

CAMPANIA

The Italy of your wildest dreams may very well be the Campania region. The name Campania is derived from Latin. The Romans knew the region as Campania felix which translates into English as “fertile countryside”. It is nestled in southern Italy along the Tyrrhenian Sea between the Garigliano River (north), the Gulf of Policastro (south), Lazio to the north, Molise and Puglia (Apulia) to the east, and Basilicata to the south. The region comprises the provinces of Avellino, Benevento, Caserta, Napoli, and Salerno.

Campania is a land of contrasts. The mountainous and hilly Neapolitan Apennines and Matese and Picentini Mountains blend into the coastal lowlands of Naples and Salerno. Campania is home to 5,766,810 people and is the 2nd largest region in Italy in terms of population. The most populous cities in Campania are Naples (the regional capital, Population: 959,470), Salerno (Population: 125,797), Torre del Greco (Population: 85,897), Giugliano (Population: 80,269) and Caserta (Population: 72,844).

History: Campania was first settled by Greek colonists and by the Etruscans. The Etruscans were displaced by the Samnites, the conquerors of Campania in the late 5th century BC. Eventually, these allies of Rome ceded the region to the Empire where it flourished in a fairly peaceful and stable period until the abrupt eruption in 79 AD of Vesuvius. The eruption caused the complete and total destruction of the cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii.

Once the Roman Empire saw its demise, the region became the battleground of the Byzantines and the Goths, then the Normans, French and, finally, the Spanish. The Spanish ruled the area from 1504 to 1713. Once the Treaty of Blois ceded Sicily and Naples to Spain, southern Italy saw the next two centuries bring about an era that was a time of immense poverty and exploitation. Disease and famine ran rampant as land grabbing by both the Spanish nobles and the Church interrupted agricultural pursuits. It was in 1861 as Garibaldi united Italy that the regions of Campania merged as part of the new Kingdom of Italy. After the Italian unification in the 1860s, this area witnessed serious economic hardships and a tragic cholera epidemic in 1884. These events resulted in a massive exodus of the population to the north of Italy and abroad.

20th Century fascism achieved little success outside the urban area of Naples. This region also paid a heavy toll during World War II. It was heavily bombarded in preparation for the Allied landing when 55,000 Allied troops stormed ashore on September 9, 1943. The bombings that followed and the destruction caused by the desperate resistance of a retreating German army caused innumerable victims among the population. One of the war's most notorious battles, the several-months-long siege of Monte Cassino, left the ancient monastery a heap of rubble. In September 1943, Naples revolted and chased out the occupiers only days before the Allied forces arrived in the city. Other towns' insurrections resulted in horrible massacres. Men and women organized guerrilla groups against the Nazis, hiding out in the mountains and hills and striking mostly at night while the Allies bombarded their towns and cities. After many hard months of fighting, Campania was finally freed in June 1944. In 1946, Campania became part of the newly established Italian Republic.

Modern Campania: Campania is considered one of the most important and even ideal agricultural provinces around. The agro-food industry is one of the main pillars of its industry. Thanks to the sun and fertile soil, this region can boast the juiciest and tastiest tomatoes in the world along with peppers, spring onions, potatoes, artichokes, fennel, lemons, and oranges. Campania also produces over 50%



of Italy's nuts. The two most iconic ingredients from Campania are tomato products and mozzarella. Tomatoes, Italy's favorite vegetable, thrive here because of the long hot summers and the volcanic soil. The most famous of the different tomato varieties is the San Marzano (1.5 million tons per year) tomato. The Nostrano variety of lemon is grown here and is considered Italy's best. Animal breeding is widespread, and the milk produced is used to process various products, such as mozzarella. The warm plains of Campania are also home to the rare native buffalo, which are still raised in the provinces of Caserta and Salerno. Campanians have made mozzarella with delicious buffalo milk for centuries and look with disdain on what we all know as mozzarella. The famous buffalo mozzarella is masterfully produced and is sweeter and softer than the cheese made from cows' milk.

However, it is tourism that plays a huge sustaining role in Campania's economy. Campania is one of Italy's most popular holiday destinations, boasting iconic coastal resorts, such as Capri, Sorrento and the Amalfi Coast. With Campania's quality of Italian cuisine, the magical nearby islands and spectacular environment drawing tourists from across the globe, it is perhaps no surprise that this region accounts for a staggering 5.5% of the national economy. Campania successfully earned 10 billion euros in tourism in 2018. As you might imagine, the most thriving tourist areas of Campania are the Italian seaside resorts. The Amalfi Coast, the Cilento Coast, and the Sorrento Peninsula are the top-ranking seaside resorts in Campania. The volume of tourism in these areas has turned these glorious coastal retreats into thriving economies.

One of the tourism highlights is to enjoy not only the natural beauty but to share the native world-renowned foods and drinks of the region. Despite the years of poverty, the Italian enthusiasm for food has remained strong in Campania throughout the centuries. The region's history of invasion, many rulers and poverty prompted the development of an important local characteristic when it comes to food - expediency. Ease, quickness, and making something out of almost nothing were the driving forces behind Campanians coming up with some of the most delicious, yet simplest, concoctions in the history of cuisine.

