

The Voice of All Things Italian italiana voce

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A Magical Trip to Siena, Italy

By Jessica Ortega



Jessica Ortega.

I started studying Italian almost 10 years ago at Bellaire High School in Houston. I initially signed up to take the course because I needed a language credit as a graduation requirement, so I did not expect to enjoy it as much as I did.

When I learned that the University of Houston (UH) had a department dedicated to Italian, I quickly decided to apply and pursue a bachelor's degree in Italian Studies.

During my time at UH, I was able to work with some of the best professors, and my love for Italy just kept growing. With the help of my professors, I was able to apply for a teaching position at the Italian Cultural & Community Center (ICCC). This experience significantly cultivated my interest in becoming an instructor. Therefore, it only made sense to continue studying so that I could acquire the necessary skill set to teach a language.

My professors at UH were very supportive when I expressed my goals, and they encouraged me to apply for a World Cultures and Literatures master's degree with a concentration in Italian at UH. The program lasted a little over two years. I recently completed my degree in June.

I knew that I still needed to immerse

myself in the Italian language and culture, so with the generous scholarship I received from the ICCC, I was finally able to travel to Italy and attend the Università per Stranieri di Siena. Since I've dedicated many years to studying Italian, my experience was incredibly exciting, beautiful, and unforgettable. I'd love to be able to teach Italian at different levels, so the main goal of my trip was to practice and improve my proficiency.

I met so many students from different parts of the world, and several of them were also interested in teaching. Our classes were small, but this gave us a chance to participate in several collaborative discussions. The professors welcomed all ideas and talking points, and they engaged everyone in our conversations. I also really loved that the professors taught us about Siena and shared several cultural and historical facts with us. They even gave us great recommendations on places to visit and activities to do while we were in Italy.

Initially, I was very nervous about traveling alone and not being able to make friends. In reality, there was nothing to worry about because all the students were so kind, and we went out every day after class. We even planned a quick trip to Florence one weekend. Although Siena is a small city, it is so beautiful and offers several museums, galleries, and architectural sites that highlight different historical periods. It was very easy to reach all of these sites on foot, and the locals were very kind when we would ask questions or ask for recommendations. I only stayed for a couple of weeks, but I was able to learn so much during this brief period. I am extremely grateful to the ICCC for giving me the amazing opportunity to study in Italy so that I may pursue a teaching career.



The Italian Cultural & Community Center (ICCC) awards \$2,500 scholarships to Houston area college students participating in study abroad programs in Italy.

Study abroad programs should be two weeks or greater and up to a full semester. It is a great honor to receive a scholarship which is applied to the cost and associated expenses of the student's selected study abroad program.

Completed applications are due in the ICCC office on the date stated on the application. The deadline is strictly observed. The deadline for Fall 2022 is Tuesday, November 15, 2022.

Visit the [ICCC Scholarships website](#) to [download the application](#).

New ICCC Members

Benvenuti!

The ICCC wishes to welcome the following new members and invites them to stay fully engaged with all of the wonderful programs and events that the ICCC has to offer.

For more information about becoming a member and joining the ICCC family, click [here](#) or contact Alessandra Pistone at accounting@icccchouston.com.

New ICCC Members

Mr. Pablo Alvarez

Ms. Costanza Boselli

Hanna Ferreria Dalla Pria

Mr. Dimitri P. Georgantas

Mr. Patrick Hamel

Ms. Roxanne Langley

Ms. Lauren Larive

Mr. and Mrs. Stewart Lawrence

Ms. Rosalie Leykum

Ms. Olga McNeese

Ms. Christine McTopy

Ms. Rachel Milano

Ms. Kim Milone

Mr. Michael Newhouse

Mr. and Mrs. Bob Ruggiero

Mr. Mark Sam

John and Rosanne Sicola

Ms. Joni Verdina

All'ICCC (At the ICCC)

Dear Members,

I hope you had a fun and relaxing summer break!

The ICCC staff spent the summer planning events for you to enjoy this fall and winter seasons. We have so many exciting things coming up!

