


Executive Pastry Chef Nick Malgieri Article



Executive Pastry Chef Nick Malgieri

Nick Malgieri is the national spokesperson for the Switzerland Tourism Gastronomy and Wine program. After culinary school in the United States, he apprenticed in Switzerland and has maintained close ties with the country ever since through frequent visits. A frequent traveler to other destinations, he collects recipes everywhere. Below is a sample of some of the recipes from his book, *A Baker's Tour: Nick Malgieri's Favorite Baking Recipes from Around the World* (HarperCollins, October 2005).

Additional information on Nick Malgieri: www.nickmalgieri.com 

Rome



In dramatic contrast to many other European countries that deat of Caesar's empire, capital of modern Italy, and home of architectural splendors that span two millennia, Rome is the world's largest living museum. Walk through a stone doorway no larger than that of an average house and you'll find yourself passing from a neighborhood of nondescript nineteenth century buildings into the glorious architectural splendor of the Piazza Navona. On Bernini's fountain in the center of the square a water monster recoils in horror from seeing the facade of the church of Sant'Agnese in Agone built by his arch-rival Borromini, while the latter's statue of Saint Agnes shields her face from the sight of the fountain. It's so Roman that it could have all happened yesterday and not in the seventeenth century.

Modern Romans take their city's glorious past with a grain of salt and have silly names for some of its greatest architectural monuments, even referring to the majestic and enormous Altare della Patria (Altar of the Fatherland) as "the wedding cake." But there is one thing Romans have always taken seriously: food. The city is teeming with open markets, cheese and butcher shops, pizzerias, wine bars, trattorie, tavole calde (prepared food shops), and restaurants of every description, including rooftop dining with views of the Vatican, the forum, or the coliseum. Many feature Roman cooking: fresh, lively dishes liberally scented with garlic, herbs, pecorino cheese, and the cured meats traditionally made there. Here are a few specialties you shouldn't miss while in Rome:

Puntarelle: Bitter greens passed through a screen that quarters the stems in the length, then soaked in ice water to make them curl. Dressed with a pungent mix of anchovy, garlic, and vinegar – addictive.

Carciofi alla Giudia: "Jewish" artichokes; young artichokes spread open and fried until the tender leaves become crisp and the heart is moist and creamy.

Suppli: Rice cooked in tomato sauce and bound with egg, made into spheres filled with diced mozzarella, then breaded and fried. When one is broken in half and the halves separated the mozzarella makes long strings giving rise to the name suppli al telefono, because of the similarity to old fashioned phone wires.

Filetti di Baccala: Salt cod soaked in water to remove excess salt, then deep fried.

Fiori di Zucca: Summer dish of delicate zucchini flowers stuffed with mozzarella and a hint of anchovy, dipped in a light batter and deep fried until crisp.

Gnocchi alla Romana: Disk-shaped gnocchi made with semolina flour, overlapped in a buttered dish and baked with butter and grated cheese.

Spaghetti alla Carbonara: Spaghetti (or penne) with a sauce of eggs, pecorino, pepper and guanciale, "cheek" bacon.

Coda alla Vaccinara: Roman oxtail stew with a tomato-based sauce.

Porchetta: Young pig boned and seasoned with herbs and garlic, slowly roasted and served as a main course or sandwich filling.

Abbacchio: Roman baby lamb; may be simply roasted or braised in a pecorino and pepper sauce.

Pollo alla Romana: Small pieces of chicken sautéed with fresh and pickled peppers.

Saltimbocca alla Romana: Small veal scallops with sage leaves and prosciutto pressed against them and quickly sautéed.

Torta di Ricotta Romana: Roman ricotta "cheesecake" in a sweet crust.

Ciambelle: Ring cookies often dipped in red wine.

Restaurants and more

The following recommendations are grouped by type; I've kept the descriptions short to include more choices. Phone numbers are stated as though you would be phoning from Rome. To phone from the United States add 011 39 before the number listed. All addresses are within the city of Rome; the place name after the address is the area or neighborhood (Trastevere, Pantheon), helpful for figuring general distance.

Roman Food: These are always at the top of my list when I go to Rome. They're not the most elegant or beautiful, but the food is superb.

Alfredo ed Ada

Go hungry, portions are generous. "The real Rome" – spaghetti carbonara and amatriciana, polpette (meatballs), and excellent, reasonably priced house wines.

Via dei Banchi Nuovi 14
Piazza Navona
Phone: 06 687 8842

Da Giggetto

Features some specialties of old Roman Jewish cooking and the best place to try carciofi alla Giudia. Excellent mushroom risotto and puntarelle salad in season.

Via del Portico d'Ottavia 21a/22
Ghetto
Phone: 06 686 1105

www.giggetto.it 

Da Lucia

Continuously operating for over 70 years, this is Roman home cooking at its best. Gnocchi di semolina and seafood specialties plus great antipasti and all the standards.

