

JNF Culinary Wine & Arts Mission

PRE MISSION TO ITALY

March 16 – 20, 2015

DRAFT ITINERARY – SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Monday, March 16th 2014

Morning: Transfer from Fiumicino Airport to Hotel in Siena with stop in Orvieto

An English-speaking escort/guide will wait for you at Fiumicino International Airport- Arrivals Hall - for a transfer to your hotel by coach (**flight details TBA - program based on arrival at 8am**). Your escort will stay with you and assist you with the check in. Porterage service carried out by the Hotel, in and out, included.

Note: the hotel being located in the pedestrian area of Siena, the bus will have to stop in specific areas. The closest is at 5minute walk.

After around 1 ½ hour drive, you will make a nice stop in Orvieto for 1:30hrs.

The Paglia and Tiber rivers have spent eons washing away most of the volcanic layer of porous tufa that once covered the area around Orvieto. But they left a plug of it jutting some 315m (1,033 ft.) above the plain, and its sheer walls are so defensible humans have been scurrying about atop it for thousands of years. The Etruscans probably called the city they inherited from Bronze and Iron Age tribes here Velzna (some scholars render it Volsinii), a major player in the Etruscan confederation of 12 cities and perhaps its religious centre. It was a close enough threat to the Romans that they attacked and levelled it in 265 B.C., driving the Etruscans to settle on the shores of nearby Lake Bolsena. The Romans built a port on the Tiber to ship home a steady supply of the famous wine produced in the area -- still much in demand today as Orvieto Classico, one of Italy's finest whites. As a medieval "commune", the city expanded its empire in all directions until the Black Death decimated the population in the 14th century. Soon after, Orvieto became part of the Papal States and a home away from home to some 32 popes.

The city seems not so much to rise as to grow out of the flat top of its butte. The buildings are made from blocks of the same tufa on which Orvieto rests, giving the disquieting feeling that the town evolved here of its own volition. A taciturn, solemn, almost cold feeling emanates from its stony walls, and the streets nearly always turn at right angles, confounding your senses of direction and navigation. It's as if, somehow, Orvieto resents the humans who have overrun it. Of course, a goodly dose of wine with lunch can make the whole place seem very friendly indeed, and the stoniness is greatly relieved by the massive Duomo rising head and shoulders above the rest of the town, its glittering mosaic facade visible for miles around.

At around noon you and your escort will take the funicular to reach the bus to proceed on your transfer to Siena where you will arrive at around 1:30pm at your hotel Grand Hotel Continental - www.royaldemeure.com/en/grand_hotel_continental/storia/htm Or www.royaldemeure.com which will be your home for 4 nights. Accommodations are in the Classic Rooms.

The Hotel Continental is housed in Palazzo Gori Pannilini, built in the 17th century by the Chigi Pope Alexander VII for his niece Olimpia on the occasion of her marriage to the nobleman Giulio de' Gori. The grandeur of the architecture and the building's sumptuous decorative scheme perfectly express the high social standing of the families. Thanks to its artistic splendour, the Continental later became the preferred Siennese residence for young European aristocrats and intellectuals on the Grand Tour. Many famous people of the time stayed there, including Queen Margaret of Savoy and her court. Recent restoration work has uncovered frescoes of outstanding beauty and the structure of a medieval tower. All this and much more contribute to the unique character of the Grand Hotel Continental, the only 5-star luxury hotel in Siena. Since the time of its original construction, the palazzo now occupied by the Grand Hotel Continental has been repeatedly embellished by artists, craftsmen and decorators, all working to make each room a treasure store of frescoes, paintings, terracotta floors, mirrors with inlaid silver frames, delicate silk, Chinese porcelain lamps and Carrara marble bathrooms.

