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EATING

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Long before the Spaniards craftily exported their tapas habits to the world's hippest metropolises, the Venetians had been enjoying their own version, *cicheti*, for centuries. More often than not delicious bite-size beasties from sea and lagoon, they symbolise the city's love affair with marine munching. Indeed, a strong sea breeze wafts over the kitchens of the lagoon city, but the occasional meaty stronghold adds the mainland Veneto's voice to the culinary chorus. Plenty of Italian pasta contributions combine with local rice-based first courses to create a broad and tangy palette.

Many Italians gripe that *'si spende tanto e si mangia male'* (you spend a lot and eat badly) in Venice. Good-value eating is more of a challenge in Venice than elsewhere in Italy (high costs are partly explained by the city's logistical peculiarities and partly by cheekiness), but if you hunt around, you can dine well.

Search out eateries tucked away in the side alleys and squares, since many of the restaurants immediately around San Marco, near the train station and along main thoroughfares tend to be tourist traps. The most unlikely looking place hidden deep in the city's entrails can prove a wonderful surprise. If you don't find enough suggestions to keep you busy here, a fine local guide is Michela Scibilia's *A Guide to the Eateries of Venice*.

Traditional Venetian food revolves around products fished in the lagoon and at sea. Although increasingly fish and seafood has to be imported, restaurant owners who know their stuff can tell instantly which critters have been caught in the vicinity. Remember that much seafood is seasonal. Better Venetian restaurants pride themselves on using only fresh, local market produce.

SPECIALITIES

A Sea of Snacks

Cicheti (bar snacks) are a Venetian speciality and *osterie* (bar-restaurants, aka *bacari*) that serve them are making something of a comeback. Venetians sometimes make a night of *giro di bacari* (bar-hopping), sampling snacks with wine and skipping dinner altogether. Some of Venice's *osterie*, long ago the preserve of men (women could wait outside to drag drunken husbands home!), serve full meals and several are noted in this chapter. *Cicheti* are generally washed down with an *ombra* (glass of wine) or three. They say the name *ombra*, which means 'shade', comes from the days when people would flock to stands in the shade of the Campanile di San Marco for an afternoon tippie. As a rule, the barman will keep a tally of what you have eaten and drunk and present you with the final bill when you settle up.

The list of *cicheti* (which often wind up, in greater portions, as antipasti or starters on restaurant menus) is as long as the sea is deep: all sorts of fried critters such as *moeche* (small lagoon shore crabs fished when shedding their shells, in March/April and November/December), calamari, *gamberi* (prawns), *pecci* (Venetian for mussels, or *cozze* in Italian),

schie (microscopic grey prawns) and other shellfish feature prominently. Other items might be fresh, such as *bovoletti* (little snails) or *folpeti* (tiny octopuses), served in a little oil with parsley and salt.

A classic antipasto is *sarde in saor*, biggish sardines lightly cooked in an onion marinade, a favourite since the 13th century. Anything fishy prepared in *saor* tastes good. The secret is in the marinade, which comes out better still with a few *pinoli* (pine nuts). Onions played a big part in traditional Venetian cuisine as a preventative measure against scurvy.

Another delicacy is *granseole* (large spider crabs that live at the bottom of the Adriatic), at their best from October to December. *Cape sante* (coquilles St Jacques), can feature with pasta, but as a snack they're lightly fried in olive oil and garlic, with parsley, lemon and a little white wine added at the last minute.

Variations on the *baccalà* (salted cod) theme are legion. It is good served with polenta, which absorbs some of the fish's natural saltiness. A classic is *baccalà mantecato* (mashed cod prepared in garlic and parsley that comes out looking like a chunky white paste). *Stoccafisso* is dried cod and less common on local menus.

Deep-fried stuffed rice balls, *polpette* (minced meat balls), a slice of *pane con*

top picks

FOR MEAT-EATERS

In a city where just about everyone seems to 'specialise' in seafood, finding a place that offers a decent choice of nonseafood dishes is a challenge!

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l'aciugheta (bread with a salty anchovy) distract you from the seafood. Among the meat starters is *cotechino*, a type of pork sausage served with mustard.

Verdure fritte (vegetables fried in bread-crumbs) are also good, as are stuffed olives. A Venetian obsession is *articiochi* (the Venetian-dialect word for artichokes, *carciofi* in Italian). Baby violet artichokes grown on Sant'Erasmo and Torcello (but some claim the best come from around Malamocco on the Lido) are called *castraure* and fetch up to €3 apiece! *Bortoli* are similar but not as highly prized. If you hang around produce markets you may well see buckets of carefully cut *fondi di articiochi* (artichoke hearts) in water. The height of the season is around June, and the best come from Sant'Erasmo. Locals swear that, fried with parsley and garlic and accompanied by a steak, *articiochi* will send your taste buds to heaven. They are right.

Of Polenta, Pasta & Rice

The staple in northeast Italian cuisine is humble – polenta. This maize-based stodge is to Venetians what couscous is to North Africans. It generally arrives at the table in the form of lightly grilled yellow slabs. A less common version is made of a fine maize and has the appearance of porridge. By itself it's pretty sad, but used to soak up sauces and the like during a meal it comes alive.

Pasta, generally served as a *primo piatto* (first course), does not figure high in Venetian tradition but is rather an Italian 'import'. Only a few types of pasta, such as *bigoli* (a kind of thick, rough spaghetti), really have a long standing in the Venetian tradition. *Bigoli* are ideal for seafood sauces, which stick to them better than to other pastas. A classic is *bigoli alla busara*, with a mild red sauce. (Be careful when you talk about *bigoli*, as *bigolo* is also

slang for a boy's naughty bit.) *Gnocchi*, made of potato, is strictly speaking a Veronese speciality but has been absorbed into the Venetian tradition.

More common than *bigoli* is *pasta e fagioli* (in Venetian, *pasta e fasioi*). This is a peasant dish *par excellence* that people unable to afford meat have been munching for centuries. To the basic mix of short pasta, dried fava beans, onion, olive oil, salt and pepper, you can add pretty much anything you want to live it up.

Rice is far more important than pasta in the Veneto and risotto, basically a rice-based stew (think of the Spanish paella and you'll begin to get the idea), comes in many varieties. Among the possible ingredients are mushrooms, courgettes (zucchini), sausage, quail, trout and other seafood, chicken and spring vegetables. Not to be missed is *risotto in nero*, coloured and flavoured with *seppia* (cuttlefish) ink. *Risi e bisi* is a kind of risotto broth with peas. Despite the often lurid green appearance, it is tasty. Sometimes it's served with ham and parmesan cheese. In the Veneto, people tend to take their peas seriously – some towns even stage *Sagre dei Bisi* (Pea Parties). It takes all sorts.

Soups also appear on menus as a *primo piatto* and the best known is *sopa de pesse* (in Italian is *zuppa di pesce*, fish soup).

The Main Course

Venice is essentially a seaside city and this is keenly reflected in its kitchens. On occasion, the prices you see for fish are per *etto* (100g). The cost of fresh fish is high, so cheap meals generally mean frozen fish. Common fish types include *branzino* (sea bass), *orata* (bream) and *sogliola* (sole).

Those who loathe fish will have to look around, but quite a few places offer a number of meat options and a handful rather haughtily ignore the city's watery environment altogether. Of land-going critters, pork and its derivatives figure strongly in more traditional dishes, along with items such as *fegato* (liver – a classic local dish is *fegato alla veneziana*, liver lightly fried in strips with browned onion and a little red wine) and even *milza* (spleen; an acquired taste) or *mammella di vacca* (cow udder). Don't worry – all the more standard cuts of *manzo* (beef), *agnello* (lamb), *vitello* (veal) and so on are available. Try boiled meats with *radicchio trevisano* (bitter red chicory), eaten baked, in risotto or with pasta.

WHERE NOT TO EAT

Feeding tourists second-rate meals is a Venetian sport. Places offering a set-price *menù turistico* (tourist menu) are frequently a trap, as are those displaying a menu in multiple languages (although this is not always the case). One clear warning sign is tour groups chomping together on an identical meal – usually a sorry-looking plate of spaghetti, with a side order of wilting salad! Anyone who takes up a waiter's/tout's invitation to step inside deserves everything they get.

The worst spots are along the route from the train station towards San Marco and San Marco itself.

Many bars also serve food, but generally do not have proper kitchens, therefore, many dishes are preprepared and probably microwaved.

If you were to try only one meat dish in Venice, it would have to be *carpaccio*. We all know that the Bellini was invented in the Cipriani family's Harry's Bar (see the boxed text, p187), but less well known is that the idea to serve plates of finely sliced raw beef in a simple sauce was also 'cooked up' there. The sauce is a mix of mayonnaise, crushed tomato, cream, mustard and a dash of Worcestershire sauce. The Cipriani named it after Vittore Carpaccio, because at the time the artist was the subject of a big exhibition in Venice. A common variation on the theme sees the beef slices bathed in lemon, *rucola* (rocket) and shavings of *grana padano* cheese.

