



Live the Italian dolce vita

Milan is the fashion epicenter of Italy, from Armani to Zegna, but no design house embodies edgy Milanese street style quite like **Costume National** (160 Mercer St between W Houston and Prince Sts; 212-431-1530, costumenational.com), whose leather pants and close-cut silhouettes scream: "I'm a badass who rides my Vespa in six-inch heels!" Such items are investment pieces, to be sure (tops start at \$297 and dresses begin at \$413), but unlike most stores in Italy, the label's first stateside boutique hosts occasional sales.

Get a whiff of Old European charm when you step through the ornate iron doors of **Santa Maria Novella** (285 Lafayette St between E Houston and Prince Sts; 212-925-0001, lafcony.com). The centuries-old beauty company was founded in Florence by Dominican friars and continues to sell time-tested items like olive oil soap (\$22) and skin-toning orange blossom water (\$28).

Hobnob with expats at the free monthly parties thrown by **Made in Italy NYC** (madeinitalynyc.com; [sign up online](http://sign-up-online)). The group's events are sponsored by brands like Peroni, and often feature Italian DJs. "We're bringing a new vision of Italy to New York," says cofounder and Rome native Francesco Mo. "Not the Mulberry Street Italy, but a modern one. It's not spaghetti and meatballs—it's a lot more than that."

EAT LIKE AN ITALIAN

As delicious as American ice cream is, you'll think you've been eating perforated cardboard after you get a lick of true **Italian gelato**. Though poorly executed imitations abound, the most authentic scoops we've tasted this side of the Atlantic come from **Grom** (233 Bleecker St at Carmine St; 212-206-1738, grom.it • 2165 Broadway at 76th St, 212-362-1837), a chain based in Turin. Order a cone of nutty *nocciola* (\$5.25), made with *tonda gentile* hazelnuts from Piedmont, then *fare una passeggiata* (take a stroll) as you devour your rich, creamy treat. When Italian bakers Simone Bertini, Camilla



Clockwise: Made in Italy NYC, Rustico Cooking, I Trulli's Dora Marzovilla, cantucci at Il Cantuccio

Battri and Lorenzo Palombo opened **Il Cantuccio** (91 Christopher St at Bleecker St; 212-647-8787, ilcantuccionyc.com) in April, they introduced New Yorkers to *cantucci*, the soft, anise-flavored biscuits typical to their native city of Prato. The biscuits are traditionally served with a glass of *vin santo* for dipping, but until the café gets its liquor license, you'll have to dunk the chocolate-, apricot- and prune-filled pastries (\$29.90/lb) in a *caffè latte* (\$3).

INSIDE INFO
Next time you want to tell someone off without cursing, exclaim, "Va fa un brodo!" It means "Go make a soup," but serves as a fine substitute for "Eff off."

New York certainly has no shortage of red-sauce joints, but for superior Puglian cuisine, **I Trulli** (122 E 27th St between Park and Lexington Aves; 212-481-7372, itrulli.com) is pretty much the only game in town. You won't want to miss any of the pastas handmade daily by mama Dora Marzovilla (we drool for the *orecchiette* in rabbit *ragù*, \$24), nor the 450-strong all-Italian wine list.

"The most authentic area that still retains its Italian identity is Arthur Avenue in the Bronx," says Louis Calvelli, executive director of Casa Belvedere (casabelvedere.org), an Italian cultural foundation slated to open in September 2011. "You go from one specialty shop to the other, whether it's Casa della Mozzarella for cheese, Borgatti's

for pasta—everybody has their little traditions." Among Calvelli's rituals: hitting family-run **Madonia Brothers Bakery** (2348 Arthur Ave between Crescent Ave and 186th St, 718-295-5573) for a loaf of olive-studded bread (\$5) and picking up the occasional rabbit from **Vincent's Meat Market** (2374 Arthur Ave between 186th and 187th Sts, 718-295-9048), the same butcher that his grandfather once frequented.

BE CULTURED LIKE AN ITALIAN

Italy has produced some world-class directors (Federico Fellini) and actors (Totò); watch the next wave during the Film Society of Lincoln Center's **Open Roads: New Italian Cinema** (Walter Reade Theater, 165 W 65th St between Amsterdam Ave and Broadway; 212-875-5600, filminc.com; Thu 3–June 10; \$6–\$12). The festival's bill features three flicks nominated for Best Film at the David di Donatello Awards (the Italian Oscars), including *Cinema Paradiso* director Giuseppe Tornatore's *Baaria* (Mon 7 at 8pm), an epic tale about three generations living in Tornatore's hometown of Bagheria in Sicily.

Gather some *amici* (friends) for **Parla Come Mangi** (by request; \$65), an informal conversation class held over a three-course meal at mod eatery Alloro (307 E 77th St between First and Second Aves; 212-535-2866, alloronyc.com). An instructor from language school **Collina Italiana** (135 96th St between Park and Lexington Aves; 212-427-7770, collinaitaliana.com) facilitates discussions on everything from travel and fashion to art and current affairs.

For those who don't have a *nonna* to teach them how to roll homemade *gnocchi*, there are the pasta workshops at **Rustico Cooking** (40 W 39th St between Fifth and Sixth Aves, third floor; 917-602-1519, rusticocooking.com). The next class takes place June 26 (noon; \$95), but making *cavatelli* from scratch isn't the school's only focus: Rustico's "Ten Best Pasta Sauces" crash course (June 11 at 6pm; \$110) is the quickest to sell out. "The low-carb fad is definitely over!" says Milan-born owner Micol Negrin. "People love pasta."—Cristina Velocci

