



Food, travel, collections, decorating, gardens, books, organizing, and life with Brette Sember. Pull up a chair...

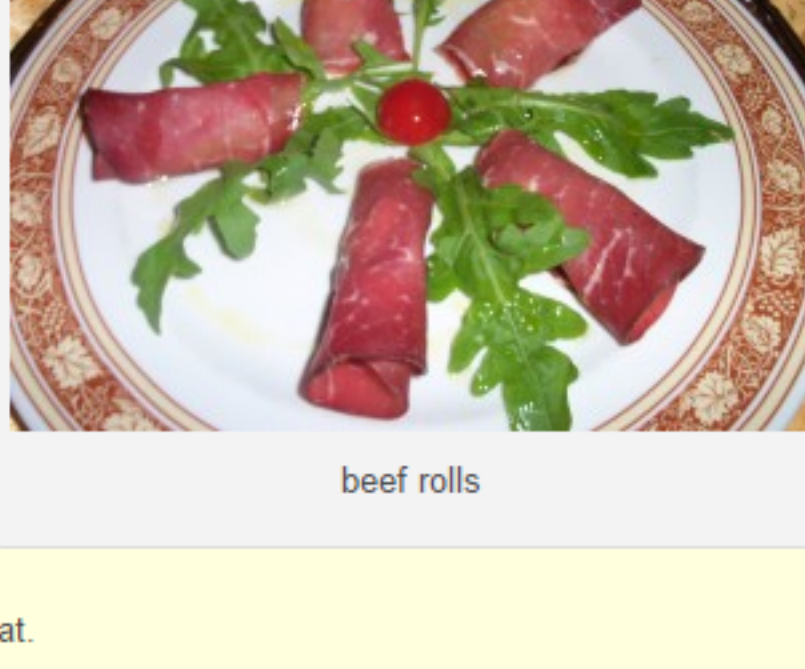
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Food Fun in Rome

Posted by Brette in Food | Travel



beef rolls

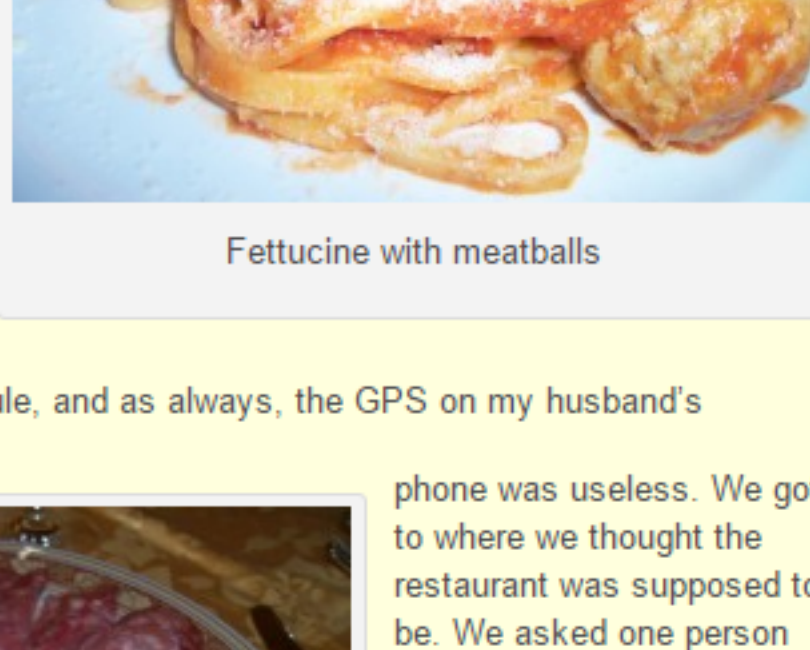
that.

The photos in this post are appearing a bit ahead of my descriptions (since there are so many!), so I hope you won't mind reading and then looking up to see the corresponding photos.

