

Hosted by
The Chopping Block
+ Onward Travel

# COOK like a TUSCAN

A hands on culinary vacation!

Oct 16—23, 2027

The Chopping Block

## Tuscany's landscape says it all: medieval hilltop towns overlooking rolling countryside covered with grapevines and olive trees.

The mountains, forests, cypress trees, and winding roads create the perfect backdrop for discovering one of the world's most revered destinations for culinary tradition, craftsmanship, fine art, historical preservation, and winemaking.

Join a small group of travelers for a week of culinary and cultural discovery in Italy. We'll visit Tuscany in autumn, when the olives and grapes are being picked and pressed to perfection. It's the perfect time of year to savor some of Italy's best wines and ingredient driven dishes. Explore regional Tuscan cooking and expand your culinary repertoire with four hands-on in-depth cooking courses. Time in the kitchen is complemented by epicurean field trips, visits to medieval towns and gothic Siena, and opportunities to walk amongst the vines and views.

From our stone villa in the heart of Chianti wine country, we'll travel throughout the region plus enjoy the charm of Panzano in Chianti. Join The Chopping Block's travel and food loving community for a once-in-a-lifetime culinary immersion in Tuscany.

## Imagine yourself...

Spending a blissful week at a photogenic villa in the heart of Chianti.

Gazing at Siena's marble clad Gothic cathedral, built in the 13th century.

Perfecting your pasta-making (and eating) skills.



**During this relaxing and delicious vacation, enhance your culinary knowledge and skills as you learn to Cook Like a Tuscan.**

**Collect recipes and culinary tips. We have a diverse food and wine program planned with four hands-on cooking classes and two wine classes. Experience the special ingredients and terroir of Tuscany.**

# Learn How To...

- Prepare fresh pasta including gnocchi, spaghetti alla chitarra, ravioli, and maltagliati
- Taste and analyze wine
- Work with herbs and spices
- Get the most from cooking leafy greens
- Learn iconic Macelleria Cecchini meat preparation and butchery techniques
- Select the appropriate wines for a menu and describe them to your guests
- Beautifully plate your creations
- Prepare delicious bean-based dishes for vegetarians and omnivores alike
- Execute a Tuscan themed dinner party
- Create tasty pasta sauces including classic ragout (meat sauce), tomato sauce, and vegetable sauce variations
- Mix and knead pasta dough by hand
- Cook pasta properly
- Prepare fresh, seasonal vegetables

# Experience...

- Taste local extra virgin olive oil
- Brunello wine at an enoteca in Montalcino
- Local cheeses
- Panzano's weekly outdoor market
- Food and wine pairing
- Winery tours and tastings
- Wood-fired pizza preparation
- Stories and anecdotes about Tuscan culinary tradition

# Our Tuscan Villa...

We'll be based in the heart of Tuscany at a beautiful stone villa that is part of the Fontodi wine estate at Panzano






# Food & Wine Education

## TEAM AT ANTICA MACELLERIA CECCHINI
### Cuisine of the Butcher Shop

Tuscany's iconic butcher shop, Antica Macelleria Cecchini is famous for top-quality meats, expert butchery, and proprietor Dario Cecchini's passion and personality. At Cecchini's they believe an animal must have four things: A Good Life, A Good Death, A Good Butcher, and a A Good Cook. Dario has two excellent restaurants in Panzano and the knowledge and expertise of this operation are top-notch.





## BADIA A COLTIBUONO
### Pasta & Sauces Workshop

Set in the storied halls of Badia a Coltibuono, an ancient 11th-century abbey and one of Chianti's most influential wine estates that is owned by the family of the late Lorenza de' Medici. Under the guidance of the estate's expert chefs, you'll craft fresh pasta and classic regional sauces using ingredients from their historic organic gardens. You'll also prepare excellent focaccia and fabulous biscotti, all paired with the estate's wines and olive oils.

*Two Wineries We Will Visit for Tours and Tastings:*

## FONTODI

We're lucky to be staying on the Fontodi estate this week in Panzano's famed "Conca d'Oro." Fontodi is a globally known label with esteemed organic wines like the 100% sangiovese Flaccianello della Pieve.

## ALTIERO

One of the smallest producers making around 10,000 bottles/year, owners Samuela and Paolo offer an intimate glimpse into winemaking. They make three levels of Chianti Classico, two special IGT wines (including one aged in amphora), and a delightful rosé.