Venice is a small town and there is little in the way of foreign cuisine – about half a dozen restaurants spanning Japanese to Indian, along with a growing rash of kebab stands. Vegetarian restaurants are also thin on the ground (read: nonexistent), although a handful of places accommodate most vegetarian needs. Vegans will have a harder time of it.

PRACTICALITIES

Opening Hours

Italians rarely eat a *colazione* (sit-down breakfast). They tend to drink a cappuccino and eat a *brioche* (croissant) or other type of pastry (generically known as *pastine*) at a bar before heading to work.

For *pranzo* (lunch), restaurants usually open from 12.30pm to 3pm. Few take orders after 2pm. Traditionally, lunch is the main meal of the day, and many shops and businesses close for two or three hours to accommodate it.

A full meal will consist of an antipasto (starter), which can vary from fried vegetables to a small seafood offering. Next comes the *primo piatto*, generally a pasta or risotto, followed by the *secondo piatto* (second or main course) of meat or fish. Italians may order a *contorno* (vegetable dish) to go with it. In practice, most people opt for an antipasto or *primo*, and some people skip both and content themselves with a *secondo*.

Opening hours for *cena* (dinner) vary, but people start sitting down around 7.30pm. You'll be hard-pressed to find a place still serving after 10pm. The evening meal follows a similar pattern to that of lunch. It was once a simpler affair, but habits are changing because of the inconvenience of travelling home or going out for lunch every day.

Restaurants and bars are generally closed one day each week. In this chapter, operating days are listed but opening times are mentioned only where they vary substantially from the norm.

You should consider booking a table. You can often get one when you walk in off the street, but do not bank on it.

Cafés and bars that serve sandwiches and other snacks generally open from 7.30am to 8pm, although some stay open after 8pm and turn into pub-style drinking and meeting places.

How Much?

Many bars serve filling snacks with lunch-time and predinner drinks. Most also have a wide range of *panini* (sandwiches or filled bread rolls). *Tramezzini* (sandwich triangles) and huge bread rolls cost from €2 to €3.50 if you eat them standing up. You'll also find numerous outlets where you can buy *pizza a taglio* (by the slice) for just a couple of euros. Another option is to go to an *alimentari* (which is a cross between a grocery store and a delicatessen) and ask them to make a *panino* with the filling of your choice. This can cost €3 to €4.

For a sit-down meal there are several options. Many restaurants offer a *menù turistico* (tourist menu) or *menù a prezzo fisso* (set-price lunch) for €12 to €18. Generally, choice is limited, and the food can be breathtakingly unspectacular. If your budget's tight, it is frequently better to settle for a *primo* and, say, a salad at a decent restaurant. That said, a few good restaurants also offer worthy set-lunch menus.

PRICE GUIDE

This price guide is indicative only. We define a meal as a *primo* (first course), *secondo* (second course), dessert and house wine.

€€€	over €80 a meal
€€	€30-80 a meal
€	under €30 a meal

In many bars and eateries a two-tier system operates – one price for locals and another for all the *foresti* (non-Venetians). Just asking for the bill in Venetian (*podemo ghaver el conto?*) is enough to prompt most restaurateurs to chop a few euros off the bill. It's unlikely to work unless you can really manage to sound like a born-and-bred Castello kid!

Most eating establishments have a cover charge ranging from €1 to €6. You also generally have to factor in a service charge of 10% to 15%. Further tipping is strictly optional.

SESTIERE DI SAN MARCO

A handful of classy restaurants and one or two more modestly priced hideaways ply their trade in the heart of Venice, surrounded by the serried ranks of mediocre tourist rip-off joints. Of the six *sestieri* (municipal divisions), San Marco is in many respects the worst when looking for dining options.

HARRY'S BAR Map pp62-3 Venetian €€€
% 041 528 57 77; www.cipriani.com; Calle Vallaresso 1323; meals €90-150; h 10.30am-11pm daily; f Vallaresso/San Marco
Arrigo Cipriani's classic location is better thought of as a bar (see p187). The Cipriani family, who started the place in 1931, claims to have invented many Venetian specialities, including the Bellini cocktail. A meal here is incredibly expensive and, given the fiscal effort involved, lacklustre, but many take comfort from knowing that the likes of Toscanini, Chaplin and Hemingway have preceded them.

VINI DA ARTURO Map pp62-3 Meat €€€
% 041 528 69 74; Calle dei Assassini 3656; meals €85; h Mon-Sat; f Santa Maria del Giglio
There's not the slightest whiff of sole, bream or prawns in this carnivores' club buried in the backstreets of San Marco. Not only that,

but the sizzling slabs of meat are accompanied by respectable vegetable garnishes.

OSTERIA AL BACARETO

Map pp62-3 Venetian & Cicheti €€
% 041 528 93 36; Calle Crosera 3447; meals €35-50; h lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, lunch Sat; f San Samuele

Take the simple option and go for a plateful of *cicheti* with a glass of wine. Some people will tell you that the fried sardines are the best in Venice. You can also sit down to a full meal.

AI ASSASSINI

 Map pp62-3 Osteria €€

% 041 528 79 86; Rio Terà dei Assassini 3695; meals €30-35; h lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat; f Santa Maria del Giglio

This backstreet joint offers a glimpse into a fairly typical Venetian eating scene. Head through the Gothic doorway into a lowlit, cluttered (all those pots and pans hanging from the ceiling) and bustling ambience and pull up a pew at one of the long timber tables for simple Venetian fare. The food is not spectacular but the prices are reasonably under control and, wonder of wonders, even locals eat here.

VINO VINO

Map pp62-3 Wine Bar, Cicheti & Venetian €€

% 041 241 76 88; Calle della Veste 2007a; meals €30; h Wed-Mon; f Santa Maria del Giglio

This fine old wine bar got the once over in 2007 but has otherwise remained largely true to its history of offering a broad choice of wines to be accompanied by a limited range of dishes or *cicheti*. The remake means it has definitely lost something of the timeless aura it once had, but it is not a bad stop-off all the same in a part of town where most of the competition is rubbish.

OSTERIA ALLA BOTTE

Map pp62-3 Venetian & Cicheti €€

% 041 520 97 75; www.osteriaallabotte.it; Calle Bissa 5482; meals €25-30; h lunch Wed-Mon, dinner Mon-Wed; f Rialto

Wander into this backstreet *bacaro* (old-style bar) near the Ponte di Rialto for an array of *cicheti* and a glass of *prosecco* (sparkling white wine). Racy music and brisk bar staff suit the crowds of young punters. Sit out the back for no-nonsense Venetian food washed down with some decent reds.

GELATERIA PAOLIN

Map pp62-3 Gelateria & Café €
% 041 522 55 76; Campo Santo Stefano 2962;
breakfast dishes €10; h 9am-10pm daily;
f Accademia
Not a bad place at all for *gelato* (ice-cream), it is even better for a relaxing breakfast in the morning sunshine. A limited range of toasted sandwiches is on offer, the orange juice is good, and instead of a straightforward coffee you could opt for the more gluttonous *bicerin*, a marvellous Turin speciality: coffee and chocolate combo topped off with thick cream.

ENOTECA IL VOLTO

Map pp62-3 Cicheti & Wine €
% 041 522 89 45; Calle Cavalli 4081; snacks €2-3;
h Mon-Sat; f Rialto
Near Campiello San Luca and established in 1936, this *osteria* (restaurant-bar) has an excellent wine selection (more than 1000 labels according to one claim). Tiptle in hand, proceed to choose from the tempting array of snacks, which no doubt will induce you to hang about for another glass.

AI RUSTEGHI

Map pp62-3 Cicheti & Panini €
% 041 522 22 05; Campiello del Tentor 5513;
mini-panini from €1.50; h 8am-9.30pm Mon-Sat;
f Rialto
For a great range of mini-*panini* with all sorts of fillings, pop in to this cosy bar and eatery that is something of an institution around here. There's nothing better than an *ombra* or two and a couple of delicious *panini* as a quick lunchtime snack.

SESTIERE DI DORSODURO

Some excellent restaurants are scattered about Dorsoduro, many not far from the social hub of Campo Santa Margherita. A particularly rich hunting ground is Calle Lunga San Barnaba, which is lined with enticing spots. Otherwise, you'll have to spread the net wider to find the occasional isolated gem.

AI GONDOLIERI

Map pp76-7 Meat €€
% 041 528 63 96; Fondamenta Ospedaletto 366;
meals €65-75; h Wed-Mon; f Accademia
Surrounded by innumerable seafood restaurants, Ai Gondolieri is a welcome change

LOVELY LICKS

Venice seems to be awash in gelato. At every turn, someone is purveying the stuff. Some is better than average, and locals gravitate to a handful of faves, among which are those listed below.

