

Italian food celebration pushes Covid off the menu

Lovers of Italian food and culture, who have been starved of their favourite restaurants or travel because of the pandemic restrictions, are getting a chance to sample and learn about the delights of Italy – without having to leave their homes.

Two celebration events to showcase the food of Sicily – including a rare opportunity for a select group of people to take part in a live cook-a-long with one of Italy's top chefs – have been planned as Scotland's contribution to the World Week of Italian Cuisine.

World Week of Italian Cuisine from 23 to 29 November, now in its fifth year, is an initiative started by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation to promote the country's high-quality cuisine around the world. It aims to boost food and wine tourism, particularly to regions little-known outside Italy, following the spirit of Pellegrino Artusi who 130 years ago published "La scienza in cucina e l'arte di mangiar bene" [Science in the Kitchen and the Art of Eating Well] which gathered and united the regional culinary traditions of the Bel Paese.

To mark the week, the Italian Consulate General, Italian Institute of Culture in Edinburgh and the Italian Chamber of

Commerce and Industry for the UK – in collaboration with Alma and Ambasciatori del Gusto – have organised events themed around how the Mediterranean diet can boost the body's immune system.

The opening event of the week (A Sicilian Dinner) will see an invited audience of food writers and bloggers take part in a Sicilian-food themed live cookery webinar from Italy with leading chef Carlo Maria Ricci, an ambassador with the acclaimed Italian ALMA cook school in Parma (La Scuola Internazionale di Cucina Italiana) – with the menu actually being delivered to their homes to allow them to sample the exact dishes.

Giovanna Eusebi and chef Sebastian Wereski from Eusebi Deli restaurant in Glasgow and Sabrina Damiani, who runs Edinburgh-based Damiani Sicilian Fine Dining, have been recruited to make the Chef Ricci's dishes before arranging for them to be delivered to each of the writer's home. They will be present on the webinar to answer any questions.

This event will also be screened live over the internet to allow as wide an audience as possible to watch the demonstration and pick up tips.

The closing event (Cooking in Sicily) – in partnership with Ambasciatori del Gusto (the Italian Association of Ambassadors of Taste – whose members focus on enhancing Italian food and wine heritage) will involve 30 people winning the chance to cook a specially designed menu in their own kitchens through a cookery demonstration beamed live from Sicily with leading chef Bonetta dell'Oglio.

The lucky home cooks will also have the chance to ask questions to Palermo-born Chef dell'Oglio who has won widespread praise for her innovative cooking which celebrates her Sicilian heritage and her passion for showcasing organic agriculture and the benefits of healthy eating. There will

also be a wine pairing presentation from Mariella Caputo from Ambasciatori del Gusto.

The participants will be judged on their dishes with the winner scooping a luxury Italian food hampers from sponsors Pastificio dei Campi and Berlucchi Wines. Details of how to enter the competition will be made available on social media channels of Italian Institute of Culture in Edinburgh and Italian Chamber of Commerce in Scotland.

The event will also be screened live over the internet to allow other Italian cooking enthusiasts to watch and make the menu.

Fabio Monaco, Consul General of Italy to Scotland and Northern Ireland, said: "While the Covid-19 restrictions have upset our usual planning for the World Week of Italian Cuisine, we wanted to ensure that people still had the chance to enjoy and celebrate the amazing food of Italy.

"We think we have brought some clever thinking to overcome the challenges to bring a taste and education of Italy once more – without anyone having to leave their homes.

"While travel to Italy remains complicated for now, we hope these events will continue to inspire people to learn more of our culture and those of our wide range of different territories – and better still to plan a visit when we can do so easily."

For more details on all the events:
https://iicedimburgo.esteri.it/iic_edimburgo/en/gli_eventi
www.italchamind.org.uk/archive/events