

Marche

REGIONS
OF
ITALY

By JIM SANO

Marche or the Marches derives its name from the plural name of marca. Marche is a region located in the East Central area of Italy bordered by Emilia-Romagna and the republic of San Marino to the north, Tuscany to the west, Umbria to the southwest, Abruzzo and Lazio to the south and the Adriatic Sea to the east. The Marche region ranks 13th in population among the 20 regions (1,429,205), and ranks 15th in size (3,742 square miles).

Ancona is the capital of the region which is divided into the provinces of Ancona, Ascoli Piceno, Macerata, and Pesaro e Urbino which were named after their chief cities. Agriculture is the chief occupation; cereals, olives, grapes, vegetables, and tobacco are the main products. Livestock is also raised. Industry has expanded in the 20th century with the construction of hydroelectric facilities. Major manufacturing includes ship building, textiles, chemicals, musical instruments, and pottery. Commercial and fishing ports are located at Ancona, Pesaro, Fano, and Senigallia.

Le Marche is mostly hilly or mountainous, except for a narrow coastal strip. This coast provides abundant white pebble beaches sheltered by cliffs which results in spectacular scenery and makes the coastal towns and villages a popular option for vacationers.

A Quick History Lesson

Marche was known in ancient times as the Picenum territory. The Picens or Picentes were the Italic tribe who lived in Picenum along the coast and the Gauls lived in the mountains. The Battle of Sentinum was fought in Marche in 295 BC. Afterwards, the Romans founded numerous colonies in the area which

were connected to Rome by the Via Flaminia and the Via Salaria. Following the fall of the Western Roman Empire, the region was invaded by the Goths. After the Gothic War, it was part of the Byzantine Exarchate of Ravenna with Ancona, Fano, Pesaro, Rimini, and Senigallia forming the so-called Pentapolis. After the fall of the Exarchate, it was briefly in the possession of the Lombards, but was conquered by Charlemagne in the late eighth century. In the ninth to eleventh centuries, the region was split in two. The southern part was ruled by the Lombards and the northern section, the Maritime Pentapolis (Rimini, Pesaro, Fano, Senigallia, and Ancona) on the Adriatic coast, was controlled by the Byzantine Exarchate of Ravenna. The name Marche [boundaries] originated around the 10th century because the fiefs of Ancona, Fermo, and Camerino were established at the border of the Holy Roman Empire. Despite the strength of the popes and the emperors who contested for control of the region, some cities established free communes or were governed by noble families such as the Malatesta, the Varano, and the Montefeltro families. From the 13th to the 16th century, the popes gradually established their total rule in Marche and ended local autonomy. The papal control ended with the early 19th century Napoleonic period. After Napoleon's defeat, Marche returned to papal rule until 1860 when it was annexed to the unified Kingdom of Italy by a popular vote.

Jumping to the 20th century, Le Marche was the Adriatic end of the so-called Gothic line in World War II. While this region suffered heavily in the Allied advance of 1944, many of its old buildings escaped with minor damage.

A referendum passed in 2006 by which the 7 municipalities of Montefeltro were annexed from the Province of Pesaro and Urbino to join the Province of Rimini (Emilia-Romagna).



The Marche area was devastated by the August 24th, 2016 central Italy earthquake and is still undergoing intense infrastructure rehabilitation.

Cuisine and Wine

In the wine world, Marche is best known for white wines made from Verdicchio and for Montepulciano-based red wines like Rosso Conero DOC and Conero Riserva DOCG. Le Marche is a thriving wine production region boasting over 20 legally protected varieties. In 2017, Marche produced 9.6 million cases of wine. The region's primary grape varieties are Sangiovese, Montepulciano and Verdicchio. Le Marche has a higher number of native grapes than any other region.

Food in the Marches is not limited to one dish or type, but rather blends the special regional characteristics into the flavors of their cuisine. On the coast, fish and seafood dishes abound. In the hills, you'll find meat dishes like roast suckling-pig and marinated lamb, as well as dishes created around truffles

and mushrooms. Creamy sauces made from chicken giblets are used liberally in Marche cooking. Marche recipes cover a wide range of meats from their herds of beef and lamb to free range poultry and pork, rabbits and game birds.

