

Mediterranean Ways

Final Portfolio



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Living the Mediterranean Life

Like most students and professionals on our exploration of Florence, I was excited to immerse myself in the Italian culture and live the Mediterranean diet while in Italy.

The first morning I got a taste of the Italian diet when I went down to breakfast. I



usually have cereal and water in the morning and was overwhelmed by the amount of pastries, meats, fruits, and cheeses offered by Hotel Celli. I had learned from my readings that a typical Italian breakfast was usually simple, a pastry and fruit, with espresso. Each morning I tried a different combination of fruit and a pastry with a cappuccino. I tried an espresso my first morning, but it was too strong for me. I enjoyed the close tables at breakfast because Taylor and I usually

ended up near other members of our group so we could easily talk to them, which helped turn breakfast into a social meal.

Lunch food choices were varied. On days where we had a lot of time we would go to a sit down restaurant and have a larger meal. When we only had a short time we would grab quick food like pizza from Pugi or go straight for dessert and get Grom gelato. We used the longer restaurant meals to



experience “eating like an Italian”. We would usually make it the biggest meal of the day and have both primo and secondo with red wine. We would eat slowly and talk, which was easy since we were all working on getting to know each other. I tried to order something new that fit into the Mediterranean diet. I would usually have pasta first. Most restaurants had a wide range of sauces to pick from. My favorites were olive oil with Parmesan and pesto sauce. Most pasta dishes I had seemed to have a lot of garlic and herbs in them too for seasoning. They had a lot of pasta dishes that included nuts so those were easy to check off my pyramid every day. I had a hard time finding dishes that contained beans or legumes while I was in Italy. This surprised me since the pyramid had them at the base and most of our readings talked about the important role they played in the Mediterranean diet. My second course always contained a meat and a vegetable side. I had a hard time finding seafood in Florence, but I was able to have fish in Rome and mussels in Cinque Terra. Since seafood was difficult to find I usually had chicken or some type of cured meat. The chicken was always baked and seasoned and came with either a side salad or sautéed vegetables. Cured meats tended to come as a build your own bruschetta. I enjoyed the long lunches because it was nice to relax after all our walking and get to talk to our other group members. I especially liked our tastings during field



trips and Ganzo meals because we all got to sit at long tables and converse about what we were learning.

When we weren't eating as a group, dinner usually small because we either ate on our excursions, ate in our cooking classes, or we had a large lunch. We would find a place where we could take away food and eat on a curb looking at the people and sites. This is where I got most of my fruit for the day. I would get a few pieces of fruit and cheeses and enjoy eating them while we observed the city. If we did have a large meal at dinner I tried to eat the same way as lunch with two smaller portioned courses and red wine.



One part of the pyramid that I did not follow while in Italy was the top part that says "sweets in moderation". We had gelato almost every day, but it was always a social activity. It was a fun treat after a long day of walking and learning or a refreshing stop on a hot day. I knew that I would not get gelato as good as in Italy in the states so I took every opportunity to enjoy it while I was there.

It was very easy to meet the physical exercise part of the pyramid while on our trip. When we were not on an excursion or in class Taylor, Allison, and I wandered the streets to past time and take pictures. I was happy that they did not seem to want to stop exploring until we were too exhausted and had to sit down. In Rome we bypassed subways so we could see everything on foot and

experience the whole city. Cities like Rome and Florence are compact enough that walking anywhere is not a daunting or dangerous task. In my hometown, Grapevine Texas, I cannot walk anywhere because my neighborhood is off a highway with no crosswalks. There are few roads where cars can drive and not many cars are allowed into Florence so walking down the wide streets is usually easy, minus the bikers that we would have to dodge every once and a while. Even walking to the Piazzale Michelangelo, which was on the edge of Florence, was an easy half hour walk. Parking plays a key role in preventing people from driving. There is very limited space and like most U.S cities parking, and gas, is expensive. My favorite day was getting to hike in Cinque Terra. It was a beautiful place, but I really enjoyed seeing the Italians using their weekend to be



active and explore their country. I do not think Americans do that enough. I live about three hours from Austin, yet I think I have been three times in my whole life. Italians are lucky to have great countrywide transportation so they do not have to spend money on gas to travel to far away places.

This accessibility promotes an active lifestyle and makes physical activity fun and easy.