Day One

We arrived in Rome before lunch and checked into our hotel. The hotel clerk was very helpful and friendly, so we decided to ask him for a lunch suggestion. He told us the Spanish Steps were within walking distance of the hotel, so we asked for a place near there. The map of Rome that we had makes everything seem close by. Getting to the Spanish Steps alone was quite a hike. Once there, he had us walking blocks and blocks and blocks. The streets and

writing on the map were miniscule, and as always, the GPS on my husband's



Fettuccine with meatballs

phone was useless. We got to where we thought the restaurant was supposed to be. We asked one person where it was; he pointed straight ahead. We walked and walked and finally asked someone else who pointed us back in the direction we came from. At that point we gave up. We took a cab to the Trevi Fountain area and ate in a bar (a "snack bar") where we ate pizza at some tables crowded inside it. I gave that pizza a discerning look because they had sheets and

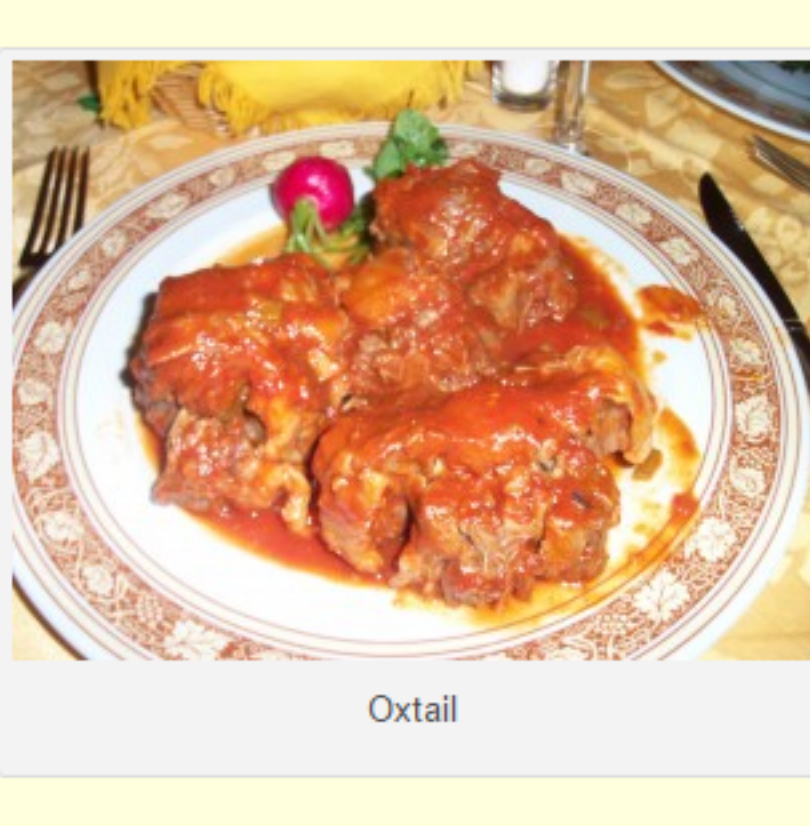


Cured meat with ship's cheese