We will be continuing our Aperitivo Italiano series for the rest of the year. Our wine tastings have been so popular that they sell out within a couple of weeks! Join us for [Aperitivo Italiano - Harvest in Italy](#) on Tuesday, October 4, presented by Philip Cusimano. Register for the event [here](#).

In August, we celebrated Ferragosto with our annual pizza and movie event. Attendees had so much fun watching the comedy *A Crazy Bunch of Friends*, directed by Sergio Colabona. It is an honor to continue this tradition at the ICCC, and we are thankful that we have a great turnout every year.

La Scuola d'Italiano has been busy this summer, and we hope students keep the momentum going. Our wonderful instructors are going the extra mile every day to provide students with the best learning experience. I would like to extend a huge thank you to our instructors for their high-quality level of teaching and dedication.

We are excited to announce that we are two weeks away from our most special event of the year, [Celebrating the Jewels of Italy Fashion Show and Luncheon](#), on Wednesday, September 14 at the River Oaks Country Club. The ICCC staff has been tirelessly working on making sure this is a memorable event for all attendees.

To ramp up enthusiasm, we hosted a sparkling kick-off party at Tenenbaum Jewelers on Thursday, August 18. It warmed our hearts to see the many people who came to support the ICCC. Our event honoree, Rosie Carrabba, came to celebrate, and attendees enjoyed fantastic food and beverages, all generously donated by ICCC supporters. We would like to thank Citterio, Matilde Vicenzi, Baratti & Milano, Acqua Panna, San Pellegrino and Casteggio Italian Wines by Gruppo Butera.

Join us at Kendra Scott - Heights Mercantile on Wednesday, September 7 at 5 p.m for another ICCC soiree. Kendra Scott will be releasing a new Italy-inspired collection. This is a community partnership where 20% of each sale will be given back to the ICCC. We hope to see you there!

Check the [ICCC website](#) to stay up-to-date on our classes and events. Make sure you are on our mailing list to always receive our messages!

We look forward to seeing you soon!

Grazie mille.

Con affetto,
Monica Ercolani



ICCC President Monica Ercolani.

2022 ICCC Board of Directors

Officers

Monica Ercolani	President
Claudia Sims	Vice President
Julie Mastroianni	Treasurer
Flavio Zannin	Secretary
Laura Ferro	Assistant Secretary

Board of Directors

Jerry Baiamonte
Thann Rae Dauterive
Sheila Echols-Smesny
Tracy Lalasz
Mary Milloy
Sandra Celli Harris

“ *la voce italiana* ”

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La Voce Italiana is a benefit to ICCC members and followers. *La Voce Italiana* can be found at www.icccchouston.com

For more information, please call 713-524-4222 ext. 4 or email info@icccchouston.com.

We Appreciate Our Members in These Special Categories!

By the ICCC Team

We would like to take a moment to acknowledge our Friend of the ICCC members, Patron members and our Individual or Family Lifetime members. We are incredibly thankful for your support!

Friend(s) of the ICCC Members

Mrs. Arianna DiFilippo

Patron of the ICCC Members

Mr. Jack Fassetta
Ms. Sandra Porter
Mr. Jerry Baiamonte

ICCC Individual or Family Lifetime Members

Mr. and Mrs. Alvin Albert
Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Aspromonte
Mr. and Mrs. John Bannon
Ms. Barbara Barcelona
Mr. and Mrs. Giorgio Borlenghi
Mr. and Mrs. Alfred J. Fatica
Mr. Nick Ferrantino

Mr. Gary DeSerio
Mr. and Mrs. Vincent Guariglia
Ms. Kathryn Kase
Mr. and Mrs. James J. Liuzza
Mr. and Mrs. Frank A. Mandola
Mr. Michael Massa
Mr. and Mrs Carmelo Mauro
Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Meyers
Mr. Joseph A. Polichino, Jr.
Mrs. Vincent Quartaro
Mr. and Mrs. William Sinacori
Miss Barbara Teague
Mr. and Mrs. J. Hunter Todd
Ms. Cynthia L. Whitbor
Ms. Caroline Whitmore-Knotts
Mr. Robert Tucci

New members are always welcome! We offer six different memberships, all which include amazing benefits. [Click here to view our membership options.](#)

Friend(s) of the ICCC members receive discounts on our language school

classes, discounts on selected events, discounts on Milford House rentals, free admission for two movie screenings, free admission for two lectures, and a friend listing in *La Voce Italiana* for one year!