Food: The stars of Campanian cuisine are pasta, pizza, and mozzarella. Famous for the quality of their pasta since the 16th century, the many mills of the Monti Lattari area are considered among the best producers of pasta in the world. The pasta here is still extruded through bronze forms, a procedure that leaves the pasta slightly porous, allowing for better penetration of the sauce for tastier results. This region created the kinds of pasta that we eat today; penne, fusilli, rigatoni and spaghetti. While debated by some, the Neapolitans claim that they invented pizza. The simple combining of wheat, mozzarella and the tomato produced a result that couldn't be anything but a bestseller. Pizza quickly spread from Naples and became popular worldwide. It is known as the “ultimate street food”. It was a Neapolitan pizza maker who invented a tri-color pizza with tomato, mozzarella and basil in honor of Queen Margherita of Savoy. It still survives with the traditional name of “Pizza Margherita”.

REGIONS OF ITALY

By JIM SANO



In Naples, you can also taste their version of pizza fritta. This wonderful creation is served only in truly old-fashioned places where a double round of pizza dough is filled with ricotta, mozzarella, and ham, and deep-fried in a copper cauldron of scalding olive oil.

While vegetable and meat dishes are plentiful, the cuisine of Naples and most of the Campania coast focuses on seafood and some of the best main courses feature fish. A few of the more popular fish dishes are Risotto Alla Pescatora (classic seafood risotto), Spaghetti con le vongole (clams, olive oil, garlic, and parsley served with spaghetti, Totani e Patate (squid and potatoes and Pesce all' Acqua Pazza (fresh white fish poached with olive oil and simmered in water with garlic, tomatoes, and parsley). Fritto Misto di Mare is a mix of fried seafood usually calamari, shrimp and anchovies. Scialatielli is a fresh, homemade, eggless noodle served with sautéed seafood.

Some popular meat dishes are Coniglio all' Ischitana (rabbit with wine and black olives) a delicious creation typical of Ischia, Brasato (beef slowly stewed with wine and vegetables), braciola di maiale (a pork cutlet rolled and filled with prosciutto, pine nuts, and raisins cooked in a tomato sauce, alla pizzaiola (a beef cutlet sautéed in olive oil and cooked with fresh tomatoes and oregano and Polpette-Naples (meatballs). At the other end of the spectrum is the elaborated sartù which is a typical Neapolitan baked dish made with seasoned rice, baby meatballs, sausages, chicken liver, mozzarella, and mushrooms.

A few popular vegetable dishes are; Parmigiana Melanzane or Eggplant Parmesan. Broccoli rabe and sausage with fennel and Caprese Salad which is made with sun-ripened tomatoes, fresh leaves of basil and a drizzle of olive oil over the region's excellent mozzarella di bufala (buffalo milk cheese). While this salad is now famous throughout Italy, it is named after the island of Capri where it originated.

If Sicilians are famous for having a sweet tooth, Neapolitans come in a close second with many delicious specialties. Naples is famous for its pastiera, a cake traditionally prepared for Easter but so good that it is now offered year-round in most restaurants. Whole-grain wheat is soaked, boiled, and then used to prepare a delicious, creamy filling with ricotta and orange peel in a thick pastry shell. The famous sfogliatelle are flaky pastry pockets filled with sweet ricotta cream. On the Amalfi Coast, sfogliatella Santa Rosa is filled with pastry cream and amarene (candied sour cherries in syrup) instead of ricotta.

Wine This land, kissed as it is by sun and sea, naturally boasts its own excellent and internationally appreciated wines. Italy is the largest wine-producing country in the world. While grape cultivation and winemaking are ancient, it wasn't until 1965 that laws were enacted to guarantee consistency in winemaking and to defend specific labels. Winemakers must apply for the right to add "D.O.C." (Denominazione di Origine Controllata) on their labels, and only consistently good wines from specific areas receive this right. Of Campania's

five provinces, Benevento is the one with the largest number of D.O.C. wines (Aglianico del Taburno, Solopaca, Guardiolo, Sannio, Sant'Agata dei Goti, and Taburno). Avellino boasts the Taurasi, the Greco di Tufo, and the Fiano di Avellino. From the volcanic soil of Mount Vesuvius comes the amber colored Lacrima Christi (Tears of Christ), and from the area of Pozzuoli, the D.O.C. Campi Flegrei. For many, the most famous Italian drink is Campari. Bright red in color and flavored with herbs, it has a quinine bitterness to it. It's customary to serve it with ice cubes and soda as an aperitif before dinner. Campania also excels at making Rosolio, a sweet liquor, usually herb or fruit-flavored, prepared according to recipes passed down by families for generations. Italy's second-most popular drink is limoncello. This bright yellow drink is made by infusing pure alcohol with the famous Nostrano lemons from the Amalfi Coast and is served ice cold direct from the deep freeze.



Weather: The climate is warm and temperate in Campania. Campania has a significant amount of rainfall during the year. This is true even for the driest month. In the mountain zones despite the abundant winter snowfalls, the climate is temperate. Along the coast, lowlands, and islands, the climate is typically Mediterranean and incredibly mild.

Conclusion Few corners of Europe can match Campania's natural beauty, warm and temperate climate and cultural adventures. Campania presents natural and man-made attractions calling tourists to discover it all.