

## **THE FOOD GAP - ITALY SPRING '24**

March 1 - April 30 (60 days)

Florence, Italy

**THURS 2/29** - Day 0: Arrive in Florence. Settle into your apartment and meet your new friends! Share an evening meal at a local restaurant and get to know Firenze - visit the Duomo, Ponte Vecchio, gelato shops, and head to bed early.

**FRI 3/1** - Day 1: We start the day with student orientation, where we learn basic Italian, local customs, go over rules and expectations for the program, and play team-building activities to get to know each other. Students also receive a goodie bag of desserts, an apron, and a recipe journal. We'll learn how to use our kitchens and proper safety protocols, emergency numbers, and basic knife skills. Students receive money for their meals for the week and are briefed on where to buy the best food and how to cook for a group. Then, we head out for *The Food Gap's* favorites food tour. We'll hit up our favorite panini shop, gelato spots, and more. After our stomachs are full, we'll head to the Duomo and climb to the top, taking in the incredible view of Florence and Tuscany. Dinner is made by the instructors, who will welcome students to Italy with an array of local dishes.

**SAT 3/2** - Day 2: Today we'll head to Mercato Centrale early to see the vast array of fresh foods and market vendors. Students will compete in a scavenger hunt to find a list of rare ingredients and get to know the layout of all the cheese shops, butchers, bakers, and produce stands. You'll practice greeting locals and asking how much things cost. After that we'll head upstairs, peruse the food stalls, and eat lunch together. In the afternoon, we'll learn about bread making and we'll create our group's sourdough starter! We'll eat at Trattoria ZaZa for dinner, in the square where Bistecca Fiorentina was invented! Students can taste truffle pasta, steak, fried artichokes, and bruschetta.

**SUN 3/3** - Day 3: Today is a free day, as all Sundays are. Students are encouraged to sleep in and shake off jet lag. Make brunch in your apartment or venture out into town. We'll meet in the afternoon to get in line for the Academia Gallery - the home of the famous David statue. We'll have the late afternoon to explore before students break into small groups and cook a potluck dinner. We'll eat as a group and debrief on our first few days, and instructors will meet individually with students to check in. The rest of the night is dedicated to playing games or getting sleep.

### **Week 1 - Fundamentals Week**

**MON 3/4** - Day 4: We wake up early today to head to the train station, where we'll meet our hosts for an all-day pasta making class with lunch, wine tasting, and dessert! We'll learn from a chef couple in the Chianti region who learned traditional pasta recipes from their grandmothers. There will be plenty of photo-ops and time to marvel at our surroundings. We'll return to Florence in the late afternoon and have free time to relax and explore before dinner. Then, we'll head to a trattoria for dinner and finish off the night with gelato.

**TUES 3/5** - Day 5: We'll head out in the morning to attend our first Italian language class where we'll develop our skills and meet some new friends. For lunch, we'll try Lampredotto - a local delicacy, and have plenty of time to relax before a pizza making class! Around 6 we'll meet our host and learn the basics of dough, sauce, and toppings. We'll cook up our handmade pies in a wood-fired oven and enjoy dinner with wine.

**WED 3/6** - Day 6: Today we'll meet a local blacksmith who forges incredible culinary knives. We'll learn about the fascinating, artistic process of making cutlery and learn how to take care

of them for years to come. After a pasta lunch, we'll head to Riccardo Lucci's, a leather and paper shop, where we'll learn about paper marbling! Riccardo will teach us about the process of "cooking" algae to affix paint to paper and how to make different colorful patterns. For dinner, students will cook a mystery box of 5 local products hand-selected from Mercato Centrale that are each a different color.

**THURS 3/7** - Day 7: We'll head out early to the train station and give students a run-down on how to buy tickets, validate them, and navigate train schedules. As a group, we'll head to Certaldo, a medieval castle town on a hill, known for onions, where we'll explore picturesque streets, jewelry and ceramic shops, and of course, food shops. We'll share cheese boards for lunch and pick up red onion jam at an alimentari. We'll relax for the rest of the afternoon and head back to Florence. For dinner, students will be tasked with cooking a dinner featuring onions, an ode to Certaldo.