Vicolo del Mattonato 2
Trastevere
Phone: 06 580 3601

Armando al Pantheon

The menu at Armando reads like the list of Roman specialties above. Famous for its bruschette (grilled country bread with savory toppings) and vegetarian specialties, classic Roman meat and fish dishes are also not neglected. Excellent selection of local cheeses.

Salita dei Crescenzi 31
Pantheon
Phone: 06 688 03034

www.armandoalpantheon.it 

Some of the Best: Rub elbows with the Romans at these restaurants, all well known for the combination of excellent food, great service, and often elegant setting.

Camponeschi

In its three beautifully furnished dining rooms you'll find some of the best creative takes on Roman cooking today. Lobster with truffles, pasta with kid ragu, oyster risotto, and foie gras with candied grapes pair with great desserts for which Camponeschi is well known. Carefully chosen house wines and very complete international wine list.

Piazza Farnese 50
Campo de' Fiori
Phone: 06 687 4927

www.ristorantecamponeschi.it 

Piperno

Quietly elegant, Piperno has catered to discerning Romans and visitors since 1860, and yes that really is Tom Cruise or another celebrity at the next table. A great mix of homey and refined specialties such as spinach and ricotta ravioli, grilled dorade, sweetbreads with artichokes, mixed fried fish, and in season la vignarola, a stew of artichokes, peas and fava beans share the spotlight. Carefully chosen local wines.

Via Monte de' Cenci 9
Ghetto
Phone: 06 683 3606

www.ristorantepiperno.com 

Maccheroni

Yes, the name makes it sound like a real tourist trap, but the crowd here is almost 100% Roman. Of course, there are great pasta specialties such as spaghetti all'amatriciana, fettuccine with truffles, and ravioli with zucchini flowers. Great meat dishes such as osso buco, roast lamb, and tagliata (a sliced steak with rucola salad) are not neglected either.

Piazza delle Coppelle 44
Pantheon
Phone: 06 683 07895

Tullio

This Roman outpost of Tuscan cooking should satisfy any traveler's need for rare beef – its bistecca alla fiorentina, Italy's answer to the porterhouse, is particularly well prepared here. Other grilled meats, fish and seafood available along with an excellent selection of Tuscan wines.

Via San Nicola da Tolentino 26
Spanish Steps
Phone 06 474 5560

Capo de Fero

An old-fashioned trattoria in Trastevere features great pasta dishes, a wide selection of antipasti and simple grilled meat and fish dishes. Good desserts too.

Via San Cosimato 16
Trastevere
Phone 06 581 8038

Al Moro

Popular with Romans, Al Moro serves its own take on classic Roman dishes such as roast lamb, veal rolls, and pasta al moro, with red bell peppers. After dinner stroll past the magnificently illuminated Trevi fountain.

Vicolo delle Bollette 13
Monti
Phone: 06 678 3495

Wine Bars: Characterized by a more modern appearance than their predecessors, the enoteche (wine shops with tastings available) today's Roman wine bars attract a younger crowd and often serve other contemporary drinks. Here are a couple of both types:

Buccone

An old enoteca with a staggering selection of wines for sale, some by the glass. A few tables for lunch and diner on Friday and Saturday only.

Via di Ripetta 19
Piazza del Popolo
Phone: 06 361 2154

Palatium

A brand-new enoteca opened by the Lazio region which surrounds Rome to spotlight local wine and food specialties. Lunch and dinner served too.

Via Frattina 94
Piazza di Spagna
Phone: 06 692 02132

Bar del Fico

This tiny wine bar expands outward in good weather to tables around the enormous fig tree in the center of the square. Open from early for breakfast until late evening it's a fun casual spot.

Piazza del Fico 26
Piazza Navona
Phone: 06 686 5205

Gloss

This ultra up-to-the-minute wine bar features a gallery of contemporary art and a DJ playing rock selections. Twenty-first century Rome at its best.

Via dei Monte di Farina 43
Largo Argentina
Phone: 06 681 35345

www.glossroma.it 

Views of Rome: Why do view-oriented restaurants often have unremarkable food? Go for a drink in the afternoon or a coffee in the morning, but not for a meal. I'm just listing the names and addresses of these rooftop places and a description of the view.

Hotel Forum

Via Tor de' Conti 25
Fori Imperiali
Phone: 06 769 2446
View over the Forum and the Piazza Venezia in the other direction

Hotel Splendide Royal
American Bar
Via di Porta Pinciana 14
Via Veneto
Phone: 06 421 689
View of the Broghese Gardens and St. Peter's in the distance

Hotel Atlante Star
Terraza Paradiso
Via G. Vitelleschi 34
Vatican
Phone: 06 687 3233
View of St. Peter's Square and the Basilica; Caste Sant'Angelo in the other direction

Best of Rome: My favorites for espresso, gelato, and pastry.

