

OVERVIEW: THE TOP GASTRO TOURISM TRENDS IN ITALY



As one of the most popular countries in the world, Italy welcomes millions of tourists every year. Despite recent stagnation due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the sector will inevitably recover and once again prosper in the long run. Gastro tourism is one of the sectors that help recover the visitor numbers.

One of the biggest advantages of the country on the market is the wide offer of tourism products. Italy boasts incredible cultural heritage, but also beautiful natural locations. **At the same time, Italian cuisine is one of the best in the world, which is why, not surprisingly, gastro tourism is also widely popular.**

In this context, the new Report on Italian Food and Wine Tourism (Rapporto sul Turismo Enogastronomico Italiano) lined up the prevailing trends in Italian food and wine tourism, describing the sector as resilient, attractive, and increasingly organic.

A Breath of Fresh Air

It must be noted that the ability to combine psychophysical well-being and taste, adding the amenity of rural places, has given impetus to the sector.

The number of gastro tourism companies has grown, in particular those offering tasting sessions (+8%) and other activities, especially in the open air (+10%). The ratio between Italian and foreign customers, which in 2019 was 11 to 10, dropped to 23 to 10 in 2020.

When it comes to the preparedness of individual regions, Puglia, Campania and Sicily know how to enhance their food and wine resources in the best way and are bearing the fruit from their efforts. Regions like Lombardy, Piedmont, on the other hand, are also doing well, but in line with expectations.

Local Is the New Global

The already recognized Italian food and wine heritage have reconfirmed its leadership in Europe in terms of certified products.

In November 2021 there were 814 of them (315 food products and 526 wines), with three new GI products 2021. Stakeholders are also aware of its attractiveness and are paying more and more attention to the quality of their offer, made up of local raw materials and original productions.

Organic Farming

The sensitivity of demand towards issues of environmental, social and economic sustainability is directing agriculture towards organic farming.

In fact, the area designated for organic farming has been constantly increasing in Italy during the last years, with an overall growth rate of +109% between 2010 and 2019 for vine and 95% in

2010-18 for olive trees. This is definitely an added value not to be underestimated.

Wine as a Catalyst for Reservations

The wine was one of the key gastro tourism elements in 2021, having experienced very impressive growth. At the same time, it was a catalyst in online bookings and a protagonist of the best-selling food and wine-themed proposals in the Italian regions (Tuscany and Piedmont in particular): 6% of bookings made on TripAdvisor in Italy involved tastings and cellar tours.

The Potential of Breweries

Although 2020 was a very negative year for Italian craft breweries, with a loss of 85 production units (down from 841 to 756), the crisis has stimulated a reflection on the possible combination of tourism and beer, already successfully tested in countries such as Germany, Belgium and the United States.

Wine Roads and Hikes

So-called wine and taste roads present in Italy constitute an offer to be implemented and enhanced. More and more public investments are being made to create cycle and hike paths leading tourists to some of the most fascinating gastro tourism corners and realities of a region, thus combining an active form of rest with a pleasurable cherry on top in the form of quality Italian wine and food.

UNESCO World Heritage Sites

Since the recognition of the Mediterranean Diet in 2013, the amount of Italian heritage that has become part of the UNESCO list has grown, with 3 creative cities, 2 material and 4 intangible assets related to food and wine, including the newly elected “search and truffle quarrying in Italy”, universally recognized in 2021.

The recent record achieved by Italy was favored by the efforts made at the national and regional levels in supporting the candidacies, which in the meantime have multiplied. Obtaining UNESCO recognition for a territory entails recognition and a strong tourist appeal but also the awareness of the protection of what, to all intents and purposes, presents itself as a heritage of social interest.

Creative Restaurants

Finally, it must be said that **while the crisis in the restaurant sector is still far from over, the growth of the number of catering companies (+1 %) in 2021 indicates the dynamism and resilience of a sector in search of a more varied dimension.**

As a result, restaurants are getting more creative and offer innovative and hybrid formats. Some of these include home delivery, digital tastings, video recipes with the chefs, temporary restaurants in hotels, ghost kitchens and many more.

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