As a region on the Adriatic coast, it is common to find typical seafood dishes. The undisputed champion of these is brodetto, a fish soup containing more than 14 fish varieties; often seasoned with vinegar, garlic or saffron and thickened with flour. Several other seafood combinations are also very popular. Potacchio includes white wine, tomato, onion and rosemary with lemon juice. Mussels are stuffed with ham, breadcrumbs and parsley before roasting in tomato sauce to make muscioli arrosto. Dried cod, tomatoes and carrots are Brodetto Fish Stew cooked in a garlic and rosemary flavored sauce made with olive oil, white wine, and milk for stocco all'anconetana. Soups popular in Marche cuisine include minestra di trippa, a tripe soup served with battuto, an herb flavored pork fat.



Brodetto Fish Stew

Ascolana olives are a delicacy in Le Marche. They are pitted green olives, stuffed with a filling of meat and cheese, dipped in beaten egg and breadcrumbs, and deep-fried to a golden brown in sunflower oil.

The region's most famous traditional dish is vincisgrassi, a rich, baked pasta dish made of 12 layers of lasagna noodles, interspersed with chicken livers and giblets, veal brains, ham and mushrooms with béchamel sauce. This classic baked pasta dish is Le Marche's version of lasagna.

A Marchigiana delicacy is crema frita (literally, fried cream), which is served with a mixed fried platter of zucchini, onions, olive ascolane and veal or lamb kebabs. Cooked cream is set in the fridge

overnight, then gently coated in egg and breadcrumbs and deep-fried on skewers.



Pasta di Campofilone is a famous type of Italian pasta which is indigenous to Le Marche. This handmade pasta is made of eggs and durum wheat semolina. It is first made into a very thin, golden yellow sheet then cut into very fine ribbons. It is usually served with meat sauce sprinkled with pecorino cheese, but it is also eaten with fish sauces. Some other pastas from here are tagliatelle, strozzapreti ("priest stranglers") spaghetti alla chitarra, spaghettini, papparadelle and maccheroncini which have also found their way into Marche dishes.

Marche's variety of salami is quite extensive and the region claims to be the origin of porchetta. Porchetta combines cured pork, such as pancetta or prosciutto, wild fennel, rosemary and garlic with seafood and spices

Truffles are, weight for weight, one of the most expensive foods on the planet. In Le Marche, Acqualagna and Sant'Angelo in Vado are the places to go during truffle season. Italian truffle hunters dig up around 100 metric tons, involving sixteen species of truffles, in Marche a year. Le Marche is home to the most famous and expensive truffle, the tartufo bianco or white truffle (£1,500 a kilo) and the more modestly priced tartufo nero pregiato or black truffle.



Le Marche "White" Truffles

Cheese-wise, Marche has Casciotta d'Urbino, a sheep and cow's milk cheese which is hand-pressed into rounds that are then salted and cured in a moist environment producing a velvety texture. Pecorino from Marche is eaten while relatively young and mild in Marche recipes. It is used frequently in focaccia and pizza. Formaggio di fossa is a rare cheese from Talamello which is made from sheep and cow's milk. It is wrapped in cloth and buried in pits to age resulting in an earthy flavor.

Marche cooking often uses cheese in sweet dessert dishes. Calcioni are pocket shaped pastries made with fresh pecorino. Macerata's picconi is made with ricotta and flavored with cinnamon and rum. Marche's most famous desserts are ciambellotto con i funghetti all'anice (a ring-shaped cake with aniseed), cicerchiata (deep-fried dough with honey), and fried ravioli stuffed with chestnuts, cream and ricotta cheese. The 'lonzino di fico' is made from sweet dried figs, almonds, walnuts and anise, wrapped in fig leaves and looks like a salami.

