



*Tenuta  
Villa Gaia*

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*A Cooking & Wine Experience  
Hosted by  
Isabel Innocenti*

*T u s c a n y , I t a l y*



*Tuscan Way*  
LA DOLCE VITA IN TOSCANA

*"Isabella,*

*I think many people  
would really appreciate  
staying with us in Tuscany,  
visiting our beautiful  
medieval villages,  
olive groves and vineyards.  
I would like to offer  
my lifetime of experience  
in restaurants  
and hospitality, teaching  
people how to cook  
our local cuisine -  
the Tuscan Way. "*

CARLO INNOCENTI



## *Our Tuscan Land*

Ciao, I am delighted to present to you a different kind of paradise from my homeland. This paradise is Villa Gaia – a charming country estate nestled in the hills of Southern Tuscany, between the slopes of Monte Amiata and the coastal region of Maremma. Please join us for a unique culinary and cultural experience.

I am a native Tuscan and grew up a few kilometers from Villa Gaia. My father, family and I are very proud of our area of Tuscany. We cherish the food, the wine, the peasant culture, the Etruscan art, the beautiful countryside, the Villa Gaia estate and our ancestral home which is perched next to the village of Arcidosso's medieval castle.

We invite you to experience the largely undiscovered, charming towns of our Tuscan region, south of Siena. Many Italians consider this area to be one of the most splendid Italian regions because of its ancient villages and stunning landscapes. Best of all, it has always been a bit off the beaten path and has not been exploited by tourism. As our guest, we'll take you to visit the little towns of the Monte Amiata and Val d'Orcia areas, where cultural heritage is remarkably preserved. These are far away from places like downtown Rome and Florence, which, while beautiful, are heavily visited by tourists.

Join me in the next few pages as I tell you about the cultural Tuscan experience we offer at Tuscan Way and the secrets of the enchanting country estate...Villa Gaia! And keep in mind – our program is for everyone interested, whether or not you can boil water for pasta.





## *Villa Gaia Excursions & Wine Tasting*

The focus of Tuscan Way's daily excursions is for our guests to discover and experience the lesser-known towns of Tuscany. Our area of southern Tuscany is very different from other areas – far from the noise and commotion of modern city life and the bustle of the traditional tourist spots. Here, where Brunello & Olio d'Oliva di Montenero reign supreme, you will find a peaceful and harmonious environment – a quiet and lovely spot immersed in a rich countryside, where the main livelihood is red wine and olive oil.

Everyday, you will be accompanied by Isabel, and/or an expert guide on a cultural excursion. The towns that we will be visiting are charming and full of history – Arcidosso, Pienza and Montalcino are sited in the popular book titled, "The Most Beautiful Villages of Tuscany". Other towns chosen for this book, located only a few kilometers away from Villa Gaia, are San Quirico d'Orcia, Castiglione d'Orcia and Abbadia San Salvatore.

We will be visiting the celebrated wine towns of Montalcino and Montepulciano, where we will participate in wine-tastings offered in ancient and prestigious wine cellars. We will also go to see Bagni di San Filippo (known for its hot springs), Pienza (considered the ideal model of early Renaissance architecture) and the little hillside villages of the Monte Amiata area. We will share our personal stories relating to these places and our guides, Fernanda Biserni and others, will offer their insights and cultural expertise.



*"Thank you for making  
our first trip  
to Tuscany  
so memorable.*

*You really made us  
feel like family.*

*We both loved  
the cooking classes*

*and touring  
your beautiful*

*countryside.*

*Thank you all  
for a wonderful experience  
we will never forget!"*

A TUSCAN WAY GUEST

*“The best  
of artist  
hath no thought  
to show  
Which the rough stone  
in its superfluous shell  
Doth not include  
within the mass,  
and to this  
image arrives  
Only the hand  
which is obedient  
to the mind”*

MICHELANGELO BUONARROTI



## *Villa Gaia* Seggiano, Province of Grosseto

**Accommodations:** 10 guests max. for culinary program. Rental of entire estate available. Sleeps 18 guests.

Set near the medieval town of Seggiano and bordering the ruins of the ancient monastery founded by San Bernardino, the estate extends on rolling hills through vineyards, olive groves, thicket, forests and fields.

