

spannocchia



LEARN·GROW·SUSTAIN

Farm Internship Program Information and Frequently Asked Questions

Important: Please read this document thoroughly before applying and accepting a spot in the Farm Internship Program.

It is imperative that you be honest on your application, as we determine acceptance by what we believe will be a good fit for our community and for each individual, based on the information provided.

The idea of working on a farm in Tuscany can be very easily romanticized and may seem like a great opportunity when one is daydreaming in class or at work. Living at Spannocchia is undoubtedly a rewarding experience. Interns acquire knowledge and practical skills through involvement with the daily operation of the farm as well as education programs and field trips. A tremendous satisfaction can come from learning new skills and working with others to achieve common goals, while strengthening a connection to the environment and to another culture.

But please also understand: Farming and maintenance work is often chaotic, messy, unpredictable, laborious, monotonous, tiring, and challenging. Instant gratification is not part of farm work, so you must be realistic about the goals and expectations you set while here. This experience requires not only an ability to perform manual labor, but also flexibility, patience, curiosity, and positivity.

Responsibilities & Expectations

The internship program is based on a 45-50 hour week, Monday to Friday, with rotating chores some of the weekends as well. Approximately 35 hours are dedicated to hands-on work and 10-15 hours are spent on the educational component. Each intern is allowed 3 days off, in addition to holidays.

Farm work can be physically demanding. You should be aware of the limitations of your own body, and know to stop work that is too difficult or dangerous before an injury occurs. Will you be able to engage in manual labor all day without injuring yourself or

others? Do you have any kind of health problem that requires attention or might warrant quick access to a hospital? (The nearest hospital is 20km away from Spannocchia.) Your safety and the safety of the staff is our priority.

In addition to physical ability, it is essential that interns come to Spannocchia willing to work hard and be a conscientious community member. A willingness to take direction from others is also imperative. Some jobs are easier, some more difficult, some exciting, some dull—but all the tasks play an important part in the operation of the farm and the property. We do our best to explain various tasks and “the why” behind them, but also encourage interns to ask questions whenever more context would be helpful. How much you learn as you work is partially dependent on your openness and curiosity.

Be honest with yourself and with us about your ability, motivation, and desire to do manual labor and your interest in learning skills through hands-on experience.

Beyond farm work, interns spend about 10-15 hours a week participating in various planned educational activities and field trips. These are selected to further explore regenerative agriculture, environmental issues, and culinary topics, as well as regional history and culture. We don't follow a strict curriculum, and some selections may change from one session to the next, depending on seasonality, relevance, the interests of the group, and our own ongoing growth and exploration!

Educational presentations may be taught either by our own staff or by outside experts. Biweekly field trips to local areas of interest are also a significant and favorite element of the internship experience. Neighboring organic production facilities, farms, and vineyards are carefully selected to provide interns with unique exposure to traditional Tuscan values of food production as well as innovative techniques to help protect and conserve land.

Some examples of typical presentations and trips include:

- Beekeeping
- Olive oil making
- Foraging
- Tuscan cooking class
- Cattle farm
- Winery tours & tastings
- Rice farm
- Various local cities & villages

Italian classes are held once a week for two and a half hours. Prior knowledge of Italian is not essential, but it helps. All accepted candidates are expected to study some Italian before arriving, and we provide some resources to help with this (free apps like Duolingo are a great place to start!). We ask that you be committed to learning and trying to speak Italian while at Spannocchia. And yet, it is important to recognize that **this is not a language immersion experience**, so while we hope you are able to learn some Italian language, it is not the main aim of our programs.

Farm Work Learning Targets and Duties

Team Orto (3 interns): Work with the horticultural expert and farm staff in the extensive gardens, to understand the dynamics of small organic farm planning and implementation.

- Participate in the management of the *orto* (vegetable gardens) and olive groves: seeding, transplanting, weeding, hoeing, applying treatments, watering, harvesting, taking samples, weighing/measuring/recording, bringing harvest to kitchens/storerooms, etc.
- Collect the compost for the pile every morning.
- Help prepare harvest baskets for guests when needed.
- Monitor chickens and ducks (feed and water, eggs, keeping track of the flock and closing them in at night, repairs to chicken coop/tractor, etc.).
- Do rotating orto duty on weekends.
- Rotating general chores (trash/recycling, Villa dinner service, intern lunch duty).
- Anything that needs doing!

Team Animali (2 interns): Work with farm professionals in all aspects of animal husbandry, to acquire a level of expertise in decision-making about animal care.

