

## SPEAR'S

# These two Italian cookery schools will make your spaghetti sparkle

Josh Spero on culinary classes offered by Monteverdi in Tuscany and Stirred Travel in the Veneto



Pasta, like The Queen, knows every stratum of society. It can be rugged and frugal or sleek and spendy, dowsed in Dolmio or truffle oil, self-served on a windy Monday night or dished up by Jacob Kenedy on a Friday. However, I'm not sure even in an innocent raviolo's wildest dreams it ever expected quite so luxurious a setting as it has found at one of two new cooking academies in Italy.

Monteverdi Tuscany is a collection of villas, a hotel, restaurants and a gallery which sits with medieval fronts and modern pomp amid the village of Castiglioncello del Trinoro (pictured above and below). It has artistic pretensions, sure: it's named after a composer, and has offered residencies to luminaries like Sir John Eliot Gardiner and Wes Anderson. But it's also keen to conquer culinarily.

That's why it's now offering a five-day cooking academy in April and October. Executive chef Giancarla Bodoni, who has made her name with organic farm-to-table eating, will lead the programme, which includes daily classes on how to make regional pasta and cooking (but not catching) wild boar. There will also be excursions to notable restaurants, producers and wineries.



If you find your veritas in vino, you might prefer a six-day wine festival tour in February. There will be over 1,000 wines to taste, though if you fall down after five (like I would), that's valid too.

But if you're only trying five wines - or even if you try all thousand - the price may be too steep: €7,000 (£5,500) per person, or €10,000 for a couple. That's less true for Monteverdi's cooking academy, which is €8,500 per couple (roughly £3,300 a person).

An alternative cooking academy, which comes in at £2,495 per person, is offered by Stirred Travel in the Veneto (pictured below). Their courses run much more frequently - there are seven between May and October - and they also include classes, trips, tours and tastings, as well as the chance to plunge into Venice (not literally).



Stirred was founded by Sarah Roberts, who first set up a cookery school in Italy with Alastair Little twenty years ago, and Patrick Obert, an Italianophile repentant financier, and the courses are taken by one of three chefs: Sophie Baimbridge, Maxine Clark and Valli Little. Guests stay in the Villa Casagrande, part of a fifteenth-century estate near the foothills of the Dolomites.

Both programmes emphasise the seasonality of their food and the teaching of techniques which can be taken home and finessed (until your resolution fades and you're back to that booth at Cecconi's). And if you do keep them up, you'll even be able to rustle up something Italianesque for HM when she pops round.

[Monteverdi Tuscany](#)

[Stirred Travel](#)