incarnation of God. For Western denominations, it is celebrated on 6 January, exactly 12 days after 25 December, Christmas Day. The etymology of the Epiphany is to be found in

ancient Greek, used to indicate a divine manifestation or apparition.

The pagan meaning of Epiphany, however, is linked to propitiatory rites for agriculture between the 10th and 6th centuries B.C. and, between ancient Rome and the Middle Ages, to Roman winter solstice celebrations that continued for 12 days after 25 December, with each day representing one of the 12 months of the year.

#### **The origins and history of the Befana: how did her character emerge?**



The origins of the Befana, a traditional Italian folklore character linked to the Christmas season, go back to ancient pagan propitiatory rites that were inherited by

the Romans. During the 12 nights following the Winter Solstice, mysterious female figures were believed to fly over the fields on broomsticks to propitiate future harvests.

From these figures, and with the influence of Germanic mythology and the Christian symbolism of the Magi who came to bring gifts to the infant Jesus, we come to the legend of the Befana as she is celebrated today: an old woman who, on the night between 5 and 6 January, visits children to fill the stockings left hanging on the fireplace with sweets or coal.

#### **Traditions and events for celebrating 6 January**



'L'Epifania tutte le feste porta via' (Epiphany takes all holidays away) is a saying that comes true in the spectacular celebrations in Italy, for what is effectively the last

day of the Christmas holidays.

In Venice every year the Regata della Befana takes place, in which people dressed as the Befana challenge each other to a rowing race along the Grand Canal, while in Verona a large puppet is set on fire during the 'rogo della vecia' (burning of the old woman) ceremony.

In the Parco degli Acquedotti in Rome on 6 January, there is the 'Corri per la Befana' (Run for the Epiphany) event, a competitive 10-kilometre race; while a short walk from Castel Sant'Angelo, in Piazza Navona, you can watch a costume parade.

In many Italian cities, from Cervia to Marina di Pisa, 6 January is the occasion for the Befana dive: a group swim in the sea in which everyone can participate.

And if you want to visit the Befana's house, head to the historical centre of Urbania, in the province of Pesaro and Urbino.

#### **The Befana's sweets: which delicacies are dedicated to her?**



There is no tradition in Italy that is not also associated with food, and the arrival of the Befana is no exception. Sweets for the Epiphany vary from region to region, but rest assured that everywhere you will find delicacies that you can only taste at this time of year.

Fugassa della befana, a staple on Piedmontese tables, is a sweet focaccia enriched with candied fruit and sugar grains. Simple and delicious, as are the befanini, rum-flavored biscuits that can be found throughout Tuscany.

In Abruzzo, throughout the Christmas period, you can feast on pepatelli, biscuits made with almonds, honey and a pinch of pepper; while if you are in Salento, you can't miss purcidduzzi salentini, small gnocchi made of fried dough that you will find in different variations in the bordering regions.



# Beyond the Saints: Italy's Most Captivating Festivals in 2026

Food · Music · Film · Flowers · Sailboats · Opera · Chocolate & Truffles

*Italy doesn't just celebrate — it lives its festivals.*

Not only in grand piazzas or glittering theaters, but in candlelit taverns, along cobblestone streets perfumed with espresso and sea salt, in medieval squares echoing with drums, laughter, and the clinking of wine glasses. While many Italian festivals honor saints and ancient traditions, there is another world of celebration — one filled with music, opera, chocolate, truffles, sailboats, film stars, and pure, vibrant joy.

This article invites your travelers to discover **14 unforgettable festivals in Italy in 2026 — all open to the public**, all rich in culture, flavor, emotion, and beauty. And best of all? These events are more than dates on a calendar — they're once-in-a-lifetime travel stories waiting to happen.

