



# the countryside's treasures



TRAVELS THROUGH THE MONFERRATO AND THE PROVINCE OF ALESSANDRIA





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**TRIPS AROUND MONFERRATO  
AND THE PROVINCE OF ALESSANDRIA**

To Gian Carlo



# Alessandria: this is Italy

In visiting Alessandria, you will visit a condensed version of Italy itself. You don't believe me? Why, just take a look around: here are the plains, the hills, the snowy peaks, complete with ski slopes, and even the sea - or at least the smell of it, with coastal Liguria lying just around the corner and influencing, from afar, the cuisine and lifestyle of part of the province. This is a land of great wines, with plenty of original, rare appellations, but also a land abundant in vegetable gardens, rich in animal farming, salami and cheese production. But remember: even though we have grouped villages and towns in areas which present some sort of continuity, similarity, or bond, each single locale, each specialty, will always be absolutely unique. Salami from Alessandria, such as the *filetto baciato* or the "noble raw" from Giarolo, you will not find anywhere else. The same can be said of the Montebore or of the *formaggetta di capra* goat cheese. And of the wines: Timorasso, Brachetto, Strevi and Grignolino. Another excellent tradition is the rich *pâtisserie*, ranging from home-made artisanal cakes to an entire industry dedicated to confectionary and chocolate. Every village has its own amaretto or cookie: be it extremely well-known, such as the *krumiri*, or awaiting discovery, all bear witness to the great creativity of this

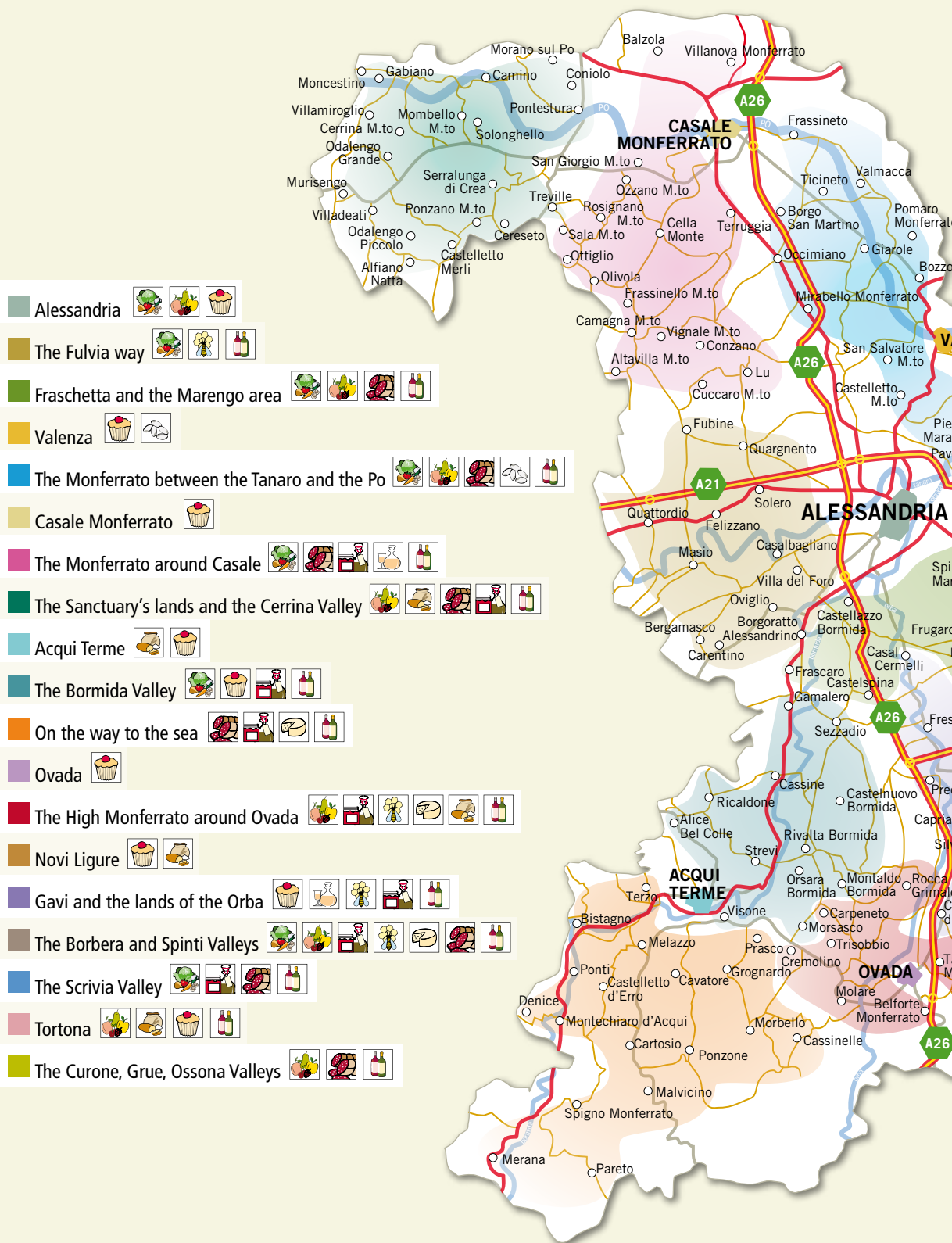


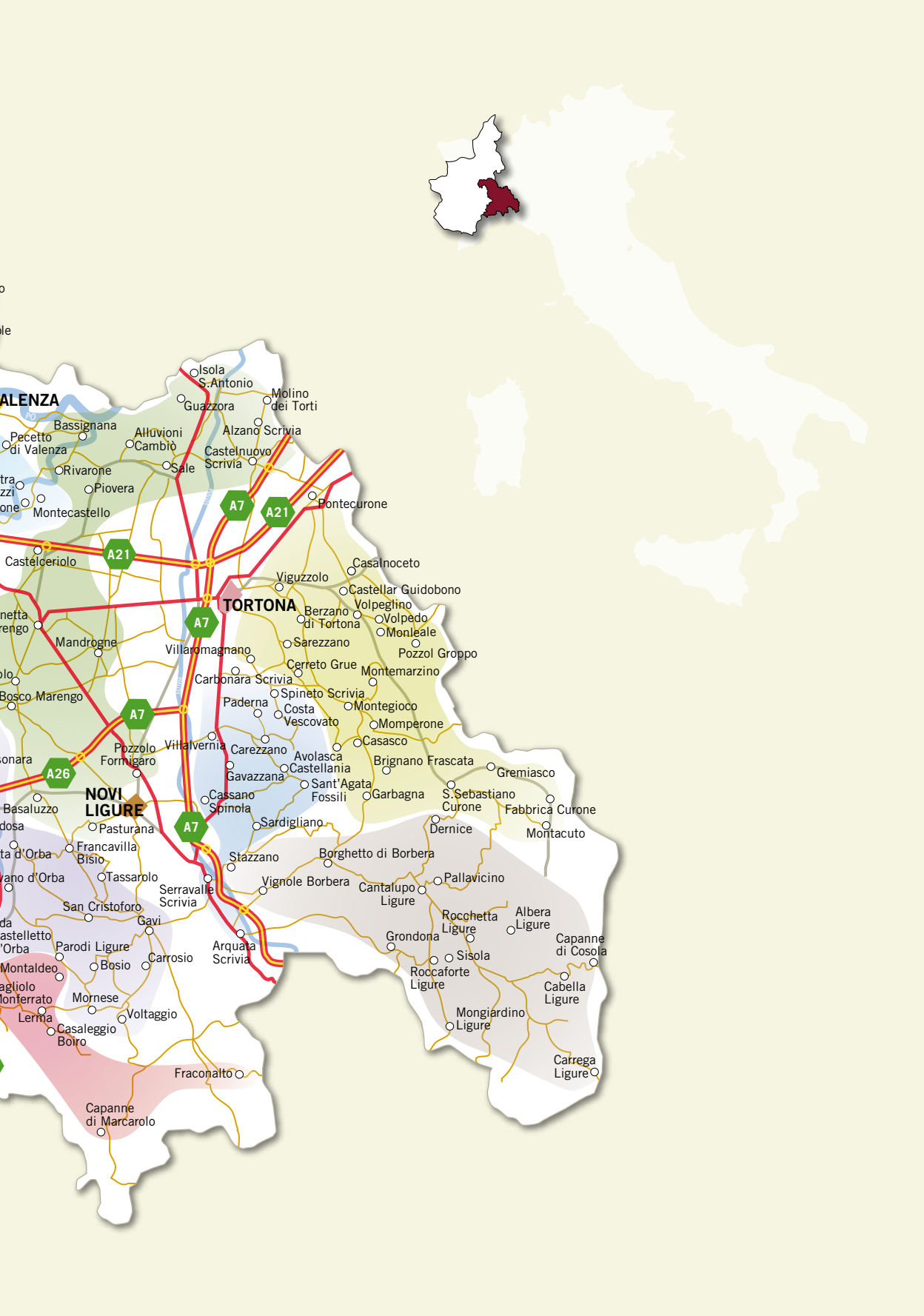
province's cooks. The local cuisine is quite varied as well, having absorbed the influence of many different cultures which passed through this landscape throughout Europe's history. More than three quarters of the province is part of the Monferrato, a region where the tides of time left dozens of castles and fortresses behind - at least forty just around this province. To write this guide we began by exploring our own fascination with this land... We found myriad villages with myriad, unimaginable and often still hidden, treasures. Artistic, environmental and cultural, of course, but also treasures from the land, the soil, and the kitchen, unique products and undiscovered artisanal recipes. But before going on I must confess that I myself am a proud son of this land and, therefore, might sometimes have let the ink flow with the wine, and my pleasure in a dish of well-made *agnolotti* get mixed up with the enthusiasm of promoting a land which tourism has not hurt but enhanced. Here, the visitor can enjoy a taste of real Italy, all at his fingertips, in a province with as many facets as there are villages, an attractive land, just waiting to be discovered. So, finally, allow us to welcome you, through these pages, to a land of villages and squares, country lanes and farmhouses. Enjoy the trip - we know you will!



Paolo Massobrio

*Journalist and food and wine critic, president of the Papillon Club*





# reading guide

This book is divided in 19 sections: seven are devoted to the main towns, while the remaining twelve are districts we have divided the remaining 190 small centers and villages of the province of Alessandria into. To do this, we kept two parameters in mind: geographic proximity and cultural continuity. Most of these areas are defined by a river, a valley, a hillside community - at the same time, they also share a collective memory of the past, as well as a similar landscape, which means their agriculture, artisanal traditions, wine production and cuisine have a lot in common as well. As for the recipes, some are directly linked to a specific area, others are part of a larger system of knowledge, and are therefore shared by many districts. Each chapter ends with an appendix containing a list of restaurants, eateries and shops in which the visitor can taste the specialties mentioned in the text - all these places have been selected by food critic Paolo Massobrio.

## Accessibility

legend by



All the information relating to the accessibility of restaurants mentioned in this guide has been collected by providing a structured questionnaire. These questionnaires have been filled in on a voluntary basis, allowing technicians from the "Turismabile" project to provide a technical description of the accessibility level of each structure. Following the contemporary international trend, we chose not to assign "accessibility points" but rather to provide all the relevant information, thereby allowing each visitor to autonomously evaluate whether or not each place is able to respond to his or her specific needs. In this context, saying that assistance is necessary to move through part of the structure means that, in some areas of the restaurant, there may be small obstacles (e.g. steps lower than 5 cm, a piece of furniture which must be moved) which may easily be overcome with the assistance of another person. When it is noted that the staff's assistance will be necessary to guarantee accessibility to a person in a wheelchair, this means that there are major obstacles (such as a

stairway) - it is advisable to contact the structure to find out whether they can be overcome, according to the client's specific needs. All the following restaurants, unless differently stated, declared to have already served disabled people in the past, and will generally offer all their support to make their clients' visit as comfortable as possible.



Structure certified by the AIC  
Italian Celiac Association



Special menus available  
upon request/reservation



Special menus  
available at all times



Small/medium sized animals  
allowed



Only guide dogs allowed



No animals allowed



No aid systems for clients  
with sensorial disabilities

# Alessandria



## piemonte's grand salon



I like Alessandria. I like it more than any other city. I like it because it's a salon, a grand salon, almost French-like in its alleys, in its cafés. My favorite way to explore it is by foot; I believe it to be the only way to appreciate its hidden treasures: the palazzi's courtyards, deep and intimate. I like the squares, completely surrounded by porticos: Piazza Garibaldi and Piazza della Libertà, beating heart of the city. This latter is where all the major roads lead, set out in an orderly grid: Via Dante, Via San Lorenzo and Corso Roma, the road natives spend their afternoons on, just walking up and down, browsing the shop windows - and checking out each other's clothes. I like the churches (there are many, and they are all lovely), and I like to know that, for two years now, Palazzo Monferrato has hosted an art show, designed to encourage quiet con-

templation in a cultural environment which is never bragged about - but always present. Alessandria is home to one of the most lively Music Conservatories in Italy, as well as to traces of a flourishing tradition of silversmiths, whose creations, as delicate as pastries, have been attributed the De.Co., Denominazione Comunale, label, a brand of origin and quality awarded by the Municipal Authorities. These lovely crafts remain a popular attraction today. I also like the Lega square, a small but popular hangout, close to the liberty-style gallery, the Galleria Guerci, a place which, alone, would suffice to put Alessandria on the maps. There is another thing, in Alessandria, which nobody ever writes about: a diffuse culture of the aperitivo, popular since the Fifties - that is, since long before anyone came up with the concept of "happy hour". In

Alessandria's caf  s, high-class barmen serve the *marocchino*, i.e. coffee with cream and cocoa. The locals' taste has always been highly refined: you can tell from the *p  tisserie*, different from all the rest of Italy, but also from the *pizzeria*, since Alessandria imported the best cooks from the Southern town of Tramonti. And then there are restaurants, wine bars, *trattorias*, a myriad choice of where to eat: each place is different, and each place is - usually - packed. They even established a label, certifying the menu's adherence

to local standards of cooking (and drinking; the province's wines are many and their quality is getting to be quite well-regarded). Have I said it all? Impossible: I should go on talking about the bread and the *focaccia*, the meat on display in the butchers' windows, the vast choice of meals waiting to be picked up in any *gastro-nomia*. The pursuit of excellence, a mark left from the military bourgeoisie's taste and spending power, is everywhere. Alessandria is worth a visit, and one day here just isn't enough.

## what to see

Many interesting parts of Alessandria were created in the Nineteenth Century: the small Lega square, heart of the city, and Piazza Garibaldi with its porticoes and palaces, all built with an eye to symmetry and regularity. Another interesting square is Piazza Marconi, with the lovely **Figarolo di Gropello Palace** - albeit partially redone in the 1930s, it maintains all the gracefulness of its eighteenth-century origins, especially if one ventures inside the courtyard. Other notable palaces, homes of the old aristocracy, are the **Ghilini Palace** (1732, considered to be one of the most beautiful manors in Italy), the **Guasco Palace** (note the imposing stairway and the 12-metre-high gallery lit by 18 windows), the **City Hall Palace** (neo-classical), the **Cuttica Palace** (Eighteenth Century, anticipating neo-classicism in the sobriety of its fa  ade) and the **Civalieri Palace** (don't miss the courtyard with its exedra entrance). All of these were mainly built in the Eighteenth Century. Another interesting corner of the city center is the Guerci Gallery, built in 1895 with fine wrought iron gates and lamplights. During the Twentieth Century other buildings were added: the **Palace of the Monferrato**, by Turinese artist Chevalley, who inserted some early eclectic elements in the design, the **Post and Telegraph Building**, covered by Gino Severini's great mosaic, and palaces by Ignazio Gardella. A major rationalist architect, Mr. Gardella designed, among others, the **Teresio Borsalino Hospital and Sanatorium**, the **Workers' House** and the "**Taglieria del Pelo**". On the other

side of the Tanaro river, outside the city, stands the imposing **Military Citadel**, built in the Eighteenth Century. The design is by Ignazio Bertola and represents a six-point star. It was Victor Amadeus, duke of Savoy, who ordered the construction of what is now one of the best-preserved of such complexes in Europe. Recently it has been re-converted for use as a cultural venue and art gallery. Three baroque "pearls" among religious buildings are **Saint Lawrence's**, **Saint Lucy's** and **Saints Alexander and Charles' Churches**. The first two's best feature are the harmonious and sober terracotta fa  ades; the third has an amazingly rich central nave. The **Cathedral** (construction ended 1879), dedicated to Saint Peter, is almost excessively polished, yet full of surprises: a fifteenth-century wooden statue of the Mary of Salvation, a Byzantine Mary of Uscetto, paintings by Moncalvo. The **Church of Saint Mary of the Carmine** in Via dei Guasco, originally built in the Fourteenth Century with double-barrel arches and vaults, has a sixteenth-century Mary of the Ro-





sary and a eighteenth-century Crucifix. **Saint John the Baptist** of the Crucifix's brotherhood is a goldmine of precious artwork, including the amazing sixteenth-century bas-relief of the Crucifixion on the portal. **Saint Mary of the Castle**, documented in a text from 1107, incorporates parts of older religious buildings; nowadays it is mostly late-gothic, with some Renaissance elements. Annexed to is is a Fifteenth-Sixteenth Century cloister. Only a few

ruins of the **Umiliati of Saint John of the Hood's** brotherhood's **settlement** remain - these are the only medieval site in the city and include a part of the cloister and of the cellar. Finally, there are a few collections worth visiting: the **Art Rooms of the Civic Museum**, the "Rooms of King Arthur" Exhibition Halls, the Ethnographic "Once upon a time" Museum and, especially, the Borsalino Hat Museum.

## products

### FROM THE VEGETABLE GARDEN TO THE PATISSERIE

Centrally positioned in the valley between the Bormida and Tanaro rivers, Alessandria has always been known for its vegetable gardens' abundance, so much so that an entire neighborhood takes its name from the city's great orti. The flatlands around Alessandria are covered with rich earth particularly suited to the cultivation of pumpkins, beets, vegetables, cherries, apricots and of the **strawberry**, pride of the small village of Casalbagliano. The city center is known for the **cookies** and **pastries**, a refined tradition developed to answer the needs of the military bourgeoisie, who gathered for coffee and tea after the theatre in the salons of the mid-Nineteenth Century. Today, the Municipality has endowed these city treasures with a quality label, faithfully recording the original recipes of all kinds of fresh pastries, cakes such as the Tartufata,



local family stores' specialties (Marengo's Polenta, Gallina's Baci, the Mandrugnin, the Rhum Meardini, Marelli's Amaretti), high-quality ice-

creams prepared with fresh fruit, and sweets baked only in certain moments of the year, such as Saint Lucy's Day's Lacabòn and Carnival's Farcìo.

## cuisine

Alessandria's cuisine is a successful blend of the great Piedmontese tradition with Ligurian and Lombard influences, a rich heritage which combines the best local produce in classic dishes such as **bagna caoda**, pig-head cima (or **saccoccia**) and **vitel tonnè**.



The result is a cuisine which is both traditional and original. Many local dishes are vegetable-based, including the **herb salad** (a famous recipe involves eggs and Saint Peter's herb), or herb omelette, as well as the area's traditional **peperonata**, a simple dish of peppers, tomatoes and anchovies, served in the summer.

The winter equivalent is the **sancrò**, a revisited Sauer-Kraut, eaten before a broad-bean soup and **garunet e fagioli** (garunet cutlets with beans), common here as well as in all the Monferrato. All

the town's restaurants serve **rabbit tuna**, a mix of rabbit meat with sage, nuts, clove and juniper, tagliolini pasta with anchovies and leeks, **capunet** (traditionally made with left-over roast meat, cooked salami and cabbage) or Boxing Day stuffed cabbage (with spi-



ced pork sausage, lean meat, fontina cheese, parmesan and bacon) and the **Alessandria-style agnolotti**, small and irregular, stuffed with stew, sausage and vegetable, cooked in the same stew or with Barbera wine. Traditional second courses include **meat stew**, also used to prepare agnolotti, rabbit cooked with peppers and **tripe**, often made following the "Piazza Tanaro soup" recipe, in which tripe is cooked with onion, potatoes, leeks and bacon, or served with tagliatelle pasta. "Alla Mandrogna" is a famous tra-

ditional **snail** recipe: the snails are cooked in white wine and then dressed with anchovies, butter and hazelnuts. During Lent, people eat plenty of fish from the river as well as **cod**, fried with tomatoes and served with a slice of polenta. The **Pollo alla Marengo** chic-



ken is a whole different story: it is attributed to Napoleon's cook Dunand, who is said to have invented it on the evening of the historical victory of the French troops over the Austrians.

This creative concoction of all there was to be found in the area (chicken, river shrimp, eggs, white wine) has reached far and wide, even being described by Auguste Escoffier, who added mushrooms to the legendary recipe.

The lesser-known - but more easily found in the area's restaurants - **Marengo veal**



is a stew cooked in white wine with tomato sauce, mushrooms and onion.

For dessert, the certified De.Co. pastries are complemented, according to the season, by specialties prepared for certain religious festivities: in November, the Beans of

the Dead, simple bean-shaped cookies with sugar, hazelnuts and egg-whites, and around Carnival the Gazze (Magpies), light and airy fried sweets made with flour, butter, Marsala liqueur and eggs, and the frittelle (also called farciò), soft fried cream puffs made of

milk, white flour, butter, eggs and sugar. Alessandria's cuisine is extremely well-suited to the area's wines, including all kinds of Barbera, from the young light one to the more full-bodied Superior Monferrato Barbera, which recently received the Docg label.



## shopping

### • Antonella Cioccolateria (Chocolatier)

via Castellani, 16 - phone 0131441828

closed: Tuesday

chocolates, sweets, "Monferrini" (bread-crusts, cooked in the oven and covered in 70% dark chocolate)

### • Bar Gipsy's (Café)

via Galvani, 12 - phone 0131442467

closed: Monday

aperitivi and home-made ice-cream

### • Bar Tazza d'Oro (Café)

via Bergamo, 13 - phone 013155758

closed: Sunday

specialties and wine from all over Italy

### • Boano

via San Lorenzo, 71 - phone 0131254797

via Dante, 80 - phone 0131252058

closed: Wednesday afternoon

high-quality white meats, roast chicken

### • Enoteca Millevigne (Winery)

via Pontida, 54 - phone 0131535970

vast selection of Piedmontese wine

### • Gelateria Cernè

piazzetta della Lega, 12 - phone 0131251643

home-made ice-cream

### • Gelateria Cernè

corso Crimea, 45 - phone 0131254268

closed: Tuesday - home-made ice-cream

### • Gelateria Soban

via San Lorenzo, 99  
phone 0131445255

home-made ice-cream, ice-cream with no sugar, ice-cream for people with food intolerances (gluten, lactose, eggs), certified by the Italian Celiac Association (AIC)

### • Guidetti Cocktail Bar

via Alessandro III, 33 - phone 0131260148  
closed: Tuesday

cocktails, wine, cheese, pastries, honey, jams

### • Macelleria Baldon (Butchery)

via dei Guasco, 18 - phone 0131263593  
Piedmontese breed bovine meat

### • Macelleria Fara (Butchery)

via Rettoria, 19 - phone 0131226268  
Fraschetta cow salami, tripe

### • La Mandragora

via Legnano, 25 - phone 0131262960  
closed: Monday morning

organic agriculture products, food for people with intolerances

### • Pane & Co.

corso V. Marini, 67 - phone 0131253178  
closed: Sunday

sweet and savory focaccia

### • Panetteria Mauro Sandroni (Bakery)

corso IV Novembre, 45 - phone 0131253013  
closed: Wednesday afternoon

bread and focaccia (specialty: hard treccia)

### • Pasta Fresca Fabio e Luisa (Fresh pasta)

via San Lorenzo, 72 - phone 0131263548  
closed: Wednesday afternoon

agnolotti, rabaton

### • Pasticceria Bonadeo (Patisserie)

Galleria Guerici  
phone 0131251741 - closed: monday

Alessandria's traditional pastries, "Polenta di Marengo" cake

### • Pasticceria e Confetteria

### Rovida & Signorelli (Patisserie)

piazza Garibaldi, 23 - phone 0131252754  
0131246937 - closed: Tuesday

historic patisserie in Alessandria, De.Co. savoury pastries

### • Pasticceria Gallina (Patisserie)

via Vochieri, 46 - phone 013152791  
closed: Monday and Sunday afternoon

"Baci di Gallina" cookies, "Baciona" cake

### • Pasticceria Mezzaro (Patisserie)

via Cavour, 43/45 - phone 013168815  
closed: Monday

Mezzarini (sweet creams served in small glasses)

### • Pasticceria Pasquali (Patisserie)

via Trotti, 67 - tel 0131254130 - closed: Monday  
chocolate baci, Bavarian cream with chocolate

### • Pasticceria Rolando (Patisserie)

via Plana, 3 - phone 0131443538  
closed: Monday and Sunday afternoon

amaretti, many tastes

### • Pasticceria Zoccola (Patisserie)

corso Lamarmora, 61 - phone 0131254767  
via San Lorenzo, 102 - phone 013143772

closed: Monday

mignon cream pastries and Tartufata (cake)

### • Pasticceria Gastronomia Teo e Bia (Patisserie and Gastronomy)

via Sant'Ubaldo, 32/a - phone 0131222752  
www.teoebia.com

organic products, products for people with food intolerances

### • Salumeria Parma & Reggio (Butchery)

via Dante, 92 - phone 0131260451  
closed: Wednesday afternoon

cheese and salami from all over Italy

### • Il Salumaio

via Dei Guasco, 20 - phone 0131253624  
closed: Wednesday afternoon

stuffed fresh pasta, rabaton, selected cheeses and cured meats

### • Vineria Mezzo-Litro (Winery)

corso Monferrato, 49 - phone 0131223501  
closed: Monday

Wines, local salami, rice, oil, grappa, chocolate, jams and preserves

- paved parking lot with spaces reserved for disabled persons. - the ground-level entrance and the interior are easily and autonomously accessible by wheelchair - disabled bathroom.



**CANTALUPO**• **Macelleria Ferrua (Butchery)**

via Pace, 1 - phone 0131269206

closed: Sunday and Monday

**Piedmontese bovine meat, ox meat, home-made sausages****CASCINAGROSSA**• **Macelleria Armano Gigetto (Butchery)**

via Gramsci, 3 - phone 0131619689

**Fraschetta salami****VALLE SAN BARTOLOMEO**• **Macelleria Da Davide (Butchery)**

piazza Dossena, 32 - phone 013159473

closed: Sunday and afternoons; Saturday open from 7 am to 4 pm

**salami, meat**• **Az. Agr. Berto Vito (Farm)**

via S. Antonino, 17/19

phone 013159370

open: Friday and Saturday (8-11.30 am)

**meat****VALMADONNA**• **De Gustibus**

via Profumati, 12 - phone 0131507066

**bakery with organic flour**

## what to eat

• **A Casa di Joséphine**

via Parma, 10

phone 0131253971

closed: Sunday

set menu price: 30 euro

**rabaton, "alla cacciatora" chicken, tartrà in red sauce***- paved parking lot with spaces close to the entrance - a person on a wheelchair will require the staff's assistance in order to navigate the interior; it is not easy to move around - disabled bathroom.*• **Alli Due Buoi Rossi**

via Cavour, 32

phone 0131517171

www.alliduebuoirossi.com

closed: Saturday for lunch, Sunday evening

set menu price: 35 euro

**capunet with bagna caoda, rabaton grilled with butter and sage**• **L'Arcimboldo**

via Legnano, 2

phone 013152022

www.ristorantearcimboldo.it

closed: Sunday; open for lunch Monday to Friday

set menu price: 35 euro

**butter and sage plin, gnocchi with fonduta cheese, Piedmontese veal cutlets**• **Duomo**

via Parma, 28

phone 013152631

closed: Saturday for lunch and Sunday

set menu price: 35-45 euro

**Carnaroli rice with leeks and duck salami, bollito misto, hazelnut soft icecream with Turin-style bicerin coffee***- paved parking lot - the step at the entrance can be overcome by a wheelchair only with the assistance of another person; the same is true of the interior - the bathrooms can be reached by wheelchair but a wheelchair cannot get close to the WC.*• **Il Grappolo**

via Casale, 28

phone 0131253217

www.ristoranteilgrappolo.it

closed: Monday evening and Tuesday

set menu price: 35 euro

**agnolotti monferrini with three-roasts dressing, stuffed guinea hen, boiler meat***- paved parking lot with spaces reserved for disabled persons - the entrance, with paved slide, and the interior are easily accessible by wheelchair, with the occasional assistance of another person - the bathroom's structure does not allow for a wheelchair to get close to the WC.*

### • **Gusto (Winery)**

piazza Principessa Mafalda di Savoia, 15  
phone 0131441141 - closed: Sunday  
set menu price: 24 euro

**agnolotti, Fassone veal with potatoes**

### • **La Piola**

via Poligonia, 86  
phone 0131226779

closed: Monday - set menu price: 23 euro

**rabaton, veal with artichokes, stone-cooked rooster**

- paved parking lot - the entrance and the interior are easily and autonomously accessible by wheelchair - disabled bathroom.

### • **Dai Tre Gnüront**

via Plana, 95 - phone 013156423

closed: Monday and Tuesday

set menu price: 25 euro

**agnolotti, cumudà cod with onions and tomato**

### • **Osteria della Luna in Brodo**

via Legnano, 12- phone 0131231898

closed: Monday - set menu price: 29 euro

**risotto with herbs and robiola di Roccaverano cheese, roasted veal, hazelnut cake with chocolate cream**

### • **Osteria Porcavacca**

via Modena, 68 - ang. via U. Rattazzi

phone 0131234274

closed: Monday - set menu price: 35 euro

**potato gnocchi with sausage and mushrooms, seafood with green beans and potatoes in basil**



**sauce, veal filet marinated with herbs and cooked on stone**

### • **Torino**

via Vochieri, 108

ph. 013155752 - [www.bioristorantetorino.it](http://www.bioristorantetorino.it)

closed: Monday - set menu price: 33 euro

**veal carpaccio with herbs and Montebore cheese, potato and beet gnocchi with cheese fondue, "drunk" salami with polenta**

- gravel parking lot with reserved spaces - the ground-floor entrance and inside rooms allow for easy movement for clients on a wheelchair - disabled bathroom.

### • **Il Vicoletto**

vicolo Cremona, 1 - phone 0131261578

closed: Wednesday evening e Sunday

set menu price: 32 euro - **"Alla Marengo" chicken**



### **SAN MICHELE**

#### • **Al Mulino**

via Casale, 44

phone 0131362250

[www.almulino-hotel.it](http://www.almulino-hotel.it) - closed: Sunday

set menu price: 26 euro

**piedmontese stew agnolotti, Fassone raw meat with robiola cheese and fresh tomato**

- private, paved, parking lot, with reserved spaces - the ground-level entrance and the rooms inside are easily navigated by wheelchair - disabled bathroom. The staff has no previous experience with clients with special needs.

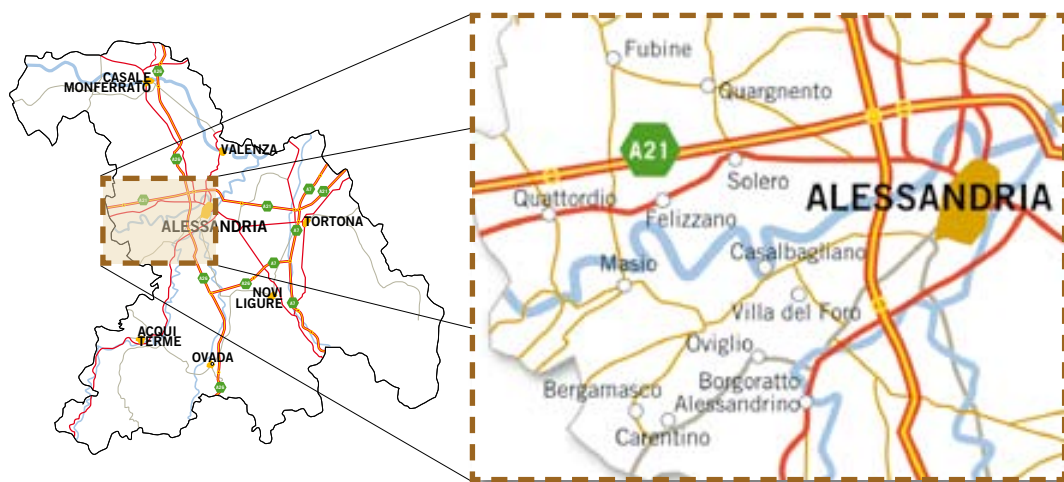


## events

- "Fiera di San Giorgio" festival (end of April - beginning of May)  
info: [www.comune.alessandria.it](http://www.comune.alessandria.it)
- "Scampagnata in centro" (May) info: [turismo@provincia.alessandria.it](mailto:turismo@provincia.alessandria.it)
- Artisanal Chocolate fair and market "Alé Chocolate" (October)  
info: [assessorato.commercio@comune.alessandria.it](mailto:assessorato.commercio@comune.alessandria.it)
- "Fiera di Saint Baudolino" festival (November) info: [www.asperia.it](http://www.asperia.it)
- "Festa di Santa Lucia", festival and procession, sale of lacabon sweets (December)  
info: [www.comune.alessandria.it](http://www.comune.alessandria.it)
- in various parts of the province Visiting Cellars, Castles and... Wineries,  
(every Sunday, May to October)  
info: [turismo@provincia.alessandria.it](mailto:turismo@provincia.alessandria.it)

# The Fulvia way

Bergamasco, Borgoratto Alessandrino, Carentino, Casalbagliano, Felizzano, Fubine, Masio, Oviglio, Quargnento, Quattordio, Solero, Villa del Foro



## a portrait of nineteenth-century piemonte



A legend has circulated, since time immemorial, in the villages between Alessandria and Asti: it is said that a network of secret passageways runs underground, connecting them all. As a child I remember catching a glimpse of one of them, an opening hidden in the forest which stretches from the Pallottini di Abbazia di Masio boarding school to the damp valleys of the river Tanaro. According to legend, these tunnels made their way under the riverbed, connecting tower to church, to castle, to convent. The name of Abbazia is connected to the existence of one such place, a Benedictine monastery, while in the plain, close to Felizzano, a still-visible ruin used to be host a convent. Driving along the Via Fulvia, by car or by bus, one feels the echo of Piemonte's Eighteen-hundreds; mulberry trees dot the low fields - a silk-worm production once flourished here. A system of small lakes and waterways, composing a much-

needed irrigation network, is still there to be admired. Today, they are full of fish and water fowl. Noble families, lords with their castles, were the forces behind the strong agricultural system established in this area. The first manor one sees is the ruin of Casalbagliano, just before Villa del Foro. Next comes Oviglio, where the castle is still very much the focal point of the village's topography, and then Solero. Finally, one reaches Redabue, a true jewel. The village still retains its air of self-sufficiency, surrounded as it is by prosperous farmhouses, a park and the church Juvarra designed, later used as a model for Torino's Superga. The structure of this and all the other villages of the area denotes the presence of a strong, resilient community, which continues to defend itself, its traditions and its heritage. Young people have been very active in the restoration of historical sites, including some of Minister Urbano Rattazzi's many



properties. It's hard to believe - but quite true - that one of the many common ovens which used to be at the centre of the old communities is back in use, and has become a popular meeting-place. Find it in the "Popolo" quarter

of Abbazia di Masio. Wine-yards, hazelnut trees, forests - including one at Tenuta Zucca, which belonged to the legendary cyclist Fausto Coppi - provide the main ingredients for the local cuisine, and for the area's many famous restaurants.

