

Italy 2010 Study Abroad Tour for Food Science Chelsey Novak's Travelogue

May 19-20, 2010

My journey began from Dulles International Airport. I arrived at the airport and after checking in and going through security I met up with some of my fellow classmates. Our flight departed around 6 in the evening. This was my first trip to Europe and the 8 hour flight was definitely an experience. It surprisingly went faster than I expected. We arrived in Frankfurt, Germany and awaited our next flight. I had a window seat on this flight so I was able to see the spectacular Alps from out the plane window. After arriving in Milan, we met up with the rest of our group, and our bus driver took us to Exporesidence in Torino, our home for the next 7 nights.

We freshened up and some representatives from St. John International University took us for a tour of Torino's city center. After the tour of the various piazzas, we went to a pizzeria for dinner. Here I got my first taste of Italian pizza. It had very thin and crispy crust and I got a whole pizza for myself! We then went back to the hotel after 2 long days without much sleep.

May 21, 2010

Friday morning we went to St. John International University Campus where we were given a presentation on Italian cuisine in 3 regions of northern Italy. We learned about the traditions that have been passed down for generations. Lunch was served in St. John's café on campus. I had lasagna which was very good but different from lasagna I was used to because it didn't have any red sauce. After lunch, we went to Agrigelateria San P é We were all excited about seeing gelato production. It was a very small production plant. All the



ingredients are natural and the milk and some produce come from their farm. After the tour, we finally got to taste gelato. The production and the gelato were so different from ice cream production in America. Gelato has less fat and it is stored at a higher temperature than traditional ice cream from America. That evening we went into the city center for dinner. I had an amazing cheese risotto which is a rice dish. At this restaurant, we got our first big taste of the language barrier because we knew very little Italian. It was hard to figure out what the different foods were on the menu.

May 22, 2010

The schedule for Saturday included an open air market and comparing an Italian supermarket to supermarkets in America. The supermarket we went to near our hotel had some differences than in America. There was a lot more fresh produce and the bottled water was in very large containers for a really cheap price. The Porta Palazzo open air market was so cool. It was so much bigger than I expected. The locals had suitcases and they do their shopping for the

whole week at one place because the open air market had everything from fish to fruits to shampoo. After exploring the open air market, some of us decided to look for somewhere to eat, and a local pointed us in a direction of a great restaurant. On our way there, we admired the beautiful city and churches, and we even saw a wedding. At the restaurant, I had caprese salad that I topped with delicious olive oil. One difference in our culture compared to Italian culture



was the public restrooms. Everywhere we went the toilets were different, with this restaurant having a whole in the ground. We then had some free time so we ventured back to the city center to go to Museo Egizio. It is the second largest Egyptian Museum in the world. We then treated ourselves with some gelato and did some shopping before heading back to the hotel. Our whole group went to a traditional Italian aperitivo by our hotel. Aperitivo is drinks and appetizers that you have before you go out for dinner. I had some more gelato before calling it a night.



May 23, 2010

I was most looking forward to this day. We were traveling to the Alps. We went to Centro Agricolo Dimostrativo which was a demonstration center for herbs and honey bees. We learned about some natural remedies and culture of the people living in the Alps. There was some dairy farmers that were having a party near by before they head up into the mountains for months. The Alps were breathtaking! After this, we went into Aosta's city center. There we ate lunch and walked around. Since it was Sunday, not many places were open though.

We traveled back to Torino, and a couple of us went to check out the Olympic center. Torino hosted the 2006 Winter Olympics. We saw the torch and the stadium that the opening ceremony took place in. For dinner we went back to the pizzeria from the

first night, but I decided to get pasta this time and chocolate cake for dessert.

May 24, 2010

On Monday morning we walked to Eataly, a large grocery store that reminded me of Wegman's. I bought some food while we were there. We also ate lunch here. There were multiple little restaurants throughout the store. Next, we went to Societ á Agricola Drusiana, a rice farm. I learned a lot about rice production. I learned that the fields are flooded with water until harvest time. After harvesting, the rice is put through many machines to clean it. For dinner this evening, we went to another apertivo. This one was a buffet which included meats, cheeses, bread, potatoes, and salads. I had vanilla and chocolate gelato for dessert.



May 25, 2010

This morning we went to Anaborapi. This was a semen production station and genetic station. Here they gave us a presentation on breeding of Piedmontese cows. We toured their facility and they provided us with lunch. They breed the cows to be double muscle cows for more meat per cow. They took us to an area farm that they work with. We saw so many cows. After the cows, we took a bus ride to a winery. The wineries are on hillsides of the mountains. I have

been to a winery in New York, so it was interesting to compare it to the one in Italy. One of the major differences was that it was located on the side of the mountain. We saw the grapes and the vats where fermentation occurs, and then we sampled their wine. Back in Torino, I had hazelnut crusted veal. I was so hungry for meat because I had been eating so much pasta. Lastly, we had some gelato on our walk back to the hotel.