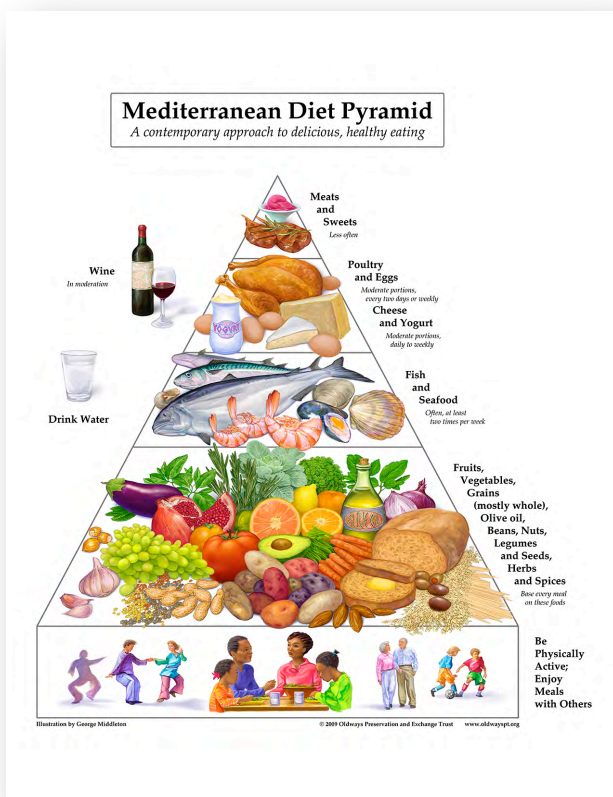
Overall I found the foods and lifestyle outlined by the old ways Mediterranean Diet refreshing. All the fresh food and clean cooking methods kept me going through the long days. Getting to talk and relax while eating was a nice change too. I think it was a

good way for us to unwind either in the middle of the day or at night. It also helped us expand and discuss what we were learning in our classes at FUA and compare them to our own experiences. Hearing different points of view and ideas helped solidify what we learned and broadened our perspectives on the topics.

Pyramid vs. Plate

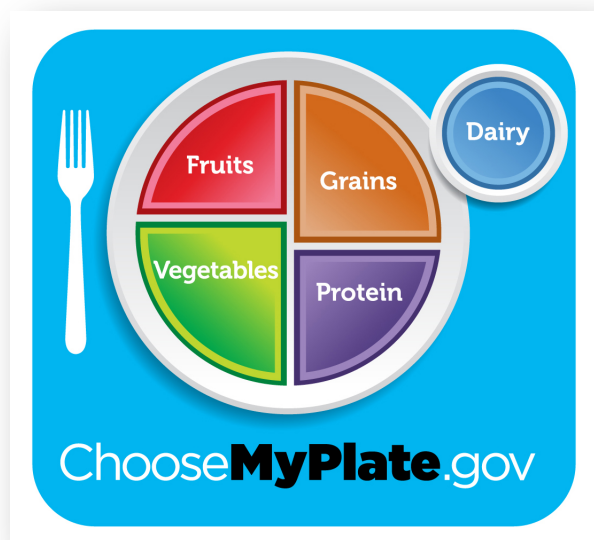
When I first saw the visual aid for the Mediterranean diet pyramid it reminded me of the food pyramid I grew up learning in elementary school. Especially after we toured the school and saw the Mediterranean diet pyramid posted in the dining area I thought about the MyPlate posters I have seen on campus and in our public schools. MyPlate was introduced my freshman year of college and I learned about it in my entry nutrition

course. While visually I think it is easier to understand portion sizes the overall visual lacks description. When viewing the Mediterranean diet pyramid the foods are clearly pictured on each tier. I think this is easier for the viewer to understand what foods should be consumed. We did an exercise my freshman year to recognize the pros and cons of MyPlate. My professor put the



picture of the plate on the screen and told us to write down a meal that would fit the plates approximate serving sizes and food groups. The answers varied from salads to ice cream. Usually when I see MyPlate posted in an eating facility, they will only post the picture MyPlate with out the detailed guidelines explained online and in their brochures.

The first difference that I notice between the two recommendations is the grains.



The Mediterranean Pyramid places grains in the same serving size category as fruits and vegetables. MyPlate shows that fruits and vegetables take up half a plate while grains only take up a little over a fourth. Also the Mediterranean Pyramid does not differentiate serving sizes between fruits and vegetables like MyPlate does by emphasizing that

vegetables should be eaten more than fruits. Both guidelines note that the grains should be whole grains when possible.

