Italian food and wine tourism: the 2024 report unveils the Italy of flavors

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The 2024 Italian Food and Wine Tourism Report by Roberta Garibaldi reveals a booming sector worth over €40 billion. Driven by authenticity, rural destinations, and immersive experiences, it reflects strong growth and a clear opportunity for Italy. The report calls for more strategic, integrated, and sustainable approaches to maximize this potential.

The 7th edition of the Italian Food and Wine Tourism Report, presented in Parma and curated by Roberta Garibaldi with AITE, outlines a sector increasingly strategic for Italy's economic, social, and cultural development. It emphasizes actions needed to turn this tourism into a driver of sustainable growth, especially by enhancing rural areas and small villages.

A growing sector

According to the report, 70% of Italians took at least one vacation in the past three years primarily motivated by food, wine, or olive oil. This marks a 12% increase from 2023 and includes more than 14.5 million tourists, 64% of whom chose domestic destinations. The growing interest in authentic, cultural, and nature-connected experiences drives this trend.

The diversification of offerings has been key, with destinations providing innovative experiences like vineyard tastings, cooking classes with local chefs, and thematic itineraries.

Trends and destinations

Rural destinations and small villages are gaining popularity for their tranquility and authenticity. 93% of Italian tourists intend to visit such places in the next 12 months. Tuscany, Umbria, and Emilia-Romagna are top choices, with Tuscany leading thanks to its unique blend of landscape, culture, and food and wine traditions.

Italy's inland small towns—home to 93% of DOP and IGP products—are an extraordinary asset. These places promote sustainability and slow travel, with tourists increasingly using trains and avoiding peak season periods.

Scenic beauty, cultural richness, and authentic food and wine offerings are key decision drivers. The rise of the "Joy of Missing Out" (JOMO) mindset reflects a desire to unplug from digital life and reconnect with human experiences.

Multisensory experiences

Tourists are increasingly drawn to immersive and multisensory experiences. Since 2021, there has been notable growth in oil-themed (+37.1%), beer (+13.2%), and cheese (+7.3%)

experiences.

There is still unmet demand for gourmet dinners and visits to chocolate factories, revealing a need to further innovate traditional formats by integrating wellness, culture, and gastronomy.

Visits to taste museums and thematic routes are also increasing, showing the sector's potential to evolve in line with market demands.

The restaurant as a territory ambassador

40% of Italian hotels now have in-house restaurants, turning them into true local ambassadors. The focus on zero-kilometer ingredients and eco-friendly practices strengthens the link between hospitality and local traditions.

More hotels are including tastings, production site visits, and cooking classes in their packages, increasing loyalty and reinforcing their brand through local product gifts and experiences.

The role of social media

Social media are increasingly influencing travel choices, especially among younger generations. 74.7% of Italian tourists look for authentic local experiences, while 25% say they are inspired by food and wine-themed TV shows.

Gen Z favors TikTok and Instagram, proving the importance of targeting the right platform for each demographic.

Economic impact

Food and wine tourism contributed over €40 billion to Italy's GDP in 2023, including €9.2 billion direct, €17.2 billion indirect, and €13.7 billion in induced value. The cost-benefit ratio is 6.9, with significant impacts on employment and

income distribution.

The sector also helps preserve local traditions, products, and rural landscapes, but still holds untapped potential. A strategic, integrated approach involving institutions, operators, and communities is essential.

Italy can become a global leader in food and wine tourism by investing in innovation, sustainability, and public-private collaboration—ensuring harmonious growth and enhancing local identities.

Key points

1. **70% of Italians traveled for food and wine** in the last 3 years.
2. **Rural destinations and small towns** are top travel choices.
3. **Tourists prefer immersive and multisensory food** experiences.
4. **Social media plays a crucial role** in travel decisions.
5. **Food and wine tourism generates €40 billion for the economy**.