From Villa Gaia, you can easily visit the medieval villages of Sant’Angelo in Colle, Castelnuovo dell’Abate and Montalcino, perched on neighboring hilltops, or go slightly further afield to Arcidosso and Castel del Piano to the south or Bagno Vignoni and Castiglione d’Orcia to the north.

**Surroundings:** Strolling through the hills, you can often see sheep, badgers, porcupines, foxes, falcons and even wild boar. It is possible to wander, along footpaths that meander through the Monte Amiata forests and from village to village through the Val d’Orcia. Accessible by car or a very long hike, you can reach the summit of Monte Amiata (1700+ meters), which has a recreational area with a ski resort. The Tuscan seaside of the Province of Grosseto is beautiful and lined with beaches preserved by the protected Uccellina Natural Park.

Just a short distance from the villa, there are many architectural jewels such as the Convent of Monte Oliveto Maggiore, the Abbey of Sant'Antimo, the Abbey of San Salvatore and numerous castles.

For art lovers, Villa Gaia is very well situated. The medieval and Renaissance cities of Montalcino, Pienza, Montepulciano and San Quirico are nearby and these towns offer a variety of cultural events – art exhibitions, theatre and music festivals and the summer festivals of Montepulciano, Monticchiello and Montalcino.

Some of these areas are stops on Tuscan Way tours. When feasible, we also try to incorporate festivals ("Le Sagre") into our itinerary. We always try to customize excursions and are open to individual requests and suggestions.

Independent travelers often enjoy the hot baths of Bagno Vignoni and San Filippo. And further afar (40 – 50 minutes by car), one can even reach the baths of Chianciano, Saturnia or Petriolo.

*Accommodations:* Villa Gaia guests have a choice of accommodations (all are separate, elegantly furnished and have all modern conveniences):

*La Foresteria:* La Foresteria, a separate building from the main villa, accommodates 8 guests in four bedrooms. Each room has its own bathroom. These rooms share the use of a large common living room with fireplace, kitchen, laundry, storeroom, telephone and a large summer porch.

*Amiata :* Amiata is an apartment on the ground floor of the main villa which has its own private entrance. It has two bedrooms (one double bed and one twin bed), a large bathroom with bathtub, a living room with fireplace and a summer porch.

As our guest, you can take advantage of the piano, a collection of books, movies, records, satellite TV and stereo system, as well as the other amenities of the villa: swimming pool (open in the summertime) with panoramic view, mountain bikes and ping-pong table.





*"Buon Giorno!*

*Dear Carlo, our new friend:*

*This has been a perfect way*

*to celebrate*

*our 30th anniversary!*

*We had such a wonderful*

*week filled with*

*lots of laughs and food and wine.*

*We can't forget all those hills too!*

*Thank you for teaching us the art*

*of Tuscan cooking.*

*We hope we can*

*make our food look and taste as*

*beautiful and delicious as yours.. "*

A TUSCAN WAY GUEST

## *Cooking with the Innocenti Family*

Time to get down to business...and food is serious business in Italy, especially in Tuscany. The cuisine that Tuscany is famous for is known as "La Cucina Povera Toscana" (Tuscan country cooking). Literally translated it means "the poor kitchen". This was the cooking of the peasants throughout the centuries. Why poor? Because they could not afford to import delicacies from elsewhere in Europe. Rather, they became masters of self-sufficiency by growing and utilizing all local ingredients. Their creativity, blessed with an extraordinarily rich land, shows in the use of every imaginable ingredient and recipe combination that was locally available to them.

