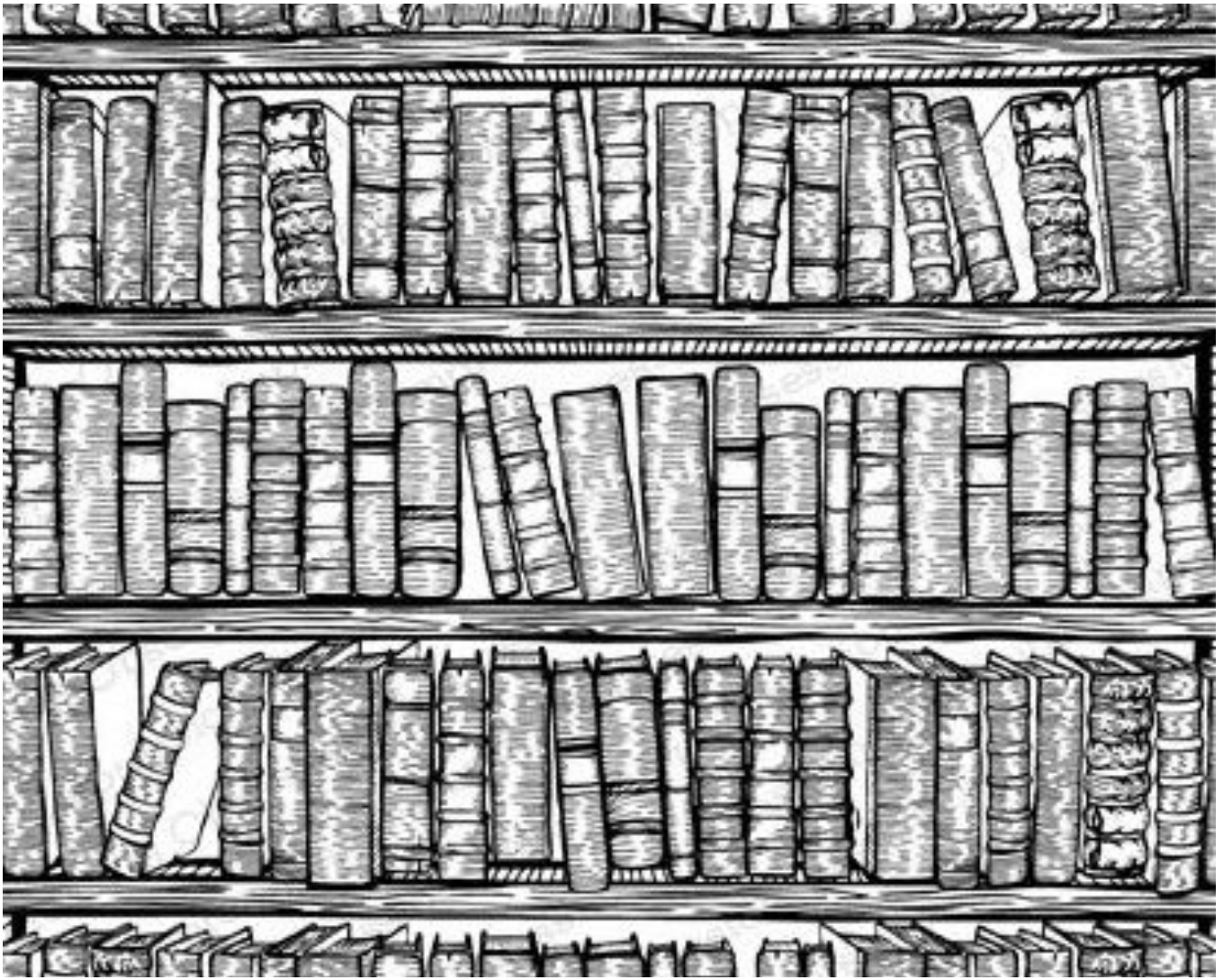




Seeing and Savoring Italy's Book Shelf

The noblest
pleasure is the
joy of
understanding.

Leonardo da Vinci



Overstuff your bookshelf or e-reader with these books to discover the “fatal charm of Italy that can be found nowhere else.” An eclectic mix of fiction and non-fiction, memoirs, cook books and travel journals. Stories that introduce you to the Italian lifestyle. Books about food, wine, art and design that will give you a true insight into the culture, traditions, landscape and history of a country that lingers in everyone’s imagination.

Each of them in some way resonates with my travels in Italy with my Italian family and friends.

* Eric Jong, American novelist

Like our travels in Italy this list of books is slightly off the tourist flow. Every book like every city and town in Italy offers a unique mix of tastes, characters, inspiration and recommendations to inform, excite and encourage you to discover Italy in a unique way.

It is by no means exhaustive. We hope you find something of interest in this list of books that have helped us find traveling in Italy so memorable. Even if you don't have a trip planned for the immediate future, pick up one of these books set in Italy to enjoy a little armchair travel. It's been said that very little can match the pleasure of discovering that, with the right book, you can journey around the world from the comfort of your favorite armchair.

May this list be an introduction to the countless books written about Italy and an invitation to the lifestyle of *la bella vita*.

P. Marasco

[CosìtuttiMarketPlace](#)

[Seeing and Savoring Italy](#)

Note: Books can be purchased by clicking on the highlighted link for which we we may get a small commission however there is no extra cost to you.

Book Selections

You'll Find Books On:

Food

Wine

Art

Architecture

Historical Fiction

Design

Gastro-history

Italian Culture and
Living

Language

Travel

Cookbooks

Children's Books

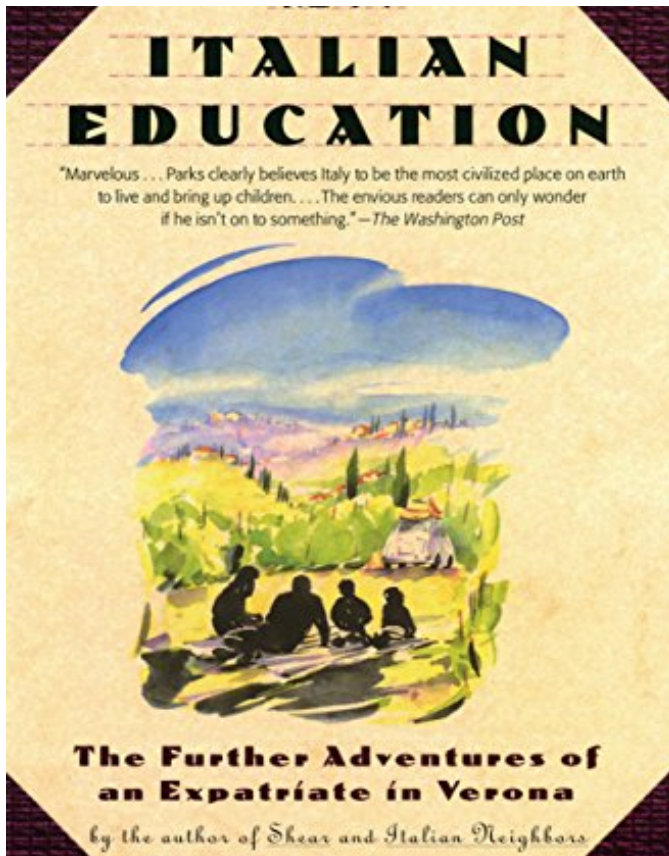
Mystery

And More





Italian Culture and Living



[An Italian Education](#)

Tim Parks

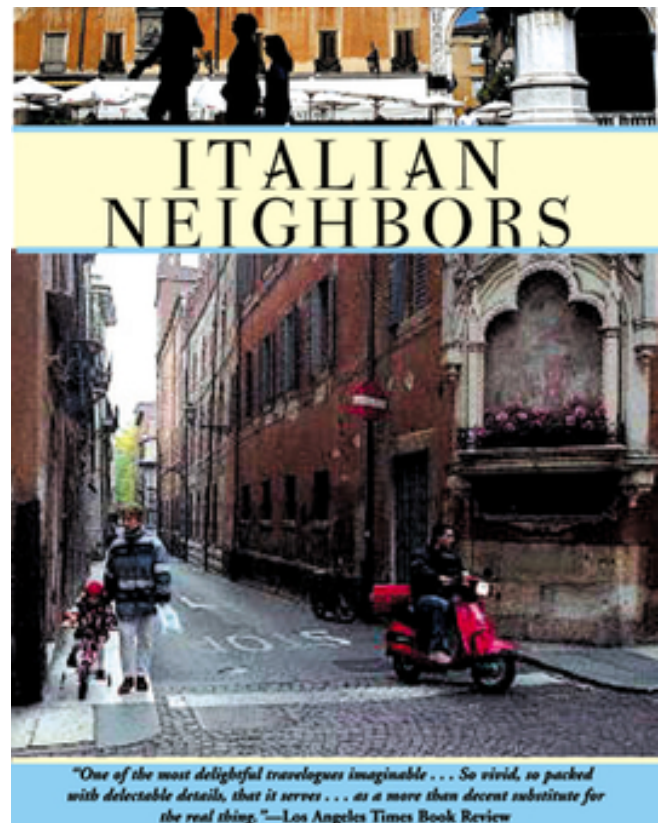
Every time I'm asked on how to plan a trip to Italy I always include a recommended reading list with the itinerary. I call this a literary meet and greet. This is one book I always include on the list as part of your Italian education. A portrait of the landscape and character of Italy with an expatriate's view of life in a small village outside of Verona.

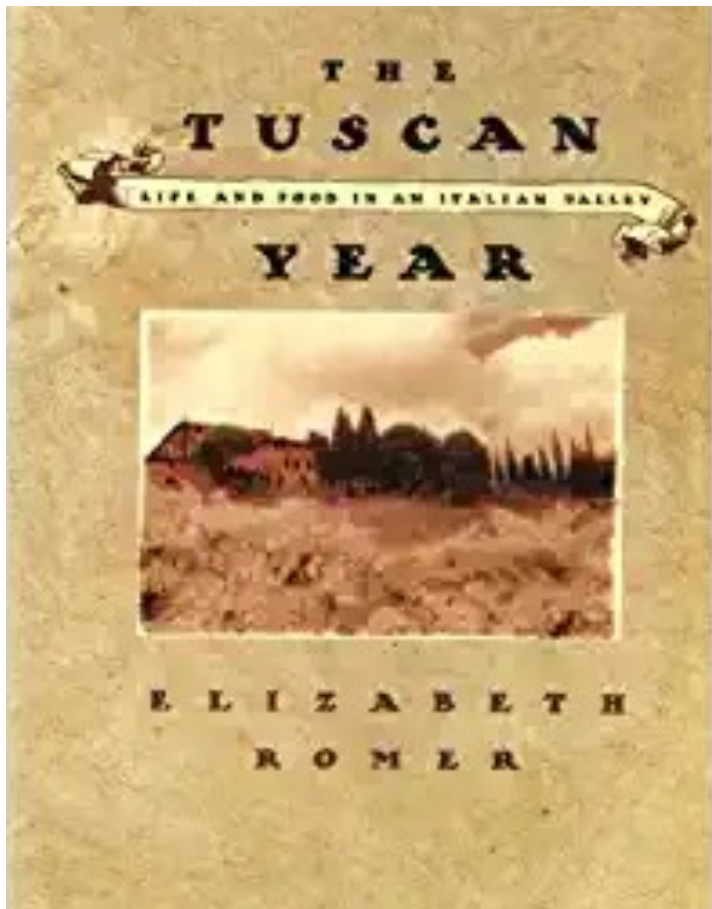
[Italian Neighbors](#)

Tim Parks

Another book by Tim Parks with an insight into living the Italian lifestyle traveling in his rusty Fiat 127 with his family to discover his future *padrona di casa* in Italy, a 1200 sq foot flat in the village of Montecchio in the Veneto.

We have family in Montecchio and have been there so I found this book especially charming.