Alaska (Da Pistacchi; Map pp84-5; % 041 71 52 11; Calle Larga del Bari, Santa Croce 1159; h 8am-1pm & 3-8pm daily; f Riva de Biasio)

Gelateria Il Doge (Map pp76-7; % 041 524 40 49; Campo Santa Margherita, Dorsoduro 2604; h 8am-9pm daily; f Ca' Rezzonico)

Gelateria Millefoglie da Tarcisio (Map pp84-5; % 041 524 46 67; Salizada San Rocco, San Polo 3033; h 8am-10pm daily; f San Toma)

Gelateria Nico (Map pp76-7; % 041 522 52 93; Fondamenta Zattere, Dorsoduro 922; h 6.45am-10pm Fri-Wed; f Zattere)

Gelateria San Stae (Map pp84-5; % 041 71 06 89; Salizada di San Stae, Santa Croce 1910; h 11am-7pm Tue-Sun; f San Stae)

for carnivores. All the mains are constituted from land-going critters, with such options as Angus steak, duck and liver.

LINEA D'OMBRA

Map pp76-7 Seafood €€
% 041 520 47 20; Ponte dell'Umiltà 19; meals €40;
h lunch & dinner Mon, Tue & Thu-Sat, lunch Sun;
f Salute

A good catch for fish and even better for the location. Grab a seat on the generous pontoon set out from the footpath and gaze over the Canale della Giudecca while getting stuck into some tender fish of the day. Some tables are set aside for drinking only, grand for an early afternoon tippie in the summer sun.

RISTORANTE LA BITTA

Map pp76-7 Meat €€
% 041 523 05 31; Calle Lunga San Barnaba 2753a; meals €35-40; h dinner Mon-Sat;
f Ca' Rezzonico

The short and regularly changing menu is dominated by a few *primi* and meat dishes (what about *coniglio in casseruola ai peperoni* – casserole of rabbit with capsicum?), and not a fin of fish. This restaurant's bottle-lined dining room leads out to an attractive internal courtyard. Be sure to leave room for dessert. Credit cards are politely declined.

RISTOTECA ONIGA

Map pp76-7 Venetian €€
% 041 522 44 10; www.oniga.it; Campo San Barnaba 2852; meals €35; h Wed-Mon;
f Ca' Rezzonico

Having gone through several unhappy incarnations, this nicely located corner eatery has it right now. A balance of seafood and meat (Angus steak and duck), preceded by imaginative pasta *primi* (eg *tagliolini* done with spring onion, artichoke and fish) at €10, and cheerful service make this a popular bet. These guys won a catering contract with the Teatro La Fenice.

DO FARAI

Map pp76-7 Seafood €€
% 041 277 03 69; Calle del Cappeller 3278; meals €35; h Mon-Sat; f Ca' Rezzonico
Hidden away on a *calle* (street) you are less likely to stumble on, this busy seafood restaurant is compacted into a timber-panelled room where you can sample such delights as the *tris di saor sarde*, *scampi e sogliole* (sardines, prawns and sole in the typical Venetian *saor* sauce). Prices are a trifle elevated.

PANE VINO E SAN DANIELE

Map pp76-7 Italian €€
% 041 523 74 56; Campo Anzolo Rafael 1722; meals €30-35; h Thu-Tue; f San Basilio
A revived version of a legendary old-time trattoria, haunt of postwar artists and other bohemians, Bread Wine and San Daniele (ham) offers a little more than that: a limited range of starters and gnocchi first courses, followed by various meat-based dishes.

OSTERIA AI QUATRO FERI

Map pp76-7 Venetian Seafood €€
% 041 520 69 78; Calle Lunga San Barnaba 2754b; meals €30-35; h Mon-Sat; f Ca' Rezzonico
Seafood only is the deal here. Tuna is a house speciality, but you can also tuck into swordfish at your cosy (sometimes a little too cosy) oak table. Consider the antipasti instead of pasta *primi*; there's also a good mixed grill of vegetables or seafood salad.

TRATTORIA SAN BASILIO

Map pp76-7 Seafood €€
% 041 521 00 28; Calle del Vento 1516; meals €30-35; h Tue-Sat; f San Basilio
Stefano loves a chat so come in a social mood and *sea* what he can offer in terms of catch of the day. You might want to have

mixed seafood antipasto with prawns, squid, *baccalà mantecato* and *sarde in saor*, followed by lightly grilled bream. Finish with a glass of *fragolino* (strawberry-flavoured wine).

OSTERIA ALLA BIFORA

Map pp76-7 Charcuterie €
% 041 523 61 19; Campo Santa Margherita 2930; meals €25-30; h 10am-2am; f Ca' Rezzonico
Carved out of an exquisite 12th-century building, this is an enticing option for a few glasses of red over an enormous *tagliere* (platter) of cold meats and cheese. Franco, the owner, painstakingly unveiled the centuries-old timber ceiling of what had long been a butcher's. At the back is the *bifora*, a Gothic window (now walled in) that is unusual for being at ground level. Franco's rules: no coffee and no pictures on the brick walls.

SESTIERI DI SAN POLO & SANTA CROCE (SANTA CROSE)

Tucked away in all sorts of corners of these *sestieri* you'll stumble across cosy Venetian restaurants, the city's sole Indian redoubt, some of the oldest and most genuine of *osterie* and the city's lone Michelin-star splurge! The Rialto area has become the busiest nightlife spot in town and most of the busy bars serve good food.

DA FIORE

Map pp84-5 Refined Venetian €€€
% 041 72 13 08; Calle del Scaletter, San Polo 2202; meals €180-200; h Tue-Sat; f San Stae
The unprepossessing shopfront appearance belies an Art Deco interior and traditional dishes, such as *risotto di scampi* (prawn risotto) and *bigoli in salsa* (thick pasta in tomato sauce), prepared with optimum care. They need to be. Once praised by Patricia Wells as one of the finest eateries in Italy and one of only two in Venice to have a Michelin star, Da Fiore risks all by pushing prices to the stars.

VECIO FRITOLIN

Map pp84-5 Inventive Venetian €€
% 041 522 28 81; Calle della Regina, Santa Croce 2262; meals €45-50; h lunch & dinner Wed-Sun, dinner Tue; f San Stae
Traditionally, a *fritolin* was an eatery where diners sat at a common table and dug into

fried seafood and polenta, or wrapped it up in paper and took it away. It was basically a chippie. At lunchtime you can still pick up takeaway *pesse in scartosso* (fried fish), but things have changed. The present owners regale you with fine meals based on local and national cooking. Pasta is homemade (as are the bread and desserts), and all the ingredients are purchased daily at the nearby Rialto markets.

ANTICHE CARAMPANE

Map pp84–5 Venetian €€
% 041 524 01 65; Rio Terà delle Carampane, San Polo 1911; meals €40-45; h Tue-Sat; f San Stae
If you manage to navigate to this place in the heart of the one-time red-light district (the nearest bridge is Ponte delle Tette, or Tits Bridge), you could be forgiven for hesitating to enter. The handwritten sign declaims: 'No lasagne, no pizza, no tourist menu'. A tad tetchy? Never mind – for home-cooked fresh fish and vegetables, you have come to the right place.

AL PESADOR Map pp84–5 cicheti €€
% 041 523 94 92; www.alpesador.it; Campo San Giacometto, San Polo 125-126; meals €35-45; h 10.30am-2am Tue-Sun; f Rialto
The newest of the three incredibly popular spots housed in the Fabbriche Vecchie, this is great for snacks and wines from all over the country. The tendency is for simple fusion tittbits, which most folks munch on canalside. They specialise in various fish *carpaccio* dishes and do a reasonable seafood couscous. Many just come for the drinking.

DO YOUR OWN THING

Pick up wonderful fresh produce at the city's markets (see the boxed text, p164). For salami, cheese and wine, shop in *alimentari* or *salumerie*, which are a cross between grocery stores and delicatessens. Freshly baked bread is available at a *fornaio* or *panetteria*, a bakery that sells bread, pastries and sometimes groceries. You'll find a concentration of these around Campo delle Beccarie in the Rialto, which happens to lie next to the city's main *pescaria* (fish market). Complement these acquisitions with other general requirements at a sprinkling of supermarkets, including the following:

Billa (h 8.30am-8pm Mon-Sat, 9am-8pm Sun) Cannaregio (Map pp92–3; Strada Nova, Cannaregio 3660; f Ca' d'Oro) Dorsoduro (Map pp76–7; Fondamenta Zattere, Dorsoduro 1492; f San Basilio).

In-Coop (h 9am-1pm & 4-7.30pm Mon-Sat) Cannaregio (Map pp92–3; Rio Terà dei SS Apostoli, Cannaregio 4662; f Fondamente Nuove) Santa Croce (Map pp84–5; Campo San Giacomo dell' Orio, Santa Croce 1492; f Riva de Biasio)

Punto Sma (Map pp76–7; Rio Terà della Scoazzera, Dorsoduro 3113; h 9am-12.50pm & 4.30-8pm Mon-Sat; f Ca' Rezzonico)

Suve (Map pp100–1; Salizada San Lio, Castello 5817; h 8.30am-7.45pm Mon, Tue & Thu-Sat, 8.30am-1pm Wed; f Rialto)

OSTERIA MOCENIGO

Map pp84–5 Venetian €€
% 041 523 17 03; Salizada San Stae, Santa Croce 1919; meals €40; h Tue-Sun; f San Stae
A young and enthusiastic team serves you in this smallish but welcoming Venetian eatery. Exposed timber beams and burnt brown floor tiles give the place a sense of warmth, but it is unmistakably fresh and modern – no attempt at recreating ye olde Venice here. Try the *insalata di piovra* (octopus salad, €12).

