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Lombardy

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BUON APPETITO

Lombardy's plethora of culinary offerings is one of its main draws. Here's a look at some of the dishes — and people — that make the region a gastronome's dream

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Between cities of world renown are breathtaking landscapes of river plains, lakes and mountains and a significant amount of agriculture. In the south, around Mantova and Cremona, is the 'white belt' of Lombardy, where rice, butter and cheese prevail. Heading north towards Milan, Brescia and Bergamo, the microclimate of the lakes allows olives and citrus fruit to thrive, and in Franciacorta is where you'll find Italy's best sparkling wine. Further north, the Valtellina valley is home to Alpine Nebbiolo wines and the hyper-local *bresaola*, an air-dried, salted beef.

When it comes to Lombard staples, think *bollito misto* (stew), *cassoeula* (pork and cabbage stew) and the world-famous risotto. For dessert, there's *sbrisolona*, a crunchy almond cake synonymous with Mantua. Other big hitters from the region include *mostarda* (candied fruit syrup) and *torrone* (nougat), both from Cremona. For the turophile, there's plenty of gorgonzola, grana padano and *taleggio*.

To better understand what makes the cuisine so irresistible, let's meet some of the people behind the dishes and ingredients.

Tortelli di zucca (pumpkin ravioli)

RIGHT: Lakeside restaurant in Bellagio, Lake Como



Oltrepo Pavese,
Province of Pavia

RIGHT: Terrace, Osteria del
Crotto, Morbegno



WHERE TO EAT

We round up the best places across the region to get your fix of authentic Lombard cuisine

Osteria al Bianchi, Brescia

Part local bar, part excellent restaurant, Osteria al Bianchi is a hub of activity. Expect morning coffees with the day's papers, lunch, afternoon card games, aperitivi, dinner and late-night digestivi. All sorts of Brescians come here, from young movers and shakers to elegant older regulars who return for honest-to-goodness food, like the home-cured *salumi*, *casoncelli* and spinach *malfatti*. Be sure to try a *pirlo*, the city's aperitivo (Campari, white wine and sparkling water) served with a twist of lemon peel. osteriaalbianchi.it

Trattoria del Glicine, Cernobbio

When arriving at Cernobbio by boat, ignore the waterside restaurants and carry on walking up a steepish hill to Osteria del Glicine. When it's warm, the doors open up onto a wisteria-covered terrace with Lake Como seen between houses. Loyal diners come back here for the menu of classic dishes such as Lake Como missoltini, violet artichoke salads, fresh homemade pastas, wild boar and an enticing wine selection. trattoriadelglicine.com

Osteria del Crotto, Morbegno

The menu here is influenced by ingredients from nearby farmers and producers. Settle down in the cosy dining room to try local favourites such as *bresaola*, *violino di capra* (cured goat meat) and thin homemade *grissini* (breadsticks). In summer, a sheltered terrace

next to a cooling wall makes this place perfect any time of year. Don't leave without trying a tasting of *Storico Ribelle* cheese with Valtellina wines made in the same year. osteriadelcrotto.it

Caffè La Crepa, Isola Dovarese

The family-run trattoria was established in 1951. Today, Federico, alongside his uncle and father, serve fresh fish from the Oglio river as they have done for as long as anyone can remember. The menu features much-loved classics; *bollito misto* with salsa verde, *marubini* pasta, and perhaps a *semifreddo* of *torrone* from nearby Cremona, with an intriguing and well-researched wine list. Sunday lunchtime is busy with families, friends, celebrations, and often group photographs as the trattoria occupies a prime position in the picturesque Piazza Matteotti. caffelacrepa.net

Prato Gaio, Montecalvo Versiggia

The Oltrepò Pavese is Pinot Nero country, and home to the restaurant Prato Gaio, which attracts as many oenophiles as it does gastronomes. The menu features a number of almost forgotten recipes such as chicken *duls-e-brüsc* (local dialect for 'sweet and sour') with *strachitunt*, a blue cheese from the Taleggio valley; *baccalà* with white onions and sultanas; stuffed chicken necks; as well as traditional chocolate salami. Local wines include Bonarda, Croatina and Buttafuoco. ristorantepratogaio.it

Osteria del Treno, Milan

The daily queue here speaks for itself. Locals love it for reasonably priced lunch menu, which includes an excellent choice of pastas (like the meat-filled *tortelli*), delicious cheeses and efficient service. Head here in the evening for a more relaxed atmosphere and enjoy a house aperitivo, namely a *consolazione* (Campari and Prosecco), alongside the traditional braised meats. There's also a good choice of grappas, to aid digestion of course. osteriadelreno.it

La Madia, Brione

Many people (from the smartly dressed to the very casual) make the winding trip up to La Madia, where chef and co-owner Michele Valotti is a dedicated supporter of local producers. Expect homemade breads and raw-milk cheeses to small-production wines and even a chicken kebab — which probably isn't what you'd expect. trattorialamadia.it

Osteria Sali e Tabacchi, Mandello del Lario

An appetite-enhancing walk from the lakeside stop of Mandello del Lario is Osteria Sali e Tabacchi, run by husband Gabriele (chef) and wife Giuliana (front of house) since 1999. It's a small place with a bar area for coffees, drinks and catch-ups and a menu of excellently sourced food and wine, including fish antipasti, artisan-produced salumi, homemade filled pastas and meat *secondi*. osteriasalietabacchi.it

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