



Culinary Apprenticeship Program Information

Important: Please read this document thoroughly before applying and accepting a spot in the Culinary Apprenticeship 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. Apprentices acquire knowledge and practical skills through involvement with all aspects of the kitchen and restaurant at Spannocchia. You'll interact closely with the Italian workers, who often provide a wealth of information not only about Tuscan cuisine but also Italian farming techniques and cultural traditions. 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: This work—and farm life in general—is often chaotic, messy, unpredictable, laborious, monotonous, tiring, and challenging. Instant gratification is not part of farm life, so you must be realistic about the goals and expectations you set while here. As with all kitchen work, this experience requires not only an ability to perform manual labor, but also flexibility, patience, curiosity, and positivity.

Responsibilities & Expectations

The restaurant at Spannocchia highlights the local cuisine, where the fruits of the earth are treated with care and respect, enjoyed in a relaxed and convivial setting. Simple preparations bring out the flavor of our products. The vegetables are grown according to the principles of organic, regenerative agriculture, and the meat comes from animals raised in a semi-wild state. The ingredients that are not produced at Spannocchia are sourced, whenever possible, from other organic farms and producers.

Meals are served buffet or family-style, with a fixed menu that changes daily, and one seating time. Diners include *agriturismo* guests, program group participants, interns/apprentices, and other residents, ranging from a handful of people up to 45 covers per meal. In this sense, the restaurant at Spannocchia is probably a bit different from ones you might have worked in previously!

The three-course dinners begin with a *primo piatto* (first course): a pasta, soup, or risotto made with seasonal vegetables or meat. The *secondo piatto* (main course) is a meat, usually our pork, beef, wild boar, or venison, served with a *contorno* (side dish) of vegetables from the Spannocchia garden and a simple *insalata* (green salad). *Dolce* (dessert)—panna cotta, tiramisu, a seasonal fruit cake, or cantucci with vin santo, for example—is served at the end of the meal.

Seasonally, every other Wednesday evening is Pizza Night—a favorite experience for residents and guests alike. The pizza is baked in our wood-fired brick oven and topped with different types of cheese, meats, and fresh vegetables from the garden.

Culinary apprentices will be expected to work around 45 hours per week, with one day off a week (usually Friday). Over the course of your apprenticeship, you also can take three vacation days, to be agreed upon in advance with kitchen staff. Every day is a bit different than the next, and your schedule will vary based on the number of guests we're feeding, but a typical day could look as follows:

10:00–13:30: Lunch Prep & Service (Lunch served at 13:00)

You will cook lunch with Beatrice (our lunch cook). Lunches are buffet-style and always vegetarian, such as: pasta with seasonal vegetable sauce, a risotto or a soup; and lentil or farro salad, or other roasted veggies.

17:00–21:00 Dinner Prep & Service (Dinner served at 19:30, with a casual wine reception for all diners starting at 19:00)

You will assist Pietrina (our dinner cook) in the last steps of the meal preparation, will set the tables, and will help with plating and serving together with Matilda (our server/dishwasher).

While both Italian and English is spoken throughout the Spannocchia property, our kitchen staff speaks Italian. Menu planning and conversations before and during service are all done in Italian. Therefore, while not absolutely required, a working/intermediate knowledge of Italian is preferred for a more enriching and effective experience. *Please note that formal Italian lessons are not included as part of this apprenticeship, though there is much opportunity for learning through exposure!*

Aside from your role in the kitchen and dining room, all interns, apprentices, and volunteers share rotating duties including maintenance of the wood-burning furnace, trash & recycling, cleaning the house, etc. It is essential that you come to Spannocchia willing to work hard and be a conscientious community member. You must have a

strong sense of responsibility toward the Spannocchia community and a commitment to our work schedules. A willingness to take direction from others is also imperative.

At Spannocchia and on working farms in general, some jobs are easier, some more difficult, some exciting, some dull—but all the tasks play an important part in the operation of the *Tenuta*, and need to be completed efficiently and correctly to ensure the success of the farm and hospitality program, and the community. If you don't understand the importance of a certain job, feel free to ask the restaurant staff or the Farm Education Director.

As you likely already know, culinary work involves a moderate amount of lifting, carrying, and standing on your feet for long periods. You should be aware of the physical limitations of your own body, and know to stop work that is too difficult or dangerous before an injury occurs. Please consider your level of physical fitness and wellness when applying to this program. Will you be able to do these tasks for 6-8 hours a 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. **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.**

Life & Community

It is important that apprentices 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.

Apprentices, interns, and volunteers live together and share a common kitchen, living room, and bathrooms in Casa Pulcinelli, centrally located on the property. You can expect to share a double room with another participant. Kitchen staples are provided by Spannocchia (fruit, vegetables, pasta, flour, cereal, coffee, milk, butter, oil, sugar, legumes, grains, eggs, meat, etc.) for meal preparation. There is also 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.

As a group, apprentices, interns, and volunteers 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 permit. This will allow for some local travel as well as errands, etc.

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 apprentices to take care of any important personal business before arriving at Spannocchia.

Costs

All apprentices must become members of [Friends of Spannocchia](#) (\$30 apprentice-level membership, good for one year) and [WWOOF Italia](#) (€40 for one year). Membership prices are subject to change. WWOOF Italia membership also acts as a basic health insurance *while working on the farm*. You are responsible for arranging your own travel to and from Siena, Italy at the beginning and end of the session.

Background on Spannocchia

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 two of her adult children still have homes 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 interns, apprentices, winter volunteers, 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. Along with the farming operation, Spannocchia runs an award-winning salumi program, sells products including honey, meats, and wine; offers a small farm-to-table restaurant in season, and provides limited tours, classes, and events/activities for visitors (again, in season).

Contact Us

If you have any other immediate questions that were not answered here or online, please feel free to reach out to our Farm Education Director, Niccolò Merighi, at farmprogram@spannocchia.org.

**Thank you for your interest in the
Culinary Apprenticeship Program at Spannocchia!**