[The Tuscan Year](#)

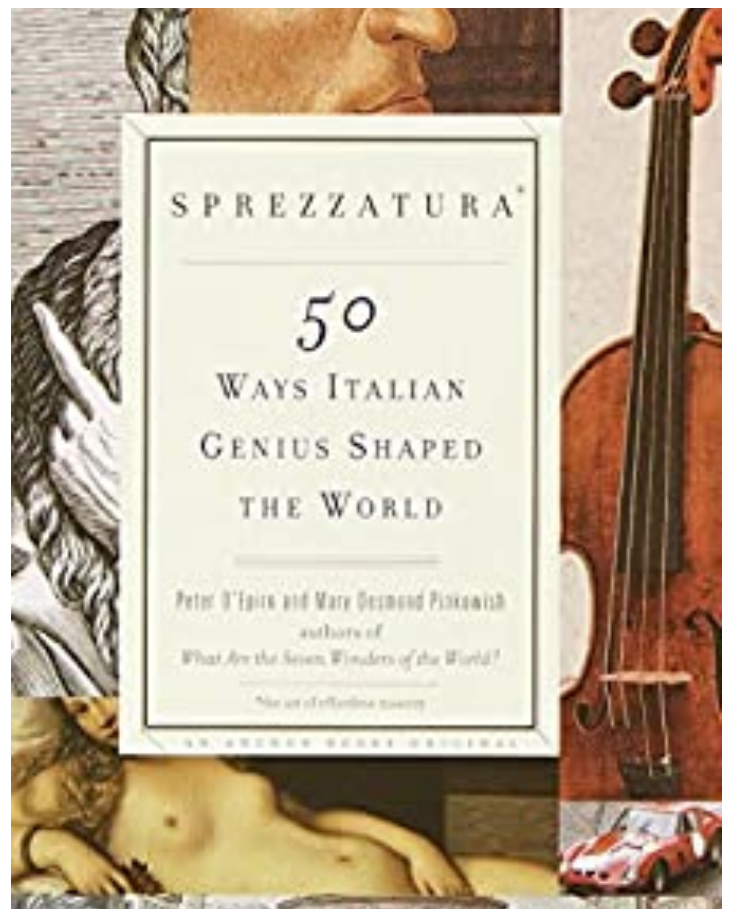
Elizabeth Romer

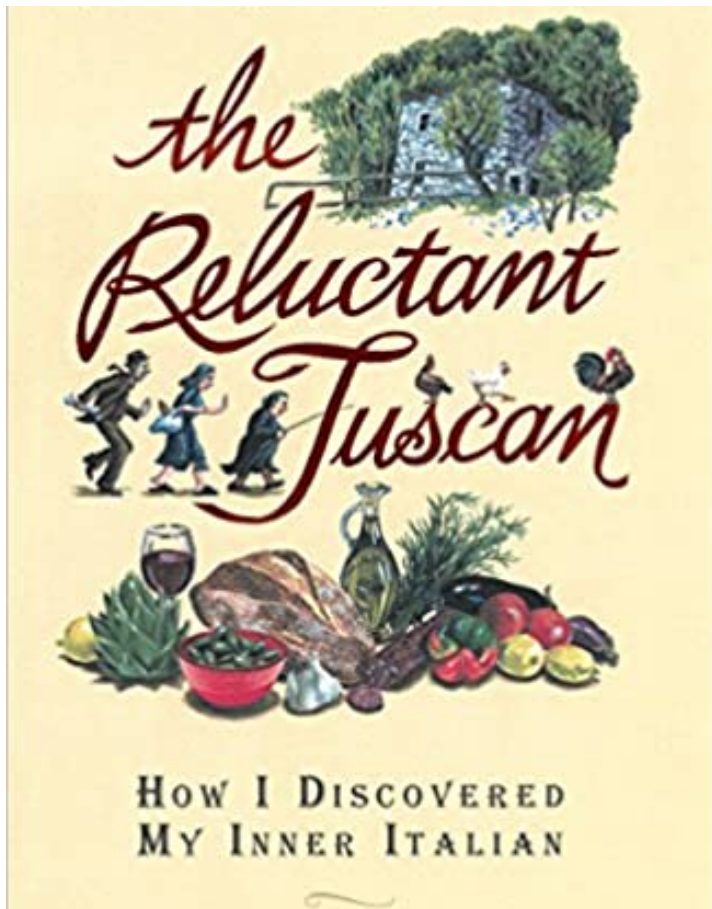
A book for those who want to experience the heart and soul of Italy. Following daily life on a family farm in a valley between Umbria and Tuscany, the author introduces the reader to the seasonal pleasures of Italy with evocative notes about life on a Tuscan farm including farm to table recipes to see and savor the life and food of Italy.

[Sprezzatura: 50 Ways Italian Genius Shaped the World](#)

Peter D'Epiro and Mary Desmond Pinkowish

Sprezzatura, or the art of effortless mastery. Refined during the Renaissance, it is a part of the Italian DNA. A unique cultural mindset with a knack for a characteristic quality of style. Learn about this Italian “super power” and how its genius shaped the world.





[The Reluctant Tuscan: How I Discovered My Inner Italian](#)

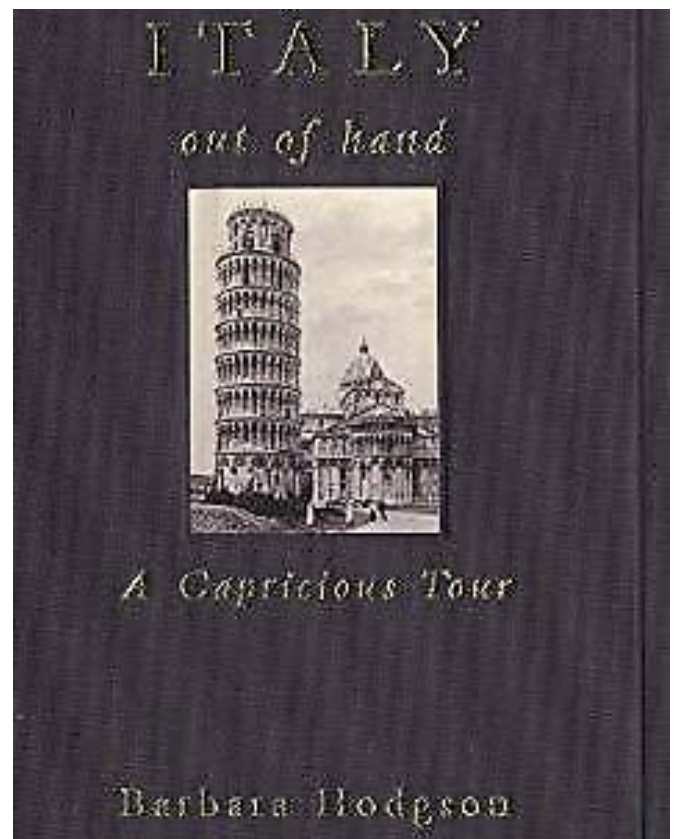
Phil Doran

A book about finding happiness in the last place expected. Described as a travel narrative with the quirky humor of Bill Bryson, Dave Barry, and Jerry Seinfeld. A good read about the seduction and inexhaustible beauty of Tuscany.

[Italy Out of Hand: A Capricious Tour](#)

Barbara Hodgson

A cultural guidebook with an eclectic tour of the personality and history of Italy slightly out of hand which makes it all the more interesting. A curiosity cabinet of Italian culture and living with guided instruction on how to open and best enjoy a country with “too many possibilities to love”.





Traveling in Italy

INSPIRE / PLAN / DISCOVER / EXPERIENCE

ITALY



[DK Eyewitness Italy](#)

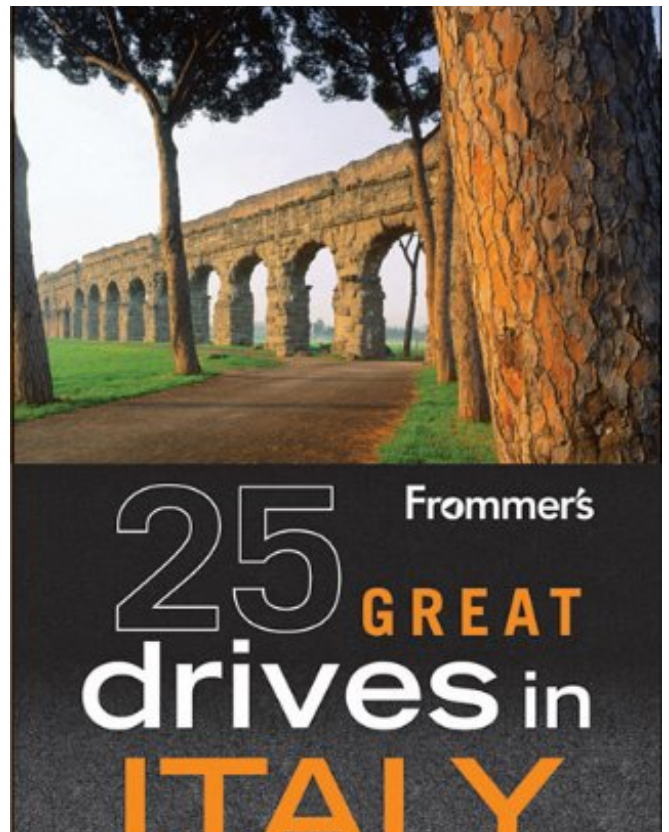
DK Eyewitness

DK Eyewitness travel guides are highly visual with expert advice and detailed illustrations and fotos. Accessible itineraries, maps and walks, suggestions on places to eat, drink, shop and stay, these guides pretty much have it all. I have used them repeatedly over the last 20+ years. 600+ pages of summarized and highlighted information. A heavy book so allow enough space in your backpack or pre-read before your trip.

[Frommer's 25 Great Drives in Italy](#)

British Auto Association; Paul Duncan

When I first bought this book it was called Italy's Best Loved Driving Tours. An earlier edition still remains in the glove compartment of my Fiat on road trips in Italy with our Italian family and friends. It was a starting point for my travels and I have since gone off script but it remains my primary road trip guide and a good resource for the independent traveler.



ITALY



[Rick Steves Italy](#)

Rick Steves

Where would world travel be without Rick Steves? Thousands of tourists became travelers reading his guidebooks and watching his travelogues. His travel guides to Italy are an essential starting point when planning your trip especially since now he is including more tips for traveling off the tourist flow.

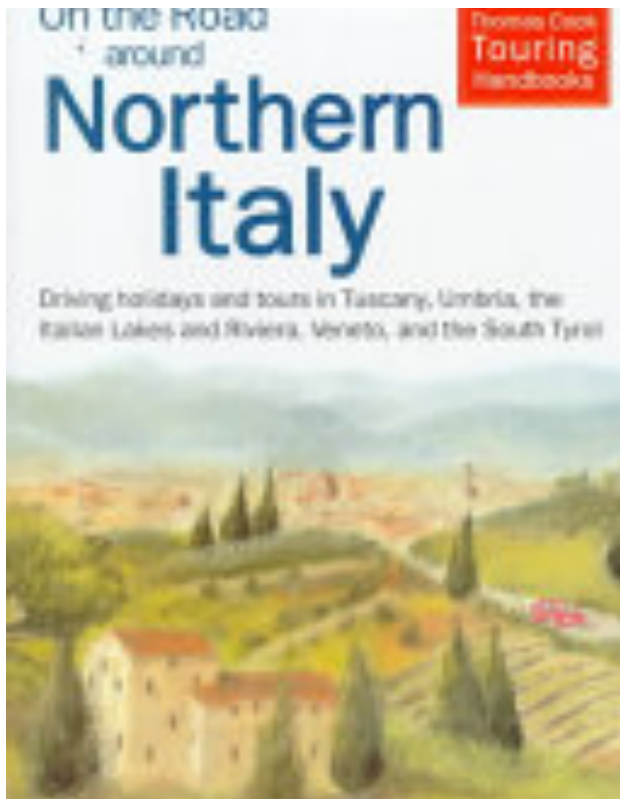
[The Michelin Green Guide - Italy](#)

Michelin

My first Green Guide was given to me by our cousin Lidia in 1999 on our first road trip in Italy. Lidia and her husband Roberto traveled with us through Northern Italy and Tuscany year after year for 20+ years. Michelin Green Guides offer travelers the inspiration to create a memorable journey with many driving itineraries to choose from. There are also Michelin Italy Road Maps which despite the technology options, I still use and rely on today.

