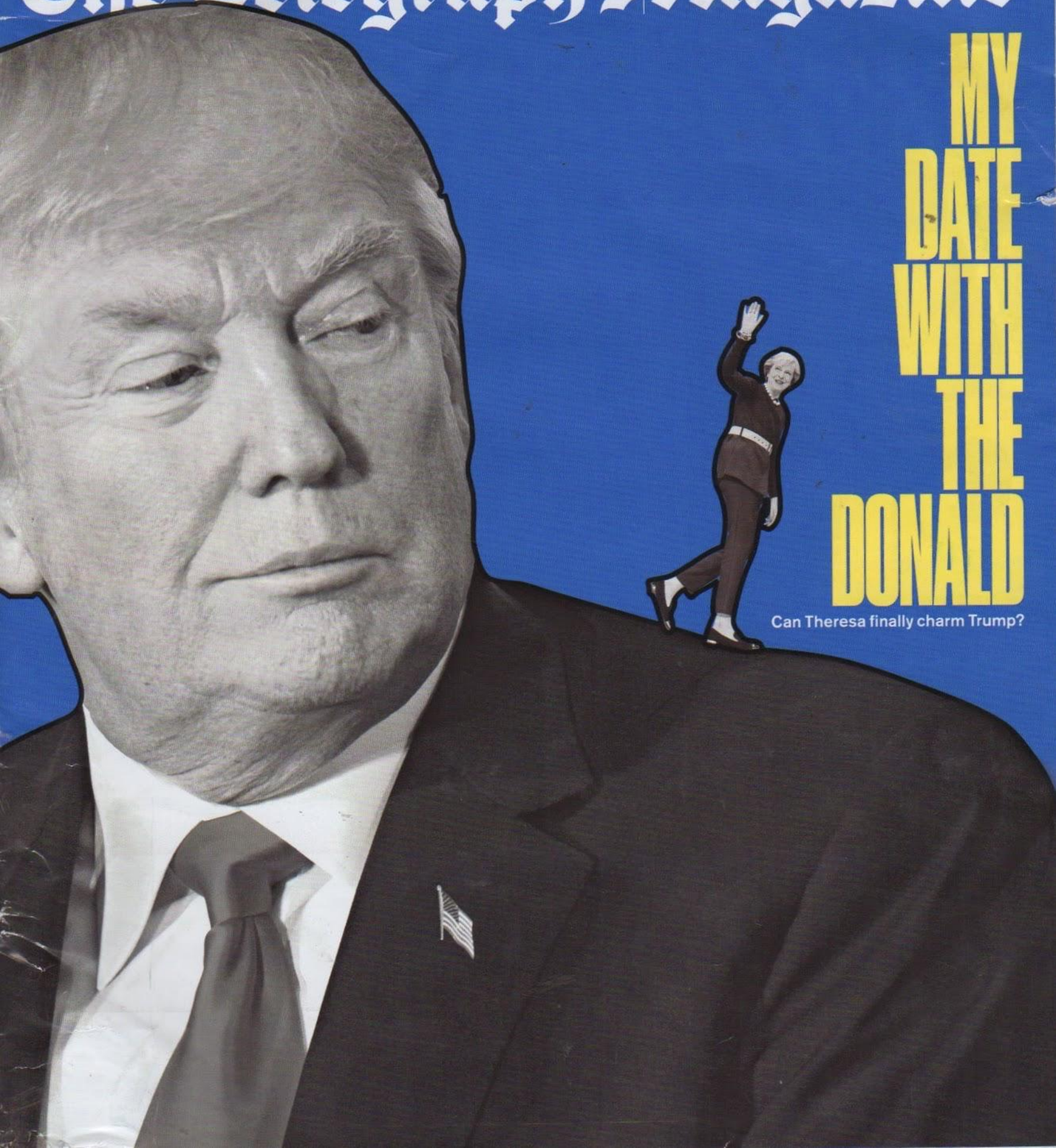


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MY DATE WITH THE DONALD



Can Theresa finally charm Trump?