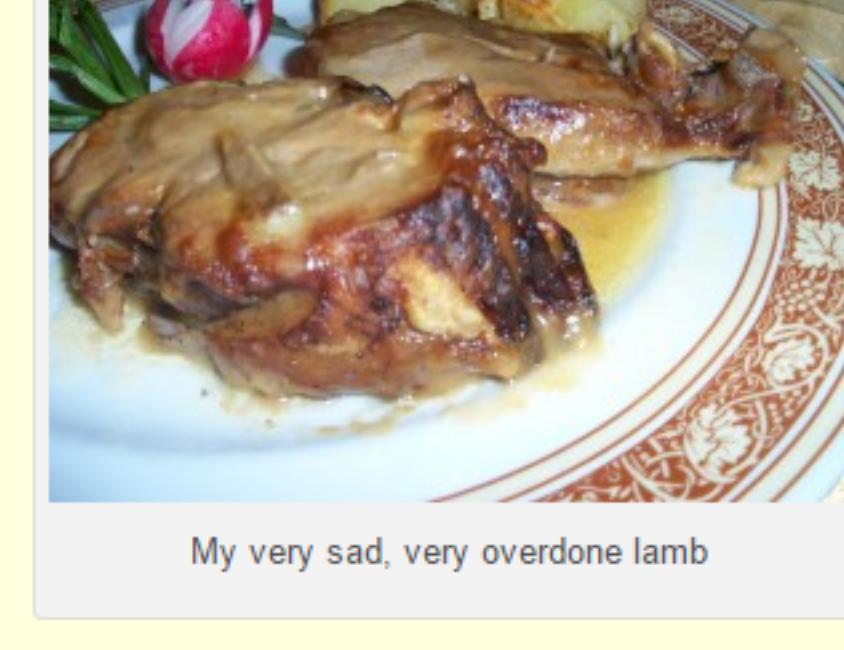
sheets of different varieties just

sitting in the case (unrefrigerated) and they quickly heat them up in an oven when you order. It was about 102 degrees there that day and the thought of those pizzas sitting out all day made me wary, but we did survive.

For dinner, we decided to talk to the desk again, assuming we were idiots and just couldn't find the lunch place. They recommended a place just down the block (perfect since we were exhausted from walking), [Ristorante La Pentolaccia](#). It looked to have the



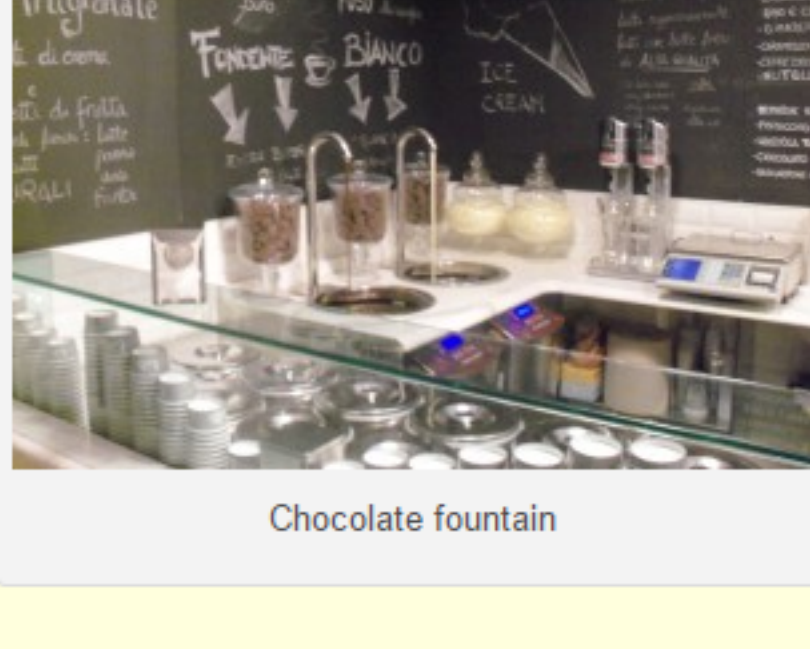
Oxtail



My very sad, very overdone lamb

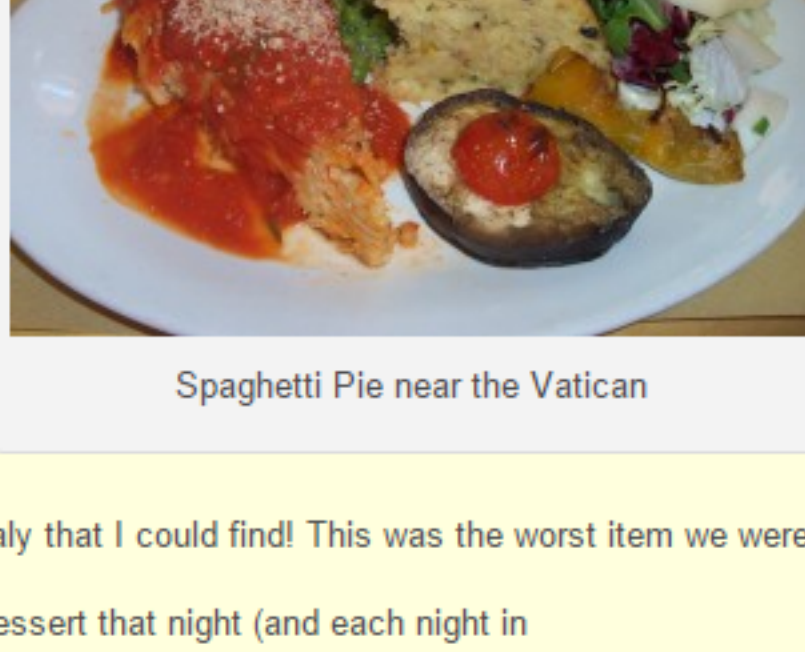
more flavorful than our pasta – even though I cook it al dente, I cannot quite replicate it), however we found throughout Italy that their tomato sauce lacked the hint of sweetness we are used to in sauces here at home, and which we prefer. We also had tortellini in beef broth (this was so simple, but so amazingly delicious), cured meats and cheese (the menu described it as "ship's cheese" which is how Italians pronounce "sheep's cheese."