In the afternoon - Guided Tour in Siena - 2hrs: Your guide English-speaking guide will wait for you at the



hotel at 3pm for a 2hrs walking tour of the city centre high lights. With its narrow streets and steep alleys, a stunning Gothic Duomo, a bounty of early Renaissance art, and the glorious Palazzo Pubblico overlooking its magnificent Campo, Siena is often described as Italy's best-preserved medieval city. Victory over Florence in 1260 at Montaperti marked the beginning of Siena's golden age. During the following decades Siena erected its greatest

buildings (including the Duomo); established a model city government presided over by the Council of Nine; and became a great art, textile, and trade center. Siena succumbed to Florentine rule in the mid-16th century, when a yearlong siege virtually eliminated the native population. Ironically, it was precisely this decline that, along

with the steadfast pride of the Sienese, prevented further development, to which we owe the city's marvelous medieval condition today.

Although much looks as it did in the early 14th century, Siena is no museum. Walk through the streets and you can see that the medieval contrade, 17 districts into which the city has been historically divided, are a vibrant part of modern life. You may see symbols of the contrada—Tartuca (turtle), Oca (goose), Istrice (porcupine), Torre (tower)—emblazoned on banners and engraved on building walls. The Sienese still strongly identify with the contrada where they were born and raised; loyalty and rivalry run deep. At no time is this more visible than during the centuries-old Palio, a twice-yearly horse race held in the Piazza del Campo, but you need not visit during the wild festival to come to know the rich culture and enchanting pleasures of Siena; those are evident at every step.

Evening: Welcome Dinner at the Grand Hotel Continental.

You will enjoy dinner at the hotel at **7:30pm**. We will set the menu at the confirmation of the program. The rate is based on a 3course dinner with 1/3 bottle of wine, water and coffee per person.

The meal will include fish, vegetables, pasta - no meat, no shell fish. (D)

Tuesday, March 17th 2014

Tour to Montepulciano and Pienza

Cooking Class in Siena (afternoon and dinner)

Your guide English-speaking escort will pick you up at the hotel at **9am**. You will together walk to reach the bus and you will depart towards Montepulciano, where you will arrive at about **10am** and enjoy 1:30hrs time on your own for exploration.

Montepulciano is built along a narrow limestone ridge at 605 m above sea level. The town is encircled by walls and fortifications dating back to the 16th century. Inside the walls the streets are crammed with Renaissance-style palazzi and churches, but the town is chiefly known for its good local "Vino Nobile" and "Rosso" red wines. A long, winding street called the Corso climbs up into the main square, which crowns the summit of the hill. It is the ancient Etruscan city of Nocera Alfaterna, which in 308 B.C. made an alliance with Rome against the Samnites. In the Middle Ages it was under the control of Florence, but was conquered by Sienna in 1260. The main street of Montepulciano stretches for 11.5 kilometers from the Porta al Prato to the Piazza Grande at the top of the hill.

The façades of the church of Saint Agostino and of the Oratorio della Misericordia are worth seeing. Notable among the civic buildings are the Tarugi palace, like the Mercato, a work of Pignola, the Contucci palace designed by Sangallo and the fourteenth-century Palazzo Municipale, which contains a small gallery of Siennese and of Umbrian art. An incredible scenario is offered to your when getting to see the giant wine caves and the underground passageways that are open to public beneath Montepulciano.

The origins of **Vino Nobile di Montepulciano (Noble Wine from Montepulciano)** are ancient and tightly linked to



the history of the town as evidenced by the observation that wineries are integrated into the fabric of the old town centre. A rich cache of documents and articles relating to the flourishing history of the town is kept in the Politian Archives and shows that as far back as 1350 the terms and conditions governing trade and the exportation of wines from Montepulciano had already been established. In the second half of the sixteenth century, Pope Paul III extolled the exceptional qualities of the wine. In his poem "Bacchus in Tuscany", Francesco Redi defined it as the "king of all wines", and in the second half of the eighteenth century the

Montepulciano wine was accorded the description of "noble", in recognition of its splendid flavour and the idea that it was fit for the tables of the nobility. The reputation of this wine early spread abroad and it is mentioned by Voltaire in his "Candide". Other early foreign admirers included the American Presidents Martin Van Buren and Thomas Jefferson.

You and your escort will board the bus at around **11:30am** for your second destination of today: Pienza. You will arrive at noon and you will spend 1:30hrs in the town.