GOING ON THE ROAD with holidaying restaurant staff can be an electrifying business. They're like pit ponies, kicking up their heels in green pastures after months stuck underground in basement kitchens. But at Trullo and Padella, two much-praised modern Italian restaurants in London, things are different. For a start, their chef-director Tim Siadatan has been taking his staff on working holidays for nearly a decade. 'I first came across the idea when I was taken on by Jamie Oliver as an apprentice at Fifteen,' he explains. 'So when Jordan [Frieda, his business partner] and I opened Trullo in 2010 we decided to do the same. It's important for our chefs; they all work hard and it's a treat. And it's good for the team, which in turn is good for the restaurants.'

This year they are taking staff from both restaurants and tackling Rome and Abruzzo, two destinations that encompass wildly differing versions of Italian food. And, thankfully, Siadatan's team are completely unlike the mad, skin-burnt stereotypical chefs who lead nocturnal lives and exist on KitKats. This lot all seem to get on very well and have a wide-ranging, non-cheffy hinterland - they include a playwright, an actor, a Cambridge graduate and a Brazilian candle-maker. By the time they've left Rome for Abruzzo, one wave has already returned home, fuelled by sightseeing, nights of eating out, and classes with Carla Tomasi, one of the city's most eminent cooks, and food writer Rachel Roddy.

Siadatan and Conor Gadd, Trullo's head chef, drive 125 miles to Abruzzo to join chefs Mariana Congo and Rose Maxwell, operations manager Gavin Purdie, head bartender Francesco Tortora and manager Nikki Williams for the

THE ITALIAN JOB

The staff of two of London's most exciting Italian restaurants decamp to Abruzzo for a lesson in local food. Carolyn Hart tags along for a taste of the action. Photographs by Matteo Imbriani

Spaghetti alla chitarra con le pallottine (spaghetti with meatballs)

Serves 4

This dish is deeply associated with Abruzzese food culture. Its name is derived from the manner in which the spaghetti is made. Rather than using a traditional pasta-rolling machine, they use a piece of equipment called a chitarra – named because of its visual similarities to a guitar. With a rolling pin, sheets of pasta are pressed through the small rectangular box, which has parallel wires running its length. Strands of spaghetti are released with an action almost like strumming a guitar's strings.

The spaghetti alla chitarra has an almost square cross section, which is more robust than tagliarini or other types of fresh pasta you can roll by hand, so for this recipe I'm suggesting using dried spaghetti, as it will be closer in form and texture to the Abruzzese pasta type.

For the pallottine (meatballs)

- 200g veal (or pork) mince
- ¼ tsp freshly grated nutmeg
- 25g Parmesan, grated
- 1 egg
- 1 tbsp rapeseed oil

For the ragu sauce

- 1 small onion, finely diced
- 2 garlic cloves, finely sliced
- a little olive oil, for cooking
- 1 x 400g tin plum tomatoes, crushed in your hands
- 100g sausage meat

To serve

- 320g dried spaghetti (De Cecco is a good brand)
- Parmesan, grated
- dried chilli flakes

Mix together the pallottine ingredients (apart from the oil), with some seasoning, until well combined. Fry a small piece of the mixture first to check the seasoning, then adjust if necessary and form the rest of the mixture into tiny meatballs, no larger than a chickpea. Set aside.

