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GO TOP 10 TRAVEL EXPERIENCES  BOND FAMILY FUN IN EUROPE  UNPLUG WORK-LIFE BALANCE
When in Rome...MANGIA

Andrew Sessa reveals the top five places to eat in the Italian capital right now—and what to order while there—according to expert local foodie and cookbook author Katie Parla.

Upon moving to Rome a few years ago, I was shocked (and disappointed) by how easy it was to get a bad meal in the Eternal City. Wasn’t this Italy, land of fresh-tomato sauce, highly seasonal ingredients and undaunting mamas toiling in the kitchen to create perfect, no-frills plates that please the palate? Wasn’t this the country that the Slow Food movement launched? Where the idea of the cucina locale existed long before the word even did?

Yet and no, I learned. In a city as venerated-packed as Rome, it’s easy to get a death-near-natural-overlooked plate, a soggy panino or a plate of overcooked insipid pasta at a tourist joint that leaves you wondering how they keep their doors open. And even at many of Rome’s best restaurants, you need careful guidance to make sure you order the right things off the menu.

I was at a loss. But then I met Katie Parla. A Yale-educated, New Jersey native who’s spent the last 14 years living in Rome, Parla’s favorite one of the city’s most sought-after, English-language foodies, with a much-read blog, serious Twitter and Instagram followings, and an in-person following of all stripes, political and otherwise, and in-the-know visitors, too.

What to Get: Parla heads here Thursdays for the seaside clam festival, where the best chefs in town produce fresh, flaky pastas with fresh seafood and simple, humble roots.

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SI. SAINTRENNELLO

Why Go: Although just 15 miles from the sea, Rome offers cuisine that’s largely meat based, and good seafood spots are few and far between. This restaurant, however, “works with fishermen from the nearby Pontine Islands,” explains Parla, “so everything served in the palatial dining rooms is the freshest catch in town.”

Why Go: Part delicatessen, part restaurant, part wine bar, it plates some of Rome’s top traditional pasta dishes, using only the best ingredients. The Roscioli brothers’ culinary empire also includes a bakery and just-opened pastry shop, both nearby.

SALUMERIA ROSCIOLI

What to Get: “The classic pastas—guince, carbonara and butter and parmigiano—are best,” promises Parla. “The assiette (mixed) are forgettable, but you shouldn’t have room for them anyway after starting with the best: mortadella, prosciutto, mortadella and salame.”

What to Get: “L’Arcangelo” is rich and deep, and influenced by a Papal recipe, is rich and deep, and influenced by a Papal recipe, the house twist on guanciale and chili.”

L’ARCANGELO

Why Go: Chef Iacangelo Dandini, says Parla, “merges simple, humble roots with intellectual and elegant notions of gastronomy,” creating renditions of Roman comfort foods that “become incredibly light expressions of local flavors.”

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TERRE E DOMUS

Why Go: This restaurant and wine bar—sponsored by the City of Rome, and celebrating local produce, meat, cheese and fish—is the rate delizioso, well-sourced spot near the Roman Forum and right next to the Imperial Forum, making it Parla’s favorite for a lunch break while exploring the ancient monuments. Tables by the windows have the best views of the 100-foot-tall Trajan’s Column.

What to Get: She suggests the amarantina (pasta tossed with guanciale and tomato sauce) and seasonal vegetable sides like spring’s zucchini (a mix, pea and arugula side) or winter’s pastina (Carolina chesnut), dressed with garlic and anchovy sauce.

Foro Traiano 82, +39 06 678 3495; ristorantealmororoma.eu

Escape to the Eternal City

Live la dolce vita at the Club’s new gorgeous three-bedroom residence in Rome. Exquisite European design, en suite baths, private sitting areas, and a covered loggia overlooking immaculate gardens? Check. It may be tough to have the Club’s three-bedroom Villa Parrini, but once you do, the historic city center is just a walk away, as are fashionable finds in the Paroli-neighborhood. The Vatican awe-ins, too. 1-877-DISCOVER (DISCOVER)

KATIE PARLA HAS BECOME A GASTRONOMIC ROME GO-TO FOR EVERYONE FROM MARIO BATALI TO Mark Bittman, Andrew Zimmern to Alice Waters.