- Participate in the management of pigs and cows, including all feeding and animal care during the week and on weekends (rotating care on weekends).
- Occasional cleaning of animal stalls/housing.
- Help with building projects for the animals.
- Maintain and/or build new fence lines on the property.
- Patrol/fix/maintain the electric fences on the property.
- Mill feed for animals.
- Rotating general chores (trash/recycling, Villa dinner service, intern lunch duty).
- Anything that needs doing!

Team Tuttofare (3 interns): Work on vineyard management and wine production, general farm projects, and maintenance, to gain comprehensive insight on viticulture and the complexities of running a diverse organic farm.

- Work in vineyards, including hoeing weeds, selecting and tying vines, pruning, applying treatments, etc.
- Participate in the management of the olive groves.
- Harvest (depending on time of year: grapes, olives, tree fruits, etc.).
- Work in the cantina helping with the wine (winemaking, bottling, labeling, cleaning, depending on season).
- Make *fascine* (brush bundles) and manage the *caldaia*—the large, wood-burning furnace that provides all heat (in season) and hot water.
- Responsible for Pizza Night fire on a rotating basis.
- Assist in the garden as needed.
- Keep tools in good condition and keeping workshops clean and organized.
- When necessary, assist in preparation of firewood on property.
- Rotating general chores (trash/recycling, Villa dinner service, intern lunch duty).
- Anything that needs doing (including assisting in other team duties).

Life & Community

It is important that interns share our commitment to sustainability as well as the ideals of community living; everyone must be willing to pitch in to ensure that Spannocchia continues to be an enjoyable place to live and work.

Interns, apprentices, and volunteers live together in double rooms in Casa Pulcinelli, and share a common kitchen, living room, and bathrooms. Everyone is expected to work together and rotate chores and cleaning to care for the house.

Kitchen staples are provided by Spannocchia (fruit, vegetables, pasta, flour, cereal, coffee, milk, butter, oil, sugar, legumes, grains, eggs, meat, etc.) for meals in Pulcinelli. Interns are generally responsible for their own breakfasts, and take turns preparing lunches for the group on a weekly basis.

Dinners vary depending on the season. During quieter times of year and on occasional in-season evenings when the restaurant is closed, interns prepare their own dinner in Pulcinelli, with ingredients provided. When the restaurant is open (when agritourism guests and other educational groups are on the property—typically every night from April-October), dinner is prepared by the culinary staff and served in the main Villa dining room or outside on the Villa patio. Starting with “Wine on the Terrace,” an informal social gathering to enjoy a glass of wine together before dinner, the evening meal is a special community experience, and interns are encouraged to interact with other diners as much as possible. Guests are often interested to learn more about the intern experience, and have their own unique background and stories to share. *Note:* There are some times when the restaurant is at capacity; on these occasions, interns may be asked to dine at Pulcinelli, with a meal still provided by our kitchen staff.

As a group, you have access to a farm vehicle (with a manual transmission/stick shift) for a total of two hours of driving time a week. We require drivers to pass a simple driving test here on the farm and have an international driver’s license. This will allow for some local travel as well as errands, etc. There is time set aside for a weekly trip into town to purchase any additional personal groceries you may desire (snack foods, chocolate, alcohol, etc.), at your own expense.

Spannocchia is not only physically remote; it is also quite technologically remote. There is no television access. We do have telephones and cell phones, but the connection is not always perfect. Same for internet: we have a wifi connection which can fail in bad weather. We advise all interns to take care of any important personal business before arriving at Spannocchia.

Costs & Scholarship Opportunities

There is a one-time activity fee of \$1500 to participate in the Farm Internship Program. This covers just about a third of the full cost of running the program, with the rest paid by Friends of Spannocchia, thanks to the generous support of our donors and foundation grants. The fee is used to offset educational costs including Italian lessons, field trips and educational presentations, learning materials, and includes a one-year student-level membership to Friends of Spannocchia. Interns can pay this fee directly or use our online platform to invite people in their networks to contribute toward the total. All interns must also become members of [WWOOF Italia](#) (Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms), which costs €35.

Participants are responsible for their own travel costs to and from Spannocchia, and for any expenses they incur during their free time.

Recognizing that the participation costs may be a barrier for some would-be participants, limited need-based scholarship funding is available to qualified candidates. Please [email Sarah Allenby](#), our US-based Executive Director, for more information and the scholarship application.