## what to see



In **Villa del Foro** visit the Antiquarium, inside the important archaeological site of the roman Forum Fulvii. The tower in **Masio**, as well as the gothic church in San Dalmazzo, is undergoing restoration. In the church of Holy Mary Magdalene note the precious altar, created by G.B. Solaro. Outside the village stands the castle of Redabue, medieval in origin, and next to it a church designed by baroque architect Filippo Juvarra.

The Lajone castle in **Quattordio** was built in recent times over the ruins of a seventeenth-century residential building. In the same village, the City Hall, Palazzo Sanfront, has just been restored. The late Romanic church of

Saint Dalmatius, in **Quargnento**, is notable for its architecture as well as for the saint's reliquary, kept inside. The parish church in **Fubine**, dedicated to Saint Christopher and built in 1490, has an elegant rose window. Religious buildings enrich the village of **Felizzano**: Saint Peter's, Twelfth Century, holds a series of original tiles and Saint Michael's still has its original Romanic-gothic bell-tower, while in Saint Roch's there are frescoes from the Fifteenth Century. The parish church in **Oviglio** is from 1308 but older still is the church of Saint Agatha, which was already here in 850. Another Romanic-gothic church is that of Saints Perpetuo and Bruno in **Solero**.

## products

### THE SARACENO ASPARAGUS

**Asparagus** was introduced in Masio at the beginning of the Twentieth Century in the Purple Argenteuil variety - at the time, it was sold in the markets of Asti and Alessandria. Nowadays it grows in the sandy hills of the area, where it is harvested in April and May. The local asparagus has a very strong taste and is used in a famous recipe: the **subrich**, small omelets, always served fresh, made with asparagus, spinach, herbs, parmesan cheese and eggs. Historically, this was a "poor" dish, prepared with whatever there was to



be found in village gardens and cooked over a hot brick (*su-brich* meaning, in fact, over the brick). Both the asparagus and the *subrich* recipe have received the De.Co. appellation in July 2006. The nearby village of Fubine is

also famous for green asparagus; a fair is held here in May, when the monferrina asparagus dish, cooked very simply with butter and parmesan cheese, is served in abundant quantities to natives and visitors alike.

### HONEY

Innumerable generations of farmers have kept bees in this area, with business getting better in the last few decades. The Municipality of Masio awarded its beekeepers with a De.Co. appellation in 2006, for the following kinds of honey:

- **Acacia**: liquid, very light, floral and sweet, often has a vanilla scent.

Refreshing to the palate.

- **Sunflower**: liquid, but quick to crystallize. Vegetable, not very sweet, fruity. Characteristically bright yellow or amber-colored (in the Masio area, often mixed with honeydew).



- **Forest**: liquid, doesn't always crystallize. Generally very sticky, amber-colored, dark, with a vegetable or fruity smell, not very sweet and almost astringent (not unlike malt).

- **Wildflower**: liquid, may cry-

stallize quickly or slowly. Smell, taste and color depend on the composition (linden, chestnut, honeydew, ailanthus).

Particularly suited for the local pastries, honey is also often served with aged cheeses.

## cuisine

In these villages, every speciality has a long history. In Oviglio people cook the **pen**, meatballs with lard, ham, eggs, cheese, parsley and garlic, while in Masio the **subrich** received De.Co. appellation (see under "asparagus"). Asparagus is also cooked in a green dip with eggs, or in the oven. Every single village has its own way of making **agnolotti**, generally a variation on rabbit, veal and vegetables. **Alla cacciatora** rabbit or chi-

**cken** with vegetables is reserved for Sundays and holidays, followed by the sweet bread called **tirà**, with raisins and sugar, cooked in a wood-burning oven. Local cuisine also includes freshwater fish (catfish caught in the Belbo and Tanaro rivers) and mushrooms. These fertile lands' rich vegetable gardens supply all kinds of produce, such as cabbage, beets, spinach, carrots, beans, green beans, peas and broad beans, which the

farmers used to put in soups or in summer salads with egg and cheese. Cabbage is the main ingredient of one of the Alessandria province's most well-known dishes, **capunet**, stuffed cabbage leaves with pork, egg and garlic. The peasant dish called **pe**, only prepared in the village of Solero, is made with stale bread, parmesan cheese, lard, salami, eggs and spinach, rolled in big dumplings to be eaten with broth.

## wine



The area produces excellent wines, mostly based on Barbera from the great vineyards of Quargnento - including the Shon winery where the famous

fashion designer Mila Shon lived until a short while ago - Fubine and Masio.

Barbera is native to the Monferrato and is the most com-

mon cultivation; nevertheless, its precise origin is lost in time. Allegedly, it is first mentioned in Chieri and Nizza's public registries from the beginning of



the Sixth Century A.D.  
The Piedmontese scientist Gallesio classified it as *vitis vinifera montisferratensis*, linking the plant to the land forever.

The wine is a rich red ruby, with notes of violet, rose and almond. Its main characteristic is an acidity level which is quite refreshing to the palate. Two

types of Barbera wine exist, still and vivace, or "lively". The Valle Tiglione prides itself in the excellence of its Barbera grapes.

## shopping

### FUBINE

#### • Az. Agr. Mauro Antonio Longo (Farm)

via della Repubblica, 11/a  
phone 0131778656 mobile 330510129

Marano corn flour for polenta

### MASIO

#### • U Re

fraz. Abazia-str. Collina, 17

phone 0131799080

closed: Wednesday afternoon

Russian salad, locally produced salami, cheese, jam, flour

#### • Apicoltura Roggero (Beekeeping)

fraz. Abazia - strada Collina, 17

phone 0131799259 - De.Co. honey

### OVIGLIO

#### • Az. Agr. Battisti Silvana (Farm)

Cascina Milandra strada Felizzano

ph. 0131776047 - "senese" breed pork meat

### QUATTORDIO

#### • Az. Agr. Olivazzi (Farm)

piazza Olivazzi, 2 - phone 0131773314

www.olivazzi.it - closed: never (please arrange a visit by phone) - tajarin (hand-made pasta)

## what to eat



### FELIZZANO

#### • La Torre

via Paolo Ercole, 84 - phone 0131791156

closed: Monday - set menu price: 30 euro

agnolotti with stew, "alla cacciatora" chicken, bollito misto



### MASIO

#### • Casa del Popolo

Antico Forno dell'Abbazia delle Roncaglie

fraz. Abbazia - Contrada Monvicino, 15

phone 0131799004 - mobile 3281135709

closed: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday (open only)

in the evening) - set menu price: 15 euro  
**farinata, chickpea soup, tongue with green sauce**

• **Losanna**

via San Rocco, 36

phone 0131799525

closed: Sunday evening, Monday

set menu price: 35 euro

**De.Co. subrich, agnolotti, cod, tripe, donkey stew**

- gravel parking lot with no reserved spaces, the entrance can be accessed by a wheelchair only with the assistance of another person; the same is true of the interior - rooms are sufficiently spacious to be accessible to people on a wheelchair - disabled bathroom.



**OVIGLIO**

• **Donatella**

piazza Umberto I, 1

phone 0131776907

closed: Sunday evening, Monday

set menu price: 60 euro

**Roccoverano robiola ravioli, rabbit ravioli cooked in rabbit stew with fresh porcini mushrooms, tuna in bitter chocolate with onion marmelade, coffee cream**

• **Da Tunon**

via Dante, 4

phone 0131776218

0131776142

www.ristorantedatunon.com

closed: Friday

set menu price: 30 euro

**pen (a specialty from Oviglio), salmì boar, bollito misto**

- parking lot (mixed paving and gravel) with spaces reserved for disabled persons - rooms and interior spaces are easy to navigate by wheelchair - disabled bathroom.



**SOLERO**

• **La Bettola**

via G. Di Vittorio, 17 - phone 0131217220

closed: Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evening

set menu price: 20 euro

**farinata, raw ham cappellacci with pumpkin cream, pork chops**

## events

<b>Bergamasco</b>	Truffle fair and market (October) info: <a href="http://www.comune-bergamasco.it">www.comune-bergamasco.it</a>
<b>Fubine</b>	Asparagus fair (April) info: <a href="http://www.comunedifubine.it">www.comunedifubine.it</a>
<b>Masio</b>	Subrich fair (April) info: <a href="http://www.comune.masio.al.it">www.comune.masio.al.it</a>
<b>Quargnento</b>	"Palio dell'Oca Bianca" race and parade in historic dress (May) <a href="http://www.comune.quargnento.al.it">www.comune.quargnento.al.it</a>

# Fraschetta and the Marengo area

Alluvioni Cambiò, Alzano Scrivia, Basaluzzo, Bassignana, Bosco Marengo, Castellazzo Bormida, Castelceriolo, Castelnovo Scrivia, Castelspina, Frascaro, Frugarolo, Guazzora, Isola Sant'Antonio, Mandrogne, Molino dei Torti, Pasturana, Piovera, Pozzolo Formigaro, Rivarone, Sale, Spinetta Marengo



## the legend of mayno from spinetta



Mayno from Spinetta is the legendary hero in these parts, a Robin Hood of the plains, who dared to oppose the French troops' occupation - the context being the years following the historic Battle of Marengo, where Napoleon beat the Austrians. Storytellers also like to tell the tale of Giuditta of Fraschetta, a pretty maiden from Bosco who daringly humiliated and tricked Napoleon's soldiers in defense of the weak. This is a land which sparks the imagination, particularly the villages around Mandrogne, which, in certain months of the year, assume a mysterious air, strangely South-American in character. People from the Mandrogno area, cattle farmers and traders, insufficiently defended from the outside world, are often said to be diffident folk. The region's cuisine, on the

other hand, is open to creativity and quite original: one of the most famous dishes is the historical (or maybe legendary?) Pollo alla Marengo, chicken cooked with eggs, vegetables and river shrimp, which Napoleon is said to have enjoyed during his Italian campaign. Some eateries in the Alessandria province still serve it, together with the rabaton; these vegetable-and-cheese dumplings, typical of Fraschetta, should not be missed, as they are the symbol and pride of Alessandria's province's cuisine. Among the cooking professions' brightest stars, Luigi Lombardi's legend lives on in these parts. This cook from Bosco Marengo was a contemporary of Nino Bergese: together, they codified the tradition of Italian bourgeois cooking. Nowadays, visitors are drawn

to Spinetta's La Fermata, one of the most renowned restaurants in Italy, a shrine to local cuisine... with a touch of creative flair. In Bosco Marengo, furthermore, birthplace of Pope Ghislieri, aka Pius the Vth, the most traditional dishes are served at the Locanda dell'Olmo. A whole page ought to be devoted to Castellazzo Bormida, important agricultural center, producing red beets but also, perhaps more appealingly, chocolate, in the "Fabbrica del Cioccolato" headed by maître chocolatier Giacomino Boidi. It is here in Castellazzo that every year, in July, the unusual Sanctuary of our

Lady of Motorcyclists - the Madonna dei Centauri - is paid homage to by two-wheel aficionados from all over the globe. Personally, I think that this flat landscape is better suited to bicycles: from here it's a lovely ride to the banks of the great Po, with time for a stop at the Da Manuela restaurant, on the river island of Sant'Antonio. The menu covers the whole range of traditional local specialties, including frogs, snails and all manner of dishes inspired by the rich number of vegetables grown and harvested in this vast and generous plain. So pick up your bicycles: off we go!

## what to see

History comes alive when you travel through the villages of this district. In **Bassignana** visit the Romanic chapel of Saint John the Baptist and the parish church of Saint Steven, with its ancient, precious treasure. The church of Saints Peter and Paul in **Castelnuovo Scrivia** is Romanic as well, while the elegant Pretorio Palace dates to the Fourteenth Century. Other points of interest are the church of Saint Ignatius and the great Centurione-Scotto palace with its Genoese architecture.

In **Sale**, stop to admire the Renaissance Church of Saint John the Baptist, the sixteenth-century church of Saint Calogerus and the old parish church of Saints Mary and Syrus. The Assumption parish church of **Guazzora** (Eighteenth Century) dominates the village where the Bishops of Tortona used to have their summer residence. The parish churches of **Alluvioni Cambiò** (Saint Charles') and **Isola Sant'Antonio** (Saint Anthony's) were both built in the eighteenth-hundreds. Among the many castles, visit the one in Piovera - inside, some parts are painted black in mourning for the death of Napoleon - and the Clara Fuentes castle in **Basaluzzo**. All the villages already mentioned, as well as **Rivarone** (where the baroque church is dedicated to the Nativity of Mary), **Alzano Scrivia** and **Molino dei Torti** are part of the protected Natural Riverside Park of the Po, a lovely setting

for walks and bicycle rides. In **Castelceriolo**, close to Alessandria, there is an ancient castle and fortress, belonging to the Ghilini family. In **Spinetta Marengo** the Battle Museum covers the historic victory of the French troops over the Austrians in the year 1800. In **Bosco Marengo**, inside the massive religious complex of the Holy Cross, there is a Renaissance church with works by some of the great masters of the time, including paintings by Vasari and a statue attributed to Michelangelo. In **Pozzolo Formigaro** stop to admire the medieval castle, the Ghiare church, and the Oratory of the Holy Trinity and of Saint Bartholomew. About one kilometer from Pasturana, the ancient and hallowed longobard church of Saint Martin has recently been restored. Closer to Alessandria, inside the Church of the Assumption in **Castelspina**, there is an admirable seventeenth-century altarpiece. In **Castellazzo Bormida** the Sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin of the Clay has taken the name of Little Mary of the Motorcyclists and become a pilgrimage site for bikers from all over Europe. The nearby Church of the Trinity of Lungi was built in the Twelfth Century, probably as part of a vaster monastic complex. The building has gone through a lot of changes throughout the centuries, and only part of the apse, some stonework and the Byzantine-style capitals testify to its Romanic origin.



## products

### **GARLIC AND GOLDEN ONIONS**

**Garlic**, grown since time immemorial in the small village of Molino dei Torti, is one of the Region of Piemonte's Traditional Agricultural Products (P.A.T.). Here, the old varieties are still grown with traditional methods. This garlic usually has 8 to 10 cloves, wrapped in papery skin which can be white, pink or mauve. The plant, with its green base leaves, can grow as high as 70cm. Garlic is harvested in two different times: the borgognone variety, also called ravagno, usually eaten raw in salads, is picked in June, while the winter white variety, here known as Molino dei Torti's garlic, is harvested in July, then dried, and sold on the national and international markets. The **golden onion** is abundant around Castelnuovo Scrivia, together with the more common red variety. These plants can grow to about 40cm, and produce a very sweet bulb. They are generally harvested between August and September.



## RED BEET AND BLACK SALSIFY

The red beet produced in the villages of Castellazzo Bormida and Castelspina is a local variety. The edible part is the root, deep red in color; it is planted early and can be picked from July to October. Generally, it is stored after harvesting, then cooked in a 300°C oven, or steamed. Afterwards, it is ready to be packaged in bags, trays or under vacuum and distributed to the markets. **Black salsify**, or scorzonera, is grown in the Castellazzo area's vegetable gar-

dens, and has been, according to local historians, for quite a few decades. The edible part is the root, which is whitish-

yellowish and carrot-like, 20 to 30cm long. It is eaten in the fall and in winter, boiled or cooked in the oven.



## POTATOES AND CELERY

**Potatoes** were brought to the low Scrivia valley a very long time ago - this is documented by local historians - and are cultivated successfully, producing around 400,000 quintals a year, mostly around Castelnovo Scrivia and Guazzora. The variety here is a yellow, round-ish potato, harvested early in order to satisfy the demand or to avoid late diseases if the potato is produced for propagation. It is cooked in many ways, in gnocchi, mashed, in salads, boiled, fried. **Celery** was first introduced in the vicinity of Alluvioni Cambiò, probably before the Second World War. The village hosts a "Celery Fair" every year since 1977. The local celery is thick and wide, can grow up to 60cm, is greenish-white, tender and crunchy, with a distinctive strong aromatic smell. It is harvested in autumn to be served in salads or with a dressing called pinzimonio. Locally it is also eaten with bagna caoda.





## PUMPKINS

The province of Alessandria, mainly the area around Castellazzo, was for a very long time one of the main areas for the cultivation of **pumpkins** - many local studies exist on the subject.

Cultivation and preservation methods have changed little through the centuries.

The Alessandria pumpkins are roundish and large, with a thick green skin hiding a sweet yellow pulp which tends to get more sugary as it ages.

The harvest is in fall, September to November, and the pumpkins can be eaten fresh or preserved.



With the passing of time, most of the starch turns into sugar, improving the product's quality.

## CHERRIES

Cherry trees grow all around the village of Rivarone, as well as in some parts of Montecastello and Bassignana. There are two varieties:

- the **Early Cherry**, a soft, small, deep red cherry with a delicate and sweet taste and
- the **Beauty from Pistoia**, also known as the Hard Cherry of Rivarone. This kind makes flatter fruits which are light red, rather hard and very sweet. It is harvested in May and eaten fresh.





## MELONS

Typically, **melons** are grown in the low Scrivia Valley, mainly in Isola S. Antonio and Castelnuovo Scrivia. The species was introduced after the war; it is grown in a sandy valley which is scarcely irrigated. The local melons are oval shaped or sometimes round, yellow, with a thick rough skin. They are a summer crop, planted in May-June and picked between the first week of July and the end of August. Melon is eaten as fruit but also cooked in risotto or used to make melon ice-cream or a fruit-salad with Muscat wine.



## COW SALAMI

This is a traditional dish, made by the butchers of the Fraschetta area, especially in Mandrogne, Litta Parodi and

Cascinagrossa. Generally, these small salami are made from the meat of old cows, with the addition of pig lard and spices.

It is a peasant dish, served fried, grilled or boiled with polenta.



## cuisine

The local cuisine is as rich as the local ingredients are varied. Frascchetta's specialties include the **rabaton** (egg, flour, ricotta cheese and herbs dumplings), and the **ciapilaia** (horse or beef ground meat cooked in red wine and served over polenta), the typical salami and sausage, cooked in Barbera wine with spices, onion and herbs. Around Bosco people prepare the **gnocchetti**, tiny egg-dough pasta cooked in chicken broth, and chicken necks stuffed with the

"poor" parts of the animal. Sale is well-known for the S. Stefano bread-sticks and cookies, while Alluvioni Cambiò offers "**the delights of Alluvioni**", cookies made with cocoa powder and hazelnuts. Many peasant dishes come from Castelnuovo Scrivia, such as the **ciapulò** (ground and cured donkey meat), **panada** (stale bread, water, oil, cheese and salt), **farsò** (flour, egg and sugar pancakes), **crumbè** (a Christmas cake), **tajarè e fasò** (home-made pasta) and the

Dar Carsent cake, a self-rising cake which has been prepared here for centuries. Isola Sant'Antonio has a typical Isola dip made with local vegetables, good to accompany stewed meat, and everywhere in the area people cook **thistles**, either with anchovies or cooked in the oven. Bagna caoda also goes well with topinambour, or Jerusalem artichoke, a root of the sunflower family which can be consumed raw as well as stir-fried.

## wine

The area does not have a strong tradition of wine-making, as the grape blights which spread everywhere at the end of the Nineteenth Century destroyed the valley's vineyards. Fortuna-

tely, land which has been planted with grapes is very easy to re-convert. There is a rare wine, still occasionally found, the Nerello of Frascchetta, which probably was common before the

two major diseases (powdery mildew and phylloxera), and was later set aside in favor of the more productive Barbera and Cortese grapes, which grow in the surrounding hills.

## shopping

### BASSIGNANA

#### • Pasticceria Pino (Patisserie)

corso Italia, 35 - phone 0131926267

closed: Monday and Tue. afternoon

**"Brassadé" (traditional breakfast cookies)**

#### • Il Buongustaio di Bassignana

via Cavour, 30 - phone 0131926019

www.il-buongustaio.it

**Carnaroli rice, torcetti, winery**

### CASTELLAZZO BORMIDA

#### • Az. Agr. Padana (Farm)

Paolo Bobbio, owner - via Roma, 23

phone 0131275105 - **red beet, "Priest Hat" variety pumpkin, lavender, saffron**

#### • Salumificio Cereda (Butchery)

piazza V. Emanuele II, 8

phone 0131275172

closed: Wednesday afternoon

**cooked salami, cacciatorini, natural cooked ham**

#### • Giraudi

loc. Micarella - via Giraudi, 16

phone 0131278472

www.giraudi.it - closed: Sunday

**"Giacometta" gianduia chocolate cream, chocolates from all over the world**

#### • Panetteria Ferraris (Bakery)

via Umberto I, 13

phone 0131275276

**grissini bread-sticks**

**RIVARONE**• **Az. Agr. Solia Davide (Farm)**

regione Poggio - mobile 3386376812

snails

**SALE**• **Panificio Castellotti Paolo (Bakery)**

via San Giuliano, 47 - phone 013184916

• **Sapori di Campagna**

via San Giuliano, 61

phone 013184947

open: Thursday (in summer), Friday, Saturday, Sunday (4-7 PM)

fruit, vegetable preserves

## what to eat

**BOSCO MARENGO**• **Locanda dell'Olmo**

piazza Mercato, 7

phone 0131299186

www.locandadellolmo.it

closed: Monday and Tuesday evening

set menu price: 30 euro

peppers in monferrina sauce with anchovies,  
fassone veal with Gavi wine, rabaton

• **Dei Tacconotti**

fraz. Tacconotti, 17

phone 0131278488

closed: Wednesday (open only in the evening;  
Saturday, Sunday and holidays also for lunch)

set menu price: 31 euro

outdoor tables

vitel tonnè, bollito misto, tripe

**FRASCARO**• **Hosteria de' Ferrari**

via Cavour, 3 - phone 0131278556

www.hosteriadeferrari.it - closed: Monday

set menu price: 29 euro

chicken salad with potatoes and basil, lamb  
sauce tagliolini pasta, cod with three tomatoes  
and basil sauce, ricotta and hazelnut mousse

**ISOLA SANT'ANTONIO**• **Da Manuela**

via Po, 31 - phone 0131857177

www.ristorantedamanuela.it

closed: Monday - set menu price: 40 euro

terrace, garden

potato and artichoke cream, pisarei e fasò, ri-  
sotto with salami, fried frogs, fish, pears coo-  
ked in Barbera

## POZZOLO FORMIGARO

### • Agriturismo La Giorgietta

strada Tortona, 18

phone 3385806653

open Thursday, Friday e Saturday evening, Sunday for lunch

set menu price: 30 euro (including drinks)

credit cards not accepted

hand-cut raw meat, Derthona *agnolotti*, bolli-to misto, Bavarese nougat cream

## SPINETTA MARENGO

### • Le Cicale

via Pineroli, 32 - phone 0131216130

www.lecicale.net - closed: Sunday

set menu price: 40 euro

potato and egg gnocchetti with seafood and grilled peppers, veal filet with green pepper mixed raw vegetables and roasted potato, ice-cream with apple sauce and Barbera dei Colli Tortonesi wine

### • Giuditta della Fraschetta

via Genova, 30 - phone 0131213800

www.marengohotel.com



closed: never - set menu price: 30 euro

vitel tonn , millefeuille, smoked ox cooked in salt - paved parking lot without reserved spaces - the ground-level entrance and inside rooms are easily and autonomously navigated by wheelchair - the elevator has a relief/braille keyboard - disabled bathroom.



### • La Fermata

via Bolla, 2

phone 0131251350 - www.lafermata-al.it

closed: Saturday for lunch and Sunday

set menu price: 65 euro

12 rooms - Garden, conference hall

stuffed Castellazzo onion cooked in salt, Carnaroli rice with wild herbs and vineyard snails, strawberry cake with icecream made from extravirgin olive oil, orange compote

- gravel parking lot - the ground-level entrance and the interior are easily and autonomously accessible by wheelchair - disabled bathroom - the elevator is accessible; a signal lights up when the requested floor has been reached, and the elevator also has a Braille/relief keyboard.

## events

### Alluvioni Cambi 

Celery fair (August)

Salami fair in Crova (September)

info: City Hall, phone 0131848121

### Basaluzzo

Arts and Crafts Fair of Saint Bovo (May)

Tagliatelle and boar fair (July)

Country fair of Saint Joachim (August)

info: City Hall, phone 0143489107

### Bosco Marengo

Saint Pius Vth Day (May)

Cock and chicken fair (September)

info: www.comune.boscomarengo.al.it

### Castellazzo Bormida

International bikers meeting (July)

info: www.comune.castellazzobormida.al.it

### Castelnuovo Scrivia

#### Guazzora

Fars  fair (March) info: www.castelnuovoscrivia.info

Potato fair (August) info: City Hall, phone 0131857149

### Isola Sant'Antonio

Melon fair (mid-July)

Fair of the Sacred Heart and animal market (October)

info: City Hall, phone 0131857121

### Rivarone

Cherry fair (May) info: www.comune.rivarone.al.it

# Valenza



## valenza, the city of gold



Some say that gold deeply transformed the city of Valenza - a little dip into history offers some moving insights on the matter. The City Hall, a beautiful building, once hosted an exhibition on goldsmiths during the war. In parts it paid homage to pure Italian inventiveness, the creative genius that managed to use cheaper materials instead of gold while maintaining the artwork, the worth, and the worldwide reputation. There should be a way to protect such knowledge as humanity's heritage. The master goldsmiths live in the town where, de facto, Monferrato was born. It is sweet and hilly, like the rest of the

area; the town center is pleasant, self-contained yet open, just like its people. The local theatre is thrilling, newly restored, one of the prettiest in the province and puts on some excellent shows. Historic cafés complete the scene, as well as pastry shops with original variations on the omnipresent amaretti. The cooking tradition, on the other hand, has apparently been lost: there are very few restaurants worth mentioning, but it is good to find that the few there are pay due homage to the great river and to the nearby Lomellina rice-paddies, serving fried and marinated fish, rice, frogs and other delicacies from the past.



## what to see

The town's main street is via Garibaldi, which ends, after a slight uphill stretch, in the central square, Piazza 31 Martiri. From here the visitor can access the Art Gallery and Armory as well as the Museum of the Building of the Duomo, while another worthwhile exhibit, the Collection of Goldsmith Art, is in via Mazzini. Only a small part of the great wall which used to surround and defend the city is still standing - it is known as "the Colombina". Because Valenza used to be a military center, undergoing repeated cycles of destruction and rebuilding through the centuries, very few of the old town buildings remain. Therefore, little is left of medieval Valenza, apart from the **Oratory of Saint Bartholomew**, with its octagonal plan and interesting terracotta inlays on the late-gothic portal. The building was restored, during the Nineteenth Century, in neo-gothic style, then again in recent times; now it is used for cultural activities, exhibits, concerts and theatre shows. Nearby, note the remains of another portal, from the Fifteenth Century. The balcony of **Casa Fancelli** was built a century later- in the same palace there is also a seventeenth-century well, with terracotta decorations. In 1622 the **Cathedral** was inaugurated, to be later much transformed in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. Inside there is a painting by Moncalvo, the "Mary of the Rosary", and another by the Flemish artist Claudio Gozner, "The Virgin with

Saints". The **Church of the Annunciation** dates from 1699 - the best thing about it is the baroque façade. Other religious buildings are **Saint Bernardino's church**, with an 1894 organ, and the **Holy Trinity**, unfortunately ruined by innumerable structural changes. The **ex church of Saint Roch**, refurbished a few years ago, is now used for cultural activities, but the loveliest of Valenza's civic buildings is undoubtedly the neoclassic **Social Theatre**, built by Pietro Clerici in 1852. Many private residences of the aristocracy are also to be admired: the **Trecate Palace**, with its surrounding gardens and eighteenth-century architecture; the **Ceriana Palace**, with a majestic stairway and frescoed vaults; the **Pastore Palace**, a more modest building; the **Valentino Palace** and, last but not least, the **Pellizzari Palace**, now seat of the city government, a neo-classical edifice from the end of the Eighteenth Century. Inside, the Council Hall is frescoed with mythological scenes painted by Luigi Vacca (1810).



## products

### GOLD AND COOKIES WORTHY OF A KING

Valenza, on the river Po, has an age-old jewelry tradition, and is a world-renowned goldsmith center. Its love affair with gold - which allegedly dates back to ancient Roman mines - officially began in 1845, when Vincenzo Morosetti opened the first workshop. From then on, it is a tale of continuous success; today, the town is seat of a prestigious goldsmith school and of an international fair, "Valenza Gioielli". The other jewels in Valenza's crown are its soft, fragrant **Amaretti**, made from a nineteenth-century recipe. The difference from other kinds is in the process of blending almonds and apricot kernels with beaten egg-whites, obtaining a particularly light and soft mixture. Wrapped up in candy shapes, their fame reached the Royal House: for decades, a large supply was regularly sent to the House of Savoy's Court.



## cuisine

Valenza's cuisine is not unlike Alessandria's, but with the addition of a few products from the Lomellina area, mainly rice. Restaurants and elegant food-stores display products from the Po valley: vegetables such as asparagus, eggplants, onions,

garlic and beans, different kinds of rice and rice-based products such as rice bread. The last Thursday before Christmas, tradition calls for a dish of **stuffed onions**, prepared with pumpkin, amaretti, Voghera grape chutney, eggs and nutmeg. Morta-

ra, a nearby city, provides duck specialties, such as cacciatori salami, peasant-style ciccioli, aged ham, durelli, and refined foie gras patè. Wines include all of Monferrato's typical labels, especially Cortese and still or fizzy Barbera.