**FRI 3/8** - Day 8: Today is all about steak. We head to Mercato Centrale early to learn about different cuts of steak and how to cook them. We'll also learn about the history of Florence's most famous food - Bistecca Alla Fiorentina. Then we'll head to a bistecca cooking class, where a local restaurant owner and expert will show us how to perfectly cook our steaks. In the afternoon, we'll tour local book stores to find Italian cookbooks, as we start to plan and imagine our own recipes. Students will cook a vegetarian dinner for the group.

**SAT 3/9** - Day 9: Students will get to sleep in today and cook brunch with their roommates. In the afternoon, we'll learn how to make cannoli at the Lorenzo de Medici cooking school in Mercato Centrale. For dinner, instructors will pick up pizza and we'll have a movie night. We'll watch culinary-themed shows and movies to get inspiration, like *Chef's Table*.

**SUN 3/10** - Day 10: We've learnt a lot, moved a lot, and eaten a lot, so today is a free day to sleep in, catch up with friends and family back home, and to explore Florence. We'll also go grocery shopping to stock up on food.

## **Week 2 - Art Week**

**MON 3/11** - Day 8: Today we venture to a pottery shop in Montelupo where our friend Matteo will greet us. Matteo is from a 5th generation family of potters, and his father will teach us how to make our very own soup bowls! He's a master potter and a local celebrity! We'll spend the day learning about throwing and touring the family's production facility that ships pieces to Crate & Barrel, Williams Sonoma, Pottery Barn, and more! We'll take a break for lunch and check out a the local gelato and pastry shops. Then, we'll head back to the studio and learn how to paint and glaze pottery - a process similar to watercolor painting. We'll return to Florence after our lesson is over and students will make a creative dinner inspired by the pottery techniques we learned.

**TUES 3/12** - Day 9: We head back to Montelupo today to check on our bowls and to learn how to make plates, which we'll use for our cookbook photos. We'll learn about glaze colors, textures, and creative shapes, and we'll return home with plenty of inspiration. For dinner, students will make another mystery box of local delicacies.

**WED 3/13** - Day 10: Art week continues with an early tour of the Uffizi Gallery, home of some of the world's most revered art. We'll learn about the renaissance, the symbolism of color, and we'll be face-to-face with Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* and *Primavera*. We'll also tour the museum's incredible sculpture collection and share our favorite artworks over lunch. Then, we'll head to a local art school and take a figure drawing class to get our creative juices

flowing! For dinner, students will make dinner in monochrome - using ingredients of all the same color.

**THURS 3/14** - Day 11: Today we'll head to the Bargello to view some of the greatest sculptures in the world. We'll then head to palazzo Vecchio to have lunch and participate in our very own photography class. Students will learn all the basics and practice composition, lighting, and framing with a sculpture and street tour. Then, we'll head to a former prison that's been turned into a multimedia art gallery. We'll take a break from cooking to recharge and enjoy our weekly pizza night at Gustarium, a shop serving delicious focaccia-style dough.

**FRI 3/15** - Day 12: It's time for our trip to Vinci, the birth place of Leonardo Da Vinci! We'll head out early and walk through the quaint streets and explore bakeries and coffee shops. Then, we'll head to the Leonardo Da Vinci museum and soak up inspiration from Leonardo's inventions, schematics, and artworks. We'll enjoy lunch at a local trattoria that serves lemon sorbet in a lemon! After lunch, we'll have the option of taking a challenging hike up to Leonardo's birth place (and we mean challenging!). We'll also have the option to view more of Vinci, take photos, and explore. We'll head back to Florence in the late afternoon and cook a dinner inspired by Leonardo.

**SAT 3/16** - Day 13: Today students will sleep in and cook brunch at home. Then, we'll gather for a watercolor class. We'll learn the fundamentals of color mixing, paper selecting, composition, and brush techniques. We'll learn how to paint still lifes of food and snack on bread, olives, and olive oil while we paint. For dinner, we'll venture into Florence to a trattoria that specializes in ribollita, a rustic Tuscan soup. The night is free for games, movies, and relaxing!

**SUN 3/17** - Day 14: We'll sleep in, catch up with friends and family, do laundry, and go shopping for groceries. Students will have plenty of time to explore, relax, and practice their recipes.

*The Food Gap reserves the right to reschedule or cancel activities during or before the program due to unforeseen circumstances, inclement weather, and host cancellations.*