Another key difference is the presence of olive oil on the Mediterranean pyramid. Fats are not pictured on MyPlate at all. After exploring MyPlate's website I did find that they have a tab discussing and listing oils, but olive oil is not singled out like the pyramid. MyPlate puts solid fats and oils in one category and seems to focus on oils in foods like nuts, salad dressings, and fish. MyPlate does not describe or suggest which oils are better to consume than others. Other foods shown in the bottom tier that are

not specified on MyPlate are nuts, legumes, and spices. When looking up these foods on MyPlate.gov, I found nuts, beans, and seeds under the “protein” category along with meats, poultry, and seafood. The Mediterranean pyramid separates each of these proteins into different tiers according to how many times a week they should be eaten while MyPlate just shows that a protein should be consumed each meal. The Mediterranean pyramid says that seafood should be consumed “often/two times a week”, Poultry and eggs “every two days or weekly”, and meats should be eaten “less often”. MyPlate’s website specifies that eight ounces of seafood should be eaten every week and that meats should be low fat or lean cuts, but this is not shown on their visual aid. I also found it interesting that sweets and meats were placed together at the top of the pyramid. I think it was a good way to show that meats are a “treat” that should be consumed infrequently. MyPlate does not show sweets on its diagram and are listed as “Empty calories” on their website. Empty calorie foods included whole milk, sugared cereals, regular ground beef, cheese, and desserts like ice cream and cakes.

Another large element that the Mediterranean pyramid includes that MyPlate does not is physical exercise and how to eat meals. The pyramid says “Enjoy Meals with Others” which is a key part of the Mediterranean diet culture. Physical activity was part of the U.S’s MyPyramid, but is not emphasized on MyPlate. I think this is a big flaw. Even the posters that have descriptions of food groups and details about MyPlate on them do not mention daily physical activity. I did notice that MyPlate.gov has a large portion of its website devoted to physical activity, but I think it should be included on their main symbol. I could not find any mention about “social eating” on MyPlate.gov. I agree with the Mediterranean diet pyramid that enjoying meals with others is essential. Talking

with others during a meal helps an individual from eating too fast and I believe it can help improve mental health. I always feel happier and more relaxed when enjoying a meal with family and friends than I do eating a quick meal alone between activities.

The last big difference, and my biggest surprise, between the two is the inclusion of wine and water on the Mediterranean diet pyramid. While water seems like an obvious thing to consume regularly, I have always been surprised that it is not emphasized on the U.S MyPlate image. Water is not

even listed under the MyPlate food groups, it is mentioned under the “weight Management” tab is a replacement for sugary drinks, but it is not emphasized. After extensively searching MyPlate.gov I found a small blurb saying that “All alcohol should be consumed in moderation”. They did not specify what kind of alcohol or the amount allowed per gender. The Mediterranean diet pyramid is specific and shows only red wine in moderation

and its guidelines explain that 1 glass per day for women and 2 glasses per day for men is acceptable. With research showing that red wine might help heart disease I think it should be at least be discussed or mentioned on the MyPlate.gov website.



Over all I think that the U.S.'s MyPlate image is too simplified. Most of the public does not go on to the MyPlate.gov website to learn the specifics of what they should be consuming. The clearly illustrated foods and how many times a week they should be consumed is much easier for the general public to understand and follow. When comparing the actually written guidelines proposed by both "diets" I think that it is up to the individual for which they want to follow. I think either is a good outline for a healthy diet, but I think the Mediterranean pyramids clear separation of types of proteins and how much they should be consumed is a better guideline than the single protein category and serving size shown on MyPlate.

Hard to Follow?

To see how hard it would be to follow the Mediterranean diet in the United States I decided to spend one week following the guidelines when I returned to my apartment in Kansas. My original plan was to try to have a social meal once every other day (4 or 5 meals), seafood three times, poultry once, and meat once. Other meals would be made up of old grain or whole wheat pasta, fruits, vegetables, and one meal a day containing olive oil and beans. I did not feel I needed to change my physical activity because I already try to be active at least 30 minutes a day.