Pienza is a delightful village whose intimate little centre was almost completely redesigned in the 15th century by Pope Pius II. Born as Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini in 1405, when the village was known as Corsignano, he became a leading Humanist scholar and philosopher. Elected pope in 1458, Pius II decided to rebuild his birthplace a year later, renaming it Pienza in his own honour. Pleasant walks and great views can be enjoyed from the village walls. The airy Duomo contains six altarpieces commissioned from the leading Sieneese painters of the day.

Pienza is famous not only for its architectures but also for the excellent sheep's milk cheese, or more correctly, ewes' milk cheese, **pecorino**, produced in the area. The word "formaggio" - generic cows' milk cheese - is rarely used in Tuscany where most of the cheese consumed is pecorino, followed in popularity by mozzarella and then

other cheeses that have their own individual names. Even the word "pecorino", alluding to "pecora" - a ewe - is a quite recent invention. Until the end of World War II, Tuscans used the term "cacio". Pecorino is sold fresh, medium-aged and mature. It doesn't get better as it ages, it simply changes in flavour and consistency, and which one you prefer is purely a matter of personal taste. The fresh pecorino (pecorino fresco) is a soft, white cheese with a comparatively mild but still strong flavour. The texture can range from soft and moist to crumbly and granular, but is usually the former. As the pecorino ages, the bone-

coloured paste becomes darker in color with a firmer texture and a saltier flavor. The rind is light on pecorino fresco, and orange- or black-coloured on a medium and fully matured pecorino (pecorino stagionato).



At **1:30pm** you will board the bus again to return to Siena at around **2:30pm**

After some relaxation at the hotel your escort will accompany you to a Cooking School located in the historic centre of Siena.

Your cooking class will start at **4pm** and will be completed by the dinner.

A cooking class is a recreational and social occasion for discovering the gastronomic and cultural roots of an area. The aim is for the “dish” to come alive for visitors who, during their stay in Tuscany, are eager to taste the local cuisine and learn the secrets of the basic recipes. The only requirement for participating in these courses is a love of food, places, and their inhabitants.



Today, more than ever, food has become an art form. Lovers of good food seek traditional flavours and authentic ingredients by following directions found in old recipes. The rhythms of modern life that lead to hurried preparation and the use of pre-prepared products have contaminated most people’s taste buds and caused the disappearance of many traditional recipes, even from the most sophisticated menus.



Cooking is first of all culture, conviviality and creativity.

The aim of this cooking course is to introduce participants to the fascinating world of Tuscan gastronomy so that it can be understood, appreciated and enjoyed. Instructed by competent local cooks, participants will share in the authentic moments of “kitchen life” that lead to the execution of various recipes. This very special cooking lesson, which offers the experience of daily life in Tuscany, is also planned to finish with the pleasure of an excellent homemade meal together with a glass of good red wine! The course is designed for anyone who is interested in the subject; there are no requirements other than the love and appreciation of good food.

The school is based in a building from the 1200's which has recently been restored, only a few yards away from Piazza del Campo in the centre of Siena.

Mrs. Lella will welcome you in her Cooking School housed in the ancient slaughterhouse at Fontebranda. Lella will tell you about herself and the story of her cooking school while moving among burners, pots, pans and bowls filled with sugar, flour, cocoa and all the different kind of spices: "I have always loved cooking since I was a child. I should have inherited this art from my grandfather who was a real gourmet. I have always dreamed about opening a cooking school where I could share the secrets of the traditional Senese cooking!"

Clients from all over the world came to Mrs. Lella's cooking school and enjoyed both the charm, beauty and flavours of Siena and the medieval recipes Mrs. Lella would like to share. She is not only a chef, but also a researcher, always looking for ancient texts and recipes which could also be cooked today such as hearty soups, pappa al pomodoro, ribollita, panlavato, stew, game...

With the small group you will prepare a Tuscan menu together with Mrs. Lella and you will have your dinner enjoying the dishes you have just prepared. Wines included in the rate. (D)

Wednesday, March 18th 2014

Tour to Florence with Walking Guided Tour in Florence with Academy Gallery and the Synagogue

Your escort/guide will pick you up at the hotel at **8:45am** and together you will reach the bus.