Sites to See

Urbino, a UNESCO World Heritage site, was designed as an "ideal city", rebuilt and styled by Federico Montefeltro who ruled Urbino from 1444-1482. The Duke was a great patron of the arts, using local as well as Umbrian and Tuscan artists to enrich his city. Urbino was the birthplace of the master painter, Raphael. The great Renaissance architect, Donato Bramante, was born nearby. The centerpiece and artistic hub of Urbino is the Palazzo Ducale. Montefeltro's grand palace is like a fairytale castle with slender twin towers forming a gorgeous skyline. Inside you'll find the National Gallery of the Marche with rooms filled with art along with a network of rooms, cellars and stables to explore below.

The city's heart is Piazza della Repubblica, a triangular space with some outdoor cafes and restaurants with a hip, lively vibe thanks to the students who hang out here. The Oratorio di San Giovanni, a church covered from floor to ceiling in incredible frescoes, is an artistic highlight.

Marche



In the province of Genga lies the most surreal experience in the region, The Grotte di Frasassi. With more than 18 kilometers of caves, it is one of the largest subterranean cave systems in Europe.

Approximately 120 kilometers south of Ancona is the city of Ascoli Piceno, also known as the city of a hundred towers. Historical records show that there were around 200 towers in Ascoli, of which 50 still stand today, like sentinels presiding over an old city.

Did You Know?

The Le Marche area birthed the founder of one of America's most famous wine dynasties, Cesare

Mondavi (Charles Krug Winery, Napa Valley's oldest wine estate). He brought his cuttings from Italy to his new world vineyards.

Though the beaches of Marche are relatively unknown to foreign tourists, Italians flock by the thousands to this coastline in the summer. The most crowded conditions occur around the mid-August Ferragosto holiday, when the cities empty out and Italians flee to the beach. Eleven of Le Marche's beach towns are Blue Flag beach certified. The Blue Flag is a certification by the Foundation for Environmental Education that a beach, marina, or sustainable boating tourism operator meets its stringent standards for water quality and eco-tourism.

Marche is well known for its shoemaking tradition with the finest and most luxurious Italian footwear; Loriblu, Gucci and Prada, manufactured in this region.

Famous people from this region include Maria Montessori (education), Valentino Rossi (motorcycle racer), Valentina Vezzali (fencer), Giacomo Leopardi (poetry), Beniamino Gigli, tenor and Renata Tebaldi, soprano (opera), Gioacchino Rossini (composition), Ostilio Ricci, Galileo's first teacher of geometry, (mathematics) and Raphael (Renaissance painter and architect).



Master Shoemakers of Le Marche

Mangia Bene, Viva Bene

By FRANK ZEOLI

At Easter I can't help but remember all the traditional dishes my grandmother would make. She would make ricotta bread and, instead of the traditional meat pie, she would make a meat bread. We would enjoy homemade manicotti, pork, lamb and lots of vegetables. She made Easter a special time for us kids.

As was her tradition when she was a young girl, each Easter morning she would make a special breakfast for the whole family. Frittata was a blend of eggs and cheese served with some good Italian sausage. I have a photo of the last time she made this dish standing at my stove instead of hers. I look at it often and thank her for passing this wonderful Easter tradition on to us. I hope you will enjoy it.

Prep Time: 5 Minutes

Cook Time: 15 Minutes

Ingredients

- 4 links of Italian Sausage
- 1T Salted Butter
- 1lb of Whole Milk Ricotta Cheese
- 8 Eggs
- 3oz of shredded Mozzarella Cheese
- Salt & Black pepper to taste

Instructions

Beat the eggs in a bowl. In a medium pan, fry the Italian sausage. Once the sausage is cooked, remove the sausage and reserve some of the sausage grease (you can also bake the sausage in the oven). Cut the sausage into pieces.

On medium heat, add the butter to the oil until the butter is melted; add the ricotta cheese. Let the ricotta fully melt and slowly start folding in the egg mixture. Once you

FRITTATA



have added all the eggs, add salt and pepper while continuing to stir the eggs. Don't let them stick. After about 4 minutes, the mixture will begin to set. Add the mozzarella cheese and the cut-up sausage.

Serve hot with a slice of toast.
BUONA PASQUA

Look for more recipes in the next addition of the SIAMO Qui.