My first barrier was finding people to eat with. This experiment took place the first week of July so most of my friends were either out of town with their families for the fourth of July or had left our college town for the summer. I ended up only have 3 meals with friends, one lunch and two dinners. The other problem I



encountered was my friends wanted to eat out if we were getting together. For lunch we went to a place where I could stay with the Mediterranean diet by ordering a whole grain pasta with olive oil and cheese with a side salad. I cooked one dinner for my friends so that they could experience the foods I had made and tasted in Italy. The third dinner we went to Chinese place so that meal was varied from the rest from the week.

Another thing I noticed was how expensive it was to eat like this for a week. Generally I try to eat in season fruits and vegetables so those were easily affordable, but the seafood, cheeses, and extra virgin olive oil were pricier. I think if I were going try and keep this lifestyle I would have to have less seafood and more chicken to make it more affordable. Unlike the seafood markets in Italy, Kansas is not close to any major body of water so good seafood it harder to find and higher priced that other proteins.

I ended having to stop eating beans once a day because they would give me horrible stomach aches. I also could not have a glass of wine with any of my meals because I did not turn 21 until July twelfth.

Overall I think that in certain areas of the United States it would be easier to follow this diet than in Kansas. Near the coast seafood would be easier to purchase and in the areas that produce fruits and vegetables the seasonal selection would be wider. Kansas produces a lot of grains and wheat so wheat breads and pastas are easy to find and usually reasonably priced. Italy is fortunate to have many climates to be able to produce a wide variety of foods in a small area. The United States has the same climates, but the areas are spread out making it hard to deliver fresh foods to all parts of the country.



I enjoyed my week of trying to live by the Mediterranean diet and lifestyle guidelines even though it was more difficult than I had first imagined. I hope to repeat this experiment when school is in session so I can have more social meals, try a glass of wine per day, and see how easy or hard it is to stick to the guidelines when my schedule is busy.

Why We Eat What We Eat

Everybody needs to eat, but what and how much we eat varies from person to person around the globe. Three things usually dictate what you eat: the time of year, where you live, and your food preferences. Imagine trying to serve watermelon in January or pumpkin pie in June, it doesn't seem right. It doesn't matter what diet or health guidelines you follow, your diet will change year round.

Eating Seasonally is not only good for nutritionally it can save you money. While most foods are available year round due to importing and modern grocery stores it is good to be aware of what produce and fish are “in season”. Imported foods have traveled many miles, which can cause them to lose some nutritional value, their flavor will not be as good, and the price will be higher. Foods that are in season tend to be cheaper, fresher, and tastier because they were picked at the correct time in its life cycle. Another thing that seasonality can effect is physical activity. It can be harder in the winter to get out and moving or drive to a gym than it is in the spring and summer months.

Location I think is the biggest factor in food choice. Even if you eat in season you may not be able to get a food that’s in season simply because you do not live near an area that produces it. For example, Kansas and other central state have a hard time getting reasonably



priced fresh seafood. Also the culture in your area can dictate what you eat. The U.S. is lucky that many areas have access to a wide variety of restaurants. Walking around Italy it was hard to find different types of restaurants. There were common fast food places like McDonalds and I saw a few Asian and Indian places, but the vast majority were Italian restaurants. Even in the U.S. though we have different types of foods and cooking styles that are more common in certain areas. In Texas we tend to eat a lot of

Tex-Mex and steak while in Kansas there is a lot of Barbeque. The two coasts are known for their seafood while the central U.S is known for its breads and meats. The best way to get low priced, high quality food is to know what your area grows and what time of year is best to buy.

Moderation is something that mostly individuals control themselves, but it can also be influenced by their surroundings. We witnessed moderation being taught at a young age when each kids plate was pre-portioned at the school. Growing up in school I could go through the line as many times as I wanted and get as much food as I wanted which



usually caused over eating or food waste. Most restaurants I visited in Italy had reasonable portions or smaller portions so you could have both a primo and secondo course. Americans expect a lot of food for their money so most restaurants create extra large portions. I strongly believe that all foods can be incorporated into a diet as long as its in moderation, but it is hard to retrain the brain to think it's full when the body is accustom to oversized meals. That was a

big problem I struggled with when I started to change my eating habits. I think the U.S is working to combat our large portions with MyPlate's pictured serving sizes, which I

think can be effective at home, but I have not seen any major changes in our restaurants.