*"Life is short. Travel!"*

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## ♪ 1. Sanremo Music Festival



📍 Sanremo, Liguria, **February 24–28, 2026**

Each February, the seaside town of Sanremo becomes the heart of Italian music and conversation. The Sanremo Music Festival has been running since 1951, and it's the event where many beloved Italian artists — including Andrea Bocelli and Laura Pausini — first stepped into the spotlight.

The main performances take place inside the Teatro Ariston, but what makes Sanremo special is how the whole town gets involved. Shop windows display festival posters and fresh flowers, cafés turn on their TVs, and locals talk freely about their favorite singers over espresso. You don't need a ticket to enjoy it — just being in Sanremo during festival week feels like you're part of something Italy truly cares about.

### Why Travelers Enjoy It

- It's a genuine slice of modern Italian culture — music, style, and everyday life all mixed together.
- You can enjoy the festival atmosphere from the streets, coffee shops, and waterfront promenade without ever stepping inside the theater.
- Sanremo has a relaxed Riviera feel, especially in winter — quieter and more authentic than in peak summer.

⭐ **Friendly Travel Tip** - Tickets for the theater sell out quickly, but most people simply watch from local bars or outdoor screens. If travelers plan to go, booking a hotel in town early is helpful, as rooms fill up quickly during festival week.

## 🎶 2. Venice Carnival (Carnevale di Venezia)

📍 Venice, Veneto, **February 7–18, 2026**

Venice Carnival is one of those events people dream about — and what's nice is that it's just as beautiful in real life. During Carnival, the streets and canals of Venice take on a quiet charm. People in elegant masks walk slowly through St. Mark's Square, musicians play in the open air, and pastry shops fill their windows with traditional treats like frittelle and galani.

What makes this festival easy for travelers is that you don't need a ticket or costume to be involved. The city itself is the celebration. You can simply stroll along the canals, stop for a cappuccino, admire the masks and capes, and feel like you're part of a story that's been unfolding for centuries.

### Why Travelers Enjoy It

- It's incredibly scenic and relaxed — perfect for photography, slow walks, and people-watching.
- You can take part without planning anything in advance — no parade seats or exclusive events required.
- Venetian artisans still make masks by hand, and some offer short workshops for visitors.

⭐ **Friendly Travel Tip** - Encourage travelers to get out early in the morning. Venice is quieter, the light is softer for photos, and costumed participants often gather in St. Mark's Square just after sunrise, before the crowds arrive.

## 🍊 3. Battle of the Oranges – Ivrea Carnival

📍 Ivrea, Piedmont - **Mid-February 2026**

The town of Ivrea in northern Italy celebrates Carnival in a very unusual way — with an organized orange-throwing battle. It's called the **Battle of the Oranges**, and while it sounds wild, it's surprisingly well-coordinated and fun to watch.

The event is based on a local legend about a young woman who stood up to a tyrant. Today, that story is remembered through teams on horse-drawn carts (representing the tyrant's guards) and teams on foot in the town squares (representing the people). Instead of weapons, they use oranges — thousands of them.

Visitors don't have to participate. Most people watch safely from behind nets set up around the squares, enjoy the atmosphere, taste local food like polenta and wine, and take photos of the orange-covered streets.

## Why Travelers Enjoy It

- It's completely different from any other Carnival celebration in Italy.
- The festival is full of history, humor, and local pride.
- You don't have to throw oranges to enjoy it — watching is fun on its own.

❖ **Friendly Travel Tip** - Wear old clothes and waterproof shoes if you plan to stand close to the action. Those who don't want to be hit by oranges should stay behind the safety nets — and avoid wearing white, as it signals you're not part of the battle.

## 4. Verona Opera Festival

• Verona, Veneto - **June – September 2026**

Each summer, opera fills the warm evening air in Verona's ancient Roman Arena. Built almost 2,000 years ago, this open-air amphitheater transforms into one of the world's most beautiful music venues for the **Verona Opera Festival**.

