



Winter Farm Volunteer Program Information

Important: Please read this document thoroughly before applying and accepting a spot in the Winter Farm Volunteer 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. Volunteers acquire knowledge and practical skills through involvement with the daily operation of the farm. You'll interact closely with the Italian workers, who often provide a wealth of information about Tuscan 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: 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

All volunteers will be expected to work between 30 and 40 hours per week, Monday to Friday, with chores some of the weekends as well. Weekend chores generally take two hours per day, depending on the job. Volunteers will be given three vacation days (in addition to national holidays) during their session.

Farm volunteers' primary responsibilities will be animal care (pigs and cows), vineyard management/pruning, general maintenance, and wood stacking. All volunteers and apprentices share rotating duties including lunch prep, dinner prep, weekend animal chores, maintenance of the wood-burning furnace, trash & recycling, cleaning the volunteer 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. 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*.

Winter volunteer work involves a moderate to difficult amount of lifting, carrying, bending, and/or shoveling. 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 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 hard, monotonous manual labor and your interest in learning skills through hands-on experience.**

Life & Community

It is important that farm volunteers 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.

Volunteers and apprentices live together and share a common kitchen, living room, and bathrooms. Volunteers/apprentices generally share double rooms in Casa Pulcinelli, centrally located on the property. 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, volunteers and apprentices 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.

While Spannocchia is beautiful in winter, it's also very isolated and often very cold. Because winter is a quiet time of year, there is time for volunteers to pursue other areas of interests. A year-round community on the farm provides the opportunity to get to know and spend time with a close-knit group of people, and you can expect to take part in a variety of organized community activities during your stay, but it should also be understood that our long-term community uses this time to recharge and prepare for our busy guest season. Constant stimuli, in a conventional sense, are not always available and, as such, before applying you must first assess your own suitability as a winter volunteer at Spannocchia.

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, in winter, the connection is not always perfect. Same for internet: we have a wifi connection which can fail in bad weather. We advise all volunteers to take care of any important personal business before arriving at Spannocchia.

Finally, knowledge of Italian is not essential, but it helps. At the very least, we ask that you be committed to learning and trying to speak Italian while at Spannocchia.

Costs

All winter volunteers must become members of [Friends of Spannocchia](#) (\$30 volunteer-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 her adult daughter Chiara 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 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. 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
Winter Farm Volunteer Program at Spannocchia!**