



# Il Pennato

Spannocchia Internship Program

Volume 8, Issue III

## DAYS OF GOLD

By Bronwen Hanna-Korpi  
Education Director



One day this fall when we were headed out to pick some corn or maybe it was harvest some olives although it could have been grapes, our farm manager Riccio said one of the most perfect sentences I've heard since I've been at Spannocchia. I can't do the moment justice on this page but it was something about these days being the days of gold...these were the days that we worked all year for. This sentiment captures fall on the farm beautifully. Nine months of work by

farm staff, interns and volunteers all leads to the autumn months. It is a joyful time here in Tuscany, where there is some sort of *sagra* almost every weekend celebrating the harvest of whatever it is that is up or ripe or ready that week, from chestnuts and mushrooms to Chianti wine and *olio nuovo*. And amazingly, even as foreigners, we really felt a part of the celebration because we too had lived and worked for it.

Fall's interns worked together more than any other session because so many hands were needed to get the various harvests done at the right moment. But it wasn't just Amber, Chris, Liz, Seth, Sage, Lila and Colin in the olive groves or vineyards or corn fields. It was all our interns and all of our staff and all our volunteers who have, over the years, worked this land. It is exactly this that makes fall so special and helps those who spend time here form close relationships, both with each other and with something larger. It was wonderful to see this group of interns feel and appreciate not only all that they had accomplished in the months they were here, but all that those who came before them have put into Spannocchia. And I truly think that the neon green oil from the first pressing of the season, poured over bread that Seth toasted in a fire burning explicitly for this purpose and which Lila and Chris rubbed with our own garlic, tasted that much better because everyone, from those of us standing by the press to those that had come 800 years before us, had worked for it. How marvelous are the days of gold.

## CONTENTS

<b>Spannocchia</b> by Amber Estep	P. 2
<b>Graziella</b> by Christopher Terpstra	P. 3
<b>Process</b> by Elizabeth Ries	P. 4-5
<b>The Diving Rod</b> by Seth Gould	P. 6
<b>Tuscan Dolce</b> by Colin Kull	P. 7-8
<b>How To Learn A Language</b> by Lila Wilmerding	P. 9
<b>Kid Wisdom</b> by Tobias Lunt	P. 10
<b>Doorway</b> by Sage Stout	P. 11



## Spannocchia Amber Estep

It was not the sort of place I didn't truly appreciate until I was gone from it, it was more so the sort of place so magical that I tried to soak in every minute of it, knowing that my time there would pass far too quickly.

When I think of Spannocchia I have a series of vivid mental images, a photo album of memories: of fog resting in the valleys first thing in the morning, of the view from the tower at sunset, of endless blue skies, of rolling green hills, of lizards scuttling through the vineyards, of starry skies and of autumn leaves. I wouldn't know exactly how to sum up my experience... I suppose I could say friendships, because what strikes me most about my experience is the friendships I have formed, and the closeness of the Spannocchia family. Sharing dinners with the other interns, staff, and guests was a truly rewarding experience. Perhaps the most rewarding aspect being that it was all of our hard work combined that put the food and wine on the table to be shared by everybody.

I feel so lucky to have been a fall intern, to have participated in the harvesting of grapes, corn, and olives (not to mention the figs, walnuts, chestnuts and persimmons). Harvesting allowed us to reap the products from a whole year's worth of efforts and energies, bringing together all of the staff, interns, and volunteers, and even a few guests. My favorite harvest was the olive harvest; there was something really incredible about being up in the olive trees in the brisk fall weather, the gentle Tuscan sunsets being the signal for the close of our work day.

We started with hot days and quick jumps in the pool to cool off, and ended with huddling together under blankets around a fire. We began with long days of relentless sun, and ended with short days of cool air and a sun whose small amount of warmth we were grateful for. We came in as strangers, and after three months of breakfasts, work days, lunches, dinners, chores, and outings together, we parted ways as friends.

So to everyone who reads this: Thank you. Thank you for interest in Spannocchia and all that Spannocchia stands for in a world that is moving too fast and changing too quickly, thank you for the support that allows Spannocchia to remain what it is, and thank you for giving us this opportunity which has been a source of so much inspiration!





# Il Pennato

Fall 09



At Spannocchia there are many great experiences that one encounters. From the day to day joy of just living in the Tuscan hills to staring into nothing for several minutes at a time. Everyone experiences something different and takes away a lot of new knowledge. For me, it had to be cooking in the kitchen with Graziella. The food was always good and the fun she had in the kitchen was even better. Coming as I did from a training in formal French cookery, some of the methods she used initially seemed just a little off. From starting to fry things in cold oil to using half liter of oil to fry some beef. Graziella always had a heavy hand on the oil, and would tease me for having a heavy hand on the salt.