## shopping

- **Pasticceria Il Baciotto (Patisserie)**

via G. Donizzetti, 15

phone 0131945334 - closed: Monday

pastries, fruit tarts, cream cakes

- **Pasticceria Barberis (Patisserie)**

viale Oliva, 9/b - phone 0131941041

www.pasticceria barberis.com - closed: Monday

Valenza amaretti, Tartufata (cake)

- **Pasticceria Torti (Patisserie)**

via al Po, 5 - phone 0131941090

closed: Monday

Valenza amaretti, torrone "Camillo"

- **Gelateria Soban**

piazza Gramsci, 23 - phone 0131941806

www.soban.it - home-made ice-cream, ice-

cream with no sugar, ice-cream for people with food intolerances (gluten, lactose, eggs), certified

by the Italian Celiac Association (AIC)

## what to eat



- **Del Ponte**

strada Pavia, 12

phone 0131952312

closed: Saturday and every evening

set menu price: 23-25 euro

panoramic views of the Po

fried river fish, donkey agnolotti, donkey stew

- **Osteria La Cantinetta**

piazza Verdi, 5

phone 3384675827 - 3391206726

closed: never

set menu price: 25-30 euro

agnolotti and fresh pasta,

fassone meat battuta

## events

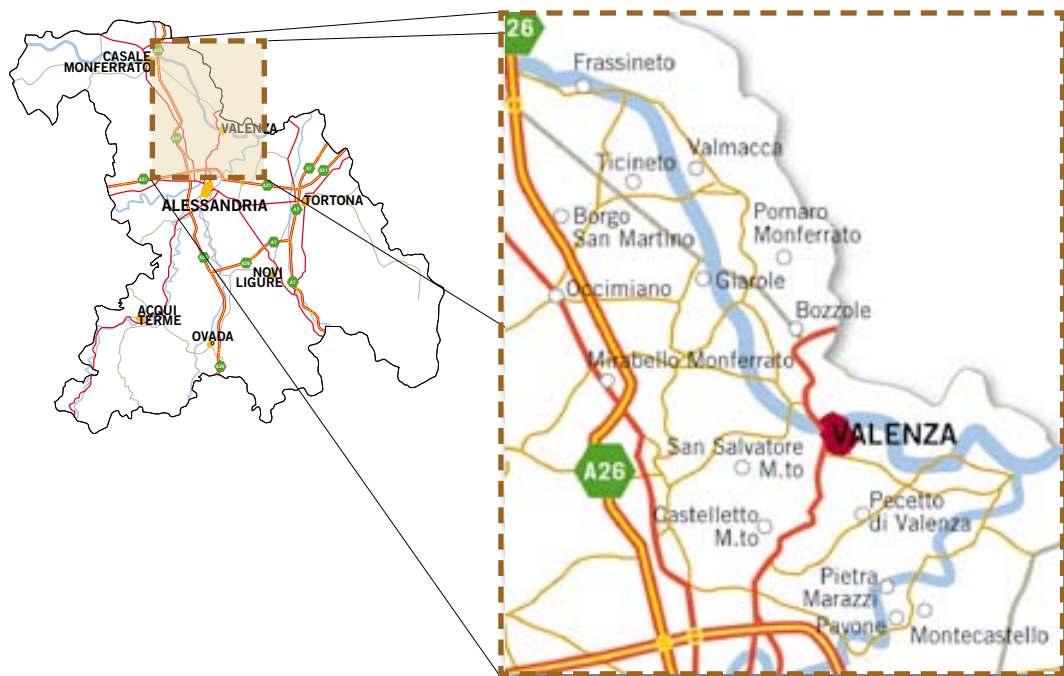
- *Riso&Rose* (Rice&Roses) - wine, food and culture (May) info: [www.monferrato.org](http://www.monferrato.org)

- Barcé (local boats) race on the Po (July)



# The Monferrato between the Tanaro and the Po

Borgo San Martino, Bozzole, Castelletto Monferrato, Frassineto, Giarole, Mirabello, Montecastello, Occimiano, Pavone, Pecetto di Valenza, Pietra Marazzi, Pomaro Monferrato, San Salvatore Monferrato, Ticineto, Valmacca



## castles and rice-paddies



Everyone here will claim that these lands take their name from an episode in the legend of Ale-ramo, founder of the Monferrato, who, before the end of the first millennium, was promised by king Lotario II sovereignty over all the lands he could travel, by horseback, in three days and three nights. More plausibly, although the area is quite vast, the name derives from a water-source close to Montecastello and Monte Valenza - the water's high iron content would have given these "Monti" the characteristic of being "Fer-rati", rich in iron. Many astonishing discoveries have been made in this area, such as the finding of ruins of castles built not on the hill-tops but

in the valley, unusual for the northern regions. Among these, the castle in Giaroli, which has belonged to the same family, the Nazaro dei Bur-gundi, for the past 900 years. A bed&breakfast has been set up in the building. Close-by is the Pomaro castle, probably defending the road from Valenza to Casale. From there, it's uphill to San Salvatore Monferrato, a village placed high, as in most of the Monferrato, among vine-yards - these produce Barbera and Grignolino. The Barbera from San Salvatore Monferrato is especially well-known, easy to drink, light and well suited to accompany the all-purpose Pied-montese dip called bagna caoda, which of cour-

se is often served here. The maître chocolatier Mauro Allemanni has recently returned to his hometown here, while local production of extra-virgin olive oil has resumed: olive groves used to be a common sight in the Monferrato in the past, when winters were less harsh, and now, due to recent changes in temperature, they are

making a comeback. The whole area is also full of villas and holiday homes; the rolling hills and beautiful landscapes make it one of the loveliest countrysides in the world. This is Piemonte seen from Montecastello, Pecetto di Valenza, Pietra Marazzi - places suited to a motorbike excursion (or to a bicycle tour, for the more virtuous).

## what to see

On the road leading from Alessandria to Casale Monferrato, the first village you encounter is **Castelletto Monferrato**, with the parish church of Saint Syrus and the castle both set high upon a hill. The next hilltop is occupied by a tower, symbol of **San Salvatore Monferrato**: it is easy to recognize, having received a hole in the middle from a cannon ball which struck it during the Italian unification wars. In the same village, the Sanctuary of Our Lady of the Well commemorates the miraculous rescue of a soldier who had fallen into a water reservoir. Next in line is **Borgo San Martino**, with Villa Scarampi, an eighteenth-century palace, and the church of Saints Quiricus and Julietta - inside, note a few paintings by Moncalvo. In **Frasinetto** the parish church of Saint Ambrose is decorated with works by important local artist such as Ambrogio Volpi and Moncalvo. Other points of interest are an ancient house with portico and the Palace of the Dukes of Mantova, built in the Seventeenth Century. In **Ticineto**, the parish church of the Blessed Virgin of the Assumption has some precious late-baroque paintings. In **Occimiano**

there are an Eleventh Century parish church dedicated to Saint Vitalis and another one, built in 1560, dedicated to Saint Valerius. In **Valmacca**, the Cavaglià castle is Twelfth Century; inside the parish church, dedicated to the Nativity of Mary, there are paintings from Moncalvo's workshop. The imposing castle in **Pomaro**, repeatedly restored, is set in a vast nineteenth-century garden. In the church inside the Sannazzaro castle of **Giarole** there are more works by Moncalvo, while other well-known local artists decorated the eighteenth-century churches of Saint Dorothy and of the Nativity in **Bozzole**. **Pavone** and **Montecastello** are each recognizable from the outline of their hilltop castles, while in **Pietra Marazzi** there is the Oratory of Saint Bernard, Romanic, as well as the Civic Tower. Giuseppe Borsalino, founder of the great Borsalino hat factory, was born in **Pecetto di Valenza**: in 1920 a monument to his memory was built here by Luigi Contratti. In the same village, see the parish church of Holy Mary, in Baroque-Lombard style, the renaissance Certosa and the seventeenth-century De Questore Palace.

## products

### RAW SALAMI FROM THE MONFERRATO

Ubiquitous in all of the Monferrato, salami is usually bought in one of the many village butcheries, where it is produced according to old, traditional recipes. It is always made using very fresh pork, whi-



ch is packed in skins and aged for 40 - 60 days or more. Each pie-

ce can weigh anything between 7 hg to 2 kg. Two variations are

cooked salami and the Muletta, packed in natural skins.

## EGGPLANT, ASPARAGUS AND CHERRIES

The **eggplant** is cultivated in the valley between Valenza and Casale; it is a bright purple variety with white streaks which is picked from July to September. In Valmacca the traditional crop is the "Argenteuil Valmorin France" **asparagus**. The edible part is light-pink and green, about 22cm long when ripe. Harvest lasts from April to the 13th of June, the feast of Saint Anthony, which is here celebrated as a harvest



fair. Finally, **cherry-trees** dot the landscape around Pietra Ma-

razzi, with a dedicated festival at the beginning of June.

## RICE AND FROGS

Rice cultivation has been at-

tempted in the area's valleys, following the example of the nearby Vercelli and Lomellina

plains. A consequence has been to include **frogs** in some dishes of the local cuisine.

## cuisine

All the traditional Monferrato dishes are prepared in this area, as well as some specialties from the valleys around Alessandria. Since many of the fields are used for growing corn, corn turns up in many dishes such as **peperonata** with polenta as well as **corn cookies**, baked

and sold in Giarole. Other delicacies include the "**friculin**" dumplings with local vegetables and herbs and "**bagnèt**", a dip each household could prepare with parsley and paprika from the garden. Riverside villages used to cook a lot of sweet-water fish, in recipes

such as the **carpionata** (fried fish simmered with garlic, rosemary, vinegar and white wine). Amaretti are the most common dessert, while in San Salvatore they make traditional **baci**; the same village also has a well-established tradition of hand-made agnolotti monferrini.

## wine

This area does not produce much wine, although the sur-

rounding hills are cultivated with Barbera, Grignolino, and

most of the other Monferrato grapes.

## shopping

### FRASSINETO PO

- **Cascina Ardizzina (Farmhouse)**

via Ardizzina, 2 - phone 0142482649

Carnaroli and Baldo rice, spelt

### OCCIMIANO

- **Cascina San Lorenzo (Farmhouse)**

Cascina San Lorenzo, 52

strada Prov. Casale-Altavilla

phone 014250801-013150802

www.cascinasanlorenzo.it

raw salami, "The President's" salami

### SAN SALVATORE MONFERRATO

- **Pasticceria Allemanni Mauro (Patisserie)**

piazza Carmagnola, 21

phone 0131233258

www.pasticceriaamauro.com

Torta del Pozzo (specialty cake), Amaretti

- **Tenuta Olympia (Farmhouse)**

loc. Squarzolo, 74 - mobile 3477112277

extravirgin olive oil from Leccino olives

## what to eat



### BOZZOLE

- **Le Braci**

via Noè, 30

phone 014260587 mobile 3338122567

closed: Monday to Wednesday

set menu price: 28 euro

barbecued meat

### SAN SALVATORE MONFERRATO

- **Locanda Arzente**

regione Guastrasone, 100 - phone 0131233969

www.locanda-arzente.it - closed: Sunday evening

and Monday - tasting menu: 30 euro - 9 rooms

raw meat, tongue with green sauce, risotto with mushrooms

## events

### Various places

Riso&Rose (Rice&Roses) - wine, food and culture (May)

www.monferrato.org

### Borgo San Martino

Strawberry fair (June) info: City Hall, phone 0142428003

### Bozzole

Potato fair (August) info: City Hall, phone 014260314

### Montecastello

Walking around Montecastello (June)

info: City Hall, phone 0131355136

### Pietra Marazzi

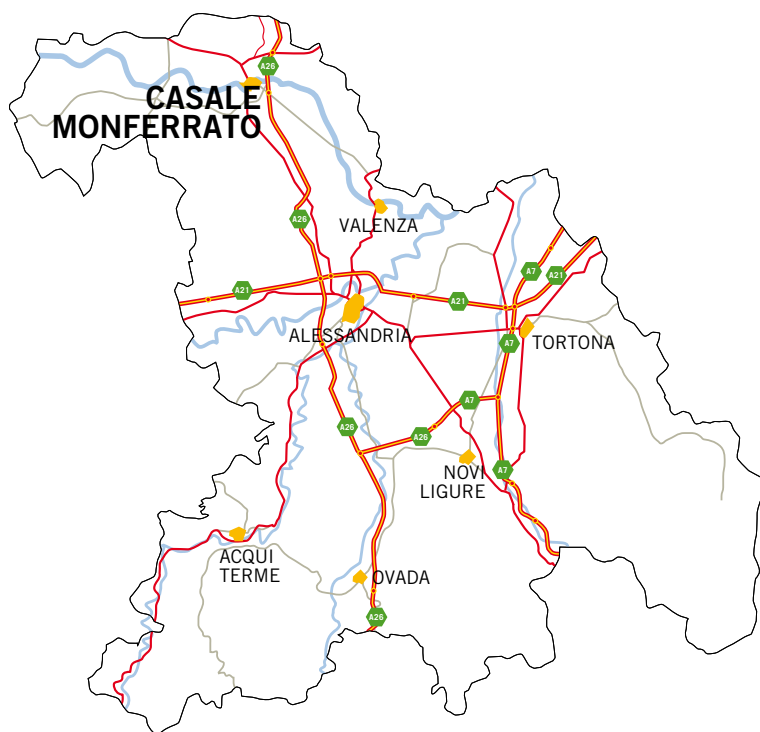
Maccheroni fair (September) info: www.comune.pietramarazzi.al.it

### San Salvatore M.to

The First Fair of S. Salvatore (May)

In the Region (September) info: www.ssalvatoreinrete.it

# Casale Monferrato



## casale monferrato, or “on history”



Casale Monferrato is a capital. This was true in past times, when the town defended the name of the Monferrato, and remains true today: the center simply feels like ancient Piemonte, thanks to the efforts of its inhabitants, who protect it with great pride. I made my first acquaintance with Casale when visiting the Paleologi castle - which is huge, as befits a capital. The square it gives onto, where all the roads and lanes which crisscross the town center eventually meet, is also home to the loveliest provincial theatre in living memory. The town has always been a focal point for the interests of the whole region surrounding it, the Casalese: marketplace, commercial hub, center of a network of relationships - Casale's topography

seems to be designed specifically to facilitate such exchanges. I vividly remember the sense of wonder I felt the first time I stood in front of the Baronina convent - yet another huge building - and the lectures which are held in the Treville Palace: those solemn, ancient halls are the ideal backdrop for the local tales which form part of a past so deeply intertwined with Europe's. It thrilled me to discover that one of these palaces is named after Anna d'Alençon, one of the most extraordinary figures of European history. A strong woman, protégée of Carl the Vth and a friend of Joan of Arc. Four thousand letters, preserved in Mantova, are attributed to her: a sign of how history moves not only through wars but also through friendships



built among people. Two roads lead out of Casale: one toward the fields, the sparkling rice-paddies, which then go on to cover the Vercelli province and the Lomellina area - here, Morano Po is the border of the province. The other one opens, after climbing up to Sant'Anna, onto a view of the soft, rich hills of the Monferrato. Here, vineyards face the city, then turn their backs to it, in a series of curves and altitude

changes stretching all the way to the Cerrina Valley and then to the province of Asti on one side, and of Turin on the other. Many of our artists have sung their shapes as a rolling sea. Casale's treasure is, precisely, this intersection of worlds - testified, as often happens with state capitals or, indeed, states - by the mixed heritage of its cuisine. From this complexity, a number of imaginative dishes were born, among which

## what to see

The Town Museum and Bistolfi Art Gallery always has impressive collections on show. The beautiful Jewish synagogue, built in 1595 and restored a number of times (the last time in the 1960s) is an absolute jewel. Annexed to it find the Museum of Jewish History and Art. Close to the town center, in Piazza Mazzini, a nineteenth-century square, there is the **Cathedral**, dedicated to the patron saint of the city, Saint Evasius. The building's plan is Romanic-lombard, the interior (narthex, paintings by Guala, artwork by Sammicheli, the chapel of Benedetto Alfieri) and the exterior (gabled façade) are both quite remarkable. The church has recently celebrated its first 900 years. The **Paleologi castle** was originally built in the Fourteenth Century but now presents mostly fifteenth-century traits. Following restoration, the castle is finally open to visitors, and is a must-see. Many of the town's churches deserve to be mentioned: **Saint Dominic's** (construction begun in 1472, note the Renaissance portal), **Saint Catherine's** (built in 1725 on a baroque design by Scapitta, most extraordinary from the outside), **Our Lady of Sorrows** (central symmetry plan, built in 1768 following a blueprint by Magnocavallo), **Saint Filippo Neri's** (1667, built by Sebastiano Guala: note the paintings as well as the Greek cross plan and the dome), **Saint Anthony Abbot's** (1555, with a precious polyphthic of the

Virgin's Genealogy, attributed to Gandolfino from Asti), **Saint Ilarius'**, with paintings by the local artist Nicolò Musso and by Guglielmo Caccia, and the **Holy Apostles** (1747, note the elliptic dome). Unremarkable from the outside, the **Oratory of Jesus** (1500) has a rich interior, with a wood coffer ceiling, a precious sixteenth-century polyphthic attributed to the school of Martino Spanzotti, an altar piece by Bernardino Lanino, a panel with the Virgin's Assumption by Pietro Francesco Guala and an interesting tapestry of Flemish school. The houses of the local aristocracy are also quite impressive: **Anna d'Alençon's Palace** (Sixteenth-Century; the garden in the courtyard has a patio and a hanging balcony) and the **mansions of Gozzani di Treville** (1714, designed by Scapitata, with a beautiful hallway - the main stairway's dome was frescoed by Guala), **Gozzani di S. Giorgio**, now hosts the City Hall (1778, with an exquisite façade and stairway), **Langosco** (1776, note the stairway, entrance and gallery), **Gambera-Mellana** (Renaissance, with porticoes on three sides of the courtyard), **Natta d'Alfiano** (baroque), **Sannazzaro** (seventeenth-century) and the **Tornielli House**, from the Fifteenth Century, with single-light windows in terracotta. Last but not least, the lovely **Municipal Theatre** (built 1785-1886) presents neo-classical elements.

## products

### VICTOR EMMANUEL'S SWEET WHISKERS

Krumiri, Casale Monferrato's cookies, were invented in 1878 by the baker Domenico Rossi, who claimed to have been inspired by the deceased King Victor Emmanuel II's "handle-bar whiskers". The "Rossi" Krumiri were an instant success, receiving a special mention at Turin's Expo in 1884 and Supplier Patents from the Households of the Dukedoms of Aosta, Genova and of the Royal Family, whose emblems still are printed on the old-fashioned cookie boxes for sale in Casa-



le's patisseries. Krumiri are produced in a traditional fashion, with sugar, eggs, butter, white

flour and vanilla, left to rest for a day and baked at 300 °C, until they turn brown.

## cuisine



Rich and varied, full of cheeses, salami and pastries, Casale's cuisine is a compendium of all that is best in Monferrato's cooking. Although the local dishes are clearly selected from the surrounding hills' special-

ties, there are also quite a few recipes "alla Casalese", which originated in town and can now be found in many restaurants of Alessandria's province. Ideally, dinner in Casale begins with a serving of **roast peppers**

with tuna sauce, green monferrina **garlic cream** with robiola cheese, garlic and parsley, tomato-and-egg with fine herbs, **onion cream** with robiola, and vitel tonnè. There are also plenty of local soup recipes, such

as Casale Popolo's **pasta and bean soup**, with lard, potatoes, beans and meat, minestrone with legumes and meat or with lard, cabbage and beans. Classic first courses include **agnolotti alla casalese**, stuffed with veal, beef, ham, eggs and truffle, and green risotto with leek and wild herbs. A second course might be **stew** with cured Fassone beef and anchovies, **Piedmontese fritto misto**, boiled meat dipped in bagnet, a green sauce with garlic and parley, or the traditional **bagna caoda** sauce, made with anchovies, garlic and oil and eaten hot with mixed raw vegetables. **Krumiri** are eaten for dessert with **zabaione** (a sweet cream similar to custard), while another popular choice is **bo-**



**net** pudding made with amaretti, milk and cocoa. Casale offers a great variety of wines from the whole region: Barbera del Monferrato, Grignolino del

Monferrato Casalese, Barbera d'Asti, Freisa, Cortese, Rubino di Cantavenna, Gabiano, and the sweet wines Moscato and Malvasia di Casorzo.

## shopping

### • Az. Agr. La Briata (Farm)

Cantone Grassi, 19/a - loc. Casale Popolo  
phone 0142563404

open: Thur. afternoon, Friday, Saturday morning  
"delle risaie" toma cheese, aromatic cheeses

### • Drogheria Corino

via Roma, 197 - phone 0142435144  
www.drogheriacorino.it

wine and spirits from the Monferrato, specialties from all over Italy

### • Gelateria Grom

via Roma, 120 - phone 014273192  
artisanal ice-cream

### • Enoteca Soliti Ignoti (Winery)

via Cavour, 39 - phone 0142461279  
www.solitignoti.net  
open: Tuesday to Saturday  
wine, Italian and local specialties

### • Lo Scatolino del Buongustaio

corso Valentino, 53/a  
phone 014271698

closed: Sunday and Monday

wine, beer, spirits and local and Italian delicacies

### • Unica Fabbrica Krumiri Rossi di Portinaro (Factory)

via Lanza, 17/19  
phone 0142453030 - 0142478553  
www.krumirossi.it

closed: Sunday and Monday

the original producer of krumiri cookies

### • Pasticceria Torti (Patisserie)

via Volpi, 8  
phone 0142452367  
Margherita amaretti, Camillo nougat

## what to eat

### • La Torre - Hotel Candiani

via Candiani d'Olivola, 36

phone 014270295

[www.ristorante-latorre.it](http://www.ristorante-latorre.it)

closed: Tuesday and Wednesday for lunch

set menu price: 50 euro - 49 rooms

**tagliolini with porcini aroma served with "alla finanziaria" meat sauce - old-fashioned Casale brasato stew**

- paved parking lot, the entrance and the interior



terior are sufficiently spacious to be easily and autonomously accessible by wheelchair, disabled bathroom.

### • Taverna Paradiso

piazza di Stefano, 7

phone 014275544

closed: Monday

set menu price: 29 euro

**mixed Monferrato specialties hors d'oeuvre, agnolotti, zabaione cream with krumiri**

## events

- "Fiera di San Giuseppe", festival (March)
- *Riso&Rose* (Rice&Roses) - wine, food and culture (May) info: [www.monferrato.org](http://www.monferrato.org)
- Wine and Monferrato fair (September)
- Krumiri and truffles (November)

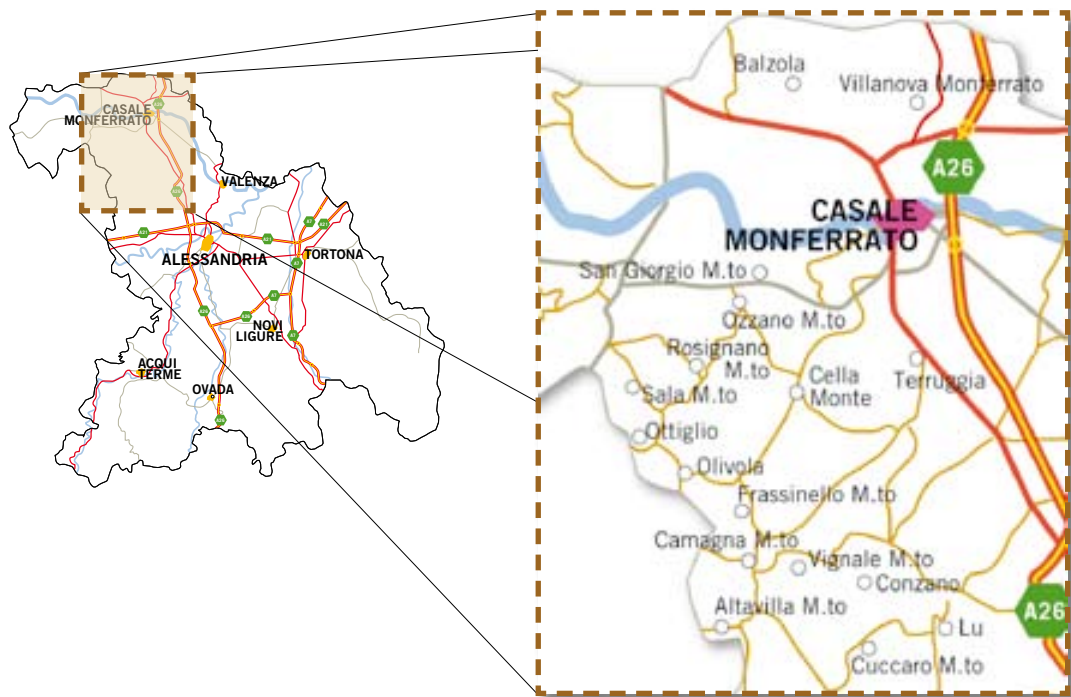
[www.comune.casale-monferrato.al.it](http://www.comune.casale-monferrato.al.it)





# The Monferrato around Casale

Altavilla Monferrato, Balzola, Camagna Monferrato, Cella Monte, Conzano, Cuccaro Monferrato, Frassinello Monferrato, Lu, Olivola, Ottiglio, Ozzano Monferrato, Rosignano Monferrato, Sala Monferrato, San Giorgio Monferrato, Terruggia, Vignale Monferrato, Villanova Monferrato



## the gentle monferrato around casale



The first adjective this landscape - surely one of the most beautiful in Italy - brings to mind is "gentle". The hills roll on, among picture-perfect villages, each hill topped by a bell-tower or a castle. Vineyards and forests are interspersed with a few fields of wheat or other grains, but the most striking elements are the houses: built in tuff, a peculiar volcanic rock which is cut in thick, rustic blocks, they are pearly white and emanate a unique feeling of warmth.

Most tuff used to come from the Moletto quarries, which are at the center of a myth according to which the invading Moors would have left an immeasurable treasure of hidden gold buried somewhere around here. Perhaps the site was first excavated in order to search for this treasure,

which was never found. And the legend lives on. Another peculiarity of the area are the *infernott* cellars, dug deep beneath the hill-side, in the same raw tuff - architecturally, they are extraordinary, and their beauty protects the slumber of many a bottle of robust red wine. Some notable *infernott* are in Cella Monte, others in Rosignano Monferrato, a village which seems to be built for the keeping of secrets, inaccessible as it is on its unlikely perch.

The Regional Winery in Palazzo Callori in the small town of Vignale is partly set in a cellar full of *infernott* niches, while the palace itself is a testimony to the beauty of the white tuff rock building-style. Vignale has been called the *Capalbio* of the Monferrato and it's easy to see



why: plenty of VIPs have taken up residence in the area. For 30 years now, this village has been the venue of the important "Vignale Danza" festival, celebrating dance and ballet. This corner - no, heart - of the Monferrato is like a calling-card for the whole province; here, every stone hides a story or a legend.

According to one such tale, Christopher Columbus was born in Cuccaro Monferrato, which, at the time, was ruled by the lords of Genova; Donato Lanati, the mind behind Enosis Meraviglia, a first-class enology research facility, claims it's quite true. The nearby village of Lu is known for its camparot, countryside look-outs, and for its world record of religious vocations, while throughout the Monferrato all take pride in the Monferrina bread, made from whole wheat and perfect when combined with a fine slice of aged salami. You can taste it with a full glass of Grignolino in many wineries set inside the infer-

nott (remember that the best salami comes from Cella Monte). The area is full of bed&breakfasts, farmhouse hotels and relais de charme, having been a tourist destination since time immemorial. Still more durable treasures are its castles, signs of Monferrato's changes through history. They are all well-fortified, set high on the hills: for centuries, they were continuously under attack, under siege, or pillaged, won over and occupied by a number of lords, sometimes Spanish, sometimes French, sometimes a Savoia, or a Sforza, or a Gonzaga. In more peaceful times, many artists have painted the Monferrato, or chosen to live here. Aldo Mondino set up a country studio in Altavilla Monferrato, Guido Botta's colors are clearly stolen from the autumn vineyards and Angelo Morbelli, the well-respected Italian divisionist from Rosignano, turned this fascinating landscape into vivid impressions of shadow and light.

## what to see

**Altavilla Monferrato** has an interesting parish church, dedicated to Saint Julius, with paintings by Moncalvo and an onyx altar. In the same village, there are two unusual collections: the "Mazzetti" Grappa Museum and the Steam and Electric Tramway Museum. **Cella Monte** houses part of the Ecomuseum of the Cantoni Stone. The parish church is dedicated to Saints Quiricus and Julietta (1610), richly frescoed and decorated. Close to **Conzano** there is Saint Maurice's convent, built in 1418 in late Gothic style. The frescoes in the cloister are some of the oldest in the area. The Empress of Constantinople, Sofia, wife of John the Eighth of the Paleologi, is buried here. The tower in **Lu** is fifteenth-century, while the Church of Holy Mary the New is decorated with works by Guglielmo Caccia, known as "Moncalvo", and by his daughters. The same is true of the parish church of the Assumption (Eighteenth Century, designed by Magnocavallo) in **Balzola**. Close to **Frassinello** note the Lignano castle, a medieval building among the

oldest in the Monferrato. The castle in **Ozzano** is Twelfth Century, the church was built in gothic style and the palaces are modern (e.g. Simonetti). The Church of Saint Eusebius (Nineteenth Century) in **Camagna Monferrato**'s majestic dome is similar to the Mole Antonelliana in Turin. Within, note the large altar-piece by Moncalvo. The oratory to Saint Gratus in **Terruggia** has an unusual octagonal shape; the same village has a Municipal Palace with a theatre inside, built in the Nineteenth Century. Many churches grace **Vignale Monferrato**, such as Saint Bartholomew's (a grandiose building designed by Magnocavallo), Our Lady of Sorrows (late Gothic) and the Church of the Battuti brotherhood (Seventeenth Century). The village is also seat of a Museum of Local Agriculture, but the main attractions are certainly Palazzo Callori, entirely built in volcanic stone (tuff) and seat of the Regional Winery, and the castle above the church of Saint George. The castle's original nucleus was probably built in the Tenth Century.

## wine

In Casale, wine comes first, both in terms of economical value and in terms of landscape and heritage. In the Piedmontese imagination, the area is immediately associated with **Barbera del Monferrato**, in its still and fizzy variations. The Superior Barbera del Monferrato as well as the Barbera d'Asti (a label some of the villages here are allowed to use, even though

it is mostly produced in another province) have even received the DOCG appellation, the most prestigious of enological certifications. These two wines usually go through a longer aging process than the simpler Monferrato quality. The local **Grignolino del Monferrato Casalese** is slightly lesser-known but perhaps more representative of this area: it is a delicate wine with a grassy

aroma and a slightly sour, tannic taste, well-matched to the local cuisine. Other grapes in the area include Freisa, which is used for the wine of the same name or sometimes in combination with Barbera grapes, and **Ruchè di Castagnole Monferrato**, a native species with floral, aromatic notes, whose distinctive smell of roses is quite unique among Piedmontese reds.

## products

### THE MULETTA AND OTHER CURED MEATS FROM THE MONFERRATO

The hills surrounding Casale are a veritable goldmine of food specialties. The traditional raw salami is often cured with wine for extra taste and improved texture, while the Monferrato cacciatore is a small pork salami (3-4 hg each), aged for no longer than 3 months. Being "pocket sized", it was made to be carried by hunters, cacciatori, inside their hunting jackets as a mid-hunt snack. The hunting tradition continues to this day, with hare being the most common game. Monferrato's most traditional salami is the Muletta, made with choice parts of



the pig; each piece weighs one kilo and a half to two kilos and is aged for about three months. The origin of the name, meaning "small mule" is unclear, although it is likely that in the past donkey and mule meat could

have been added to the mixture, a custom still kept alive in a few villages around Asti. The natural skin used to pack the **Muletta** slows the aging process down; shapes vary according to the meat's grain and quality.

## SUGARBREAD CHICORY

The **Sugarbread Chicory**, or *En-dive*, is a common cultivation in Villanova Monferrato as well as in other villages on the river Po.

It is a kind of salad with white stems and green leaves which turn white when ripe - usually it is picked between October and

December, but recently a Spring crop was introduced which is picked in May and June.

## GRAPE CHUTNEY

Grape chutney, called **Mostarda d'uva** or, in dialect, *cugnà* - a name mostly used in the Langhe - was for the longest time the main dressing for cheeses and stews.

Every farmhouse made its

own, with the last grapes from the harvest and seasonal fruit: the traditional recipe calls for grape must (mostly *Barbera*), cooked with fruit such as quince, pumpkins, pears, figs, plums, nuts, hazelnuts, orange

rind and lemon on a low fire for quite a number of hours. A primitive - but delicious - version of ice-cream is *mostarda* poured over a glass of fresh snow: the taste of Monferrato's past winters.



## GRAPPA

A fair number of distilleries, from Altavilla Monferrato to

Rosignano, produce the strong pomace spirit called **grappa**

using the discontinuous steam process.

## cuisine

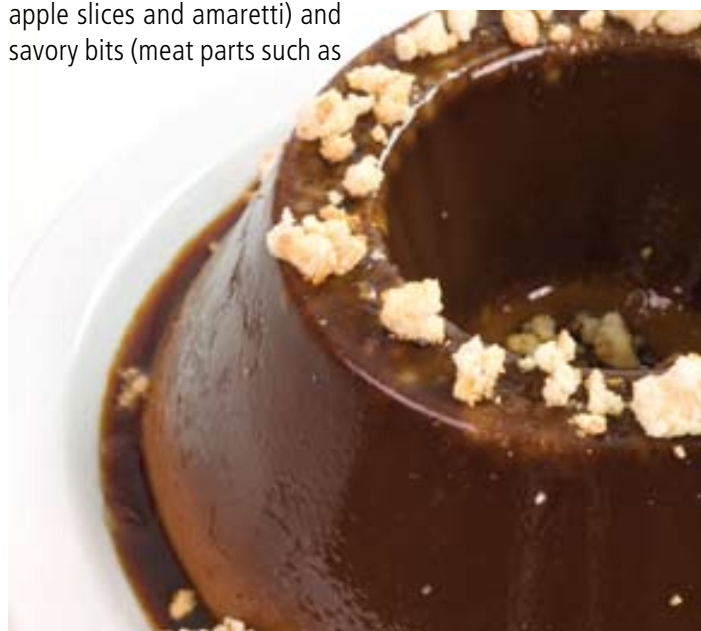


The cuisine of the Monferrato is very traditional, with many old-fashioned dishes such as **agnolotti alla monferrina**, stuffed with stew and pork, the classic appetizer **vitel tonnè** as well as **bollito misto**, in which veal or ox parts including ox shoulder, culatta or culaccio (hind quarter), ribs and tail, and veal tongue, chest and testina are all boiled together - most times, a whole chicken also winds up in the mix. The bollito is served with a green sauce made with parsley, anchovies, oil and garlic. Another typical dish, commonly found in the province of Alessandria as well as in the rest of Monferrato, is beef stew with spices, rosemary, garlic and laurel.

A few glasses of strong Barbera wine are added in the pot two hours before it is served over potatoes or polenta. Leftovers are set aside for use

in sauces or agnolotti stuffing. When visitors come to these parts, they usually come looking for a legendary dish called **Piedmontese fritto misto**, a mixture of deep-fried foods. In the local recipe, it consists of breaded and fried vegetables (cauliflower, zucchini flowers), sweets (semolina, apple slices and amaretti) and savory bits (meat parts such as

the brains, liver, entrails, lung and sausages). Classic desserts include bonet, a perfect mix of amaretti and cocoa, as well as local specialties such as the pumpkin cake of San Giorgio Monferrato, made by stuffing a pumpkin with amaretti, chocolate, renette apples and Marsala.