Even if travelers aren't opera fans, this experience is special. As the sun sets, candles are lit across the stone steps, the orchestra begins to play, and the atmosphere feels both historic and relaxed. Popular operas like *Aida*, *Carmen*, and *La Traviata* are often performed with impressive costumes and classic staging, but the mood is never overly formal.

People arrive early, enjoy a spritz or light dinner nearby, and slowly make their way inside as the Arena glows under the evening sky.

## Why Travelers Enjoy It

- Listening to music in a Roman amphitheater under the stars is an unforgettable experience.
- The event is elegant but not intimidating — casual summer clothing is perfectly fine.
- You don't need deep opera knowledge to enjoy the atmosphere, music, and setting.

❖ **Friendly Travel Tip** - The stone seating can get a little hard during long performances — a small cushion or scarf makes it much more comfortable. Arriving early also means travelers can choose better seats in the open sections.

## 5. Ravello Festival

• Ravello, Amalfi Coast - **June – September 2026**

Perched high above the Amalfi Coast, the town of Ravello offers quiet streets, sea views, and one of Italy's most scenic music festivals. The **Ravello Festival** features classical concerts, dance, and art performances held in villa gardens and open-air terraces overlooking the Mediterranean.

The most famous stage is at **Villa Rufolo**, where the sea stretches out behind the performers and the coastline glimmers at sunset. It's peaceful, romantic, and far less crowded than nearby Amalfi or Positano.

Travelers often spend their day exploring the winding lanes of Ravello, then settle into their seats as the sky turns pink and music begins.

## Why Travelers Enjoy It

- The setting is breathtaking — music surrounded by sea views, lemon trees, and historic villas.
- The atmosphere is calm and intimate.
- Ideal for couples, culture lovers, or anyone who enjoys a relaxed evening in a beautiful place.

❖ **Friendly Travel Tip** - Even in summer, Ravello can get cool at night due to its hilltop location. A light sweater or wrap is useful during evening concerts.

## 6. Umbria Jazz Festival

• Perugia, Umbria - **July 3-12, 2026 (expected dates)**

Every July, music drifts through the medieval streets of Perugia during the **Umbria Jazz Festival** — one of the most beloved jazz events in Europe. Unlike large, crowded concert venues, this festival takes place throughout the town: in piazzas, theaters, cloisters, and quiet corners.

Visitors might hear a world-famous jazz musician in an evening concert at the Santa Giuliana Arena or stumble upon a small band playing in a side street in the afternoon. Cafés stay open late, students sit on stone steps listening to music, and the town feels welcoming and easygoing.

## Why Travelers Enjoy It

- Many performances are outdoors and free, so travelers can enjoy music simply by walking around the city.
- Perugia's historic setting — archways, piazzas, and panoramic views — adds charm to the experience.
- Great for slow travelers who enjoy culture without rush or formality.

❖ **Friendly Travel Tip** - Comfortable shoes are helpful — Perugia is a hilltop town with cobblestone streets and gentle slopes. Evening performances can get busy, so arriving early for outdoor concerts is wise.

## 7. Eurochocolate Festival

• Perugia, Umbria - **October 17-26, 2026 (expected)**

In October, Perugia transforms into a chocolate lover's paradise during the **Eurochocolate Festival**. Streets are lined with stalls offering truffles, pralines, hot chocolate, chocolate sculptures, desserts, and even playful chocolate shapes like tools and keys. The air smells like cocoa and roasted hazelnuts.

What makes this festival enjoyable is how relaxed it feels. Travelers can wander through the historic center, sample chocolates from local and international artisans, watch demonstrations, or simply sit in a piazza with a cup of thick Italian hot chocolate (*cioccolata calda*).

## Why Travelers Enjoy It

- It's fun, informal, and perfect for families, couples, or anyone with a sweet tooth.
- Sampling chocolate while exploring a medieval hilltop town is a simple pleasure.
- Visitors can enjoy as much or as little as they like — no tickets or reservations needed.