I have learned to cook from several different people in my life, and they have all had an influence on the food that I prepare. I think that Graziella will be one of the greatest influences. Her approach to cooking is not to get too worried about rules, but to enjoy working with ingredients and thinking about how enjoyable it will be to eat the meal. This is something I really learned from. She also prescribes to the classic (and very good) Italian approach to cooking: use less than 10 ingredients in a whole meal and let them do the talking. There were also times that I was blown away by how unconventional (or so I thought) her methods were. For instance, when cooking risotto I was always told you have to stand over your pot and keep stirring the rice for a good 21 minutes. This was not the case with Graziella. She would add some liquid and let it boil, stir it a couple times, and then add some more. Once again there was that relaxed care-free approach that I loved so much.

Then there was the overwhelmingly sympathetic side to Graziella. Anytime you enter the kitchen or even pass by, she stops what she is doing to talk a little, taste what she has cooked, and maybe even ask for your help. This was often the case with me. Usually after work I would come and stop by the kitchen for a just few minutes, and the next thing I knew dinner was well under way, the duty was there ready to set up, and it was almost 7:00. It was a nice way to wind down at the end of a day of milling, still covered in dust, no shower, cooking with someone who is very easy to talk to and who, for me, was perhaps the best teacher of Italian at the farm.

When it was time to leave Spannocchia it was a sad goodbye between the two of us. We had spent a lot of time together, had a lot of laughs, and a fair amount of *casini* to deal with. She told me I could come a stay at her house anytime I needed a place to stay, and always have a home in her *cucina*. From cooking to just being a welcoming person, I learned a lot from Graziella and she has a lot more to offer to the many groups of interns who come here.

## Graziella Christopher Terpstra





## Process

### Elizabeth Ries

One afternoon Seth and I were walking down Pig Hill from finishing evening chores and we were talking about what it would be like to be at Spannocchia without a lot of our modern comforts, but just the animals and the garden as they are. We were half-kidding as we said that we could make cured meats from the pigs, olive oil from our olive trees, and wine from our vineyards. After thinking about all of the things we could make, we realized that it wasn't so much of a joke-that we really could make all of those products. It was at that moment that I realized that one of the best things about this internship was learning how to make the things that were on our dinner table every night.

### MEAT

By far the most interesting process I learned was making all of the cured meats and learning how to break down the pigs. As part of Team Animali I got to see every stage of the pigs' life. I saw piglets be born, I cared for pigs of all ages, learned how to castrate the male pigs, and then went to the slaughter house when the pigs were 18 months old. I was able to be in the transformation kitchen twice and see a total of 8 pigs be, quite literally, transformed. We would process 4 pigs at a time and it would take a solid 3-4 days to break them down, cut all the meat off of the bones, prepare the prosciutto legs, and make all of the cured meats ready to begin the aging process. One of the most respectable things about processing the pigs in this way is that we really used every part of the pig. I learned a lot from Riccio and Piero in the kitchen and hope to continue to learn how to process meat when I return to the states.



### WINE

As mid-October approached and it began to feel a bit more like fall, it was finally time for the vendemmia, or grape harvest. I really knew nothing about wine before coming here and after being in the vineyards harvesting grapes and seeing how the grapes turn into wine, I feel a greater appreciation for what we drank every night at dinner. One of the most fun things about the vendemmia was that everyone on the farm worked together for those 3-4 days to get the job done. It is imperative that once the grapes started to be picked that we did it all at once. I hadn't had a chance to work with any of the interns or staff besides my animali crew and so it was great to work with the whole group. We started by picking all of the white grapes and then "the best" red grapes to make a higher quality red wine, and then all of the rest. Angelo and the vines interns were the ones working in the cantina putting the grapes into the destemming machine and then pumping the juice into vats, but we were all able to witness the process. Although we won't be able to taste the wine that will be produced from the actual grapes we picked, it was still pretty amazing to see how it is all done.



