

The so-called “new Tuscany” is a diverse, mountainous island with ancient hilltop towns, a plethora of Roman and Greek ruins, resort beaches and a cuisine that is rich and unique, developed around the magnificent seafood and fertile gardens. I ate fantastically well and enjoyed great hospitality, but there was a dark side, too. The years of Mafia dominance have left a legacy of some of the ugliest cities I have visited, with rubbish and dirt strewn around highways, towns and suburbs.

The secret to Sicily is to go well prepared, planning ahead for both accommodation and meals.



Modica

Nagaj, oversees a splendid wine list. At dusk, walk down through the alleyways to the main street to view the lights.
Palazzo Failla, Via Blandini 5, Modica, ph: 932-941 059, palazzofailla.it

7 RISTORANTE MAJORE

This pork-lover’s heaven is hidden in the medieval alleys of Chiaramonte Gulfi, high in the hills. Majore has been serving six-course meals of delicious fresh and cured pork specialities since 1896. Not for the faint-hearted eater.
Via Martiri Ungheresi 12, Chiaramonte Gulfi, ph: 932-928 019, majore.it

8 SICILIAN WINE

Sicily has both ancient and modern vineyards throughout the countryside, producing excellent red wines. I loved the special wines from COS in Vittoria that had been matured in earthenware amphora, and those from the nearby eponymous winery of the young Arianna Occhipinti. And I’d return in

A SICILIAN TOP 10

LAURINE JACOBS FINDS PLENTY TO LOVE ON THIS ENCHANTING ISLAND

1 AZIENDA AGRICOLA MANDRANOVA

Close to the Roman ruins at Agrigento and Licata (see La Madia below), this beautifully landscaped olive farm is run by elegant owners/hosts Silvia, who cooks the delicious farmhouse dinners, and Giuseppe, who oversees the estate and conducts the farm tours.

SS115 (km 217), Palma di Montechiaro, ph: 393-986 2169, mandranova.it

2 CAFFÈ SICILIA

Touted as the best pastry shop in Italy, this café in the beautiful, baroque town of Noto serves the cakes, pastries and granitas of Corrado Assenza, a magician in the kitchen. Try the almond granita with a dollop of coffee granita for possibly the best breakfast on earth.

Corso Vittorio Emanuele 125, Noto, ph: 931-835 013, closed Mondays

3 CASTELBUONO

It’s worth the two-hour winding drive from Palermo to this hilltop village to eat at the tiny Nangalarruni Restaurant and feast on local cuisine, every imaginable mushroom and fine wines. Sit in the square at dusk and listen to the music from the men’s clubs – you will feel transported to a film set.

Ristorante Nangalarruni, Via delle Confraternite 5, ph: 921-671 428

4 CATANIA

Sicily’s second largest city has a major airport, Roman ruins, a colourful fish market, La Pescheria, and baroque palazzos, museums and churches. Eat at the humble Antica Marina on the edge of the fish market for superb fish and join the crowds at breakfast for coffee, pastries and cannoli on the run at Savia on the main street.

Pasticceria Savia, Via Etnea 302-4, ph: 95-322 335, savia.it

Osteria Antica Marina, Via Pardo 29, ph: 95-348 197, anticamarina.it

5 LA MADIA

Owner Pino Cuttaia’s superb food at this humble Licata restaurant is modern and clever, and pays homage to Sicily’s finest produce. *Market Kitchen* co-presenter Matthew Fort said he ate possibly the finest meal of his life here. I felt the same.

Corso Filippo Re Capriata 22, Licata, ph: 922-771 443, ristorantelamadia.it

6 MODICA

One of several world heritage sites in the south, this hilltop town has a four-star luxury hotel, Palazzo Failla, with a cutting-edge restaurant, La Gazza Ladra, where chef Accursio Craparo cooks modern food, and the quirky Japanese sommelier, Shingo

a heartbeat for one of Sicily’s finest wines, the rich, red Rosso del Conte, from Tasca d’Almerita at Regaleali.

9 SELINUNTE

On the south coast, this striking Greek archaeological site is partially restored and open to exploring, with or without guides. Book for lunch at La Pineta, a casual seafood restaurant, for simple fresh fish and shellfish on the sandy beach nearby.

Ristorante La Pineta, Via Punta Cantone, Marinella di Selinunte, ph: 924-46 820,

ristorantelapinetaselinunte.it

Selinunte tourist office, Via Caboto Giovanni, ph: 924-46 251, selinunte.net

10 TAORMINA

This town has a striking view of Mt Etna. Get there by cable car from Mazarò, then explore the narrow streets and ruins before taking in lunch and the view. Drop back down to the coast road for dinner at La Capinera and a night at Hotel Caparena, which has its own beach for a morning swim.

Ristorante La Capinera, Via Nazionale 177, Taormina, ph: 942-626 247,

ristorantelacapinera.com

Hotel Caparena, Via Nazionale 189,

Taormina, ph: 942-652 033, gaishotels.com

OLD FACES, NEW PLACES



Cumulus Inc and Andrew McConnell



Heading to Melbourne?
You won't want to miss
the latest places that
have the town talking

CUTLER & CO & CUMULUS INC

Andrew McConnell's airy new restaurant, **Cutler & Co**, is worth the short taxi ride to Gertrude St, Fitzroy, from the CBD. It's modern, jazzy and casual, with a large comfortable bar and plenty of space to dine. We had five entrées, five mains and loved everything we ate, including the anchovy pastries, a sublime late-summer tomato salad and suckling pig to die for with thin, crisp skin.

Another brainchild of the talented McConnell, in the central city's Flinders Lane, is **Cumulus Inc**, with a fresh, zingy breakfast menu, coffee from 7am, lunch from noon and dining into the evening. The innovative food includes a yummy whole roast shoulder of lamb to share.
Cutler & Co, ph: 03-9419 4888, cutlerandco.com.au
Cumulus Inc, ph: 03-9650 1445, but no bookings, cumulusinc.com.au

SPICE MARKET & MOMO

The magical **Spice Market** bar with its opulent décor is in a cavernous space - part of the Grand Hyatt and accessed through Beaney Lane - with several intimate private spaces and filled by an adoring crowd Tuesday to Saturday. The exotic cocktails (don't miss the Turkish Delight martini) are complemented by an array of mezze dishes designed and supervised by Greg Malouf.

Next door to Spice Market - also in the Grand Hyatt but approached from Collins St - is **Momo** restaurant's eagerly awaited new premises, a more tranquil and elegant space for Malouf's spicy Middle Eastern fare. The signature dishes are accompanied by the best wines money can buy. A superb dining experience.

Spice Market, ph: 03-9660 3777, spicemarket.net.au
Momo, ph: 03-9650 0660, momorestaurant.com.au

✶ LAURINE JACOBS

www.cuisine.co.nz



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