

Learning Journey

Sicily: leading innovative culinary enterprise (SLICE)

8-14 May 2022

Case study

Food Heritage

History on a plate



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Introduction

In May 2022, as a group of food tourism & hospitality professionals from the UK, we travelled to Sicily for a learning journey. This focussed on the food heritage, entrepreneurial vision, and sense of place which contribute to the area's overall visitor experience.

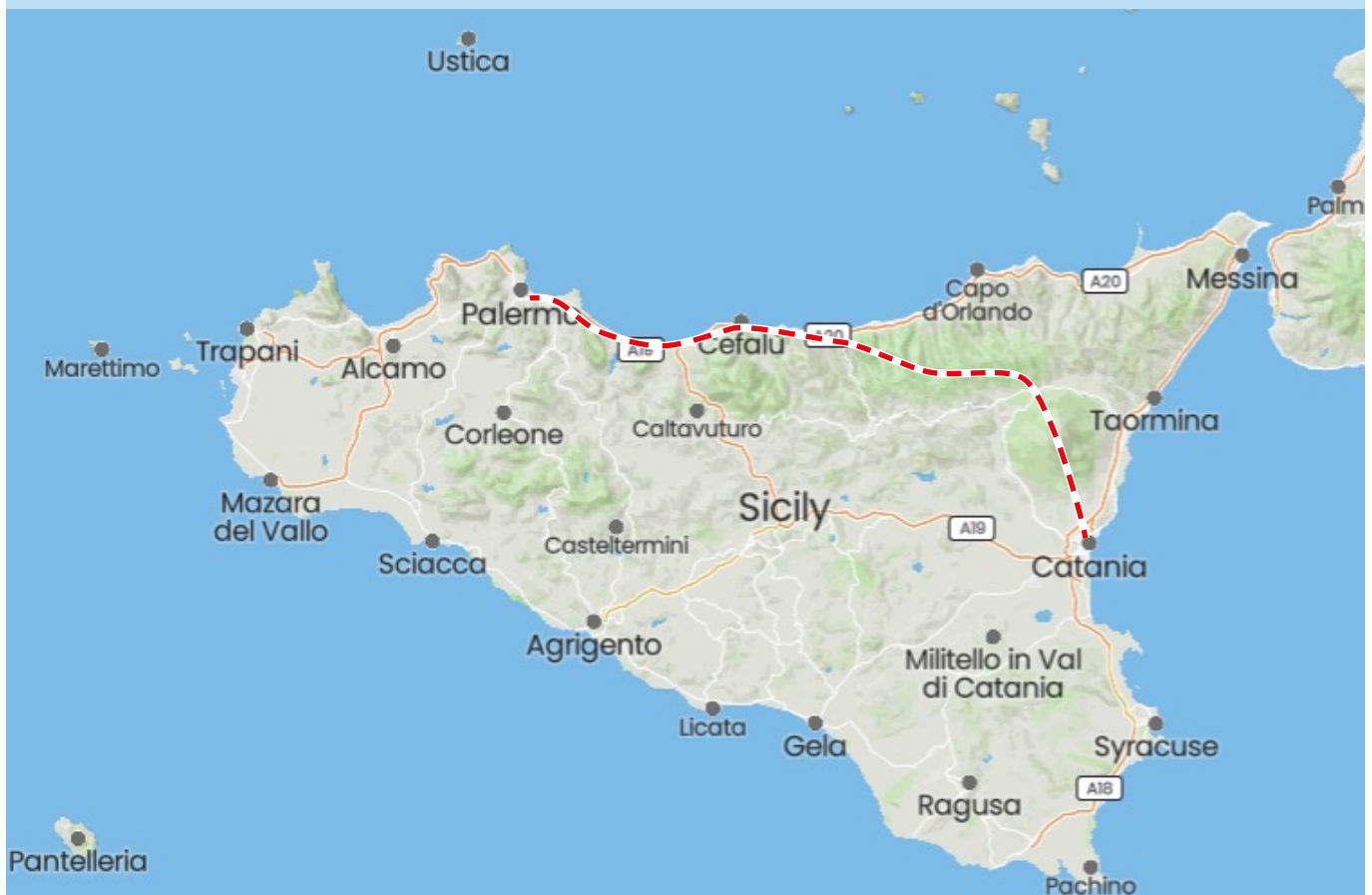
We travelled to Palermo, the Nebrodi Mountains and Catania, over a 6 day period. We were hosted by the Sicilian partner Pegaso and our UK host Tourism Angles, and co-funded by The Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union. In this short space of time, we were immersed in Sicilian culture and hospitality, warmth, kindness and food and drink!

Aim of this case study

Flavour and Pragmatism

We have tried to give the reader both a flavour and taste of Sicily but more importantly, the practical learnings that we, as a group of tourism and hospitality professionals, are taking away to apply to our own businesses in the UK.

Our aim is that you will be able to take some of the learning and tools and apply them to your businesses.



How to use this case study

What you won't find

We visited over 18 sites in 6 days. This was an extraordinary logistical feat, pulled off superbly by the organisers of this learning journey and tremendously stimulating, interesting and valuable to us, as participants.

You won't find an in depth description and blow by blow account of each site, what we ate and drank etc. We have decided to focus on the learnings from our experiences, rather than in-depth descriptions.

You will find a short description of each site together with their website or relevant social media addresses in the Appendix, (click here) should you wish to find out more.

We hope your curiosity is piqued and not only do you want to find out more about each site – but that you'll also want to visit them one day! Then we'll feel like we've done our job.

What you'll find

You will find a series of personal responses to the sites that we visited. Each focus on innovation and entrepreneurialism in the context of Food Heritage. We'll define what we mean by Food Heritage too – as we are well aware that this needs some unpicking as it can be both an umbrella term and a catch all.

About us

We are all from different organisations and background, ranging from chefs to coffee shop owners & roasters to environmentalists, food tours organisers, fishing experts, pizza makers, strategists, bee keepers, consultants, tourism experts and restaurateurs. You can well imagine we all had different “takeaways”.

A site visit could inspire and delight some of us, leaving others less enthusiastic.