## OLIVE OIL

In early November it was finally time to pick all of our olives and take them to the press to make our fresh olive oil. The process of making olive oil is actually pretty simple, although we don't have the technology to do it here. Back in the day, Spannocchia made the olive oil here with an old press that was comprised of 2 large stones that would be turned by donkeys to grind down the olives. Instead now we take all of our olives to a place that processes a lot of people's olives from around the region. We took our olives to the press early on a Saturday morning and watched the olives be cleaned, milled, mixed with warm water, spun in a centrifuge, filtered, and then put into a large container to take back to the farm. The process happened pretty quickly and soon we were able to taste our olive oil that was an almost neon green color. Fresh pressed olive oil has a bite to it that almost burns your throat going down and the taste is unlike anything else I've ever had. We toasted up some bread to go with the oil, grilled Spannocchia ribs on a big fire outside of the mill, and had some wine. It will be hard to go home after being spoiled with all of this delicious food, but after making meats, wine, and olive oil I have gained a huge appreciation for these seemingly simple foods.



*\*As a side note, Liz was more or less our official photographer for the fall session. We can thank her for use of all the lovely photos you'll see in this issue of Il Pennato!!!*





## The Diving Rod Seth Gould

He jumped out of the backhoe and headed towards the tree line. His skin was tanned and leathery from years of working in the Italian sun. As he walked, a few white wisps of comb-over hair floated amiss across his head. He walked towards the woods, a *pennato* in hand, and started along the tree

line, looking for something. We had been looking for water to irrigate the lower cow pasture with. I had been unloading hay when beckoned over to help watch for the water as he dug. I did not know his name or anything about him, but I had seen him working about the property, clearing roads here, digging drainage there, always in his little yellow, tank-tread backhoe. He was kind of a mismatched individual, always wearing a tucked in button down with loafers on, but always unbuttoned with the loafers dirty and worn. He looked like he should be plowing behind a mule, not running a backhoe. He had been digging a ditch, and with each scoop of mud, I watched for the natural spring start to run out of the channel wall. He had dug until the spring stopped, about 30 meters from the tree line. When I looked up again from the ditch he had ducked into the bush and was making a racket chopping away at the trees. When he emerged he was carrying a mess of sticks and leaves. It was not until he began chopping away the excess leaves and twigs that I realized what he might be doing. Before him he presented a trimmed and sharpened "Y". He held each arm of the "Y" in each hand, bowing them out and holding them as if he were lifting a barbell. The leg of the "Y" was pointed away from him and he held his elbows tight against his sides. He then began to pace. I could not believe it. He had made a divining rod and was looking for water. I had heard of the technique, but I had never actually seen it done nor was I sure that it was possible. And I had certainly never seen it done by an old Italian man who just moments before had be operating heavy machinery. He paced up and down the tree line, waiting until he felt the branch pull, and would then retrace his steps. Without a word he called me over and placed the rod in my hands. Doing just as he did, I began to pace up and down. Not feeling anything I looked at him in question. He made sure I was bowing the rod and my elbows were snug to my side and then set me off again. As a walked parallel along the woods I held my body stiff, just loose enough to allow me to walk. And then I felt it. I could feel the "Y" pull towards the ground. I looked up in astonishment and started back towards his. He motioned that I try again and sure enough, as I walked over the same spot the "Y" pulled towards the ground. I could not believe it. I walked back towards the backhoe, not being able to control the smile on my face. I could not help but think, how many people are able to say that an old Italian man taught them how to find water with a stick? I can.





## Tuscan Dolce Colin Kull

Italy is, without a doubt, highly noted for its gastronomy. The traditional and ever so savoury meals are world famous. It is perhaps one of the bigger pulls that bring foreigners over to this wonderful country. Tuscan food is no exception, and Spannocchia, with the help of Graziella, Loredana and Gaetana, pulls out all the stops. These three talented, sassy, incredible *donne*, I believe are integral to Spannocchia's survival and success. The meals that are produced come from Graziella and Loredana's past, old traditional Tuscan meals that are tied to the freshest produce and meats available to create sensations one can only experience here at Spannocchia. Not much feels better than eating a meal that has been grown, raised and cooked within 1,100 acres.

My experience in the Villa kitchen was mesmerizing and highly educational. The afternoons spent in the kitchen were a gift, something I never thought I would experience. Watching the ladies cook with such ease was at times magical. Coming from a pastry background, I certainly connect with the ease and fluidity that takes control when you know your ingredients and recipes so well. During the preparation of the first and second courses I typically would stand back and do as directed. It wasn't until the preparation of the dessert that I would stand up to the challenge of making a Tuscan dessert. Graziella was always more than happy to let me crack, stir, fold, and whisk.