ITALY





[On the Road Around Northern Italy](#)

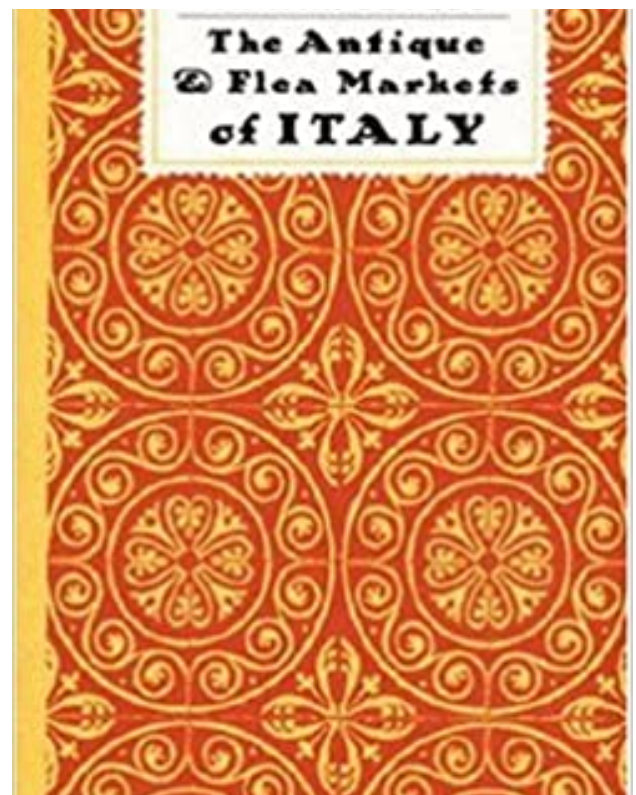
Christopher Catling

A road trip in Italy connects you to the people and places that go beyond a travel brochure with a playlist of possibilities that will make your trip unique and unforgettable. An Italy where towns and villages spring up like pages of a book each with something new and exciting to see. This book includes detailed maps, city and town plans, sightseeing information, hotel and restaurant recommendations and more.

[The Antique and Flea Markets of Italy](#)

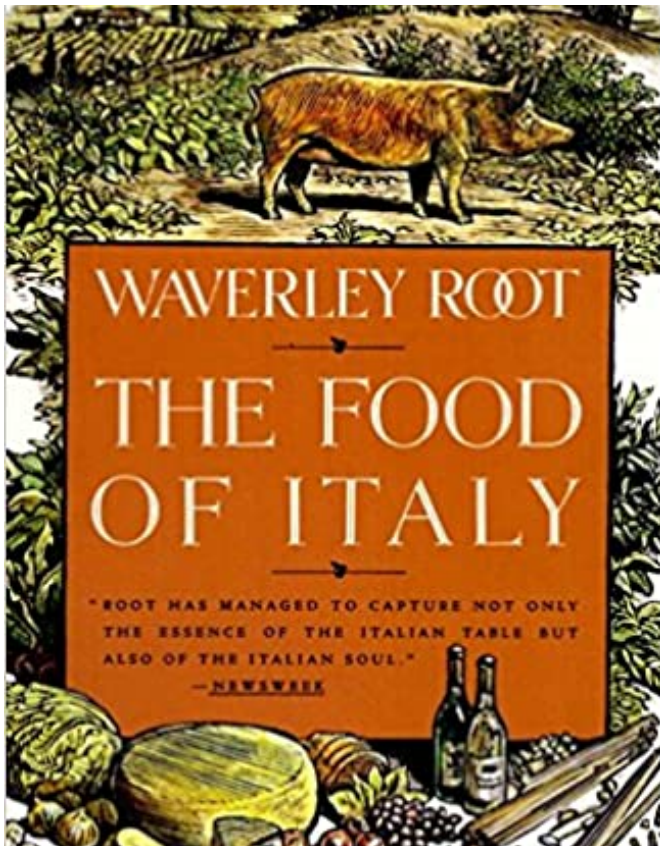
Marina Seveso

The piazze and arcaded porticoes of Italy's towns and villages are the settings for some of the country's most pleasurable shopping experiences. This book is your passport to the great antique and flea markets of Italy guiding you to the best markets in all regions of the country. It lists locations, directions, days and hours of operation and expected market merchandise to help you find that one of a kind treasure.





Food, Cooking and Gastronomy



[The Food of Italy](#)

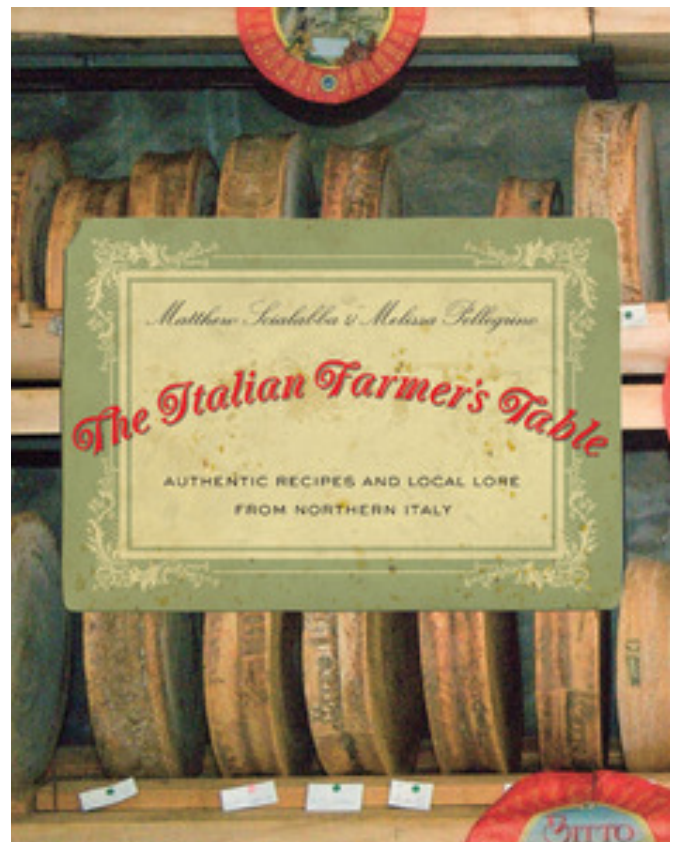
Waverly Root

Food eaten in the place of origin is a not to be missed experience. This book is a gastronomic legacy of regional Italy food from the length, width and breadth of the Italian peninsula. With historical references and captivating stories this book will prepare you to eat and enjoy Italian food at its finest whether here or in Italy.

[The Italian Farmer's Table](#)

Matthew Scialabba and Melissa Pellegrino

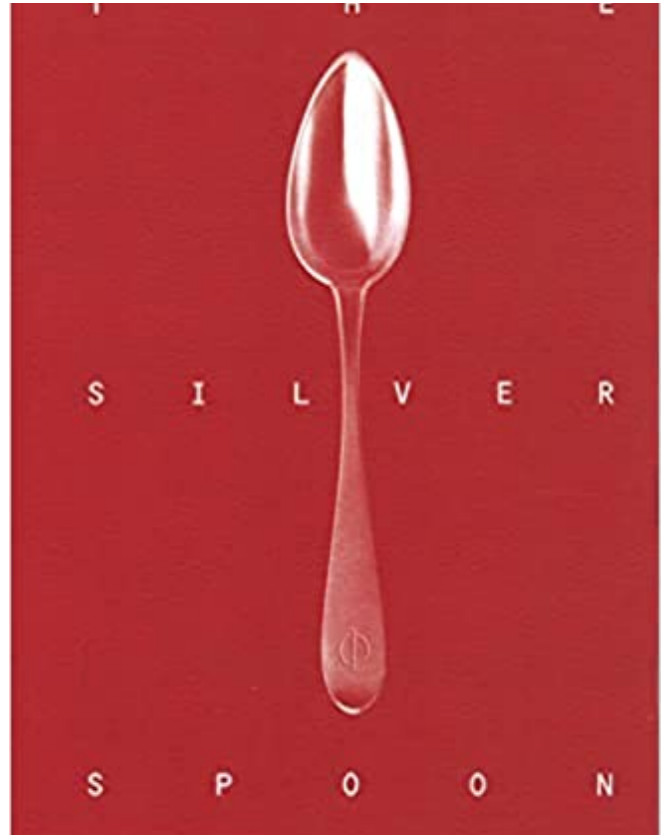
If you love rustic Italian food and want an authentic taste of Italy, this cook book has 150 recipes for you from northern Italian *agriturismi*. You can enjoy the recipes and learn about the farms, country houses and their owners who provide accommodations and farm fresh ingredients to the tables of Italy



Silver Spoon Cookbook

Phaidon Press

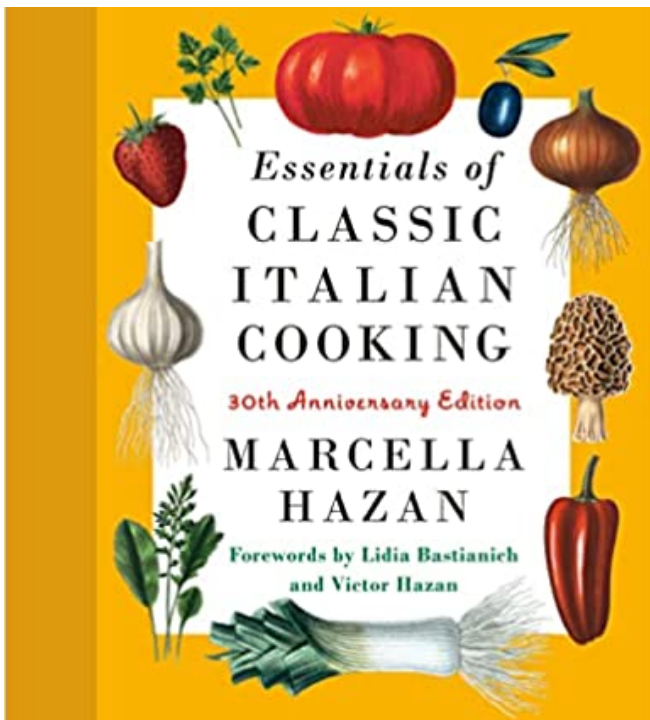
First published in 1950, the Silver Spoon, *il Cucchiaino d'Argento*, is considered to be the “bible” of Italian cooking. Brides received it on their wedding day, mothers passed copies on to their children, grandmothers revered it. A book with hundreds of traditional recipes, it is considered to be the authoritative cookbook of traditional Italian recipes and methods of cooking. Leave a substantial amount of space on your bookshelf. The weight alone tells you this book is a course in Italian cooking.

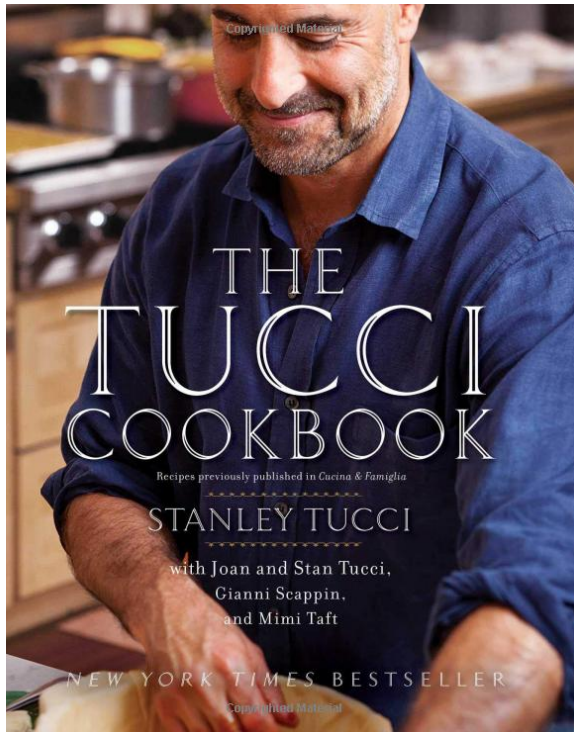


Essentials of Classic Italian Cooking

Marcella Hazan

I'm a big fan of Marcella Hazan. For me she is a kindred spirit, someone who gets what it means to cook Italian, someone who cooks with the same food memory as mia Nonna. Considered to be the “doyenne of Italian cooking”, it was Hazan who introduced olive oil as an ingredient to American home cooks in 1973, when she first published the *Essentials of Classic Italian Cooking*. This publication is the 30th Anniversary Edition.