Il Caffè di Sant'Eustachio
The water in the Pantheon neighborhood is fed by an underground spring and some credit this for the fact that the best coffee bars in Rome are there. The perennial favorite is Sant'Eustachio. If you've never had a real Italian espresso before or already love it, you'll get the best here.
Piazza Sant'Eustachio 82
Pantheon
Phone: 06 688 02048

Giolitti
Everyone's hands-down favorite for gelato in Rome. If you get in line to buy a cup or cone this doesn't give you the right to occupy a table, so be ready for a waiter to give you the heave-ho if you do.
Via Uffici del Vicario 40 Via Luigi Settembrini 21
Parlamento Prati
Phone: 06 699 1243 06 321 7499

Valzani
A old Roman pastry shop, Valzani makes artisan versions of traditional sweets that have long disappeared from more contemporary oriented places. Try a totally Roman version of Vienna's Sachertorte, meringues nested with whipped cream and strawberries or chestnut puree depending on the season, or pangiallo or panpepato. Good chocolates too.
Via del Moro 37
Trastevere
Phone 06 580 3792

A Note about Roman Wines
Wines of the Lazio region have been made since antiquity. Light, cool whites, such as Frascati, have always been the classics of the region. Nowadays, some interesting reds, mainly Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot varietals, have been making an appearance. Though the northern end of Lazio touches Tuscany and Umbria, two of Italy's most interesting wine-making regions, its climate and soil cause the wine made there to have more in common with wines from the Campania region to the south. Here are a few of the best:

Frascati: A thin dry white, best served well chilled. Frascati is a perfect accompaniment to excellent Roman fish and seafood dishes. Sweet versions of Frascati also exist.

Est! Est!! Est!!!: Another white, a bit more fruity and a little more robust. The name derives from the fact that an important prelate sent a servant ahead on a journey to write the word "Est!" (It is!) on the door of any inn that had good wine. When he got to Montefiascone, the wine was so good, that he wrote it three times on the door of the inn there.

Cerveteri: Both red and white. The red is made from Montepulciano, a classic Italian wine grape, also much used in Tuscany and Abruzzo.

Aleatico di Gradoli: A sweet red wine, sometimes known as Roman Port.

Some Vini da Tavola (less important table wines) you might encounter can be very good, and usually a bargain. The whites include Castelli Romani, Foriano, and Rigogolo. Some of the reds are Cecubo, Colle Picchioni, and Falernum.

Lighter wines such as these in the Lazio region tend to travel less well than more robust ones, so this is the place to enjoy them. Don't neglect one of the table wines either, especially in a restaurant or trattoria that specializes in Roman food.

Recipe: Roman Almond and Pine Nut Tart

This is similar to many tarts of this type available in Rome, with one important difference: Roman versions are baked in deeper pans than our fluted tart pans. The tart is plain enough to be enriched with ice cream or whipped cream on the side when you serve it.

Makes one 11-inch tart, about 10 servings

Pasta Frolla
1 cup flour (spoon flour into dry-measure cup and level off)

3 tablespoons sugar
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
4 tablespoons (1/2 stick) unsalted butter, cold, cut into 8 pieces
1 large egg

Almond and Pine Nut Filling

8 ounces canned almond paste, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
1/3 cup sugar
2 large eggs
8 tablespoons (1 stick) unsalted butter, softened
2 large egg yolks
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
2 teaspoons finely grated lemon zest
1/3 cup all-purpose flour (spoon flour into dry-measure cup and level off)
1/2 cup pine nuts (pignoli)
Confectioners' sugar for finishing
One 11-inch tart pan with removable bottom

1. For the dough, combine the dry ingredients in a food processor and pulse to mix. Add the butter and pulse until it is completely absorbed. Add the egg and pulse to form a ball.
2. Press the dough into a disk on a floured surface. Flour the dough and roll it to a 12-inch disk. Fold the dough in half and set it into the pan, lining up the fold with the diameter of the pan. Unfold the dough to fill the pan and press it well into the bottom and sides of the pan. Sever the excess dough at the rim of the pan.
3. Set a rack in the lowest level of the oven and preheat to 350 degrees.
4. Combine the almond paste and sugar in the bowl of an electric mixer. Beat on medium speed with the paddle until reduced to fine crumbs, about 2 minutes. Add one of the eggs and continue beating until the mixture turns to a heavy paste
5. Beat in the butter and continue beating until the butter is completely absorbed. Stop and scrape down the bowl and beater. Beat in the remaining egg, then the egg yolks, beating smooth after each addition. Stop and scrape the bowl and beater.
6. Beat in the vanilla and lemon zest, followed by the flour.
7. Use a large rubber spatula to give a final mixing to the filling and scrape it into the prepared pastry crust. Use a small metal offset spatula to spread the filling evenly in the crust.
8. Scatter the pine nuts all over the almond filling, gently pressing them to make them adhere with the palm of one hand.
9. Bake the tart until the crust is baked through and the filling is set and well colored, about 30 to 35 minutes.
10. Cool the tart on a rack.

Serving: Unmold the tart and slide it to a platter. Serve wedges of the tart unadorned. This is a better tea pastry than a dessert.

Storage: Keep the tart at room temperature wrapped in plastic. It will start to become dry after a couple of days