Background on Spannocchia & the Farm Internship Program

The Farm Internship is run by Friends of Spannocchia, a US-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that supports the educational activities at the Spannocchia farm property. Friends of Spannocchia works in collaboration with the Associazione Castello di Spannocchia, our Italian-based partner, to implement programming on-site, as well as Tenuta di Spannocchia, the organic farm and agritourism property.

In the 1980s, Tenuta di Spannocchia and an organization called the Etruscan Foundation began hosting volunteers and interns who worked on the farm in exchange for room and board. Under the auspices of the Etruscan Foundation in the late 1990s, the Internship Program (formerly called the “Farm Program” and “Garden Internship”) developed a more formal structure that included Italian language study, field trips, and educational presentations. Friends of Spannocchia has supported the educational elements of the Internship Program since 2003.

Spannocchia is a truly unique and beautiful property and community dating back to 1225 (with portions of the property even older); we recommend reading [Our Story](#) on our website for historical context about the estate and the Cinelli family’s role over the last century. Francesca Cinelli and Randall Stratton still have a home at Spannocchia, and split their time between Italy and the US. There is a small number of other ongoing residents—some longtime and some newer—all of whom also work for either the Associazione or the farm. Short-term residents include farm volunteers, interns, apprentices, and sporadic WWOOFers. Between April and November there is a steady flow of international guests—both as part of educational program groups and as independent

agritourism visitors—who stay in bed & breakfast-style accommodations in the Villa/Fattoria buildings, or in farmhouse rentals that are scattered throughout the property.

Comprised of 1100 acres, Spannocchia lies within the Alto Merse Nature Reserve, a protected area rich in wildlife and biodiversity. A large portion of the property is wooded and managed according to a sustainable forestry plan. In addition to the elements of the farm that the interns participate in daily, Spannocchia runs an award-winning salumi program; sells products including honey, meats, and wine; offers a small farm-to-table restaurant for guests and visitors (in season); and provides limited tours, classes, and events/activities (again, in season).

COVID-19 Information & Policies

As we welcome interns, apprentices, and volunteers to the Spannocchia property, the health and safety of our farm staff and residents—including all of you—is our priority. While many of our COVID-19 policies have been relaxed or eliminated, we do still maintain a few important precautions, as outlined here:

- You must be fully up to date on COVID-19 vaccination (including booster(s), as eligible) before arrival at Spannocchia. We may require proof of vaccination.
- You will be required to take a rapid test upon arrival at Spannocchia.
- Throughout the entire duration of the program, you must notify Spannocchia staff if you have any COVID-19 symptoms, or learn you've been in contact with anyone who tests positive for COVID-19.

Because the global COVID-19 situation continues to evolve, please understand that guidelines are subject to change/tightening at any time, as advised by the Italian or American governments, or as determined by Spannocchia staff. We will do our best to communicate any changes as quickly and clearly as possible. As we've all seen throughout the pandemic, flexibility and compassion are essential!

Note: It is possible—even if highly unlikely—that the government might reinstate limitations or even severe restrictions regarding moving around Tuscany/Italy, which could lead to most of your time being limited to the Spannocchia property. If you accept this opportunity, this is a possibility you should be aware of and comfortable with.

If you are unable or unwilling to adhere to any of the COVID-19 safety policies, Spannocchia is unfortunately not the right fit for you at this time. We appreciate your understanding, flexibility, and adherence to keep our community as safe as it can be.

While Spannocchia takes precautions to prioritize the community's health and safety, Spannocchia is not responsible for any cases of COVID-19 that may arise on or related to the property and this program.



Common Eligibility & Application Questions

Q: Do I need to have lots of experience with farming and/or gardening to be a good fit for the Farm Internship Program?

A: No! BUT a curiosity and desire to learn about these core elements of the program are essential. We look for applicants who have an interest in organic farming, food, and the environment, are committed to the Friends of Spannocchia mission, and are eager to gain knowledge and skills through experience. We do appreciate some background in these areas, and past experience with physical labor of some sort is advantageous, as challenging, physical work is a fundamental element of the program.

Q: My background is in organic farming, animal husbandry, and/or Italian language and I am looking for an experience to build my resume. Is the Farm Internship Program right for me?

A: Maybe. This program provides a good introduction to regenerative farming and Italian language. **The internship is most fitting for individuals who are fairly new to one or all of the aforementioned fields, or have had little practical experience and wish to engage in hands-on learning.** If you have a strong career background in these areas and are looking for an intensive, advanced course, then the Farm Internship Program is probably not the right fit for you. In any event, it is important to have realistic expectations of what the program offers.

Q: Can non-Americans apply to the Farm Internship Program?