Sometimes more than one of us has chosen to write about the same site – with different lived experiences and different learnings.

We want to offer you a range of viewpoints and hope that some may be of practical, pragmatic use.

Mount Etna. The vineyard and agro-tourism destination Firriato Cellars nestles in the foothills of Etna, along with the Marzullo Pistachio company in Bronte. Both benefit from the fertile lava soils in growing their crops.



What is Food Heritage?

Whether you get fancy and flip to the Italian translations of Food Heritage - **Patrimonio Alimentario** or **Eredità del cibo**, (food legacy) it's a phrase that holds a vast amount of differing meanings and covers both continents and centuries.

Both of which were in abundance in the food legacy of Sicily. Here are some of our thoughts and definitions.



Non c'è sapore senza sapere.

*(Without knowledge, there is no taste)
a Sicilian saying*



Is food heritage about history and knowledge? Something to be studied, or simply enjoyed? For me, it's the confident smile of a grandfather sharing a meal in a lemon grove with his family and new friends, just as generations have done before.

Food heritage is about appreciating and celebrating the past, but the value lies in preserving and adapting for the future and creating new traditions and patterns of enjoyment.

We could look for examples of entrepreneurship or innovation, but then we'd be missing something. The people we met are making a living, yet it's passion and pride, not pounds and pence, that drive them.

Susan Briggs



***Food heritage is about
appreciating and
celebrating the past.***



It can mean many things to different people - for some, it is about preserving traditions, for others it is about adapting traditions to meet current trends and embracing change.

Personally, I feel that having a step in both camps will safeguard a country's Food Heritage and keep it relevant and in demand. Preserving and growing it in equal measure.

Alice Edgecumbe -Rendell

A close-up, low-angle shot of a thatched roof, showing many parallel wooden beams or reeds fanning out from a central point, creating a strong sense of perspective and texture. The color is a warm, golden-brown.

***It is about adapting
traditions to meet
current trends and
embracing change.***



For me, it's "history on a plate". It's Nonna, (Grandma) saying she ate it as a childor the nuns baking at St Caterina's. It's the stories that make us value our past.

Food heritage can be lost and retrieved – like an ancient manuscript which reveals more about our past than we ever knew! Again, the convent at St Caterina is a great example of this.

This "loss and retrieval" happened in the UK with our cheesemaking in the 70's. We had lost a lot of cheesemaking skills and varieties, and Patrick Rance spearheaded a huge revival. Now we have a huge range of artisanal cheeses and other products, and we are now one of best cheese producers in the world. That is a heritage success.

As food and tourism professionals, part of our role is to tell the stories behind produce. My job is to tell the story of food and drink, so you value it and respect it, appreciate the passion, skill and heritage that surround it – and then enjoy the taste".

It's like Arturo, from Caffé Morettino says –
Non c'e sapore senza sapere.

Claire Fuller



***The UK is now one of best
cheese producers in the
world. That is a heritage
success.***

Meeting food producers and tasting Sicilian specialities

Susan Briggs – The Tourism Network

Susan has worked in tourism for over 30 years, offering marketing support, publishing, digital marketing, and training for tourism businesses and destinations.

The Sicilian food producers we met may adapt to make their business easier or more profitable (using a machine to collect snail slime springs to mind!) but for the most part they're carrying on the traditions of their terroir. Their food tastes good because it comes from their locality, traditions, and experience.

We repeatedly ate the same Sicilian specialities. Each time it was different, depending on the love and attention that went into their making. Younger chefs may add something extra, or lighten a dish to make it more appealing to modern tastes. Other cooks may cling to the past, eschewing written recipes, and instead guided by the generations before them.

Food heritage is attractive to visitors, although the food producers may not actually be providing an attraction that the public can visit. We were privileged to get an inside view. This is something visitors want too, so there is an opportunity for food and tasting tours, although we shouldn't assume this is something the food producers we met would want to do. We talked about the opportunities from food tourism within the broader SLICE group, and I've agreed to help one group member look at establishing farm tours in Scotland. Authenticity and an insight into another way of living and eating are key.



The street food café we visited on our first day, (Nni Franco u Vastiddaru, Palermo) was disappointing in terms of food and sense of heritage. Yet the chaotic service was an entertainment, and (again) proves the value of being distinctive. The café had clearly survived for years and was popular with locals.

Watch Claire Fuller and Vicky Martin discussing their differing experiences at Nni Franco Vastiddaru

www.vimeo.com/718426366/7d0d830bb1



"Organized chaos" describes the service – and the restaurant was full with people queuing to get a seat.

Traditional pane con la milza – poor food of bread with spleen



Some visit highlights:

The passion and pride of producers such as the **Morettino coffee family**, and the owners of **Lumaca (Snail) Madonita**, the **citrus grove** (where we had a rustic, peasant lunch picnic), and **Il Canalotto restaurant and hotel** shone through.

The **Firriato Cellars** benefitted from a beautiful setting, and a slick operation with pristine buildings. Our guide and characterful host made the whole place more memorable and fun.

www.firriato.it



It was good to see the way **Convent Santa Caterina**, (<https://en.isegretidelchiostro.com>) is creating revenue by re-creating pastries from the past, making connections between the past and present. There were missed opportunities for fundraising, by creating smaller delicacies (less waste) and promoting take-home gifts for families together with a blessing from the church.