Patron of the ICCC members receive exclusive benefits such as discounts on our language classes, discounts on Milford House rentals, free admission for two movie screenings, free admission for two lectures, complimentary seats (2) to any of our Aperitivo Italiano wine tasting events, and a friend listing in *La Voce Italiana* for one year!

ICCC Individual or Family Lifetime Members get the ultimate exclusive perks we offer. [Click here to view the benefits of being a lifetime member](#) or call the Center at 713-524-4222 ext. 6 for more information.

News From ICCC Clubs

Daughters of Italian Heritage

By Donna Patterson | Deborah Graustein, president

Although the summer is inching behind us, the heat seems to linger on. That doesn't stop the Daughters.

We are raring up for a new year with new leadership. At our August meeting, we conducted our election for the incoming board for 2023 and 2024. In November, the Daughters will celebrate and install the new board members including: Donna Patterson, president; Christina Nance, president elect; Benda Benigno, recording secretary; Michelle Belco, corresponding secretary; Anna Messer, treasurer. Thank you for serving and congratulations to the new board members.

Additionally, the annual strategic planning meeting will be held with the board and executive committee to

discuss 2023 future meetings, activities, and to ensure we continue to uphold our mission statement.

After receiving presentations from various non-profit organizations, the Daughters voted to make the 2022 donation to Donors Choice – specifically, Mike Milazzo's classroom. Mike is a special education teacher at Rosa Parks Elementary School, a Title-I funded school. He teaches a self-contained classroom that focuses on behavioral support with students that range from K-5.

All his students are in foster care and most live in a residential treatment center. The majority of children in his class struggle significantly with reading. They are typically reading one to two levels below grade level. Most

of the books in the classroom library are old, outdated or on a level above their ability to be successful. With the Daughters' donation, Mike's students will receive new leveled reading books.

If you are interested in attending our meetings or becoming a member, contact [Anna Messer](#) or [visit our website](#) to receive information on upcoming meetings. Although we are back with in-person meetings, Zoom continues to be an option.

Meetings are held on the third Saturday of each month at 9:00 a.m. Our host teams provide a light breakfast, and the meetings always provide opportunity to make wonderful friendships. Thank you, and stay safe.



October 1, 2022, Deadline...

ICCC Board Nominations Sought

The Italian Cultural and Community Center is seeking candidates to fill five upcoming vacancies on the Board of Directors. The election will be held at the annual meeting of members on December 1, 2022. Each term lasts three years.

We welcome strategic thinkers who understand “the big picture” and who can translate ideas into actions to fulfill ICCC’s mission to advance, celebrate, and preserve Italian culture and heritage for everyone.

Candidates must have the following qualities: integrity, independence, confidence, corporate manners, courage, and commitment. The overarching responsibilities of Board members are governance, fundraising, and public relations. Board members do not have to be of Italian descent, but must have a passion for Italian culture

Because we are a working board, all Board members are expected to “do their share” to keep ICCC advancing.

The qualifications for Board members as listed in the ICCC Bylaws are: Good standing with dues current; legal resident of US; no closer than third cousin to any other board member; pass a background check; no convictions for felony, Class A or B misdemeanor, crime of moral turpitude, or declared to be of unsound mind by order of a court.

ICCC is a multi-faceted organization that is in ascendency, growing by leaps and bounds, in scope and influence. It is more critical than ever for ICCC to have leaders capable of carrying forward our strategic plan with a vision to continue as the destination for all things Italian for all Houstonians.

If you’ve got what it takes to become a valued member of the ICCC leadership team, please submit your application to: Nominating Committee, ICCC, 1101 Milford, Houston, TX, 77006. The deadline is October 1, 2022.

Download applications at: www.iccchouston.com

Refer questions to Erika Myers, ICCC Executive Director 713-524-4222 Ext. 7 or Ray Miller, ICCC Executive Director Emeritus 713-524-4222 Ext 3.