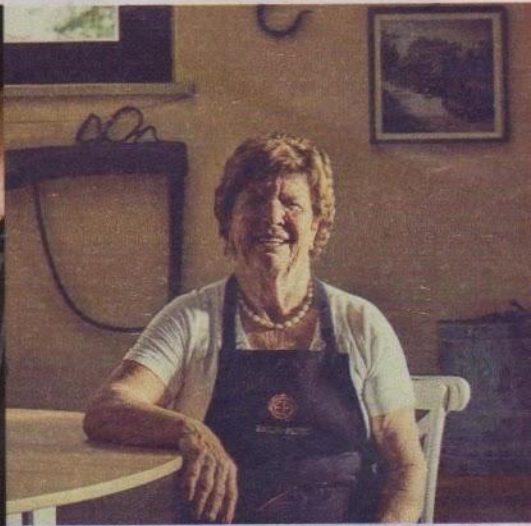
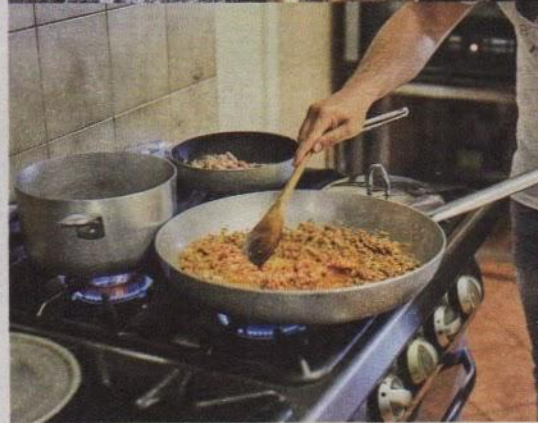
For the sauce, sweat the onion and garlic in olive oil over a medium heat until soft, then add the tomatoes. Allow the sauce to simmer on low for an hour or so, making sure it doesn't catch on the bottom of the pan. Add a splash of water if it runs dry.

Crumble in the sausage meat and continue to cook for 10 more minutes. Remove from the heat.

Heat a good tablespoon of rapeseed oil in a large pan and fry the pallottine in batches, making sure not to overcrowd the pan. Remove them with a slotted spoon.

Cook the spaghetti in generously salted water until al dente (check a minute or so before the packet instructions suggest), then drain, reserving some of the cooking liquid. Add the pasta to the sauce. Add the pallottine and toss together for a couple of minutes, adding some cooking water if the sauce starts to thicken up.

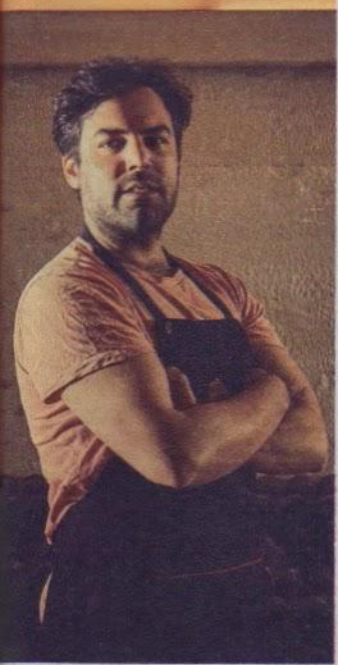
Serve with Parmesan and dried chilli flakes.



Top row, from left Using a chitarra to make spaghetti; Rosa Pepe; chopped garlic for the festival menu. **Middle row** Preparations for lunch in Abruzzo; the Trullo and

Padella teams explore the vines at Emidio Pepe; signs at the vineyard.

Bottom row Views from Emidio Pepe; chef Tim Siadatan



Olive all'ascolano (stuffed and deep-fried olives)

Serves 4

Nonna Pepe, her daughter and her granddaughter all remember fondly hours spent sitting around tables stoning olives before important occasions. This is a labour of love, but one that the Abruzzese feel extremely patriotic about – as do their neighbours over the border in Le Marche. Nobody knows where these originated, but they are ubiquitous in the area. An aperitivo isn't quite right without a freshly fried, crispy olive that almost burns the inside of your mouth when you eat it.

- 500g Castelvetro olives
- 350g beef mince
- 75g pork mince
- 75g chicken mince
- ¼ tsp freshly grated nutmeg
- zest of ½ lemon
- 30g Parmesan, grated
- 2 eggs, beaten
- oil, for deep-frying

To coat

- plain flour
- 3 eggs mixed with 100ml milk
- 500g breadcrumbs

Remove the stones from the olives, trying to keep the flesh in one piece.

Mix together all the meat mince with the nutmeg, lemon zest, Parmesan, egg and some seasoning until well combined.

Stuff each olive with a small ball of the mince mixture – you'll need about a teaspoon per olive. Once stuffed, press the olive into the palm of your hand to reshape it into its oval form.

