

## ITALIAN CUISINE

Italian cuisine is considered the mother of all Western and European cuisine. The art of fine dining actually originated in Italy and spread to France. Italy has been an ancient civilization and is home to many ancient dynasties and Clans. Italy is known for its pasta risotto, fritto, misto, Pizza and cheese. It is also famous for its charcuterie products like Mortadella, Salami ham etc. it is the first fully developed cuisine of Europe and most of the western food is influenced by Italian cuisine.

The Ancient Romans have contributed greatly in the development of this cuisine in almost a span of 1500 years. Romans were essentially shepherds and farmers the basic essence of Italian food lies in fresh quality produce. It is still followed in kitchens worldwide. Romans were far more advanced than other European countries and used pots and cauldrons to cook meat. Italy was famous for its art literature paintings and gastronomy and became a trendsetter for many European countries.

### Geographical location

Italy is located in Southern Europe and comprises of Italian Peninsula and the islands of Sicily and Sardinia. It is surrounded by Mediterranean Sea and is full of mountains and lush green meadows. It is known for its cultural heritage, food, fashion and natural beauty. The countryside has warm sunny beaches, ice covered mountain peaks and lush meadows, that are home to many famous wine yards. The neighbouring countries include France Switzerland Austria and Yugoslavia.

### ITALIAN REGIONS

#### Abruzzo

Abruzzo is located in the central part of Italian Peninsula facing the Adriatic sea in the East. It is a region surrounded by mountains in the west and coastline on other sides. This region offers a robust cuisine and variety of seafood. Hot Chili Peppers, aromatic saffron and olive oil make the food lively. Meat of sheep and mountain goat are commonly used. Herbs such as Rosemary and garlic are favourites.

#### Basilicata

This region lies in Southern Italy and has a rough and hard terrain and sunny weather. Life here is governed by ancient rules and philosophies. The queen is not very popular outside Italy as the food here is mainly made from meat of sheep and pigs. Pork is the staple diet.

#### Campania

The Cuisine of this region is also known as Neapolitan. This region introduced the dish Pizza to the world. It is also known as that culinary capital of Southern Italy. It is famous for its fresh vegetables like tomatoes, peppers, potatoes, artichokes, fennel, lemon and oranges. The region has a fertile soil. This region is also known for the Mozzarella cheese. It is popular for its pizza and pastas as wheat is grown here abundantly.

#### Emilia Romagna

Region of north Italy is home to fresh and flat pasta. Popular pastas such as lasagna, tortellini, tagliatelle are produced here. It is famous for Parmesan cheese, parma ham, and bologna sausages and its balsamic vinegar. Bologna is a province lying in this region also known as the northern

culinary capital of Italy the vegetables and fruits grown here have a unique taste because of the fertile soil. Common producers include fresh vegetables fruits cheese and meat products.

### Liguria

Liguria is the coastal region in north-western Italy. It touches sea in the south, alps in the north and apennine mountain range in the East. Common produces include fresh fruits vegetables and seafood. Basil is grown in abundance and pesto is a popular pasta sauce produced here. The cuisine is influenced by southern France and Muslim past. minestrone and pesto have been invented here flatbreads such as focaccia come from this region and olives and olive oil are common producer of this region.

### Lombardy

This region is situated in Northern region of Italy. It is covered by Alpine mountains and southern part and borders with piedmont and Emilia Romagna. Popular cities include Milan and Lombardi. The soil is fit for growing rice and therefore popular Italian rice varieties like risotto are grown here. The cattle are reared here both for meat and dairy products like milk, cheese, cream and butter which are liberally used in this region. It is also a major producer of varieties of cheese and is also known as the cheese lovers Paradise of Italy. The cooking styles are influenced from France and Switzerland because of the close proximity. Historically this region has been under Austrian dominance which has resulted in a lot of French and German influence on its cuisine and culture.

### Piedmont

This region lies in the North Western part of Italy and is famous for its refined cuisine. The cuisine is influenced by the French style of cooking and butter are commonly used in dishes along with garlic fresh raw vegetables and truffles. The people of this region love food. It also produces a wide variety of cheese. Grains are the main produce and it is the largest rice producing area of Italy. This region is also famous for its pastry and chocolate confectioneries.

### Puglia

Puglia which is also known as Apulia, is Situated at the South Eastern tip of Italian Peninsula. It is the largest Food producing region of the country. This region produces wheat, tomatoes, zucchini, fennel, endives Chickpeas, cannellini beans, fava Beans and numerous vegetables. It is also the largest producer of olive oil in Italy. Shellfish oysters and mussels are commonly used ingredients

### Sardinia

Situated in the Mediterranean Sea it is the largest island in Italy after Sicily the cuisine is dominated by seafood and pork. the food is influenced by the Greek French and Spanish cuisine mint and, myrtle are popular herbs. The breads produced here are dry in order to improve their shelf life. It is a part of the Mediterranean cuisine

### Sicily

Sicily is the largest island in the Mediterranean sea. The cuisine is influenced by the Greeks, Spanish and Arabs. It is a part of the Mediterranean cuisine. Common vegetables are tomatoes pepper and eggplant common seafood includes shellfish, tuna, sea bass and Swordfish. Citrus fruits are commonly used and the olive oil used here is very robust

## Tuscany

Tuscany is the heartland of Italy. It forms a large part of the coastline and therefore seafood plays a vital role in the cuisine. This region is popular for its Olive, wheat and wine. The major food are bread, pasta, fruit, vegetables, high quality cheese and cold meat. The food is not dominated by garlic, tomatoes, olive oil and herbs unlike other parts of Italy but Emphasis is given on the sparing use of seasoning to enhance the flavour of the natural ingredients.

## Umbria

This region relies heavily on fresh produce and seasonal cooking.. It is a land of valleys and mountains and the cuisine here is very rich but not very refined in nature. Olives and fresh Herbs are used in abundance. The food includes beef, pork, wheel, baby lamb, game birds and seafood. Popular sea food items are Trout and crabs. Fresh sausages from this region are very famous. Robust and dark Green Olive oil is produced here. This is the only region in Italy which does not have a coastline therefore the fish used is of fresh water. Common fish include Trout, mullet, carp which are often grilled and served with fresh sautéed mushrooms and vegetables.

## **Special ingredients used in Italian cuisine**

- Cheese
- Salumi i.e. charcuterie
- Olive oil
- Starches and Breads
- Pasta stuffed pasta
- Stuffed pasta
- Balsamic Vinegar
- Special equipments used in Italian cuisine
- Paiolo: This is a traditional cast iron pot used for making polenta . It could also be made of Copper and Aluminum the Porter slightly rounded at the base to prevent Polenta from sticking to the dish while cooking
- Chitarra: Also known as pasta harp it is used in the abruzzo region. Used to obtain a string shaped pasta
- Pizza Oven: It is made of fire bricks fired by wooden log and coal
- Schola pasta: Is basically a strainer used to drain pasta
- Mozzarella slicer: Is used to cut the slices of Mozzarella cheese in even circular shapes to avoid wastage
- Mezza Luna: half moon cutter used for fine chopping herbs
- Gnocchi board: Is a small wooden bed with Richard Lyons used for shipping and giving pasta its shape and look
- Pasta machine: Is used for rolling the Pasta Dough to form the sheets
- Mortar and pestle : Is used for grinding herbs to prepare pasta sauce