May 26, 2010

Wednesday was cheese day. We first traveled to a gorgonzola cheese factory. It was really cool to see the cheese production. It was very interesting to see the cheese salted and pierced to allow oxygen into the cheese to give gorgonzola cheese its signature blue spots. I don't like gorgonzola cheese, so I didn't care for walking through the aging area because it smelled. After the cheese factory, we went for lunch. I had pizza, and it tasted like frozen pizza that I can get at Walmart. The waiter didn't give us many options and we definitely got ripped off. Next, we went to Luigi Guffanti, a cheese aging facility. We went down into the area where all the cheese ages. Contrary to the gorgonzola factory, it smelled good there. Here I got to try 4 and 9 year aged Parmigiano Reggiano cheese!



This was our last night in Torino, so the representatives from St. John International University met up with us at Ristorante il Vicolo for a farewell dinner. I had a risotto called Alba. It was a truffle and porcini mushroom risotto. For dessert, I shared two crepes with my friend. These crepes were the best dessert I have ever eaten!

May 27, 2010

We had to get up early on Thursday for a 3 ½ hour drive to Parma. We first arrived at Azienda Sperimentale. Here we were supposed to be given a presentation from the European Food Security Authority, but they didn't show up. Instead, we toured their farm. They had a demonstration farm of various types of wheat and they also grew hot chili peppers. I saw the world's hottest chili pepper; I never thought I would be seeing that in Italy. For lunch, I had an amazing 4 cheese pizza at a local restaurant. Next, we went to Parmalat, the largest aseptic packaging plant in the world. They package shelf stable milk and juices. This place was really large, and there were robot forklifts that were really cool to watch. After touring Parmalat, we checked into our hotel and then walked around Sala Baganza, a province of Parma. Then, we went to dinner that I would later realize was the best meal I ate while I was in Italy. We had a 4 course meal the consisted of a two pasta dishes, veal and potatoes, and then dessert. I ate every bite of it!

May 28, 2010

Friday morning we began our day with a complimentary breakfast at our hotel. I had chocolate croissants, cheese, and prosciutto. We began our day at a Parmigiano Reggiano cheese factory. The process of making this cheese had to be completed within 2 hours or it had to be thrown out. There was a little boy helping his dad make the cheese which was weird to see because in America that would have violated so many safety regulations. After tasting and purchasing some of their cheese, we went to see prosciutto production. Here they salt and cure the pig legs. After it had been curing for the proper amount of time, it had to be tested with a horse bone before it can be sold. We again sampled their product. Lastly, we traveled to a balsamic vinegar plant.



We saw where the balsamic vinegar is aged and learned about the process of aging it. It can be aged from 2 to even 25 years in wood barrels made from various types of wood like cherry or oak. The longer it is aged, the sweeter it becomes. We then sampled various balsamic vinegars. They were delicious! After this long but great day of sampling foods, we headed to our hotel in Bologna. For dinner, I had tagliatelli al ragu which is a famous dish in Bologna.

May 29, 2010

Saturday morning we had another great breakfast in our hotel before heading out for the day. We were going to learn how to make pasta. We arrived at Vecchia Scuola Bolognese. Here we were taught how to make pasta dough and how to turn it into various shaped pastas. The yolk from the eggs that were used to make the dough were very orange, thus the color of the dough isn't white like pasta in America. We then got to



eat the pasta for lunch. It was very good. After we had learned how to make pasta, we had free time in Bologna where we walked around and took in the sites of the city. Our bus driver then took us to Milan, our final destination. We went to a restaurant near our hotel for dinner, and I had beef with arugula and Parmigiano Reggiano cheese and a strawberry cake for dessert.

May 30, 2010

Sunday was our last day in Italy, and we were ready to make the most of it. My one friend on trip has family who live outside of Milan. They picked us up for the day. They own a restaurant, so they took us there and fed us lunch. We had marinara pizza, penne with pistachio pesto sauce, cannolis, and finally homemade gelato! Then their daughter took us sight seeing. After that we went for gelato. My friend and I shared a gelato sundae. Then, we went back to their home and just hung out for awhile. It was really neat to see an Italian home. For dinner, we went to a church picnic. By this time, I was so full that I couldn't even finish my food! After this great day with some locals, they took us back to the hotel. I packed and prepared to leave at 3 in the morning for the airport.

May 31, 2010

Sadly, we had to leave Italy. Our flight home went really well and even though I had an amazing time I was glad to be home.



Going to Italy for this food science study abroad trip was an amazing experience! I learned so much about the Italian food system and culture. I can't wait to go back to Italy sometime soon!