RIBÒ Map pp84–5 Venetian €€
% 041 524 24 86; www.ristoranteribo.com; Fondamenta Minotto, Santa Croce 158; meals €35-40; h Thu-Tue; f Ferrovia
In a part of town where good dining options are scarce, this is one to watch for. In the extensive rear-garden dining area you will be served meticulously prepared Venetian dishes. Pasta and desserts are made on the premises.

TRATTORIA DA IGNAZIO

Map pp84–5 Italian €€
% 041 523 48 52; Calle dei Saoneri, San Polo 2749; meals €35-40; h Sun-Fri, closed mid-Jul–mid-Aug; f San Toma
The first thing one appreciates here is the space between the tables – no forced cosiness (and in summer you can sit under the pergola in the courtyard). Service is the old-fashioned, white-jacket variety and meals are Veneto-Italian with a marine leaning. A classic *primo* is the *spaghetti al sugo di pesce* (spaghetti with a substantial fish sauce).

DELUXE HOTEL DINING

In some of Venice's grand hotels, masters of gastronomy produce first-rate food for guests and outsiders alike. Here we list some high-flyers.

Cipriani (Map p109; % 041 520 77 44; www.hotelcipriani.it; Giudecca 10, Giudecca; meals €150-200; f Zitelle)
The restaurant at the Hotel Cipriani (see p209) offers fine views across the Venetian lagoon. You are regaled with *haute cuisine*, especially seafood. Also in the Hotel Cipriani is Cip's Club; this option is more relaxed, offering anything from pizza to a bruschetta on the terrace.

La Cucina (Map pp62–3; % 041 240 00 01; www.starwoodhotels.com; Westin Europa & Regina, Corte Barozzi, San Marco 2159; meals €100; f Santa Maria del Giglio) One of the few Italian quality restaurants to boast an open kitchen, this romantic location is making a name for itself as a gourmet stop.

Ristorante de Pisis (Map pp62–3; % 041 520 70 22; www.bauervenezia.com; Calle dei 13 Martiri, San Marco 1413d; meals €80-150; f Vallaresso/San Marco) Chef Giovanni Ciresa combines international cuisine and Mediterranean influences at one of the top restaurants in town inside the Bauer hotel (p201). The 13 martyrs to whom the street name refers were people executed here by the Fascists in July 1944.

Ristorante Met (Map pp100–1; % 041 520 50 44; www.hotelmetropole.com; Hotel Metropole, Riva degli Schiavoni, Castello 4149; meals €120; f San Zaccaria) Corrado Fasolato has turned the kitchen at the Hotel Metropole into a mine of Michelin-star-rated good food, including ever-present fish and game.

Terrazza (Map pp100–1; % 041 522 64 80; www.starwoodhotels.com; Riva degli Schiavoni, Castello 4196; meals €100-150; f San Zaccaria) A meal on the rooftop terrace of the Hotel Daniele (p207) is a delight for the palate as well as for the eyes.

IL REFOLO Map pp84–5 Pizza €€
% 041 524 00 16; Campo San Giacomo dell'Orio, Santa Croce 1459; pizzas €7-12, meals €35-40; h lunch & dinner Wed-Sun, dinner Tue; f Riva de Biasio

This place is a firm favourite for quality pizza, especially in summer when you can take up a position along the peaceful canal (and hang out until 1am, although the last pizzas roll out at 11pm). Run by the son of the owners of **Da Fiore** (p173), the restaurant's other big plus is the divine homemade desserts.

NARANZARIA Map pp84–5 Fusion €€
% 041 724 10 35; www.naranzaria.it; Campo San Giacometto, San Polo 130; meals €30-40; h Tue-Sun; f Rialto

East meets West in this hip corner bistro, offering sushi and Venetian-style *cicheti*, along with light summer dishes. Swilled down with fine local and Friuli wines, this microscopically sized locale with cool ambient music adds a metro touch to the Rialto market bustle. Grab a table upstairs in winter or take a canalside position in summer. (The Naranzaria was long the orange market. Oranges were prized by mariners not for making juice but as a preventive measure against scurvy while at sea.)

OSTERIA VIVALDI Map pp84–5 Venetian €€
% 041 523 81 85; Calle della Madonnetta, San Polo 1457; meals €30-40; h Mon-Sat; f San Silvestro

You could easily rush past here in the crush of the San Polo shopping district, but if it's a food time of day, drop in to this traditional eatery, with its low timber-beam ceiling and cosy dark-wood tables. Accompany your *ombra* with a few *cicheti*. Alternatively, sit down to a full meal and try the *grigliata di pesce* (mixed fish grill).

TRATTORIA ALLA MADONNA Map pp84–5 Venetian €€
% 041 522 38 24; Calle della Madonna, San Polo 594; meals €30-40; h Thu-Tue; f Rialto

This is one of those time warps. A long, rowdy series of dining areas, swarms of busy but affable waiters in white jacket and black tie, and a menu that hasn't changed in decades (the place opened as Italy struggled its way out of the postwar doldrums in 1954). Expect lashings of simple food. Try the *pasta e fagioli* (pasta and bean soup) to start and move on to fish or, say, veal done in a butter sauce. All sorts wind up in here, from local market workers on a night out to American tourists in search of an experience.

AL NONO RISORTO

Map pp84-5

Pizza €€

☎ 041 524 11 69; Sotoportego de Siora Bettina, Santa Croce 2338; pizzas €7-9; meals €30-40; **h** Thu-Tue; **f** San Stae

Stop in if only to luxuriate in the leafy, wisteria-filled canal-side garden in summertime. In the cooler months, customers crowd inside the lofty, timber-lined dining area. Pizzas are the best bet.

BANCO GIRO

Map pp84-5

Italian €€

☎ 041 523 20 61; Campo San Giacometto, San Polo 122; meals €30-35; **h** Tue-Sun; **f** Rialto

A convivial place that once served simply as a bar and snack stand for market workers, it buzzes in the evening with a young set in for an evening of beers and light meals. In the warmer weather take a seat outside by the Grand Canal.

OSTERIA AL DIAVOLO E

L'ACQUASANTA

Map pp84-5

Venetian €€

☎ 041 277 03 07; Calle della Madonna, San Polo 561b; meals €30-35; **h** lunch & dinner Wed-Sun, lunch Mon; **f** Rialto

Punters line up at the bar for a tippie while waiting for a cramped table in front of the bar or out the back. The sometimes gruff owner runs a tight ship but has his stalwart local customers. The place is loaded with atmosphere, the walls covered in a slew of old photos and memorabilia. Beware that the kitchen closes at 9.30pm, although you

CHAIN GANG

Those on a tight budget could keep an eye out for chain eateries. Several Italian firms have taken the fast-food concept and put a local spin on it. The result is a cut way above the usual.

Brek (Map pp92-3; ☎ 041 244 01 58; Rio Terà Lista di Spagna, Cannaregio 124; meal €7-12; **h** 7.30am-10pm daily) This is light years from hamburgers and hot dogs! *Primi* (first courses) and *secondi* (second courses) for minimal outlay! The restaurant area is open nonstop from 11.30am to 10pm and you can get coffee and snacks at the bar all day. There is another branch in Mestre (Map p121) on Via Carducci 54.

Spizzico (Map pp62-3; Campo San Luca, San Marco 4475-6; pizza slices €3-4.50; **h** 10am-9pm Sun-Fri, 10am-11pm Sat) For quick slices of pizza, this isn't bad – the chain is popular in northern Italy.

can wander in as late as midnight for a quick tippie at the bar.

OSTERIA ALLA CIURMA

Map pp84-5

Cicheti €€

☎ 041 523 95 14; Calle Galeazza, San Polo 406; meals €30; **h** 8am-9pm Mon-Thu, 8am-3pm & 6pm-midnight Fri & Sat; **f** Rialto Mercato

As is typical in this kind of *cicheteria* (snack bar), space is limited: drinkers and snackers inevitably pile out on to the street as well. Hemingway would have approved of this 'clean, well lighted place'.

OSTERIA ALLA PATATINA

Map pp84-5

Venetian & Cicheti €€

☎ 041 523 72 38; Calle dei Saoneri, San Polo 2741a; meals €30; **h** lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, lunch Sat; **f** San Tomà

Pile in around the rough timber tables and benches for *cicheti* (including *sarde in saor* and other classics) or simple pasta dishes (such as the hearty *pappardelle con scampi e porcini*, a thick ribbon pasta with prawns and mushrooms), washed down with a robust Refosco red. The Potato Chip Inn (don't bother looking for chips!) makes no compromise with fickle trends and retains a traditional air.