❖ **Friendly Travel Tip** - Encourage travelers to bring a small bag or backpack — it's easy to pick up chocolates as

gifts. Visiting in the morning is ideal before the afternoon crowds arrive.

## 8. Infiorata di Noto – Flower Carpet Festival

### 📍 Noto, Sicily - **Third Weekend of May 2026 (expected)**

Each spring, the baroque town of Noto in Sicily creates stunning floral carpets along Via Nicolaci. Artists use flower petals, herbs, and natural materials to create large, detailed designs on the street — forming colorful temporary artwork.

Locals and visitors stroll past the designs, admiring the patterns and taking photos with the golden stone buildings in the background. The festival is peaceful, artistic, and full of local pride.

#### Why Travelers Enjoy It

- It's beautiful, calm, and easy to enjoy by simply walking through town.
- Noto's historic setting — balconies, churches, and soft limestone architecture — adds to the charm.
- No tickets or special passes are needed.

#### ⭐ Friendly Travel Tip

The flower carpets look their best in the early morning of the first day. Suggest travelers arrive early to beat the crowds and enjoy the artwork before petals begin to wilt.

## 9. Alba White Truffle Fair (Fiera del Tartufo Bianco)

### 📍 Alba, Piedmont - **October–November 2026**

In autumn, the town of Alba celebrates one of Italy's rarest ingredients — the white truffle. The **Alba White Truffle Fair** features fresh truffles, cheeses, cured meats, local wines like Barolo and Barbaresco, and cooking demonstrations.

Travelers can visit the main market hall to see truffles up close, learn how they're hunted with trained dogs, and taste dishes like tajarin pasta or risotto prepared with freshly shaved truffle. The town feels festive but still relaxed, and the fall colors in the surrounding vineyards make it especially scenic.

#### Why Travelers Enjoy It

- Perfect for food lovers and wine enthusiasts.
- The fair feels authentic — more about traditions and flavors than luxury.
- Alba is small and welcoming, easy to explore on foot.

#### ⭐ Friendly Travel Tip

- Even if travelers don't plan to buy truffles, the market is worth visiting in the late morning when stalls are full. A light scarf is helpful — truffle aroma is strong indoors.

## 10. Barcolana Regatta

### 📍 Trieste, Friuli Venezia Giulia - **October 11, 2026**

Each October, the sea in front of Trieste fills with sails — hundreds, sometimes thousands — for the **Barcolana Regatta**, one of the largest and most inclusive sailing races in the world.

What makes Barcolana special is that it welcomes everyone: professionals, amateurs, families, old wooden boats, modern yachts — all racing on the same course. From the shore, it's a beautiful sight: white sails spread

across the blue Adriatic, framed by Trieste's elegant buildings and hills in the background.

On land, the atmosphere feels relaxed and cheerful. People stroll along the waterfront, visit temporary food stalls, enjoy live music, and watch boats come and go. No ticket is needed — just a comfortable spot to take in the view.

#### Why Travelers Enjoy It

- It's visually stunning — a sea of sails in a historic port city.
- No need to understand sailing to enjoy the excitement and scenery.
- Friendly street food, local wine, and music add to the experience.

#### ⭐ Friendly Travel Tip

- Encourage travelers to arrive early on race day for a good viewing spot along the harbor or nearby hills. The day before is also lovely, as boats arrive and the waterfront comes alive.

## 11. Venice International Film Festival

### 📍 Venice Lido, Veneto - **Late August – Early September 2026**

The **Venice Film Festival** is one of the oldest and most respected film events in the world. While it brings celebrities and red carpets, it's more accessible than people expect.

The festival takes place on the **Lido**, a quiet island with beaches and tree-lined streets. Many film screenings are open to the public and tickets can be purchased online. Between films, visitors relax at outdoor cafés, walk along the promenade, or take a short boat ride back to St. Mark's Square.