In fact, many organically grown ingredients, used in the recipes, are grown in the Monte Amiata area – extra virgin olive oil (produced at the villa), a selection of local wines and cheeses, and when in season, wild forest mushrooms (Porcini and other varieties), wild berries, herbs and fresh garden vegetables.

At Villa Gaia, we share with you some of the dishes that were taught to us by our mothers, grandmothers, great grandmothers... recipes passed from generation to generation. Some of the specialties include Risotto ai Funghi Porcini (Porcini Mushroom Risotto), Pollo alla Cacciatora (Free Range Chicken – Hunter Style) and Pappa col Pomodoro (a hearty soup that is a traditional Tuscan first course made with grilled Tuscan bread, fresh tomatoes and basil).





*The Chefs and the Ingredients:* Carlo Innocenti will share some of his recipes with you and show you the secrets his mother and grandmother taught him. His son, Romeo, has a passion for seafood and will teach you several Tuscan seafood dishes. Keep in mind that Villa Gaia is in the Province of Grosseto, a province celebrated for its seaside and the Maremma culture. "I Maremmani" (people of this region) live from the sea – and seafood is king.

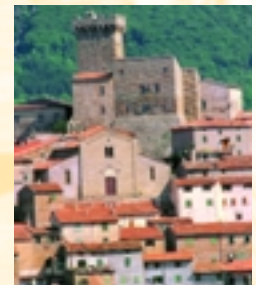
One of Romeo's favorites is "Spaghetti agli Scampi". This dish is prepared using large fresh Mediterranean scampi, Italian parsley and fresh chopped plum tomatoes. Mrs. Leoni, Romeo's mother-in-law, is famous in the family for her hand-made pasta. When available, she will teach you this classic tradition from start to finish and then we will compare how the hand-made pasta tastes next to packaged pasta.

Villa Gaia's Manager, Antonio, often fires up the wood-burning pizza oven and demonstrates how to make several varieties of pizza – a truly special treat! At Villa Gaia, you will also learn the art of preparing other savory traditional Tuscan dishes from some of our renowned guest chefs.

This land is rich in agriculture and food markets and you will develop a greater sensitivity to what constitutes a fresh ingredient (basil, rosemary, sage, porcini mushrooms, red peppers, the colors and consistency of olive oil, types of accompanying wine, etc.). You will learn the basic culinary elements and how the Tuscan farmers have used them over the centuries – and why this Cucina Povera Toscana phenomenon ever came to be, spreading around the world to places that appreciate excellent food!

*"Thank you  
for an unforgettable visit.  
I could not have imagined  
a more unique experience.  
Our trips throughout the villages,  
with your insightful comments,  
were so very enjoyable.  
And your cooking lessons!  
I'm excited to practice all the  
classic Tuscan recipes!  
I truly appreciate all your kindness,  
warmth and a glimpse of family life  
in Italy. I would like  
nothing more than to return..."*

A TUSCAN WAY GUEST





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Tenuta Villa Gaia is perfectly nestled in the lush province of Grosseto just a few miles south of Siena. The estate lies in the township of Seggiano, bordering Montalcino and Castiglione d'Orcia to the North – Northeast and Castel del Piano to the South – Southwest. Conveniently located between the famous valley of the Val d'Orcia and Monte Amiata, Southern Tuscany's highest mountain, you'll find Tenuta Villa Gaia.

The Tuscan Light slowly, but forcefully, melts into the landscape at dusk only to experience Renaissance at dawn rising like warm milk to a pillar of strength that is midday. This ebb and flow is lived daily with full immersion, as it has been since those ancient beginnings... Etruscans, advanced and clever, building the rudiments of civilization that remain, in certain simple yet fundamental ways, at the apex of the nicer aspects of civilization today – peaceful moments of beauty, the Way of the Senses and the Dolce Vita "Sweet Life" that we know in Toscana...

*"Come taste & experience with us!"*

*A presto – ciao,*

*Isabel Innocenti*



*Tuscan Way*  
LA DOLCE VITA IN TOSCANA

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