[The Tucci Cookbook](#)

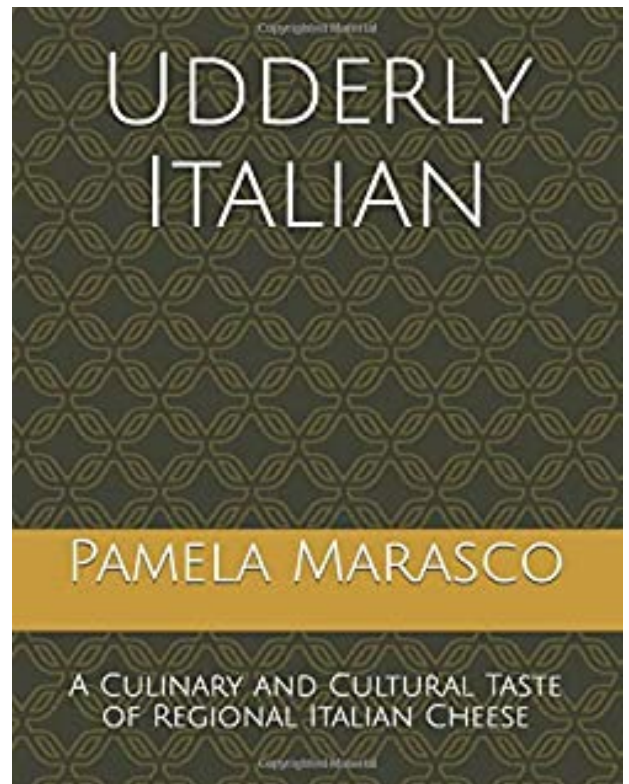
Stanley Tucci

What does the rest of the world eat? At Stanley Tucci's childhood table that question became a nightly mantra spoken by this father because it was inconceivable that anyone could eat as well as they did, his mother's cooking was so good. This book is a testament to that as well as Tucci's belief that people who love to cook, love their past and want to pass on its truths to the next generation. This book will inspire you to do so.

[Udderly Italian: A Culinary and Cultural Taste of Regional Italian Cheese](#)

Pamela Marasco

Are you curious about Italian cheese? If so you're not alone. I found I had a lot to share after a visit to the Parmigiano Reggiano Consorzio Vacche Rosse in Reggio Emilia and wrote this survey of Italy's most well-known and some lesser known cheese. Each reflects the cultural landscape of the region and generational traditions pasture to plate. Included are flavor profiles, recipes and serving suggestions for charcuterie and cheese boards and recommendations on how to store your cheese to keep it at its best.





Culinaria Italy

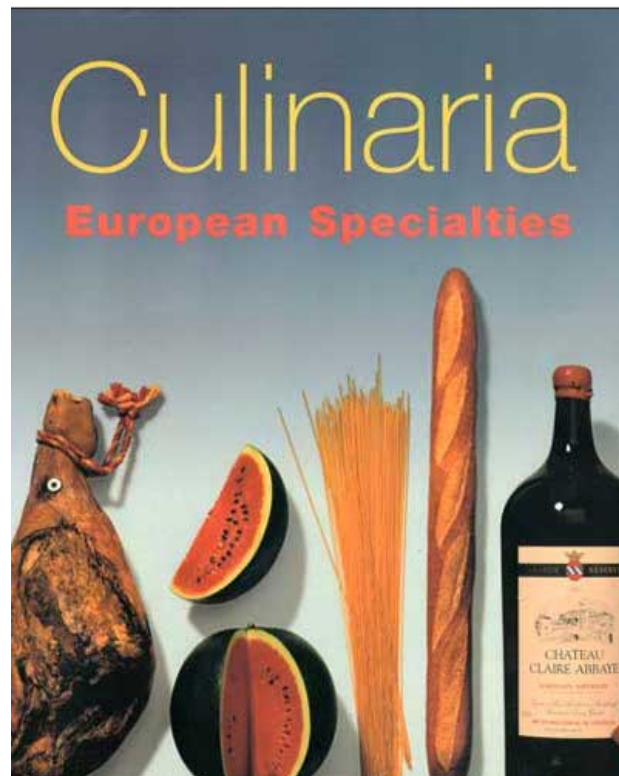
Claudia Piras and Ruprecht Stempelt

Part of the Culinaria series where the art of cooking and the art of living meet. This book is a feast for all the senses. Stunning photographs with recipes from throughout the peninsula. Captioned bits of culinary history, illustrated ingredients and cooking techniques that will inspire you to explore the cuisine of Italy. The Italian kitchen in all its glory.

Culinaria European Specialties

**Joachim Romer, Michael Mitter
and Christine Westphal**

Food art at its best. Like all books in the Culinaria series this book is well-designed with stunning photographs and illustrations of European specialties. A culinary encyclopedia to which top chefs as well as home cooks have contributed their best recipes. A must have reference for those interested in cooking and foods with recipes and ingredients that will excite your taste for learning.





Micol Negrin
**the
italian
grill**
fresh ideas to
fire up your
outdoor cooking

The Italian Grill

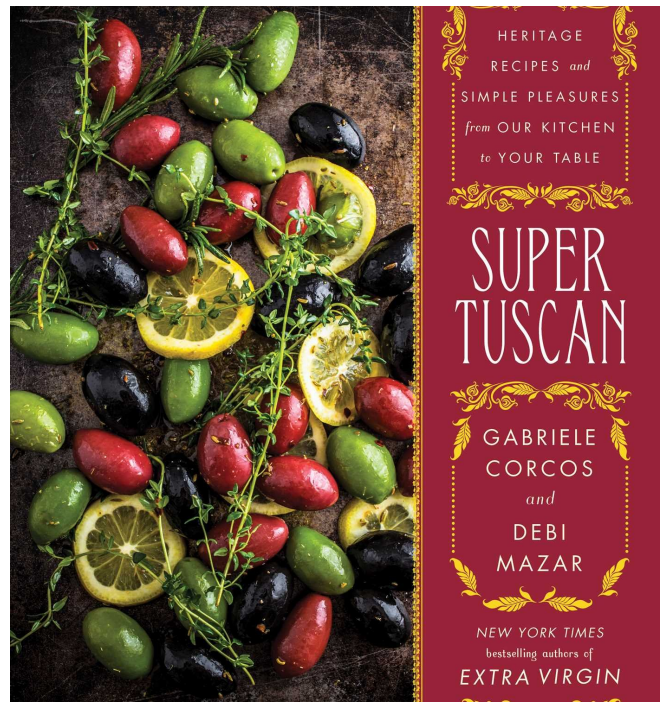
Micol Negrin

Italians love to cook over an open flame and this book is right up my grill. Although Italians did not invent the grill they certainly are among the cultures of the world that have perfected its use. The life of the fire, *il fuoco vivo*, in the gastro-history of the early Italians held a special attraction. From appetizers to desserts you'll see how easy it is to grill like an Italian. The recipes in this book are on fire.

Super Tuscan

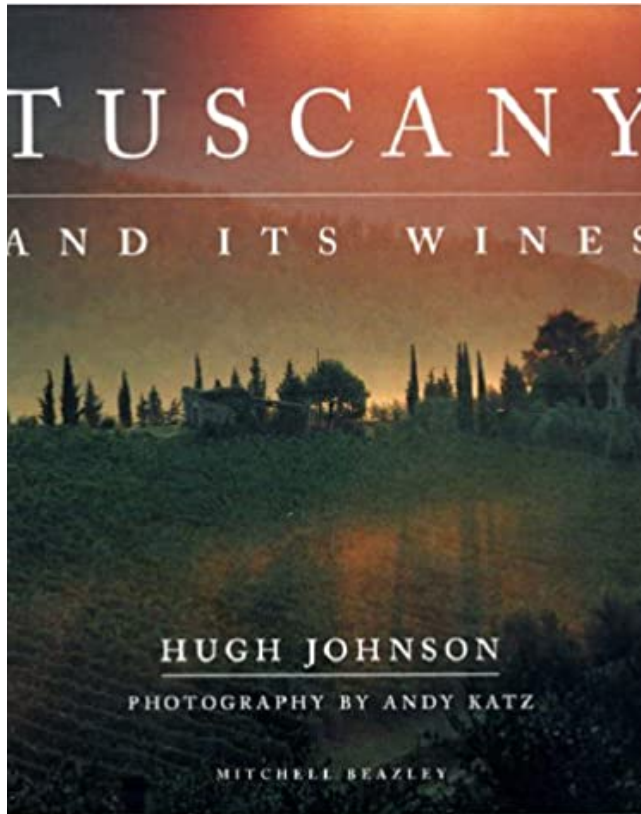
Gabriele Corcos and Debi Mazur

A serious romance in the kitchen begins with Italian food. It is earthy, sensual, easy to get along with and satisfying. Who better to introduce us to the pleasures of cooking Italy as a couple than Debi Mazur and Gabriele Corcos. Debi is an American actress and Gabriele is an Italian celebrity cook. The two paired to host a successful show on the Cooking Channel and have written a book that will inspire you to cook and live *la dolce vita* wherever you are.





Wine



[Tuscany and Its Wines](#)

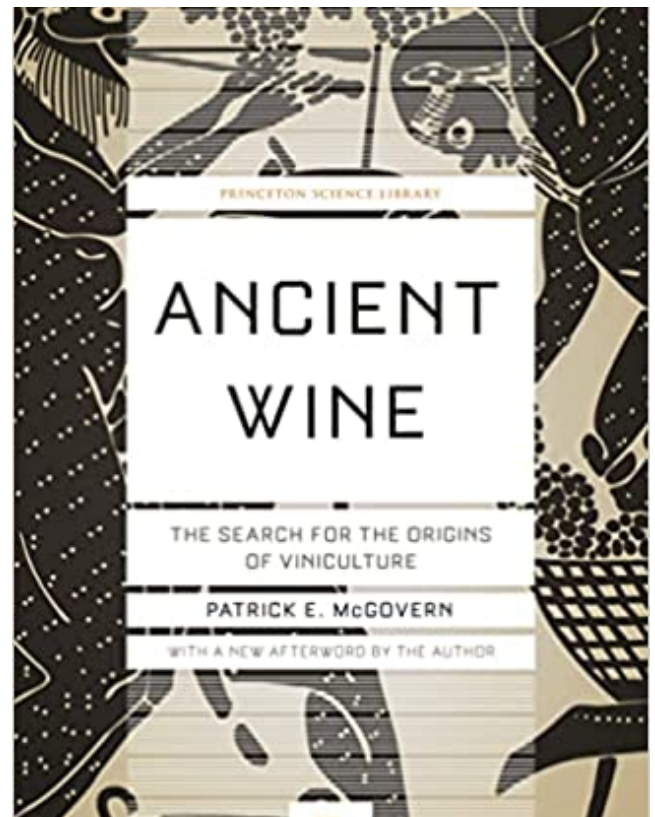
Hugh Johnson

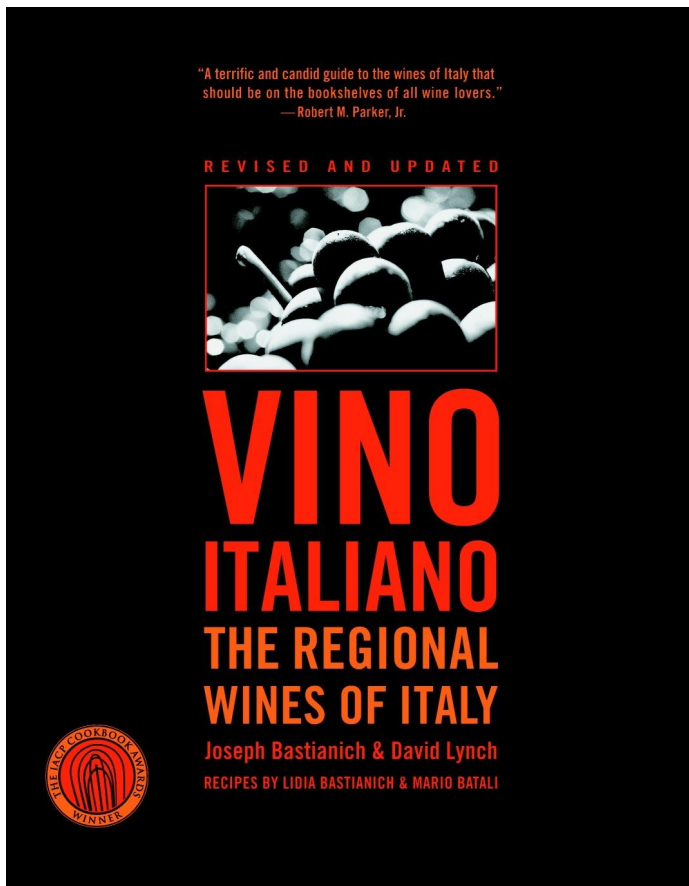
Hugh Johnson is one of the world's best selling writers on wine. It has been said that no education in wine is complete, without time spent learning from the his writings. In this book on Tuscany and its wines, wine and life seem to intermingle as you learn about Italian regional wines without effort. One of our favorite families in Italy, the Contini-Bonacossi's from Carmignano, are mentioned on page 41.