A: Yes! All nationalities are encouraged to apply, and we've hosted interns from around the world. Historically, the majority of interns have been American because Friends of Spannocchia is based in the United States and the application process is done in English. However, we recognize the unique value in a diverse and international intern group, and welcome applications from all interested and qualified candidates, regardless of nationality/citizenship or current residence.

Q: What are the typical ages of interns?

A: Applicants must be a minimum of 18 years old by the start of their session, and under 35. Most farm interns are between 20 and 30 years old, but we strive to create internship groups with a diverse range of ages and life/work/school experiences. Regardless of age, the accommodation is a shared, double room in a rustic, communal farmhouse.

Q: Do I need a special Visa to participate in the program?

A: For citizens of the United States, the European Union, and many other non-EU countries, no visa is required for travel in Italy for up to 90 days, and our Internship and Apprenticeship programs are designed to fit within this timeframe. If you are not from the EU or US, you are responsible for determining if you will need a Schengen Visa to stay in Italy for the duration of the internship. [This website](#) is a helpful resource. We are unable to provide assistance with Visa applications.

If you are an EU citizen and would like to remain in Italy for more than 90 days, it is not necessary to acquire a visa. US and other non-EU citizens have visa requirements for stays longer than 90 days, and interns are responsible for determining and handling these on their own if they plan on a longer stay.

For more information for US citizens, see the [Department of State's travel website](#).

Q: Can couples, friends, and siblings apply to the Internship Program together?

A: Yes, although the chances of being selected are greatly reduced. Couples, friends, and siblings must submit separate applications. If you are connected with someone who is applying, you must state clearly on the application what the nature of your relationship is to one another (e.g., girlfriend, brother, friend, roommate, spouse, etc.), and whether you'd like to be considered together or separately in the selection process. Group dynamics are always taken into account when building each group, and we usually prefer to accept individuals with no ties to other accepted candidates.

Q: Can families apply to the Internship Program? What if I would like to bring my young children with me to the program?

A: Unfortunately, families or individuals with dependent children are not eligible for the internship program. The housing we offer is limited to a single bed in a double room, so we simply cannot accommodate families or children.

Q: How competitive is the Spannocchia Internship Program?

A: We typically receive dozens of applications for the 8 available spots for each session. We seek to build each internship group as a diverse but well-balanced whole, giving consideration to geographic diversity, educational background, work experience, future goals, age, gender, etc. The summer session tends to see the highest number of applicants. Due to the high number of applications, we cannot consider any applications that arrive after each session's deadline or that are significantly incomplete (e.g., missing multiple references, etc.) at the session deadline.

Q: I'd like to apply, but I can't participate in the full length of the session. Am I still eligible?

A: No. All interns must participate in the full duration of the session.

Q: If I apply early, can I be accepted early?

A: No. We review all applications for each session following the application deadlines, and make our decisions by the listed notification dates. It is important to us to evaluate each applicant individually, but also to take group dynamics into consideration when examining the applicant pool in our interest of building a well-rounded group that will work well together.

Q: The application deadline has passed for the session I am interested in. Can I apply late?

A: No. Due to the volume of applications received, internship applications received after the listed deadline dates cannot be accepted.

Q: Can I participate in more than one session?

A: No. Our spring, summer, and fall internship programs are highly competitive, and it is important for us to offer this unique educational experience to as many people as possible. Internship Program alumni, however, are welcome to apply for our Butcher/Culinary Apprenticeship or Winter Volunteer programs.

Q: How important is it to be able to drive a "stick-shift" (manual) vehicle?

A: It is not a requirement that participants have a driver's license or know how to drive a manual transmission. **However, we have a need for at least three "stick-shift" drivers**

in each intern group to assist in farm chores (on-farm transportation, trash duty, supply runs, etc.). This is particularly important for interns working with our animals, which are spread throughout the property.

Please note that the vehicle the interns have access to for two hours of driving time for weekend travel is also a manual transmission, so the more drivers available in each intern group, the more flexibility when planning travel.

Q: If accepted, what is expected of me prior to my arrival at Spannocchia?

A: We will provide more information about general expectations, what to bring, etc. to all confirmed interns well in advance of the start of each session. But in general, we ask that you study some Italian; review the educational resources we share about Spannocchia, farming, food, and environmental issues; and get excited for what promises to be an incredible experience.

More Questions? Contact Us!

If you have any other immediate questions that were not answered here or on our website, please feel free to [email our Farm Education Director, Niccolò Merighi](#).

**Thank you for your interest in the
Farm Internship Program at Spannocchia!**