## shopping

### CELLA MONTE

- **Francia Enrico**

via Barbano Dante, 23

phone 0142488172

raw salami, Muletta

### OLIVOLA

- **La cucina di Annalisa**

via Vittorio Veneto, 2/a

phone 0142928311

www.lacucinadiannalisa.it

cakes, traditional Piedmontese sauces

### SALA MONFERRATO

- **Pietro Crova**

via Olearo, 27 - phone 0142486728

bread, salami

- **Luca Sassone**

via Roma, 11 - phone 0142486353

Muletta, salami, cacciatorini

### TERRUGGIA

- **Il Forno della Natura**

strada Cacciolo, 20 - phone 0142401460

closed: Saturday - croissants, organic bread



### OZZANO MONFERRATO

- **Apicoltura Antos (Beekeeping)**

Cascina Porta Bassa, 12

phone and fax 0142487226

honey, natural beauty products

- **Apicoltura Giuseppe Mortara (Beekeeping)**

Cascina Nuova, 21 - mobile 3391751557

open on appointment, 3pm - 8pm

closed Sunday

honey, Mielcioc (honey with chocolate)

- **Salumificio Colombano (Butchery)**

via Leonardo da Vinci, 22 - phone 0142487182

closed: Wednesday afternoon

tripe, Muletta

- **Az. Agr. Cascina Bettola (Farm)**

strada Provinciale, 24

phone 0142403254

mobile 3334441281

fruit and vegetable preserves, jellies, typical sauces

### VIGNALE MONFERRATO

- **Il Mongetto**

Jams and Preserves

Ca' Mongetto, 10 - phone 0142933469

preserves, jams

2 mini-apartments, 3 rooms c/o the Cantina Locanda Agrituristicca Mongetto

via Piave, 2 - phone 0142933442

www.mongetto.it

- **Tenuta Zullaro (Farmhouse)**

Cascina Zullaro

phone 0142925330 - www.cascinazullaro.com

open: Thu. afternoon to Sunday morning

meat

### ROSIGNANO MONFERRATO

- **Panificio Bisello (Bakery)**

via Bonelli, 2 - phone 0142488686

closed: Sunday

Grissia monferrina bread



## what to eat

### ALTAVILLA MONFERRATO

#### • Tenuta San Martino

strada prov. per Moncalvo, 18

phone 0142930029

www.vinisanmartino.com - always open

set menu price: 30 euro - 20 rooms

**risotto, cheese nougat**

- paved parking lot with spaces close to the entrance - the ground-level entrance and the interior are easily accessible by wheelchair, with the occasional assistance of another person - disabled bathroom.



### CAMAGNA MONFERRATO

#### • Taverna di Campagna dal 1997

vicolo Gallina, 20 - phone 0142925645

closed: Monday and Tuesday (only from January to the end of April)

set menu price: 29,50 euro

**hand made monferrini agnolotti, guinea fowl in vinegar with sugar**

#### • L'Elfo

via Matteotti, 27 - phone 0142925138

www.elfodicamagna.com - always open

set menu price: 30 euro - open-air tables

**agnolotti, fassone meat with green pepper**

### CELLA MONTE

#### • Villa Perona

strada Perona, 1 - phone 0142488280

www.villaperona.it

always open (in summer only Friday, Saturday, Sunday)

set menu price: 28-35 euro - 10 rooms

garden, sale of wines

**bagna caoda, panissa, roast rabbit, bonet**

### CUCCARO MONFERRATO

#### • La Cantina in Collina

via Marconi, 9 - phone 0131771111

closed: Monday - set menu price: 20-30 euro

**Piedmontese agnolotti, own wines**



### LU

#### • La Commedia della Pentola



frazione Borghina - phone 0131741706

www.lacommediadellapentola.it

open in the evening (except Monday), for lunch Sunday and for groups upon reservation

set menu price: 25-35 euro - 3 rooms

**agnolotti with rabbit sauce, pasta and beans, roast meat with hazelnuts**

- gravel parking lot with spaces reserved for disabled persons - The entrance with paved slide and the interior are easily and autonomously accessible by wheelchair - disabled bathroom.

### OLIVOLA

#### • Ai Cedri



via Vittorio Veneto, 23

phone 0142938885

closed: Sunday evening and Monday

set menu price: 42 euro

**ox tail risotto, veal filet with leeks**

- gravel parking lot with spaces reserved for disabled persons - the entrance and the interior are spacious enough to be accessible by wheelchair, with the occasional assistance of another person - disabled bathroom.

### OTTIGLIO MONFERRATO

#### • Cave di Moletto

via Villa Celoria, 10 - closed: Monday and Tuesday - set menu price: 45 euro

13 rooms - garden, conference rooms

**monferrini agnolotti, Scottona cutlets with rosemmary**

### ROSIGNANO MONFERRATO

#### • Ai Cavalieri del Monferrato

loc. Castello di Uviglie, 73

phone 0142488792

www.aicavalieridelmonferrato.it

closed: Sunday evening and Monday

set menu price: 39 euro  
 outside tables in summer, set in an ancient garden  
**hand-cut raw veal meat, vegetable ravioli, tagliolini pasta with rabbit sauce**

## TERRUGGIA

### • Il Melograno

piazza Vittorio Emanuele III, 9  
 phone 0142401531 - mobile 3388098126  
[www.osteriailmelograno.com](http://www.osteriailmelograno.com)  
 closed: Monday and Saturday for lunch  
 set menu price: 44 euro  
 indoor panoramic terrace  
**home-made red beet tagliolini with Montebore**

**cheese, guinea fowl with Moscato passito, chocolate cake**

## VIGNALE MONFERRATO

### • Serenella

via Bergamaschino, 1 - phone 0142933412  
 closed: Monday  
 set menu price: 25-30 euro (including drinks)  
**agnolotti, roast rabbit**

### • Universo

via Bergamaschino, 29 - phone 0142933952  
 closed: Monday and Tuesday  
 set menu price: 30 euro  
**rosemary rice, stew**

## events

### Various places

*Riso&Rose* (Rice&Roses) - wine, food and culture (May)  
 info: [www.monferrato.org](http://www.monferrato.org)  
 "Golosaria" food fest (March) [www.golosaria.it](http://www.golosaria.it)



### Altavilla Monferrato Conzano Cella Monte

Chocolate and Monferrato (October) info: City Hall, phone 0142926141  
 Trades of the Past fair (April) info [www.comune.conzano.al.it](http://www.comune.conzano.al.it)  
 White truffle fair in the Ghenza Valley (November)  
[www.comunecellamonte.it](http://www.comunecellamonte.it)

### Cuccaro Monferrato

Walking around Capanne (April) - La Pulenta (September)  
 Fagiolata and chickpea (October) info: City Hall, phone 0131771928  
 Bagna Caoda (December) info: [www.frassinello.it](http://www.frassinello.it)  
 Saint Joseph's festival (March)

### Frassinello M.to Lu

Grape fair (September) info: [www.lumonferrato.org](http://www.lumonferrato.org)

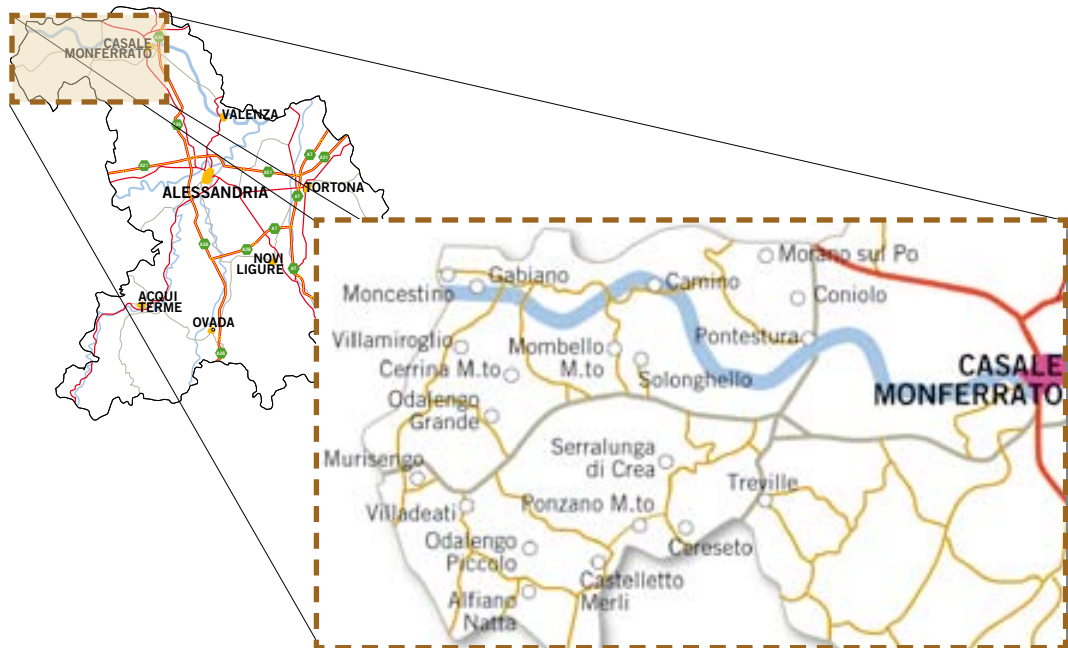
**Ottiglio** (together with the *Municipalities of Altavilla M.to, Camagna M.to, Cuccaro M.to, Frassinello*)  
 Truffle fair from Grana to Rotaldo (November)  
[info@comune.ottiglio.al.it](mailto:info@comune.ottiglio.al.it)

### Vignale Monferrato

summer "Vignaledanza" International Dance Festival (June - August)  
[www.vignaledanza.com](http://www.vignaledanza.com), Wine Festival (October)  
[www.prolocovignalemonferrato.it](http://www.prolocovignalemonferrato.it)

# The Sanctuary's lands and the Cerrina Valley

Alfiano Natta, Camino, Castelletto Merli, Cereseto, Cerrina Monferrato, Coniolo, Gabiano, Moncestino, Mombello Monferrato, Morano sul Po, Murisengo, Odalengo Grande, Odalengo Piccolo, Pontestura, Ponzano Monferrato, Serralunga di Crea, Solonghella, Treville, Villadeati, Villamiroglio



## in the shadow of the "holy mountain"



Friends from Villamiroglio, members of the "C'era una Volta" Association, have succeeded in moving me to tears with a film about life in the villages of the Cerrina Valley and the surrounding areas. Here, as opposed to what happened in the rest of the Monferrato we've described, the land has held on to the old ways. While traveling across the hills it is not entirely unlikely to have the peaceful view of a castle interrupted by the passage of a down of hares or, indeed, a pack of wild boars. Hunting is a very popular sport, as it has always been, and it follows that lepre in salmì, hare cooked in red wine, is one of the main dishes of the area's osterie. The wine here is a full-bodied red which has been "rediscovered" by the younger generation - this is especially true

of Barbera - with very good results. So many memories are associated with each village, so many dear moments: landscapes such as these are unique in their ability to awaken the mind and the senses. I like to think that the writer Cesare Pavese, who took refuge in Crea during the war (a good book just came out collecting traces of his passage) must have felt the same warmth I feel each time I pay these lands a visit. I close my eyes and wake up in one of the loveliest relais de charme hotels: this one is in Alfiano Natta (the village where digestive magnesium was invented), inside the castle of Razzano. The place is like a dream, with swimming pools among the vineyards, set in a valley surrounded by hills and, farther, by those mountains Piemonte owes its

name to (literally, "At the mountain's feet"). If, passing by Murisengo, you stop at the Corteranzo Rectory, which is set within another wine-producing property, the Tenuta Isabella, you will have the chance of seeing, in one glance, the Crea Sanctuary and the church of Colle Don Bosco - one of the most amazing sights in the world. Another good idea is a stop at Cascina Zucca, in Ester Accornero's farmhouse hotel and restaurant, where you can taste some lovely cooking in a warm and welcoming environment. As if all that were not enough, there is yet another relais in Solonghello, the Locanda dell'Arte, an inspiring place from the bedrooms to the spa to the breath-taking view of the horizon. In Camino there is one of Marquis Aleramo's castles, which later belonged to the Paleologi and nowadays is owned by the Zandonini family, who has preserved and restored it, including fixing the moat bridge - which is still hand-operated. One of the rooms was occupied, some time ago, by historian Giovanni Spadolini - but that was before the building was turned into a first-class hotel, open

to whomever wishes to enjoy a country holiday and feel a touch of the land's history. Wine is produced in this castle, as well as in the Gabiano manor, which is beautiful and imposing, set above a valley where the Pedaggera village is enlivened by one of the province's main fruit-and-vegetable markets. It's easy to get lost among the villages, just keep in mind that the Cerrina Valley road leads towards Chivasso, another part of the Monferrato which, under the Paleologi family's reign, was given to Anna d'Alençon, an extraordinary woman who was very much a part of Europe's history. To the left, instead, the road leads towards Asti, passing through the "Holy Men's land", so called because Saint Giovanni Bosco, Saint Domenico Savio and the Canon Priest Cafasso were all born there. This is where the lands of Barbera and Grignolino end, and the sweeter Freisa and Malvasia grapes prevail. What could all these different places possibly have in common? Plenty of stuff: agnolotti and fritto misto, the smell of bagna caoda and roasted rabbit - all the wonders of the Monferrato!

## what to see

In **Camino** there is one of the best-preserved castles in all of Piedmont and the Monferrato, originally from the Eleventh Century. Courtyards, hallways, balconies and annexed buildings make for a charming atmosphere. Another such place is the manor of Rocca delle Donne, with a great view over the plains of Vercelli. In **Murisengo** there are a fourteenth-century castle and a couple of notable churches: S. Anthony the Abbot's (eighteenth-century), in rococo style, built by the Scapitta workshop, and the baroque Church of Saint Luis (1760), in the hamlet of Corteranzo, built by Bernardo Vittone. Other castles top the hills of **Ponzano**, of the village of Salabue, of **Crea**, of Pessine in **Odalengo Piccolo**, of **Solonghello**, of **Gabiano**, of **Odalengo Grande**, of **Castelletto Merli**, and of **Cereseto**. The "Belvedere" residence in **Villadeati** combines baroque and neoclassical elements in a beautiful sequen-

ce of pillars, porticos and arches leading up to a high terrace atop the central tower. The Church of Saint Remigius has an interesting empire-style pulpit, and almost all the area's parish churches are decorated with paintings by Guglielmo Caccia ("Moncalvo") or by his daughters - in Saint Marcian's in **Alfiano Natta**, in Saint Peter's in Cereseto, in Saint Agata's in Pontestura, in Saint John the Baptist's in **Morano**. This village has characteristic gothic portals around the main street and beautiful frescoes (from before 1450) on the church of Saint Peter the Martyr. The parish church in **Pontestura**, with pictures by Guala, is memorable for its gothic shapes. Inside the city hall of Pontestura it is possible to visit (after setting up an appointment by phone, 0142466339) the Enrico Colombotto Rosso Foundation's art collection. The village of **Villamiroglio** is set under the parish church of Saints Philip and Michael, built in

1764. The countryside of **Treville** is the backdrop for the Romanic church of Saint Quiricus, while the sanctuary of Saint Gotthard, from the Seventeenth Century, is in Pozzengo, a village in the township of Mombello Monferrato. Finally, close to **Serralunga di Crea** there is the majestic Holy Mountain, with 23 chapels and 5 hermitages, set

in a Natural Park and leading up to the Church of Mary, which was built in different time-periods (in the Fourth, Eleventh and Fifteenth Century). It is one of the loveliest places in Piedmont, enriched by groups of polychromatic terracotta statues and important paintings by artists such as the Tabacchetti brothers and the Moncalvo.

## products

### GRISSIA AND SALAMI

The Cerrina Valley area can be seen as a natural extension of the Monferrato, both geographically and gastronomically. Each one of the valley's many villages offers innumerable choices of cured meat, including the **Mulletta monferrina**, **cacciatorini** made of mixed pork and beef - or sometimes wild boar, and a local wine-flavored variety. The bread baked in Pontestura or Castelletto Merli is renowned throughout the whole provin-



ce: the most common shape is the **Grissia**, a large loaf with a lovely crust, and the **Monferrina**, smaller but just as tasty.

The grissia is baked with bread wheat, oil, lard and yeast; each loaf is about 2-300 grams and can last for quite a few days.

### APPLES AND HAZELNUTS

**Hazelnuts**, in the regional variety known as "gentle-round", are produced in a vast area encompassing the Langhe, Roero and Monferrato highlands. They are often grown in place of grapes, as it takes less time to insure production. Easy to shell and preserve, the Piedmontese hazelnut is especially suited to the confectionary industry as its full aroma is only revealed after toasting. Here in Cerrina Valley it is grown to be used in the typical flat hazelnut cake,



made with toasted hazelnuts, sugar, flour, eggs and butter, without adding yeast. This is also an **apple**-producing area, especially around the village of Odalengo, where the Canditina

- a very juicy variety which used to be brought to the fields, instead of water, to quench thirst during the wheat harvest - and the Ruscaio, sour but very long-lasting, are grown.



## TRUFFLES AND MUSHROOMS

A great part of the Cerrina Valley is forested, and a hunting-place for truffles. Here, as well as in the Valle Ghenza, both the **White Truffle** (*Tuber Magnatum Pico*) and the **Black** (*Tuber Melanosporum Vittadini*, also known as Périgord Truffle) can be found. The forest floor also provides an ideal habitat for various mushrooms, including porcini (*Boletus*), the Famigliola Buona (*Armillaria Mellea*), found between the end of September and the end of November and frequently used in peasant cooking.



## RICE AND FROGS

Rice is common throughout the valley of the Po: all the best varieties found in Piemonte are here in the Cerrina Valley. The presence of rice-paddies is also instrumental to the raising and cooking of **frogs**, which used

to be served in every river-side restaurant. This peculiar gastronomical tradition is not as popular now, but it's still possible to find places where one can taste the esculenta or magnareccia, i.e. "appetizing" frog, which is

green, with black spots on its back and white, tender meat with almost no fat. The river also provided loam to grow legumes and vegetables: in Villamiroglio a whole festival is dedicated to the local pea and asparagus.

## cuisine

Once more, one of the most common dishes is the agnolotti; the local Pontestura recipe calls for a stuffing made of roast beef and pork, herbs, ham, eggs, and parmesan cheese. Usually they are served with butter and sage, or else with a meat sauce, but the traditional way would be to cook them in Barbera wine. As usual, antipasti are abundant,

and include **Russian salad**, **vitel tonnè**, peppers with bagna caoda and, in summer, **soused eggs**. Two typical regional dishes are usually served as second course: **Piedmontese fritto misto**, consisting in various foods fried together (including veal ribs, meat cutlets, liver, brains, pork, sausage, chicken nuggets, apple slices and sweet semolina) and

the **finanziera**, made with chicken and veal parts roasted and simmered in Marsala liqueur. A favorite for Sunday meals is **roast rabbit** or rabbit stew, or hare or pheasant, cooked with the same recipe. Other, more localized, specialties, are Morano sul Po's rice panissa, Odalengo's nettle pancakes and Ponzano's bollito alla monferrina. Apart



from the hazelnut cake, desserts include the Brut e Bon "ugly but good cookies", Sanico's sweet

lasagna and the round pastries called canestrelli. The village of Treville is peculiar in its use of

capers and artichokes, which only grow in its unique micro-climate.



## wine

These hills are the birthplace of Paolo Desana, known as the "Father of DOC" because he was the one to propose a law to establish a quality assurance label for Italy's wines to the Senate. Apart from the famous Barbera, Freisa and Grignolino, the area produces two lesser-known, historical appellations:

the Gabiano and the Rubino di Cantavenna. The Gabiano appellation, established 1983, defines a wine made mainly with Barbera grapes, strong in taste, with a characteristic scent which evolves as it ages. The Rubino di Cantavenna is made by mixing Barbera grapes with a small amount of

Freisa and Grignolino. It has a lovely dark-ruby color and a typical cherry and blackberry aroma. The village of Sala Monferrato also produces the sweet fizzy Malvasia, perfect to accompany a tray of cookies, while Cella Monte is home to the rare Moscatellina, a rather sweet rosé.

## shopping

### ALFIANO NATTA

- **Az. Agr. Casa Faina (Farm)**

strada Crè Alto, 5 - phone 0141922420

**Monferrato honey**

### CAMINO

- **La Butega**

via Roma, 1 - phone 0142469336

www.labutega.com

closed: Sunday and Monday afternoon

**vegetables from the garden, delicacies from the Monferrato**

### CASTELLETTO MERLI

- **Emporio Alimentare, Dilve Penna owner (Grocery Shop)**

via San Giuseppe, 33 - phone 0141918113

closed: Monday afternoon

**grissia monferrina bread**

### CERESETO

- **Macelleria Salumeria Ferraris Marcello (Butchery)** - via Cristilliano, 4

phone 0142940297 - closed: Sunday afternoon

**raw salami, piedmontese bovine meats**

### CERRINA MONFERRATO

- **La Bottega dl'Uisot**

via Nazionale, 96 - phone 014294193

**wines, artisanal beers, salami and other delicacies**

### MONCESTINO

- **Az. Agr. Biologica San Giovanni Vecchio (Organic Farm)** - via San Giovanni, 18

phone 0142945230 - www.sangiovannivecchio.it

open for salami: Monday to Saturday, only upon reservation - open for meat: Wednesday, Friday, Saturday - **salami, meat**

- **Az. Agr. La Nocciola (Farm)**

fraz. Seminenga - via Brusa, 5

phone 0142945292 - www.lanocciola.it

**products made with "Piemonte" hazelnuts**

### MURISENGO

- **Pasticceria Quilico (Patisserie)**

via Umberto I, 76 - phone 0141993182

www.pasticceriaquilico.it

**hazelnut cakes, "truffle" sweets**

- **Casa Costa di Giulia Tasso**

via Bava, 10

phone 0141993243 mobile 3288154388

www.casacosta.it - 2 rooms

**goat products**

- **Alimentari Panetteria Sarzano (Grocery store, bakery)**

fraz. San Candido - via Casale, 8

phone 0141993806

closed: Wednesday afternoon

**salami, local bread**

### PONTESTURA

- **Raviolificio Gastronomia Bruno (Gastronomy)**

strada delle Fontane, 8 - phone 0142466206

closed: Monday-Wednesday, Sunday afternoon

**agnolotti, salami, cakes**

### SERRALUNGA DI CREA

- **Pasticceria Ceruti Madonnina (Patisserie)**

fraz. Madonnina, 62 - via Distilleria

phone 0142940184

www.pasticceriaceruti.com - closed: Monday

**"truffle" sweets, "krumiri" cookies with Grignolino**

- **Salumificio Miglietta (Butchery)**

fraz. Madonnina - via Distilleria

phone 0142940149

closed: Saturday afternoon and Sunday

**Muletta salami, "Lonzardo" with Moscato (made with lard and lonza)**

### VILLAMIROGLIO

- **Il Filo di Arianna**

via Molino del Conte, 3 - phone 0142947207

www.molinelconte.it

**organic jams**

## what to eat

### GABIANO

#### • Ca' Villa

via Santo Stefano, 19

phone 0142945126 - [www.ca-villa.it](http://www.ca-villa.it)

closed: Monday - set menu price: 30 euro

12 rooms - panoramic views, garden, pool

**veal carpaccio with pears and nuts in sweet gorgonzola sauce, home-made tajarin pasta, rabbit roast with potatoes and rosemary**

- gravel parking lot with reserved spaces - the entrance can be accessed by a wheelchair only with the assistance of another person; the same is true of the interior - rooms are sufficiently big to be accessible to people on a wheelchair - disabled bathroom.



### MOMBELLO MONFERRATO

#### • Dubini

via Roma, 34

phone 0142944116

[www.cadubini.it](http://www.cadubini.it)

closed: Wednesday

set menu price: 30 euro

**peppers with bagna caoda, truffles and eggs, Piedmontese fritto misto**

- paved parking lot without reserved spaces - the step at the entrance and inside rooms's spaces do not allow for movement with a wheelchair - disabled bathroom - the staff doesn't have any experience with special-need clients.



### MURISENGO

#### • Cascina Martini

fraz. Corteranzo

via Gianoli, 15

phone 0141693015

[www.cascinamartini.com](http://www.cascinamartini.com)

open only in the evening (except weekends)

closed: Sunday evening; in winter also Monday and Tuesday - set menu price: 40 euro

tables outside in the summer

**agnolotti del plin, red potato gnocchetti, monferrina creamy bonet**

#### • San Candido

via Casale, 7

phone 0141993024

closed: Tuesday

set menu price: 25 euro

**salmi hare, fritto misto monferrino**

### ODALENGO GRANDE

#### • Le Corte

fraz. Vallestura

via Odalengo Grande, 2 - phone 3398645585

[www.osterialecorte.it](http://www.osterialecorte.it)

closed: Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday

set menu price: 35 euro - garden

**Cervia marinated veal in salt, tripe salad, cutlets with tomato and sausage**

- the packed earth parking lot does not have any reserved spaces - two steps at the entrance





*can only be overcome only with the assistance of another person. inside, only some rooms can be navigated autonomously by wheelchair - disabled bathroom.*

## PONTESTURA

### • Osteria Adria

corso Italia, 34 - phone 0142466419

closed: Monday

set menu price: 25 euro

credit cards not accepted

**ruddian salad, traditional agnolotti with roast sauce, savarin with dark chocolate**

## SERRALUNGA DI CREA

### • Il ristorante di Crea

loc. Santuario di Crea, 4

phone 0142940108

[www.ristorantedicrea.it](http://www.ristorantedicrea.it)

closed: Monday (never closed from June to August)

set menu price: 30 euro

the restaurant is set inside the Natural Park of the Holy Mountain of Crea, pic-nic baskets available to be filled with dishes from our menu

**agnolotti, bollito misto, typical Moncalvo sauces and dressings, bagna caoda**

## ZANCO DI VILLADEATI

### • Da Maria

via Roma, 131

phone 0141902035

closed: Tuesday (no long holidays)

set menu price: 35 euro (including drinks)

**raw meat, finanziaria, stewed rabbit, cod**

- gravel parking lot with spaces reserved for disabled persons - the ground-level entrance and the interior are easily and autonomously accessible by wheelchair - disabled bathroom - the staff has no experience in assisting clients with specific needs.



## events

### Various places

Riso&Rose (Rice&Roses) - wine, food and culture (May)

info: [www.monferrato.org](http://www.monferrato.org)

### Camino

Spring Festival (June) - Monferrato lives! (Il Monferrato è vivo!)

(September) info: [www.comune.camino.al.it](http://www.comune.camino.al.it)

### Moncestino

Salami fair (April) info: City Hall, phone 0142945061

### Morano sul Po

Panissa fair (June) info: City Hall, phone 014285330

### Murisengo

National "Golden Truffle" fair (November)

info: City Hall, phone 0141993041

### Odalengo Piccolo

Tuff and truffle fair (October)

info: City Hall, phone 0141919126

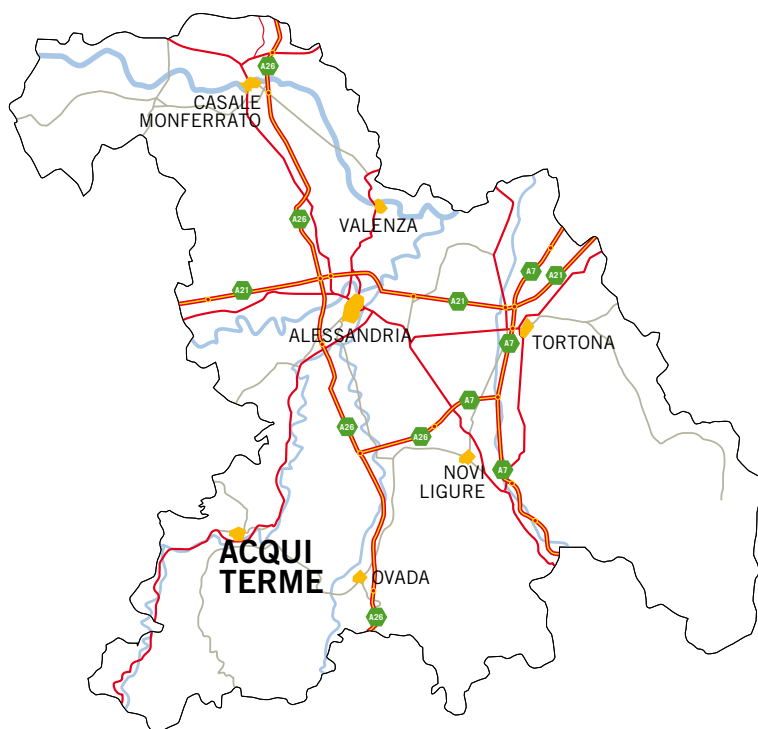
### Serralunga di Crea

Fraz. Madonnina - White truffle market and fair (November)

info: City Hall, phone 0142940101



# Acqui Terme



## acqui, the fair



No one will take offence in our stating that, among the towns of Alessandria's province, Acqui Terme is the most charming, cozy, and interesting one. People travel to Acqui for the good restaurants, for a bite of farinata, a salty snack made with chickpea flour, for a visit to the grocery stores, packed with mushrooms from Sassello and cheeses, for the night scene. The regional winery in the Robellini Palace, showcasing the region's wines, is one of the busiest in all of Piemonte. And, of course, there are the hot water springs, recently rediscovered by the public, including young people, who flock to the hot pools and baths hosted within hotels, spas, and specialized centers. Quality of life is high, and residents spend a fair amount of time strolling up and down the narrow lanes - narrow enough, in

some points, to remind one of the carrugi of Genova - all the way to the Pistoria, a newly-restored neighborhood which has come to symbolize "the good life". Acqui is as florid today as it must have been in ancient times, if we are to believe the splendor of its monuments: the Romanic church named after Saint Peter, the Duomo and the castle, with its ineffable, evocative atmosphere. Acqui is built around a central square, "La Bollente", a spring of boiling hot, sulfurous water; locals dare newcomers to put a hand inside, thereby symbolically joining the town's population. Such is Acqui: a warm and welcoming town, whose liveliness is proven, among other things, by the modern Fountain of the Water lilies, whose 31 pools flow downhill towards Piazza Italia, in a playful display of water and light.

## what to see

The new part of town is centered in Piazza Italia, restored in the Nineteenth Century and recently embellished with the spectacular **Fountain of the Water-Lilies**. The main street, Corso Italia, was also restored around the same period, as well as the porticos of Via Saracco, which lead to the **Bollente**. The "Boiling Hot" stream of sulfurous water (75° C) rises here in a spring which, in 1879, was covered with a neo-classical marble gazebo. In ancient times, the town was placed on the very top of the hill; this is where the **Cathedral** stands, with its Eleventh-century transept and bell-tower, a portal by Giovanni Pilacorte (1481) and, inside, the "Virgin of Monserrat" (1495), by Bartolomé Bermejo. Nearby, stop to admire the **Presbytery's cloister**. The **Bishop's Palace** is a fifteenth-century building with Romanic reliefs on the outside façade and attractive frescoes inside. The **Robellini Palace**, built in the same period, was redesigned in the Eighteenth Century, with the addition of a magnificent stairway and vast hallways, currently used by the City Hall for

cultural events and exhibitions. On the other side of the hill there are the **hospital of Santa Maria Maggiore**, built in the Fifteenth Century, and the **Pa-leologi's castle**, built in the Eleventh Century, then re-built in the Sixteenth. Inside there is the **City's Archaeological Museum**, with exhibits dating from Acqui's Roman times as well as pre-historic, proto-historic and medieval finds. The major Roman relic is certainly the aqueduct, built under Augustus to bring the waters of the Erro river to the city; its ruins are still visible in the valley beyond the river Bormida. There is also an Archeological dig of the Roman Pool, which can be visited upon request. Other significant monuments are the ancient **Basilica of Saint Peter**, an Early Christian settlement rebuilt at the beginning of the Second Millennium with a notable Romanic interior and a lovely octagonal bell-tower, first cathedral of the city, now dedicated to Our Lady of Sorrows, and the **church of Saint Francis**, with paintings from Moncalvo and Soleri, next to the City Hall (ex Lupi di Mirano palace, Eighteenth-century).

## products

### BRUT E BON AND LINGUE DI SUOCERA

The town, well-known because of the natural hot water springs, is also blessed with some of the best bakeries and the nicest pastries. The elegant main streets' bread-makers all display the **lingue di suocera**, i.e. Mother-in-law's tongues, a kind of thin, dry, sweet bread, which is usually kneaded by machine but then pulled by hand, making for a crunchy and tasty snack, an alternative to the omnipresent Genoese focaccia bread. Acqui also has



its own **amaretti** cookies, bitter-sweet and very soft, thanks to the care taken in beating the egg-whites. Another specialty is the **Brut e Bon** "ugly but good cookies", made with almonds, hazelnuts, sugar, egg-whites and vanilla. Some stores add cinnamon, others cover the cookies in chocolate.

Hazelnuts, together with honey, are the main ingredients of the local **nougat**, which is produced in town as well as in the surrounding countryside. Finally, dark chocolate, chestnut paste, hazelnut paste and rum combine in the **Acquesi al rhum**, a favorite since the Nineteen-fifties.