Davide Merlino –
founder of **Lumaca Madonita**
– Sicilian snail producers.
www.lumacamadonita.it



Takeaway

Advice I'll pass on to my clients as a result of this trip:

- Passion and pride make the biggest difference to a business. It costs nothing, but reaps huge rewards. For many tourism and hospitality businesses, their 'about' page is as important as the one on pricing. Be confident. Show passion for what you do. It benefits the business and makes customers feel upbeat and enthusiastic too. They'll love having stories to take home and tell others. Passion is infectious.
- There are opportunities in even the most remote villages. Think creatively, tell a story, appeal to a market that others often ignore (e.g. Roots & VFR-visiting friends and relatives), but also follow through with good interpretation and content.
- Don't let 'facilities' get in the way of offering something different and memorable. Too often businesses don't do something because they can't get planning permission or afford parking or toilets. Lunch in the citrus grove proved that if the experience is different enough, visitors will adapt.
- Visitors love insider tips: create opportunities for them to see behind the scenes, to taste or actually do something, or hear the story behind the business. They'll pay for something special.
- Don't assume that because someone is already doing something, they have to be the leaders forever. Think about wine in France a couple of decades ago, and how New Zealand and Australia have developed such a strong reputation. Food and drink evolve, as do markets. There's space for you.
- We need to be prouder of our own food heritage. We're too self-effacing. We assume other countries have stronger food heritages, yet we have some excellent national and regional dishes. One of our strengths is the way we take something from other cultures and adapt it to our tastes, creating even more interesting food.
- Much pleasure can come from appreciation of the everyday. We need to identify what is 'ordinary' to us, and 'extraordinary' to others, and shout about it.



*Rustic lunch in the
Citrus Grove*

Simplicity wins the day – Citrus Grove Rustic Picnic

Fiona Young – Fiona Young Training and Consultation

Fiona is passionate about service excellence and training & development in hospitality.

We were given a delightful rustic lunch in a citrus grove in the Nebrodi Mountains. The citrus grove was the ultimate Sicilian experience in the most basic format. Although the host had limited English, he made everyone feel extremely welcome. He shook everyone's hand and had a genuine smile on his face.

They had taken the time to print “**You Are Welcome**” signs and had these pinned up at the entrance. And we did truly feel welcome.

The table was wooden pallets, covered with linen tablecloths, balanced on crates and the seats were upturned logs. The food was beautifully locally produced simple fare – arancini, olives, bread and meats, cakes – all purchased from the local villages and towns.

The family came to meet us including the children and grandchildren.



Lemons, oranges and limes are an integral part of the Sicilian diet and the citrus grove provides fresh fruit to businesses across Sicily and parts of Italy. Everyone was encouraged to pick their own fruit and taste it. And take some away as well.

For me, this was the most genuine, authentic Sicilian experience that you could get, yet, it was by far the simplest.

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Takeaway

- Being yourself, keep things simple and a warm, genuine welcome are what people are looking for. Don't over complicate things.
- Explore what "authentic" experiences visitors to Scotland receive and reflect back to my experience in the Citrus Grove to see if they really are authentic or if we are over thinking and making assumptions on what the visitors are looking for.



A note about lemons

Janet Gordon - Bluestarfish Consulting

Janet is a consultant, specialising in customer experience.

Several of us took lemons home with us (although we were not sure if we were allowed to, so please don't tell on us). We exchanged recipes for Limoncello, Lemon Drizzle cake and Pistachio, Cardamon and Lemon cake. We were highly motivated to use the amazing produce we took with us – that we had been gifted. It sparked energy, fun and passion; it also generated a much WhatsApp and Instagram traffic as well.

I am waiting for my batch of Limoncello to “brew” and hope it will be as lovely as that made by our host's wife that we sampled on that memorable day. Every time I see it, I am transported back to that sunny, blissful, and very simple day. It's a mnemonic for Sicily and that experience.



Takeaway

- Being yourself, keep things.
Think about how your guests or customers can apply your product or service when they get back to their “home lives”.
- What will be a reminder in their homes of their wonderful trip or experience?
How do you create a positive mnemonic?
Something that nudges them to tell their story of their experience with your product/venue to a friend.

*What will be a
reminder in their
homes of their
wonderful trip or
experience?*



A Case of Food Heritage Reclaimed - I Segreti Del Chiostro (The secrets of the cloister)



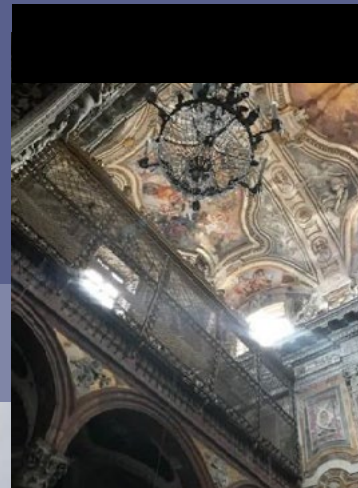
*Claire Fuller – Partner Armchair Tasting Tours,
Freelance Food tour guide*

Claire is specialist in food heritage and food tours.
Santa Caterina - Palermo

This beautiful church and female monastery were occupied by Dominican nuns from 1311 to 2014. Many of the nuns came from noble families and brought with them recipes for luxurious and indulgent cakes and pastries.

Sicilian patisserie reflects the colonisation of the island by the Greeks, Arabs, Normans and latterly the British featuring pistachios, almonds, oranges and other exotic flavours and ingredients. Originally the nuns baked these confections as a way of giving to the community but eventually the sale of these goods became a revenue source for the monastery until the 1980s when the bakery closed. (Explore the website for some interesting videos with more information (<https://en.isegretidelchiostro.com/press>))

In 2017 a project was begun to rediscover these traditional recipes. The methods had been passed down by word of mouth and so surviving nuns were interviewed and the recipes were written down for the first time and recreated with a few contemporary adjustments.



Today the artisan bakery is run as a social cooperative selling confectionery based on these original recipes from 21 Palermo monasteries. They include:

Trionfo di Gola – Triumph of Gluttony

This cake was commissioned by nobility to show their wealth and status – it is incredibly rich – in all meanings of the word.

Sospiri di Monaca – Nun's Sighs

Testa Di Turco – Turkish Men's Heads

Minne De Vergine – Virgin's breasts

(This comes from the story of St Agata whose breasts were cut off before she was killed)

Fedde Di Cancelliere – Chancellors' Buttocks

This is a shell of soft pistachio paste that hides a filling of cream and apricot jam. And is a reference to one of the benefactors of the Monastery.



And there is a story behind most of these – you can find them in the blog on the website. www.isegretidelchiostro.shop/blogs/notizie

The methods and equipment used are traditional and there is no ambition to expand. This project is about conserving old methods and recipes and retailing the products in the original cloister environment. Revenue is used to renovate and restore the church and attached monastery.