After a few weeks working with Graziella I came to realize the Italians and Americans (and French) have a very different sense of what makes a dessert a dessert. The difference I have discovered is as follows, less sugar, more eggs, lemon (in *almost* everything), extensive mixing, and the occasional chestnut flour. These differences are what make the desserts so different than what Americans and French are used to. One will notice that the confections tend to be on the drier side. Of course many people enjoy the Tuscan desserts, especially the Tuscans... The Tuscans and I suppose all Italians will hold strong to their beliefs that *all* their food is the best and superior to anything else. In the beginning of this all, it pained me at times, but I soon let go and came to the conclusion that we all have different taste buds. I learned that it was best to do as I was told, crack, stir, fold and whisk.

I never was able to make one of my recipes for a Villa dinner, but I did produce a good amount of baked goods and in the end infiltrated the Villa breakfast sweet bread. The *pane dolce* as the Villa ladies would call it, was just a simple, but damn good American coffee cake. It quickly became a staple. Around 8:30 nearly every morning I would receive a slow pitter-patter of Spannocchia women (even some lucky *orto* girls), fluttering in and out of the kitchen for coffee and their *pane dolce*. I am leaving the recipe on the next page so that this wonderful breakfast treat can be continued. If made, the women of Spannocchia (and perhaps the men) will visit you daily in the kitchen with big smiles and good conversation.





## ***Spannocchia Coffee Cake*** ***Yield 11"x 6" pan***

250 g (1 lb) Soft Butter  
3 ½ C White Sugar  
2 Eggs  
2 Yolks  
3-4 C Yogurt  
4-5 C Flour  
1 T Baking Soda (Bicarbonato)  
½ T Salt

In large bowl cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy. About 5 min on the highest speed.

Add eggs and yolk. Lightly beat in, just until incorporated. Add yogurt. Fold in with spatula.

Add flour, baking soda and salt. Fold in with spatula. Don't over mix, the mixture should be thick and a bit lumpy.

Add in flavoring. Some favorites are...

- ½ C Coffee (luke warm) + 3T Coffee grounds + 2C Chocolate chips
- 2-3 Sliced apples + 1T cinnamon, nutmeg, coriander, ginger
- Zest of 2-3 Oranges + 2C Chocolate chips.



This recipe is extremely versatile. As long as nothing is over mixed it should be light and moist. I am transcribing this from my mind so nothing is exact. As with most all recipes play around with it and see what works the best.





## How To Learn A Language Lila Wilmerding

This past September—the beginning of my internship at Spannocchia—was the first fall in my memory that did not mark a new year at school. I was nervous not to have the comfort of a fully structured schedule before me, and as I sat on the plane to Italy I wasn't sure what to expect in the months to come. Over the past four years, without realizing it, I had become dependent upon the carefully planned curriculums and clearly set expectations of a classroom setting. My time at Spannocchia would be an experience where I could set my own limitations and determine my own contributions to the group. My faith in myself was lacking; I was worried that I'd not take full advantage of this great opportunity without anyone pushing me to do so.

By the end of my first work day, however, these anxieties had faded. It was clear that, whether or not I invited them, there would be challenges for me at Spannocchia. Right from the start, the most apparent challenge was the language barrier. Sage and I were lucky to be working in the orto with Carmen, a wonderfully patient and quietly omniscient Italian woman who spoke to us in a mixture of our language and hers.

Despite Carmen's valiant efforts, though, I was often left at the end of her sentences either confused by what I thought she had said or frustrated that I could not communicate my own thoughts back to her. Some days were better than others. However, by the end of the first few weeks, I noticed myself picking up words and directions more easily than I had been able to initially. Things continued to progress—piano piano—with the help of Valeria's lessons around our kitchen table. Though the frustration and confusion of the language barrier were far from gone, I was happily surprised by the level of Italian that the Ragazzi were able to pick up by mid-November. At our morning wall meetings, I felt able to understand a good portion of what was being said—luckily for me, Italians use hand gestures to communicate about half of what they are saying.

Though it was completely basic, this level of comfort with the language was striking to me when I compared it to my abilities in French, a language I had studied in school for many years. Because the majority of my experience with French has come from books, I can read and write, but have trouble communicating and often understanding. With Italian, I had been learning through listening, and so the sounds of words are more familiar and easier to pick out.

Much of what I will remember from Spannocchia will stick with me because I experienced it all through listening, watching, tasting, and getting my hands dirty. Thinking back to September, it is silly to have imagined that I couldn't learn as well without an organized syllabus. Rather, I learned differently than I had before: watching our hand-picked olives travel through the press and onto my bruschetta, rolling out gnocchi for dinner, and listening to Carmen's Italian instructions in the garden.