Changing My Ways and Our Grains

The biggest change I have made to my lifestyle after returning home from Italy is how I eat. As a kid I use to eat moderately fast, but as I got older and my schedule became busier I turned into an extremely fast eater. It was not uncommon for me to finish my meal before others were only half way done. I would use my time to cook a good meal, but I would eat it quickly so I could move on to the next task. I have lived in my apartment alone for two years so eating alone was never anything I really thought about. It was not until we started discussing the value of social eating in our classes and learning about its role in Italian culture did I start to realize I did not like eating alone. I practiced eating slower at group meals and at breakfast each morning. Taylor helped me because she was a slow eater so I would try and mimic when she would take rests. I started to get better the more I practiced. I made it my goal when I was home in Texas to be the last person eating at the table during family meals. It helped me focus on slowing down and promoted me to talk more. When I started to slow down and focus on my food, I realized how much I was missing. Dishes I have been making for years had flavors I hadn't noticed before, some good and some bad. I have also started asking friends over for meals or going out with a couple once a week. When I eat with others I eat slower because I talk more. I feel more relaxed and happy when we finish than I do when I finish a solo meal. I realized I was becoming a person who let relationships fail mostly because I put school before them. We discussed this at one of our group lunches in Florence and I realized that I needed to learn to balance my school work and my



friends if I really wanted to have a fulfilling life. My friends also enjoy seeing me more and have commented many times that they enjoy the everyone getting together as well.

Another change I am trying to implement slowly is eating more

seafood. I did not like it growing up so I haven't tried a wide variety. I have been making a new seafood dish once a week with a different type of fish or crustacean to learn how it should be prepared and if I like the taste. I have learned I like most crustaceans, mussels, clams, and salmon. It has been harder to do this than eating slowly because it is hard to find decent seafood in Kansas. Also most of the fish is expensive so I cannot afford to eat it more than once a week. I am hoping as I grow older I will become more accustom to eating fish so that it becomes a regular part of my diet. In addition, just started having a glass of red wine with dinner once a week since I just turned twenty-one and received a few bottles for my birthday. I am not sure if I will continue to consume this much red wine once my bottles run out.

It has been pretty easy to change my own ways, but it's going to be an uphill road to do the research to see if old grains could really help those with gluten intolerance. Many of my agronomy and agriculture friends have been talking about ancient/old grains a lot in the past year so I was interested to hear what the FUA professors would have to say about them. The research seemed to match what my friends had been saying. The



gluten produced by the old grains could be safe for slightly gluten intolerant people. Many people had been saying that it was safe for individuals with Celiac disease, but that did not make sense to me because the old grains still contained gluten. I was glad that the research clarified that the grains were not safe for individuals with celiac.

I have been skeptical of this information since it came out. While the research we saw in Italy concluded that individuals who were gluten intolerant

felt okay after eating the grains, I still feel like more research needs to be done before a movement is started to switch everything to ancient grains. One theory that Massimo talked about that I had not thought about was that we are eating grains from all over the world. Our bodies are not use to consuming these different types of grains, which is what may have started the increase in intolerances. While I could not find much research on this theory, I thought it was a unique idea.

I found an experiment published in the Scientific World Journal in January 2012. The researcher M. Stella Colomba and Armando Greorini proposed that “ancient grains might show lower immunogenic properties” which could be consumed by “gluten sensitive people, including celiac patients”. The researchers found that all the grains

had a recorded at least some immune reaction and could not confirm that the ancient wheat was less toxic. They recommended that both gluten sensitive and people with celiac disease should not consume this type of ancient grain. This article used a different ancient grain than the Italian research, which may explain the different outcome.

My stance is still the same as before. I will be eager to see what future research says. I am not sold that this is a solution, but I do not have enough information to disclaim it either. This course has help me understand the difference between celiac and gluten intolerance. It also confirmed my feelings that many people who are on gluten-free diets do not need to be. I hope this trend ends soon so that the general public can understand those individual with celiac disease better. I have a friend who has been diagnosed with celiac disease and she hates having to ask gluten-free questions because they assume she is just on a trend diet.

Lets Take a Walk!

I have been consciously recording my steps for almost three years so I was excited to do the pedometer log. During the school year I aim to get 10,000 steps a day minimum and during the summer I try for 15,000 a day. I was fortunate that my log shows three very different environments and how they affected my physical activity. The first week, Sunday May 4th though Saturday May 10th, was a good representation of movement during an average school week. Most of my steps occurred while moving from class to class, working out, and teaching boxing. I do not typically do a lot of cardio workouts during the week since my gym only has weights and boxing bags. May 10th showed a typical Saturday where I would do a morning cardio work out then study

most of the day. The following week, I had final exams. Normally this would have been a low step count week due to studying, but Kansas had beautiful weather so I walked to a



nearby park most days to study.