OSTERIA LA ZUCCA

Map pp84-5

Italian €€

☎ 041 524 15 70; Calle del Tentor, Santa Croce 1762; meals €30; **h** Mon-Sat; **f** San Stae

It seems like just another Venetian trattoria, but the menu (which changes daily) is an enticing mix of Mediterranean themes. The vegetable side orders (around €4.50) alone are inspired, while the mains (€12 to €16) are substantial and always a little different (try the *agnello arrosto con tzatziki*, roast lamb with tzatziki). Only the seriously famished will want pasta as well.

OSTERIA AE CRAVATE

Map pp84-5

Venetian & Italian €

☎ 041 528 79 12; Salizada di San Pantalon, Santa Croce 36/36; meals €25; **h** Mon-Sat; **f** San Tomà

Ties hang from the roof and every conceivable nook in this tiny place (so that explains the name). The menu changes regularly, and they don't need publicity to fill the cramped tables! The *fusilli agli asparagi e scampi* (green asparagus and shrimps) might be followed by a *saltimbocca alla*

SLICES OF PASTRY PARADISE

Venice has as much of a sweet tooth as any Italian town, and a long tradition of baking up temptations. While you can feed your gluttonous side in most pastry shops, an effort to get to some of the better ones – such as those listed here – will be truly sweetly rewarded.

Andrea Zanin (Map pp62-3; ☎ 041 522 48 03; www.andreazanin.it; Campo San Luca, San Marco 4589; 7.30am-8pm Mon-Sat, 10.30am-7.30pm Sun; **f** Rialto) One of the city's top pastry chefs has taken this age-old patisserie and turned it into a darkly cool, metropolitan cake-freaks' hangout. Music videos play from screens on black walls as well-dressed punters eye each other and the many-coloured torts and tarts.

Antica Pasticceria Tonolo (Map pp76-7; ☎ 041 523 72 09; Calle dei Preti, Dorsoduro 3764; **h** 7.45am-1pm & 3-8.30pm Tue-Sat, 7.45am-1pm Sun; **f** San Tomà) This place has been turning out delicious pastries since 1886. Stop by for a coffee or perhaps a midday *prosecco* and bar snacks.

Bucintoro (Map ppp84-5; ☎ 041 72 15 03; Calle del Scaleter, San Polo 2229; **h** 7.15am-8pm Tue-Sun; **f** San Stae) The Venetian word for pastry maker is *scaleter*, which comes from the step-shaped sign (the Italian word for stairs is *scale*) they once etched onto their sweets, which were known as *scalete*. Gino Zanin carries on antique Venetian traditions with his sweets and pastries, which come with such wonderful names as *bacingondola* (kiss in the gondola), a little meringue-and-chocolate number.

Gobbetti (Map pp76-7; ☎ 041 528 90 14; Rio Terà Canal, Dorsoduro 3108b; **h** 8am-1pm & 3.30-8pm Wed-Mon; **f** Ca' Rezzonico) This is another good traditional place for sweet things, just off Campo Santa Margherita.

Pasticceria da Bonifacio (Map pp100-1; ☎ 041 522 75 07; Calle degli Albanesi, Castello 4237; **h** 7.30am-8.30pm Fri-Wed; **f** San Zaccaria) This classic Venetian pastry shop has remained unspoiled by its proximity to Piazza San Marco. Alongside local sweets and pastries you will occasionally encounter others sneaked in from surrounding provinces.

romana (veal slices cooked with ham and, in this case, spinach).

TRATTORIA DA RENATO

Map pp84-5

Italian €€

☎ 041 524 19 22; Rio Terà Secondo, San Polo 2245a; meals €25; **h** Fri-Wed; **f** San Stae

Affectionately known as Da Vittorio (a reference to the owner), or good-naturedly as Il Lento (the Slow One – some say service can be tardy, largely because he prepares the food when you order it, not the night before!). You are unlikely to eat as well for this price in many other Venetian eateries. There is no pretence at gastronomic adventure, just tasty pasta dishes and decent mains.

GANESH JI

Map pp84-5

Indian €€

☎ 041 71 90 84; Fondamenta Rio Marin, San Polo 2426; meals €20-25; **h** lunch & dinner Fri-Tue, dinner Thu; **f** Ferrovia

Fancy a quick curry? Forget it. But a good slow one can be had on the canal-side terrace of this place. Charming chaotic staff members serve up authentic dishes at reasonable prices – particularly pleased guests have scribbled their appreciation on the walls. The place also offers a vegetarian lunch menu (€12) and a nonvegetarian lunch option (€13.50). Chuck in a €2.50 cover charge.

ALL'ANFORA

Map pp84-5

Pizza €€

☎ 041 524 03 25; Lista dei Bari, Santa Croce 1223; pizzas €8-10; **h** Thu-Tue; **f** Riva de Biasio Head out the back into the courtyard to indulge in an enormous choice of generous, tasty pizzas over a beer. Try the pizza all'Anfora, loaded up with various meats, artichokes and asparagus.

ANTICO PANIFICIO

Map pp84-5

Pizza €€

☎ 041 277 09 67; Rio Terà Sant'Aponal, San Polo 945a-b; pizzas €8-10; **h** Wed-Mon; **f** San Silvestro

No-one comes to the 'old bakery' for bread, but for the generous, crispy pizzas that sail out of the wood-fired oven. It takes a little finding and gets busy, but it's streets ahead of the many pizza-slice takeaway joints in the vicinity.

AE OCHE

Map pp84-5

Pizza €€

☎ 041 524 11 61; Calle del Tentor 1552a; pizzas €7-10; **h** daily; **f** San Stae

Students love this place, with its low timber ceiling and old-style travel ads from the US on the walls. Choose from around 90 types of pizza and a good range of salads in a busy, youthful atmosphere. This is the mother ship of a growing chain in and beyond Venice.

CANTINA DO MORI

Map pp84-5 Cicheti & Other Snacks €

☎ 041 522 54 01; Sotoportego dei do Mori, San Polo 429; snacks €3-4; h 8am-8.30pm Mon-Sat; f Rialto Mercato
Back in 1462 they started selling wine in this dark tavern near the Ponte di Rialto. They haven't stopped since (except for a few years in the 16th century when fire and plague wrought havoc). The place has operated as an *osteria* – offering a range of snacks – since the 1940s. Oozing history, it still attracts a lot of local custom in spite of rising prices. Don't bump your head on the pots hanging from the ceiling.

BAR AI NOMBOLI

Map pp84-5 Panini & Sandwiches €

☎ 041 523 09 95; Calle dei Nomboli, San Polo 2117c; sandwiches €3-4; h 8am-8pm Mon-Sat; f San Tomà
Francesco is the local king of the fresh *tramezzino* (sandwich triangle). His corner bar may not look like much, but all Venice knows that he makes the best, partly because he actually makes them with freshly cut bread, rather than having them delivered prefabricated and vacuum packed.

ALL'ARCO

Map pp84-5 Cicheti €

☎ 041 520 56 66; Calle dell'Arco, San Polo 436; cicheti €1.50-3; h 7am-5pm Mon-Sat; f Rialto Mercato
For good-value *cicheti* and a glass or two of wine, this is one of the most authentic *osterie* in San Polo. People gather around the bar or, on warmer days, cramp together on stools by tiny tables among the hubbub of the cramped lanes outside.

SESTIERE DI CANNAREGIO

Numerous bars along the main thoroughfare between the train station and San Marco serve sandwiches and snacks. For restaurants, it is best to head for the side streets to look for trattorie and pizzerie.

FIASCHETTERIA TOSCANA

Map pp92-3 Venetian €€

☎ 041 528 52 81; Salizada San Giovanni Grisotomo 5719; meals €75; h lunch & dinner Thu-Mon, dinner Wed; f Ca' d'Oro

A classic that has long maintained quality, the Fiaschetteria Toscana is about as Tuscan as a gondola. Here they serve up solid Venetian food, washed down with wines from an impressive national tippling list. The *frittura della Serenissima*, a mixed fried-seafood platter, is memorable. Leave room for Mariuccia's home-made desserts, especially the *rovesciata*, a rich upside-down apple-and-caramel concoction. If money is a consideration, drop by for lunch specials.

BOCCADORO

Map pp92-3 Seafood €€

☎ 041 521 10 21; Campiello Widman 5405a; meals €60; h Tue-Sun; f Fondamente Nuove
Take a seat beneath the pleasant pergola on this quiet square for the freshest of seafood. The house special is the *fritto misto*, a delicate fry up of fish, seafood and vegetables. If you want, the owner will explain the various merits of his fresh fish brought in from Chioggia that day.