## CHEF MIRELLA
### Traditional Seasonal Tuscan Cuisine & Elevated Entertaining

Tuscan cooks create some of the most delicious dishes from simple ingredients. Chef Mirella and her husband Stefano ("fiorentini DOC") will lead you in two dynamic cooking classes. The first, rooted in peasant tradition "cucina povera" and the second a sophisticated gourmet menu. From their kitchen garden and passion for seasonality arises a lovely approach to cuisine. They collect wild herbs, preserve vegetables in oil, make salted capers, prepare jams, compotes, and infusions... A true attention to food and its origin. Seasonal ingredients star in their recipes and they'll open our eyes to this way of cooking. Both classes will feature hyper local wine from their village along with their garden bounty.




## VIKTORIJA TODOROVSKA & ANDREA MILLER
### Tour Hosts

**Viktorija Todorovska** is a wine educator and writer, formerly based in Chicago and now living in Provence. Viktorija is a Sommelier, fluent in Italian and author of two books about regional Italian cuisine. She is also an avid cyclist.

For over two decades, **Andrea Miller** has been working to inspire home cooks with The Chopping Block, Chicago's renowned recreational cooking school. She lives in Florida and enjoys gardening, reading, and stand up paddleboarding.



# Welcome to Italy

DAY 1: SATURDAY OCTOBER 16

- See Italian craftsmanship in a terracotta workshop
- Enjoy a wine class and festive dinner party in our stone villa

*Benvenuti!* Welcome to beautiful Tuscany. This morning we'll organize pickups at Florence Airport and Hotel Pendini, then head straight to Chianti. The first stop: Impruneta, a Tuscan town famous for terracotta. The tradition of making terracotta in this area goes back to the 14th century and the clay and craftsmanship combine beautifully! We'll tour a workshop and kiln and then tuck into our first meal together, a leisurely lunch featuring the local food and wine. After a short transfer, settle in for a week at our villa in the vineyards on the edge of Panzano in Chianti. If the sun is shining, relax at the villa's garden areas or stroll into town.

We'll gather tonight on the *loggia*, or open air porch, to enjoy the million dollar vineyard views and a wine class held by Viktorija where we'll be introduced to the wines of Tuscany including some excellent whites. A local chef is coming to the villa to prepare a gourmet meal for our first convivial private dinner party. Chef Laura is a passionate foodie and excited to cook for us tonight! Get to know your traveling companions over a great meal.

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**Meals** Lunch, Dinner

## *Don't Miss Florence!*

This itinerary does not include time in Florence but it is such a fabulous, beautiful city, do consider arriving early for a few days of self-guided fun in the seat of the Italian Renaissance! Florence is walkable and photogenic... full of markets, museums, cultural sites, and great eateries.

Take advantage of our optional Florence add-on package and we'll organize your hotel arrangements at the lovely, central Hotel Pendini. For travelers spending 2 or 3 nights in Florence, join a private three-hour walking tour Friday morning with a delightful, engaging and informative local guide who will show you highlights of the city and make local shopping and dining recommendations, plus take you to Galleria dell'Accademia to see Michelangelo's David. A sightseeing guide will be mailed in advance.

Guests who elect this package will be picked up at Hotel Pendini to commence the tour. Breakfast and private en suite room included. Inquire with Onward about upgrading to Deluxe accommodations or for triple/quadruple rates and availability.

**1 Night (Oct 2-3) at Hotel Pendini**
*Double Occupancy, $150/guest; Single Occupancy, $260/guest*

**2 Nights (Oct 1-3) at Hotel Pendini with Walking Tour including Galleria dell'Accademia**
*Double Occupancy, $350/guest; Single Occupancy, $575/guest*

**3 Nights (Sept 30-Oct 3) at Hotel Pendini with Walking Tour including Galleria dell'Accademia**
*Double Occupancy, $490/guest; Single Occupancy, $830/guest*

# Drinking in the Landscape

DAY 2: SUNDAY OCTOBER 17

- Savor a wine tasting lunch at Onward's favorite small scale producer
- Learn about *cucina povera* first hand

Today, ease into the Chianti lifestyle. We'll walk into town to enjoy Panzano in Chianti's weekly outdoor market where the locals shop and gossip. After a leisurely morning we're off to visit Onward Travel's favorite local winemakers. Agricola Altiero is a small family operation producing excellent wines. Samuela is a fabulous cook and her signature jams pair perfectly with crostini, pecorino, and salumi. Winemaker Paolo will lead us through a tasting as we enjoy lunch in the sunshine.