The days leading up to the trip I spent most of my time shopping and packing so I did not gain as many steps as the first two weeks.

Once I got to Italy my step average almost doubled. The lowest number I recorded the

entire trip was 8,437 steps. On that day we spent most of the time on the bus driving to Parma and Modena. In Italy it was easy to achieve 10,000 steps. There was a lot to do and see and it is all accessible by foot. The lay out and compact design of Florence makes walking the easiest mode of transportation. The best part of wearing a pedometer in Italy was looking at it through out the day and setting goals to see if I could beat the previous days steps. Even students like Taylor and Allison would get excited and we would take an extra long way back to the hotel just to gain more steps. We were very excited when we returned home from Rome because I had achieved more steps then my pedometer had ever recorded since I bought it a few years ago. I think that turning my step count into a game encouraged us to move and see more while we were in Italy.

The last three weeks on my log were spent at home in Texas. I do not live in a walkable area and the purpose of being home was to relax and spend time with family and friends. It was a good time to recover from a stressful semester and preparing to return to work and classes in July. This section of my log is representative of my time before moving to college and adopting a more active lifestyle. When I returned to Kansas on July 1st my step count jumped back up to 10,000-15,000 steps a day. I plan to keep it there the rest of the summer.

While I do admit that Florence, like many European Cities, is built for walking I would be curious to see how many steps an average Florentine citizen walks. We were fortunate to be touring places and had the freedom to explore most afternoons. I know, from experience with my dad working in New York, that he does not walk as much as my mom and I do when we are there on vacation there because he spends most his day at a desk. I am positive that a majority would achieve more steps than many Americans, but I do not think that it would be quite as high as the numbers I recorded while in Italy.

A New Experience Around Every Corner

One of the most beneficial parts of the trip was seeing multiple parts of Italy. Every excursion and city had its own unique twist and experience. Overall I was surprised by how kind most of the Italians were and how interested they in our trip. In many shops and restaurants people asked how our trip was going and if we were enjoying the city. Even in tourist cities like New York, shop owners and waiters tend to avoid conversations and stay out of everyone's business. I enjoyed being asked questions and learning new things from the locals. My favorite experience were the two young waiters



that served us on top of the convenience store over looking the Duomo. They helped us learn how to order in and ask easy questions Italian. They could have easily gave us our drinks and left us alone, but they kept coming back if we had questions about the city or how to say a word.

Pienza and Montepulciano were interesting because of their remote locations. Each had unique a history and layout. They were very different from any of the other

locations we saw. The aging process of pecorino in also was fascinating to me. I had seen cheese with rinds and wax coatings, but the straw and ash covering was new to me. I was excited that they had the ash in a specialty store near my house in Texas so I could have my parents try it. The winery was probably the excursion that shocked me the most on the trip. I have been to a few Napa Valley wineries and so I thought I knew what to expect. I was blow away by the engineering and clever use of their surroundings to make their winery sustainable. The mirror light shafts were so unique that I had a hard time explaining them to people back home. The wine was not my

favorite in taste, but the meal was excellent and the views were incredible.

Visiting Pastificio Fabbri in Chianti was probably the most educational



excursion for me. I had never seen gluten after everything else had been washed away. It was a great way to show us the product we had been discussing in our lessons. I had known about old grains from some of my agriculture friends in Kansas, but hearing about how large businesses make pasta versus the slow old method he uses was eye opening. It is probably the thing I share with most people who asked me about what I learned on the trip, but cause its something that everyone can understand at a basic level. Seeing the Extra Virgin Olive Oil production was also a personal thrill. I am huge fan of olive oil and tasting oils to experience the different flavors. I had done tastings,



but never see how it's made. I thought it would take up multiple rooms and use lots of machines. It surprised me it only took five machines that were all in one room.