This has now become our standard family pronunciation) with ambrosia honey (amazing). Another item was air-dried beef rolls with bleu cheese and walnuts. This was a nice combo and the beef was aged and had a deep flavor. Also on our table was roast lamb with the ever present potatoes and oxtail with carrot, tomato, and celery (my husband grew up eating oxtail soup, so he had to get this and did enjoy it. basically a roasted piece of meat with a bone through it).



Chocolate fountain

The worst item was the lamb. It was served well-done and was simply awful: dry, chewy, stringy, and flavorless. As always, our waiter was

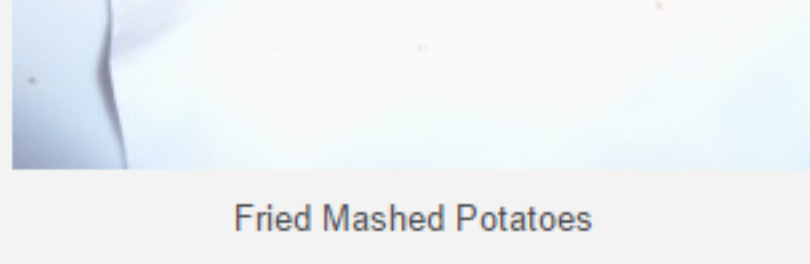


Spaghetti Pie near the Vatican

Italy that I could find! This was the worst item we were served on our entire trip.

Dessert that night (and each night in

Rome!) was at a gelato shop around the corner that had dark and white chocolate "fountains," really just a stream of chocolate that was running continuously from a little faucet. Our hotel desk clerk told us to go there. He was in awe of the "fountains." They didn't excite us much but the gelato was excellent (even if everything was completely in Italian and they did not have it out in mounds so you could see it, so you had to try to ask what the flavors were). You would order your gelato and they would hold a little wafer cookie under the "fountain" then stick that in the gelato. It was puzzling to us because it simply wasn't that wonderful. If they had made gelato sundaes with it, I would have been more interested.