## cuisine

Acqui Terme's tables are covered with an array of products from the surrounding hillsides, such as salami, cheeses, mushrooms and other forest delights, plus some delicacies from nearby Liguria. Appetizers include the filetto baciato salami from Ponzone, the light goat-milk robiola cheese (also called **formaggette del bec**), the Ligurian **cima**, a mix of meat and vegetables and the Piedmontese fritto misto, mushrooms preserved in oil with spices and cabbage meatballs, a dish of meat, spices and chicken livers served inside a

cabbage leaf. The first course might include **agnolotti**, stuffed with stew and spinach, simmered in the same stew or in a glass of Dolcetto wine, or hand-made pasta called **tajarin served with mushroom sauce**. Chick-peas are grown to be ground into flour for the farinata, or else used in the autumnal soup known as "Soup of the Dead" - eaten around the 2nd of November, the Day of the Dead - or **cisrà**. Second courses often include game as well as recipes using mushrooms and **tripe**, cooked with lard, cabbage, potatoes

and onions – but the favorite second course of all is undoubtedly **Acqui-style cod**, cooked with anchovies, potatoes, pine nuts, taggiasche olives and white wine. The aforementioned cookies are good for dessert, and other choices include the classic chocolate pudding called **bonet**, **pear soufflé with Brachetto di Acqui wine egg-nog cream**, hazelnut cake, **marron glacés** or a chestnut cake called **castagnaccio**. Any of these goes well with a glass of local sweet wine such as Brachetto d'Acqui, Muscat or the original Passito from Strevi.

## shopping

### • Pasticceria Canelin (Patisserie)

via Antiche Terme, 16

phone 0144323340

closed: Monday

**nougat, chocolate Easter eggs**

### • Torrefazione Leprato (Coffee-roasting)

via Amendola, 8 - phone 0144322676

closed: Saturday afternoon and Monday morning

**coffee from all over the world**

### • Il Germoglio, Volpe & C.

via Alberto Da Giussano, 49

phone 0144325393

**"pulled" grissini bread-sticks, Acqui amaretti, kifferi, canestrelli**

### • Oliveri Funghi

via Carducci, 14

phone 0144322558

closed: Wednesday afternoon

**mushrooms, Roccaverano "robiola" cheese, fruit and vegetable preserves, sauces**

### • Salumeria Centrale (Butchery)

corso Italia, 15 - phone 0144322975

closed: Wednesday and Sunday afternoon

**filetto baciato, tome, cheese, preserved delicacies**



## what to eat

### • I Caffi

via Verdi - ang. vicolo del Voltone, 1

phone 0144325206

www.icaffi.it

closed: Sunday, Wednesday evening and holidays

set menu price: 44/52 euro

**rabbit ravioli with roast sauce, guinea fowl with cherries**

### • Il Nuovo Ciarlocco

via Don Bosco, 1

phone 014457720

closed: Sunday evening, Monday

set menu price: 35 euro

**chowder, roasted Roccaverano goat, Ganduiotti chocolate and zabaione ice-cream**

### • Osteria Enoteca La Curia

via della Bollente, 72/74

phone 0144356049

www.enotecalacuria.com

closed: Monday (no long holidays)

set menu price: 50 euro

**tripe salad with slices of robiola di Roccaverano, twice-cooked Roccaverano goat, cod**

- cobblestone parking lot with reserved spaces

- the entrance, with a step, and the interior spaces can be easily accessed by a wheelchair



*only with the assistance of another person - disabled bathroom.*

### • La Schiavia

vicolo della Schiavia - phone 014455939

www.laschiavia.it

closed: Sunday evening and Tuesday

set menu price: 40 euro

**three-cheeses flan, Acqui-style cod, lamb cuts cooked in Gavi wine**





### • Antica Osteria Da Bigat

via Mazzini, 30/32  
 phone 0144324283  
[www.osteriabigat.it](http://www.osteriabigat.it)  
 closed: Wednesday, Sunday for lunch  
 set menu price: 20 euro  
**farinata, tripe soup, Acqui-style cod**

### • Parisio 1933

via Battisti, 7  
 phone 014457034  
 closed: Monday  
 set menu price: 35 euro  
**Parisio's cannelloni, Acqui-style cod, mushrooms and truffles in season**

## events

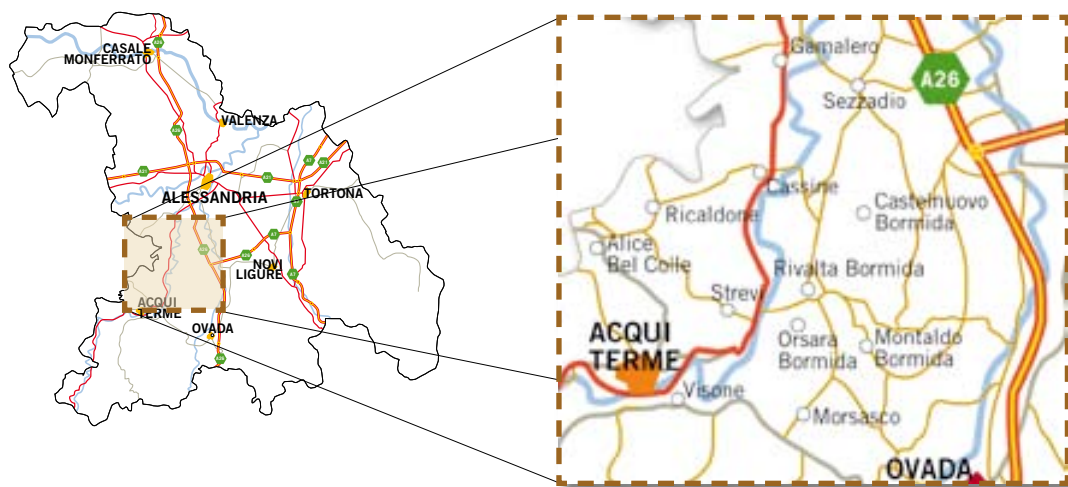
- "La via dell'Acqui Brachetto d'Acqui" (August) info: [enoteca@termeevino.it](mailto:enoteca@termeevino.it)
- "Festa delle Feste" - Wine Show - Palio del Brentau race (September)  
 info: [www.comuneacqui.com](http://www.comuneacqui.com)
- "Acqui & Sapori" - Regional Truffle Show (November) info: [www.comuneacqui.com](http://www.comuneacqui.com)





# The Bormida Valley

Alice Bel Colle, Cassine, Castelnuovo Bormida, Gamalero, Montaldo Bormida, Morsasco, Orsara Bormida, Ricaldone, Rivalta Bormida, Sezzadio, Strevi, Visone



## a tale of small things



Every year, at the beginning of September, Cassine comes alive in one of the loveliest and most charming medieval festivals: each time, it feels as if the village has suddenly awoken after centuries of sleep. On the main road, which leads from Alessandria to Acqui, each of these villages is nothing more than a white name on a blue sign - but, trust me, it is worth taking a detour... so be bold and follow one of those side roads into the heart of the countryside. Alice Bel Colle, "Alice Lovely Hill", may catch your eye, with its attractive name - this is a wine-producing area, especially sweet Moscato and Brachetto. It borders with Ricaldone, native village of the well-known singer and songwriter Luigi Tenco, whom the village honors in a yearly celebration. After Ricaldone, suddenly, the hills lift in a majestic coup de théâtre, rising to meet the wild High Langa around Asti. In close-by Sezzadio there is a true gem - the Abbey of Saint Justina,

notable example of a purely Romanic church (one of the most beautiful in all of Italy) - in the surrounding park, a restaurant offers typical, local specialties. But there is more: according to legend, the Marquis Aleramo himself, the mythical founder of the Monferrato, was raised in this Abbey; he is said to have been left here as a child by his parents during their trip to Rome, a religious pilgrimage they never returned from. It seems that Count Camillo Benso of Cavour, who often held his political meetings in this area, was also fond of Sezzadio. In my memory, the village of Strevi will always be the place where old wine-makers serve passito of Brachetto wine, aged for at least twenty-five years. Strevi must be a blessed land; its name is spoken in every corner of the great northern plains, since this is where the traditional Carnival drink, the sweet Brachetto wine, is produced. Rivalta is the native town of philosopher

Norberto Bobbio; here, the festival dedicated to the main produce, zucchini, now includes an ambitious project, with a permanent exhibition in the lovely Casa Bruni, and a new restaurant. Community spirit is still very much alive in Rivalta, as well as in Morsasco, a jewel of a town. Visit it in the springtime, when the first goat cheese of the year is served in every farmhouse. All of these villages thrive and languish according to the fortunes of their river, the Bormida, which has finally been reclaimed after a decade of terrible pollution, and now marks the scenery with its winding, watery

beauty. Last but not least, I should mention Visone, a village close to the spa town of Acqui Terme. Here, right on the main road, master Giovanni Verdesse, aka Canelin, has established his laboratory and shop. Known as one of the best confectionary artisans in Italy, this man has dedicated his entire life to perfecting the art of the nougat - every day he cooks a batch, which he tastes at least 40 times before allowing it to be packed in those amazingly delicious blocks which have been awarded no less than the Nonino Prize, awarded for life-long dedication to promoting local traditions.

## what to see

In **Cassine** don't miss the complex of Saint Francis - a Romanic and Gothic church with frescoes from the Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries and, annexed, a convent, also frescoed. The fifteenth-century Casa Zoppi is another interesting building. In **Sezzadio**, the beautiful Romanic abbey of Saint Justina was founded, according to legend, in the year 722 by the Longobard King Liutprand, then turned into a Benedictine convent in 1030 by King Ottobert, marquis of Sezzadio. The abbey of Saint Justina reached its highest splendor in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries; a slow decline followed, until the structure was closed when a Napoleonic decree assigned the property to war veterans. In modern times, in

1956, careful restoration began on the church, the only one of the abbey's buildings still standing. The inside is divided in three naves terminating in transept apses, with fifteenth-century cross vaults. Note the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century frescoes on the apse and vault and the crypt's floor mosaic, completed in the Eleventh Century. **Castelnuovo Bormida's** parish church, dedicated to Saints Quiricus and Julietta, was first built in the Romanic period, then expanded half-way through the Seventeenth Century. Inside, the chapel of Saint Felician is decorated with precious marble inlays. However, the focal point of the village is the castle, built in the Fourteenth and Seventeenth centuries. In **Montaldo Bormida**



the parish church was built in 1686 with material recovered from the destruction of the castle. In **Morsasco**, the most interesting place to visit is the Pallavicino family's medieval castle. In **Rivalta Bormida**'s center there are a few notable buildings such as the houses of the Biorci and Torre families and the houses in vicolo Baretto. Stop to note Saint Michael's portal, sculpted in sandstone (Sixteenth Century). In **Strevi** the parish church (Eighteenth Century), dedicated to Saint Michael, was built by Alessandro Caselli next to the Bishop's Palace (Fourteenth Century) and the

Grassi counts' residence (Sixth-Seventeenth Century). In Visone there are an interesting parish church dedicated to Saints Peter and Paul and the Rossi palace, a sixteenth-century villa with a frescoed gallery. In **Orsara Bormida** there is an Ethnographic Museum dedicated to agriculture. In **Ricaldone**, since 2006, a museum honors the well-known singer Luigi Tenco, buried here, with rooms full of records, pictures, documents and portraits. In **Visone** the remains of the ancient medieval town walls (Eleventh Century) and of the Castle (Fourteenth Century) are still visible.

## products

### FROM THE GARDENS

The Val Bormida opens onto the valley of Alessandria; the entire area is rich in vegetable gardens, sown with

potatoes, pumpkins, melons, beets and lettuce. The village of Rivalta Bormida is a traditional center of zucchini production:

from here, the vegetables were sold in every one of the province's markets, all the way to Milan. Zucchini, still central to the village's economy today, appear in many specialties, including scapech - a dish with its own festival and De.Co. appellation, since 2008. The Bormida Valley is also rich in mushrooms and truffles, both white and black.



### AMARETTI AND NOUGAT

The valley of the river Bormida has a solid tradition of confectionary, producing **amaretti**, **Brut e Bon** (ugly but good cookies) and **torrone** (nougat). Strevi is the place to go for amaretti: the local almond, apricot kernel, sugar and egg-white cookie was awarded a De.Co. appellation. The village patisseries also make nougat with local hazelnuts, honey from Cassine, eggs and sugar. Another famous nougat-produ-

cing center is Visone: after a long process the best honey and hazelnuts are turned into a hard, compact,

and crumbly bar. The dry pastries called Brut e Bon are made with almonds, hazelnuts, sugar, egg-white and vanilla.



## cuisine

Valle Bormida's cuisine is mostly similar to the rest of Monferrato, with some influences from the nearby coastal region of Liguria. In every village there is bound to be a place where to eat **bagna caoda**, a dip made with oil, anchovies and garlic to be eaten with fresh raw vegetables. There are many local **vegetable quiches** with wild herbs, such as the **Ligurian-style artichoke quiche**.

In other lovely dishes artichokes are served cooked in the oven, in soups, or with goat fricassée. The zucchini flower is served fried stuffed with sausage, salami and parmesan cheese. Traditional second courses include **Baciuà**, pork cooked with wine, celery and onion, and Acqui-style cod with white wine, potatoes, olive, pine-nuts and anchovies. First

dishes include peasant lasagna from Acqui and Ovada, cooked with beans and bacon or with leeks, dried tomatoes and anchovies, as pasta or in soups. Rivalta Bormida's specialties are the **bagnetto**, a tomato and vegetable sauce with bread and eggs, and polenta with soured eggs - a dish for the winter months. In Cassine and Strevi they cook chickpea

flour in a wood-burning oven to make farinata, while in the area around Strevi restaurants serve **canestrini cookies with Moscato wine**, hazelnut cookies and **Moscato zabaione**, a kind of custard made by beating egg yolks and sugar with wine. Here, as in all the South of Piedmont, no dinner is complete without a taste of bonet, a pudding made with milk, amaretti and bitter chocolate.



## wine

The area around Acqui has some of the most interesting vineyards in the province, producing important DOC and DOCG appellations.

Among dry wines, don't miss **Dolcetto d'Acqui**, a dark ruby-red wine with fresh, fruity scents and a pleasant hint of almonds.

All around Strevi there are plenty of sweet and aromatic wines, predominantly **Moscato**, both fizzy and passito, usually made with the last grapes of the harvest.

Passito wine, especially the Moscato from the Bagnario Valley around Strevi, which has a peculiar structure that

allows for a longer period of aging, has recently caught the international markets' attention. Another interesting sweet wine is **Brachetto**, which is sold in four different versions (sweet and fizzy, sparkling, passito and dry). It is good with dessert, while not excessively sweet.



## shopping

### MONTALDO BORMIDA

- **Idee da Forno (Bakery)**

Villa Bianca, 124 - phone 014385517

canestrelli, "bacetti" of Piedmont hazelnut, "Panfrollo"

### VISIONE

- **Gelateria Canelin**

via Acqui, 123

phone 0144395285

home-made ice-cream, torrone (nougat)

- **Wine Bar - Gelateria La Casa di Bacco**

via Acqui, 95

phone 0144396199

closed: Tuesday

wine, home-made ice-cream

## what to eat

### MORSASCO

- **Podere la Rossa**

loc. Podere la Rossa

phone 014473104

www.quellidellarossa.it

open Friday, Saturday, Sunday

set menu price: 30 euro



artichoke quiche, butter and sage agnolotti, roast guinea fowl, hazelnut cake

- parking lot (gravel) with reserved spaces - the main entrance has a step which can be overcome with the assistance of another person - the interior is sufficiently spacious to be easily navigated by wheelchair - disabled bathroom.





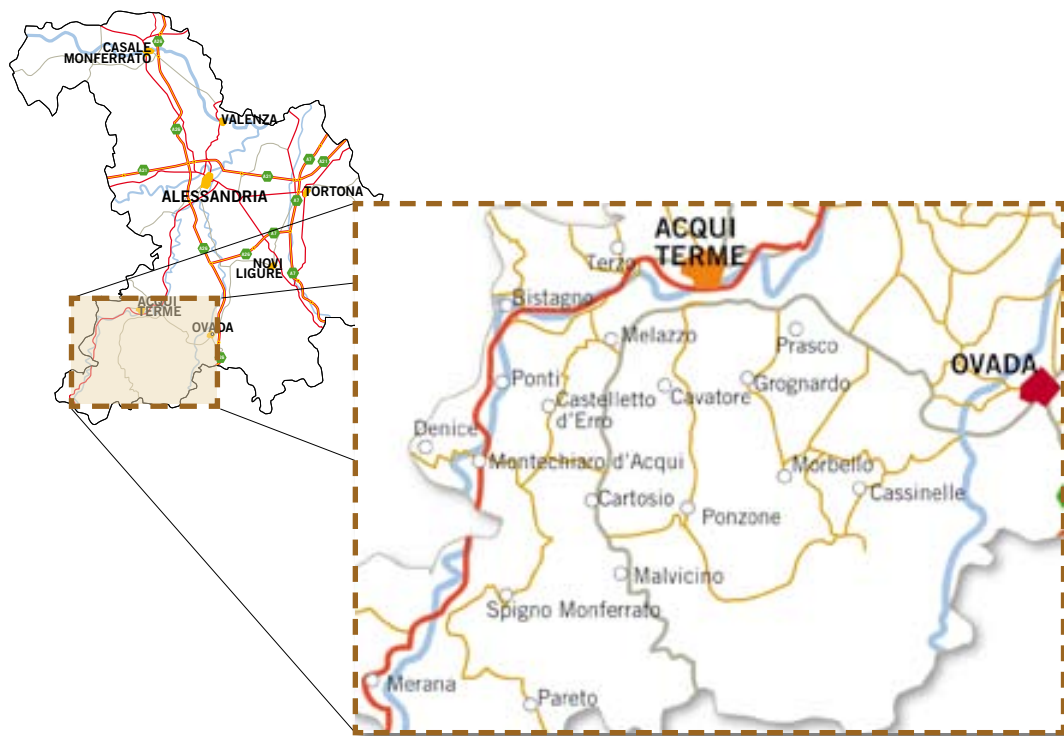
## events

<b>Cassine</b>	Medieval Festival (September) info: <a href="http://www.comune.cassine.al.it">www.comune.cassine.al.it</a>
<b>Castelnuovo Bormida</b>	Life-sized chess games info: <a href="http://www.unionedeicastelli.it">www.unionedeicastelli.it</a>
<b>Montaldo Bormida</b>	Farinata fair (June) info: <a href="http://www.unionedeicastelli.it">www.unionedeicastelli.it</a>
<b>Rivalta Bormida</b>	Zucchini fair (August) - info: <a href="http://www.comune.rivalta.al.it">www.comune.rivalta.al.it</a>
<b>Ricaldone</b>	"L'isola in collina", musical festival in memory of Luigi Tenco (July) info: <a href="http://www.ricaldone.it">www.ricaldone.it</a> - City Hall, phone 014491155
<b>Strevi</b>	"Septembrium" fair (June) - Ferragosto Strevese (August) info: <a href="http://www.comune.strevi.al.it">www.comune.strevi.al.it</a>
<b>Visone</b>	Busie (local fried sweets) fair (May) info: City Hall, phone 0144395297



## On the way to the sea

Bistagno, Cartosio, Castelletto d'Erro, Cassinelle, Cavatore, Denice, Grogna, Malvicino, Melazzo, Merana, Montechiaro d'Acqui, Morbello, Pareto, Ponti, Ponzone, Prasco, Spigno Monferrato, Terzo



## from the langhe to the wild appennino monferrato's farthest outposts



Nowadays, just as it has always been, the scenery changes in Spigno. Coming from Liguria, suddenly the first vineyards announce the beginning of the province of Alessandria. The villages marked by road signs here are tiny, stubborn hamlets of a few hundred souls. Although depopulated, they still resist: why? To find the answer one must climb up to the hill-tops, and there it is: nature, in its purest and most untouched form - this is a land where farmers still go to the forest in search for firewood with which to heat the winter nights, where soup is still likely to be cooked on a wood-burning stove. There

used to be more vineyards here - now it's mostly hazelnut trees, but what grapes there are make for some unforgettable wines, the Barbera and Dolcetto from Spigno, Morbello, Prasco and Terzo. A heavy snowfall is all it takes to return these hills to their ancient isolation. I read about the tourist destinations: Bistagno, home of the Piedmontese ball game called pallone elastico, where a careful eye can find the first buildings built in tuff, a rare kind of igneous rock, and Cartosio, picture-perfect. And not just, I might add, because of its quiet, simple beauty, but also because of its famous restaurant, the Cacciatori,

where one can taste a cuisine rich in mainland Ligurian influences. The most interesting item on the menu, at least to my taste, are the stuffed zucchini and onions - but nobody leaves without a taste of their goat with potatoes. Goats have been a part of the landscape here for centuries; their milk is turned into pearl-white cheese which is served in different ways: after 15 days with a drop of oil, after two months, aged, with a touch of grape chutney (*mostarda*) and after six months, hard as a rock, grated over a plate of tagliolini pasta with butter and sage. In Ponti the natives experimented with wrapping the cheese inside a cabbage leaf: it launched a whole tradition, the *incavolata* ("inside the cabbage" but also, idiomatically, "the angry lass").

Another pleasure to be savoured here is the taste of good raw salami, well-aged - at its best, it is called *filetto baciato*, a speciality only produced, until very recently, in the tiny village of Cimaferle. Or the anchovies, which, I have come to believe, play some sort of role in local religiosity. Ok, I'm joking, but it is true that this land is infused with popular beliefs, and full of sacred corners. Close to Ponzone I discovered the unusual Santuario della Pieve, a parish church in which the Virgin Mary is portrayed pregnant, and is therefore revered by future mothers. Hunters, or those who like to trek through mountain forests, should be advised that these are quite impenetrable. But full of good stuff to eat - not a bad idea, perhaps, for your next holiday...

## what to see

Saint John the Baptist's church in **Bistagno** is mostly baroque, with a Romanic bell-tower. Inside, admire a marble statuary group by Giulio Monteverde. A building named after this artist hosts the Marengo Natural Science Hall and the "Giulio Monteverde" Museum of Art. The well-preserved square-plan medieval tower is the symbol of the village of **Cartosio**. In **Cavatore** there are some fifteenth- and sixteenth-century palaces and a lookout tower, as well as the church of Saint Lawrence, close to the graveyard, with its cycle of fifteenth-century frescoes. The original medieval center of **Ponzone** is remarkably well-preserved. Inside the Oratory of Prayers for the Dead there is a Sacred Art Museum - the most important piece is Maragliano's group of carved wooden statues. The Romanic Church of Saints Nazarius and Maurice is set inside the graveyard in **Prasco**. The village castle is seat of a study centre dedicated to Count Gallezio, author of the monumental "Italian Pomona", the first and most important encyclopaedia of fruit and fruit-tree images and descriptions in Italy (Twentieth Century). A series of baroque buildings characterizes **Me-**

**lazzo**, including the parish church of Saint Bartholomew (1759), with a painting by Moncalvo. The seventeenth-century church of Saint Catherine in **Montechiaro**, built over a pre-existing religious building, has a baptismal font carved from a single stone. In the same village there is a Museum of Peasant Life. In **Ponti** it's worth checking out the City Hall, where a few interesting items including a crucifix by Giulio Monteverde and a Roman milestone are kept. Saint Ambrose, the parish church in **Spigno Monferrato**, is a Ligurian-baroque building from the end of the Sixteenth Century. It is set in the picturesque old graveyard. The square-plan tower in **Terzo** is late-medieval, part of a network of signal towers which dot the valley (Bistagno, Denice, Merana, Castelletto d'Erro). **Denice** is a well-preserved medieval village, built in a ring around the castle tower (Twelfth Century) erected by the Marquis of Carretto. **Pareto** is arranged in a similar way, with houses grouped around the Spinola castle (Fourteenth Century). It also has a lovely parish church, dedicated to Saint Peter, with an elaborate eighteenth-century façade in Ligurian-baroque style.

## products

### MUSHROOMS, TRUFFLES AND WILD HERBS

Thanks to a special local climate and rich forests, this area is a great hunting-ground for finding mushrooms, especially the **porcino** (*Boletus Edulis*), celebrated in various fairs around Ponzone, Cassinelle and Morbello.

The eroded badlands are rich

in **truffles**, both white and black, while half-way up the mountains, on slopes where fruit-trees and vineyards would hardly grow, people cultivate **official and aromatic herbs**.

Lavender, with its soft purples, is the most striking among more than forty varieties inclu-

ding sage, thyme, mint, strawflower, fennel, aniseed, cumin, chamomile, coriander, tarragon, herb hyssop, achillea, St. John's wort, rosemary, malva, verbena and oregano - all used to produce essential oils or products for the cooking, pharmaceutical and cosmetic industries.

### THE FILETTO BACIATO

More or less a symbol of the village of Ponzone, the **filetto baciato** - kissed tenderloin - is a unique salami made by wrapping a whole tenderloin in a traditional mix of pork and fat. It was invented at the beginning of the Twentieth Century by the Malò family and soon became an important feature of the local butcheries' heritage. Sold in 600-gram pieces, it is served cut in thin, bright pink slices. Other local cured meats include cooked and raw salami, testa in cassetta, blood sausages, sausages, cacciatorini, and preparations made with entrails (frizze and grive).



### GOAT CHEESE

The High Bormida Valley and the area around Ponzone have an ancient tradition of herding goats and producing **goat cheeses** - the **formageta d'la pignata** is a soft cheese

which used to be aged inside kitchen pots. A recent change in the dedicated regulation now allows these villages to produce Dop appellation **Robiola di Roccaverano**, which

can be eaten fresh or aged. Even though the Robiola can be made by combining cow and goat milk, producers from this area prefer to use goat milk exclusively; the goats are



mainly raised in the wild. A slice of cheese is usually served with a dollop of honey (acacia,

chestnut, or wildflower). The local goat-herders also love the taste of brus, a mixture of

re-fermented goat and sheep cheeses with herbs, eaten over toasted bread or fired polenta.



## cuisine

The local cuisine is somewhere in-between hillside and mountainside traditions, with the addition of ingredients and recipes from inland Liguria, as well as from the Langhe. This is where the favorite first course **ravioli al plin** originated - the name indicates the way the pasta is "pinched" around the meat-and-vegetable stuffing. Ravioli are also locally served alla curdunà, i.e. rapidly boiled over a piece of linen. **Other kinds of pasta are usually served with**

**mushrooms** (mainly porcini) **or game** (hare, pheasant and boar). **Polenta** is cooked with cod or following the old Pucia recipe (a soft polenta cooked in a cabbage, bean and vegetable broth, with butter and cheese). The mountain dish called **zutta**, a simple chestnut soup, is prepared all around the Apennines with ingredients from the forests. Taste it in Ponzone, one of the highest points of this mountain range, a village with a spectacular view on the

hills beyond. In olden times, **chestnuts** were dried by placing them on the upper floor of a house and lighting smokefires in the lower part. Packed in a jute bag, they were then shelled by beating them over a wood block. Every farmhouse would also, of course, raise a pig, butchered on the onset of winter to make salami and other cured meats such as the baciua (pig's feet marinated in vinegar, boiled, de-boned, cut in slices, breaded and fried).





Aleramo's fritto is prepared in Cavatore by deep-frying breaded meat, while Montechiaro Alto is known for its dishes based on anchovies - a sign of the millennial patterns of com-

merce between coastal Liguria and land-locked Piedmont. In Ponti they make a good polenta served with an egg, onion and cod omelet. Local pastries include amaretti, nougat, baci

di dama, candied hazelnuts and hazelnut or chestnut cakes, as well as the unusual Mon ed Cavau, shaped like the blocks from the stone quarries in Cavatore.

## wine

In these valleys, next to the **Barbera del Monferrato**, the most important local appella-

tion is **Dolcetto**, both of Acqui and of Ovada. Also, the prized **Brachetto** is

still produced on these hills which look at the sea.

## shopping

### CARTOSIO

- **Az. Agr. Accusani di Robiglio (Farm)**

località Pessinelle, 2 - phone 014440196

**robiola di Roccaverano cheese**

### DENICE

- **Apicoltura Poggio**

via Ratè, 4 - phone 014492337

mobile 3334419272

**honey and jams**

### MALVICINO

- **Az. Agr. Biologica le Ramate**

**(Organic Farm)** - loc. Ramate - ph. 0144340923

**Robiola cheese and goat tome**

### MONTECHIARO D'ACQUI

- **Az. Agr. Ferrero (Farm)**

via Roma, 14 - phone 014492236

**Robiola di Roccaverano cheese**

- **Beatrice Schlapfer**

reg. Ferretti, 9 - phone 014491332

**Robiola di Roccaverano cheese**

- **Cascina Polovio (Farmhouse)**

reg. Carozzi, 7 - phone 014492117

**Robiola di Roccaverano cheese**

### MORBELLO

- **Laboratorio Musso**

frazione Costa - via Umberto I, 10

phone 0144768136 - **soft nougat**

### PONTI

- **Antica Macelleria RV Salumi (Butchery)**

piazza Caduti, 5 - phone 0144596416

closed: Wednesday afternoon and Sunday

**cooked salami, testa in cassetta**

- **Andrea Adorno**

reg. Cravarezza, 50 - phone 0144596112

**Robiola di Roccaverano cheese, "incavolata" (robiola wrapped in cabbage leaves)**

- **Cascina Blengio (Farmhouse)**

reg. Rosi, 18 - phone 0144596108

www.cascinablengio.it - 4 rooms

**products made with lavender and honey**

### PONZONE

- **Salumificio Cima (Butchery)**

fraz. Cimaferle, 181 - phone 0144765244

www.salumificima.it - closed: Sunday afternoon

**filetto baciato**

- **Salumeria Macelleria Giachero**

**(Butchery)** corso Acqui, 6/a - phone 014478077

closed: Monday and Wednesday afternoon

**cheese, filetto baciato**

### SPIGNO MONFERRATO

- **Alcide Accusani**

regione Moncastello, 6

phone 014491370

goat cheese

• **Az. Agr. Serina (Farm)**

regione Vivello Soprano

phone 0144993300 - snails

## what to eat

### BISTAGNO

• **Del Pallone**

corso Italia, 17

phone 014479234 mobile 3393576368

closed: Tuesday evening and Wednesday

set menu price: 28 euro

agnolotti del plin, pork tenderloin, "torta del Pallone" specialty cake

### CARTOSIO

• **I Cacciatori**

via Moreno, 30

phone 014440123

info@cacciatoricartosio.com

closed: Thursday, Friday for lunch

set menu price: 50 euro

meat sauce agnolotti, rabbit with rosemary, roasted goat, fruit tart

- the paved parking lot doesn't have any reserved spaces - clients in a wheelchair can reach the interior through a side entrance - the



• **Agronatura Soc. coop. (Cooperative)**

loc. Bergagiolo - phone 0144950035

www.agronatura.it

closed: Saturday and Sunday (in summer only)

Sunday) - essential oils, herbal teas

rooms inside are spacious enough to be easily accessed by wheelchair - the bathroom is too small for a wheelchair to get close to the wc - the structure has no previous experience with disabled clients.

### CAVATORE

• **Da Fausto**

loc. Valle Prati, 1

phone 0144325387

www.ristorantedafausto.it

closed: Monday and Tuesday for lunch (October to April also Tuesday evening)

set menu price: 28-32 euro

rooms: 3, 1 suite (Relais Borgo del Gallo)

outdoor tables

Russian salad, anchovies with green sauce, ravioli del plin, roast goat

- parking lot (gravel) with reserved spaces - the interior can be easily and autonomously navigated by wheelchair - disabled bathroom.



### • Cascina Camolin

regione Valle Prati - phone 0144322673  
open March to December, Saturday evening and  
Sunday for lunch  
set menu price: 25 euro  
**ravioli, roastbeef with roast potatoes**

### MELAZZO

#### • Ca' di Facelli

S.S. 334 per Sassello  
phone 0144341015  
closed: Monday and Tuesday; from Wednesday  
to Saturday open only in the evening and upon  
reservation for lunch  
set menu price: 31 euro

**duck with Marsala wine, Roccaverano potato  
gnocchi, roast guinea fowl with anchovie sauce  
and liver**

### SPIGNO MONFERRATO

#### • Ristoro Regina

via Airaldi, 27  
phone 014491506  
closed: Tuesday  
set menu price: 30 euro

**gnocchi with Robiola cheese, vitel tonnè**

*- paved parking lot close to the entrance - the  
ground-level entrance and the interior are spa-  
cious enough to be easily navigated by wheel-  
chair - disabled bathroom.*



## events

### Melazzo

Cod fair (April)  
info: City Hall, phone 014441101

### Morbello

Boar fair (August) - Chestnut fair (October)  
info: City Hall, phone 0144768146

### Pareto

Pancake fair (May) - info: City Hall, phone 019721044

### Ponti

"Polentone" fair (March) - info: City Hall, phone 0144596142

### Ponzone

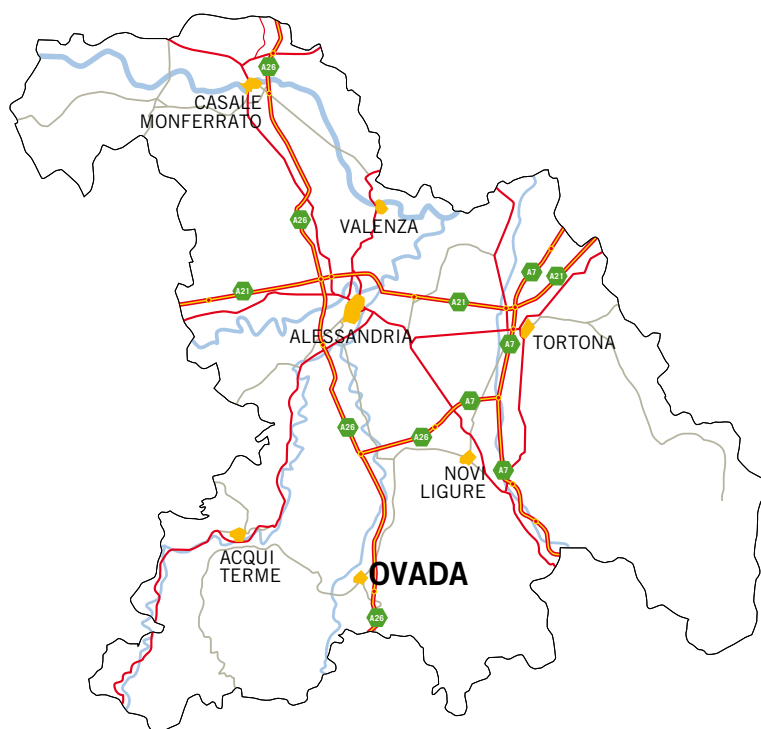
Mountain fair (October) - Mushroom fair (September)  
info: [www.comuneponzone.it](http://www.comuneponzone.it)

### Spigno Monferrato

Figazen fair (July) - Settembre Spignese (September)



# Ovada



## ovada, the ligurian



Ligurian influences are clearly felt the town of Ovada, as well as in the other six major settlements of the province of Alessandria.