Biking around the wall of Lucca was a fun experience and a great way to see how the walls limited car access to the city. Unfortunately biking took up most of our time in the city so we did not get a chance to walk around. I could tell by the little walking we did do though that cars would not fit down most of the roads and

bicycles were parked in every available spot. I was happy we went to the leaning tower of Pizza just because we were so close and it would have been unfortunate to go home without seeing it. I was not as impressed with it as I thought I would be. I thought the



town around it would be more historic and interesting, but it was so crowded with tourists that it was hard to see the surrounding buildings.

Parma reminded me of Kansas because of the amount of animals and agriculture I saw in the surrounding areas. I was interested

the Parmigiano-Reggiano because it was a food I grew up eating, but I had no idea how it went from milk to hard cheese. Unfortunately, I ended up in the back while the woman explained the process so I could not hear very well, but the pamphlet I picked up at the end was detailed so I now understand the process. Seeing the how they kept their cows was interesting for me, and my agriculture friends were excited to see those pictures when I returned home. The specialized calf cages were like nothing I had ever see on a farm. I appreciated the prosciutto producer's enthusiasm about his product. Seeing how long it takes to prepare a leg helped me understand why it is so pricy in the United States. Their group meal was one of my favorites because we got to try prosciutto with different foods to experience their flavor combinations. This was beneficial to me because I had not had prosciutto growing up and I would not know what to pair it with. I was amazed at the simplicity of making balsamic vinegar. Like Parmesan and olive oil, balsamic has always been a staple food in my house. When we pulled up to the house and walked in I was confused. I thought that there would be

machines like the olive oil producers and special temperatures to regulate the barrels. Learning about the specialized antique barrels and how each family uses the wood to create their own flavor of balsamic was mesmerizing. The amount of time it takes to make one bottle of Traditional Balsamic gave me new respect for the product and changed how I perceive it on foods. I use to just see it as an extra flavor enhancer, but now I understand that it is an ingredient to be respected and used to enhance a dish.

All of our side trips gave me new incites to the Italian culture and the care they take in crafting their products. Every producer spoke with pride and passion about their product, which kept us captivated and helped us understand the underlying value of each food.



Bringing it all Home

When I first heard about this study abroad experience I was drawn to it because of the topics we would be focusing on. A lot of study abroad opportunities I had researched seemed focused on learning about a culture and their food only. I was excited to see gluten intolerance would also be a main topic along side the Mediterranean diet because I felt as a dietetics student I was drastically under informed on the topic. Gluten free and Celiac disease has yet to be covered in depth in any of my classes, though I know that it will be covered in the classes I am taking this up coming semester. With it being such a large topic and trend in the United State I was curious if it had spread world wide and how Italy, with a large pasta and bread based diet, was dealing with celiac and gluten intolerance. I was drawn to the Mediterranean diet and the cooking courses because my favorite part of traveling has always been trying new foods and trying to recreate them at home. When I joined Dietetics I knew that my focus would be on public health nutrition and food service because that's where my passion lies. Gluten Intolerance is a popular topic in public health nutrition. Now I will be able to talk intelligently about celiac and gluten with people how have questions. I will also be able to move forward and learn more about ways to help those with celiac and current methods being researched to help combat it. I look forward to using the recipes and knowledge about the Mediterranean diet and lifestyle for myself and sharing it with friends and classmates. I learned in





Food Production Management last semester how helpful it is to know about the background of various foods, how it should be prepared, and how it should taste so that customers get exactly what they are expecting. Also seeing the schools food production system gave me a new insight on how

things could be done in our own schools. It's hard to picture new ways to help improve our school systems when the only systems I have studied are the ones already in place.

The biggest change in perspective for me while I was in Italy was the value of eating slowly and eating with people. I had been to Europe before and had experienced waiting a long time for the check and usually felt annoyed. I have always been a fast eater, but now that I am back home I have worked hard to slow down and enjoy each meal even if it a small one. I made my family eat at the dinner table every night so they could learn to eat slow and use the time to talk and unwind. I have been working to eat more meals with people, but I live alone in my apartment and most of my college friends are out of town. My goal is to try and work on having a group meal at least twice a week once the school year starts. I also want one of those meals to be a long social meal so we can relieve stress and be closer as friends.

This experience was more than I could've hoped for. I made new friends, networked with professionals, learned useful information for my career, and got to do it all in a

beautiful country. Everything was fun and educational at the same time. I enjoyed getting try all the different foods and experience a different lifestyle than the one I grew up with. If someone told me I could go back and do it all again I would be packed and ready to leave in a heartbeat.





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