Fried Mashed Potatoes

Day Two



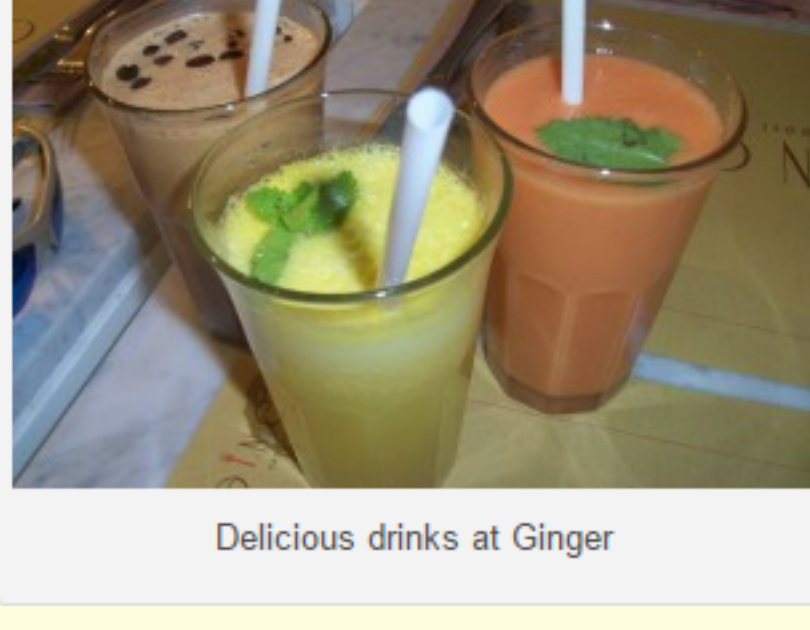
Amazing pizza in 4 styles

Our second day in Rome was a very busy one, with our tour of the Vatican. The tour was in the early afternoon, so we headed to Vatican City to shop and eat lunch beforehand. We had a hard time finding a lunch venue. Everything was very touristy, with the dreaded picture menus that scream bad food. We ended up in one place where we had some pizza and a spaghetti pie that was unlike anything I saw anywhere else in Italy. It was pretty good, but it was clearly

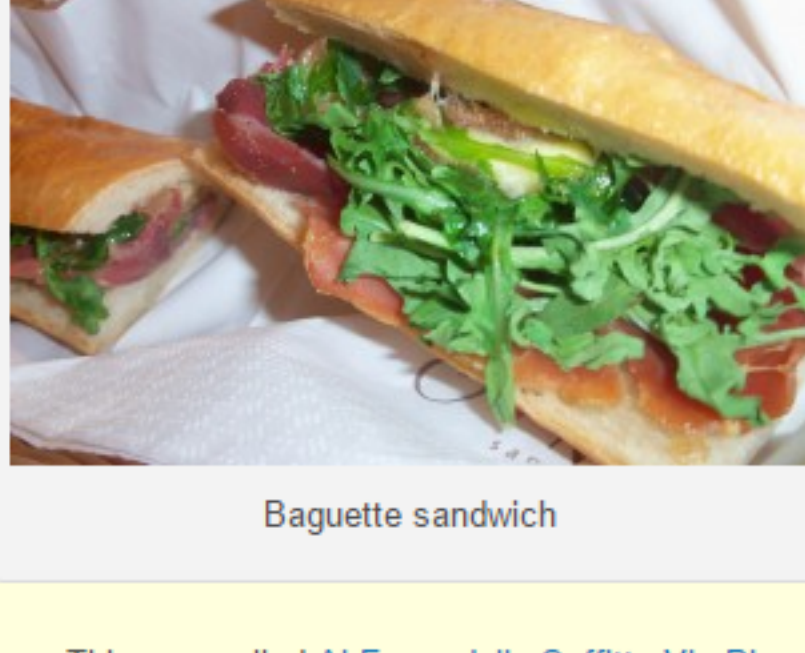
made ahead and reheated, so it just wasn't as fresh as I would have liked.

We arrived back at our hotel that night completely wilted (it was incredibly hot inside the Vatican) and worn out, but decided

that we wanted to have some really good pizza for dinner. Again, although I had done months of research, we wanted to hear what the desk clerk recommended. We explained we wanted the best pizza in Rome and what did he recommend? He gave us directions to a place a few blocks away. He gave us his card and said to give it to the restaurant and also promised to call ahead and reserve a table. We were excited – good pizza recommended by a Roman. We arrived at the restaurant and it



Delicious drinks at Ginger



Baguette sandwich

there. This was called [Al Forno della Soffitta Via Pavia](#). It was exactly

what we were looking for. Tons of amazing pizzas made in a wood oven. A busy, happy restaurant with friendly servers. Jackpot. We started with fried mashed potatoes (kind of fun, but similar to what my grandma used to do with leftover mashed potatoes) and a Pollo salad (with chicken and corn) and a Toto Salad (with pears and artichoke). Delicious, fresh, and amazing, and as always so much better than salads at home. I still can't get over how good all the salads were and how stunningly fresh the ingredients were as well. In Italy, there is no such thing as yellow lettuce, brown edged lettuce, unripe tomatoes, or wilted greens.



