

## Route between Bolzano and Merano



by Susanna Sforza

Going for asparagus

In **Terlano**, the broad valley that links Bolzano to Merano in the **Alto Adige**, it's cultivated a rare variety of **white asparagus**. A niche product, for gourmet lovers, with a very special taste: it is sweet and it reminds to smoked flavor maybe due to the stream sandy land where they're cultivated. It's really an unmatched emotion to pick up the "turioni"-edible part of the plant- that comes out from the land, wash it and eat it raw.

The white asparagus from Terlano should be consumed fresh, within few hours since it was harvested, and that's the reason it's possible to buy it and eat it only locally, in the restaurants and masi (typical houses from Adige) of the zone, otherwise it gets bitter and tough.

Since 1996, the [Cantina Produttori di Terlano](#) (tel. +39 0471 257135), as a cooperative (the partners are the same farmers) takes care of the quality of this product, nowadays known in the market as part of the brand **Margarete** name of the last queen of the Tirolo region (the old castle is located in the hill in front of the Cantina).

The plants arrive until Germany and Netherlands; the land that will receive them should be sandy, rich in minerals and alluvial, to grow correctly. The life of each plant goes from ten to twenty years, depending on the intensity of cultivation.

The Cantina is famous also for its wines: especially the Sauvignon created specifically to taste the white asparagus of the zone.

### **The right season**

You can take the most of the “asparagus time or season” (between April and last days of May, depending of each year), to leave the typical tourist tours to concentrate on the fine harvest.

At **Castelbello**, about 20 km from Merano, you can visit the [maso Köfelgut](#) (tel. +39 0473 624634) from the XIV century, where the Pohl family produces wine (Pinot Bianco, Pinot Grigio, Gewürztraminer, Riesling, Pinot Nero), grappa and fruit distilled (peach from the Val Venosta, plum, apple, moscato grape, pear) and cultivates asparagus using innovative and unconventional methods.

Mr. Pohl guides the field tour, explaining every detail, passing by a fragrant apple orchard. Instantly you can notice the black roofing, forming series of “cylinders” in parallel; the reason for that roofing is to keep asparagus white, otherwise with the light they can turn green due to the chlorophyll process.

The most modern companies, to keep the temperature of the land and avoid frosting, have special heating installations under the field.

The altitude (600 mt, in the zone of Castelbello) can influence the taste: the higher it is, the tastier the asparagus gets.

It's worth to stop at the town, which is dominated by the gallant medieval castle (available to visits from mid April until the last days of October). The building was recently restored and hosts a permanent exhibition of the roman Via Claudia Augusta and a lovely chapel in roman style.

At Castelbello there is the **restaurant** [Kuppelrain](#) (tel. +39 0473 624103) where you can enjoy a meal made of asparagus prepared specially by Jörg Trafoier, chef with a Michelin star, along with an excellent choice of wine advised by his wife, the sommelier Sonia Egger, known as the “wine woman”- donna del vino.

Continuing towards Bolzano, in **Terlano**, the dinner at the **maso** [Oberlegar](#) (tel. +39 0471 678126) is a must. It is a typical place from the **Gallo Rosso** circuit, known by its menu mainly made of asparagus, from which the several starters, asparagus with ham, salsa bolzanina (the typical sauce made of hard-boiled eggs,

chives, oil and vinegar), boiled potatoes and a lot more. The environment is cozy and familiar.

Yet in Terlano, you can visit the **Cantina produttori Terlano**, already mentioned, to understand better the intensity and quality of the job that cultivation and commercialization of asparagus needs. Inside the structure there's a shop where you can buy the fresh products, and a wine section to taste or buy excellence wines.

In the city, you can find also the [Weingarten](#) restaurant (tel. +39 0471 257174) known by the traditional cuisine and mainly by its dishes made of asparagus. The tale tells that the famous salsa bolzanina was born here, even if today it's more refined (or touristic) compared to the original recipe. Inside the place, the pictures, furnishings and fittings guide you through the vegetables.

### **Festival!**

A real must, the **Asparagus Festival** that will take place in Terlano's downtown on May 8th (from 10 to 14): it's the occasion to taste dishes where the main ingredient is the asparagus, plus the salsa bolzanina, along with local wines, like for example the Terlano Sauvignon DOC.

To conclude this gastronomic tour, at **Bolzano** you can enjoy dinner at the [Laurin restaurant](#) (tel. +39 0471 311000), an antique building that has become strong due to the recent well-designed work of restore.

Here the young chef Manuel Astuto takes to the table deliciousness of every kind, everything accompanied by a good local wine: you should taste the Lafóa Sauvignon and the Moscato Rosa Franz Haas. In this restaurant it's done the *Fair Cooking*, meaning a real mix between tastes and colors, where raw regional materials get together with the quality exotic specialties, coming from the equo-solidal market.

A local characteristic comes from the [Onkel Taa-museo Bad Egart restaurant](#) (tel. +39 0473 967342), a historical place of Italy: a particular place full of history and charm.

It is a health resort since 1430, the oldest from the Tirolo, in roman times it was already used with medical aims. The Platino family, owner, has transformed with the years the place into a restaurant and also hosts a museum dedicated to the Habsburg's history, specially the one of the Princess Sissi.

There are three water springs, tubs dedicated to take showers while eating as was used in the medieval time, a chapel and a room with the genealogical tree

and Habsburg family's portraits. The family used to go into this room to treat their selves with the prodigious water. Since 2008 it is a museum.

The cuisine is creative and makes an interaction between local ingredients, like the white asparagus, most of them organic and from farm to table. You should try the **fig coffee**: a real deliciousness, from which the recipe has been passed generation through generation.

The **Touristic Bolzano Group vineyard and Dolomites** schedules wine and food tours and holidays as for example the one dedicated to the Terlano asparagus ([www.bolzanodintorni.info](http://www.bolzanodintorni.info), tel. +39 0471 633488).