

Title:

Italian Cuisine: More Than Pasta

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Summary:

Go to any family restaurant with Italian dining in mind and you are likely to order chicken parmesan, pasta alfredo, spaghetti and meatballs, or maybe a pizza. It is easy to think that some pasta, some marinara sauce, a crust of Italian bread and a glass of wine is the beginning and end of Italian cuisine, especially if you grew up in the United States. There is much more than red sauce and starch on the agenda for most Italian regional cuisines, and with all of the various re...

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Article Body:

Go to any family restaurant with Italian dining in mind and you are likely to order chicken parmesan, pasta alfredo, spaghetti and meatballs, or maybe a pizza. It is easy to think that some pasta, some marinara sauce, a crust of Italian bread and a glass of wine is the beginning and end of Italian cuisine, especially if you grew up in the United States. There is much more than red sauce and starch on the agenda for most Italian regional cuisines, and with all of the various regions and cultures in the boot on the ocean, Italian regional cuisines have as much range as your average New York City block.

There is the tourist region of Tuscany, on the northwestern coast of Italy. Tuscany is sought out for its simple but delicious dishes, seasoned sparingly with basil, parsley, and thyme. Tuscan bread and a little bit of olive oil is a big part of the seafood dishes of the Tuscan region.

Abruzzo, a little known treasure in the middle eastern section of the boot mixes chili peppers into almost all of their dishes. Like many other regions in Italy, there is a mixture of mountain and seafood dishes. Pasta is very often a first course, instead of a part of a stew or entrée. Most of the chefs in the Abruzzo region are skilled at hand rolling their own stuffed pastas, and crepes are used in meat dishes, rolled in savory sauces or put in to broths. Polenta is enjoyed with hearty sausages and rich, meaty sauces.

Sardinia, an island off of the western coast of Italy is home to a rich fishing

tradition as well as a beautiful mountainous inland landscape. This, in addition to a rich heritage of not only Italians, but also Arabs, French, Greeks, and Spaniards, has made the island home to a diverse culture of seafood and meat dishes spiced with fennel and saffron. Stews and rich, hearty pastas make up a large part of the local cuisine in Sardinia, as well as sheep milk's cheese.

Emilia-Romagna is perhaps the most sought out region of Italy in terms of local cuisine. It is often called the market basket of Italy. Located in northern Italy, Emilia-Romagna is home to many of Italy's most renowned dishes, like Prosciutto di Parma, Mortadella, Parmigiano-Reggiano, and balsamic vinegar. Chefs in the Emilia Romagna region have a penchant for gregarious presentation and rich spices.

Much like the American idea of Chinese food, the American idea of Italian food is only the tip of the iceberg. Italian regional cuisine is marked by the country's locality to northern Africa and other Mediterranean countries, as well as a diverse local landscape, ranging from mountains to oceans. Sheppards, shopkeepers, farmers, and fisherman all contribute to one of the most diverse cultural cuisines in the world. Next time you are in the mood for Italian food, try something a little bit different than your usual spaghetti and meatballs, maybe a saffron seafood stew or a polenta. Rest assured, you won't think of the words "Italian cuisine" the same again.