MIRAI

Map pp92-3 Japanese €€

☎ 041 220 65 17; Rio Terà Lista di Spagna 227; meals €45-50; h dinner Tue-Sun; f Ferrovia
What a surprise – halfway decent Japanese food in Venice. Sure, the Venetians have their own way with fish, but sometimes sushi and sashimi is the way to go. Strange that it should be alone in a city renowned for its Eastern-languages faculty! The ambience is a chilled modern-design affair (completely renovated in 2006).

OSTERIA GIORGIONE

Map pp92-3 Seafood €€

☎ 041 522 17 25; Calle Larga dei Proverbi 45827a; meals €45-50; h lunch & dinner Tue-Sun; f Ca' d'Oro
Wine-lovers will enjoy combining one of the bottles of fine Veneto and Friuli drops that line the exposed brick walls with a carefully prepared fish dish. Don't hesitate to try the *zuppa di cozze* (a big bowl of mussels in a light onion and capsicum broth) as a starter. There is also a handful of meat dishes for landlubbers. It's a romantic spot with soft lighting and discreet service.

ANICE STELLATO

Map pp92-3 Venetian €€

☎ 041 72 07 44; Fondamenta della Sensa 3272; meals €35-40; h Wed-Sun; f Sant'Alvise
Awaiting you in the guise of doorman is a huge *damigiana* (huge demijohn) by

the entrance. Inside, the heavy timber tables and wooden chairs invite you to a chatty, convivial meal. In recent times it has swung back to more traditional local options. Try the *misto di cicheti* (mix of *cicheti*) starter (€12) or *tagliatelle alla Buranella con sugo di crostacei e bescimella* (tagliatelle with seafood and a béchamel sauce).

TAVERNA DEL CAMPIELLO REMER

Map pp92-3 Venetian €€

☎ 349 336 51 68; Campiello del Remer 5701; meals €35-40; h Thu-Tue; f Rialto
Skip down a narrow lane and you discover this vaulted cavern of brick, stone and timber beams (locally known as Da Emilio) that opens onto a delightful tiny square on the Grand Canal. Expect buffet-style lunch with lots of *affettati* (sausages and cold meats), freshly made pasta and the like (lunch will cost about €20). Throw in grilled catch of the day and meats at night and you have dinner. Tourists in search of set menus stay away, because *menù turistico non ghe xe* (there ain't any)!

OSTERIA DALLA VEDOVA

Map pp92-3 Venetian & Cicheti €€

☎ 041 528 53 24; Calle del Pistor 3912; meals €35-40; h lunch & dinner Mon-Wed, dinner Fri-Sun; f Ca' d'Oro
The 'Widow's Inn', off Strada Nova, is also called Trattoria Ca' d'Oro and is one of the oldest *osterie* in Venice. It was once a cheese store and was taken over by a family from Puglia in the 19th century. The food is reasonable, whether you nibble on the *cicheti* or settle in for a full (mostly seafood) meal. The snacks are copious, including battered vegetables and all sorts of weird and wonderful sea creatures.

DA MARISA

Map pp92-3 Meat €€

☎ 041 72 02 11; Fondamenta di San Giobbe 652b; meals €30; h lunch daily, dinner Tue & Thu-Sat; f Tre Archi
You may need to work up some Italian credentials to squeeze in (it's popular). If you get in, expect robust, no-nonsense meat-based cooking (Da Marisa is near the former abattoir but seems to have taken no notice of its demise). Duck, pheasant and lamb dishes take prominence. The occasional fish and seafood option is available.

GAM GAM

Map pp92-3 Mixed Mediterranean Kosher €€

☎ 041 71 52 84; Calle del Ghetto Vecchio 1123; meals €30; h noon-11pm Sun-Thu, lunch Fri; f Guglie
Great for your taste buds if you like Israeli-style falafels (€4.50) and other Middle Eastern delicacies. It's fully kosher and has a diverse menu, from Red Sea spaghetti to couscous (with meat, fish or veggie sauce).

OSTERIA DA ALBERTO

Map pp92-3 Seafood €€

☎ 041 523 81 53; Calle Larga G Gallina 5401; meals €30; h Mon-Sat, kitchen closes 9.30pm; f Fondamente Nuove
Another hidden Venetian jewel, this *osteria* is run by Alberto, a well-known figure in the business of serving up traditional food. The dried cod, a house speciality prepared in various ways, is good. Dark-wood tables are spaced out nicely and surrounded by huge *damigiane* and other décor on the walls.

OSTERIA LA FRASCA

Map pp92-3 Venetian €€

☎ 041 523 54 33; Corte della Carità 5176; meals €30; h lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, lunch Sun; f Fondamente Nuove
Set aside in a quiet *campiello* (small square) and frequented above all by locals, the gruff Hemingway-esque owner will serve up various simple fish and seafood dishes. The octopus salad is fresh and briny, the *sarde in saor* reasonable. It's best to take a seat outside, order some wine and snack a little.

ANTICA ADELAIDE

Map pp92-3 Venetian €

☎ 041 523 26 29; Calle Priuli 3728; meals €25-30; h daily; f Ca' d'Oro
Nicely restored, with art hanging on cream walls, the Ancient Adelaide was (under different names) in the food business as early as the 18th century. Drop by for tea or *cicheti*, or stick around for a good meal. Pasta is €8 and you can opt for fish or such oddities as *arrosto di cuore* (roast heart) as mains.

TRE SPIEDINI DA BES

Map pp92-3 Venetian €

☎ 041 520 80 35; Salizada San Canciano 5906d; meals €25-30; h lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, lunch Sun; f Rialto
A classic *osteria* where you can crowd in for no-nonsense food. Choose from several

broths and pasta for the first course and then dig in to, say, a slab of sole for the main. It's a typically cramped Venetian locale, with ponderous timber ceiling beams and all sorts of paraphernalia hanging on the walls.

UN MONDO DI VINO

Map pp92–3 Cicheti & Wine €

☎ 041 521 10 93; Salizada San Canciano 5984a; meals €25–30; h Tue–Sun; f Rialto
It's standing room only in this postage-stamp-sized wine bar where you can sample from a long list of wines and a bar-load of snacks. It gets lively with the chatter of locals and the clinking of glasses. Try a cheese platter (€8). Wine by the glass goes for €2 to €3 depending on your tippie.

IGUANA Map pp92–3 Latin American €

☎ 041 71 35 61; Fondamenta della Misericordia 2515; burritos, tacos & fajitas €6.50–10.50; h 6–11pm Tue–Sun; f Madonna dell'Orto
The low, wooden-beamed ceiling makes for a warm atmosphere at this Venetian excursion into South American food. The burritos, tacos, *quesadillas* (filled and fried

tortillas) and other Latin American specialities are OK. Some people just show up for tequila at the bar, and if enough folks hunker down, it may stay open a little later. There's a drinks happy hour from 6pm to 8pm and live bands on Thursdays at 9pm.

OSTARIA AL PONTE Map pp92–3 Cicheti €

☎ 041 528 61 57; Calle Larga G Gallina 6378; cicheti €1.50–3; h Mon–Sat; f Ospedale
On the 'frontier' with Sestiere di Castello is this aptly named and highly recommended snack joint. Enter the bright red doors and sidle up to the bar to nibble on *cicheti* and indulge in good wines. Or settle in at one of the couple of tables. Locals hang about in here, chatting vociferously and sipping their *ombra*.

SESTIERE DI CASTELLO

If you've wandered around the Castello area you'll have already realised that this part of the town, the tail of the fish that Venice resembles and the largest of the *sestieri*, is perhaps the most real. Much the same can be said of its eating options.

WINE FOR DINING

Vino (wine) is an essential accompaniment to any Italian meal. Italians are justifiably proud of their wines and it would be surprising for dinner-time conversation not to touch on the subject.

Wine is graded according to three main classifications – *denominazione d'origine controllata e garantita* (DOCG), *denominazione d'origine controllata* (DOC) and *vino da tavola* (table wine) – which are marked on the label. A DOC wine is produced subject to certain specifications, although the label does not certify quality. DOCG is tested by government inspectors for quality.

Your average trattoria will generally stock only a limited range of bottled wines, but quite a few of the better restaurants offer a carefully chosen selection from around the country. Indeed, some places are better known for their wine lists than their grub. Ordering the house wine is generally safe if unexciting.

Although the Veneto is not one of Italy's prime winemaking regions, some good drops are produced around Verona, including Soave whites, the simpler (and cheaper) whites of Custoza, Bardolino reds and rosés and Valpolicella reds. The latter, favoured by Hemingway, are light- to medium-bodied wines best consumed within five years. A local speciality, Amarone della Valpolicella, is a sturdy, almost syrupy DOC red that has wine-lovers melting over dinner. An alliance of local Corvina, Rondinella and Molinara grape types makes for a smooth, dark, robust tippie weighing in at a hefty 14% alcohol. Nosiola, another white, is not bad. The Vicenza area is also dotted with wineries.

