



## Gastronomic Sicily

Food & wine in the west



Palermo Cathedral, steel engraving, c. 1850.

**13–20 November 2025 (ML 851)**

8 days • £ 4,090

Lecturer: Marc Millon

Colourful Palermo street markets, authentic salt flats near Trapani, historic cellars in Marsala.

Learn about making wine, olive oil and artisan foods from the craftsmen and women who carry on these age-old traditions.

Spectrum of culinary experiences from street food in Palermo to dinner in a private *palazzo*. Emphasis on authentic methods rather than *haute cuisine*.

If Sicily's history is a layer-cake of the different cultures that have colonised the island through the centuries, its food is no less complex. Citrus fruits and ices were brought there by the Arabs before the Middle Ages. Wine-making was introduced by the Phoenicians, and during the Roman era wheat turned the inland hillsides to gold. The magnificent landscape remains a key source of agricultural richness for the island: Trapani is today Europe's most productive grape-growing province.

What Sicily offers more than any other Italian region is an unrivalled cornucopia of sun-ripened vegetables and fruits, many grown on volcanic soils for added intensity of flavour. The Sicilians cook these products in myriad, colourful ways: sweet and sour, hot and spicy, fresh and nutritious – Sicilian food is arguably more exciting than its northern counterparts. It is also a mix of old and new cultures. Pasta is handmade in unique shapes to accommodate vegetables, capers, herbs and the varied seafood that make up the healthy Sicilian diet. Dessert lovers will be rewarded with some of the most delicious sweetmeats Italy has to offer: from the hollow *cannolo* filled with fresh ewe's milk ricotta to elaborately decorated *cassata* cakes.

As the tour travels across the Western part of the island we visit small producers of artisan foods, wine-makers, home cooks and chefs alike, and do not ignore cultural sites that determine its key historical importance. Sample street food from market stalls in Palermo, the freshest seafood in the Mediterranean, and home-prepared dinners whose hospitable cooks share their secrets with us. Walk in vineyards and olive groves, and around some of the finest archaeological sites on this ever-fascinating island.

### Itinerary

**Day 1: Palermo.** Fly at c. 8.30am from London Heathrow to Palermo (British Airways).

Palermo is the largest and most interesting city on the island: capital of Sicily from the period of Saracenic occupation in the ninth century, it reached a peak under the Normans and again during the Age of Baroque. First of four nights in Palermo.

**Day 2: Palermo.** A morning walk to the city's best market, sampling authentic street food. See also key cultural sites such as the cathedral, a building of many periods, and the church of S. Cataldo. Dinner at a private *palazzo*.

**Day 3: Monreale.** Monreale dominates a verdant valley southwest of Palermo, and its cathedral is one of the finest Norman churches with the largest scheme of mosaic decoration to survive from the Middle Ages. Lunch is at a top restaurant. In the early evening the lecturer leads a wine tasting in the hotel.

**Day 4: Segesta, Partinico.** With its magnificently sited temple and theatre, Segesta is one of the most evocative of Greek sites. Travel on to visit an organic farm in Partinico, one of the earliest of its kind in Sicily, to have a simple and abundant lunch with the freshest produce from the farm and local area.

**Day 5: Erice,** a medieval town perched on top of a hill, boasts spectacular views of the coast and surrounding area. Demonstration and tasting of traditional pastries here, before continuing on to the charming port town of Marsala where the following three nights are spent.

**Day 6: Marsala, Mazara del Vallo, Menfi.** Visit Il Museo del Satiro Danzante in Mazara del Vallo before a couscous cooking demonstration and lunch. The afternoon is spent at an award-winning olive oil estate, discovering their methods and tasting the oil.

**Day 7: Mozia.** Drive north of Marsala to see the salt pans that have been in use since Phoenician times, and take a boat across the lagoon to visit the ancient ruins of Mozia (*weather dependent*). Visit the small Whitaker Museum which houses the fifth-century BC Auriga (charioteer), one of the most exquisite of surviving Greek sculptures. In the afternoon, visit and tasting at the cellars of a historic Marsala producer.

**Day 8.** Fly from Palermo to London Heathrow, arriving at c. 4.45pm.

Gastronomic Sicily  
continued

**If joining the *Handel in Malta* festival,** fly from Palermo to Malta, via Milan (ITA Airways), arriving c. 5.15pm. We arrange your travel from Palermo to Valletta, and will assume that you require festival accommodation on 20 November ('arriving a day early' on the festival booking form). Flights are charged as part of this tour booking, so you take the 'no flights' price for the festival.

**How strenuous?** There is a lot of walking, some of it over rough ground and cobbled or uneven paving. Fitness and sure-footedness are essential. Some days involve a lot of driving. Average distance by coach per day: 47 miles.

**Group size:** between 10 and 22 participants.

## Lecturer

**Marc Millon.** Wine, food and travel writer. Born in Mexico, he was raised in the USA before studying English Literature at the University of Exeter. Together with his wife, he pioneered a series of illustrated wine-food-travel books including *The Wine and Food of Europe*, *The Wine Roads of France*, *The Wine Roads of Italy*, *The Food Lover's Companion to France* and *The Food Lover's Companion to Italy*. He is also the author of *The Taste of Britain* and lives in Devon, where he is closely involved with the food scene of the West Country. Marc is a certified Vinitaly International Italian Wine Ambassador, and has a weekly show on Italian Wine Podcast, *Wine, food and travel with Marc Millon*. His most recent book, *Italy in a Wineglass*, was published in April 2024 and tells the story of Italy through its wines.

## Practicalities

**Price, per person. Two sharing:** £ 4,090 or £3,850 without flights. **Single occupancy:** £4,560 or £4,320 without flights.

**Included:** flights (economy class) with British Airways; travel by private coach; hotel accommodation; breakfasts; 6 lunches and 5 dinners with wine, water, coffee; all wine and food tastings; all admissions; all tips; all taxes; the services of the lecturer and tour manager.

**Accommodation. Grand Hotel Piazza Borsa, Palermo** (piazzaborsa.it): 4-star hotel housed in an assortment of historical buildings; a little tired in some respects, but its central location is unbeatable. **Hotel Carmine, Marsala** (hotelcarmine.it): small, charming 3-star hotel, with occasionally erratic service. Some rooms can be on the smaller side. *Single rooms are doubles for sole use throughout.*