

# *“Gelato Tour 2010”*



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**Food Science 497- Food Systems in Italy**

May 19, 2010

USA- As I cruised down the four lane highway towards Dulles International Airport, the realization that I was flying overseas for the first time without my family started to set in. Would I make it to the gate on time by myself? Would I lose my passport? I swallowed my worries as best I could and willed that the increasing number of cars in front of me would create a congested parkway. Finally, an ascending airplane clued to me that I was close to my first destination. My brother and Dad bid me a fond farewell at the Lufthansa Gate, I grabbed my boarding passes, checked my bag and went through security with ease. At the gate, I met up with some of my fellow travelers for our flight to Frankfurt...

12 hours and a connecting flight later, we met up with the entire crew in Milano to then continue onto Torino, Italy.



**May 20, 2010**

We checked into our hotel in Torino called the Exporesidence; it was most easily described as a short-term apartment complex. Our triple room had three beds, a couch, a kitchen, and tiny bathroom. Since we were staying there for seven nights, it quickly became our new home. In order to more easily adjust to the time zone, we headed to a city center tour of Torino given by members of St. John's International University Faculty members. The Center of Torino, Piazza San Carlo (upper picture) was about a half hour walk from our hotel, so we bought public bus tickets and rode the city streets like locals. Due to our jet lag and extreme hunger, we ate at a pizzeria near our hotel and called it an early night. The pizza was far superior to anything in the United States because of the simplicity and quality of their ingredients. I accidentally ordered one without cheese though, still deliciouso!



**May 22, 2010**

On our first full day in Torino, we visited the Castle Campus of St. John's International University for an introduction lecture to the regional culinary traditions of Northern Italian. After lunch, we headed to an Agrigelateria. The head of the dairy farm developed back problems early in life and decided to add a gelateria onto the farm. They use fresh raw milk and fresh fruit extracts to make gelati and sorbets; thus making his gelato one of the highest quality products in Italy. It was absolutely delicious too! After our visit, we headed back to Torino's city center for an early appetivo and dinner after.



**May 23, 2010**

This Saturday morning, we took a public bus and cable car to the largest open-air market in Europe. We were given the morning to wander, observe, and shop the countless stalls of produce, fish, meats, jarred goods, shoes, clothes, and household products. We were given the afternoon off and took a long group lunch. After, some of us investigated the Egyptian Museum, the largest collections of relics east of Cairo.



**May 24, 2010**

This was by far one of the best days of the trip. We woke up early for a full day in the very northwest tip of Italy in the small town of Aosta. This Alpine town borders both France and Switzerland and boasts a very quaint atmosphere. We explored a beekeeper's gardens complete with all of the Alpine vegetation he could cultivate. After, we strolled around the town of Aosta; from every street we could see the tips of the alps peeking behind the colorful buildings. I could have stayed here for weeks!

After we got back to Torino, I went to see some of the Olympic Park and venue. We saw the torch, stadium and what we guessed was the ice rink.



**May 25, 2010**

Another day in Torino found us visiting Eataly in the morning. Eataly is a food market similar to Whole Foods in the United States. They sell regional products and employ the fundamental principles of the Slow Food Movement. This Italian-born movement encourages consumption of local foods grown in the highest quality conditions to enjoy the simplicity and beauty of the meal.



After eating in Eataly, we proceeded to a rice farm outside of Torino. Italy claims to be the birthplace of rice farming, and their major production consists of Arborio and Carnonoli rice for Italian risotto dishes. This farm also grows long stemmed rice that we would be used to eating in the United States.



**May 26, 2010**

This morning we visited a bull breeding facility. Unlike the United States, the European Union outlaws growth hormones to enhance farm animals. At this facility they hand select the best cattle to the artificially inseminated by the strongest and largest bulls. This facility also tracks the genetic characteristics of each generation to successfully continue the line.



After our trip to the bull farm, we toured the vineyard, production tanks, and aging rooms of Bava Winery. In the Piedmont region of Italy, Barolo Wine is the resident classic. Made from Nebbiolo grapes, Barolo is only produced and drunk in this region. Bava decided to expand their worldwide market and they are now experimenting with growing Merlot and Chardonnay grapes.





**May 27, 2010**

Our adventure started this morning with a visit to a Gorgonzola production plant. We suited up in hair nets, aprons and boots to be able to walk through the facility. In the first rooms the enzymes and mold were added to the milk to begin curdling. Because of the fine nature of gorgonzola, the curdled milk is slowly and finely cut then transferred to tables and finally packed into molds. In these molds the cheese will reduce to half its size after salt and aging decrease the water concentration. The cheese is pierced during the aging process to ensure that an adequate amount of mold grows inside. The cheese is also inspected to ensure it passes the standards for a Gorgonzola label.

During our last night in Torino we went to a very traditional crepe and risotto restaurant.



**May 28, 2010**

We left Torino and headed to Parma today. Our first stop was a wheat and pepper demonstration farm. We were expecting a lecture from the European Union equivalent of the FDA; however, when they did not arrive the farm explained their demonstration plots to us. They grow over 100 types of wheat and peppers for agricultural comparison. Next we went to Parmalat, one of the biggest tetrapack plants in the world. This packaging is made of layers and paper and plastic to hold shelf-stable milk and juice. They also produced yogurt and other dairy products.

We stayed outside of the city of Parma and ate a four course traditional Italian meal complete with espresso at the end.



**May 29, 2010**

Today was one of most packed and informative days in Italy. We toured three major production facilities. Still outside of Parma, we toured a very traditional Parmigiano Reggiano plant. This Protected Designation of Origin (DOP) cheese can only be produced in this region with specific milk from cows fed a specific diet. After seeing the entire process of adding enzymes and curdling, we toured the aging rooms with wheels of cheese stacked to the ceiling. We then tasted cheeses that had been aged four years and nine years; it was by far the most amazing cheese I have ever eaten.

We then visited a Prosciutto de Parma aging center, another DOP product of Italy. The pigs that are slaughtered for these legs of prosciutto are fed the leftover whey from the DOP production of Parmigiano Reggiano. The legs are salted and rubbed with a flour and lard mixture then left to age for months.



## May 29, 2010 Continued

Later that day, we traveled to Modena to taste the DOP Balsamic Vinegar. This vinegar is made from the must (leftover seeds and skins) of wine production. The highest quality is aged in barrels of different types of wood. The vinegar that is bottled is taken from the smallest barrel then the smallest barrel is refilled from the successive bigger barrels. A bottle of the DOP balsamic vinegar product costs approximately \$150.

We then continued onto Bologna for the rest of our travels.



**May 30, 2010**

This morning in Bologna, we had a pasta making lesson from a restaurant kitchen. We learned how to make Bolognese sauce as well. We ate the fresh pasta that we had just made for lunch and had the rest of the day to site see and shop in the city.



**May 31, 2010**

On our last day in Italy, we were given a free day to tour Milan. I went to the Castle of Milan, the Duomo, and the shopping district. We also found a medieval fair that the city was hosting. We went back to the hotel early and headed to the airport at three am to catch our plane back to the United States.