Note: being Wednesday the day for local market, you might walk a longer distance to reach the first possible parking place for buses.

You will reach Florence at around **10:15am** and you will enjoy a walking guided tour of 4hrs, including the main highlights of the city centre, the Academy Gallery and the Synagogue

Florence is known all over the world as the city of art, the capital of the Renaissance and one of the most important centres of literary and scientific culture. Below you will find a short description of the highlights you will see today. The sequence may change according to the hotel location.



Piazza del Duomo, the religious heart of Florence. The Duomo (Cathedral) is dedicated to Santa Maria del Fiore and is typical of Italian Gothic architecture. The present building was designed by Arnolfo di Cambio. The Cupola remained unfinished, and in 1421 the polygonal base was erected. Two architects won the competition to design the dome, Lorenzo Ghiberti (1368-1445) and Filippo Brunelleschi (1377-1446), but it was Brunelleschi who actually built it using remarkable technical knowledge to achieve the uniquely beautiful results we

see today. Completed in 1436, the Cupola is the most characteristic feature of the Florentine skyline, symbolising a great cultural tradition and the city's civic awareness.

Piazza della Signoria, the political heart of the city from the Middle Ages to the present day. It gets its name from the most important monument there, Palazzo della Signoria, designed by Arnolfo di Cambio in 1298-99 for the seat of the Republican government and which was later to host the Gonfalonier of Justice and the Priors of the Arts (it was in fact at first called Palazzo dei Priori). The square however is not just the "civic" centre of Florence, it is also a splendid open-air museum. The square of the Uffizi stretches out on the south side, towards the Arno, with the eye-catching Loggia dei Lanzi, (1376-1382), whose late Gothic roof covers 15 statues which also include Benvenuto Cellini's wonderful Perseus holding up the head of the Medusa. The statues in the square deserve a chapter all to themselves. Apart from the great sculptures lined up in front of the facade of Palazzo Vecchio (among them the copy of David by Michelangelo), we can hardly avoid noticing the Fountain of Neptune by Ammannati and the equestrian statue of Cosimo I de Medici by Giambologna.

Close by to the Piazza della Signoria you will see the **Ponte Vecchio**, the oldest bridge which crosses the Arno at its widest point. It dates back to Roman times and has been re-built on several occasions.

After the flooding of 1333 it was re-constructed with a double row of shops, passing from a defensive type of architecture to the current public one. In 1565 the east-facing Vasariano Corridor above the shops was built and the back-shops were added in the seventeenth century giving the bridge its modern-day structure.

Piazza Santa Croce (Holy Cross) is one of Florence's largest squares, and traditionally one of the city's main arenas for ceremonials and festivities. The Basilica of Santa Croce, one of the largest churches in the city, is attributed to the genius of Arnolfo di Cambio who seems to have begun work in 1294. The presence of a great many funeral monuments and tombstones (276 can still be seen on the floor alone) has led to the Basilica being thought of as the city Pantheon, the burial place of Florence's most illustrious citizens. Here lie the tombs of Michelangelo, Galileo Galilei, Vittorio Alfieri, Gioacchino Rossini. This tour does not include the visit of the Church.

During the tour you will visit both the Galleria dell'Accademia and the Synagogue; the guide will have the voucher to enter the Museum as we will reserve the entrances.

The collection of Florentine paintings, dating from the 13th to the 18th century, is largely unremarkable, but the sculptures by Michelangelo are worth the price of admission.

The most famous section of the Galleria is surely the Hall of the Prisoners, displaying Michelangelo's unfinished "Slaves". Today the arrangements of the Prisoners along the corridor is a growing crescendo of emotions to the feet of David, exposed under a circular skylight. Next to the Tribuna of David you'll find a series of paintings by Alessandro Allori which are a delightful vocabulary of the symbolism of flowers. Chase the key for explaining hidden messages among a triumph of botanical species like tulips, daisies, lilies, lilies of the valley, citrus and forget-me-nots are displayed a few steps from David.