**THE ITALIAN CULTURAL & COMMUNITY CENTER OF HOUSTON
BOARD OF DIRECTORS APPLICATION**

Full Name _____

Home Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone: Home _____ Work _____ Cell _____ Email _____

Current Employer: _____ Position: _____

Have you served on the ICCC Board or any other Board previously? Yes ___ No ___ When _____

List Boards and Offices held (if any): _____

On a separate attached sheet, please provide:

A short paragraph (please limit to 250 words) describing who you are and why you feel you are qualified to be an ICCC Board member. If your nomination is accepted then this will be used for distribution to the membership along with the ballots. Please email paragraph to: info@iccchouston.com

A nominee to the Board must meet, and continue to meet throughout his/her tenure on the Board, the following qualifications:

- Be in good standing with the ICCC with all dues current.
- Be a legal resident of the United States.
- No two family members whose relationship is closer than third cousin shall serve on the Board at the same time.
- Paid employees of the Italian Cultural & Community Center are not eligible to run for a period of one year from their employment separation date.
- Must agree to and pass a background check. Shall not have been convicted of a felony, Class A or Class B misdemeanor, crime of moral turpitude, or declared to be of unsound mind by an order of court.

Verify that you qualify to serve on the Board by answering the following questions:

1) Are you member in good standing of the Italian Cultural & Community Center? Yes: _____ No: _____

If yes, approximately how many years have you been a member or date joined: _____

2) Are you a legal resident of the United States? Yes: _____ No: _____

3) Are you related to anyone who is now serving on the Board of Directors? Yes: _____ No: _____

If yes: Name(s): _____ Relationship(s): _____

4) Were you ever a paid employee of the Italian Cultural and Community Center? Yes: _____ No: _____

If yes, date of employment separation: _____

5) Have you ever been convicted of a felony, Class A or Class B misdemeanor, crime of moral turpitude or declared to be of unsound mind by order of court? Yes: _____ No: _____

Please provide a photocopy of your driver's license.

I certify that all information, I have provided herein and attached, is true and correct.

Signature _____

Date _____



Ciao, Houston!



Shop at Kendra Scott to Support the ICCC!

By the ICCC Team

We are excited to partner with Kendra Scott this September alongside the launch of their latest fall collection, inspired by Italy.

We invite you to join us for our soiree at **Kendra Scott - Heights Mercantile** on **Wednesday, September 7** from **5 to 7 p.m.** This is a community partnership. 20% of all purchases will be given back to the Italian Cultural & Community Center (ICCC).

We would love to see you! Join us in person to browse through the fabulous new collection while enjoying delicious sips and sweets.

If you aren't able to make it to our celebration, don't worry, you can still support us from the comfort of your own home! Shop online anytime from **September 7 through September 8** using the following unique online giveback code at checkout on www.kendrascott.com. This code cannot be combined with another promotional code.

Online Giveback Code:
GIVEBACK-CLRJM

Please ensure you input the giveback code at checkout before placing your order. Otherwise, the ICCC will not benefit from your purchase. Kendra

Scott customer service does not have the ability to retroact if the code is forgotten at checkout.

Spread the word, and invite your friends and family to our free event. We hope to see you rock Kendra Scott's new pieces with us at the store on September 7!

Time: Wednesday, September 7, 2022 at 5 PM

Place: Kendra Scott - Heights Mercantile | 714 Yale St Unit 1D Houston, TX 77007

Upcoming Classes and Events



IN-PERSON | Italian for Beginners - AISI

Learn everyday words and phrases that will help you speak Italian comfortably. With the help of our native Italian teachers, you will immerse yourself in the true Italian language!

Thursdays | September 22 to November 3 | 11:30 AM to 1:30 PM

\$202.50 for ICCC Members | \$225 for Non-members

Click [HERE](#) to register



Supereroi (Superheroes)

Join us for the screening of Superheroes. The movie will be in its original Italian with English subtitles. Doors open at 6:45 PM. Movie starts at 7 PM.

