



Dining In Montalcino

A visitor to Montalcino faces an embarrassment of riches when it comes to dining. Like many another thriving small town, it seems to have restaurants every few yards, some barely visible down narrow alleys and others spilling tables into the streets. As would be expected of a medieval center, parking is limited because of narrow streets, many too narrow-mercifully-for any vehicular traffic at all. But strategically located parking lots, including one near the fortezza and another off the Piazza Cavour at the other end of town, are a short, appetite-building walk to a selection of restaurants tucked within the alleys of town.

Taverna del Grappolo Blu

Closed Fridays

Scale di Via Moglio 1

Tel. 0577 847150 / Fax 846 400

At its northern end, Piazza del Popolo spills into Via Mazzini. There, while admiring the narrow slices of view between old stone walls, one could become so entranced by the perfectly framed vista of the old Convent of San Francesco that it would be easy to miss the modest oval sign of Grappolo Blu, but the wonderful aromas drifting from Maria Pia's kitchen will draw you in. Head down the stairs ("scale" means stairs) to this compact, two-room restaurant; warm, brick floored and full of happy-looking diners at its bare wooden tables, caringly looked after by Maria Pia, her husband Luciano, daughter Anna and sometimes even young grandson Edoardo. Enjoy the pinci (thick, hand rolled spaghetti that is a local specialty and addiction) with meat sauce and mushrooms or "all aglione," served with whole cloves of garlic and cherry tomatoes; rabbit in Brunello sauce, flavorfully roasted turkey breast, guinea hen with lemon sauce, obligatory side orders of cannellini beans, refreshing salads of spelt, tomato or greens, and more – all excellent.

Re di Macchia

Closed Thursdays

Via S. Saloni 21

Tel. 0577 846 116 / Fax 847 834

e-mail: redimacchia@tiscalinet.it

Run by a handsome young couple determined to please – Roberta in the kitchen elegantly executes traditional dishes of the region, while Antonio oversees service of food and, equally important, wine. The reception area is a small, fireplaced anteroom that gives way to a somewhat roomier lounge – a good place for a pre-dinner drink while your party assembles. Downstairs are two high-ceiling dining rooms, whose medieval brick arches and wood beams blend nicely with pale peach walls lightly sponged in white. The drapery and table linen elegantly compliment the color scheme, as do flowers on every table.

Osteria di Porta al Cassero

Closed Wednesdays

Via della Libertá 9 / Via Ricasoli 32, Montalcino

Tel. 0577.847196

A two-minute walk from the fortezza, this place is more than easy to find: with entrances on two streets, it's virtually "can't miss." The same goes for the food. Homemade pastas and soups, grilled sausages, potato and meat croquettes, stewed wild boar served with those tiny, delicious white Tuscan beans, are all excellent. A big surprise is liver and onions, moew commonly known as a specialty of Venice. Here the local style is to cook the onions in tomato sauce, and the result is superb. Inside, the decor consists of an attractive collection of framed 19th century photographs of Montalcino; outside there's a small walled dining patio. Clientele is a mix of visitors and locals, who come not only for the setting but for the nostalgia of home-style cooking. Amex, Visa and Mastercard accepted.

Trattoria L'Angolo

Closed Tuesdays

Via Ricasoli 9

Tel. 0577 848017

A warm atmosphere is matched by the jovial hospitality of this family-run restaurant, always popular with a local crowd as well as visitors. The menu presents a wealth of choices: Bruschetta and crostini, of course, but also pecorino gratin and salumi Toscani (splendid home-cured meats). Among the pastas, both the pinci and the ravioli are homemade. Then come dishes like roast chicken and roast saddle of pork, both good. If there's room for dessert, you may settle on a plate of cantucci – light sugared biscuits with nuts – to be dipped, Tuscan style, into glasses of FloruS Moscadello di Montalcino, a beguiling dessert wine that recalls the moscadelleto made in this region centuries ago and rhapsodized in 16th century poetry.



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Pizzeria San Giorgio

Closed Wednesdays

Via Soccorso Saloni 10/14, Montalcino

Tel. 0577 848507

San Giorgio is open only for dinner, and during the day its doors conceal its very existence to the point of anonymity. But at night, when the wood-burning oven is lit, there is no mistaking the life that it brings to this quiet end of town. The oven master excels in the thin-crust, crispy pizzas with a myriad of toppings, including such unique combinations as tuna and olives, artichokes and prosciutto, and hot peppers and onions. The menu of local specialties should not be overlooked, either. Amex, Visa and Mastercard accepted; closed Wednesdays.

Le Potazzine

Closed Mondays

Piazza Garibaldi 8

Tel 0577 846054

A tiny but refined family run Trattoria in the center of town offers all the requisite local dishes and wonderful wine to match. In warm weather, you can dine al fresco in one of Montalcino's delightful piazzas.

Ristorante Il Giglio

Closed Tuesdays

Via Soccorso Saloni 5

Tel. 0577 848167 e-mail: hotelgiglio@tin.it

Part of the small, quaint hotel of the same name on a corner just below Piazza Garibaldi, Ristorante Il Giglio is entered through the hotel lobby. The dining room has an airy, minimalist feel to it and the menu features local specialty pastas such as the hand-made pinci, chick pea soup, and a good assortment of tasty fried foods, steaks and desserts. In season, they feature a broad selection of dishes prepared with wild mushrooms. Major credit cards accepted; closed Tuesdays.

Pizzeria Il Grifo

Closed Mondays

Via Mazzini 18

Tel 0577 847070

The focus here is on pizza, with a flavorful, pillowy crust and a broad range of toppings that encompasses just about anything the imagination can conjure up – and then some! But there is also an excellent selection of antipastos and traditional main courses that are all excellent. The restaurant is narrow, but its warmly painted walls and comfortable furniture make it cozy and friendly, a popular spot for local friends to meet, where friendly chatter between tables is not uncommon. Open for dinner only; major credit cards accepted.

Osteria al Giardino

Closed Wednesdays

Piazza Cavour 2

Tel 0577 849076

e-mail: osteriailgiardino@virgilio.it

New management for what was historically one of Montalcino's first osterias. Enjoy the warm, inviting Tuscan ambiance inside, or take up one of the inviting tables in the small park across the road to watch local life go by in this busy piazza (this is the route that leads to the town library, elementary school, gym, and hospital, among other destinations). Reliable Tuscan cuisine also makes room for some of the chef's creations inspired from further afield.