



Food&drink

Amy Bryant

A journey through Italian cookery books

A notable Italian scene for smart young Englishmen making the Grand Tour in the 18th century was the spaghetti hanging out to dry in the streets of Naples.'

This historical snapshot was described by Anna Del Conte in her 1976 *Portrait of Pasta* in prose that still bristles with a fresh sea breeze and hot Vesuvian winds ('perfect drying conditions') in the revised book, *Anna Del Conte on Pasta*, published last year. Nigella's 'Conrad of the kitchen', Anna Del Conte writes cookbooks that become reading books – those you keep open on the sofa or piled beside the bed to thumb through before falling asleep.

We have travelled to Italy through the pages of many cookbooks of late, from the bean-podding rituals of Roman locals recounted in Rachel Roddy's *Five Quarters*, to Emiko Davies's fruit-stained and sweet-scented accounts of modern Tuscan life in *Florentine*, shared recently in these pages. The Calabrian chef Francesco Mazzei gave us a tour of the toe, while Rick Stein whizzed us to the top of the boot in Venice – and great Italian cookbooks keep coming.

Later this year, make room in the pile for Eleonora Galasso's lip-smacking travelogue *As the*



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Romans Do, and for Melissa Forti's *The Italian Baker*, a culinary trip through torte and biscotti.

Meanwhile, it's just as much a pleasure to read Katie Parla and Kristina Gill as they 'geek out on ancient cookbooks' in *Tasting Rome* as it is to sample their aromatic olives with an aperitif.

Marinated olives

makes 450g

- 450g Gaeta olives
- 1 tsp coriander seeds
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1 tsp fennel seeds
- 2 garlic cloves, unpeeled
- 1 sprig rosemary
- 1 sprig sage
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 tbsp white-wine vinegar
- pinch of peperoncino or red pepper flakes
- 480ml extra-virgin olive oil

Soak the olives in abundant water to remove excess salt, for about two hours. Preheat the oven to 140C/gas mark 1.

Drain the olives and toss in a bowl with the spices, herbs, vinegar and peperoncino. Transfer to a baking dish and submerge in the oil. Cover with foil and bake for two hours, stirring occasionally.

Cool then strain, reserving the oil to dress salads, meat or pasta.



ALAMY. RECIPE FROM TASTING ROME BY KATIE PARLA AND KRISTINA GILL (CLARKSON POTTER, £25)



Hamish Anderson

welcomes the return to favour of a neglected grape from northern Italy

Italian wine confounds the term 'expert' – you could dedicate your life's work to studying it and still not come close to knowing everything. I was reminded of this when visiting Piedmont recently, an area whose reputation is built on red wines made in Barolo and Barbaresco from the nebbiolo grape. I, though, had come to taste white, from a grape that was practically extinct a few decades ago – timorasso. Once widely planted, it was eschewed in favour of more productive varieties in the late 19th century, when Europe's vineyards were replanted after the devastation caused by the phylloxera aphid. In recent times, one man kept the timorasso flame burning – Walter Massa. For years he was broke, with a cellar full of an obscure wine no one wanted to buy, but it is now in high demand. As befits someone who refuses to accept the vagaries of fashion, tasting with him is an experience: his assistant apparently never wears shoes, and the higgledy-piggledy winery would give a health-and-safety officer nightmares. Yet, out of seeming chaos comes exquisite wine: tasting through the range makes it easy to see why the grape excites. In youth it reminds me of viognier, but with the structure of great riesling; as it develops (and it can, by all accounts, last for years), I think of Loire chenin or Hunter Valley semillon. Yet it is unique, and you should take part in its revival by drinking some.

2014 Timorasso 'Derthona', Vigneti Massa, Colli Tortonesi £17.99, cadmanfinewines.co.uk

Bright and invigorating, with flowers and mandarin zest. Deceptively powerful.

2012 Timorasso 'Il Montino', La Colombera, Colli Tortonesi £22.50, bbr.com A forceful wine with notes of beeswax (a good thing), wild honey and the tropics. Best decanted to reveal all its complexities.