Wines from Friuli Venezia Giulia, Italy's easternmost region and for centuries part of Venice's mainland empire, are often very good and readily available. Look out for Pinot Grigio whites and Pinot Nero reds, as well as a timeless favourite, Refosco (red). A more rough-and-ready red is Raboso. The straw-coloured Tocai Friuliano (not to be confused with the Hungarian Tokaji dessert wine) is a full-bodied white made from the like-named grape. Conflict with Hungary over whether the Italian wine can use the Tocai name looks set for victory to Budapest. What it will be called in future is still up in the air.

A regional curiosity is the sweet *fragolino*. This strawberry-flavoured red isn't strictly wine and cannot be sold as such commercially, although you'll occasionally find it in bars in Venice and elsewhere in the Veneto. You sometimes come across a white version, too. You can be fairly sure you are drinking the real thing if it is served in unlabelled bottles. Many stores have taken to selling a fizzy 'wine' they call *fragolino*. This is a travesty – it is little more than poor wine with strawberry flavouring added.

ALLE TESTIERE

Map pp100–1 Seafood €€

☎ 041 522 72 20; Calle Mondo Novo 5801; meals €60–70; h Tue–Sat; f Rialto
In a cosy, nay, tiny dining area with B&W photos on the walls, the chef may well come up for a chat as you sample the tasty offerings. Fish is the leitmotif. A handful of starters and pasta courses (around €15) are followed by a couple of set main courses or fresh fish (whatever happens to have been caught that day).

HOSTARIA DA FRANZ

Map pp100–1 Seafood €€

☎ 041 522 08 61; www.hostariadafranz.com; Fondamenta San Giuseppe 754; meals €50–60; h daily; f Giardini
Known in Venice as home to one of the best tiramisus in the world, Da Franz is also a phenomenal seafood stop (trying to get a table here during the Biennale is impossible). Two dishes spring to mind, the melt-in-mouth *seppie* (cuttlefish) prepared in black ink, and the *anguilla* (eel), prepared according to grandma's secret recipes as a grilled fillet – surprising and delicious.

TRATTORIA CORTE SCONTA

Map pp100–1 Seafood €€

☎ 041 522 70 24; Calle del Pestrin 3886; meals €50–60; h Tue–Sat, closed Jan & mid-Jul–mid-Aug; f Arsenal
A cosy eatery with a vine-shaded rear courtyard, the Corte Sconta is hidden well off even the unbeaten tourist track, although good publicity has locals and *foresti* wearing a track to its door. The chefs prepare almost exclusively seafood classics, such as their delicious *risotto di scampi*. The owners claim to use only the catch of the day. Who can carp at such a policy?

OSTERIA DI SANTA MARINA

Map pp100–1 Inventive Venetian €€

☎ 041 528 52 39; Campo Santa Marina 5911; meals €50; h lunch & dinner Tue–Sat, dinner Mon; f Rialto
This *osteria* offers a pleasant dining area and tables on the square. The cuisine is largely a refined take on Venetian seafood dishes, and you could start with the *acquario*, a platter of mixed raw seafood of the day. The highlights are without doubt

top picks

WORLD CUISINE

- Ganesh Ji (p177) Indian
- Gam Gam (p179) Mixed Mediterranean kosher
- Iguana (opposite) Latin American
- Mirai (p178) Japanese

the exquisite desserts, such as the artfully presented chocolate mousse.

ENOITECA MASCARETA

Map pp100–1 Cicheti & Wine €€

☎ 041 523 07 44; Calle Lunga Santa Maria Formosa 5138; meals €35–45; h 7pm–2am Fri–Tue; f Rialto
A brief stroll off Campo Santa Maria Formosa is the Little Mask, a genial tavern for the sipping of wine accompanied by a limited menu. Mauro Lorenzon, something of a local character, offers a rich *taier misto* (a fat platter of cold meats and cheese chunks), but you can also opt for various first and main courses, such as the *guancia di bue stile goulash* (ox meat 'pillows', goulash style). The emphasis is the excellent choice of wines.

OSTERIA ALE DO MARIE

Map pp100–1 Italian €€

☎ 041 296 04 24; Calle dell'Olio 3129; meals €35; h Tue–Sun; f Celestia
Hidden deep in the back alleys of Castello is this simple, welcoming eatery. You can grab a reasonable set lunch (€20); otherwise, order from the menu – a range of pastas, and fish and meat mains.

ACIUGHETA ENOTECA

Map pp100–1 Cicheti & Wine €€

☎ 041 522 42 92; Campo SS Filippo e Giacomo 4357; meals €30–35; h daily; f San Zaccaria
Born as a strange design outgrowth of the classic trattoria Aciugheta next door, this is its antithesis. A spacious bar with sheet-glass frontage, exposed brick walls, low tables, angular furniture and a chilled feel, it's a great place from which to observe the zoo outside. The servings are fine wine and *cicheti*, notably the anchovy pizzas from which the place takes its name. Or you can opt for a full meal. (There's pizza too at €8 to €14.)

DECIDING ON DESSERT

For some, the question of what to have for *dolci* (dessert) poses a primordial prandial dilemma. What about a Venetian classic: tiramisu, a rich dessert with mascarpone? All sorts of light biscuits have also been dreamed up over the centuries in Venice – start looking in cake-shop windows. They come with such names as *baicoli*, *ossi da morto* (literally 'dead man's bones') and *bigarani* and are supposed to be taken with dessert wine.

You may well be offered *sorbetto* (lemon sorbet) at the end of the main course. It is designed to clean your palate before dessert, but for many it makes a good dessert on its own account. An alcoholic version with vodka and a dash of milk, called a *sgroppino*, will be more to the liking of some.

Speaking of alcohol, another classic way to round off a meal is with a *digestivo*, some strong liquor to aid digestion. You could try a shot of grappa, a strong, clear brew made from grapes whose name comes from the Veneto region, Bassano del Grappa. Or you could go for an *amaro*, a dark liqueur prepared from herbs. If you prefer a sweeter liqueur, try an almond-flavoured amaretto or the sweet aniseed *sambuca*.

A death-by-chocolate option you are unlikely to find in restaurants but which is a speciality in some *gelaterie* (ice-cream shops) and cafés is the *gianduia*, a little slab of *gianduia* chocolate ice cream surmounted by a cup of whipped cream.

TRATTORIA DA REMIGIO

Map pp100–1 Venetian €€

☎ 041 523 00 89; Salizada dei Greci 3416; meals €30-35; h lunch & dinner Wed-Sun, lunch Mon; f San Zaccaria

It is not often you find a restaurant that in the early evening can post a sign in the window saying *completo* (full), as though it were a hotel, but this place can. It has a mixed menu, featuring Venetian fish dishes and a handful of meat options. Service is fast and the results are reliable.

TRATTORIA GIORGIONE

Map pp100–1 Seafood €€

☎ 041 522 87 27; Via Giuseppe Garibaldi 1533; meals €30-35; h Thu-Tue; f Arsenale

If you get lucky you'll strike the owner, Lucio Bisutto, a local icon, singing old Venetian songs, often in company with friends and family. He is most likely to play on Saturday and Sunday evenings. This trattoria does a great seafood risotto and even better fried seafood platter (*frittura mista di pesce*).

BACARO RISORTO

Map pp100–1 Cicheti & Wine €

☎ 041 528 72 74; Campo San Provalo 4700; meals €25-30; h Mon-Sat; f San Zaccaria

A box of a corner bar, this is another excellent new spot to sip on quality wines and munch on attractively present *cicheti*. There's barely room to swing a deep-fried *moeca* in here but it's worth popping by, even if just for a glass and a couple of snacks before moving on elsewhere. Unafraid of experiments, you find yourself on occasion surrounded by sushi.

TRATTORIA DA PAMPO

Map pp100–1 Venetian & Cicheti €

☎ 041 520 84 19; Calle Gen Chinotto 3, Sant'Elena; meals €25-30; h Wed-Mon; f Giardini

They say '*dal pampo non c'é scampo*' (there's no getting away from Pampo) and why would you want to? This is a real locals' place for *ombre* and *cicheti*, but you can sit down (inside or out) for a full, simple meal. The place is set opposite a shady park in the quietest end of the city.

ALLA RIVETTA

Map pp100–1 Venetian €

☎ 041 528 73 02; Ponte San Provalo 4625; meals €25; h Tue-Sun; f San Zaccaria

This is one of the few restaurants near Piazza San Marco that can be recommended. Surrounded by tourist traps, it has resisted the temptation to abandon all quality, and even gets a few locals in (including famished gondoliers) for its no-nonsense dishes (especially the fried-seafood options).

AL VECIO PENASA

Map pp100–1 Sandwiches €

☎ 041 523 72 02; Calle delle Rasse 4587; panini & other snacks €3-5; h 6.30am-11.30pm daily; f San Zaccaria

This remains a good spot for its excellent selection of sandwiches and snacks at reasonable prices.