[Ancient Wine: The Search for the Origins of Viniculture](#)

Patrick McGovern

Take a deep dive into the origins of wine and ancient brews with Patrick McGovern, Scientific Director of the Biomolecular Archaeology Project for Cuisine, Fermented Beverages, and Health at the University of Pennsylvania Museum in Philadelphia, where he is also an Adjunct Professor of Anthropology. Part modern scientist, part Indiana Jones, McGovern uncovers and writes about the oldest alcoholic beverages ever found.





Vino Italiano: The Regional Wines of Italy

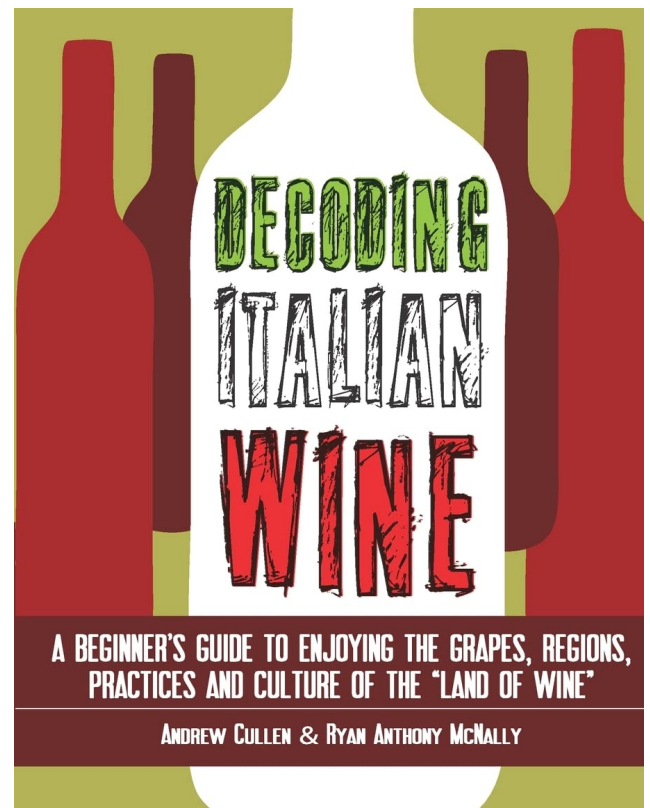
Joseph Bastianich and David Lynch

This book has quickly become the definitive guide to the regional wines of Italy. Under the tutelage of two of Italy's recognized wine experts you are in good hands as you are guided through tastings and travel trips for a complete wine holiday in Italy or for choosing the best bottle in your local eatery back home. Discussions on wine and cuisine with regional recipes by Lidia Bastianich make this a book you will want on your shelf.

Decoding Italian Wine: A Beginner's Guide to Enjoying the Grapes, Regions, Practices and Culture of the "Land of Wine"

Andrew Cullen and Ryan Anthony McNally

You love Italy. You love Italian food. You drool over the fashions of Milan and sigh over the bridges in Venice. Your blood boils at the sound of a Ferrari and you dream of basking under the Tuscan sun and you love Italian wine. This book will help you speak the language and master the art of choosing a good bottle of Italian wine.



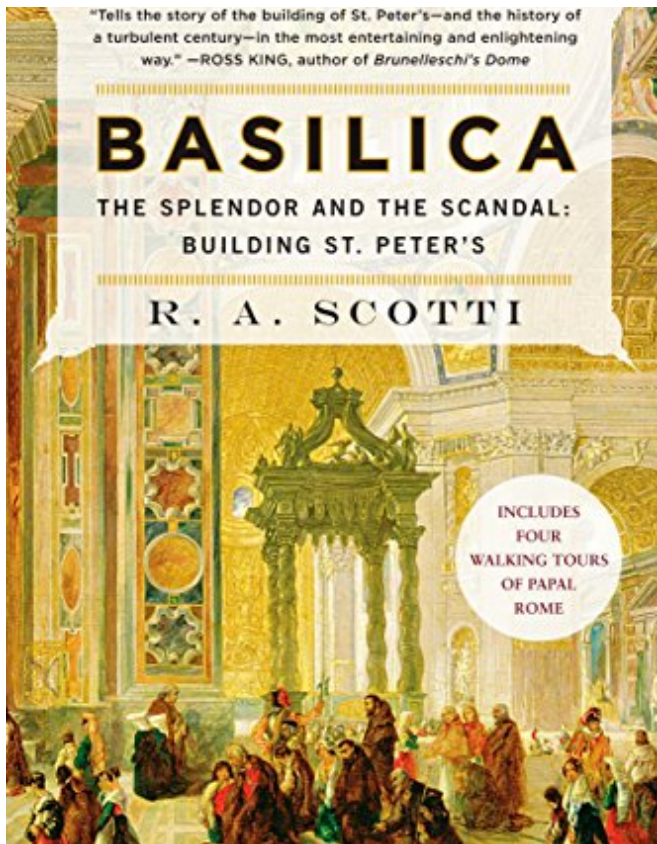


History

Historical Biography

Historical Fiction

Mystery



[Basilica -The Splendor and the Scandal: Building St. Peter's](#)

R.A. Scotti

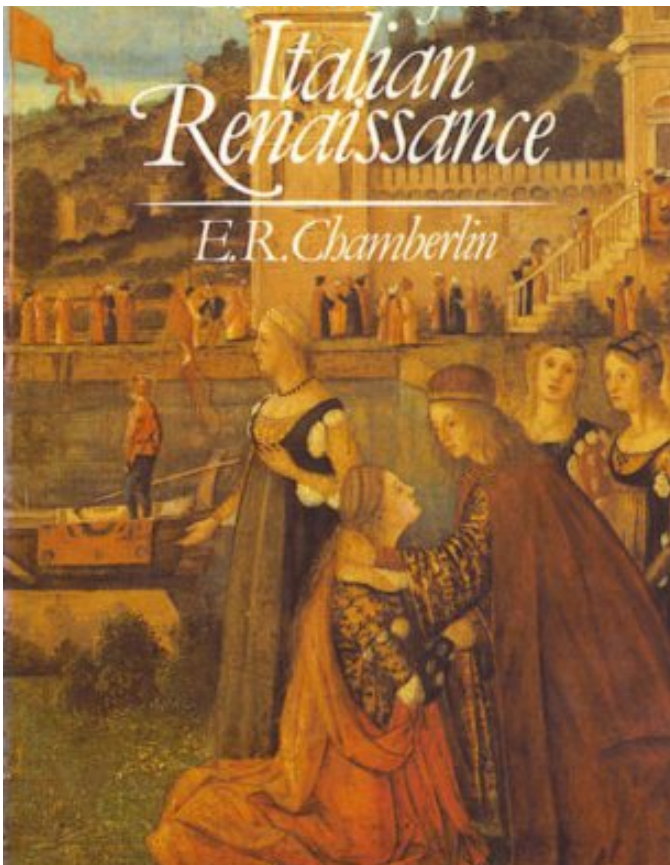
If you travel to Rome you will most likely visit the Vatican and St. Peter's. This book is a good preview to appreciate the history and magnificence of an extraordinary architectural feat of the High Renaissance that would transform the landscape of the Eternal City. Includes walking tours of papal Rome.

[Piazza San Marco](#)

Ian Fenlon

The fatal charm of Italy is never felt more than when you are at the Piazza San Marco in Venice. The city of Venice, in all its dimensions, radiates from P. San Marco. This book is part of the Wonders of the World, a series of small books that focus on some of the world's most famous sites and monuments.





The World of the Italian Renaissance

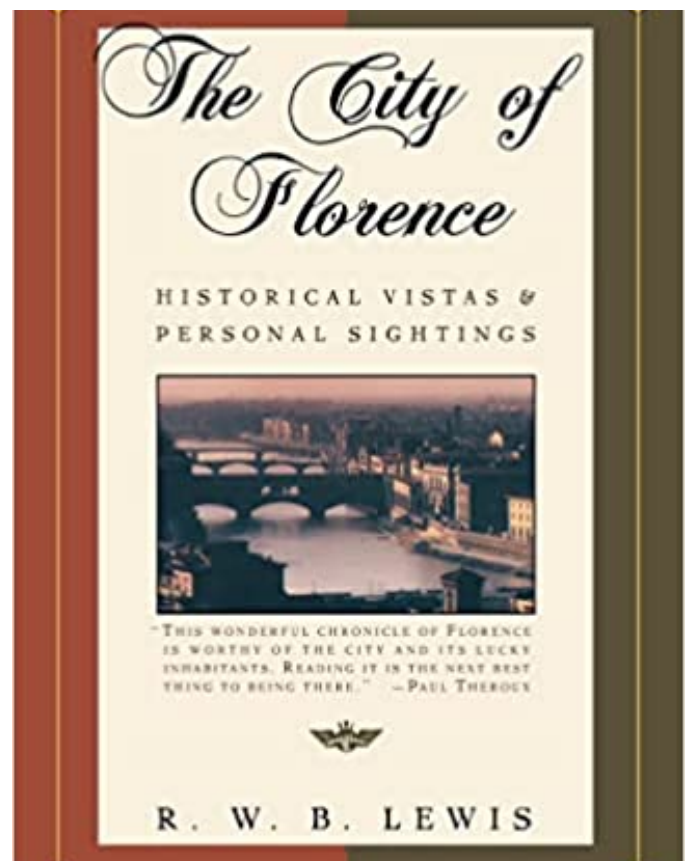
E.R. Chamberlin

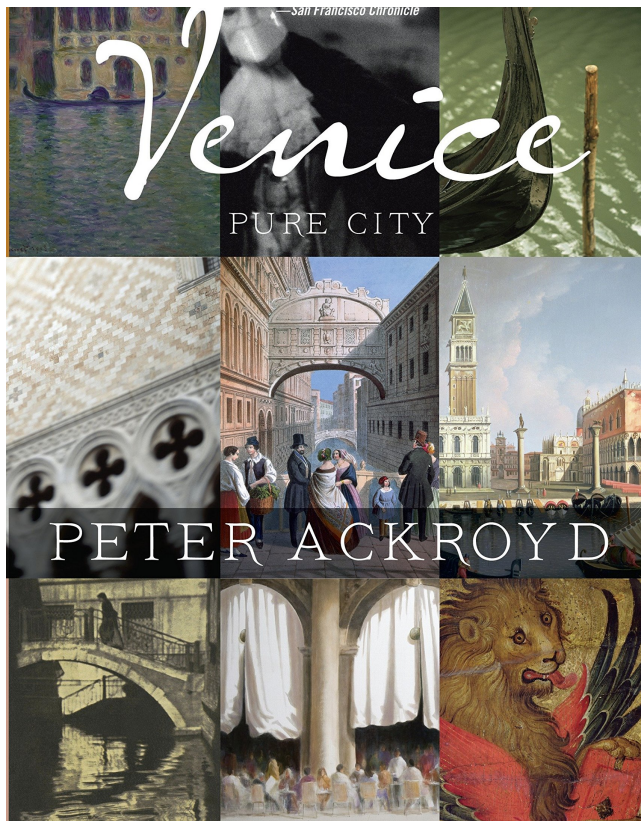
A guide to the Italian Renaissance for general readers and travelers to Italy looking for a readable yet comprehensive overview of a period in history that shaped some of Italy's most iconic cities, architects, painters and sculptors. A good pre-read to understand the amazing art and architecture of Italy.

The City of Florence: Historical Vistas and Personal Sightings

R.W.B Lewis

Dante called Florence the beautiful and famous daughter of Rome. 60% of the world's most important works of art are in Italy with almost half of those in the city of Florence. This book shares the art and design of the city of Florence and the author's personal insights on its historical vistas.