Let's stretch our legs after lunch. We'll stop in Montefioralle to explore this tiny, hilltop stone village, with 360 degree views of the Tuscan countryside. You'll feel like you've landed in a movie set, but this is real life in Tuscany!

Late afternoon, Chef Mirella will join us at the villa for a hands-on cooking class. At its heart, Tuscan cuisine is peasant food driven by what can be easily grown or procured in the region. We'll focus on preparing dishes that feature vegetables and beans such as everyone's favorite... *ribollita*. Add some recipes to your arsenal and benefit from knowledge and experience passed down and learned by doing.

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**Meals** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

# Cooking at Badia al Coltibuono

DAY 3: MONDAY OCTOBER 18

- Admire Badia a Coltibuono's special and atmospheric setting
- Lunch on four courses of fresh pasta!

Today we head to the kitchens of Badia a Coltibuono for an in-depth cooking class. Badia a Coltibuono is a place with a special history... the abbey was founded in 1051 and was home to some of the first vineyard plantings in the region. More recently, it is the home of Lorenza De' Medici, an internationally known cook, author, and authority on Italian cuisine. The estate is now owned by Lorenza's three adult children.

The culinary team will lead us in a hands-on pasta preparation workshop. Learn recipes for three pastas and three sauces, plus biscotti to pair with Badia a Coltibuono's prized *Vin Santo* (dessert wine). We'll also have the opportunity to tour the 1000-year-old abbey including the impressive wine cellar and Renaissance gardens. Midday, we will dine on our creations, complemented by the estate's organic wines and olive oils.

You're on your own this evening to enjoy dinner at one of Panzano's restaurants or maybe just a bowl of soup at the villa.

**Meals** Breakfast, Lunch



POSING WITH THE TEAM FROM MACELLERIA CECCHINI IN PANZANO

# Jewels of Tuscany

DAY 4: TUESDAY OCTOBER 19

- Go back in time in Montalcino
- Luxuriate in a warm water soak

Today we head south to the Val d'Orcia, a region carved out by the Orcia river that inspires everyone from Renaissance painters to you (just wait). The valley's unique beauty was recently recognized as a UNESCO world heritage site. We will spend the morning in Montalcino, a medieval walled hilltop city with a fortress and a 16th century go-back-in-history vibe. Be sure to enjoy a glass of Brunello di Montalcino; there are many enotecas in town.

After a medieval morning, we'll head back towards Chianti. Enjoy the scenic drive before we make a restorative stop. Since ancient times, people have enjoyed soaking in these geothermally heated waters and we'll do just that, complete with beautiful valley views.

After a full day, enjoy a delectable, homey dinner prepared by a local Nonna and her daughter featuring lasagna and tiramisu. Don your slippers and enjoy a leisurely dinner at your Tuscan home away from home. And of course we'll bring back a few bottles of wine from Montalcino.

**Meals** Breakfast, Dinner

# Meat Cookery & Appreciation

DAY 5: WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 20

- Spend the morning learning about butchery and meat cookery at Macelleria Cecchini
- Enjoy a snooze or a stroll this afternoon

Panzano is famous for its location in the heart of Chianti and its charismatic butcher: Dario Cecchini. Today we are going to focus on meat cookery at the most iconic place to do so, Dario's! The master butcher will explain the boning of a beef forequarter and best cooking methods for each piece. He'll also demo some of the best loved specialities, like Sushi del Chianti and Brasato al Midollo. Following this class, sit down to a meat-centric lunch of epic proportions! This afternoon you might like to go for a hike or simply relax.

We'll convene tonight to learn more about the local grape sangiovese. Viktorija will lead a wine class, this one focused on some big wines like Super Tuscans and Brunello, and we'll have a simple, light dinner together.

**Meals** Breakfast, Lunch, Light Dinner

# Gothic Inspiration
DAY 6: THURSDAY OCTOBER 21

- Stand in Siena's iconic Piazza del Campo
- Prepare a gourmet dinner with Chef Mirella & Stefano

Today we will depart after breakfast, and drive to Siena, a UNESCO world heritage sight that exploded with art and architecture in the 13th century before the Black Death struck in 1348. Viktorija will provide history and an orientation to the city, and we'll visit Siena's Gothic cathedral, Duomo of Santa Maria Asunta, where the beautiful mosaic floors will blow you away. Then we're off to Piazza del Campo where Siena's famous Palio di Siena horse race takes place. Enjoy time on your own to have lunch, shop, and explore Siena.