Wednesday | September 21, 2022 | 7:00 PM

\$10 for ICCC Members | \$15 for Non-members

Click [HERE](#) to register



Harvest in Italy

Celebrate the beginning of the fall season with us! Bring a friend and join us for Harvest in Italy. Enjoy Italian-style light bites while presenter Philip Cusimano talks about harvesting techniques in different regions of Italy.

Tuesday | October 4, 2022 | 7:00 to 8:00 PM

\$30 for ICCC Members | \$35 for Non-members

Click [HERE](#) to register



Dine Around at ROMA, An Italian Eatery

Meet new friends while enjoying Italian cuisine! Join us at ROMA, An Italian Eatery for a 'Dine Around' to be delighted by Chef Kevin Bryant's delicious creations. You must previously register and pay in order to attend this event. Reserve your seat by October 5.

Tuesday | October 11, 2022 | 7:00 PM

\$55 Per Person (Prix Fixe Menu)

Click [HERE](#) to register

SETTEMBRE 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7 Shop at Kendra Scott to Support the ICCC 5 - 7 PM	8	9	10
11	12	13	14 Celebrating the Jewels of Italy Fashion Show & Luncheon 11 AM - 1:30 PM	15	16	17
18	19	20	21 Italian Contemporary Film Series: Superheroes 7 PM	22 Italian for Beginners - AISI 11:30 AM - 1:30 PM	23	24
25	26	27 Law & Order in Ancient Rome 7 - 8 PM	28	29	30	

Shop at Kendra Scott to Support the ICCC

We are excited to partner with Kendra Scott this September alongside the launch of their latest fall collection, inspired by Italy. Join us for our soiree at Kendra Scott - Heights Mercantile on Wednesday, September 7 from 5 to 7 p.m. This is a community partnership where 20% of your purchase will be given back to the ICCC. Join us in-person OR shop online anytime from September 7 through September 8 using the unique online giveback code GIVEBACK-CLRJM at checkout on www.kendrascott.com.

Time: Wednesday, September 7, 2022 at 5 PM

Place: Kendra Scott - Heights Mercantile | 714 Yale St Unit 1D Houston, TX 77007

Celebrating the Jewels of Italy Fashion Show & Luncheon

This year's annual ICCC Fashion Show & Luncheon will take place on September 14 at the River Oaks Country Club. The theme, Celebrating the Jewels of Italy, will pay tribute to those facets of Italy we know and love: fashion, food, wine, artistry and history and culture. Chaired by Sandra Porter and Gina Gusemano Leck, the luncheon will honor native Houstonian and restaurateur Rose "Rosie" Carrabba.

Time: Wednesday, September 14 from 11 AM to 1:30 PM

Price: \$250 - \$10,000

Place: 1600 River Oaks Blvd., Houston, TX 77019

Italian Contemporary Film Series: Superheroes

Purchase your ticket to join us for the screening of *Superheroes* on Wednesday, September 21!

Plot: The story of a young couple who falls in love and struggles to keep its relationship alive going through tenderness and fights, lies and emotions, secrets and cheatings. A sentimental dramedy about couples and the effect of time passing on their relationships, posing a simple but profound question: what superpowers you

need to have, to love each other your whole life?

Time: Wednesday, Septemeber 21 at 7 PM

Price: \$10 for ICCC Members and \$15 for Non-Members

Place: ICCC Houston

Italian for Beginners - AISI

Join our online Italian for Beginners class and learn the basics of the beautiful Italian language!

Time: Thursdays, September 22 to November 3 from 11:30 AM to 1:30 PM

Price: \$202.50 for Members and \$225 for Non-Members

Place: ICCC Houston

Law & Order in Ancient Rome

In this lecture, we will explore the differences between our ways of legal thinking on a variety of subjects like theft, family law, and torts, to see just how different our modern assumptions of law and order are from the ancient world. We will address questions like: If the Roman Senate was not a legislature, what did it do? Why did the Romans not consider theft a public crime, but a private matter? Why is "the welfare of the child" not a principle to be found in Roman family law? Is a runaway slave thereby guilty of theft? Why can a husband sue his wife if she makes a necklace of pearls he has given to her? Weird legal questions often lay bare major assumptions, as we shall see. A presentation by Richard H Armstrong, Associate Professor of Classical Studies at the University of Houston.