AL PORTEGO

Map pp100–1 Venetian & Cicheti €

☎ 041 522 90 38; Calle de la Malvasia 6015; cicheti €1.50-3; h 10am-3pm & 6-10pm Mon-Sat; f Rialto

Beneath the portico that gives this *osteria* its name, Al Portego is an inviting stop for *cicheti* and wine, along with some more

robust meals. It's all timber in here and very cosy. Try the thick spaghetti-like pasta, *bigoli*, or perhaps a risotto.

AROUND THE LAGOON

Across the islands you'll find various enticing spots to sit down to eat – you need not go hungry anywhere in the lagoon! Each of the more visited islands in the northern lagoon (Murano, Burano and Torcello) has at least one local favourite dining spot. Over on the Lido, a handful of interesting places await discovery.

HARRY'S DOLCI

Map p109 Inventive Venetian €€€

☎ 041 522 48 44; Fondamenta San Biagio 773, Giudecca; meals €80-120; h Wed-Mon Apr-Oct; f Palanca

This place is run by the Cipriani clan of Harry's Bar fame and has tables by the Canale della Giudecca looking across to Venice. The fantastic desserts and pastries are the main attraction. Should you want a full meal, you'll be accommodated but at a price.

BUSA ALLA TORRE

Map p113 Seafood €€

☎ 041 73 96 62; Campo Santo Stefano 3, Murano; meals €50; h lunch daily; f Faro

Run by Lele, a big fellow with a big heart, this is *the* place on Murano for lunch. Take a seat on the square and try the seafood pasta, such as sea-bass ravioli in a *granseola* (crab

meat) sauce. On the subject of crabs, the place is known for its fried *moche*. Eat 'em legs and all!

AL GATTO NERO

Map p114 Buranese €€

☎ 041 73 01 20; Fondamenta della Giudecca 88, Burano; meals €40-45; h Tue-Sun; f Burano

Noisy Venetian families pile into this off-the-beaten-*calle* trattoria in Burano. Sure, you could join the crowds in the cheaper places along the island's main drag, but the food is generally not the greatest. Here you pay a premium, but the quality is better.

MISTRÀ

Map p109 Venetian & Ligurian €€

☎ 041 522 07 43; Giudecca 212a; meals €40-45; h lunch & dinner Wed-Sun, lunch Mon; f Redentore

Grab a table at the back for wonderful views south over the lagoon. Among the workshops of a major boatyard, this is a suitably maritime setting for great seafood, with a combination of local dishes and a few Ligurian imports (eg pesto). At lunchtime, join the shipwrights for a cheaper midday meal. To get here, look for No 211 on Fondamenta di San Giacomo and pass down the narrow passage beside it. Follow the signs.

LA FAVORITA

Map p116 Seafood €€

☎ 041 526 16 26; Via Francesco Duodo 33, Lido; meals €35-40; h lunch Wed-Sun, dinner Tue-Sun; f Lido

FROM BELLINIS TO MANHATTAN

Giuseppe Cipriani was a young survivor of WWI when, in 1918, he applied for a chef's job in a fancy hotel in Madonna di Campiglio. He knew nothing about cooking or waiting tables but he learned everything there was to learn. He wound up in Venice and, in 1931, in partnership with a moneyed American, Harry Pickering, launched what became one of the world's most celebrated bars (and restaurants), Harry's.

Four years later, he bought a small wine and oil store on Torcello and in the 1940s converted it into a simple, rustic hostelry, the Locanda Cipriani (now in the hands of Bonifacio Brass, son of Giuseppe's daughter Carla; see All in the Family, p211). Giuseppe's next big thing was a hotel. He found partners and in the 1950s set up the Hotel Cipriani in a former noble family's mansion on Giudecca. It went on to become one of the world's greatest (and still is, although it left Cipriani family control in the 1970s). Another Cipriani stroke of genius was the Villa Cipriani hotel in Asolo (see p241), in a splendid 18th-century villa, also later sold. In the meantime, the Ciprianis opened a gourmet dessert locale on Giudecca, Harry's Dolci.

Everyone who was anyone, from the Aga Khan to the queen of England, sooner or later wound up in one or more of the Cipriani joints. Giuseppe had an especially soft spot for Ernest Hemingway, with whom he had some memorable drinking bouts. Giuseppe not only invented the Bellini (see the boxed text, p187) but also came up with *carpaccio* (see p170).

When Giuseppe died in 1980, the business passed on to his son, Arrigo. The Cipriani name had been attracting a celebrity who's who to Venice for decades, but now Arrigo took Cipriani to the celebrities. He opened the first of the Cipriani's international eateries in New York in 1985 and he and his son, Giuseppe, have since gone from strength to strength in the Big Apple. They own several top-flight restaurants and banqueting places, including Cipriani 42nd Street, in the landmark 1921 Bowery Savings Bank building. With a presence now stretching to London, Hong Kong and Sardinia's Costa Smeralda, and activities ranging from catering to the production of brand-name food items, the immortality of the Cipriani clan seems assured.

For lashings of excellent seafood in a pleasing, relaxed setting, this is one of the best spots on this long and gastronomically meagre island. In the warmer months you can sit outside.

RISTORANTE AL TRONO DI ATTILA

Map p114 Venetian €€

☎ 041 73 00 94; www.altronodiattila.it; Fondamenta Borgognoni 7a, Torcello; meals €35; **h** daily; **f** Torcello

The cheapest and most cheerful of the four restaurants strung out here along the canal between the vaporetto stop and the cathedral. The atmosphere is suitably bucolic – dine in the charming garden with pergola. Try the *risotto di pesce* (fish risotto, €20 for two). The restaurant generally opens for lunch only, unless you book groups ahead for dinner. Much the same goes for the three other restaurants on the island.

ALLA MADDALENA

Map p114 Seafood & Game €€

☎ 041 73 01 51; Mazzorbo 7c; meals €30; **h** 8am-8pm Fri-Wed; **f** Mazzorbo

On this peaceful, leafy island adjacent to Burano is a lively seafood oasis. Walk over the bridge from Burano to reach this soothing spot near the vaporetto stop. Relax by the canal or in the garden out the back. In the hunting season (autumn) you may encounter various birds on the menu – enough to make you feel like Hemingway! It opens for dinner only for groups that book.

AI TRE SCAINI

Map p109 Venetian €

☎ 041 522 47 90; Calle Michelangelo 53c, Giudecca; meals €25; **h** lunch Fri-Wed, dinner Tue, Wed & Fri-Sun; **f** Zitelle

In this rambunctious and chaotic trattoria you can settle down with ebullient local families for copious pasta and seafood dishes (there are one or two meat options, too). Throaty wine comes from a couple of small barrels set up inside. You can eat in the garden as well.

LA PALANCA

Map p109 Venetian €

☎ 041 528 77 19; Fondamenta al Ponte Piccolo 448, Giudecca; meals €20-25; **h** lunch Mon-Sat; **f** Palanca

You'll be competing with locals on their lunch-break for a canalside table looking across to Dorsoduro at this very popular spot. First course of pasta (€6 to €8) might

include *tagliolini ai calamaretti* (narrow ribbon pasta with tiny calamari). Your host Andrea will make suggestions on mains.

DA TIZIANO

Map p116 Pizza & Cicheti €
☎ 041 526 72 91; Via Sandro Gallo 96, Lido; pizzas €6-8.50; **h** Tue-Sun; **f** Lido

A popular spot with locals for *cicheti* and an *ombra* or two, this corner restaurant is also worth a stop for the pizza, whipped up by a Neapolitan cook and served to you at dark timber tables.

THE MAINLAND

The mainland half of Venice, Mestre is by far the bigger and uglier brother. It's unlikely to attract your attention for long, but if you happen to be here there are some good eating options to consider. Chioggia, on the south shore of the lagoon, is a bustling fishing port and worth a visit. An excursion to this fishing town-cum-Adriatic holiday beach spot makes a curious getaway from Venice proper, and the main drag and its side alleys are sprinkled with enticing eateries whose menus are dominated by the local catch.

OSTERIA PENZO

Seafood €€

☎ 041 40 09 92; Calle Larga Bersaglio 526, Chioggia; meals €35-40; **h** lunch & dinner Wed-Sun, lunch Mon; **f** Lido, then bus 11

Once, all you would get here was wine and basic snacks, but nowadays staff prepare good local dishes based entirely on the fleet's catch. The setting remains homy and simple, a little *osteria* with photos of Chioggia as it once was. You can start with some *cicheti* and proceed with *gnocchetti con vongole veraci, cipolla bianca e radicchio rosso* (little gnocchi with clams, white onion and red chicory) before trying the fish of the day.

OSTERIA LA PERGOLA

Map p121 Meat €€

☎ 041 97 49 32; Via Fiume 42, Mestre; meals €30; **h** lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat

As the name suggests, here you can sit under a pergola (or inside beneath a fine timber ceiling) and enjoy some of the best-value food in Mestre. For a first course consider the chunky, homemade *spaghetti alla chitarra* (thick spaghetti made with a tool known as the *chitarra*, or guitar). Venetians swear by this place, which, by the way, serves no seafood.

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