Venice: Pure City

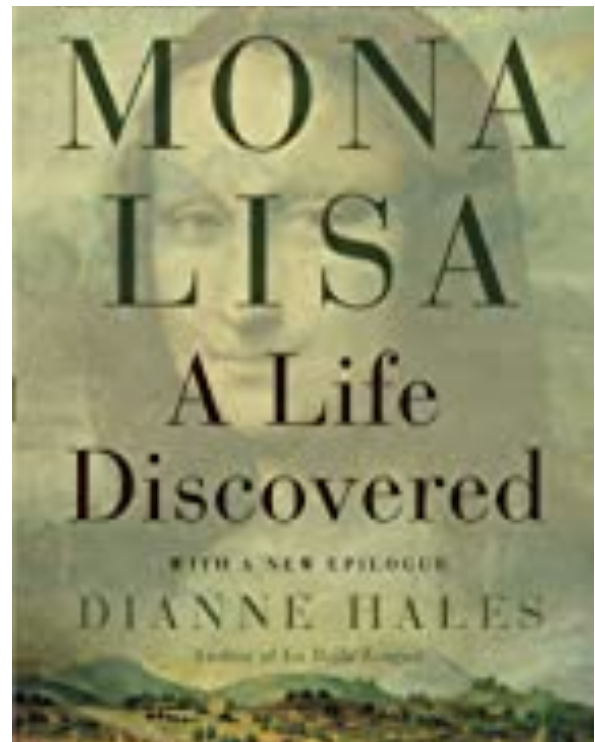
Peter Ackroyd

A historical narrative as evocative as the city itself. Like most who have visited La Serenissima, the Most Serene Republic of Venice, Queen of the Adriatic, we are captivated by her beauty and intrigue. A magic gondola ride on the Grand Canal this book takes you through the history and art of the ultimate city on the Adriatic still set like a jewel in its glistening lagoon.

Mona Lisa - A Life Discovered

Dianne Halles

The information on the inside of the book jacket sums up the purpose and pleasure of this book. It reads “everyone knows her smile but no one knows her story”. The author’s personal quest to find and confirm as much as possible about the child, daughter, wife, mother and woman behind the smile. USA TODAY reviews the book as a readable and affectionate my-search-for-story for art lovers and anyone interested in the glories of Florence in the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries, and in the divine Leonardo.





Brunelleschi's Dome: How a Renaissance Genius Reinvented Architecture

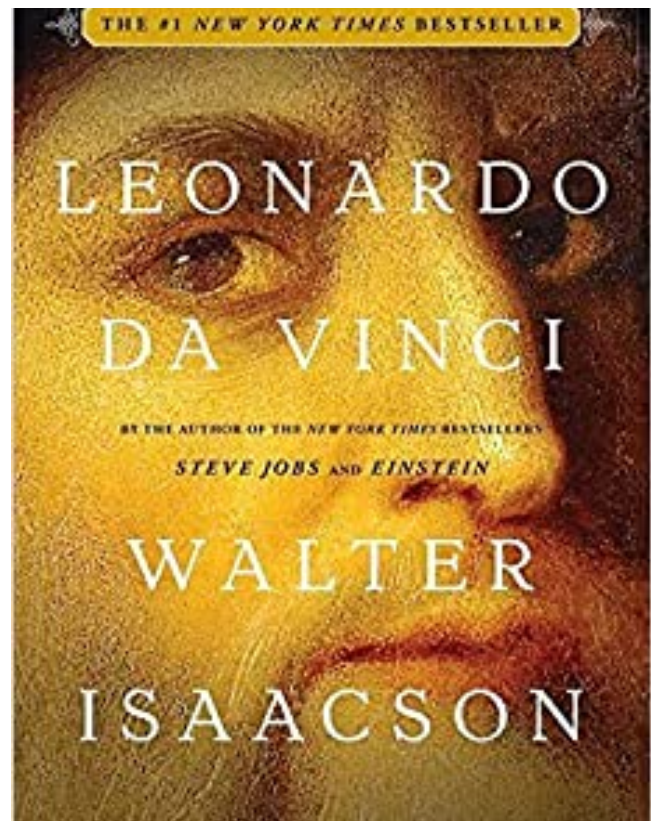
Ross King

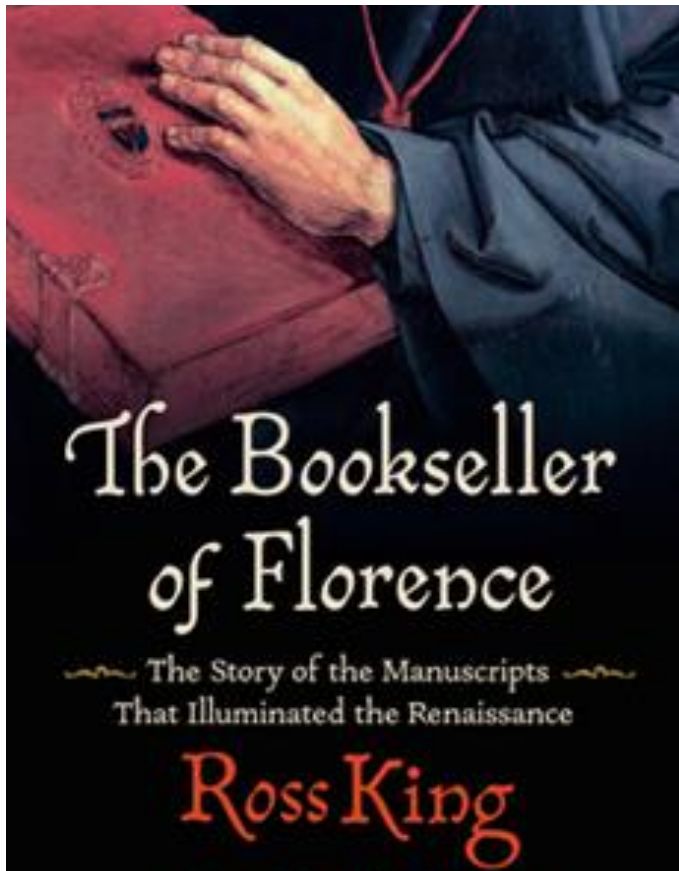
Plagues, wars, political feuds, and intellectual egos surround the construction of the dome of Santa Maria del Fiore in 15th century Florence. It would take a Renaissance genius to reinvent architecture and solve the puzzle of a dome to build it.

Leonardo Da Vinci

Walter Isaacson

I'm a great fan of Leonardo. From the first time I saw *Il Cenacolo* (The Last Supper) in the refectory of the Dominican convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan to the first time I read Isaacson's powerful biography. It is impressive in its scope and seeks to define Leonardo's genius with an insight on how we can apply his skills and way of thinking to ourselves.





[The Bookseller of Florence: The Story of the Manuscripts That Illuminated the Renaissance](#)

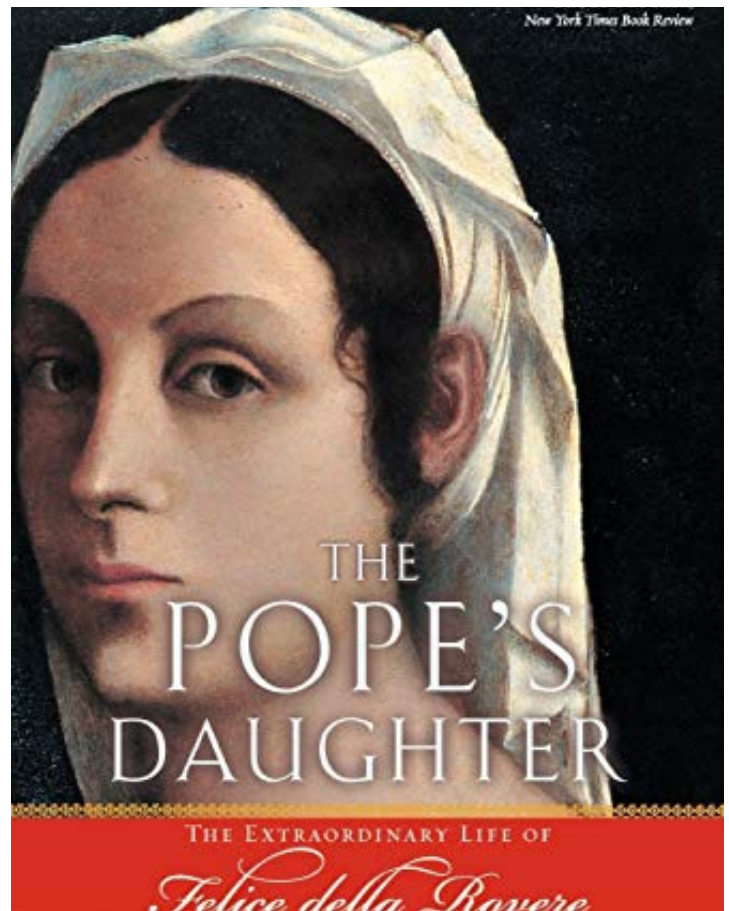
Ross King

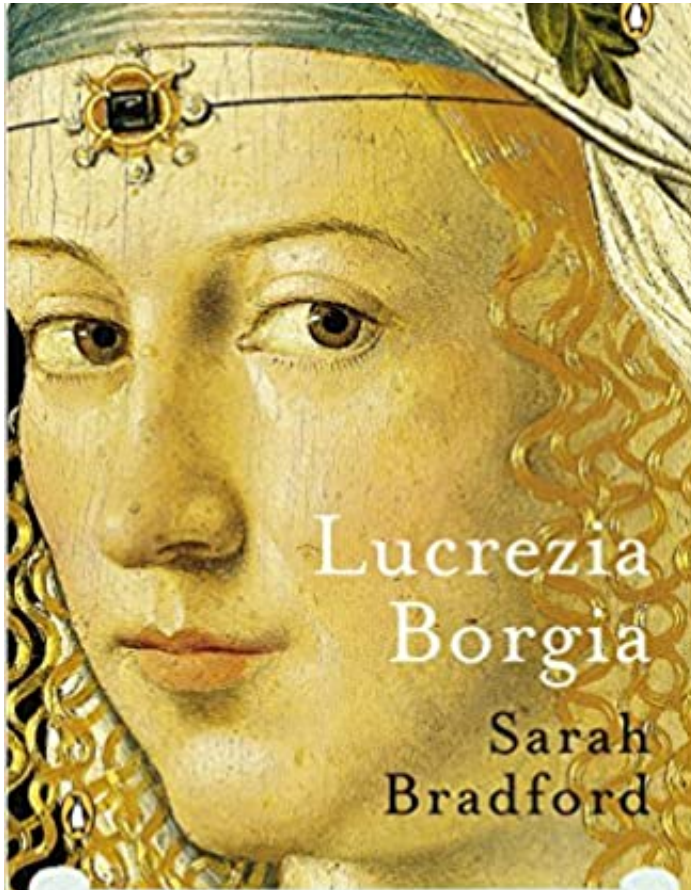
Florence's manuscript hunters, scribes, scholars, and booksellers produced books for popes, princes, bankers and merchants that led to a flourishing of knowledge that would change the world.

[The Pope's Daughter: The Extra Ordinary Life of Felice della Rovere](#)

Caroline P. Murphy

A spellbinding biography set against the backdrop of Renaissance Rome that captures the untold story of a rare woman whose presence can still be found in the Vatican frescoes of Raphael and the streets of the city. One of the most powerful women of her time, the story of her extraordinary life resonates through out Rome to this day.