Snacks with the drinks at Ginger

Then it was time for pizza. You could order small pizzas or get one



Gnocchetti with red prawns

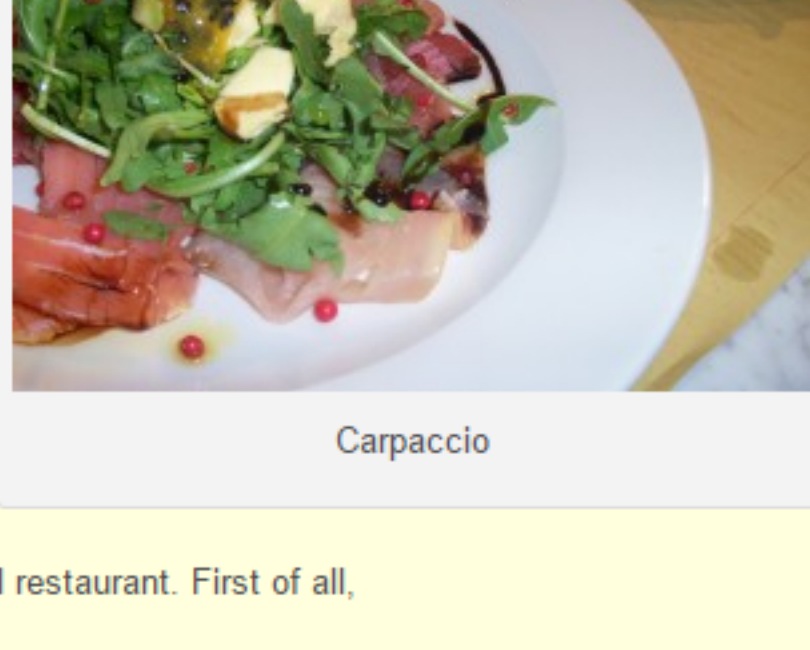
giant one with 4 types on it. We did this and got Margherita, Fume (smoked mozzarella and ham), four cheese (with a cream sauce) and Funghi (mushroom with anchovy). The pizza was fabulous and we got to sample all four kinds. All was right with the world – we finally had some outstanding pizza! I loved the smoked mozzarella and ham and the Margherita was classic. The crust was crispy on the bottom yet soft enough to enjoy chewing it. It had a fab

woody flavor from the oven. A true experience.

Day Three

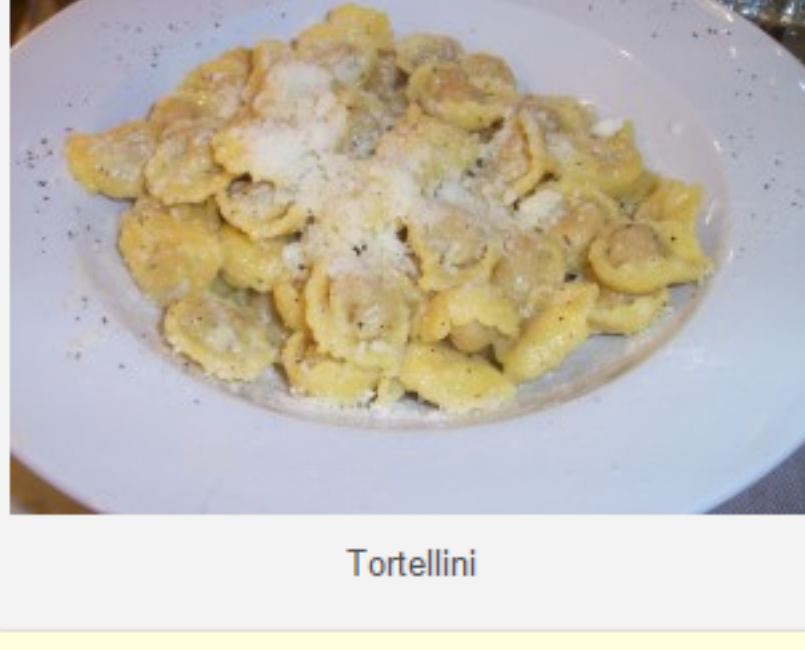
The third day was another busy walking day: Colosseum and the Forum. And again, hot as hell. We

grabbed a quick lunch this day at a snack bar: this time we had sandwiches. One was a tomato and mozzarella on white bread and one was a salami and cheese. The snack bars serve identical sandwiches all over the city. They're fast and easy and so much better than fast food you get at home.