Our visit on Sunday the 8th of May explored the beautiful church and cloisters and concluded in the bakery.

The queue to purchase the cakes and sweets is testament to the success of this project, a mixture of tourists and locals, taking them home or eating them in the rose garden of the cloisters.

The rose garden

A range of exquisite patisserie, drinks and the opportunity to buy a recipe collection. Although there are opportunities to improve the offering from better packaging for take home purchases, portion control, signage, and better “storytelling”.

This project is a glorious example of the reclamation of food heritage, a revival of lost recipes of historical importance bringing benefit to the local community by restoring historical buildings, creating a pride in that heritage and of course tourism opportunities.

Protecting and preserving our culture and customs has a role in creating a sense of place, belonging and pride.

This project has also inspired other Palermo bakeries to share the love for classic Sicilian patisserie.

We can draw parallels in the UK with this project, the revival of British artisan cheese production in the 70s and closer to home in Sussex the discovery of recipes for traditional county gingerbread and biscuits, now being produced by the Horsham Gingerbread Company. There are however many more opportunities to “rescue” our food heritage. The benefits of this are many. Protecting and preserving our culture and customs has a role in creating a sense of place, belonging and pride. These traditions can also generate revenue and contribute to tourism and local communities.



Takeaway

- Remember what we have – is there anything we need to reclaim?

A recipe?

A way of doing something that is /was important?

- Protect our heritage – and be proud of it
- How can we authentically share our own heritage produce and crafts?



Preserving the past and developing the future - Dolci Incontro

Deborah Hood- joint owner The Coffee Press & Cottage Catering



Debbie and her husband opened their coffee shop in 2007. During the pandemic they launched a home meal service from Cottage Catering which has been very successful.

Dolce Incontro is a pastry and coffee shop in hills of Sicily, in the small town of Tortorici. It was started by Giulia Galati approximately 25 years ago.

Giulia saw all the traditional cakes her mother was making at home and decided this was an important part of her heritage. She wanted to ensure it was kept alive. She opened her own patisserie. Crucially she made her own version of Sicilian recipes, utilising the hazelnuts from the farms around her, instead of the more traditional but less available to her, almonds.



These are the traditional Sicilian, "Pasta Reale", made with hazelnuts instead of almonds as in other parts of Sicily



This innovative idea of keeping the production of the traditional cakes while also ensuring the continuation of the hazelnut production in the area is unique. Her cakes have been recognised this year at the Milan EXPO where she won Patisserie of the year.

By opening this business and helping it grow she has shown great entrepreneurial skills. She has not only created a business for herself but also jobs in an area of Sicily where they are experiencing economic decline. She supports local farmers and ancillary jobs through her business.

The main thing that I have taken from this business, and virtually all other places we visited, was the **pride** in their heritage and their passion in what they do.

These were never stated aloud or in literature, but somehow came across in everything that they did. You could see their enthusiasm for their business and pride when they were talking about it, even though there was a language barrier.

This is something that I find we easily forget about. We get caught up in figures, growth strategies, marketing, staffing levels etc.



I believe, as a nation, we see innovation as coming up with new ideas, always looking forward, always looking to increase our business /market share. Whereas the Sicilian's have so much **love** for their **heritage**, they ensure these things are kept alive; they focus on the traditional way things have been done for years and expand their businesses forward by looking at the best of the past.



When visiting the different sites, we all could see aspects of the businesses that could be improved or ways they could increase their business; like the Citrus Grove doing customer visits with lunch like the one we had, which was a great experience; Morettino coffee production expanding its market to outside Italy etc. **However**, in hindsight, maybe doing what they do, focussing on what they do and doing it well brings better products/service and brings more satisfaction to yourself.

There are so many things I will be taking from this learning journey, but the main thing that sticks in my mind is their **pride** and **passion**. This has made me think about the reason we have opened our own business' and what we wanted to achieve. Our purpose – our rationale – what inspired us to go into the café and coffee business in the first place. I will be looking at ways we can convey our own passion in what we are doing and ways we can ensure we are doing what we set out to do in the beginning.

Takeaway

- Pride and passion in what you do
- Remember/revisit your rationale for starting your business – what is your purpose?
- Make sure you communicate this to your staff and customers



From one coffee producer to another – Caffé Morettino

Alice Edgecumbe Rendell - Director of Edgecumbes coffee roaster and tea blenders, Arundel

Alice is highly experienced in the coffee and tea business and passionate about sustainability and traceability.

On our trip we visited 22 different producers, sites, and institutions. Their reason for being was plainly articulated and underpinned by their location and the 'terroir' of the land.

They are proud of their businesses and a passion for their products was always evident. From the local shop owner selling chocolate-enrobed hazelnuts which has become a national sensation due to her innovative methods; to the small flour mill producing Cantucci Biscuits with cinnamon and hazelnut to replace the traditional almond.

We all felt honoured to be allowed into their world and welcomed so graciously.

I have chosen to comment on the Palermo based Morettino Coffee Company www.morettino.com

I will focus on three areas- innovation, entrepreneurial approach, and what I will take away to implement in my own business.

Morettino is a 100-year-old family business roasting and retailing coffee to their local market.



Entrepreneurial vision

Coffee runs through every stratum of Sicilian society. It represents one of the most recognisable faces of Italian life and, in many ways, IS an essential part of its Food Heritage (albeit a drink).

Arturo Morettino's approach, (the owner) however, was very entrepreneurial. Our coffee demonstration, held in the 'Morettino Coffee Lab', was designed to showcase the new 'third wave' of coffee culture.

I was struck by how clearly he recognised the need for diversification. So, rather than simply talk about 'Italian' coffee, we were introduced to three brewing methods and styles of coffee. Interestingly, and perhaps counterintuitively, this served to **highlight** the special nature of Italian Espresso, whilst showcasing his openness to other 'artisan' coffees, as he termed them.

We can see the taste notes and origin of the coffee. Note - this is very un-Italian!



It was obvious that he was open to new ideas, while always staying true to his own cultural roots.