#### Why Travelers Enjoy It

- A mix of cinema, seaside relaxation, and classic Venetian charm.
- Visitors don't need special invitations — regular film tickets are available.
- The atmosphere is calm, with a balance of glamour and everyday life.

#### ⭐ Friendly Travel Tip

- For those wanting to see a movie, booking in advance is recommended. For travelers just enjoying the setting, the area around the Palazzo del Cinema is ideal for people-watching and spotting actors arriving by boat.

## 12. La Notte della Taranta – Puglia Folk Music Festival

### 📍 Salento, Puglia - **August 2026 (finale in Melpignano at end of the month)**

In the far south of Italy, Puglia celebrates one of its most unique cultural traditions — **La Notte della Taranta**. This festival is dedicated to pizzica, a traditional folk dance and music style that's energetic, rhythmic, and deeply connected to local history.

Throughout August, small concerts take place in towns across the Salento region. The festival finishes with a large open-air concert in **Melpignano**, where thousands of people gather in the main square. Musicians play violins,

tambourines, and guitars while dancers move in a style that's joyful and easy to join.

#### Why Travelers Enjoy It

- It feels local and authentic — more like a community celebration than a formal festival.
- The music is lively and welcoming, even for first-time visitors.
- Warm summer nights, historic piazzas, and dancing under the stars create a memorable atmosphere.

❖ **Friendly Travel Tip** - Comfortable shoes, water, and a light scarf or jacket are helpful — the final concert can last late into the night. For a quieter experience, the smaller concerts in villages leading up to the finale are a great alternative.

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#### 13. Calcio Storico Fiorentino

📍 Florence, Tuscany - June 2026 - Final Match on June 24

**Calcio Storico Fiorentino** is one of the most unusual and historic events in Florence — part sport, part tradition, part living history. Played in **Piazza Santa Croce**, this game combines soccer, rugby, and hand-to-hand combat.

Four teams, representing Florence's historic neighborhoods, compete wearing Renaissance-style uniforms. Before the match, a colorful parade of drummers, flag throwers, and participants in costume winds through the streets — one of the most enjoyable parts for travelers.

The game itself is intense and physical, but it's also a strong expression of local pride and tradition. Most visitors come for the atmosphere, the parade, and the connection to Florence's past — whether or not they watch the full match.

#### Why Travelers Enjoy It

- A vivid and unforgettable tradition that feels truly local.
- The parade and costumes bring Renaissance Florence to life.
- It's a very different kind of Italian festival — bold, historic, and full of energy.

❖ **Friendly Travel Tip** - Tickets for the final match on June 24 sell out early. However, watching the costumed parade through the city is free and open to everyone — a great alternative for travelers who prefer a lighter version of the event.

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#### ❖ A Simple Travel Wrap-Up

Italy is full of famous landmarks and museums — but some of its most memorable moments happen in the streets, in town squares, by the sea, or under evening lights at local festivals. From music in ancient arenas to flower carpets in Sicily, chocolate markets, folk dancing, sailing regattas, and even flying oranges — these events show Italy as it truly is: welcoming, creative, and alive with tradition.

**If you're planning a trip to Italy in 2026, consider timing your visit with one of these festivals.**

You won't just see the country—you'll be a part of it.

## Befanini - Tuscan Epiphany Cookies

<https://www.insidetherustickitchen.com/befanini-cookies/#wprm-recipe-container-15659>

Servings: 30 cookies



Befanini are Tuscan Epiphany Cookies made to celebrate the legend of La Befana. A simple yet delicious buttery cookie dough flavored with rum and vanilla, cut out into cute shapes and topped with festive sprinkles.

#### Ingredients

2 cups Italian 00 flour, (250g) can also use all-purpose flour  
½ cup caster sugar, (80g)  
8.5 tablespoons cold unsalted butter, cubed (120g)  
½ teaspoon baking powder  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
1 medium egg  
1 tablespoon dark rum  
Zest of 1 lemon  
1 pinch of salt

#### Topping

1 egg white  
sprinkles

#### Instructions

Put the flour, sugar, baking powder, salt and butter in a food processor and blitz to fine crumbs.