[Lucrezia Borgia: Life, Love and Death in Renaissance Italy](#)

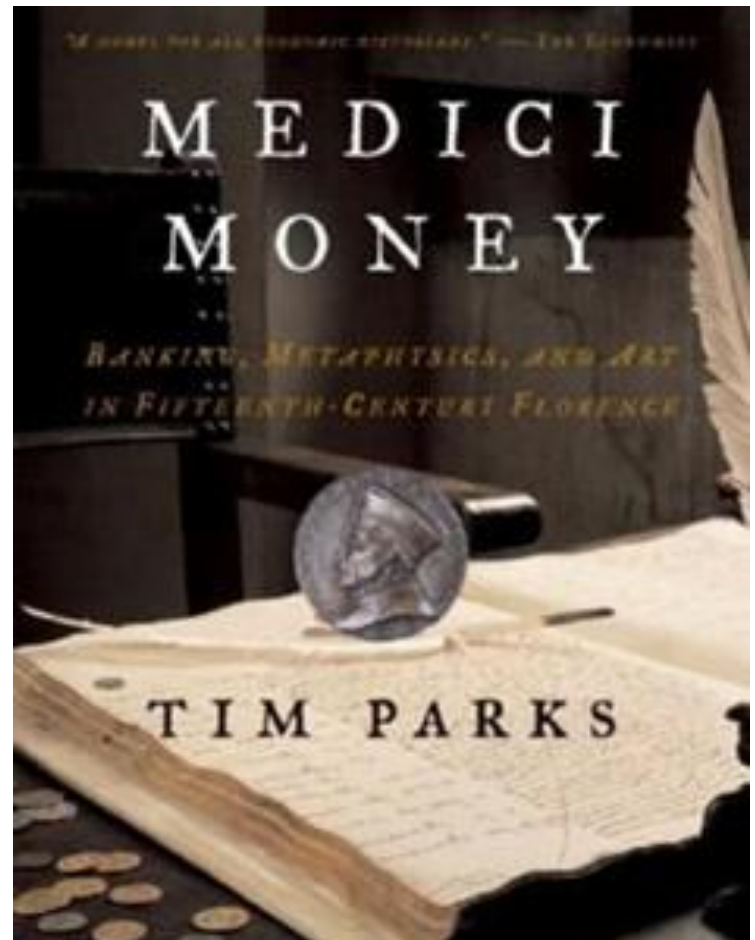
Sarah Bradford

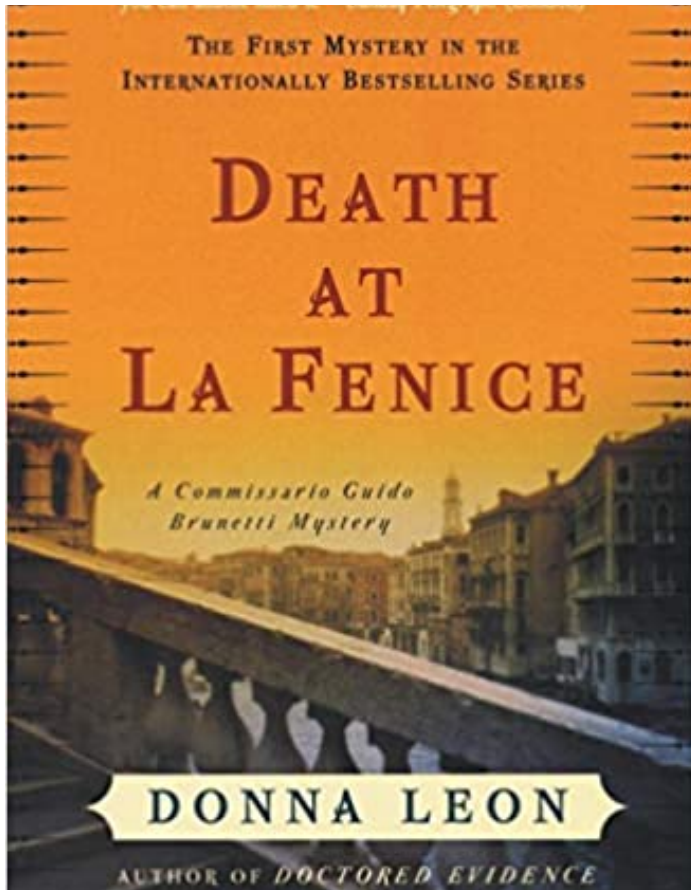
Sarah Bradford reveals an in-depth portrait of one of the most enigmatic figures of the Italian Renaissance with a biography in which the truth is far more fascinating than the myth.

[Medici Money: Banking, Metaphysics and Art in Fifteenth-Century Florence](#)

Tim Parks

The indelible mark of the Medici is all over Florence. A family of finance, commerce, politics and power with a legacy of art and architecture that defined the Renaissance. This book is about the shifting fortunes of money, patronage and politics and a family dynasty that would influence the world.





Death at La Fenice

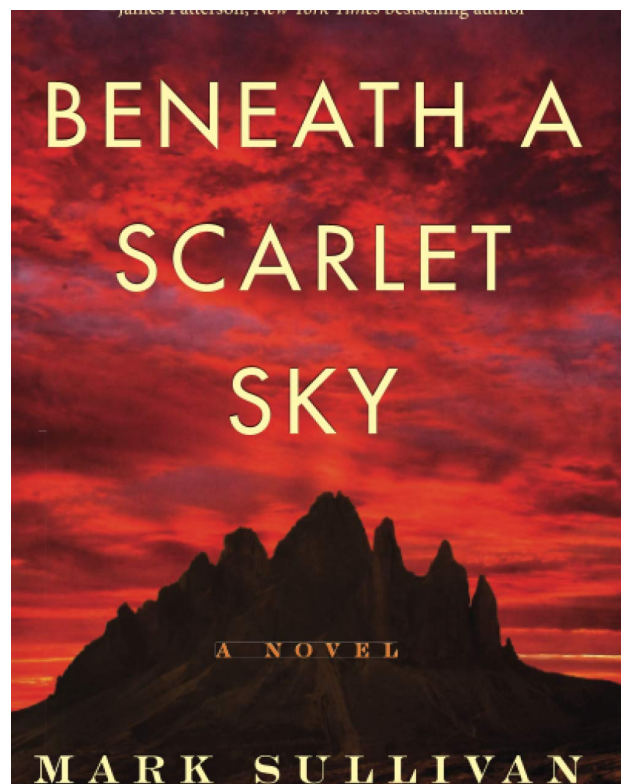
Donna Leon

A Commissario Guido Brunetti mystery by author Donna Leon set in the city of Venice. The *calli* and canals of Venice are a backdrop for the crime mysteries she is so well known for and there are always a few passages dedicated to the culinary specialties of the city for a mouth-watering read. One in a series of 26 Leon detective novels set in Venice of which I'm sure you will read more of.

Beneath a Scarlet Sky

Mark Sullivan

Based on the true story of Pino Lella, a normal Italian teenager caught up in the abnormal circumstances of WWII where his days of innocence are numbered. In a Milan destroyed by Allied bombs, at the age of 18, circumstances drive him into the ranks of the German army and a sinister existence as a spy with dreams to return to a long ago love.





Italian Language



[DK Italian-English Bilingual Visual Dictionary](#)

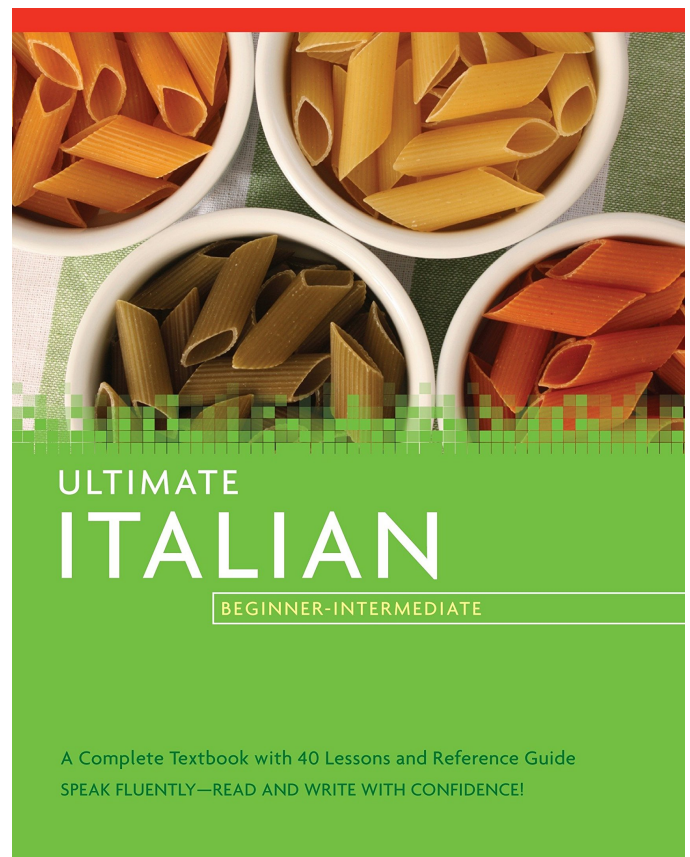
DK Bilingual Visual Dictionary

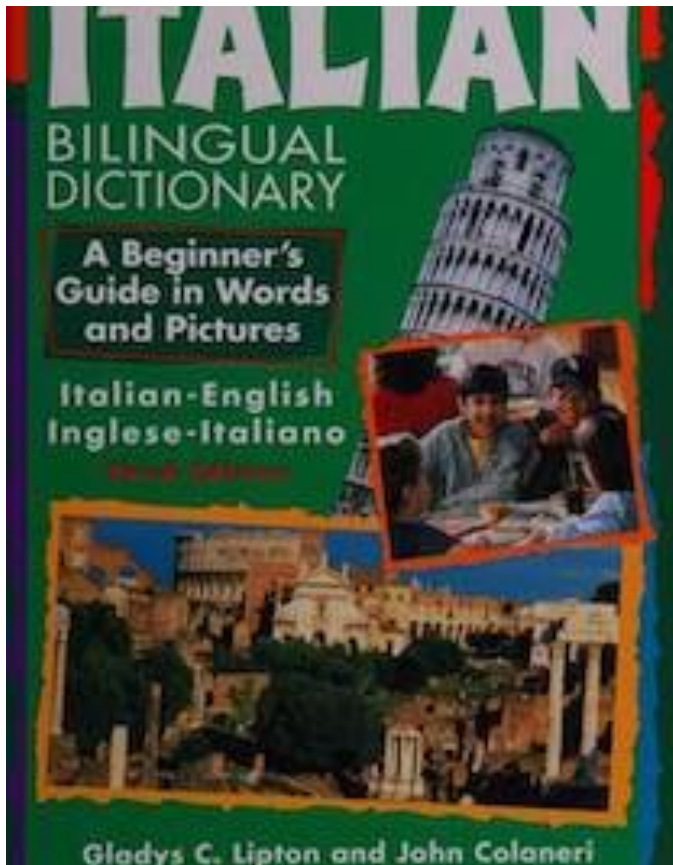
More than 10,000 illustrated terms are arranged by themes and situations, making learning easy. The book is accompanied by a free audio app that can be downloaded from the App Store and Google Play so you can learn the correct pronunciation of everyday words and commonly used phrases. Highly relatable because of the colored fotos which are a proven learning aid in the retention of information.

[Ultimate Italian Beginner-Intermediate](#)

Living Language

One of the many books I've used over the years with grammar and dialogues including the most common and useful expressions for everyday conversations.





Italian Bilingual Dictionary-A Beginner's Guide in Words and Pictures

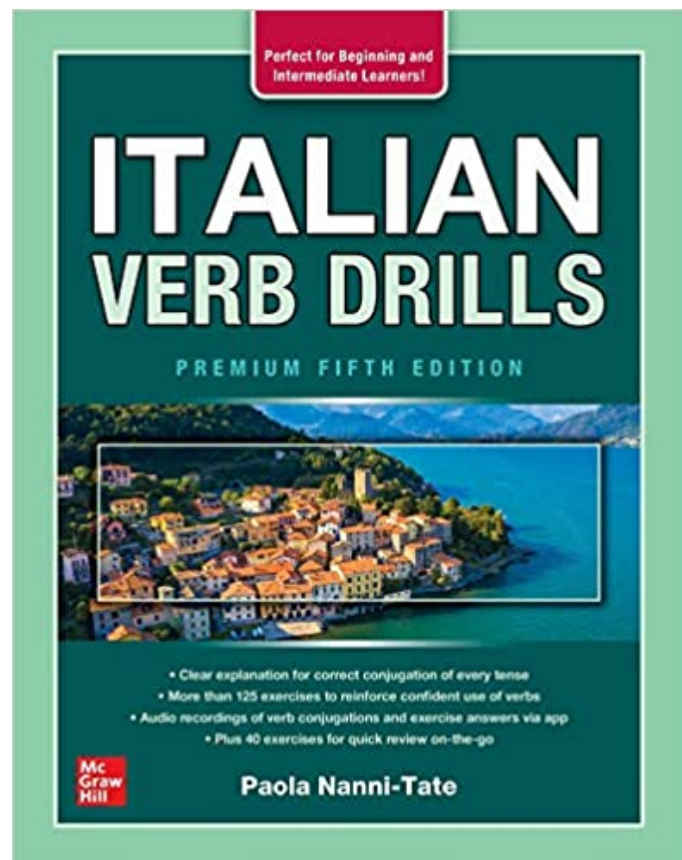
Gladys C. Lipton and John Colaneri

The pictures are actually small graphics not colorized. However what is good about this dictionary is with each entry there are sentences in Italian that use the word with the English translation. Also included with each entry are a pronunciation key, identification of the part of speech and gender which is very helpful.