The sea, only a few kilometers away, is in the air. This is a city of character, with a small centre full of lively squares; the tall, well-kept houses have pastel-colored façades and, of course, the ligurian focaccia bread is everywhere.

Commerce between the two regions brought the chick-pea farinata here as well, and, in the cold season, Piedmontese bagna caoda is served every other day.

Ovada is also the denomination of origin of a famous Dolcetto, a very robust, odorous, generous wine. Trade with nearby Liguria means the town is full of well-established restaurants for

merchants and travelers to stop at, all rich in sea-food, seaside and hillside specialties. Since time immemorial, all these eateries have been in constant competition over who serves the best anchovies.

Also, Ovada's bakeries make the softest, smoothest amaretti. The surrounding countryside is worthy of note, with its many defensive castles which protect a strategic entryway to the region.

The first signs of the landscape, the architecture, and the cuisine which lie beyond are all here to be discovered - and never forgotten. After all, this is Piemonte's - and the province of Alessandria's - original and exclusive welcome to their lands.



## what to see

Ovada's best profile is the Piazza dell'Assunta - a monumental façade, two symmetrical bell towers and, leading from it, a series of tiny lanes which recall Ligurian carrugi.

The Church of the Assumption, which dominates the square, was built between the end of the Eighteenth Century and the beginning of the Nineteenth; inside it there are many interesting works of art. The **Church of the Immaculate Conception** was first built in the Seventeenth Century but redone in the Twentieth. **Saint Mary of the Graces** was built in 1481 (note the fragment of a fresco over the portal and a painting by Fiasella inside). The **Oratory of Saint John the Baptist** is sixteenth-century, as well as the **Oratory of the Annunciation** - both belong to the respective brotherhoods. The first has an unusual façade

which was recently restored; inside the second there is a triptych by Brea's workshop, depicting the Annunciation. The birthplace of Saint Paul of the Cross is a sixteenth-century house; because of its religious significance a small Historical and Religious Museum has been opened next to it. Ovada's main exhibit venue is the Civic Paleontology "Giulio Maini" Museum, in the ex-church of Saint Anthony Abbot (Fourteenth Century). The **Gallery of Saint Sebastian** was built in the Twelfth Century but redone in 1391 - nowadays it is used for cultural events. Other notable buildings in town include the Music School (a sixteenth-century villa with frescoed ceilings) and the **Spinola Palace** (typical example of a seventeenth-century Genoese aristocrats' manor, with a simple, square design).

## products

### HEALTHY BISCUITS AND TASTY COOKIES

Yummy, as well as low in sugar content, "salute", i.e. "health", biscuits followed the railway from North to South, becoming Italy's favorite breakfast from the end of the Second World War onwards. "**Salute**" biscuits are toasted slices of sweetened bread, similar to fette biscottate, crunchy and carrying a faint aroma of aniseed. They are produced following an old-fashioned recipe and left to rise naturally. Often, these are sold alongside the bitter-sweet, soft **Amaretti** cookies, which are produced all over the province, using almonds, egg-white and flour, and packaged in traditional





cardboard boxes or wrapped in plastic bags. In Ovada you can also find eateries devoted

exclusively to farinata, which is made with water and chickpea flour and must be served pi-

ping hot (in dialect it's called "bela calda", nice'n'hot) with a sprinkle of pepper.

## cuisine

The traditional cuisine of Ovada is a well-balanced blend of Piedmontese and Ligurian tastes, characterized by a widespread use of wild herbs. Hors d'oeuvres usually include the **fried panissa** (also cooked in the area around Novi) small chickpea dumplings which are boiled before being fried and served with fresh cheese. **Agnolotti** stuffed with stew are cooked in Dolcetto wine, and **tajarin** fresh pasta is served with mushrooms, which grow

abundantly in the nearby hills. **Andarini**, tiny flour dumplings served in broth, are prepared for Easter - it is intriguing to discover an almost identical dish in the far-away island of Sardinia, the andarinos from Usini. The most typical second courses are **bollito misto** served with a bagnet dip of stale bread, parsley, garlic and anchovies, and Piedmontese **fritto misto**.

Another very good choice is **rabbit with Dolcetto**, prepared

by marinating the animal in wine for a night before cooking it in a pan with herbs, spices and vin brulé. **Wild herb quiches** are cooked according to old recipes, and desserts include amaretti and canestrelli cookies, hazelnut cake, chestnut sweets and the chocolate pudding called bonet. The wine of choice is obviously Dolcetto di Ovada, a ruby-red wine with a strong, fruity scent and a distinctive taste of almonds.

## shopping

### • La Casa del Formaggio (Cheesemonger)

via Torino, 59

phone 0143822002

closed: Thursday afternoon

**cheese, salami**

### • Pasticceria Caffetteria B&C (Patisserie)

via Cairoli, 155 - phone 014381216

closed: Monday

**Ovada "Pizzicotti"**

### • Panificio del Borgo (Bakery)

via Di Vittorio, 7

www.panificiodelborgo.it

phone 0143821381

closed: Sunday

**"pulled" grissini, bread, focaccia**

## what to eat

### • 1/4ino di Vino (winery)

via Roma, 23

phone 0143381155

mobile 3477377844

3479336046

open from Tuesday to Sunday from 6 PM

wine (glass): 3,5 euro



### **salami, cheese, daily specialties**

- parking lot with reserved spaces - the entrance and the interior can be easily navigated by wheelchairs - in some parts, the assistance of another person is necessary - the bathrooms do not have any supporting structures but are accessible by wheelchair.

- **L'Archivolto**

piazza Garibaldi, 25/26

phone 0143835208 - closed: Monday

set menu price: 35 euro

**bagna caoda, perbureira**

- **Dalla Padella alla Brace**

piazza Mazzini, 31 - phone 0143823392

closed: Thursday

set menu price: 25-30 euro

**Monferrina ravioli, panissa, cod omelets**

- **Italia**

via San Paolo, 54

phone 014386502

[www.albergoitaliaovada.it](http://www.albergoitaliaovada.it)

closed: Tuesday and Wednesday for lunch

set menu price: 25 euro

**Piedmontese agnolotti, roast veal with Volpe-do peaches**

- **La Pignatta**

vicolo Madonnetta, 18

phone 0143821650

closed: Monday evening and Tuesday

set menu price: 12 euro (for lunch), tasting menu

25 euro

**pasta and beans, ligurian-style rabbit**

- **La Volpina**

strada Volpina, 1 - phone 014386008

closed: Sunday evening, Monday evening and holidays in the evening

tastino menu: 52 euro

**cima stuffed with trout, salmon and shrimp, all'uccelletto meat, rififi cream**



## events

- Procession of the brotherhoods of Saint John (June) and Our Lady of the Carmine (July),
  - Villages and Tastes (May)
  - Local products' fair and market "OvadaInMostra" (September)
- [www.comune.ovada.al.it](http://www.comune.ovada.al.it)

# The High Monferrato around Ovada

Belforte Monferrato, Capanne di Marcarolo, Carpeneto, Casaleggio Boiro, Cremolino, Fraconalto, Lerma, Molare, Montaldeo, Rocca Grimalda, Tagliolo Monferrato, Trisobbio



## each village, a castle



Should you happen to walk these hills without knowing where you are, you would not guess "In the Monferrato" (or, as some historians claim, the Obertenga) but, rather, you might place yourself somewhere in France, maybe the Loire, or the Périgord. There are castles here which exercise a unique fascination upon the imagination - so beautiful, so imposing. And a dominant feature in these manors' history is, of course, wine. In Tagliolo they make a magnificent Dolcetto di Ovada: part of the production process takes place in the castle itself, before the wine is left to age in wood barrels. The Cremolino castle hosts a restaurant, famed for its 10-course hors d'oeuvres, which is dedicated to promoting the area's cuisine, an array of tastes highly influenced by close-by Liguria. Rocca Grimalda is well known as another centre of Dolcetto production. The village is impossible to miss from the main highway, as it dominates the scenery from

its high, austere perch. The typical dish, called perbureira, is served accompanied by legendary tales about the local lord's will to impose the *ius primae noctis*. Of course, each castle has its own legends - in the Eighties I took a trip here with Franco Cacciabue, with the specific aim of collecting these stories. I cannot forget the wine-makers boasting about their product, which they defined as a "cru" - France, now beyond the border, still stuck in the people's DNA. Trionzo, to this day, is known by all as the best of Dolcetto di Ovada's cru - a title, admittedly, contested by the village of San Lorenzo, where the "rogue pharmacist" Pino Ratto was, for years, the main producer of this kind of wine. And of course there was the case of Ornella Muti, the Italian movie star, who embarked in 1988 in the enterprise of wine production, right here in Lerma. She enlisted the help of a group of wine-makers who were busy compiling, together with Luigi

Veronelli, a world history of wine, and this is the comment she received, from Giacomo Bologna, during a memorable harvest-day in his farmhouse: "We can all join in the race, but it's a race for second place." Nobody, in other words, had half a chance of beating Pino Ratto. There is wine, but then there is also game, both of the furry and of the feathery kind, triumphant upon the local table. A lovely natural reserve around Capanne

## what to see

This area is full of castles - mostly well-kept modernized residences of the aristocracy. In **Carpeneto** the castle, set in a park, towers over the village - as a landmark it competes with the parish church, a Piedmontese-baroque building with valuable furnishings inside. The Spinola castle (1499) in **Lerma** has been turned into an elegant residence. In the same village there also are a Romanic chapel with frescoes from 1412, in a style influenced by Giotto, and the Museum of Gold. In **Molare** there are the Santa Maria Campale church and the Chiabrera castle, a medieval building - within, note the paintings by Moncalvo and Pellizza da Volpedo. The parish church is from the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries. Inside the Salvago-Raggi manor, works by Bernini, Reni and Van Dyck are to be seen. Set at the foot of the Ligurian Alps, the village of Madonna delle Rocche was built around the Sanctuary of the Virgin of the Rocks, built during the Seventeenth Century, when the Marian cult thrived after a series of miraculous healings occurred in the area around Molare. The thirteenth-century castle in **Rocca Grimalda** was redone a number of times, while the parish church of Saint James still shows its ancient façade. Saint Limbania's church is high-medieval and decorated inside with sixteenth-century frescoes. Don't forget to peek into the Museum of Masks. The castle in **Tagliolo** has a tenth-century tower, but the rest of the building follows the late-nineteenth-century style imposed by D'Andrade. In the village there are two interesting collections: the "Ferrari" Museum of Wrought Iron and the "Celestino Ferrari" Orni-

di Marcarolo protects the local boar population, until it reaches critical numbers, which it often does. And how can one forget the striped grissini, or bread-sticks, which accompany the local charcuterie? The ones from Belforte are peppery and full of spices. To sum it up, there are plenty of secret delicacies hidden among these hills, where each old grocery store, and each butcher, has something new for the visitor to try.

thology Museum. Inside the castle of **Montaldeo** (Thirteenth Century) there are works by Flemish masters and by Caracci, as well as valuable bronzes and bas-reliefs. The Malaspina family built the **Cremolino** castle in the Sixteenth Century over a pre-existing fourteenth-century fortress. Today it is a compact, high building somewhat between a military fort (it has a draw bridge and two defensive towers) and a residential palace, with many windows giving onto the surrounding countryside. Another manor is in **Casaleggio** - this one dates from the Tenth Century, while **Trisobbio's** castle is a faithful re-construction of the original, medieval, one, of which only the tower is left. The castle in **Belforte** was built over the ruins of an ancient Benedictine convent, originally established by the Irish monk Columban (Seventh Century). Outside, the Church to Saint Benedict, which is just as ancient, is still standing. Inside the **Capanne di Marcarolo** park, which protects the environment around the atmospheric Lakes of Lavagnina, it is possible to visit the Benedicta Martyrs Memorial.



## wine

Although Barbera and Cortese give a good yield in this area, the hills around Ovada's main wine is the **Dolcetto d'Ovada**. First mentioned in a document from 1593, it has long been one of the main cash crops both here and around Acqui, especially in the village of Roc-

ca Grimalda, where the land is particularly well-suited to the cultivation of this variety of grape. The wine obtained from it is a deep ruby, garnet-red when aged, has a fruity aroma and is harmonic and soft to the palate, with a smooth scent of almonds. It is perfect with sa-

lami, as well as with a plate of pasta with truffles and mushrooms. In recent times, more and more producers have introduced the **albarossa** wine, a graft of nebbiolo and barbera, which yields a brightly colored wine, with a strong structure and pleasant hints of spices.

## products

### IN THE WOODS OF THE VAL DI LEMME

The forests in the High Lemme Valley and in the rest of the Ovada area are rich in mushrooms, predominantly the **porcino**, used by all the local restaurants in a myriad dishes, especially during the autumn months.

October to January is **truffle**-hunting season, and the woods also provide an abundant **chestnut** crop, used for cakes and other local dishes, as well

as being roasted or boiled in innumerable village fairs and harvest festivals.



### AROMATIC WILD HERBS

This unique landscape is an ideal habitat for many species of **wild herbs**, which are found

in the underwood and used in many dishes - mainly quiches prepared for Easter. Peaches

and strawberries are widely cultivated, and honey is produced here as well.

### CHEESE, HAY, AND BREADSTICKS

The hills around Ovada have a rich heritage; the skill of curing meat according to many tradi-

tional recipes is passed down father to son in each family farmhouse. As a consequence,

there are quite a few different kinds of salami just waiting to be tasted. Another traditional



production is the **robiola** cheese, made either with goat milk or with a mixture of goat, cow and sheep. Robiola is eaten fresh or aged by wrapping each cheese in a chestnut leaf and leaving it to

rest on a bed of hay for about a month. It can be eaten with oil and pepper or with truffles, together with the fra-

grant and tasty **grissini**, breadsticks produced in Trisobbio.



## cuisine

Ingredients from the forest are the basis for most local recipes, such as **rice quiches with wild herbs**, veal cutlets with mushrooms, and plenty of game. **Mushrooms** have various uses: in omelets, with salami, fontina cheese and corned veal tongue, in salads such as the typical ovuli (Ceasar's mushrooms) and prataioli salad with gorgonzola cheese. Fresh and dried mushrooms are also used in

the preparation of risotto or of tagliolini pasta (best with fresh porcini or spungole), in quiches or with potatoes. In the village of Casaleggio Boiro try fugasin and home-made honey cakes, in Cremolino the local recipe for rabbit "alla cremolinese", fritto misto and bollito, while the best chickpea panissa, fried in olive oil, is to be found in Franconalto. Many local dishes are peasant variations of the classic lasagna,

such as the **lasagna alla Zerbetta**, with broth, pasta and beans. For dessert, in Cremolino they serve the local Baci, hazelnut cakes or a chocolate mattonella, while in Molare the local bakery is proud of its original "amaretti alla Lilla". Finally, Roccagrimalda is known for the **Perbureira**, a soup of pasta, beans, oil and garlic whose recipe has been jealously guarded by the village women for centuries.



## shopping

### FRACONALTO

#### • Az. Agr. e Agrituristică La Sereta

loc. Sereta, 47/a  
phone 0109693108  
mobile 3495826357  
www.lasereta.it  
closed: Tuesday  
**Sambuchino and rose syrup**

### LERMA

#### • Macelleria Salumeria Primo (Butchery)

via Martiri della Benedicta, 13  
phone 0143877150  
closed: Wednesday afternoon  
**cured meat, meat**

### MONTALDEO

#### • Az. Agr. La Comuna (Farm)

Cascina La Comuna, 21  
phone 0143849228  
closed: Sunday  
3 apartments  
**goat milk, goat cheese**

### TRISOBBIO

#### • I Grissinari

via Roma, 15  
phone 014371188  
closed: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday afternoon;  
open Sunday morning  
**grissini breadsticks**

## what to eat

### CREMOLINO

#### • Bel Soggiorno

via Umberto I, 69  
phone 0143879012  
closed: Wednesday; open only in the evening  
Monday, Tuesday, Thursday  
set menu price: 40-50 euro  
3 rooms



**stracotto ravioli, cod with olives, fritto misto**

- there are no reserved spaces in the gravel parking lot - clients in a wheelchair can enter from a side door and easily navigate the interior, with the assistance of another person in some points - disabled bathroom.

### TAGLIOLO MONFERRATO

#### • Da Gino

via Roma, 41 - phone 014389483  
closed: Monday, Tuesday e Wednesday  
set menu price: 35 euro  
**Piedmontese fritto misto, fried cod**



## events

### Carpeneto

### Molare

### Rocca Grimalda

### Tagliolo Monferrato

### Trisobbio

"Vino in Rosa" (June) info: tel. 014385121

Polentone fair (August) info: City Hall, 0143888121

Perbureira fair (August) info: www.comuneroccagrimalda.it

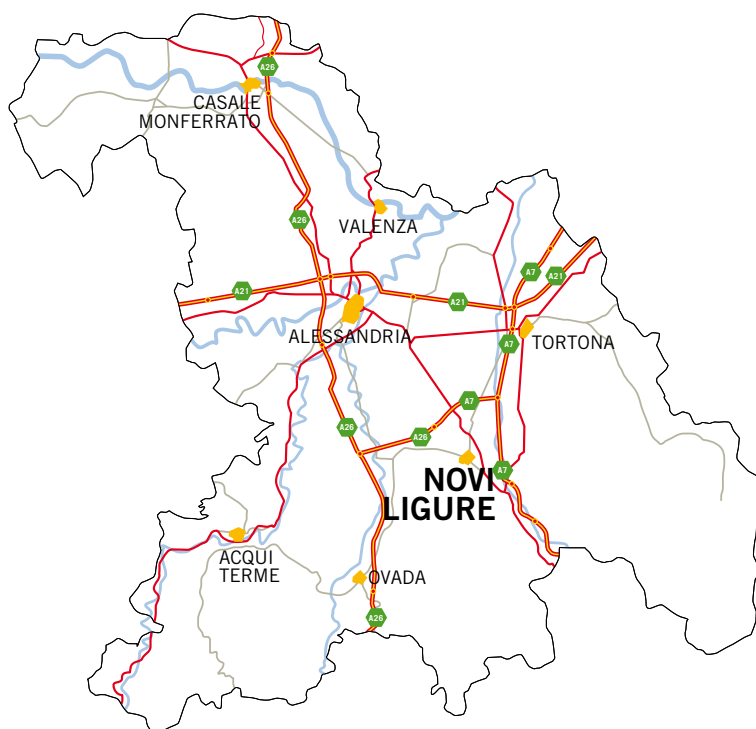
"Sapori d'Autunno dell'Alto Monferrato"

with truffles and chestnuts (October)

info: www.comunetagliolo.it

Tarso bi, truffles and wine (October) - www.unionedeicastelli.it

# Novi Ligure



## in the belly of a lush countryside



Novi is a small town, in the province of Alessandria, which enjoys a very personal lifestyle, made special by a few, small details. Mainly, it's character is due to the geography of the town's center, where everything is in walking distance and the streets are always full of people - at least on a Saturday. The Collegiata di Santa Maria Assunta is a charming intersection, so typical of Novi, where every square quickly turns into a meeting point. I will never forget the peace that reigns under the trees close to the ruin of the old, majestic castle. It is a city of corners, in the belly of an agricultural valley set under the rolling, gentle hills where Cortese wine, including the famous Gavi, is produced. One of the most interesting things to see is the "Campionissimi"

Museum, the Museum of, well, "Super-champions", collecting stories and memorabilia from Italy's great bicycle racers such as the legendary Fausto Coppi and Costante Girardengo. The adjoining complex, named after the "Lush Land of Novi" - a name evoking both the surrounding landscape and the abundance of sweets and chocolate produced in town - is used for a number of important fairs, the main one organized by the Municipality in the first ten days of December. The local focaccia is rather well-known, but more so is the strange stamp used to make corzetti, a round pasta, often cooked at home but sometimes available in local restaurants and eateries which are just waiting to be discovered in this charming corner of Piemonte.

## what to see

Novi's heart beats in via Roma, a lovely sequence of noble palaces from the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century, decorated in the Genoese style in fashion in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries: **Palazzo Da Franchi** (note the hallway and the staircase), **Palazzo della Dogana** (traces of frescoes, sandstone portals, spiral stairway), **Alignani** (nineteenth-century decorations), **Parodi** (garden with eighteen-century fountains and statues). Other noble palaces worthy of note are **Palazzo Pallavicini** (artworks by Bernardo Strozzi), **Spinola** (interesting decor), **Franzosi** (paintings on the façade), **Spinola di Variana** (frescoed portico giving onto the courtyard), **Cambiaso Negrotto** (lovely hanging terrace) and **Negroni** (outside decorations attributed to Antonio and Giovanni Muratori). The road ends in Piazza **Dellepiane**, with the palace of the same name. At the centre of the square there is the "fountain of salt" (1816). The perimeter of the square is bordered by the Collegiate Church of Saint Mary's Assumption

(dated 1650-79 but originally quite ancient, probably Twelfth, Thirteenth Century), rich in valuable furnishings such as the decorative stuccoes, paintings by Domenico Fiasella, the "black Crucifix", and the Serassi organ. In Via Girardengo there is Romualdo Marengo theatre, built in 1839 by Giuseppe Becchi. The **oratory of the brotherhood of Saint Mary Magdalene** hosts a scene of the Calvary, with 21 life-sized wood statues, and a scene of Christ's mourners, with 8 terracotta statues: both groups were sculpted in the Sixteenth Century. Right outside the city center it is possible to visit the small **Parish of Holy Mary** (Twelfth Century), previously set in the countryside, with original apses and a fresco by Boxilio, painted in 1474. Another monument outside the city walls is the only remaining tower from the castle, built in 1233, striking against the surrounding greenery. For rainy days, there are the bicycle-racing themed **Museum of Super-champions** and Novi's Historical Society's Document Hall.

## products

### IT'S NOT ALL ABOUT CHOCOLATE IN THE TOWN OF FAUSTO COPPI AND OF FRESH FOCACCIA

In Italy saying Novi is like saying **chocolate**: a single factory - the biggest one, which is also called "Novi" - produces 80 million bars a year. This quantitative wealth, together with the presence of many smaller chocolate-makers, allowed the town to claim, in 1996, the title of "confectionary production pole". Here, at the ancient border with the kingdom of the Savoy, bakeries are full of amaretti



and **canestrelli** cookies, the first made with almonds, the second, doughnut-shaped, made of olive oil, flour, yeast, salt, sugar and - here comes the secret - a glass of white Cortese wine. Liguria,

nearby, provided the recipe for the typical **focaccia** bread, flat, salty and dripping with lovely olive oil. In 2008 it was awarded recognition as a IGP (Protected Geographical Indication) as a EU-protected regional food. Fa-

**rinata**, with oil and chick-pea flour, is prepared here as well as in the entire Ligurian Appennino - the small village of Merella, outside Novi, boasts its very own chickpea variety, rare enough to merit the label of "Piedmontese regional agricultural product". It is harvested in July to be served in soups or ground to make **farinata**.



## cuisine

Although Novi's cuisine mostly follows in the lines of traditional Piedmontese cooking, it does have its own special pasta: **corzetti** (also called "crosetti" or "little crosses"), 5cm-wide disks of fresh pasta, stamped with a special hand-held press, which originally bore the imprint of a cross or a family crest. Traditionally, these "little crosses" are served with a mushroom sauce, with stew, or else with oil and anchovies. Holidays call for a dish of **gnocchetti and broth**, a small pasta shaped by running a portion of the dough between thumb and knee - if you try this at home, do note that the cook's legs should be covered



with a linen cloth. The local chickpeas are used for **farinata** but also for a pork chop soup and in **paniccia**, an appetizer made by taking a small chickpea polenta, cutting it in slices, dipping them in flour, and finally frying them in olive oil. **Paniccia** is a perfect excuse to order a glass of the great white wines which

are produced in the nearby hills, such as Gavi's Cortese and Timorasso. **Agnolotti** are ubiquitous, served "**a culo nudo**" (naked bottom) and dressed with a glass of Cortese. Roast polenta with **anchovies** and onion, known as **carabigné**, is an old peasant dish, generally only served during Lent.

## shopping

- **Bar Pasticceria La Pieve (Café, Patisserie)**

via Verdi, 55 - phone 01432622

closed: Monday - **chocolate, amaretti**

- **Il Gelatissimo**

via Garibaldi, 18 - mobile 3495950395

opening hours: winter 1 pm to 8.30 pm, summer 10 am to 12 pm

- **home-made ice-cream**

- **Pastificio Elvezia**

piazza Indipendenza, 4 - phone 01432690

closed: Monday - **corzetti, farinata**

- **Il Forno del Pugliese (Bakery)**

via Cavallotti, 130 - phone 0143323607

closed: Sunday - **"pulled" focaccia**



## what to eat

### • Cascina degli Ulivi

strada Mazzola, 12

phone 0143744598

[www.cascinadegliulivi.com](http://www.cascinadegliulivi.com)

open: Friday and Saturday evening, Sunday for lunch (no long holidays)

set menu price: 25 euro

3 rooms

**spelt soup, rabbit stew, panna cotta**

### • Emmalù

viale dei Campionissimi, 4

phone 0143746231

closed: Monday

set menu price: 35 euro

**corzetti from Novi with mushroom sauce and sausage, roast pumpkin with Montebore cheese sauce, Emmalù bowl with zabaione dessert**

*- paved parking lot close to the entrance - the entrance and the interior can be easily and autonomously navigated by wheelchair - disabled bathroom.*



### • Il Banco

via Monte di Pietà, 5

phone 0143744690

[www.ilbanco.it](http://www.ilbanco.it)

closed: Monday

set menu price: 15-20 euro

**farinata, Merella chickpea soup, panissa**

### • La Brenta Rossa

strada Pasturana, 8

phone 0143323562

[www.brentarossa.com](http://www.brentarossa.com)

closed: Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, from Thu. to Sunday for lunch

set menu price: 40 euro (including wines)

**corzetti from Novi, cod ravioli**

### • Corona Café

corso Marengo, 13

phone 0143746251

closed: Monday

set menu price: 30 euro

**agnolotti with roast stew**



## events

- Food and Wine fair "Dolci Terre di Novi" (December)
- "Fiera di Santa Caterina", festival (November)
- Top Wine (1-2 March) info: [www.alessandriatopwine.it](http://www.alessandriatopwine.it)  
[www.comune.noviligure.al.it](http://www.comune.noviligure.al.it)

## Gavi and the lands of the Orba

Bosio, Capriata d'Orba, Carrosio, Casal Cermelli, Castelletto d'Orba, Francavilla Bisio, Fresonara, Gavi, Mornese, Parodi Ligure, Predosa, San Cristoforo, Silvano d'Orba, Tassarolo, Voltaggio



## frederick the redbear and the marquis aleramo



Gavi is a name most food-and-wine-lovers associate with Carletto Bergaglio, a recently departed character, who exercised - in his own way - the revered profession of pharmacist. Not long before his death, he had turned his house into the first and only museum in the world dedicated entirely to enemas. The very same Carletto Bergaglio, founder of the Order of the Ravioli and of Gavi wine, had organized a series of lectures on Frederick the Redbeard, "Il Barbarossa", who apparently once passed through this area. Later, he set up a remarkable debate on the region's identity, which would perhaps have nothing to do with the Monferrato but pertain, rather, to the lands of Obertenga. I once got into an animated conversation on the subject - we were walking around inside the fortress, one of the most important monuments of its kind

in Piemonte, certainly worth a visit. And then we tasted those ravioli "a culo nudo" (naked-bottom), the testa in cassetta (a dish made with parts of a pig's head), the local amaretti cookies and other delicacies. This is a land of golden-tipped vineyards, an amiable, unique, breath-taking hill-scape whose myriad villages are set like jewels among the fields. It's worth the trip just to take in the scenery - and perhaps visit some of the many wine-cellars of the area. A most enchanting relais de charme hotel is set around such a place: Villa Sparina, in Monterotondo of Gavi. Facing Gavi, the village of Voltaggio, with its renowned amaretti cookies, already feels like Liguria. Every single one of these townships - Bosio, Capriata, Castelletto, Francavilla, Silvano d'Orba and Tassarolo - produces excellent cru of the famous Cortese as well as of Dolcetto, a

wine which here takes on the DOC label from Ovada. The village of Castelletto d'Orba deserves a note for its spring-time fair, devoted to the area's wines. Other resources, such as the crystal-clear water sources, lend further rich-

ness to the region. People here follow the cooking style of Alessandria, with some Ligurian influences. An ancient dish, still served to this day, is a delicious soup of bread, eggs and chicken livers, peculiarly known as "child's poo".

## what to see

**Gavi** is set under the massive fort built by the Genoese over a pre-existing - according to a document from the year 973 - castle, which was modified in different times and turned into the huge fortress we still see today (finished in the Twelfth Century). Other things to see in the center include a few remarkable churches, most notably the parish of Saint James (note the portal), built in 1165, which is one of the most interesting examples of Romanic architecture in the province of Alessandria (even though baroque elements were added in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries). In **Voltaggio** there are a few interesting religious buildings such as the parish church of Saints Nazarius and Celsus, from the Fourteenth Century, and the oratories of Saint Sebastian (Seventeenth Century), Saint Anthony Abbot (Eighteenth Century), Saint John the Baptist (Nineteenth Century) and, especially, of Holy

Mary of the Flag (Seventeenth Century). Art lovers come here to see the paintings of Genoese school collected in the Capuchin's Museum. The church of Saint Remigius in **Parodi Ligure** is interesting for its twelfth-century origins and striking location. **Francavilla Bisio**, **Mornese**, **Castelletto d'Orba** (founded in the year 1000), **Tassarolo**, **Silvano d'Orba** and **San Cristoforo** (with an interesting polygonal tower), each have a castle worth seeing, even if only from the outside. In Castelletto, also look for the Romanic church of Saint Innocent (Twelfth Century) with frescoes from the Fifteenth Century. A small Museum of Gold adds some shine to the City Hall of **Predosa** - in the village there are interesting examples of religious architecture such as the frescoed oratory of Saint Sebastian, the church of the Assumption in the area of Castelferro, and the church of Saints Lawrence and Vincent in the hamlet of Mantovana.

## products

### AMARETTI & CANESTRELLI

The Gavi region was brought to the attention of the national gourmet circles for its **amaretti**, a recipe from the end of the Eighteenth Century, still prepared with passionate rigor by the local bakeries. The **Gavi amaretto** is distinctively soft and fragrant, with a strong taste of bitter or sweet almonds. You can tell that it is home-made from the



"three-fingered pinch" closure. The traditional ingredients are sweet or bitter almonds, sugar, egg-whites and apricot kernels. The village of **Voltag-**

**gio's amaretti** are equally famous and carry a trademark registered at the beginning of the Twentieth century - having been invented a few decades

earlier. Another typical Gavi pastry are the **canestrelli**, circular cookies made with olive oil, flour, yeast, salt and sugar and a drop of Cortese wine.

## GRAPPA, HONEY, AND MUSHROOMS

Silvano d'Orba is known as one of the "capitals of **Grappa**": the spirit received an appellation as "Municipal Product" in 2004, sponsored by the famous critic Luigi Veronelli. The correct procedure involves the use of the Piedmontese water-bath still; distillation should be completed before the last



day of the year; the pomace (grape-skins) should only come from the DOC areas of Ovada, Gavi, and the High Monferrato, particularly from Dolcetto grapes. The area is also rich in mushrooms and game from its forests, and in honey, especially acacia, chestnut, and wildflower.

## cuisine

Autumn is the best season for tasting some of the many local mushroom dishes, and in every moment of the year there will be salami and cheeses on the table. Bosio excels in the preparation of rice quiches, while in Capriata a favorite is **lasagna with sturbiaroi** (beans), which is a soup with long stripes of pasta. Other specialties include all kinds of stew with green sauce, cabbage with lard, small gnocchi in broth, cooked in the village of San Cristoforo, and the excellent **agnolotti** from Gavi, the town which claims the title of birth-place of this ubiquitous Piedmontese dish. Here they are often served "naked bottom" (i.e. with no dressing



at all, or else with a sprinkle of Parmesan cheese). The dough itself should be extremely thin so as to allow the stuffing to show through, and must appear irregular when cooked. Borage (starflower) is added

to the stuffing for extra taste. "Pulled" focaccia is made in the morning and potato focaccia in the afternoon, and then come rice quiches, Gavi risotto and delicious sausages cooked with onion and Cortese wine.