He recognised the need for 'storytelling' and wove his own personal family story into the fabric of coffee as a positive force for good. He referred to his core beliefs which are illustrated on his website: *#welovecoffee*, *#welovenature*, *#weloveculture*, *#welovesicily*.

He told the story to us of 'the ritual of coffee' and how each region in Sicily had its own unique coffee culture and traditions. He effectively managed to 'own' his product and illustrate how we can all develop our own tradition.

One of the most memorable comments he made highlighted his belief in coffee as a driver of solidarity and community strength. When asked how many coffees he drank a day, he answered... 'it depends on how many friends I meet'...

It all felt very approachable and engaging! The concept is nothing new, but the way he communicated it was very entrepreneurial in its approach. Not too shouty but clearly something that made him happy, and which we could all empathise with.

Innovation

The passion and pride in their product were evident. Italian coffee, in the eyes of the present family owner, is unique. He believes that it is such an important part of Sicilian (or Italian) Heritage that the company is working hard to secure its place on the UNESCO list of intangible cultural heritage products. Whilst this might appear to be unrealistic, it certainly makes the company stand out as an influencer.

However, it was clear that he had also recognised the need to innovate. That Sicilian charm alone would not shield him from outside competition, nor would a single-minded focus on one style of coffee product be enough to survive and thrive in the cut-throat world of coffee.

We were shown round his factory which had installed an innovative new coffee roaster that was able to circulate clean air into the environment. Sustainability was obviously at the heart of his business which will be increasingly vital in the coming years. It was clear that he was ahead of the game in Sicily. A forward thinker yet fiercely defensive of his Sicilian coffee traditions.

I was particularly intrigued with their innovative decision to grow coffee plants in Sicily. Whilst the results are not likely to be of any commercial value, (the majority of coffee is grown in only 5 countries), the promotional value is huge. In fact, the reason for our visit was due to an article I saw in the coffee trade press on this very subject, which resulted in our meeting.



Demonstrating the face of coffee-green bean to roasted bean – in an affectionate and friendly way with a nod to the Italian tradition of mask wearing!



Although not a particularly show-stopping sight a wall by the bins! The story behind it was very powerful – always seeking to push boundaries and take some risks.

Takeaway

- As a fellow coffee business owner, I was struck by the power of a good story. The owner was professional, confident, and very sure of the strength of his offer.

In business, we are all bombarded with information and the secret is to communicate it simply and with conviction. This is much harder to do than one would think, and I will put some focus into keeping our message clear. We all have a story – it is just how we tell it that matters.

I found his confident, yet authentic manner made it easy to listen to his story and all members of the group indicated that they took something away from the visit.

- Also, I learnt that we should be proud of our business' family heritage. In the UK we are sometimes hesitant to shout about what drives us and to highlight the positive nature of a family business which gives us our own unique, and rich social heritage. Our company is over 40 years old and still family run, so I probably need to be wheeled out more often to engage with our customers!

- The Coffee Lab concept is very attractive, as it gives the impression of expertise and trust.

I liked the brewing session, where a team member offered three distinct types of coffee made differently to highlight the intrinsic flavours of the coffee. We were given the chance to sample three types of coffee- filter, mokapot and espresso. It was a perfect introduction for coffee lovers!

- The company showed us round their Coffee Museum which was a smorgasbord of coffee making equipment and paraphernalia. It was a remarkable achievement to have collected so many ancient and important pieces. This was an education for us all. It reminded me of the power of 'sharing one's knowledge'.

We often invite our customers into the Edgcumbes' roastery to view our processes, but I was struck by how interested we all were at seeing some of the older bits of equipment that have a place in our lives. I shall definitely dig out some of our old machines to showcase!

*Two original Italian
Espresso machines
from the late 1950's:*



*Brewing an Ethiopian
Filter coffee*



Four forks and a spoon

Livia Alexander - lecturer in hospitality at Ayrshire College

Livia is passionate about great food and exceptional service.

Food Heritage – What does this mean?

While it may conjure up images of upholding traditions based upon generations passing down their knowledge I found it opened up new ideas and different ways of thinking for me.

It allowed me to appreciate and experience a new culture and think how I can adapt and introduce elements into my learning and teaching delivery.

We visited so many diverse establishments from Il Canalotto hotel and restaurant, to hotel catering schools, a citrus grove and experienced rural tourism at the Lega'mi-case.

What I have been left with is a strong sense of family, sharing what they have, socialising, talking time to chat. At times I felt overwhelmed with the apparent organised chaos and bewildered at how it all seemed to work.

We coined the phrase “Four forks and a spoon”, and experienced food service the Sicilian way. The “four forks” related to the number of forks on our place settings and a clue to the number of courses!



For me food heritage was in **how** and not **what** was served. There was a strong sense of pride and passion, a genuine need to share, and a sense of wanting the experience to be familial, with long lunches, long dinners and no sense of timing.

This lack of urgency and lots of courses to leisurely dine over, alerted us to coin our fork phrase and eagerly anticipate the length of dining by counting the forks! We also noticed the lack of menus provided, just a willingness to feed.



The Citrus Grove Rustic Picnic

Wine was spilled at the citrus grove, no fuss made, instead laughter ensued and an expression of “it’s good luck”. This for me exemplified simplicity and an emphasis on others.

Paolo Borsellino Hotel School
www.ipssarpaoloborsellino.edu.it

The hotel school in Palermo Paolo Borsellino we visited had also an emphasis on family involvement, with meetings and panels for parents, pupils and staff. This strengthens the bonds and makes a huge impact on the shared learning.

Click here to see the interview with Livia Alexander and Fiona Young on what Scottish catering could learn from the Italian way of training young people in catering.

The gala dinner at Il Canaletto www.ilcanalotto.it

This hotel and restaurant were a family empire. A husband and wife ran the business, however we were proudly introduced to the grandfather and grandson, and discovered it had been built by the grandfather’s building firm. It was very clear the generational involvement and hopes for the future through the young grandson. We were given a tour of the premises, a history of the building and future plans for a wellness spa and pool. This family demonstrated not only pride and passion but an entrepreneurial ambition.