Italian Verb Drills

Paola Nanni-Tate

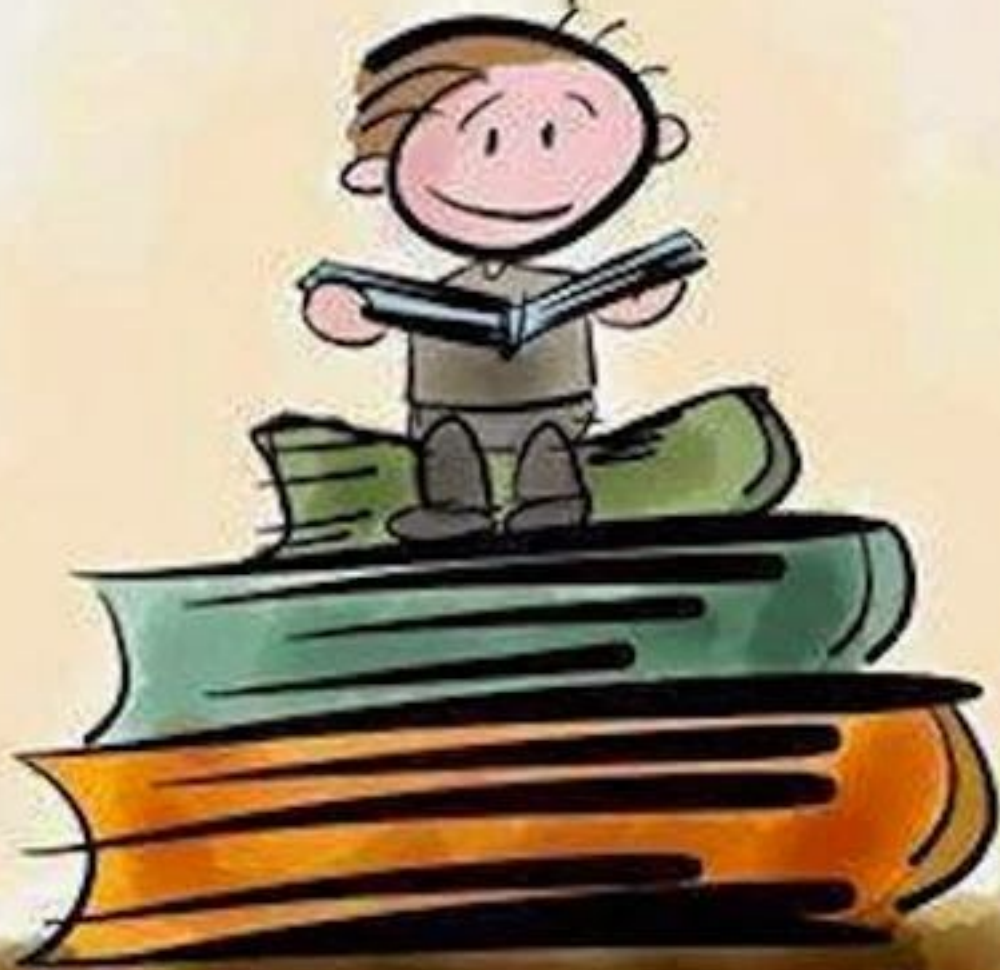
Well-structured exercises for practice of commonly used Italian verb conjugations. For beginners to intermediate learners.

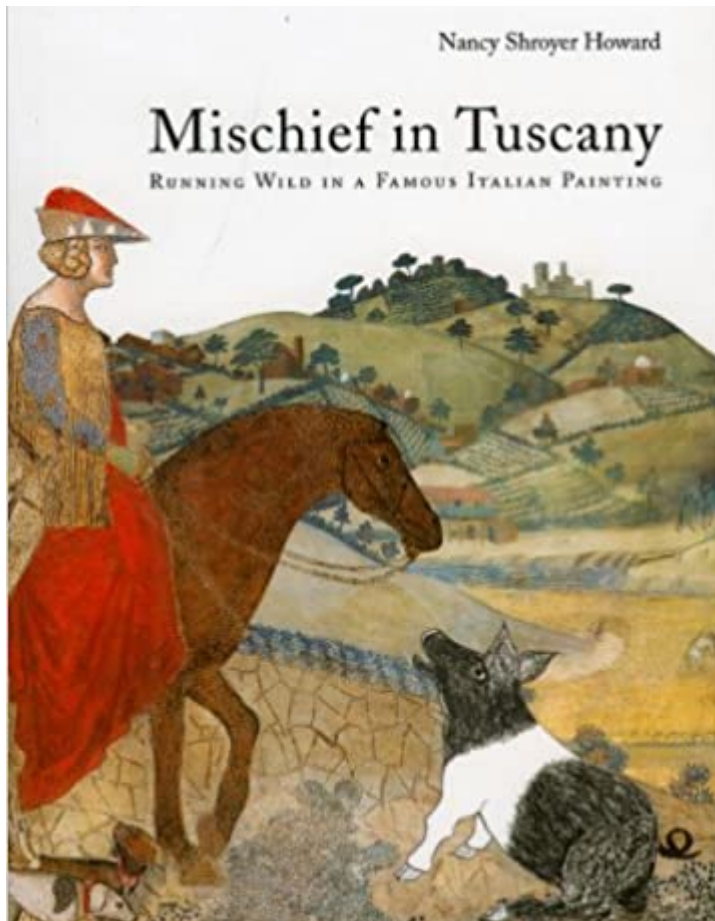




Children's Books

Un bambino che legge
sarà un uomo che pensa





Mischief in Tuscany

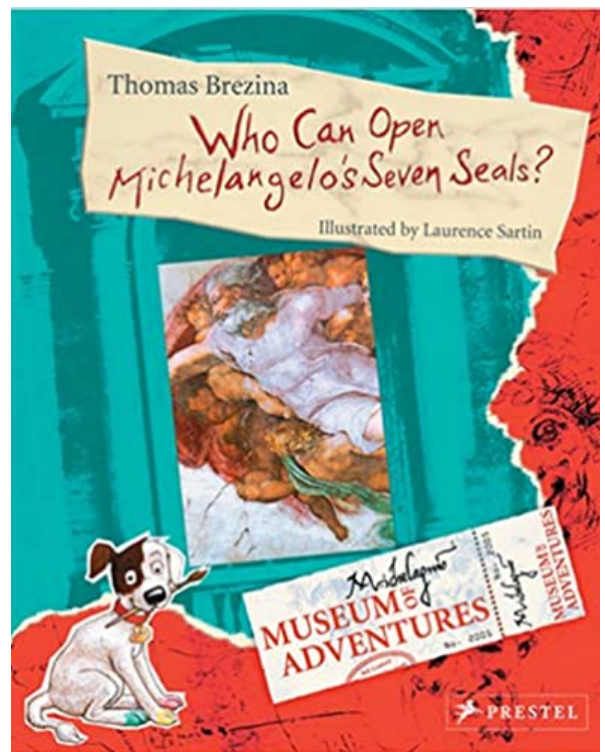
Nancy Shroyer Howard

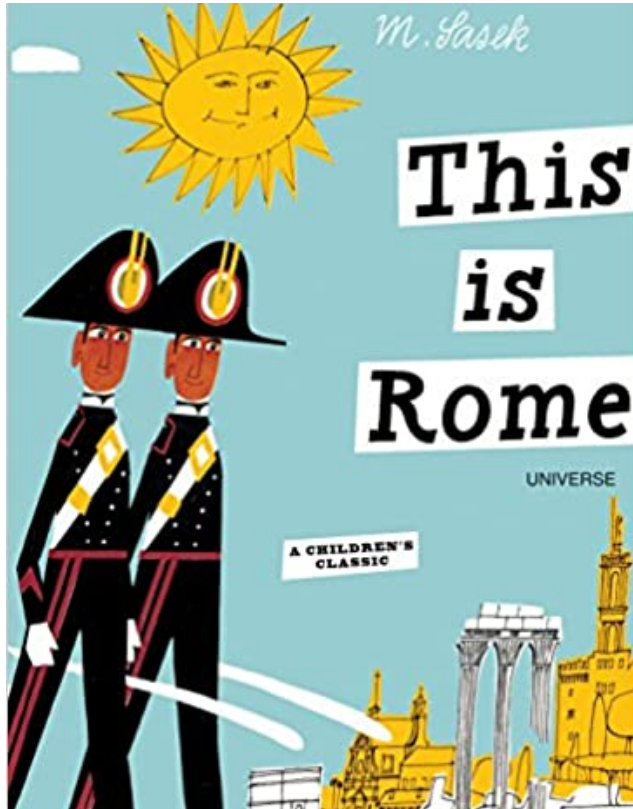
A Cinta Senese pig runs amuck in the Tuscan countryside in Ambrogio Lorenzetti's famous 14th century fresco *The Effects of Good Government in the City and Countryside* painted across the wall in Siena's Palazzo Pubblico (Town Hall). He finds himself within the walls of the great city where he gets into all kinds of trouble and ends up facing the committee of Virtues who must decide his fate.

Who Can Open Michelangelo's Seven Seals?

Thomas Brezina and Laurence Sartin

An interactive mystery as young readers try to solve the riddles of Michelangelo's secret chamber with seven puzzles to discover the great artist's secret while exploring the life and culture of sixteenth-century Italy.





This is Rome

Miroslav Sasek

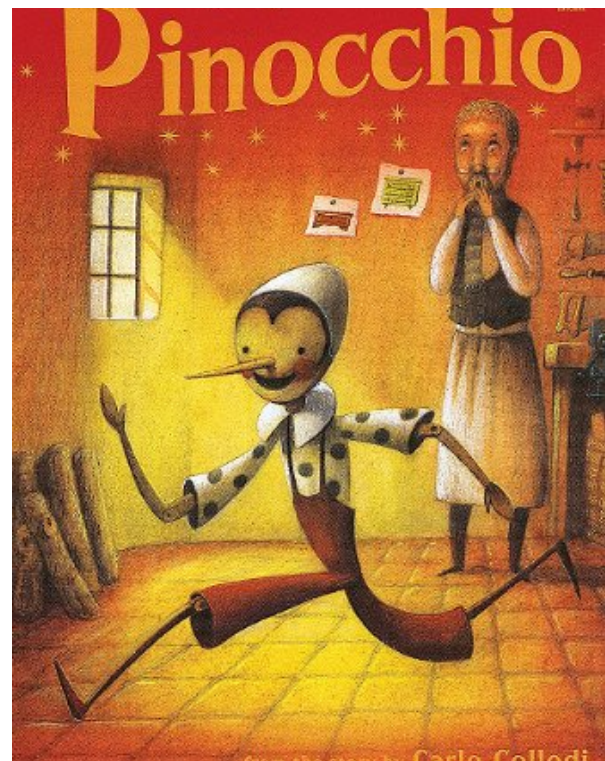
A book for both children and their parents. First published in 1960 by Miroslav Sasek, architect, author and avant-garde illustrator. The book traces the history of Roman civilization to bring to life classical monuments and ancient rulers in modern Rome in a classic children's travelogue series.

Pinocchio

Carlo Collodi

“Centuries ago there lived. . . ‘A king!’ my little readers will say immediately. No, children, you are mistaken. Once upon a time there was a piece of wood.”

So begins the story of treasure hunts, false friends, fun fairs and a wooden puppet, made by Gepetto, who wants to be a real boy. The original text by Carlo Lorenzini from the town of Collodi in Tuscany which I have visited to see *Parco di Pinocchio* and journey to the land of toys where adults and children alike can enter into this Italian fairytale beloved around the world.



From We Love the Taste of Learning Series

Our presentations are designed to encourage the character of the Italian lifestyle as a model of well-being and to promote the belief that preparing a well-laid table to share and enjoy with your family and friends in a relaxed and tranquil manner is a lost pleasure that must be found again.



P. Marasco

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