Back at the villa this evening, roll up your sleeves for another involved cooking class with Chef Mirella. Tonight it's an elevated menu: a star of the show will be fresh tagliolini pasta, tossed in a Parmesan wheel and served with truffles (decadent!). The rest of the menu is inspired by what's fresh and local, so you may see ingredients like pumpkin, porcini, and zucchini flowers on the menu. Viktorija will demonstrate how the local specialties pair perfectly with the vino made from the grapes surrounding us.

**Meals** Breakfast, Dinner


SIENA'S GRAND GOTHIC CATHEDRAL

# La Dolce Vita
DAY 7: FRIDAY OCTOBER 22

- Taste wine from grapes grown in the fields surrounding our villa
- Enjoy the pizza party of your dreams

Enjoy a slow morning at the villa...take a nature walk or have an invigorating massage at the villa (90€/60 min, organized upon arrival). We'll have a casual lunch and then head to Azienda Agricola Fontodi for a wine tasting. Fontodi is a certified organic estate that has been owned by the Manetti family since the 60's. Our villa is part of the Fontodi estate and we'll enjoy their wines all week. So let's go to the source and learn about their winemaking and passion.

We have a special dinner planned tonight for our grand finale! A pizzaiolo is coming to the villa with a portable wood-fired oven to make us a pizza feast. Sip a glass of bubbly while you enjoy a variety of pizzas, focaccia bread, and even dessert pizza. Reminisce about the tasty week spent in Tuscany with your new food and wine loving friends.

**Meals** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

# Arrivederci!
DAY 8: SATURDAY OCTOBER 23

Our wonderful time together has come to an end. Departure transfer provided to Florence Peretola Airport or Santa Maria Novella train station. Flights departing FLR around 10am are best but other schedules can be accommodated. *Buon viaggio!*

**Meals** Breakfast

## *Tuscany in October*

Fall is a terrific shoulder season in Tuscany. Many of the crowds have disappeared and the agricultural harvest is in full swing (hello, olives!). The temperature varies – low of 50 °F and high of 65 °F – so layered clothing is best. It's a fertile region, so expect both sunshine and some rain throughout the week. The fall temperatures pair brilliantly with the bold Tuscan red wines and wood burning fireplace at the villa.

## Who is *Cook Like a Tuscan* for, and do I need culinary experience?

This tour is for any curious food enthusiast who would like to experience Tuscany through it's food and wine traditions. No culinary experience is necessary, just a desire to spend time in a few Italian kitchens and a good appetite.

## How many people will be a part of this experience?

This culinary immersion is limited to 12 travelers plus Andrea, Viktorija, and your Italian hosts. We are keeping the group small to make sure everyone has the opportunity to roll up their sleeves and learn by doing. Onward Travel's culinary tours are always limited to small groups; it's like a week long dinner party!

## I have a dietary restriction or preference, can this be accommodated?

Yes it should be fine but contact Onward Travel to discuss. *Cook Like a Tuscan* is not *ideal* for someone with celiac disease but is fine for those who can handle gluten cross contamination. If in doubt, get in touch.

## Will I have time to [fill in the blank]?

We've planned a full week of cooking and sightseeing but do want to make sure you check off whatever's on your bucket list, including R&R. There are a few chunks of downtime throughout the tour.

## Can I extend my stay?

Yes, that's a great idea. Onward Travel is happy to help you make arrangements to extend your stay. We'll assist you (for free), give you some sightseeing ideas, and make sure your logistics are sound. We suggest arriving early to enjoy a couple days in Florence. It's a beautiful city with lots to see and do and you can ease into la dolce vita. See the "Don't Miss Florence!" section.

## Can I join *Cook Like a Tuscan* as a solo traveler?

Absolutely! Our groups are usually made up of couples, friends, and solo travelers. The camaraderie and shared experience is one of the best parts of travel. Our travelers are usually from different parts of the country and all different ages, but the groups mesh and bond and have a lot of fun together. You are very welcome to come on your own and you'll be in good company!

