



Cooking in Florence

DIGEST / TF x Cooking in Florence

Ask Laura and Gianluca of Cooking in Florence how they first started working together and the latter will give you a whimsical answer. “It was destiny,” he says.

Founder Laura shares some more grounded specifics: “I needed a business partner and we met over Spritzes in piazza Beccaria.” Not a bad backdrop for talking shop.

It’s also not far from the current **Cooking in Florence headquarters on via Ghibellina**, where, on this early spring afternoon, off-duty Gianluca is strumming a guitar between morning and evening commitments. Were a PR rep around, it might seem like a calculated move, the charismatic chef cultivating his devil-may-care image. Instead it’s an **organic reflection of the bohemian spirit that sets Cooking in Florence** apart from many similar institutions in the city—a spirit that comes through as Laura and Gianluca share details of their approaches, their backgrounds, their daily bread.

First things first: **Cooking in Florence isn’t a restaurant**, though you’d be forgiven for thinking so upon entering the *hygge*-ridden headquarters. (Laura and Gianluca rigged up the whole space themselves; no designer so much as set foot inside.) “It’s a 360-degree space for the community,” Laura says, equal parts cooking laboratory, food atelier, event venue and school. And that’s just the physical space on via Ghibellina; Cooking in Florence is hardly contained there.

Before joining forces with Laura, Gianluca had experience as a private chef, and both earned their culinary chops by working in various facets of the catering and restaurant worlds. All these experiences have been tossed into their pot of current-day offerings. Besides **interactive cooking classes held for a range of group sizes**—come as a couple, say, or come with 29 of your closest friends—the duo offers an **in-home chef option** (to keep your guests entertained and your fingers unlifted); **banquet and catering services** (tailor-made

for each setting and event, so no two are alike); and a “buffet” of **experiences** (truffle hunts, Chianti countryside safaris, wine tastings, and dinners aboard boats, to name a few.)

Seasonal, high-quality products are the starting points for all CiF menus and events—Laura and Gianluca hand-select all their ingredients, sample all wines and generally steer clear of big-name producers and labels. But plenty of other ingredients help give the company its spice. When cooking, serving or instructing, for example, Laura and Gianluca prefer to act as much like entertainers as they do stage crew—they don’t just keep things running, but engage with participants, share stories, tell jokes. Laura (Gianluca says) is the preeminent lady of the house, the *padrona di casa*, while Gianluca (Laura says) is the creative force, a “gypsy chef” with global experience. Both, unsurprisingly, work better with the other nearby.

It’s ultimately a shared reverence for cooking that cements the pair’s working partnership. **Good food and love for the convivial life** *a tavola* run deep in Laura’s and Gianluca’s DNA. Respectively from Florence and Fiesole, they were both raised in Tuscan families where top-shelf, seasonal ingredients were prioritized over everything else in the kitchen. Gianluca gives a prime illustration: “I’d pick up eggs with my *nonna* at the market,” he says, grinning, “crack them open and drink them on the spot.” Laura and her family were just as *raw*, so to speak, in their passion for quality ingredients. When that sort of attitude is in your blood, she says, it’s rare to see one’s fundamental approach to food to change much in adulthood. “Everything we do revolves around our love for the table,” Laura says, “so we’re way less likely to get tired.” Except maybe *after* a marathon meal.



Cooking in Florence

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