While food has always been a focus for me, I have learned that the story, the ‘how’ it’s presented represents the meaning of heritage in Food Heritage.



Takeaway

- the Sicilian way
- be more relaxed
- focus on family, friends
- enjoy the hospitality buzz, (though perhaps I may skip the four forks and a spoon at every dining experience!).



Enabling Food Heritage through accommodation - Lega'mi-case

Stuart Fraser – Director -The Oak tree Inn, restaurant and accommodation, artisan coffee shop chain and ice cream parlour Balmaha, Loch Lomond

Stuart is focussed on developing the business strategically, in line with international best practice and innovation.

Lega'mi-case – nestling in the **Nebrodi** mountains is a small village called San Salvatore de Fitalia – Guiseppa Scurria is pioneering a business whereby disused homes are renovated and used as accommodation for tourists. They are disused/empty but still furnished as relatives have died and the next generation has moved away but still keeps hold the house. It generates money for the owners and the village which has seen its population shrink from 5000 to 1000 as people move away for work and new opportunities.. We were the first guests to stay as “guinea pigs” for this project.

In a conversation between Janet and Stuart, Stuart made the point that the Lega'mi project was “genius” in terms of providing tourists with a platform to experience food tourism/heritage.

From our stay there, we were able to visit an organic honey maker, an olive mill, an ancient organic wheat mill, the black pig breeder in the homonymous national park, Dolci Incontro in neighbouring town Tortorici, and the superb restaurant Il Canalotto. The Nebrodi Mountain area is very hilly and the small village is an accessible base.



We also had a unique experience in this small village with one bar – where we had a superb breakfast everyday – with an outstanding mountain view.

Here are Stuart's thoughts.

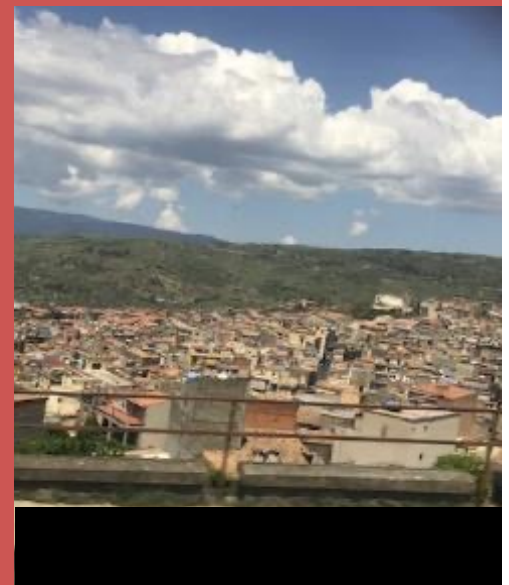
www.vimeo.com/716486523/926afacb76



Fabulous breakfast of typical granita and brioche (and coffee!)

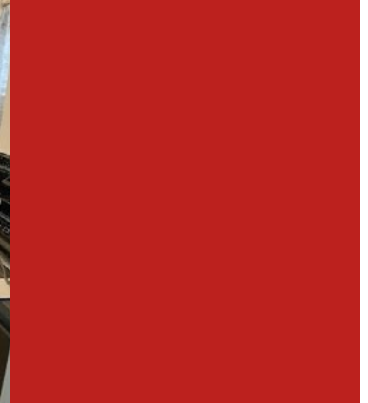


View from the bar





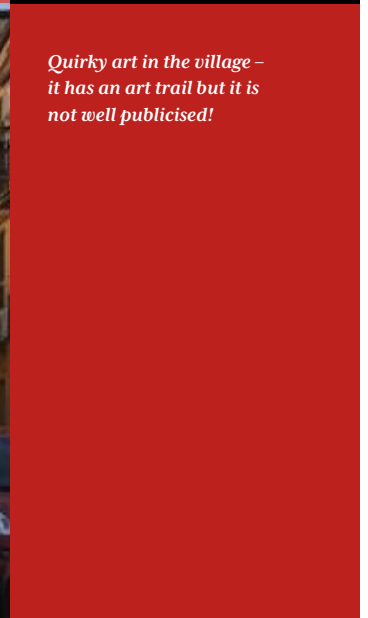
Some of the rooms in the houses – a nod to the past and how the villagers lived. Lega'mi has created a written story of the lives of the previous inhabitants which is left in each house, with an invitation for the guest to add some information about their own life and experiences – creating a living history.



It generates money for the owners and the village which has seen its population shrink from 5000 to 1000.



Quirky art in the village – it has an art trail but it is not well publicised!



Takeaway

- Always get the basics right before you launch – if you don't you may endanger your business through negative Instagram or trip advisor reviews.
- Go to market when ready
- Think about your customers and their expectations
- Sell the negatives – no Wi-Fi – take a break from busy life etc
- An innovative and inspiring idea – bringing past and present together – and a chance to truly experience a lived cultural experience - how can you help your guests or customers experience the culture you offer?

Here are some of the group's thoughts:

Susan

It's not just 'tourists' who're interested (in this kind of heritage). Those wanting to explore their roots and the overseas VFR (Visiting friends and relatives) market is potentially really important to a business such as the Lega'mi houses. Relatives of those who left long ago could enjoy returning to their 'homeland' and tasting their favourite food specialities in their natural habitat. It would have been good to tie together a food experience, and talk about the public art, with a more considered approach to decorating the Lega'mi houses.

Livia

Lega'mi-case accommodation had various reviews from the group. For me they gave a connection to the past, based on families, and provided a bridge to the future, by attempting to bring much needed tourism to the area. Again, a family story to be told in every house.



Bringing back the black bee

Vicky Martin and Robert Muir

Vicky is Head of Visitor Attraction Strategy of Welsh Water
Robert is business owner of Base Artisan Pizza, Drymen, Loch Lomond

Native to the island, the Sicilian black bee risked extinction after being abandoned in the 1970s in favour of the Italian bee, which was considered more productive and better suited to commercial apiculture

Today there are 8 breeders and over 250 beekeepers taking care of Sicilian black bees along the western part of the island.