The Accademia focal point is the original **David**. Crowds of visitors have been drawn to Florence to experience this magnificent sculpture over the past 500 years--and they continue to visit in record numbers. Why does a work of art created half a millennium ago possess such a timeless, universal appeal? What meaning does this 500-year-old sculpture hold for modern-day man? To answer these questions, consider the significance of Michelangelo's David to the Renaissance Florentines who first revered it. During the 1000 years preceding the

Renaissance, the West had been mired in the medieval Christian worldview, which divided the universe into two spheres: a heavenly realm of perfection, happiness and truth, and this dark world of imperfection, misery and falsehood. Man was regarded as powerless and ignorant. The Renaissance was the rebirth of man's life on earth. Freed from the shackles of authority, man's mind was viewed as able to understand the universe. Far from being a tortured soul trapped in a deformed bodily prison, man was regarded as rational, beautiful and heroic--worthy of happiness and capable of great achievement. He can



choose to undertake great challenges in the face of seemingly impossible odds; he can actively pursue success, fight for victory--even slay a giant. Michelangelo's David is the best expression of this Renaissance sense of life. The sculpture was inspired by the story of the young shepherd boy who chose to fight a far stronger adversary in order to save his people from invasion. Wearing no armor, with a sling as his only weapon, David defeats Goliath using superior skill and courage.

Although there had been many earlier portrayals of David in art, Michelangelo's was revolutionary. The others depict David after the battle had been won--often standing on the severed head of a defeated Goliath. Michelangelo chose to show David not in victory, but at that point in time that prefigured victory: in that instance between conscious choice and conscious action, that moment when an individual makes a choice--and commits to act on that choice. David stands, with furrowed brow, looking over his left shoulder into the distance for Goliath. Michelangelo shows David not as a triumphant victor, but as a thinking, resolute being--the preconditions for victory. The key to the David's appeal is Michelangelo's magnificent projection of man at his best--vigorously healthy, beautiful, rational, competent. It expresses a heroic view of man and of a universe auspicious to his success. Such a projection is of immeasurable worth to anyone who holds such a sense of life--whether that person lived 500 years ago or lives today.

The Synagogue of Florence

Jews were well settled in Florence by 1396, when the first money-lending operations became officially sanctioned. Medici patronage helped Jewish banking houses to flourish, but by 1570 Jews were required to live within the large "ghetto," near today's Piazza della Repubblica, by the decree of Cosimo I, who had cut a deal with Pope Pius V (1504-72): in exchange for ghettoizing the Jews, he would receive the title of Grand Duke of Tuscany.



Construction of the modern Moorish-style synagogue began in 1874 as a bequest of David Levi, who wished to endow a synagogue "worthy of the city." Falcini, Micheli, and Treves designed the building on a domed Greek cross plan with galleries in the transept and a roofline bearing three distinctive copper cupolas visible from all over Florence. The exterior has alternating

bands of tan travertine and pink granite, reflecting an Islamic style repeated in Giovanni Panti's ornate interior. Of particular interest are the cast-iron gates by Pasquale Franci, the eternal light by Francesco Morini, and the

Murano glass mosaics by Giacomo dal Medico. The gilded doors of the Moorish ark, which fronts the pulpit and is flanked by extravagant candelabra, are decorated with symbols of the ancient Temple of Jerusalem and bear bayonet marks from vandals. The synagogue was used as a garage by the Nazis, who failed to inflict much damage despite an attempt to blow up the place with dynamite. Only the columns on the left side were destroyed, and even then, the Women's Balcony above did not collapse. Note the Star of David in black and yellow marble inlaid in the floor. The original capitals can be seen in the garden.

Some of the oldest and most beautiful Jewish ritual artifacts in all of Europe are displayed upstairs in the small Museo Ebraico. Exhibits document the Florentine Jewish community and the building of the synagogue. The donated objects all belonged to local families and date from as early as the late 16th century. Take special note of the exquisite needlework and silver pieces. A small but well-stocked gift shop is downstairs.

