

Italian Grocery Shopping

Bread - Pane

Italy has many kinds of bread. You can get everything from Baguettes to flat bread. The main bread of Tuscany is salt free. This was because of taxes imposed on salt in the old days. If you do not want *pane Toscana (nostrale)*, a great bread is *pane pugliese*. It has a nice hard crust and has salt in the bread. You can also find *ciaccino* or *schacciata* which are like *focaccia*. *Ciaccino* can also be a type of pizza. It is a pizza without tomato sauce also known as a white pizza.

Salumi e Affettati - Cold Cuts:

- *Prosciutto*: - To begin, there are 2 different items that are considered *prosciutto*:
 1. *Prosciutto cotto*, which is, boiled ham and
 2. *Prosciutto crudo* which is what is translated into English as just *prosciutto* or Parma Ham. *Crudo* comes in 2 main variations, sweet or salty. Sweet is Prosciutto di Parma or San Daniele. Salty are the ones labeled *Nostrale* in Tuscany. *Nostrale* means ours by the way.
- *Speck* is like smoked *prosciutto crudo*. It is wonderful in cooking and on *ciaccino* (white pizza).
- *Pancetta* is like bacon but not smoked (we do have smoked style and they call it bacon or *pancetta affumicata*). Wonderful as a base with *soffritto* in many Tuscan treats.
- *Bresaola*, is dry cured beef. Most times you will find it listed as *Carpaccio di Bresaola* on a menu.
- *Salame*. There are so many different types that it would take forever to list. Ones that are *Calabrese* or *Napolitano* are spicy and normally are a little red. *Finocchiona* is covered with fennel seeds. *Toscana* or *nostrale* is has large bits of fat and whole pepper kernels, *Milanese* is ground much finer so there are no big nuggets and it is also much larger.
- *Capocollo* is what is referred to as coppa in the States. Lovely with a hint of fennel and a lot of pepper.
- *Mortadella di Bologna* The Oscar Meyer stuff was a take off on *mortadella*. Finally, the real stuff is legal in the US so you might have already had some. You can buy little ones but the best are the huge 10 foot long ones that are about 2 feet in diameter. If you happen on a store when they are having a special, get a wedge. Cubed up it is great in salads, on pizza, etc.

Formaggio - Cheese

- *Pecorino* is the Tuscan specialty. There are 3 main types. New, normally with a yellow or cream colored rind, aged which normally has a red rind and very aged which is black. The more aged the drier the cheese.
- *Parmigiano*, well that is self explanatory but make sure you grate it or shave it yourself.
- *Pecorino Romano* is a peppery aged cheese that is the main cheese in *Carbonara* and can be substituted with *Parmigiano*.
- *Taleggio* is a wonderful soft cheese used on crackers or in cooking. Finish off a risotto with this.
- Mozzarella. There are 3 main types:
 1. Mozzarella di bufala is the traditional mozzarella. It is wonderful and should not be missed. Drizzled with olive oil and served with tomatoes and basil or kalamata olives, oh bliss.
 2. *Fior di Latte* or what most people just call (although incorrectly) mozzarella. This is made from cow milk.
 3. mozzarella per pizza which is less watery and so the pizza doesn't get soggy
- *Stracchino* is a very runny fresh cheese. Great in pasta, risotto, on bread and of course on pizza and *ciaccino*.
- *Scamorza* is a firmer cheese and it is wonderful grilled. You can also find *scamorza affumicata* (smoked).
- *Ricotta*. Italians love ricotta and are notorious for getting it and adding marmalade (*marmalata*) to it and eating it like that. It is not cottage cheese. You can either get the fresh sheep or cow type.

When ordering meats and cheeses at a deli counter, they are ordered by the *etto* (1 *etto* is 100 grams or a little less than a ¼ pound). So *quattro etti* (4 *etti*) is almost a pound.

Latte - Milk

There is fresh or UHT (ultra high temperature). UHT is easier to keep around. As they do not need to be refrigerated until they have been opened. They sell fresh milk too; latte fresco. The 3 types of milk are:

1. *intero* which is whole milk,
2. *parzialmente scremato* which is low fat and
3. *scremato* which is non fat.

Panna - Cream

Again, more than one type. Here you also have fresh and UHT. Fresh is *panna fresca* and is kept in the refrigerator section. UHT is either *Panna da cucina* for cooking or *Panna da dolce* or *da montare* for whipping cream. The UHT *panna da cucina* is much thicker, about twice as thick as whipping cream. To use, cut the top off and stir it first as the water separates out, then adjust with a bit of milk to thin it if needed.