## What is included?

The itinerary details out the specifics but to make the most of your time and money, this tour is mostly all inclusive. You'll have a few meals on your own but that is pretty much it. All activities, tastings, libations, gratuities, impromptu gelato, etc. are included. It is a lot of fun to have paid for your vacation in advance, you can really enjoy yourself.

## What should I do about [insert phone / credit card / hair dryer]?

Before the tour we'll provide you with a guide to answer all your questions about international travel: phone, money, packing list, etc! And of course we're there along the way to assist.

## I don't like [insert activity / food / attraction], is that ok?

Totally—this is ***your*** vacation. We are very happy to accommodate you whether you're dealing with a bad knee, not a fan of mushrooms, or really want to go cycling. Just let us know your request and we'll do our best to make it happen. And if you want to skip an activity to relax or wander the shops, we won't judge. We want you to enjoy your experience abroad on your terms.

ONWARD TRAVEL
EST 2014

Onward Travel is a boutique travel planning company that carefully assembles itineraries to create an authentic, engaging trip that exposes the destination and roots travelers to the place. Onward was founded by two sisters, inspired by their family's cooking school on a farm in Bucks County, PA that offered culinary-focused travel to customers for over two decades.

## Still have a few questions?

Get in touch with
Onward Travel
at 845-293-2729
or letsgo@onwardtravel.co



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| BEGINS | **Saturday, October 16**<br>*Arrival transfer provided mid-morning from Florence Peretola Airport, Santa Maria Novella train station, or Hotel Pendini. Travelers flying in this morning may miss the terracotta visit but we'll catch you up.* ***Travelers may elect to arrive early to Florence, see "Don't Miss Florence!" section for more information.*** |
| ENDS | **Saturday, October 23**<br>*Departure transfer provided to Florence Peretola Airport or Santa Maria Novella train station. A 7am transfer from the villa will get travelers to the airport in time for international flights departing after 10am, or contact Onward Travel to schedule an earlier transfer.*<br>***No activities are scheduled for this day.*** |
| SUITABILITY & MOBILITY | This tour includes walking for 15-30 minutes at a time, plus stairs and cobblestones. Travelers may always opt out of activities they deem too physically challenging but refunds will not be provided. The villa is located a 10-minute walk from the center of town, mostly uphill, and a few stairs are required to access the villa. Note the charming bathrooms have shower/tub combos. |
| TRIP LENGTH | 8 days, 7 nights |
| LODGING | This tour's lodging is very special: a 17th century stone villa that is part of the Fontodi wine estate.<br>The villa is on the edge of town, surrounded by vines and garden plantings, with a peaceful atmosphere and a swimming pool. There is a wood-burning fireplace, panoramic terraces, and a tennis court nearby.<br><br>Onward Travel has been fortunate to bring groups to Villa Pecille since 2016. Its a magical homebase in Chianti but please keep in mind it is not a hotel. All rooms are different with their own charm. Due to global warming concerns, Italian government controls when heat can be tuned on, generally early November. Our shoulder season travel time means pack layers and be flexible. |
| TOUR DATES & PRICE | October 16—23, 2027<br>Double Occupancy $5,650 per traveler<br>Single Supplement $700 *Limited availability, inquire*<br><br>Please note that air travel is not included and a current passport is required for travel to Italy. You are welcome to pay by credit card, please add a 3% surcharge. |

## Trip price includes the following:

- Airport transfers and ground transportation in Italy.
- Seven nights accommodations at a beautiful 17th century villa in Panzano in Chianti. Private en-suite rooms provided.
- Most meals: daily breakfasts, five lunches, and six dinners. We have fantastic gourmet experiences, wine included, of course!
- Onward Travel guide at your service plus a dedicated trip host and excellent local teachers and tour guides.
- Four hands-on cooking classes and recipes.
- Activities, tastings, admission fees, and tours as detailed in the itinerary.
- Taxes and gratuities.

*Register now!*

Visit onwardtravel.co to complete the registration form and submit payment.

Space is limited to only 12 travelers.

$1500 deposit due upon booking, balance due by August 1, 2027.

## AIR TRAVEL:

The tour will start and end with transfers to/from the Florence Airport. Please confirm with Onward Travel that the tour is a "go" before booking non-refundable airfare. Contact Onward Travel for assistance. Onward Travel is happy to arrange transfers to Rome, Bologna, or other destinations at an additional cost, plus there are good train connections between Rome and Florence and Bologna and Florence.