Coat the olives first in the flour, then in the egg and milk mixture, and finally in breadcrumbs. If you can be bothered, repeat this process to create a really crispy shell.

Heat the oil to 190C in a large saucepan, making sure it is no more than two thirds full, and fry the olives in batches for five minutes or so, until the meat has cooked through and the outsides are golden and crunchy.

Remove carefully with a slotted spoon and leave to drain on kitchen paper before serving.

second part of this break – a four-day stopover at the Emidio Pepe winery, a short drive south of Ancona Airport. This family-run vineyard perched on a hill – with the Apennines, snow-covered and mysterious, in the distance – is one of Trullo's suppliers. It's currently run by fifth-generation winemaker Chiara De Iulis Pepe, her mother, Daniela, her aunt, Sofia, and her grandfather, Emidio Pepe, who between them oversee 15 hectares of vines growing three types of grape – montepulciano, trebbiano and pecorino – along with an agritourism business. This weekend they're also providing, thanks to Chiara's 80-year-old grandmother, Rosa, a crash course in Abruzzese food for the Trullo and Padella staff, who will in return produce a four-course lunch for 50 at the end of their trip during a festival for local food and wine producers.

It's not holidaying as you might know it. Barely have they dumped their

suitcases and the chefs are back in the kitchen being taught how to make stuffed olives; mazzarelle (filled salad leaves); and a kind of delicate lasagne made with layers of very thin pasta, spinach, mince and mozzarella. Everyone has a go at stuffing the olives (first

'Whole families used to gather round to make stuffed olives. It's the kind of thing you do over a glass of wine'

peel one in a spiral, remove the stone, then reshape it into a now-empty olive and fill with a glorious mix of pork, chicken, lemon zest and nutmeg, before dipping in egg, flour and breadcrumbs, and deep-frying). 'Whole families used to gather round to make stuffed olives,' Rosa tells us. 'It's the kind of thing you do over a chat and a glass of wine.'

Watching Rosa make the mazzarelle

('Where I grew up it was one of the duties we had to learn in order to get married,' she says) is not for the squeamish. Huge lettuce leaves are stuffed with a mix of lamb hearts, lungs and livers, garlic and marjoram, folded into parcels tied with stringy lamb intestines and stewed in stock for three hours. They look delicious going in – fresh, fat, green – and are delicious coming out, reduced, blackened and earthy. It's an invaluable lesson in a kind of classic Italian cooking that's fast disappearing. 'She's been making that for decades,' Siadatan explains. 'It's one of the things I love about Italian cooking – people stick to what they know. Once you connect with the people and the land, you get a depth of knowledge that you don't otherwise have. We need to know where produce comes from to cook it properly.'

Back in London, he'll use riffs on the mazzarelle and the olives on his menus,

Timballo alla teramana
(Abruzzo's lighter version of lasagne)
Serves 6

- 150g butter
- 500g beef mince
- 400g spinach
- 2 balls mozzarella
- 2 eggs
- 750g tomato passata
- 100ml whole milk
- ½ tsp freshly grated nutmeg
- 800g fresh pasta sheets
- 60g Parmesan, finely grated

Preheat the oven to 180C/gas mark 4.

Melt 50g butter in a pan over a low heat. Add the mince and cook until it browns. Transfer to a plate.

Add the spinach to the pan and allow it to wilt before draining and leaving to one side. Dice the mozzarella into roughly 1cm cubes.

Whisk together the eggs, passata, milk, nutmeg and some seasoning.

Blanch the sheets of pasta, three or four at a time, in a large pan of boiling salted water as per the cooking instructions, then refresh in ice water. Line a large rectangular casserole dish with two layers of pasta, covering the base and sides. Make sure the sheets overlap slightly so there are no gaps.

Sprinkle an even layer of mince over the pasta, before adding the same quantity of spinach, and a few scant spoonfuls of the egg mixture (fewer than you think).

Finish with a handful of mozzarella, a little Parmesan, and a few small knobs of butter. Cover with a layer of pasta sheets, cutting them to fit if you need to, and repeat. Continue in this fashion until the dish is full, but add the butter and Parmesan sporadically through the layers (not in every one) or else the timballo will be too rich.