Next, add the egg, rum, vanilla and lemon zest and blitz until it forms a dough.

Remove from the processor and form into a ball then flatten it and wrap it in plastic wrap (cling film).

Refrigerate for at least 1 hour.

Once chilled, remove from the fridge and let it sit for 5-10 minutes to soften slightly (don't let it sit for any longer than 10 minutes). Lightly dust a clean work surface with flour and roll out the dough to ¼ inch or 1/2cm thick.

Cut out cookies and place them on a lined baking tray. Refrigerate for half an hour before baking. Any scrap dough can be kneaded back into a ball and rolled out into more cookies.

Pre-heat the static oven to 180C (350F). Lightly whisk an egg white for a couple of seconds and brush it over the top of the cookies then top with sprinkles. Bake the cookies for about 12 minutes. They should be pale and not browned.

Let the cookies cool before removing from the tray so they firm up.

# Abruzzo Ravioli



Servings: 8

By Natalie Smargiassi

This ravioli recipe is adapted from Nonna Louise from Vasto

When I was a child, my grandparents would come from Philadelphia and visit us in California. They would stay for a whole month and my grandmother Louisa would make fresh pasta including ravioli, biscotti, pizza and breads. During these visits, I would stay with her in the kitchen, and she would teach me how to make all these tasty foods. The ravioli is a specialty of the farmers from Vasto, a light egg pasta filled with a mixture of cheese's and spinach. They are difficult to make. You must handle the dough just right throughout the whole process, otherwise the ravioli will fall apart when you try to boil them.

## Ingredients

Pasta Dough

2 C Caputo Pasta Flour "00"

½ C Caputo Semolina Flour

1 tsp Mediterranean Sea Salt

1 TBS Olive Oil

4 Large Eggs (room temp)

Cheese Filling

3 oz. Fresh Mozzarella (crumbled into tiny pieces)

6 oz. Whole Milk Ricotta

2 TBS Grated Parmesan

1 Large Egg

¼ C Cooked Spinach (must have all the water squeezed out)

2 TBS Plain Bread Crumbs

## Directions

Stir the salt into the flour. Make a mound with the flour and then a well in the center. Break the eggs into the well. Add the olive oil. Blend ingredients together with a fork.

Take the dough and place it on a solid surface. Put a small amount of oil on your hands. Knead the dough until smooth, about 5 minutes. Shape into a ball. Cover with a damp cloth and let rest for 3 hours.

Thoroughly blend all the filling ingredients together. Let sit in the refrigerator for 3 hours or overnight

### Rolling out the dough

Divide dough into 8 equal pieces. Keep dough under damp cloth if needed to avoid drying out.

First pass - use #2 setting on a pasta roller. Shape the piece into a rectangle. Roll through the machine.

Trifold the piece and press down. Roll through the machine again. Repeat this step.

Second Pass - Use #4 setting on your pasta roller. Place pasta sheets on lightly floured parchment paper. Do not stack them.

Third Pass - Use #6 setting on the pasta roller. Roll the sheet through the machine. It should be close to 3 feet long at this time. If you can see the shape of your finger through the sheet, then it is thin enough.

### Ravioli Assembly

On the sheet of pasta, place a rounded teaspoon of cheese filling every 4 inches. Cover with another sheet of pasta. Cut between the drops of filling. Use a fork to close the edges. Make sure the edges are fully sealed and that the dough is not punctured where the filling is or the ravioli will fall apart when it is cooked.

Place the finished ravioli on sheets of floured parchment paper in a large baking pan. You can layer the raviolis in the pan with a sheet of parchment between each layer. Put the ravioli in the freezer until it is time to cook them.