Time: Tuesday, September 27 from 7 to 8 PM

Price: \$10 for Members and \$15 for Non-Members

Place: ICCC Houston

OTTOBRE 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2	3	4 Aperitivo Italiano - Harvest in Italy 7 - 8 PM	5	6	7	8
9	10	11 ICCC Dine Around at ROMA, An Italian Eatery 7 PM	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19 Italian Contemporary Film Series: When Mom is Away... With the Family 7 PM	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29

Aperitivo Italiano - Harvest in Italy

Celebrate the beginning of the fall season with us! Bring a friend and join us for Harvest in Italy, where presenter Philip Cusimano will talk about harvesting techniques in different regions of Italy.

Time: Tuesday, October 4 from 7 to 8 PM

Price: \$30 for Members and \$35 for Non-Members

Place: ICCC Houston

ICCC Dine Around at ROMA, An Italian Eatery

Meet new friends while enjoying Italian cuisine! Join us at ROMA, An Italian Eatery for a 'Dine Around' on Tuesday, October 11 at 7 PM. Get ready to be delighted by Chef Kevin Bryant's delicious creations. Guests will have the opportunity to enjoy a nice evening surrounded by ICCC members and friends.

You must previously register and pay in order to attend this event. Reserve your seat today on Eventbrite or call 713-524-4222 ext. 7. The last day to reserve your seat is October 5, 2022.

This is event is hosted by the Italian Cultural & Community Center in collaboration with ROMA, An Italian Eatery.

This event will offer a prix fixe menu (\$55 per person).*

**Price includes iced tea, tap water, soft drinks, American coffee. It does not include wine, beer, spirits, Pellegrino, Panna, espresso or cappuccino. These can be added and paid extra at the restaurant.*

Time: Tuesday, October 11 at 7 PM

Price: \$55* Per Person

Place: 2347 University Blvd., Houston, TX 77005

Italian Contemporary Film Series: When Mom is Away... With the Family

Purchase your ticket to join us for the screening of *When Mom is Away... With the Family* on Wednesday, October 19. This is the last

film showing from our 2022 Italian Contemporary Film Series.

Plot: Carlo and Giulia are grappling with new problems regarding the division of their respective tasks within the family. Since Giulia has started working again, it is Carlo who takes care of the children and the household chores. However, he starts to find the role of "Mr. Mom" a bit tight-fitting. Just when he decides to get back into the game and look for a job, Giulia reveals to him that she is up for a promotion that would lead her to move to Sweden. As if that weren't enough, she will have to take the interview on December 24 in Stockholm. Everything seems to threaten the family unity. What should they do? Carlo comes up with a brilliant idea... At least that is how he sees. Recover the old camper and drag the family into an adventure that will lead them on a journey to the North to spend Christmas all together lovingly. Unexpected events along the way and a hilarious encounter/confrontation with a self-styled Santa Claus will make the trip unforgettable.

Time: Wednesday, October 19 at 7 PM

Price: \$10 for ICCC Members and \$15 for Non-Members

Place: ICCC Houston

Tips to Learn Italian Before Moving to Italy

By Gloria Spagnoli | [Italics Magazine](#)

If you're planning to move to Italy to live there or just to travel and experience the country at a deeper level, there's something that cannot miss from your to-do list: learning Italian.



Italian flag. Photo: Michele Bitetto on Unsplash.

Despite what some people might claim, you can't really experience Italy without knowing Italian.

Or better, you can live there, but your experience would be a lot different. It would be like living in a bubble without knowing what's going on around you and without having the tools to make deep friendships and lead an independent life in your country of adoption.

So, learning Italian before moving to Italy is definitely a good idea, especially if you want to take some stress away. Being an expat is clearly a stressful experience, but knowing the local language helps mitigate that stress and have a more realistic idea of what life is like in that country.

Still, beginning to learn is the hardest part. Where do you start from? What should you learn? What's the best material? What should you do?

So many questions but not a single answer that you can truly trust.