Finish with a final layer of pasta topped with a grating of Parmesan and some knobs of butter.

Bake for 45 minutes to an hour, until the top is golden and a knife will slip through the layers with no effort.



'Once you connect with the people and the land, you get a depth of knowledge that you don't otherwise have'

along with takes on some of the dishes taught to the team by Roddy and Tomasi in Rome. 'A pea, guanciale and onion pasta sauce was outstanding,' Siadatan says. 'And a borlotti-bean and pasta dish made with breadcrumbs.'

The next day, it's time for lunch with another supplier – the Fracassa brothers, Roberto and Luigi, run their family's pig farm about 20 minutes from Emidio Pepe and make their own salami. In the baking Italian heat, a mix of 60 Large Whites and Durocs wallow like hippos in a pond under a tree, surrounded by fields of poppies. When they notice visitors, they hurry over to investigate, some caked in mud, others pinkly clean, making a tremendous din of oinks and grunts. In the farm kitchen, Roberto demonstrates the art



of making ventricina, a spreadable salami produced using pork meat flavoured with garlic, rosemary, red peppers, orange zest and herbs. He makes about 200kg a day, grinding it up in a vast mixer and then pushing the results into pigs' bladders, which expand to the size of an ostrich egg. The ventricina is then tied with string and dried for three months. 'Try it,' says Purdie, spreading a piece of bread with a smear of ventricina. 'Now I see how to use it properly. I've always used too much of it before.' Tortora, too, is impressed by the amaro-based digestif offered with the ventricina. 'It's something like a negroni,' he says, approvingly. 'I can adapt that for the bar.'

In the company of chefs, you never wait long for more food and a glass of wine, so it's back to Emidio Pepe for a serious wine-tasting and a hard session's prepping for the feast. On the menu are crostini, courgette risotto, slow-cooked lamb shoulder with borlotti beans, and a cherry Eton mess, destined for a visiting contingent of Pepe friends and family as well as the local winemakers and producers. 'Yesterday Rosa cooked local food,' says Siadatan. 'Tomorrow it's Trullo London. Yet the more I keep coming out and meeting people, the more I realise that I don't know anything. I always come back from these trips with a different perspective, especially when we've met a Rosa or a Carla. I come away humbled.' trullorestaurant.com;padella.co

Below Local winemakers and food producers enjoy a lunch cooked by staff from Trullo and Padella

Drink me
Hamish Anderson



In the wine world Italy's diversity is without compare. A map of the country will give you one clear reason for this – it's long, with a diverse geography. Vines grow from cool northern sites, with ski resorts nearby, all the way through the country, and you end up with extraordinary sweet wines made on the island of Pantelleria, 40 or so miles from the coast of north Africa. Between these two extremes are the soil and climate to produce any conceivable style. The country's other asset is a huge range of grape varieties. It has halted the creeping internationalisation of its vineyards, getting the best out of its unique grapes. Many are grown in small areas and their style has evolved with the local cuisine. Abruzzo makes red, white and rosé from a range of varieties. The key red grape is the powerful, brooding montepulciano (nothing to do with the Tuscan region of the same name). Crisp, herbal whites might come from pecorino; or trebbiano, which often bores, but in the hands of a few can be profound. Here are three bottles that illustrate Italy's breadth.

2017 Recchia Bardolino, Veneto, £7.99, Ocado

Bardolino, on the shores of Lake Garda, makes easy-drinking reds ideal for summer consumption. This, from the local corvina grape, is very quaffable, with red cherry and spice. Lightly chill.

A stunning warm-weather aperitif, with its notes of fresh herbs and pear, and soft, textural depth.

2016 Pemo Pecorino, Terre di Chieti, Abruzzo, £9.99, Ocado

This white is a great example of pecorino's charms.

2015 Sangiovese di Toscana, Podere Scopetone, £14.95, southdowns cellars.co.uk

This is entry-level from a renowned brunello di montalcino producer. It is a cracker, with flowers, cherry, raspberry, and savoury notes adding complexity.