Burro – Butter

Normal butter here is sweet not salty. If you prefer salted butter, Lurpack is a great butter made in Denmark and sold at most larger grocery chains.

Olio d'Oliva - Olive Oil

- *Extra vergine* or extra virgin is the first cold press and the best. If you can find the first cold press that is released in November (called *olio nuovo*) then get as much as you can. It stays good for 1 year and should be kept away from heat or light but do not store it in the refrigerator please. First cold press unfiltered should be used to drizzle on foods and bread.
- Olio di oliva normal is great for cooking.

Zucchero - Sugar

- *Zucchero semolato* is granulated. It is a coarser grind than US sugar so if making sweets you may want to grind it finer (that is if you have a cuisinart type machine which is called a robot with a silent t).
- *Zucchero al velo* is powdered sugar. Main problem here is that it is normally *vanigliato* which means vanilla has been added to it.

Dolcificante - Sugar Substitute Dietor is what we use instead of Sweet & Low and Equal. Some places do have Sweet and Low but it isn't the same.

Bicarbonato di Sodio - Baking soda Seems the same as stateside.

Lievito in Polvere - Baking Powder Be careful here as some have vanilla added.

Sale - Salt

- *grosso* is like kosher salt
- *fino* is normal salt
- *marino* is sea salt

Fagioli - Beans

- ceci which are chick peas or garbanzo beans,
- *borlotti* which are used mainly for soups (almost like kidney beans) and
- *cannellini* beans or white beans

Verdure – Vegetables

Almost everything here is seasonal. You cannot for example always find Artichokes year round but that is okay because you only get them when they are ripe and ready to eat. Of course some places are importing items from other countries to change this but try to buy just seasonal items. You will notice the difference. Look to the mini dictionary for translations.

When purchasing veggies at supermarkets, you will need to first put on a glove (provided next to the bags) and then bag and weigh each item. When you weigh them you will have a machine and you will need to select the correct item from the screen. Then a tape will be printed with the item's name, the weight, per kilo price and the total amount. Stick this to the bag and continue on. To see these machines and further details, please read this section at [SlowTrav](#)

Helpful info - Peperoni are not the sliced sausage that you put on pizza. They are instead bell peppers or capsicum.

Mini Grocery Dictionary

Besides the brief descriptions above, here are some other translations that you may find helpful.

TOILETRIES:

- *Balsamo* – Conditioner
- *Dentifricio* – Toothpaste
- *Deodorante* – Deodorant
- *Grassi* – for oily hair
- *Lacca* – Hair Spray
- Shampoo or Sciampoo – Shampoo
- *Trattati* –for treated hair
- *Rasoi* – Razors
- *Schiuma da Barba* – Shaving Cream

MEAT & POULTRY (types and cuts):

- *Agnello* – Lamb
- *Ali* – Wings
- *Anatra* or *Anitra* – Duck
- *Coscia* – Leg
- *Fegato* – Liver
- *Manzo* – Beef

- *Oca* – Goose
- *Petto* - Breast
- *Pollo* – Chicken
- *Sovracoscia* – Thigh
- *Tacchino* – Turkey
- *Vitello* – Calf
- *Vitellone* – Beef

FRUITS & VEGETABLES:

- *Aglio* – Garlic
- *Albicocca* – Apricot
- *Arancia* – Orange
- *Barbabietola* – Beets
- *Bietola* – Swiss Chard
- *Carciofi* – Artichokes
- *Carote* – Carrots
- *Cavolfiore* - Cauliflower
- *Cavolo* – Cabbage
- *Cavolo di Broccoli* – Broccoli

- *Cipolla* – Onion
- *Clementina* – Seedless Tangerine
- *Funghi* – Mushrooms
- *Limone* – Lemon
- *Mandarina* – Tangerine
- *Mela* - Apple
- *Melanzana* – Eggplant
- *Peperoncini* – Spicy peppers
- *Peperoni* – Bell Peppers
- *Pesca* – Peach
- *Pomi* – Persimmon
- *Pomodori* – Tomatoes
- *Prezzemolo* – Parsley
- *Rucola* – Arugula
- *Sedano* – Celery
- *Spinaci* – Spinach
- *Uva* – Grapes

STAPLES:

- *Acciughe* – Anchovies
- *Aceto* – Vinegar
- *Aceto Bianco* – White Wine Vinegar
- *Amido di Mais* – Corn Starch
- *Bicarbonato di Sodio* – Baking Soda
- *Capperi* – Capers
- *Farina "0"* – Bread flour
- *Farina "00"* – A/P Flour
- *Lievito di Birra* – Yeast for Breads
- *Lievito in Polvere* – Baking Powder
- *Maionese* – Mayonaise
- *Mais* – Corn
- *Miele* – Honey
- *Olio di Arachidi* – Peanut Oil
- *Olio di Mais* – Corn Oil
- *Olio di Semi* – Seed Oil
- *Senape* – Mustard