High up in the beautiful mountains in the Province of Messina, we met professional beekeeper, Giuseppe Scurria of Apicoltura Colline del Fitalia

The Black Bee business

Giuseppe has 500 hives on his bee farm and produces 10 tonnes of honey a year. He sells his honey to the local market – Sicilians use honey where we use sugar and it is a staple in traditional recipes

Thanks to the rich and diverse flora in the region, Giuseppe is able to produce a wide range of honey including Wildflower, Chestnut, Caper flower & Orange blossom.

As well as producing and selling honey, Giuseppe breeds & sells Queens and bee colonies nationally.



Giuseppe Scurria

The Benefits of Black Bees

- Docile and very productive, even in hot weather, Sicilian black bees can withstand temperatures over 40°C (when other bees stop working).
- The black bee's characteristics make it highly suited to pollination in polytunnels, which are used by many Sicilian farmers
- Beekeepers raising the black bees have experienced an almost complete lack of colony collapse disorder and greater resistance to diseases, such as the varroa mite; and to pesticides .



Better than Manuka

- The nectar produced by the Black bees contains:
- antioxidants in quantities 3-10 times higher than any other honey
- 13 antibacterial and 4 antifungal substances, the latter never found in other honey.

Sicilian Bee and Climate Change

- The Sicilian black bee with its ability to tolerate extreme heat and sudden temperature changes offers greater resilience to climate change.
- This couldn't be more important following the heatwave last summer, when record temperatures and wildfires destroyed vast areas of vegetation and decimated bee populations.
- It has been catastrophic for many of Sicily's 2000 beekeepers. Honey production plummeted by 70% and the Government declared a state of emergency for the apiculture industry.

The Back Story

- In 1987, after years of searching, Carlo Amodeo found 3 genetic families of Sicilian black bees in an abandoned apiary 20km from Palermo. At the suggestion of Prof. Genduso of the University of Agriculture of Palermo, the bees were transported by ferry and boat to an Aeolian island to keep the subspecies genetically pure by enabling them to reproduce avoiding hybridisation .
- In the early 2000s, Amodeo became the first and only official Sicilian black beekeeper on the National Register of Italian Honey Bee Breeders. In 2008 a Slow Food Presidium was founded to start a reintegration plan in Western Sicily, including fertilisation stations to reproduce the black bee in purity and to check purity through genetic screening
- In 2012, the Sicily Regional Authority funded a project, in collaboration with various university bodies and the Slow Food Foundation, to reintroduce the Sicilian black bee into the northwest of Sicily (the provinces of Palermo, Trapani and Agrigento).
- To increase the number of beekeepers willing to raise the Sicilian black bees and help the bee to repopulate the territories of origin, hives were provided for free. In return beekeepers had to commit to following specific rules regarding beekeeping and to join an association for keepers of the black bees.



Takeaway

- The Sicilian black bee story is inspiring
 - rescued from the brink of extinction and successfully reintroduced; now creating business opportunities, supporting biodiversity & eco resilience in the battle against climate change
- Success didn't happen by accident, vital ingredients seem to be: having a driving vision; academic expertise; public funding & coordination; and collaboration with industry
- Sicily takes the preservation of its food heritage seriously – as well as the Sicilian black bee, Nebrodi black pigs have been successfully reintroduced and ancient Tumminia grains have been rediscovered.
- A strong food heritage helps create destination distinctiveness, strengthens sense of place and enriches the visitor experience
- Cheese with honey is surprisingly good!

Questions

- Is there an opportunity for black beekeepers in Sicily to raise awareness of the unique and special qualities of their honey outside of Sicily?
- Is there an opportunity for Apicoltura Colline del Fitalia to create a stronger black bee brand through packaging and labelling?
- Is there more we could and should be doing to support our native black bee population in UK...?



Scotland Meets Italy – Base Artisan Pizza

Robert Muir and Janet Gordon

Janet: I was chatting to Robert as we walked round one of the sites we were visiting. And I discovered that not only is he a chef with over 20 years of experience, but that he decided to launch his own venture after the first lockdown. For his business Robert wanted to focus on what he loves to cook and eat the most... PIZZA. But it was critical to him that it was authentic, artisan pizza – as made in Italy.

Robert lives in the Loch Lomond area of Scotland and has been successfully doing events – such as weddings and Stag do's since lockdown lifted. Roberts sees the introduction of a less formal wedding style banquet – pizza or an Italian sharing plate that he has created – as beginning to change the way weddings are done. He says younger people want something more informal – more “them” and more in line with being individual – being able to pick and choose what you want to eat and when.

The coming together of Italian food heritage in Scotland, is having an impact of culture – the culture of weddings!



Robert says:

“I really enjoy doing weddings as we have not only done the evening buffet, but I feel people are looking for a more relaxed theme these days. I love building relationships with brides and grooms and working with them to create their perfect menu for the big day. You leave feeling like you have had a big impact on their lives. And you have usually made some friends too”.

To me this is sounding a lot like the “Sicilian Style” we all experienced.



Have a look at an example of one of the sharing platters Robert's team creates for an event.

www.vimeo.com/716562708/c3e5fb82df



Source for photos: www.tide.co/blog/member-spotlight/robert-founder-base-artisan-pizzas

Takeaway

Base Artisan Pizza exemplifies one of Susan Brigg's takeaways

- We need to be prouder of our own food heritage. We're too self-effacing. We assume other countries have stronger food heritages, yet we have some excellent national and regional dishes. One of our strengths is the way we take something from other cultures and adapt it to our tastes, creating even more interesting food.

When we are passionate about something and we get it right and we take the learnings from another culture – we can make something new and inspiring in the culture we are in.