## wine

This area produces one of the greatest white wines of Piemonte, the DOCG **Cortese di Gavi**. It is produced from Cortese grapes exclusively and has a yellowish hue, a delicate aroma and a fresh, harmonious taste. It is usually drunk within three

years from the harvest, but it's not unlikely to find an older Gavi wine, made from riper grapes, which will have a stronger structure and a uniquely varied bouquet, including pleasant mineral and tertiary aftertastes. It goes well with light appeti-

zers and vegetable quiches, but is also traditionally served with truffle tajarin pasta and with goat cheese.

The area is ideal for the cultivation of red grapes, such as barbera and dolcetto (including the local variety called *nibiò*).

## shopping

### CAPRIATA D'ORBA

#### • Bodrato Cioccolato (Chocolatier)

via San Cristoforo, 15

phone 014368902

open: September to May

chocolates with "Bella di Garbaga" cherries

### GAVI

#### • Bar Pasticceria G.B. Traverso (Patisserie)

via Bertelli, 3

phone 0143642713

www.amarettitraverso.it

closed: Tuesday

Amaretti di Gavi

#### • Enoteca La Cave (Winery)

via Circonvallazione, 9

phone 0143643871 - closed: Monday

Gavi wine, local specialties

#### • Bar Pasticceria La Pieve (Patisserie)

via Mameli, 20

phone 0143642817

Baci di Dama

#### • Caffè del Moro

via Mameli, 41

phone 0143642648

closed: Wednesday

home-made ice-cream

#### • Macelleria Agostino Bertelli (Butchery)

via Mameli, 23

phone 0143642627

closed: Monday

testa in cassetta, sausage

#### • Macelleria Andrea Figini (Butchery)

via Mameli, 87 - phone 0143645318

closed: Monday (open Sunday morning)

veal testa in cassetta

### SAN CRISTOFORO

#### • Panetteria Pasticceria Fratelli Ferrari (Bakery, Patisserie)

via Ferrari, 46

phone 0143682265

closed: Wednesday afternoon

grissini breadsticks, Baci di Dama, canestrelli

### SILVANO D'ORBA

#### • Apicoltura Robbiano (Beekeeping)

via Pieve, 13 - phone 0143841544

honey

### VOLTAGGIO

#### • Pasticceria Bar Cavo (Patisserie)

piazza Scorza, 1 - phone 0109601218

Amaretti, canestrelli

#### • Panificio Carrosio (Bakery)

via Scaglioso, 14

phone 0109601213

closed: Tue. afternoon and Sunday

Amaretti, panbiscotto, pandolce

#### • Panificio Repetto (Bakery)

via C. Anfosso, 79

phone 0109601244

closed: Wednesday afternoon

Amaretti, ligurian cookies



## what to eat

### CAPRIATA D'ORBA

#### • La Corte dei Grilli

via Roma, 39 - phone 0143467425

closed: Tuesday evening and Wednesday

set menu price: 35 euro - outdoor tables, garden

**testaroli from Lunigiana - agnolotti - corzetti with mushroom sauce - roast goat**

#### • Il Moro

piazza Garibaldi, 7

phone 014346157 - [www.ristoranteilmoro.it](http://www.ristoranteilmoro.it)

closed: Sunday evening (only Sept. to May), Monday - set menu price: 35 euro

outdoor tables, garden, winery

**"rabbit tuna" - agnolotti - corzetti from Novi with pesto**

- paved parking lot close to the entrance - clients in a wheelchair can enter through a side door and can easily and autonomously navigate most of the interior - disabled bathroom.



### GAVI

#### • Le Cantine del Gavi

via Mameli, 69 - phone 0143642458

closed: Monday, Tuesday for lunch

set menu price: 40 euro

**charbonade with sauces, "al tocco" ravioli, risotto with Gavi**



#### • La Gallina

fraz. Monterotondo, 56

phone 0143685132

[www.la-gallina.it](http://www.la-gallina.it)

closed: never - set menu price: 50 euro

28 rooms (l'Ostelliere)

panoramic terrace

**Val Borbera trout with porcini mushrooms - Carnaroli risotto with Gavi Passito, Roccaverano robiola and sage**

- parking lot with reserved spaces - clients in a wheelchair can enter through a side entrance with a slide and can easily move around, assisted in some points by another person - the accessible elevator has an acoustic system with signals arrival at the requested floor - disabled bathroom.



#### • Il Girasole

piazza Martiri della Benedicta, 15/r

phone 0143643485 - [www.ilgirasolegavi.com](http://www.ilgirasolegavi.com)

closed: Tuesday

set menu price: 28-30 euro - 4 rooms

**tortelloni with beets and ricotta with a cream of Quarantina potatoes, fig jelly with pastries**

- paved parking lot with reserved spaces - the entrance (with slide) and interior are easily navigated by wheelchair - disabled bathroom - the elevator is accessible and has an acoustic system; both a wheelchair and another person can access the elevator together - directional signals printed in a large font.



#### • Da Marietto

fraz. Rovereto di Pessenti, 116

phone 0143682118

closed: Sunday evening and Monday

set menu price: 25-30 euro

**panissa, "al tocco" ravioli, goat**

#### • Ai Nebbioli

loc. Nebbioli, 3 - phone 0143645893

closed: Monday and Tuesday

set menu price: 25-30 euro

**Russian salad, "al tocco" ravioli, Genoese-style cima**



## events

### Castelletto d'Orba

Wine and tastes from the High Monferrato (April)  
info: [www.comune.castellettodorba.al.it](http://www.comune.castellettodorba.al.it)

### Francavilla Bisio

Raviolo fair (August) info: [www.francavillabisio.com](http://www.francavillabisio.com)

### Fresonara

Festival of Our Lady of Graces, procession (June)  
info: [www.comune.fresonara.al.it](http://www.comune.fresonara.al.it)

### Gavi

*(and 11 villages with  
the same wine appellation)*

"Andar per Gavi" - Wine and food festival (September)  
info: [www.consorziogavi.com](http://www.consorziogavi.com)

### San Cristoforo

[www.slowfood-gavi.it](http://www.slowfood-gavi.it)

"Anloci foci a man" (hand-made agnolotti) fair (July)  
info: City Hall, phone 0143682120

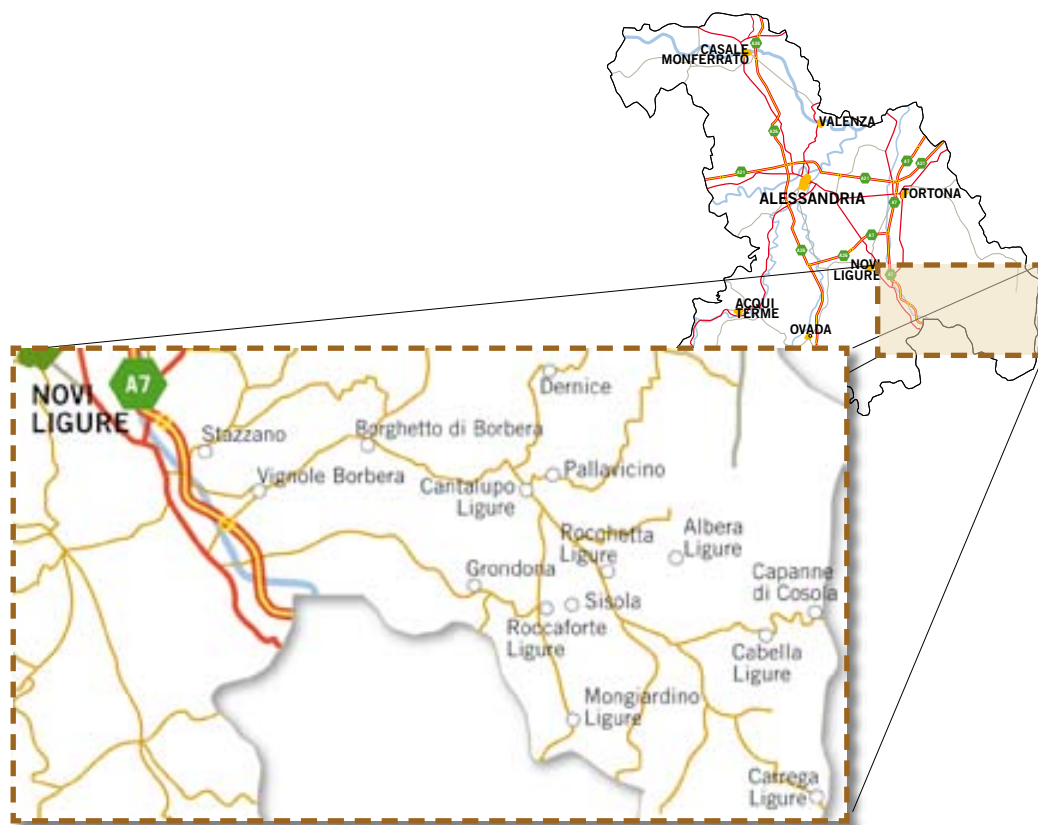
### Tassarolo

"Super Agnolotto" fair (June) [www.comune.tassarolo.al.it](http://www.comune.tassarolo.al.it)



# The Borbera and Spinti Valleys

Albera Ligure, Borghetto di Borbera, Cabella Ligure, Cantalupo Ligure, Carrega Ligure, Capanne di Cosola, Dernice, Grondona, Mongiardino Ligure, Pallavicino, Roccaforte Ligure, Rocchetta Ligure, Sisola, Stazzano, Vignole Borbera



## villages where humanity resists



When traveling through the Val Borbera, wide-eyed astonishment is the only possible reaction to the sight of the well-known Pertuso rapids, where the mountains and the river join forces to form a miniature version of the Grand Canyon. At the bottom flows the Borbore - you can walk down to its gravel banks, catch fish with your hands, capture that fleeting sense of belonging along its shores. Here, just few meters separate you from the comforting sight of a wide pasture, rising up in terraces all the way to Pallavicino, a small village made for lazy summer days; in autumn, people from all over gather here to go hunting for mushrooms or game. It is hard to find words

to describe this otherworldly landscape: on one side a valley, on the other the first mountains, forbidding to human settlements - some even say that wolves have returned up there. When visiting Carrega, the last thing you expect is for the road to continue - yet, only one kilometer away, four provinces meet at the cross-roads for Pavia, Piacenza and Genova. Here, a brave restaurant valiantly sticks to tradition with ancient recipes from this land, pisarei e fasò from Piacenza, Quarantina potatoes gnocchi with Montebore, or accomodato cod. In my past, there are great memories of those few times that we made it to Dova Superiore; a village whose inhabitants you can

count on your two hands. Yet, the parish priest, Don Sandro Maggiolo, has organized its resistance: up here they now have an agriculture coop, a farmhouse accommodation, and a big outdoor festival in summer which provides financing for the whole village for the rest of the year. This is one of the most beautiful natural landscapes in the region - the mind is left to happily wander across the valley, reliving the trips our ancestors used to take by foot to reach nearby Liguria and bring oil, anchovies and dried or smoked fish back to their families. The valley used to be poverty stricken - nowadays it is enjoying a revival thanks to young entrepreneurs such as Roberto Grattone, who opened a farmhouse hotel in Mon-

giardino as well as his own Montebore cheese production. Other hotels and restaurants have been opened in Stazzano, the lovely summer retreat of the Riccardi Counts, in Pessinate, where youthful enthusiasm even managed to catch the national television's eye, and in Borghetto di Borbera, where close to the Ratti castle, in the "Fiorile restaurant", everything is prepared using local ingredients (try the meat as well as the fagiolana, marinated in Barbera wine) - you can also sleep here. And as you make your way back to the highway in Arquata Scrivia, stop in the lovely village of Grondona, in the Spinti valley and don't leave without a supply of canestrelli cookies and a taste of the local cuisine in the hamlet of Chiapparola.

## what to see

In **Rocchetta Ligure** there is a Museum of Life and the Resistance; other landmarks are the ruins of the ancient fortifications (a door to the town) and the Spinola Palace, originally built in 1620, where local art and history exhibits are often held. The ruins of the abbey of Precipitano (the bell-tower and part of the walls) in Vignole Borbera are a good place to sit and let the imagination wander through times long past. The "A Carbuninn-a" Museum in **Carrega Ligure** collects working tools and furniture from the farmhouses of the high Borbera valley. The parish church of Saint Julian was built in the Fifteenth Century and is worth visiting. In **Borghetto di Borbera** there is the Romanic Oratory of Saint Michael, with ancient frescoes. The parish church of Saint Victor

dates from the same period - a few relics of the Saint are held within. A short walk towards the Prà S. Martino hill leads to the Sanctuary of Our Lady of the Snows (1673). **Cabella Ligure** is set below the medieval Doria Spinola Pallavicino castle. The Sanctuary to the Virgin of Monte Spinito is in **Stazzano** - other monuments include the sixteenth-century castle (redone in the Nineteenth Century) and the parish church of Saint George, built in the same period. There is also a notable Civic Museum of Natural History. Finally, in **Grondona**, beautiful fifteenth-century frescoes adorn both the countryside church of the Annunciation (note the lovely Genovese-school portal) and the parish church of the Assumption.





## products

### COPPA, BACON AND TESTA IN CASSETTA

The Val Borbera has a well-established tradition of curing meats, influenced by far-off Emilia. **Coppa** is made by wrapping a cut slice of meat in natural skin, after salting it and adding garlic and a few cloves. It is then carefully aged in the two valleys' stone cellars- the result is a very soft and aromatic salami. **Bacon** is made by curing the animal's belly, a tradition kept alive by generations of butchers living in some of the many caschine - the old Piedmontese farmhouses - which dot the valleys' landscape. The **testa in cassetta** - quite accurately and vividly, "head in a box" - is a pig or boar's head cooked together with veal tongue and muscle. After cooking, the mixture is cut in fine slices, adding salt



and pepper, nutmeg, Rhum, and egg Marsala - finally, it is stuffed in a large "pocket" or, traditionally, in a pine wood box. There is a lot of cattle in the area, and a consortium of young farmers called "Carne

all'Erba", i.e. "Grass Meat", certifies that each calf grew up in the mountain fields. The meat is then sold to the area's butchers or in the cooperative butcheries owned by the farmers themselves.



### MONTEBORE AND MOLLANA

A document from the year 1486 allegedly proves that a few "robiolete", local cheeses, were sent from Tortona to the court in Milan. Historians claim the court had requested **Montebore** - a mixed-milk cheese with an original shape apparently symbolizing the area's crumbling towers. After being produced here for centuries, it





had almost disappeared before a few brave cheese-makers, headed by Roberto Grattone, decided to try their luck in the late '90s and resumed production.

Each Montebore cheese wei-

ghs a castle-shaped kilo; it is white, hard or medium-hard, more or less spicy according to how long it was aged. The **Mollana** is another local cheese, produced here as well as in all the valleys of the Antola

Mountain, in the provinces of Genova, Piacenza and Alessandria. Mollana is made from cow milk exclusively; it is a soft, almost fresh, herb-scented white cheese with a thin white-brown crust.

## FAGIOLANA AND THE QUARANTINA POTATO

The Borbera and Spinti Valleys are home to two ancient mountain cultivations which almost risked disappearing. One is a bean, the **fagiolana** white Spanish, imported by the Spinola family in the Sixteenth Century. It has a thin skin and a delicate taste (even after long periods of cooking), and is used in many local dishes.

The traditional cultivation method using tarasse, sticks tied together in twos, has also withstood the passage of time. Potato is grown in two varieties, the **quarantina** and the late potato.

The latter is sown in March and harvested in September; it ideally grows over 400-500



meters above sea level and was introduced to the Genoese area in the Eighteenth Century. It is a white potato with a

cream-colored skin which can be cooked on an open fire or served with cod, rabbit or mushrooms.

## HONEY, CHESTNUTS AND THE CARLA APPLE

These valleys, being rich in nectarine flowers, are ideal for beekeepers, producing both wildflower and monofloral honeys, in particular chestnut, cherry, linden and acacia.



The predominance of chestnuts in the area's population's ancient diet is testified by the presence of abundant **chestnut** forests - the tree used to be so fundamental to basic survival that it was known as the "bread-tree".

Today, most of the harvest goes towards flour for cakes and pastries, while a smaller part is consumed fresh during the autumn-winter season.

Val Borbera is also home to the Carla apple, an aromatic and tasty variety which is extremely low in sugars and can therefore be eaten by people suffering from diabetes.

The apples are ripe in September and can keep all the way through Spring.



## cuisine

The two valleys' cuisine is typical of mountain regions, with many dishes based on flour, cheese, and local salami.

Cured meat of all kinds will invariably be first on the menu, followed by **fersulle**, fried breads with cheese and salami, **rice and milk breads** from the cross-road village of Capanne di Cosola, a corner where four provinces meet, and **cima**,

made with meat, egg, chicken and vegetables. The first course will include **risotto and gnocchi with Montebore cheese**, and trofie pasta made with chestnut flour.

Second courses are rich in local meat and **mushrooms**, including the famous porcini from the Spinti Valley. Of course there are plenty of dishes made with **game** (hare, boar,

fallow deer, red-legged partridge, woodcock), rabbit liver with Montebore, goat stew (tula) with polenta and all sorts of recipes involving truffle, white and black, such as truffle with poached eggs.

Among desserts, try the **castagnaccio chestnut cake**, **pancakes with apple slices** and, in the winter, a cake made with pears cooked in wine.

## wine

The Borbera Valley has proven well-suited to growing the rare **Timorasso**, a white grape whi-

ch forms the base of a yellowish, dry wine, with pleasant fruity and flowery notes. Other wines pro-

duced in the valleys include Barbera, Cortese, Dolcetto, as well as some Freisa and Croatina.

## shopping

### BORGHETTO DI BORBERA

- **Cascina Borassi (Farmhouse)**

frazione Molo, 9 - via Borghetto

phone 0143638742

**Piedmontese "bionda" chicken, truffled eggs**

- **Cascina Marco Bosio (Farmhouse)**

via Chiesa Vecchia, 24 - phone 014369489

open: Tue. to Saturday - **Piedmontese meat**

- **Salumeria Da Pina (Butchery)**

fraz. Molo - via Borghetto, 16

phone 014369428 - closed: Monday morning

**testa in cassetta, raw salami**

### CABELLA LIGURE

- **Panetteria Boggeri Fabio (Bakery)**

via Casellina, 5 - phone 014399421

closet: Sunday and Monday afternoon

**focaccia, bread**

### CANTALUPO LIGURE

- **Az. Agr. Fulvia Meinero (Farm)**

loc. Prato, 35 - mobile 3493253996

**honey, organic potatoes, mountain specialties**

### GRONDONA

- **Apicoltura La Mellina (Beekeeping)**

loc. Chiapparolo, 27

phone 0143636646 - mobile 3289040728

Laboratory: via XXV Aprile, 36/1

Arquata Scrivia

**honey, chestnut beer**

### MONGIARDINO LIGURE

- **Vallenostra**

loc. Valle, 1 - phone 014394131

**Montebore cheese**

### ROCCAFORTE LIGURE

- **Az. Agr. Castello di Roccaforte (Farm)**

loc. Campo del Re - phone 0143949300

**goat cheese**

### STAZZANO

- **Az. Agr. Agrisapori (Farm)**

Cascina Boschetto, 94

mobile 3408709819 - 3489035760

**tomini, robiole, Blu goat cheese**

## what to eat

### BORGHETTO DI BORBERA

- **Cascina Spazzarini**

frazione Molo

via Borghetto, 25

phone 0143638730

set menu price: 25-28 euro - 4 rooms

**truffles and mushrooms**

- **Il Fiorile**

frazione Castel Ratti

via XXV Aprile, 6

phone 0143697303

www.ilfiorile.com

closed: Monday

set menu price: 35 euro

4 rooms and 2 apartments

**gnocchi with Montebore, roast with Timorasso**



- there are no reserved spaces in the gravel parking lot - the rooms, which can be reached only through stairways with no supports, are spacious enough to be easily navigated by wheelchair - the staff can assist in helping clients up the stairs to the first floor - disabled bathroom on the ground floor - in the summer it is possible to dine in the garden, which is easily accessible by wheelchair.

- **Il Mulino**

loc. Mulino, 1 - phone 014369483

www.hotelmulino.it

closed: Wednesday

set menu price: 26 euro - 10 rooms

**risotto with Montebore, green pepper filet with juniper**

**CABELLA LIGURE**• **Capanne di Cosola**

fraz. Capanne di Cosola

phone 0143999126 - 0143999150

www.capannedicosola.it - 11 rooms

set menu price: 30 euro

panoramic terrace, only ATM cards accepted

**Russian salad, pisarei e fasò, roast duck, old-fashioned milk cake**

- paved and gravel parking lot with no reserved spaces - there is a < 5 cm step at the entrance, which can be overcome by wheelchair with the assistance of another person - the inside rooms allow for movement with a wheelchair - the common bathrooms do not allow for a wheelchair to get close to the wc - the staff has no experience with clients on a wheelchair.

• **Il Ponte dal 1832**

frazione Cosola

via Umberto I, 5

phone 0143999121

closed: Tuesday (from Oct. to March)

set menu price: 30 euro - 16 rooms

**Quarantina potato gnocchi, boar salmi**

- cement parking lot - the entrance, with a step, and the interior spaces can be easily accessed by a wheelchair only with the assistance of another person - the bathrooms, which can be reached by wheelchair, are too small to be comfortably used.



set menu price: 20-25 euro

**pizza with local products from the Valley****GRONDONA**• **Pernice Rossa**

loc. Chiapparolo

phone 0143680189

www.lapernicerossa.net

closed: Sunday evening and Monday

set menu price: 30 euro

**tortelli stuffed with gorgonzola, nuts, pears and vegetables, tripe with beans from the Val Borbera, Gavi amaretto ice-cream with melted chocolate**

**MONGIARDINO LIGURE**• **Vallenostra**

loc. Sisola-Cascina Valle, 1

phone 014394131

www.vallenostra.it

open Friday, Saturday and Sunday upon reservation - set menu price: 25 euro

**rabaton with wild herbs, chestnut trofie with walnut sauce, local pork, roasted with potatoes, "moretta" di fagiolane**

- the parking lot (gravel) has reserved spaces - there is a small step at the entrance - the indoor rooms, spacious enough to be navigated by wheelchair, can be reached only with the assistance of another person - disabled bathroom.

**CANTALUPO LIGURE**• **Belvedere dal 1919**

fraz. Pessinate, 53 - phone 014393138

closed: Monday - set menu price: 40 euro

**ravioli "a culo nudo", boiler meat arbatella, local cheeses**

• **Agriturismo Repetto Marco**

frazione Prato - phone 014390896

open Friday for dinner, Saturday and Sunday

set menu price: 28 euro (including wines)

**fried cuculli, savoury cakes with sausage**• **Locanda Pertuso**

loc. Pertuso - phone 014390247

closed: Wednesday







## events

### Various places

Tour gastronomici ... in the Borbera and Spinti Valleys (Spring and Autumn) info: [www.valborberaespinti.com](http://www.valborberaespinti.com)

### Borghetto di Borbera

Fireworks and Porchetta (May) - Farinata and cuculi fairs (June) info: [www.comune.borghettodiborbera.al.it](http://www.comune.borghettodiborbera.al.it)

### Cabella Ligure

White Quarantina potato fair (September) info: Comune tel.0143919557

### Dova (Cabella)

Mountain fair (August) [www.dovasuperiore.it](http://www.dovasuperiore.it)

### Mongiardino Ligure

Cascina Valle - Easter Monday with Montebore (April) info: [www.vallenostra.it](http://www.vallenostra.it)

### Rocchetta Ligure

Fagiolana fair (September) info: [www.rocchettavalborbera.it](http://www.rocchettavalborbera.it)

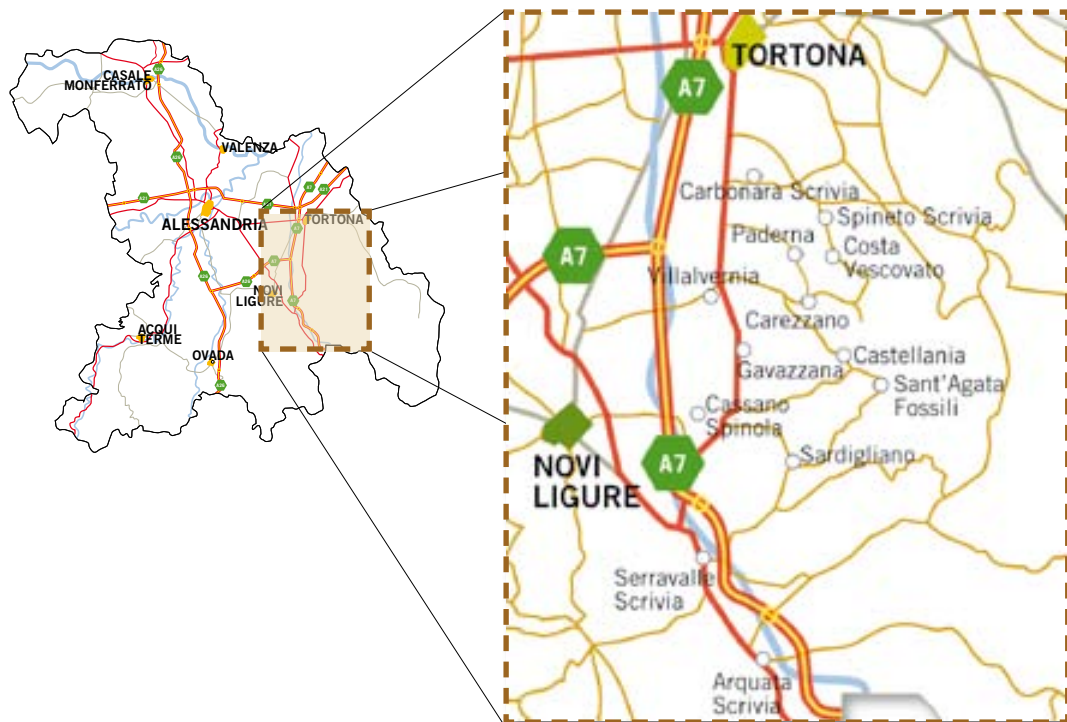
### Vignole Borbera

Cod fair (July) info: [www.comune.vignoleborbera.al.it](http://www.comune.vignoleborbera.al.it)



# The Scrivia Valley

Arquata Scrivia, Carbonara Scrivia, Carezzano, Cassano Spinola, Castellania, Costa Vescovato, Gavazzana, Paderna, Sant'Agata Fossili, Sardigliano, Serravalle Scrivia, Spineto Scrivia, Villalvernia



## in coppi's footsteps



They called him the Great Heron, but his name was Fausto Coppi, legendary Italian cyclist, golden boy of Italian newspapers after the Second World War. This is where he trained: up and down the hills, from Castellania all the way to Liguria. It is a fabulous, peaceful landscape, easy to reach and well-connected to many other valleys. True: millions of tourists come here looking for Serravalle, one of the largest Factory Outlets in Europe, but everything else around the mall should make the curious visitor take a second look. A special treat is a night spent in the Carezzano Convent, an ex-monastery with wide corridors, spacious rooms and an atmosphere of peace and silence, interrupted only by the sounds of nature, by the chirp of a bird outside. This is also the site

of a unique cheese-making tradition: cheeses are refined in an anaerobic state, sealed inside beeswax. The village facing Serravalle is Sant'Agata Fossili, where the traveler can enjoy local hospitality at the Locanda del Barco - a menu of authentic Piedmontese dishes which resisted Ligurian influences and presents lovely agnolotti pasta to be enjoyed with a glass of the host's own wine: Cortese and Barbera. Costa Vescovato, deep in the heart of the Scrivia countryside, is where one of the first businesses to combine tourism and agriculture was inaugurated. It's still there, and that in itself is a guarantee of continuous quality. Twenty years ago, Ottavio Rube revived the traditional farming of cattle and pigs together: his Valli Unite farm still produces meat

for his restaurant's table, as well as for sale. The wines can only be defined as majestic, in echo of the extreme value wine and grapes used to have in this area. Meat, of course, was also important: in Carbonara one should taste the local

gobein, agnolotti-style pasta, filled with meat, in the Locanda Malpassuti. Sport lovers ought to tour the area by bicycle, or else by motorbike, so as not to miss any part of the sensory experiences offered by the Great Heron's countryside.

## what to see



In **Castellania**, in the hamlet of Sant'Alosio, there are two well-preserved medieval towers. The House and Museum of Fausto and Serse Coppi, home of the legendary cyclist Fausto Coppi, is open to visitors. The parish church of Saint George's central nave, in **Paderna**, is early Christian, while the side naves were built in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth centuries.

A number of old manor-houses still stand in **Cassano Spinola**: the most interesting is the Millelire Palace, built in the Sixteenth Century. **Arquata** has a memorable parish church, dedicated to Saints James and Anthony, which was partly rebuilt in the Sixteenth Century, as well as some interesting fifteenth-century mansions, such as the Grafognati House, decorated with pottery inlays. The citizens of Arquata used to get their water from a system of wells, which have now become the symbol of the city. In the

area of **Serravalle Scrivia**, archaeologists have located the remains of the ancient settlement of Libarna; in the same area it is possible to visit the oratories of the White and Red Brotherhoods (so called from the colors of their mantles) dating from the beginning of the Eighteenth Century. The exhibition halls of Villa Caffarena, in the city center, host a Collection of Modern Art as well as a didactic exhibition on Libarna, with archaeological remains from the Roman settlement.

**Villavernia** has a castle and a neo-classical parish church, built in 1846, dedicated to the Assumption of Mary. In **Carbonara Scrivia** there is a castle with a keep - quite unusual in these parts - which is open to visitors. The church of **Carezzano Maggiore**, Saint Eusebius, was built in the Sixteenth Century, while the castle in Cuquello di **Sardigliano** dates from the Twelfth

Century. In the same village there is also the Tragetta church, a sanctuary dedicated to Our Lady of Sorrows (1799). In **Gavazzana** the home of Don Sterpi, assistant and friend of Saint Luigi Orione, has been turned into a Museum - af-

ter the Second World War, the local priest Don Sterpi continued Luigi Orione's work with the "Little Group of the Divine Providence". In **Sant'Agata Fossili**, the parish church has a lovely main altar and an interesting choir.

## products

### RAW SALAMI AND MOSTARDELLA

The most common product in display in the windows of all the valley's village butchers is a **salami known as "raw Tortonese"**. It is a "peasant" salami, whose origin is lost in time - nowadays it is made with pork meat, salt, black pepper and a strong-smelling

mixture of garlic and red wine. It is then aged for 4 to 6 months, until the outside appears to be covered by a thin layer of white mold. **Mostardella** is a typical Genoese salami, originally made by the poor with what was left from the production of cured meat. Today it is

made with finely ground beef, soft pork fat, salt, pepper, and a combination of spices whose exact recipe is kept quite secret. Before being eaten it must be left to rest, for three or four days, packed in an edible, natural skin made from pig's guts.

### THE QUARANTINA POTATO

This variety of potato, which has been grown on the Genoese Apennines since the end of the Eighteenth Century, was for the longest time the main source of nourishment for the local population - together with chestnuts. In the Nineteen fifties, farmers turned to more productive varieties but now, thanks to the establishment of a dedicated Consortium, the quarantina is making a comeback. It is a white semi-precocious variety, planted between April and May and harvested in September. Its smell is delicate but persistent



and the taste is well-balanced. As an ingredient it is quite versatile, cooking for a medium-long time: it is roasted in the oven or cut up in small squares to go with trenette and pesto - in typi-

cal ligurian style - or used to make gnocchi. The quarantina potato focaccia goes very well with the mustard from Vobbia or with the local cheese made from a mixture of goat, cow and sheep milk.



## TRUFFLES AND MUSHROOMS

The valley is known as a **truffle** hunting ground, both of the white and black kind (*Tuber magnatum pico*, *tuber melanosporum Vittadini* and *Tuber Aestivum*). A "Consortium of Truffle-Hunters from Sardinano and Sant'Agata Fossili" was founded a few years ago to monitor and protect the truffle "nurseries". The local **porcini mushrooms**, deep dark and aromatic, further enrich the area's forests.



## cuisine



Valle Scrivia's cuisine is similar to mountain cooking, being based mainly on potatoes and cheese, which used to be prepared in each household, over a wood-burning stove.

**Pisarei** and **fasò** pasta with beans and lard is originally from Piacenza but often served in the valley, as well as gnocchi with meat sauce and Parmesan cheese. From Liguria, the

villagers introduced **chestnut** bread (great with salami) and chestnut-and-milk soups, as well as the **trofie** pasta made with white flour mixed with chestnut flour.

Choices of second courses include the pig-head cima, mushrooms quiches and potatoes served with cheese and wild herbs.

Don't miss the Novi-influenced

traditional **focaccia** and, for dessert, **canestrelli** from Arquata cookies and, in Cassano Spinola, the "casau-casau" chocolate-covered cake. On the Day of the Dead, the 2nd of November, "sweet broadbeans" are baked with hazelnuts, sugar and egg-white, as well as a sweet bread with dry cookies or amaretti, sugar, flour, raisins, hazelnuts and dry figs.

## wine

There are two typical wines in this area: **Cortese** and the **Barbera dei Colli Tortonesi**.