- *Tonno* – Tuna
- *Uova* – Eggs

SPICES/HERBS:

- *Bacche di Ginepro* – Juniper Berries
- *Dragoncello* – Tarragon
- *Maggiorana* – Marjoram
- *Raffano* – Horseradish
- *Rosemarino* – Rosemary
- *Salvia* – Sage
- *Timo* – Thyme

CLEANING SUPPLIES:

- *Ammorbidente* – Fabric Softener
- *Candeggina* – Bleach
- *Carta da Cucina* – Paper Towels
- *Carta Igenica* – Toilet Paper
- *Guanti* – Gloves
- *Sacchi per spazzatura* – Garbage Bags
- *Sapone per Lavastoviglie* – Dishwasher Soap
- *Sapone per Lavatrice* – Washing Machine Soap
- *Sapone per Piatti* – Dish Soap
- *Spugna* – Sponge

WRAPPING ITEMS:

- *aluminium* or *carta stagnolo* – tin foil
- *pellicola* – plastic wrap
- *pellicola per il microne* – plastic wrap for the microwave
- *carta da forno* – parchment paper

Quick Tuscan Meals

Antipasti - Appetizers

There are so many things you can do here. The most important is to use fresh ingredients. There is *bruschetta* ("ch" here is pronounced like a K). This is just grilled Tuscan bread that is then rubbed with a garlic clove and drizzled with EV Olive oil and salt. You can add chopped tomatoes or whatever else that suits your fancy. *Crostone* are large slices of Tuscan bread with topping and then toasted. So you could do a mixture of sautéed sausage and mushrooms, drizzled with truffle oil and topped with *fontina* cheese. *Crostini* are smaller bread slices (*filo per crostini* is what the bread is called here). These are topped with the traditional liver or spleen spread (*crostini ner*), or olive and garlic spread, or prosciutto cotto with truffle butter, or salmon with mascarpone. Use your imagination. Bread for these normally does not get toasted.

You can also do *affettati* platters which are just a selection of sliced meats and cheese. Serve with good bread and you are set.

Primi Piatti – First Courses & Special Salads

For leftover bread, make *Panzanella*, bread salad. Toast or grill day old bread. Break it up into a little larger than bite size pieces. In a separate bowl, cut up tomatoes and season. Set aside for at least 20 minutes so that all of the tomato water comes out. Make a dressing of oil and vinegar and set aside. Chop some red onions and tear up some basil (do not cut basil as it turns brownish black). Put everything together in a large bowl, and mix. The more traditional way is to take old bread, cut it up so it gets really hard on all sides. Add water and then squeeze out all the excess water. Then add all of the other ingredients. It's mushier but good. Tuscan is a bread based region. Having salt free bread is important as it doesn't attract moisture so does not get mildew.

We use a lot of beans here in the winter and summer. Winter and fall you will find a lot of pizza places selling *pizza di ceci*. It is made with garbanzo bean flour. This is another good item to bring back. You can make lots of easy salads with beans. Drain a can of ceci beans, rinse and dress with olive oil, chopped red onions, parsley, lemon juice, salt and pepper. You can also add crushed red peppers (*peperoncini secchi*). Tuscan white bean and tuna salad is simple too. Just add 1 can of cannellini beans to one can of drained tuna, ¼ red onion chopped, 1 tomato chopped, basil, olive oil, salt and pepper to taste (*peperoncino* here too).

Secondi Piatti – Main Dishes

For main dishes Tuscany is known for its grills. We grill everything in the warmer months. Serve grilled meat, veggies, fish, etc. with no sauces. Just drop a bottle of Extra Virgin Olive Oil and a few lemons on the table and let everyone dress their meal as they like. If you do not have a grill you can always pan fry.

If you do have a grill then I highly recommend going to the Macchelleria Cecherini in Panzano in Chianti and let Dario set you up. When you go inside he normally has some bread, sliced meats and wine to sample while you wait your turn. He was a veterinarian but when his father got sick he had to come and run the family business. He takes a different view of meat since he knows the animal so well. His favorite word is Ciccia which means fat in the sense of the good fat from an animal (sorry to any vegetarians). He is the one who organized the funeral for the *Fiorentina* when we had the mad cow scare here in 2000. He is a true Florentine.