Summary of ideas and tips

<i>Idea/Tip</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Be proud of your food heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We really noticed the pride in Sicily – and we Brits tend to be self effacing. Take pride in whatever your food heritage is. - As well as how we have adapted food from other cultures.
Your pride and passion for your business is critical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We saw passion and pride in every venue we went to. It costs nothing, but reaps huge rewards. For many tourism and hospitality businesses, their ‘about’ page is as important as the one on pricing. Be confident. Show passion for what you do. It benefits the business and makes customers feel upbeat and enthusiastic too. They’ll love having stories to take home and tell others. Passion is infectious.
Revisit your purpose for starting your business – are you still communicating that passion and purpose? Revisit your story – and make sure your team is inspired with your passion and pride too.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - See above. And remind yourself of the “Why?” - Communication is key – how are you communicating to your team and to customers?
Think creatively about opportunities – tell a story and appeal to markets others often ignore.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lega’mi-Case is a great example of this. What could you do? And to which new markets?
Insider tips – behind the scenes – remember visitors love getting some extra knowledge – things they can tell stories about	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A great way to show your passion for your product or service - And people will pay extra for “something special” - In Caffé Morettino – it was a simple museum of old coffee machines and paraphernalia that caught our attention and our cameras!
Keep it simple – Be yourself. Find the “extraordinary” in what you do.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is “<i>extraordinary</i>” for others about your “<i>ordinary</i>”? For us being able to pick a lemon from a tree was “extraordinary”; memorable and delightful. And very simple.



Summary of ideas and tips

<i>Idea/Tip</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Reminders and stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What can you do/give to help your visitors remember you/your product/service and tell positive stories about it to others?
Authentic – we felt time and time again that things were very authentic in Sicily. Explore what "authentic" means to you.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Think about how you can authentically share your heritage produce or craft.
Food and drink markets evolve – there is room for you! Don't be put off because someone another country is currently a leader.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wines – New Zealand and Australia developed strongly to rival France....Beers....cheese...etc
What can you reclaim ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is there something from the past that is genuinely worth a revival? A recipe? A custom? A meal? A way of doing something? Remember our UK cheese revival.
Slow down & be more relaxed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The "Sicilian way" is about enjoying the moment, the people, the food, the coffee...how can 1) you slow down? How can you help your customers to slow down and appreciate fully the service/product you offer?
Remember to always get the basics right and go to market when you are ready	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lega mi-Case is a fantastic, innovative accommodation project– but it needed a bit more refinement. Make sure you're ready to be open to the world!
Think about your customers' expectations – revisit your customer journey and how you want them to feel at each stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Remember to put yourself in your customer's shoes and point out key aspects of your service that otherwise might surprise them. Make this into a benefit or feature.
Success doesn't happen by accident	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It does take hard work - A strong vision - And a strong heritage can be a lynchpin to support you - (Think of the Black Bees)



Appendix

Sites visited and referenced in this case study

<i>Name & location</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Contact</i>
Nni Franco u Vastiddaru Palermo	Typical street food restaurant and take away	www.facebook.com> nnifrancouvastiddaru
Convent of Santa Caterina Palermo	Convent of closed order of Dominican nuns since 1300 and now operates a patisserie of traditional pastries, cakes and sweets from the nuns' recovered recipes.	www.en.isegretidelchiostro.com
Trattoria del Massimo Palermo	Typical Sicilian restaurant	www.trattoriadelmassimo.it
Paolo Borsellino hotel institute Palermo	Cookery school	www.ipssarpaoloborsellino.edu.it
Caffè Morettino	Small coffee grower and roaster.	www.morettino.com/
Locale Restaurant Palermo	Modern twist on typical Sicilian dishes	
Snail Madonita Madonie	A small, entrepreneurial snail producer – producing snails for gastronomy & beauty industry.	www.lumacamadonita.it/
Citrus Grove Lunch Nebrodi Mountains	A citrus famer opens his orchards up to create a rustic, peasant picnic.	www.sicily-fruit.com
L'Oro Di Sant'Andrea Nebrodi Mountains	Small organic olive mill and peach jam producer	www.facebook.com/ orodisantandrea/
LEGA' MI accommodation San Salvatore di Fitalia village	Local dis-used houses in a mountain village, renovated and offered as historic and retro accommodation.	Website in development
Dolci Incontri Tortorici	Pastry shop where owner Lidia combines innovation with traditional recipes.	www.pasticceriaadolceincontro.it/
Le Colline del Fitalia – honey producer Nebrodi Mountains	An organic honey producer and breeder of Sicily's black bees	www.linkedin.com/in/scurria- giuseppe-137b0014b/
Il Canaletto Restaurant Nebrodi Mountains	Family restaurant and hotel, serving typical Sicilian food.	www.ilcanaletto.it/
Marzullo Pistachio Company Bronte	Producer of pistachios, growing tress in the lava at the foot of the volcano, Mount Etna	www.biobronte.it/en/
Medi Hotel Institute, Bronte	Cookery school, hospitality qualifications, for young people within a secondary school	www.italia.it/en/pistachio-from- bronte
Firriato Cellars and winery	Agri-tourism venue comprising winery, restaurant and hotel, in the shadow of Mount Etna.	www.firriato.it



*The famous Sicilian
caponata*

Video interview 1.

Our hospitality and catering experts, Livia and Fiona, discuss the impact of visiting the Paolo Borsellino Hotel Institute on the Scottish Hospitality Industry.

www.vimeo.com/718420730/f3da9fbcbc



Video Interview 2

Watch Claire Fuller and Vicky Martin discussing their differing experiences at Nni Franco Vastiddaru

www.vimeo.com/718426366/7d0d830bb1



Case study team

Susan Briggs, Fiona Young, Claire Fuller, Deborah Hood, Alice Edgecumbe Rendell, Livia Alexander, Vicky Martin, Stuart Fraser, Nathan Whyte, Ryan Donnelly, Robert Muir & Janet Gordon.

Videos filmed by Stuart Fraser, Robert Muir, Nathan Whyte & Ryan Donnelly

Videos edited by Ryan Donnelly

Case study edited by Janet Gordon



Ryan Donnelly – not only is Ryan very good at video editing, but he is also the Chef de Partie at The Burnside Hotel, Glasgow



Nathan Whyte – 57 Degrees North Ltd is Nathan's consultancy business and he is also Sales Manager for Scot Trawl – Nathan is passionate about Scotland and food & drink with good heritage