After the tour you will have free time for shopping, browsing and lunch. At **3:30pm** you will meet your escort and together you will reach the bus to return to Siena at around **5pm** (Dinner on own tonight)

Thursday, March 19th 2014
Tour to Cortona with Guided Walking Tour
Wine Tour and Tasting at Terra di Seta
Farewell Gala Dinner

Your escort/guide will pick you up at the hotel at **8:45am** and together you will reach the bus. You will today visit Cortona. In Cortona you will have a guided tour, from about 10am to noon.

Cortona sits implacably on a green mountainside above terraced olive groves, stony yet inviting. It's a steep



medieval city where cut-stone staircases take the place of many streets, and views over the wide Chiana Valley stretch south to Umbria's Lake Trasimeno. Cortona, like many Tuscan treasures, proclaims itself a "City of Art," but for such a small town it has truly punched above its artistic weight; it spawned (among others) the great pre-Michelangelo painter Luca Signorelli and the early-17th-century painter/architect Pietro da Cortona. (Witness the very

respectable church embellishments and the particularly rich collection of the tiny Museo Diocesano.)

The city's roots are deep and long. It claims to be no less than "the mother of Troy and grandmother of Rome," and legendarily had its start when Dardanus (who'd later go to Turkey and found Troy) dropped his helmet (corythos) during a battle -- not an overly auspicious beginning for the town he founded here and named Corito. Cortona was already a thriving city by the 4th century B.C., when it was one of 12 cities that formed the Etruscan confederation. New finds at Melone II, one of the several Etruscan tombs dotting the hillside and valley below the town, suggest it may have been an even more important center than previously believed.

Even though it was long in a fairly undervisited corner of Tuscany, Cortona never succumbed to the all-too-common fate of becoming a dusty abandoned backwater. It retained a good bit of passeggiata action most evenings on the Rugapiana ("flat street," a nickname for Via Nazionale, the only road in town that even comes close to fitting that description), and in summer the city hosts a modest outdoor film festival in the Parterre Gardens behind San Domenico. Its art treasures ensure a steady stream of tourists, and the 140 University of Georgia students who descend every summer to study art help keep it on its toes -- and make it the only place in Italy where you'll find wrinkled old olive farmers wearing "Go Dawgs!" sweatshirts.

However, the huge popularity of Frances Mayes's book *Under the Tuscan Sun*, about buying and renovating a villa just outside town, has hurled Cortona from relative obscurity to the forefront of Tuscany tourism, just behind Florence, Siena, Pisa, and the Chianti.

After the tour and some free time for lunch, you will reach the bus with your escort at **2pm** to proceed towards Terra di Seta where you will enjoy a wine tour and tasting at **3pm**. This is the only completely kosher winery in Tuscany!

<http://www.terradiseta.it/eng/homepage.html>

A wine tasting tour of approximately 1-1,5 hours will be provided. Owners or the staff will accompany guests to the vineyard and the wine cellar explaining the wine production, from grapes to the wine, related to the Tuscan wine culture, **organic procedures and to the kosher rules**. Moreover, it will be possible to taste Terra di Seta products (wine, honey and extra virgin olive oil), served with a kosher appetizer



After the wine experience you will return to Siena by **5pm** and after some time for relaxation you will enjoy a Farewell, Gala Dinner at the Hotel. (D)

You will enjoy dinner at the hotel at **7:30pm**. We will set the menu at the confirmation of the program. The rate is based on a 6course dinner with 1/4 bottle of red wine, ¼ bottle of white wine, water and coffee per person.

The meal will include fish, vegetables, pasta - no meat, no shell fish.

Friday, March 20th 2014

Transfer from Siena to Fiumicino Airport

According to your flight (Estimated to depart at 10:10 A.M. to Tel Aviv), we will have an early wake up call. Your escort will pick you up at the hotel between 4:30 A.M. - 5:00 A.M. for a direct transfer to Fiumicino airport in Rome. Approx. driving time: 2:30hrs depending on traffic conditions