So, here below I have included some tips that can help you build a solid base and equip you with some useful tools to take your first steps in Italy.

Use flashcards to learn words

One of the most important things, or the single most important thing that you will need are words. Without words you can't do much, but with them you can really do a lot. The more words you know, the more you can understand and the more you can say.

But how can you learn them?

An old but effective way is surely flashcards. It may sound mechanical and somewhat meaningless to you, but flashcards have proven to be

effective. You can create your own flashcards with a pen and a piece of paper or use Apps like Anki or Quizlet. Whatever you choose, make sure you write the Italian word on one side and the English translation on the other side.

Play with them. Start with the Italian words and see if you can remember the English translation, and then pick an English word and see if you can remember the Italian translation

Which words should you include? Any words that you will need. Help yourself with a course book to learn your very first words, and then include the ones that you know you will need during your stay.

You can expect results after a few tries, so don't get discouraged if you see that you're struggling with your first words. That's absolutely normal. Your brain needs time and repetition.

Memorize dialogues

Once you know some useful words, you can start to memorize some sentences and short dialogues. I know that memorization has gotten itself a bad reputation over the years, but it's something that should be reconsidered.

When you memorize something, anything, you can remember it more easily. Even when you're stressed out. Remember that I said that being an expat is stressful? Well, if you memorize some useful dialogues and sentences in advance, you can beat up stress and successfully speak even when you're stressed out.

By memorizing, I don't mean parroting without knowing what you're saying. Let me explain. If you take a dialogue from a course book, make sure you learn the words and the grammar features in that dialogue. Make full sense of the meaning of every single sentence, and then listen to that dialogue and repeat it out loud.

It's important that you listen to the pronunciation of the words and sentences. This way you will learn them the right way and you will understand them when you hear them.

After that, you can repeat your dialogue out loud a few times and over a period of a few days. This way, it will be easier for you to remember your sentences and use them in your day-to-day conversations.

Read

Something else that you can do once you know a lot of words is reading one

of those books written with learners in mind: graded readers. They're excellent. They allow you to read something at your level, consolidate the words that you know, and have a better idea of how Italian sentences are constructed.

And not only do they improve your reading skills, but they also improve your overall knowledge of the Italian language. So, if you have learned quite enough words to read even a simple book, I highly encourage you to try one. It will give your learning experience more meaning and a steadier progress.

There are books written with 500 words, 1000 words, 1500 words or even more. Choose the right one for you and just enjoy it, because this technique, extensive reading, works if you can enjoy the book without having to look up a new word every two seconds. It will bring you results in the long run (say at least eight weeks) so again, be patient. Your brain is always working for you backstage.

Listen

I said before that listening to short dialogues helps you both with understanding and with pronunciation. But dialogues are not just the only material that you can listen to. I've just talked about books, right? Well, these books, graded readers, come with an audio version. Listening to this audio version while reading the book helps you build that connection between spoken word and written word.

Having this connection is crucial if you want to have a better understanding of how Italians sound when they talk. Learning words without learning how they're pronounced can cause you a lot of confusion. It's better to know from the very beginning how words sound rather than imagining how they might sound and then hearing something completely different. Trust me, it's a time and an energy saver.

Repeat

You might have noticed that I've said more than once things like "repeat after a few days" or "results come after a few tries". And it's exactly what I would like to focus on right now.

Repetition, spaced repetition to be exact, is one of the basics principles for a long-lasting learning, but it's often overlooked.

[Click here to continue reading.](#)

In Cucina con gli Italiani

Spinach Orecchiette with Fennel, Ricotta and Walnuts

Recipe by [Paola Bacchia](#)

Serves four people

1 small bunch English spinach (you will have quite a bit left over)
 350g (12.34 oz) semola rimacinata (semolina flour), plus extra for dusting
 1/2 medium to large fennel bulb
 12 walnuts in the shell, shelled, broken into pieces and toasted in the pan
 200g (7.05 oz) ricotta
 Splash of milk
 1/4 cup parmesan cheese, grated
 1/2 small lemon, zest only
 Extra virgin olive oil
 Freshly cracked black pepper



Preparation

Wash your spinach several times in water (as there is often a lot of mud attached to it), and remove damaged leaves and thick stems.