### Cooking the ravioli

Bring a large pot of water to boil. Add a couple teaspoons of sea salt. While the water is heating, remove the ravioli from the freezer.

When the water is fully boiling, drop the ravioli in the water. You can cook about 16 at one time. Stir occasionally, very carefully. It takes about 15 minutes to cook them fully.

Carefully remove the ravioli with a small hand strainer and arrange it in a large pasta bowl. Cover them with marinara sauce as you remove them from the boiling water. Serve with grated parmesan.

# Burrata with Pesto and Frizzled Prosciutto



*Servings: 4 people or you can do mini balls and have one for each person.*

*By Fran Giannuzzi*

## *Ingredients*

*2 Balls of Burrata Cheese*

*4 TBS Fresh Basil Pesto*

*4 Pieces Prosciutto di Parma – I prefer San Danielle*

*1 TBS Extra Virgin Olive Oil*

*Balsamic Vinegar Reduction or Glaze*

*Salt and Pepper*

*Baby Arugula (for garnish)*

## *Directions*

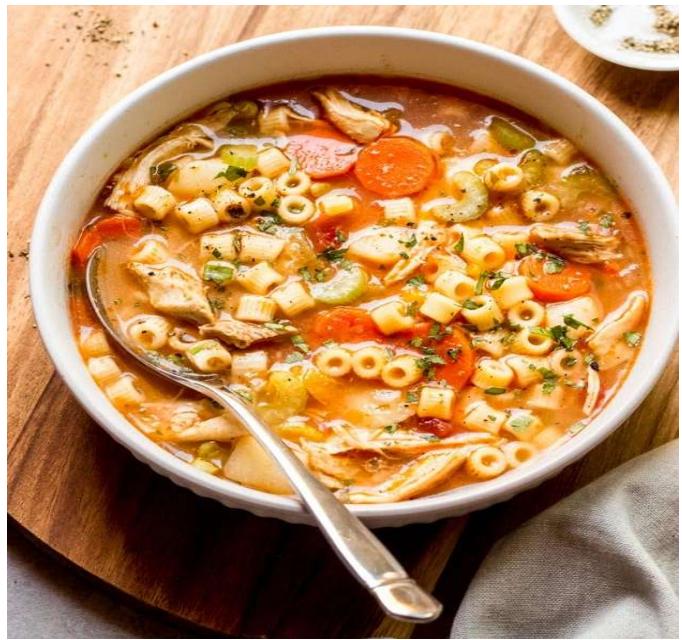
*In a medium skillet, carefully fry the prosciutto over a medium flame in the olive oil until crispy. Remove and place on paper towels to drain.*

*On a medium serving platter, spread the pesto on the bottom of the dish.*

*Cut each piece of burrata in half and place on top of the pesto, then place a piece of prosciutto over the top of the burrata.*

*Drizzle with balsamic reduction and season with pepper. Garnish with baby arugula and serve.*

# Italian Chicken Soup



*Servings: 6-8*

*By Frank Damico*

## *Ingredients*

*6 Chicken Parts*

*3 Carrots (chopped)*

*2 Celery Stalks (chopped)*

*1 Onion (chopped)*

*2 TBS Fresh Parsley (chopped)*

*18 oz. Can Tomato Sauce*

*1 TBS Salt*

*1 tsp Pepper*

*3 Peppercorns*

*2 Whole Cloves*

*1 C Small Pasta (acini pepe, orzo, etc.)*

## *Directions*

*Boil 3 quarts of water in a 6 quart pot. Add chicken. Boil for 5 minutes.*

*Sieve off brown foam. Lower flame, add other ingredients. Simmer for 1 hour then remove the chicken. Cook about another 1/2 hour until vegetables are tender. Cut the cooked chicken into bite-sized pieces and add to soup.*

*Cook small pasta--for example, acini pepe, orzo, etc. in another pot. Add 1-2 tablespoons salt to the water. Drain and add to soup.*