



# Bite The Peach

Seeker and purveyor of all things juicy



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## What's a Masseria and Why Stay At One?

By svondoering on December 4, 2015

On a recent trip through Italy I finally got to the region of Puglia, located on the southeastern coast of the country and forming what's known as the "heel of the boot".

On average I'd been moving every 48 hours and was looking forward to keeping a home base three or four days for a little R&R. But what had me really excited was the chance to experience Puglia's cooking.



Puglia produces most of the olive oil consumed in Italy, and both the land and its people reflect a resiliency born from a long history of poverty and hardship. However, history has shaped and influenced Puglia's cuisine in a most delicious way. The dishes reflect a strict reliance on the land and what is locally available. Recipes have ingredients such as fava beans and eggplant, seafood from the Adriatic, and grapes, almonds and figs. Inside a Puglian kitchen centuries old cooking methods turn simple ingredients into dishes that define the term comfort food while retaining an understated elegance that mirrors its people. For pasta enthusiasts, Puglia will not disappoint you. One of the most important crops in the region is durum wheat which produces semolina, the base for the best pastas. The soil allows for a rich taste that has more vitamins, fiber and minerals than other pastas. Orecchiette – "little ears" pasta comes from Puglia.

So where to stay in Puglia to get the best overall experience of its culture, people, food and wine? A Masseria, of course! So what exactly is a Masseria? It's an ancient fortified farmhouse indigenous to the countryside of the region. They typically date from the 16th to the 19th centuries and were built to be able to ward off Turks or marauding pirates. Lodging at a Masseria ranges from rustic to downright luxurious, and most of them are working farms that produce olive oil, wine or produce.



Hi, I'm Stephanie von Doering. I was born and raised in Philadelphia, PA where I earned my Master's degree in Clinical Psychology. In order to be able to live and play in a beautiful part of the country while working and continuing to travel the world, I moved to the mountains of Vermont.

This blog is all about using what I've learned through my practice, my travels, and life in general to lead a juicy life and offering it to you in a no nonsense, non BS way. And of course, I also find the juice all over the planet and don't spill a drop of it bringing it to you!

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I stayed at Masseria Il Frantoio, a working olive farm, and it definitely falls into the luxury category. From the moment of arrival attention to detail was, literally, everywhere. Riots of bright flowers tumbled over the walls around the meticulously cared for home, and cozy courtyards awaited with glasses of chilled white wine served with little plates of olives and almonds. Every inch of Masseria Il Frantoio has been lovingly restored using historically correct guidelines while allowing for all the amenities that we expect in a luxury hotel. The layout of the home provides a very high degree of privacy as the rooms are all buffered by gorgeous sitting areas, parlors and other various public spaces. Included is a perfectly restored early 20th century kitchen upstairs in the main house. Of course the fridge and stove are exceptions to the historically correct rule. You can keep your personal vino stash cold and ready for easy access or make a cup of tea at any hour.



Masseria Il Frantoio has food enthusiasts arriving from all over the world. Their dining room offers a choice of a fixed price dinner of either 4 or 6 courses, using only locally grown seasonal produce, much of it coming from within their own walls. And, let's not forget Puglia's excellent local wines, some of which are striking. At 8:30 sharp, after an evening tour of the house and grounds, a bell is rung alerting guests that dinner is served. No one seemed to be more than a few minutes late as dining is the focus of this little jewel. I found the 4 course option to be more than enough. My favorite dish, if I had to choose one, would be the chicken prepared in a clay pot. The owner, whom I referred to simply as "Maestro" visits each table in the evening and chats with his guests. He told me that no metal ever touches his chicken, only wood and clay. It simply melted in my mouth while bursting with flavors of fresh herbs and root vegetables. Lucky me, I celebrated a birthday while there!



So next time you're in Italy get to Puglia and treat yourself to a truly amazing experience at a Masseria. And to add to your slice of nirvana, you have a great choice of beautiful well-kept beaches as well that are only a short taxi ride away. It just can't get any better.

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