



SWITZERLAND



Wine, cheese, luganighette sausages, ham, polenta, chestnuts: Mendrisiotto is able to satisfy even the most demanding gastronomic expectations.



For those who live to eat rather than eat to live, gastronomy is a major reason for travel. In Ticino north European cuisine meets Italian cuisine, and particularly that of Lombardy. Italian wine-producing traditions have also dominated since the renaissance of viticulture in the early 20th century, primarily growing Merlot strains from Bordeaux, and this has remained the dominant grape. Ticino's wines can be discovered directly at the local wine-producers or by following a network of wine routes.

Grappa from Ticino, made by distilling the Americana grape, is prized for its aromatic qualities. Grappa is also used in Nocino, a liqueur made by steeping freshly chopped walnuts in the grappa with spices and sugar. The infusion is allowed to stand in sunlight for 40 days to develop its walnut flavour. Every season can produce convivial restaurant experiences in Ticino, whether outdoors or in front of an inviting crackling fireplace in a "grotto", small rustic-style restaurants that are so typical of Ticino. The dishes and ingredients you can expect to find on the menu are home-cured pork products, especially salami and mortadella, risotto, minestrone, polenta with braised beef, stewed rabbit, wild mushrooms, zabaglione and peaches in wine. A tradition not to be missed is harvest festival, when wine as well as food is celebrated. The yards of old

houses are transformed into authentic "grotti", where people meet around delicious wines and local dishes using locally harvested chestnuts and polenta. And now, let's have a look at some of the autumn food festivals that take place in the region. Their star is always the same: excellent food.

Gastronomy Festival Mendrisiotto and Basso Ceresio (Oct. 1/Nov. 5)

The Gastronomic Season of the Mendrisiotto and Lower Ceresio Region offers an extremely wide variety of dishes inspired by the local cuisine as well as classic seasonal specialities reinterpreted in a modern key. For more than 50 years it has been a traditional, autumn appointment. A tradition which is renewed every year!

Festival of the local dishes of the Muggio Valley (Nov. 17/Dec. 10)

In order to taste a typical dish from the Muggio Valley we recommend you to participate to the Season of Local Dishes which is held every year in this valley between November and December. The gastronomic compositions offered in the different places (restaurants, grotti, taverns and agritourisms) are based on traditional recipes and ingredients: cazöla (a cabbage dish), roast suckling pig, stewed donkey, pork shin, veal osso buco, stewed chicken and rabbit, polenta and "rustisciada" (filet and beef inards), etc. The famous fresh cheese



Previous page, Impressions of the 'Wine Harvest Festival' in Mendrisio.

Above, Nadia Fontana Lupi, Director of the Mendrisiotto and Basso Ceresio Tourism Organization.

produced in the Muggio Valley is always on the menu.

Sagra del Borgo, Mendrisio (Sept. 22/24)

The town of Mendrisio and the surrounding area has more vineyards than anywhere else in the entire canton of Ticino and is renowned for its excellent food and wine. A 'Sagra' is a local festival held to celebrate a patron saint or the harvest, while also promoting good local food and wine. The festival in Mendrisio celebrates local produce and aims to provide people with an opportunity to explore the historic centre of this 'magnifico borgo' and to discover its traditions, customs and local products.

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MENDRISIO'S VOICE

Interview with Nadia Fontana Lupi, director of the Mendrisiotta and Basso Ceresio Tourism Organization

To what extent does the food and wine aspect attract tourists and visitors to the Mendrisiotta region?

I am convinced that the image linked to the presence of merited wine cellars, salami producers and the numerous series of events related to the world of food and wine in our region attract many tourists looking for quality and variety in the sector. Also the presence of some particularly attractive grottos and the beautiful area of the wineries in Mendrisio is not to be underestimated.

Do not forget that in our region, containing the most vineyards of the Canton, there are also educational trails among the vineyards, the headquarters of the Agricultural Institute of Mezzana and a highly appreciated slow food product: Zincarlin, but also two of the most appreciated and long-lived gastronomic festivals: 'The Mendrisiotta and Basso Ceresio Food Festival' and 'The Local Produce Festival'. The possibility to spend even more days in search of tastes and flavours in the Mendrisiotta region is an opportunity that many seem to seize, the attendance and the results are the proof.

The distinctiveness of local food products is a peculiarity that must be valued. Your opinion on the various culinary events of Mendrisiotta and Basso Ceresio.

Quality is also important also when it comes to an event. I think two examples of quality and longevity, as well as appreciation are those relative to the two food festivals. But for some years other important events, also very popular with the public have found space, precisely because the products on offer are numerous. I think of the 'Mangialonga' (which was the opening act for many other events of the genre which followed its example) to 'Agroblues', but also to the 'Chestnut Festival', to 'Luppolati', the craft beer festival and the 'Km of Beer?' or the 'Swiss Mill Days'. I can state that in general the quality is present in the regional events and that the spirit that animates the organizers can always improve

Are the visitors to the grottos and restaurants in the region mostly from Ticino or are they also Swiss from other cantons and from overseas?

I think it is correct to think that a good number of loyal and therefore local-cantonal customers are always present, frequent and enjoy eating with pleasure on-site. It is true that once also the Italian presence was greater, now over the last few years this has decreased because of the Euro-Franc exchange rate, but this could change with the changes to the relationship between the two currencies... In the typical periods of the tourist season, however, there are also overseas visitors as well as German/French Swiss. Their attendance depends in part also on the reputation of the grotto or restaurant and here the most special locations and the best restaurants are clearly the chosen ones

What typical product would you recommend to Evolution readers?

The red polenta from the mill of Bruzzella accompanied by a piece of Zincarlin.



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() UNA REGIONE DA ASSAPORARE

Impossibile visitare la Svizzera italiana senza degustare la deliziosa cucina del Mendrisiotto. La gastronomia del Ticino è molto diversa dal resto della Svizzera. Forte delle sue radici contadine, ha una sua semplicità rustica in cui la qualità dei prodotti è fondamentale. Il modo migliore per scoprirla? Pranzare in un grotto, con un buon bicchiere di Merlot!

() UNE RÉGION À SAVOURER

Impossibile de visiter la Suisse italienne sans goûter la savoureuse cuisine de la région de Mendrisio. La gastronomie tessinoise est fort différente du reste de la Suisse. Puisant dans ses racines paysannes, elle garde une simplicité rustique qui laisse la part belle aux produits. Le meilleur moyen de la découvrir ? S'attabler dans un grotto derrière un bon verre de Merlot!