## Kid Wisdom Tobias Lunt

My time at Spannocchia was full of images and moment that, upon reflection, unfailingly bring a smile to my face. Little things and bigger things alike: the sizing of the salt jar in the villa kitchen, just large enough to fit Graziella's whole fist; the Pulcinelli fireplace; Angelo coming up the driveway in the mornings, hunched over in his tiny car, always with his shoes untied. The list goes on. Others can recount this glorious portfolio of perfect moments far more eloquently than I can (as exhibited in previous editions of *Il Pennato*), so I gratefully leave that task in the most capable hands of my fellow interns. Thus, I move on to the more ephemeral and philosophical imprint that my time at Spannocchia has left on me.

Although at first glance it may seem like a bit of an odd comparison, my internship experience reminds me of the aphorism "everything I need to know I learned in Kindergarten." It seems that whenever I come to a new revelation, it always echoes a worn out truism that I have heard too many times and no longer pay any attention to. The Golden Rule, treat others as you would like to be treated, is a good example of this. Sometimes the most meaningful things sound quite obvious and simple. Living and working at Spannocchia, especially as someone who has grown accustomed to office jobs and overachievers, made clear to me a few similarly obvious-seeming facts; any child could tell you they are true but many adults seem to have forgotten them:

1. It's okay to have fun, even if you're working!
2. If you like living a certain way, that's the way you should try to live. Right now.
3. The world is beautiful, and not to enjoy it is a waste of that beauty.

Someone once said, "never trust anyone over 30." Despite the fact that my age outwardly approaches that mark with ever-increasing rapidity, inwardly my time at Spannocchia has helped me learn how to cultivate the curiosity and wonder of childhood. With luck, this will aid me throughout my life. This is an invaluable gift, and a gift that can only be given by those who also possess it. So in my own small way, by pursuing happiness in my post-Spannocchia life, I hope to thank everyone who taught me these lessons: staff, interns and animals alike.





## Doorway Sage Stout

I had this conversation one of my last nights at Spannocchia. It was getting to the end of November and the weather was finally starting to act like fall. I was sitting with another intern back by the big walnut tree near the chicken coop. It was our last night together as a group and we were rambling to each other, maybe trying to make sense of the ending of our time at Spannocchia, maybe just rambling because it felt good to see where our thoughts would end up.

Either way, we're talking and at some point one of us says "I don't want Spannocchia to be a moment in time. I want to see it as a doorway."

If the point of my writing this is to impart something to future generations of interns (which it may or may not be) I want that to be what I impart. The beauty of the Spannocchia experience, for me at least, is that because you find yourself in this insular bubble of American/Italian magic, because you get to be surrounded by a group of interesting, supportive, beautiful, hilarious peers, because you get the chance to try a new language and gain ten pounds from eating way too much (or just enough) olive oil soaked bread and béchamel sauce covered veggies, because you get to have pig shit on your shoes and a bellyache from eating too many grapes during the grape harvest, because you can stand in the garden while the sunsets and watch the persimmons on the tree grow brighter and brighter in the dusk, because you will be told "*piano, piano*" ("slowly, slowly") over and over- because for all these reasons and a million others you get the chance to melt into some other version of yourself, a version that gets enough sleep and laughs really, really, really hard at least twice a day. You get to feel strong and engaged and really think about the kind of life you want to be living, the kind of world you want to be creating for yourself and your community. And because Spannocchia gives you distance from your "real" life, you get the opportunity to really explore, with a sense of perspective, how you want to reenter that life. And why would you want to leave that person you get to become behind when you leave Spannocchia?

Spannocchia is an amazing, amazing experience, but what really interests me is how that experience is taken, in so many personal, peculiar, and beautiful ways out into the big wide world.



# Fall 2009 Interns



**Tobias Lunt**—Vines and Olives  
**Chris Terpstra**—Animali  
**Seth Gould**—Animali  
**Liz Ries**—Animali  
**Amber Estep**—Vines and Olives  
**Colin Kull** – GSI  
**Sage Stout**—Orto  
**Lila Wilmerding**—Orto



## ***Spannocchia Internship Mission Statement:***

The Internship Program is dedicated to enriching the lives of young people by providing them with a unique educational experience on a community oriented farm in Tuscany, Italy. Tenuta di Spannocchia's 1100-acre pastoral estate serves as an active model for responsible stewardship through collective effort.



## **SPANNOCCHIA INTERNSHIP PROGRAM**

Località Spannocchia  
53012  
Chiusdino (SI)  
Italia  
Tel: (39) 0577 752 111  
Fax: (39) 0577 752 224  
E-mail: [internships@spannocchia.org](mailto:internships@spannocchia.org)  
[www.spannocchia.org](http://www.spannocchia.org)