Heat a large saucepan on the stove on medium to high heat, and when it is quite hot, add the spinach (still dripping with water). Stir the spinach around the saucepan until it wilts completely. Remove from the heat and lift the spinach out with tongs and place on a colander to drain. You can save the water at the bottom of the pot which should now have turned green (to make spinach risotto), or use it as vegetable stock for soup.

Allow the spinach to cool and then wring gently with your hands. It should still be a bit wet. Pop it in a mini processor and process to form a fine paste which will be helped by the bit of water you have left in the spinach. You will need 2-3 teaspoons of the paste. To make it easier, you could use frozen spinach in place of the fresh.

To make the orecchiette, place the semolina flour on your work surface in

a pile and make a well in the center. Add 2-3 heaped teaspoons of spinach paste and as much chilled water as you need to bring the dough together, initially by mixing the water and spinach into the flour with a fork and then using your hands. Knead the dough until it is firm but still able to be kneaded. Cover (I use a small upturned bowl) and allow it to rest for about 30 minutes

Roll out your pasta into ropes and cut into 1-2 cm pieces and shape into orecchiette. Scatter on extra semolina flour to stop them sticking and cover them with a clean cloth until ready to cook. There are lots of clips on Youtube that show you how to shape orecchiette.

Wash the fennel bulb, trim the stalks and cut the bulb through the middle lengthways to obtain half a bulb. Cut wedges/segments of fennel about 1cm thick at the outer surface of the bulb, trying to keep the central stalk intact (which will hold the layers of the bulb together even though they will be in wedges).

Toss in olive oil and scatter on fine seasalt to taste. Place a griddle pan (ideally with lines on it) on the heat at

medium-high. Grill the fennel wedges on each side until cooked through and grill lines have formed. Set aside in a warm place until ready to use.

Place the ricotta in a bowl and mash with a fork. Add a splash of milk and a handful of parmesan, enough so the mixture turns into a thickish sauce. Taste and adjust for salt (with a bit more parmesan if you like).

Place in a frypan (that will fit all the pasta you have made) and warm through on low heat. Place a pot of salted water to the boil and cook the orecchiette until cooked to your liking (the fresh ones will only take 2-3 minutes to cook depending on their size; dried will take much longer).

Lift them up with a strainer and toss into the ricotta, turning the heat up to medium. Add as much pasta water as you need to the ricotta and pasta so that the latter is well coated. Spoon onto your serving dish and top with fennel wedges, toasted walnut pieces, reserved fennel fronds, lemon zest and freshly cracked black pepper.

Drizzle on extra virgin olive oil to taste and serve immediately.

Pair it with: Chardonnay 'Troy' 2018 – Cantina Tramin

By [Wine-Searcher](#)



Chardonnay is one of the best-known (white) grapes in the world. The taste of Chardonnay is unmistakable in the mouth because of its impeccable sugar/acid balance, its full body, and its easy smoothness. Chardonnay's intrinsic quality also allows its flavours to be dramatically affected by differences in soil, climate, and vineyard practices.

Chardonnay 'Troy' 2018 is a wine made of 100% Chardonnay grapes in South Tyrol. This white wine is green and flinty. Some key characteristics of this type of wine are: crisp acidity, minerality, lemon and lime, apple, pear, and grassiness.

This is one of the best Italian white wines for expressiveness and integrity of the fruit: complex nose, fine hieratic: the fruity notes are integrated with unpredictable nuances that at the second sip persuade and acquire great consistency. Grape lysergic.

Chardonnay 'Troy' 2018 titillates the nose alternating intense aromas of candied fruit, orange blossom, slate, salt and pastry. The sip is voluminous, savory well balanced by a pressing acidity.

It pairs well with white fish or creamy pasta dishes.



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We mark with pride, our achievements and promise to continue improving the Italian Cultural & Community Center as we fulfill our mission to advance, celebrate, and preserve Italian culture for all Houstonians, and continue to place the ICCCH on the city's culture map. We thank you for your continued support.

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