Carpaccio

For dinner that night, we decided to wander around the Spanish Steps. We poked in some shops and stumbled upon the perfect restaurant. It is called [Ginger](#). It was my ideal restaurant. First of all,



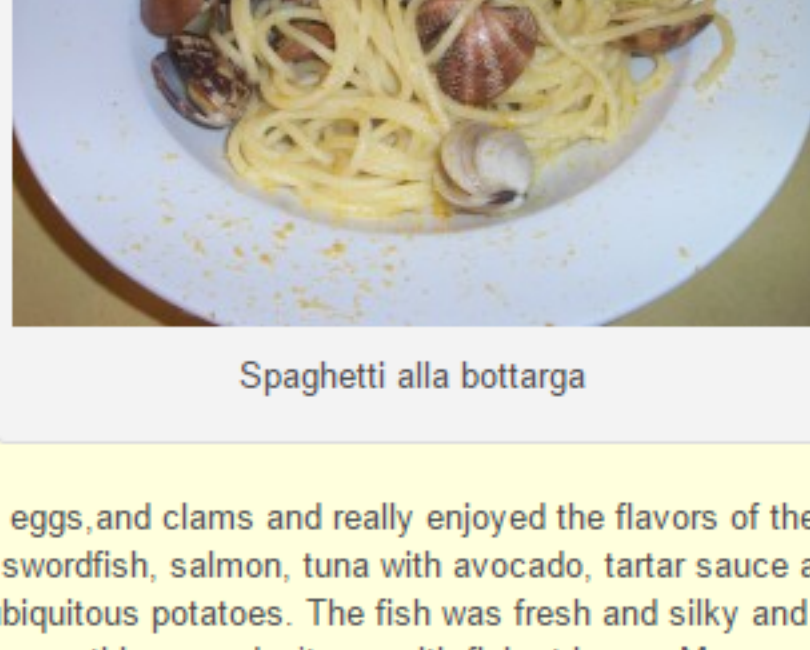
Tortellini

everything was organic. OMG. We have one organic restaurant in Buffalo. I am sure there are many others in Rome. It was also all locally sourced. Everything was creative with a fusion attitude. AND they had wonderful fruit smoothies. We had died and gone to heaven. I had an Alessio smoothie: passion fruit, apple, and strawberry. My daughter had a mojito passion cocktail (and I could have actually drunk this, it was so good): rum, lime, brown sugar, mint and

passion fruit. Delish. My son had a Caffè latte shake. The drinks came with a lovely little board of meats and cheeses that was lovely to

nibble on.

One of the specialties are these great sandwiches on super skinny mini-baguettes, so we had to try one of those: Lungarhetta (cured ham, figs, and arugula); I really love figs combined with savory elements! The baguette is made on the premises and was the perfect texture. I had the gnocchetti with red prawns, cherry tomatoes and basil (not a sauce: they were fresh) with shaved cheese on top. Husband had spaghetti



Spaghetti alla bottarga

alla bottarga with dried tunafish, eggs, and clams and really enjoyed the flavors of the fish. Daughter had carpaccio of swordfish, salmon, tuna with avocado, tatar sauce and sprout salad with a side of the ubiquitous potatoes. The fish was fresh and silky and complemented by the avocado, something you don't see with fish at home. My son had tortellini with meat and pecorino and then entrecote (steak) with potatoes and rosemary. The food was all fun, flirty and delicious.

We left Rome feeling well-fed and happy. Someday, when we are traveling without kids, I would love to go to Rome and seek out more hidden dining gems (and maybe I'll spring for one of the super-pricey spots!).



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