The first is a light flowery wine, ripe red fruit - very good with meat.  
the second is a robust, acidic wine with a pleasant aroma of

## shopping

### CAREZZANO

#### • **Formaggi Sopraffini di Montaldo Luca (Cheesemonger)**

strada del Convento, 12

phone 0131833343

mobile 3409040023

**pecorino wrapped in beeswax**

#### • **Salumificio Pernigotti (Butchery)**

via Cinque Martiri, 34 - phone 0131839131

closed: Monday and Wednesday afternoon

**raw salami**

#### • **Salumeria Piero Tambussi (Butchery)**

via Villalvernia, 46 - phone 0131839151

closed: Wednesday afternoon and Sunday

**raw salami**

### SERRAVALLE SCRIVIA

#### • **Alimentari Mersoni (Grocery Store)**

piazza Fausto Coppi, 2 - phone 014365119

closed: Wednesday afternoon and holidays

**canestrelli cookies, grissini breadsticks**

#### • **Bottega del Gusto**

Serravalle Outlet - via della Moda

phone 0143686590

**specialties from all over Italy**

#### • **Gastronomia-Salumeria Rava (Butchery and Gastronomy)**

viale Martiri della Benedicta, 42

phone 014365364

closed: Monday and Sunday afternoon

**Russian salad**

#### • **Pasticceria Carrea (Patisserie)**

via Berthoud, 86

phone 014365235

closed: Sunday afternoon

**chocolate and sweets**

## what to eat

### ARQUATA SCRIVIA

#### • **Agriturismo Lo Casale**

strada per Pratolungo, 59

phone 0143635654

open: Friday evening, Saturday and Sunday

set menu price: 25 euro

3 rooms

credit cards not accepted

**roasted goat, Valle Scrivia chestnut trofie with Montebore, plum and apricot jam tart**

### CARBONARA SCRIVIA

#### • **Locanda Malpassuti**

via Cantù, 11

phone 0131892643

closed: Tuesday

set menu price: 50 euro

outside tables, garden

**gobein (agnolotti from Tortona), vegetable soufflé with Montebore fondue, Carle apple tart**

### CAREZZANO

#### • **Agriturismo Il Convento**

strada del Convento, 8

loc. Santa Maria di Vezzano

phone 0131836070 - mobile 3394785015

closed: Monday

set menu price: 25 euro

7 rooms, 3 apartments

**COSTA VESCOVATO**• **Cooperativa Valli Unite**

fraz. Montale Celli - phone 0131838100

open: Friday and Saturday, Sunday for lunch

set menu price: 25 euro

credit cards not accepted

open-air tables, shop with jams, cereals, flour, organic meat and salami

**raw salami, agnolotti with vegetables, roast rabbit****SANT'AGATA FOSSILI**• **Locanda Del Barco**

via Case Sparse, 1/bis - phone 0131837054

[www.locandadelbarco.it](http://www.locandadelbarco.it)

closed: Monday (no long holidays)

set menu price: 30 euro - 5 rooms

**fassone meat cut using a knife with black truffle slices, agnolotti with stew, green sauce with tongue, pork chops****SERRAVALLE SCRIVIA**• **Sabatini "Il Ristorante"**

piazza Coppi, 3

phone 0143633750

closed: Sunday evening and Monday

set menu price: 45 euro

**fish, mint swordfish**

## events

**Sant'Agata Fossili**

"Mestoli e Musica" fair (July)

info: [www.santagatafossili.com](http://www.santagatafossili.com)**Sardigliano**

Truffle fair (October)

info: [www.comune.sardigliano.al.it](http://www.comune.sardigliano.al.it)**Serravalle Scrivia**

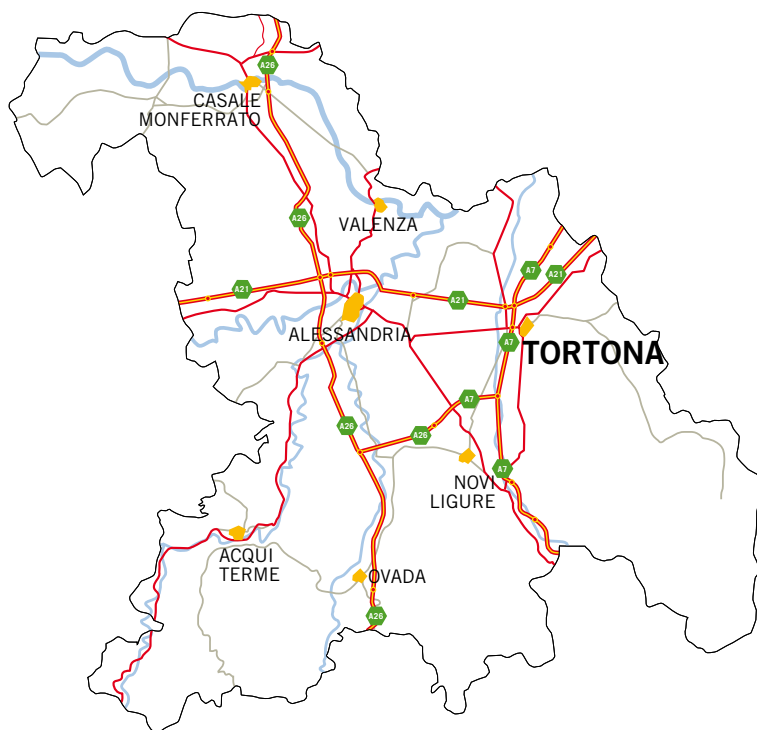
Spring fair (May)

Village fair of the Sopra quarter (September)

"Fiera di san Martino", festival (November)

info: City Hall, phone 0143609411

# Tortona



## tortona, a taste of the summer



When, coming from Milan by car or train, we reached Tortona and saw, from far away, the golden silhouette of the statue of the Virgin atop the Madonna della Guardia Sanctuary, that was the first intuition of summer. We were children, of course, but the same anticipation was reflected in our parents' faces as well. It wasn't the sea we were looking forward to, for, even though it's only a few kilometers away from here, our holidays were never spent on the beach: we went to the countryside, to the mulberry trees (muron in local speech), to the wide wheat fields. To, at least once a year, a taste of the lovely sweets called "Lady's kisses", baci di dama. The cookies came from Tortona, wrapped in silver paper which made them even more pre-

cious to our eyes. In those times, we used to go to Tortona to buy wine in big flasks called demijohns. We usually bought Cortese, allowing ourselves the luxury of a white wine while in our inland hometown people produced, exclusively, the red Barbera. Even after the highway connecting Piacenza to Turin was built, we still kept taking the road through Tortona. There we would stop to buy good bread, dry cookies and brassadé, doughnuts allegedly invented by the altar-boys' mothers so that the children could tie them, strung on a thread, to their clothes, and have something to eat during the long and tiring processions. Of course, Tortona was also the last town we saw on our way back to the city, the place we left with melancholy and goo-



dbyes. It was "our" town, a part of the history of Piemonte we had read about at school, a place from the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries. Our fortress. And when I grew up, I kept taking the same route - I wonder if my brother did it too? - from Torre Garofoli, through the Cavallosa (of the Marian Shrine by the same name), to San

Giuliano, first of Alessandria's Frascchetta area's settlements. I could not resist the temptation of visiting, learning, feeling this town which had played such a role in my childhood. I found a welcoming environment, a prosperous cultural milieu, a rich cuisine. Then and now, it's almost like being on holiday.

## what to see



A walk along the porticos of the Via Emilia is the best way of getting acquainted with Tortona. The oldest series of monuments consists of remains of the town's past as a Roman colony: the ruins of a bridge (First Century B.C.), parts of the old walls, a few burial grounds from imperial times, and the so-called "Mausoleum of Majorian" - allegedly it is the tomb of a Roman Emperor who died here in 461, but actually it pre-dates his death by a few centuries, having been built in the First Century B.C.

In the **Guidobono Palace** there are a number of archeological remains, including Elio Sabino's

sarcophagus, and art exhibits which change periodically (info on opening hours and shows 0131863470). The palace itself is fifteenth-century, although it was subsequently modified; note the three single-light windows on the façade. Other notable medieval buildings include the eighteenth-century Malaspina and Bussetti palaces. Many great works of art are kept in the **Bishop's Palace** - the best is Macrino from Alba's sixteenth-century triptych.

The **Guidobono Cavalchini Garofoli palace**, built in 1773, has a collection of paintings by masters such as Rubens, Van Dyck, Reni and Carracci. Of all the fortifications built by Napoleon around the city, only one tower has survived, and has therefore become the symbol of Tortona. The **1838 City Theatre** is richly decorated with elaborate friezes, while among religious buildings the most interesting are the **Church of the Capuchins**, built in 1664, **Saint Matthew's Church**, from the beginning of the Eighteenth Century (with a lovely painting of a "Virgin with child"), Saint James, a late baroque building with gracious frescoed vaults, and the **Cathedral**, built in the Sixteenth Century but presenting a Nineteenth-Century façade.

The latter is dedicated to Saint Lawrence and to the Assumption of Mary and holds an interesting collection of paintings. The Oratories of **Saint Roch** and **Saint Charles** were built in the Seventeenth Century by the respective brotherhoods, while the Church of Saint Maria Canale is the oldest in town, dating from the Twelfth Century, but mostly rebuilt. Don Orione is buried in the **Sanctuary of Our Lady the**

**Guardian** (1931), which is surmounted by a massive statue of the Virgin. Outside the city, in Rivalta Scrivia, the **Cistercian abbey of Saint Mary** (Twelfth Century) has recently undergone restoration. This church's architecture, with its strong rectilinear geometry and square apse, is

an interesting example of the transition from Romanic to Gothic. The interior is enriched by a series of frescoes, including works by Franceschino Boxilio, a painter who worked in the Tortona area around the end of the Fifteenth Century.

## products

### STRAWBERRY AND KISSES IN TORTONA

Tortona, ancient Roman settlement, is famous for the amazing productivity of its vegetable gardens.

The most precious local product is the **sweet-smelling wild strawberry**, a rare species producing small, strongly scented pink fruits.

Another local rarity is the "**Ot-tofile**" corn, so called because each cob has eight rows (otto file) of round, starch-rich kernels - previously reserved to self-production, it has recently been re-discovered as a source of the best polenta flour.

In town, bakeries are proud of their **Baci di Dama**, stylish pastries called "Ladies' Kisses". The basic recipe is two cookies made with ground almonds, butter, sugar and flour, stuck together with a bit of chocolate. Finally, Tortona is also the city



of the old-fashioned fizzy drink called **gassosa**, produced here

by the Abbondio factory since 1889.

### COOKED HAM

A very good raw salami from the countryside - made by grinding pure pork with salt, whole black pepper and a mixture of garlic and red wine - is

easy to find in any of Tortona's butcheries.

Nevertheless, the local favorite is **cooked ham**, locally prepared with 100% Italian pork,

using only natural ingredients and a very small quantity of salt in order to obtain a soft, pink, attractive and healthy product.

## cuisine

The hams and cheeses from Val Borbera, vitel tonn  veal with mayonnaise and tuna sauce, and quiches are among the most popular appetizers. The favorite first course is, of course, **agnolotti**, stuffed pasta locally known as **gobein**, or "hunchback", because of its shape. Tortona's agnolotti are usually a bit smaller than

in the rest of the Monferrato, tastier - no shortage of parmesan cheese in the stuffing - and cooked in broth rather than in water. The traditional dressing is simply butter and cheese, or else stew or - strictly on Christmas Eve - aj , a mixture of nuts and garlic. The second course might include **veal or donkey stew**, accompanied

with mushrooms or even truffles from the countryside. The local bakeries supply lovely desserts such as the **Baci di Dama**, "golden Kisses" (with chocolate mixed in the dough) and "bragton e busela" puppet-shaped Christmas cookies. Wines from the surrounding hills include Barbera, Dolcetto, Cortese and Timorasso.



## shopping

- **Az. Agr. Cascina Folletto (Farm)**

fraz. Bettola - strada Veneziana, 9/1  
phone 014317224

**Merella chickpeas**

- **Bar C&C (Caf )**

via Sarina, 38 - **coffee**

- **Drogheria Anselmi**

via Emilia, 76 - phone 0131862350  
closed: Sunday

**specialties from all over Italy**

- **Gastronomia La Casereccia (Gastronomy)**

via Emilia, 209/205 - phone 0131862323  
www.lacasereccia.net  
closed: Wednesday afternoon

**cheese, salami, wine, beer from all over Italy**

- **Mare di Vho**

largo Borgarelli, 16 - phone 0131895240  
closed: Wednesday - **home-made ice-cream**

- **Pasticceria Vercesi (P tisserie)**

via Emilia, 178 - phone 0131861822  
closed: Tuesday

**Baci di Dama cookies**

- **Pasticceria Casali (P tisserie)**

via Emilia, 310 - phone 0131861456  
closed: Monday

**Baci di Dama cookies**

- **Salumificio Bagnasco (Butchery)**

strada Viola, 100  
phone 0131821237  
closed: Sunday

**raw and cooked salami, testa in cassetta**

## RIVALTA SCRIVIA

### • Az. Agr. La Carassola (Farm)

strada Molino Bruciato, 9 - phone 0131817254  
www.carassola.it - "Ottofile" corn, sweet-smelling Tortona strawberry

### • Panetteria Barabino (Bakery)

strada Pozzolo, 28 - phone 0131817221  
closed: Wednesday afternoon (in August closed every afternoon)  
brassadé

## what to eat

### • Aurora - Girarrosto "Cerchi"

SS per Genova, 13 - phone 0131963033  
closed: Monday - set menu price: 50 euro  
fresh catch from the Tigullio gulf, fried with fresh tomato

### • Cavallino San Marziano

corso Romita, 83  
phone 0131861750 - closed: Sunday; Saturday for lunch - set menu price: 35-45 euro  
raw meat, agnolotti del plin



- parking lot with reserved spaces - clients in a wheelchair can easily move through the structure with the assistance of another person - the bathroom can be accessed and used by disabled persons.

### • Infernot

via Pelizzari, 9 - phone 0131894329  
www.infernotcantinaconcucina.it  
closed: Monday; Saturday and Sunday for lunch  
set menu price: 35 euro - local specialties

### • Montecarlo

via Villaromagnano, 17  
phone 0131889114  
closed: Tuesday - set menu price: 30 euro  
set in a park amidst pine trees, lake  
agnolotti with meat sauce, risotto with Montebore, boiled meats  
- paved parking lot with reserved spaces - the en-



trance and inside rooms are easy to navigate by wheelchair, with the assistance of another person in some points - the common bathroom is spacious enough to be accessed by wheelchair.

### • Vineria Derthona

via Seminario, 21  
phone 0131812468  
closed: Monday; Saturday and Sunday for lunch  
set menu price: 28 euro



### Ligurian-style rabbit, bollito misto, cod

- paved parking lot - the main entrance has a step which can be overcome with the help of another person. - part of the structure can be accessed by wheelchair, sometimes with the assistance of another person. - the bathroom cannot be accessed by wheelchair.

## RIVALTA SCRIVIA

### • Il Carrettino

strada Prov. per Pozzolo F.ro  
phone 0131860930 - www.ilcarrettino.it  
closed: never - set menu price: 20-30 euro  
44 rooms - rabaton, bolliti misti, home-made Tortona-style buffalo agnolotti  
- parking lot with no reserved spaces - the ground-level entrance and inside spaces can be easily and autonomously accessed by wheelchair - disabled bathroom.



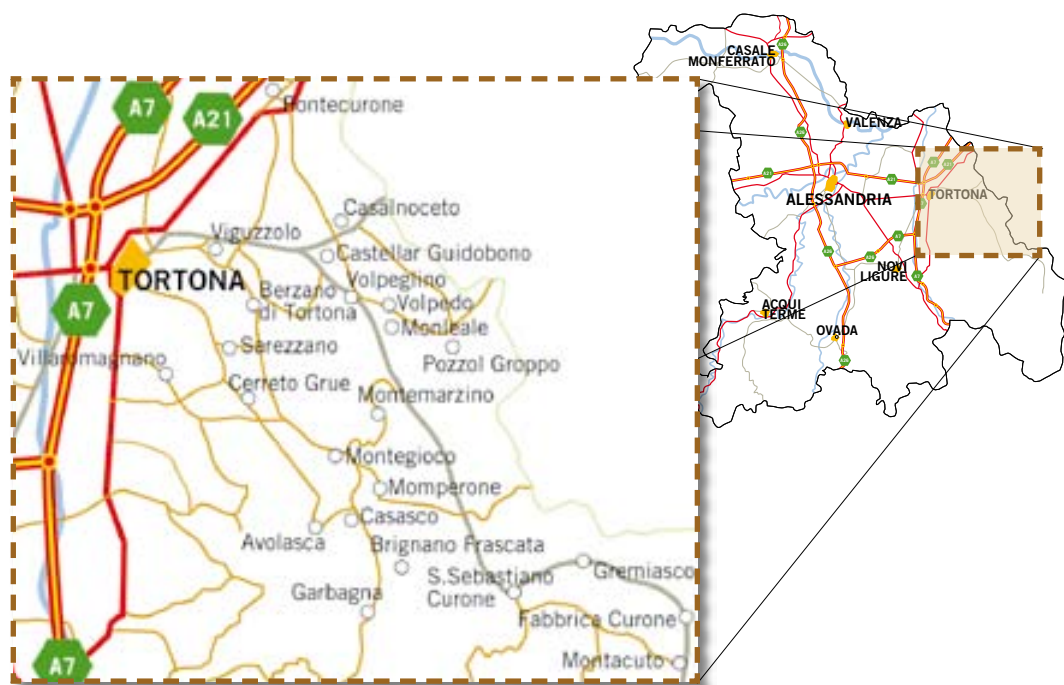
## events

- "Cantarà e Catanaj" (September, October, November)
  - "Festa di Santa Croce" (May)
  - Wine and food festival "Saperi e Saperi in città" (May)
  - Wine and food festival "Assaggia Tortona e dintorni" (end of May)
  - Wine and food festivals Truffle Market and "Assaggiatortona d'Autunno" (November)
- www.comune.tortona.al.it



# The Curone, Grue, Ossona Valleys

Avolasca, Berzano di Tortona, Brignano Frascata, Casalinoceto, Casasco, Castellar Guidobono, Cerreto Grue, Fabbbrica Curone, Garbagna, Gremiasco, Momperone, Monleale, Montacuto, Montegioco, Montemarzino, Pontecurone, Pozzol Groppo, San Sebastiano Curone, Sarezzano, Viguzzolo, Villaramagnano, Volpedo, Volpeglino



## renaissance in the name of timorasso and montebore



This used to be a well-known tourist destination, with the ski resort of Caldirola lying just above the valley. Then came a period of decline, as tourists moved towards the sea - but, today, the Val Curone is once more. The villages and the communities are strongly attached to the land; the farmers, the shop- and restaurant-owners have never given up. It is a pleasure to return to these parts, stopping here and there on the road which leads from Tortona to San Sebastiano Curone and beyond. Timorasso and Montebore are the two blessings the past has bestowed upon these

hills. The first is an almost-extinct grape which a producer of grappa re-introduced in the Eighties for her special series of rare spirits. A mere experiment was enough to reveal the potential of what has now become one of the most famous (and expensive) of Piemonte's whites. Montebore is a cow-milk cheese, shaped like a three-layer wedding cake. It is used in many local dishes, such as the white quarantina potato gnocchi with Montebore. Other unique products include the Volpedo peach, rich and delicious, and the Garbagna cherries, as well as the mushrooms, which are

abundant in all of the valley's forests. In short, we could easily call this a "food valley", both in contemporary and in historical terms. The noble salami from Giarolo has drawn the public's attention - it is produced by at least ten wonderful butchers, one for each village. In Montegioco the villagers brew their own beer, to go with the local specialties. Thanks to all this, tourism has returned to the valley: food and wine gourmets, of course, but also people drawn to the pristine nature and to the simple pleasures of countryside hospitality. Guestrooms are provided by a few good holiday farmhouses, or agriturismo, and the villages' com-

mittees, the Pro Loco, have done a lot to revive festivities in honor of the local saints or of some of (a lot of) the valley's specialties. There is artistic beauty here as well: Romanic churches in Volpedo, Viguzzolo and Fabbrica Curone, and modern artists like Pelizza, who took inspiration from the scenes the horizon paints every day, on every one of the villages' windows. There have also been some interesting developments in the area's choice of restaurants, and there are now many more to try. This is an area with much to offer and one which I would strongly advise to visit, so as not to miss the taste of a true renaissance.

## what to see

In **Volpedo** it is possible to visit the Studio and Museum of Giuseppe Pellizza, which honors the illustrious painter of "The Fourth Estate". The City Hall is embellished with a bas-relief and the church has frescoes from the Fifteenth Century. In **Viguzzolo** there is a beautiful Romanic church dedicated to the Virgin Mary. The brotherhoods' Oratories in **San Sebastiano Curone** are worth a visit - called "White" and "Red" after the colors of the brothers' mantles, they date from 1671 and 1738, respectively. In **Gremiasco** there is the Castelliere di Guardamonte, well-known site of an ancient settlement, inhabited from the Eighth Century B.C. to the Fourth. The fifteenth-century castle tower in **Garbagna**, with a square plan, is set close to the 1702 parish church with carved wooden statues by Maragliano. In **Fabbrica Curone**, the parish church of Holy Mary's Assumption was built by adding onto a pre-existing Romanic-Gothic building. In the hamlet of Morigliassi there is a Museum of Peasant Culture. Saint Mary's Assumption's Church in **Pontecurone** is Romanic-Gothic and still has its original portal as well as numerous frescoes from the Fifteenth Century. Note the Malaspina castle in **Pozzol Groppo**, a massive fort with three towers, battlements and beautiful interiors. Other castles defended Brignano Frascata (Bruzzo Castle, Fourteenth Century) and **Montegioco** (unfortunately, no part of

the original structure remains). **Casalnoceto** has an unusual Oratory of Saint Rock, built inside a fourteenth-century tower, and a Museum of Memories of the Past. The beautiful church of Saint Mary is in the nearby hamlet of Rosano - its present form is mostly seventeenth-century, but the original structure is much older. Inside there is the crypt and grave of the Spinola family. Many immense, ultra-centennial trees grow in the area around Berzano di Tortona. The parish church of Saints Peter and Victor in **Momperone**, baroque in style, has notable marble altars, while the presbytery of the church in **Montacuto** is a lovely example of Piedmontese baroque.



## products

### GARBAGNA'S BEAUTIES AND ALESSANDRIA'S STRAWBERRIES

The **Bella di Garbagna**, or "Beauty from Garbagna", is a variety of cherry cultivated in this area for almost a hundred years, even though it has often risked being discarded because of its low resistance to humidity. The fruit is bright-red and very crunchy, therefore ideal for being preserved under spirit. It is also used for jams, to make liqueur and perfect for pastries. The **Strawberry from Volpedo** - or **Alessandria strawberry** - is produced in the area surrounding the city and in the villages of Volpedo and Viguzzolo, where it is fertilized with rigorously organic methods. Sweet and fresh, scented and juicy, it must be eaten fresh as it does not keep well.



### VAL CURONE FOR THE APPLE, VOLPEDO FOR THE PEACH

**Apple** trees, which grow without any need for irrigation in the hills and lower mountain-slopes, have always been a part of the Val Curone's landscape. Recently, production has increased and has become more intensive: whereas in the past the local Mela Carla was





everywhere, nowadays the Renetta and the American Delicious and Golden Delicious, favored by the markets, have taken over.

On the other hand **Volpedo's peach**, cultivated around the village of Volpedo and previously reserved to local consumption, has had a great success on the national market. Its peculiarity is that it is picked ripe on the tree, thereby preserving its intense scent and natural taste.



## THE NOBLE GIAROLO SALAMI

Ultimate result of decades of artisanal knowledge, the **Noble Giarolo Salami** is packed in a natural skin, tied by hand, and left to age in ancient cellars. The finished product is a rough, bright red salami with a perfect balance of fat and lean

parts, aromatic and very soft. The **Sown Noble** is obtained through an even more elaborate process, as it is packed in a natural double skin which is then manually sown together, which means that the aging process can be longer (up to 24

months). Strong and interesting to the palate, it is surprisingly soft. A renewed interest in local meat-curing techniques has brought old traditions back to the valley and encouraged the locals to set up a few new pig farms.





## cuisine

The Tortona area's valley's cuisine has a lot in common with mountain traditions, as well as with the nearby province of Piacenza.

Mushrooms, truffle and game are abundant. The **panissa** is made with rice, pork, lard and legumes, while other local specialties include the village of Viguzzolo's **Cups of Saint**

**Anthony**, an ancient recipe for a two-layered sweet with walnuts, Momperone's malfatti with beet, cheese, and eggs, Pontecurone's onion soup and Villaromagnano's tajarin pasta with boar or hare sauce.

The traditional **intrabiela** is still prepared in Fabbria Curone: it is a kind of milk quiche similar to the tartrà, a warm

milk cream with eggs and herbs served with a mushroom sauce. Risotto is the most common first course, together with **gnocchi with Montebore cheese**. Peaches are the main ingredient for most desserts, and are often served with wine, sugar and crumbled amaretti, or in cakes with amaretti and chocolate.



## wine

The valleys' red wines are **Barbera** and **Croatina**.

There is also a local species of Dolcetto, called **Nibiò**.

The local white grape **Timoras-**

**so**, ubiquitous before the Phylloxera blight first invaded the region, has been re-discovered in recent times, with a fabulous success. When young, it is a yel-

lowish, fruity wine, which turns golden after a short period of aging during which it develops a complex and remarkable bouquet.

## shopping

### BRIGNANO FRASCATA

- **La Corte di Brignano**

via Roma, 19 - phone 0131784944  
open: Wednesday to Sunday morning  
"sown" raw salami

### FABBRICA CURONE

- **Salumificio Fittabile (Butchery)**

via Roma, 48 - phone 0131780110  
closed: Wednesday afternoon  
raw salami, salamelle

### GARBAGNA

- **Az. Agr. Pisacco (Farm)**

loc. Cà dei Bianchi  
phone 0131877694 - mobile 3384392377  
Bella di Garbagna, Grisona, Pistoiese varieties of cherry

- **Elda and Ugo Gentile**

via Roma, 59/b  
phone 0131877604  
Garbagna honey, cherry honey

### GREMIASCO

- **Salumificio Arsura Lino (Butchery)**

via Dusio, 7  
phone 0131787130  
closed: Wednesday afternoon  
raw salami

### MONTEGIOCO

- **Az. Agr. Bonadeo Francesco (Farm)**

Cascina Capanna, 2  
phone 0131875278  
salami, bacon

- **Birrifificio Montegioco (Brewery)**

fraz. Fabbica, 30  
phone 0131875115 - mobile 3355748181  
artisanal beer

### SAN SEBASTIANO CURONE

- **Lascia che sia il cioccolato (Workshop)**

via Garibaldi, 8  
phone 0131788027  
mobile 3389119320  
www.lasciachesia.com  
artisanal chocolate

### SAREZZANO

- **Macelleria Salumeria Mutti (Butchery)**

fraz. Baracca, 44  
phone 0131884169  
"noble" Giarolo salami

### VIGUZZOLO

- **Macelleria Semino (Butchery)**

via I Maggio, 65  
phone 0131899394 - mobile 3494354304  
closed: Sunday afternoon and Sunday  
meat

## what to eat

### AVOLASCA

- **Vecchia Posta**

via Montebello, 2 - phone 0131876254  
open: Friday and Saturday evening, Sunday for lunch - set menu price: 30 euro  
3 rooms  
sale of wines  
credit cards not accepted  
vegetable soufflé, risotto with starflower, rabbit with prunes

### CASALNOCETO

- **La Bossola** - loc. Cascina Bossola, 10  
phone 0131809356 - closed: Monday and Tuesday - set menu price: 40 euro  
agnolotti, guinea fowl with hazelnuts

### CERRETO GRUE

- **Locanda della Pesa**

via Starà, 2  
phone 0131889903





closed: Tuesday - set menu price: 30-35 euro  
**golden perch fish cakes with a cold tomato sauce, gnocchi borlotti with smoked ricotta, sea bass with fresh oregano sauce and potatoes with olive oil**

- gravel parking lot without reserved spaces - the entrance can be accessed with a slide or through a side door; inside, only part of the rooms can be navigated, with assistance, by wheelchair - the bathroom cannot be reached by wheelchair and it is not possible to get close to the WC.

## FABBRICA CURONE

• **La Genzianella** - fraz. Selvapiana

via Forotondo, 7 - phone 0131780135

closed: Monday, Tuesday (except in summer)

set menu price: 30 euro - 10 rooms

**Montebore cream with acacia honey and Bella di Garbagna, salami from Selvapiana, ravioli with stew, intrabiela (quiche)**

## GREMIASCO

• **Belvedere**

via Dusio, 5 - phone 0131787159

closed: Tuesday (Oct. to May also from Monday to Thu. evening) - set menu price: 35 euro

**fried chicken, thistle flan with Montebore**

## MOMPERONE

• **Ca' dell'Aglio**

loc. Ca' dell'Aglio, 2 - phone 0131784510

closed: Monday - set menu price: 25 euro

11 rooms - outdoor tables, garden

**hot cotechino, Russian salad, agnolotti, guinea fowl**

## MONTEMARZINO

• **Da Giuseppe**

via IV Novembre, 7

phone 0131878135

[www.ristorantedagiuseppe.it](http://www.ristorantedagiuseppe.it)

closed: Tuesday evening e Wednesday

set menu price: 40 euro - pool

**peppers in sauce, agnolotti with meat sauce, veal cutlets, mushrooms, cod**

## SAN SEBASTIANO CURONE

• **Corona**

via V. Emanuele, 14

phone 0131786203

closed: Monday and Tuesday;

open only for lunch

set menu price: 35 euro

**tuna paté, potato gnocchi, cima and tripe, ice-cream**

• **Cascina Battignana**

Cascina Battignana, 1

phone 0131786252 - [www.battignana.it](http://www.battignana.it)

set menu price: 25 euro - 7 rooms

pool, educational farmhouse activities, salami production, sale of honey and jams

**potato cakes with meat sauce, Ligurian-style rabbit, Volpedo peach mousse**



## events

<b>Various places</b>	Tour gastronomici 2009... in the Curone, Grue, Ossona Valleys (Spring and Autumn) info: Community Office phone 0131786198
<b>Avolasca</b>	Truffle fair (November) info: City Hall, phone 0131876502
<b>Garbagna</b>	Cherry fair (June), Chestnut fair (October) info: City Hall, phone 0131877645
<b>Montacuto</b>	Festival of the Savior, celebrated on the Giarolo mountain (August) info: City Hall, phone 0131785110
<b>San Sebastiano Curone</b>	National Truffle Market and Fair (November) info: <a href="http://www.comunesansebastianocurone.it">www.comunesansebastianocurone.it</a>
<b>Volpedo</b>	Strawberry fair (May) info: <a href="http://www.comune.volpedo.al.it">www.comune.volpedo.al.it</a>





## regional wineries ...

## wine shops

### ACQUI TERME

#### **Enoteca Regionale Acqui "Terme e vino"**

Palazzo Robellini  
piazza Levi, 7  
tel. 0144770273 - 0144321873  
fax 0144350196  
enoteca@termeevino.it  
www.termeevino.it

### VIGNALE MONFERRATO

#### **Enoteca Regionale del Monferrato**

Palazzo Callori  
piazza del Popolo, 12  
tel. 0142933243  
fax 0142933243  
info@enotecadelmonferrato.it  
www.enotecadelmonferrato.it

### ALICE BEL COLLE

#### **Bottega del vino Alto Monferrato di Alice Bel Colle**

piazza Guacchione, 4/6  
tel. 014474104

### CAPRIATA D'ORBA

#### **Bottega del vino di Capriata d'Orba**

piazza Garibaldi, 2  
tel. 014346102

### CASTELNUOVO BORMIDA

#### **Bottega del vino Antica Marca Monferrina di Castelnuovo Bormida**

piazza Marconi, 4  
presso sede municipale  
tel. 0144714535

### ROCCA GRIMALDA

#### **Bottega del vino di Rocca Grimalda**

piazza Vittorio Veneto, 15  
tel. e fax 0143873401

### SAN CRISTOFORO

#### **Bottega del vino di San Cristoforo**

piazzale Carpeneto Spinola, 3  
tel. 0143682120  
fax 0143682260





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15100 Alessandria  
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inforail@alexala.it - [www.alexala.it](http://www.alexala.it)  
Lun-Sab 8.30 - 12.30 e 15.00 - 17.30

## **ACQUI TERME**

Piazza Levi, 12 - c/o Palazzo Robellini  
15011 Acqui Terme (AL)  
tel. 0144322142 - fax 0144770303  
iat@acquiterme.it - [www.comuneacqui.com](http://www.comuneacqui.com)

## **ALESSANDRIA**

Via Gagliaudo, 2 - 15100 Alessandria  
tel. 0131234794 - fax 0131234794  
iat@comune.alessandria.it  
[www.comune.alessandria.it](http://www.comune.alessandria.it)  
Lun-Sab 10 - 13 e 14.30 - 17.30

## **CASALE MONFERRATO**

Piazza Castello - 15033 Casale Monferrato (AL)  
tel. 0142444330 - fax 0142444330  
chiosco@comune.casale-monferrato.al.it  
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V.le dei Campionissimi, 2  
15067 Novi Ligure (AL)  
tel. 014372585 - fax 0143767657  
iat@comune.noviligure.al.it  
[www.comune.noviligure.al.it](http://www.comune.noviligure.al.it)

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Via Cairoli, 103 - 15076 Ovada (AL)  
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iat@comune.ovada.al.it  
[www.comune.ovada.al.it](http://www.comune.ovada.al.it)

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Corso Alessandria, 62 - 15057 Tortona (AL)  
tel. 0131864297 - fax 0131864267  
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