

GUIDE TO THE BEST GELATO & CAFFÈ SHOPS



FLORENCE

VILLAS-AND-VINES.COM

OVERVIEW

Florence is the birthplace of gelato, and the best place in the world to try this amazing dessert. Though gelato is similar to ice cream, it is not identical. Gelato is made with less fat, churned at a slower rate, and served at a slightly higher temperature, giving it a firmer texture than standard ice cream.

Gelato in Italy is “worshiped” as much as pasta. To Italians, “going out to get gelato” is a daily ritual – especially on warm summer days and evenings. It is also a moment of pleasure to share with family and friends. From exclusive dessert savored by members of the Italian aristocracy in the 16th century to worldwide phenomenon loved and enjoyed across the whole of Europe and the United States, gelato has always played a role in the Italian and then the world’s daily eating routine. Its simple, natural, clean and universal taste makes it an everyday, one of a kind treat.

Don't worry about the calories, your not in Italy everyday and you should have at least one a day. You can try 2 or 3 different flavors in one cup or cone. Besides most people walk over 15,000 steps a day so you've earned it!

DON'T WASTE YOUR CALORIES ON BAD/TOURISTY GELATO Here is how to tell the difference.

1. Look at the display. This is something I always do before deciding on what to choose. If the gelato is piled high and looks sculpted then it has been whipped to add air to it. I usually walk away at that point.
2. Color - While various gelato shops might lure you in with neon lights and brightly-colored shops, it’s the color of the gelato itself that you’ve got to study. Colors should roughly match their real-life counterparts, and any fluorescent deviation should be considered abnormal. Banana, for instance, should not be bright yellow. It should be a vaguely grayish creamy color – like real bananas. Pistachio should not be bright green, but more of a pale gray-green color.
3. Mountains of Gelato - Stay away from the mounds of piled high gelato. This stuff is mass produced and doesn't hold its flavor. After the third taste the flavor is gone. You want to look for the gelato that is made fresh daily and it is usually stored in stainless bins and covered or at least not piled high. The gelato shops I've listed are some of the best you will taste.

ORDERING YOUR GELATO ITALIAN STYLE

There shouldn't be a problem ordering gelato in the major cities but just in case here's the scoop on ordering your gelato.

First you pay - In most gelato shops, you'll need to pay for your order before you've actually ordered it. This is because the person who takes your money and the person who actually scoops your gelato can be two different people, and sometimes they're even in two different parts of the store. It may seem like an extra step, and it may seem like a hassle, but think of it this way - money is dirty, and by not handling money the people who are in close proximity with gelato that's destined to be in your mouth are keeping their hands clean. This, in my estimation, is a good thing.

It's important to note that while you'll line up to pay for your gelato and get your receipt, you won't be waited on in a particular order at the actual gelato counter. This does give you time to look over all the flavors, so you don't have to feel pressured to come up with your order immediately, but it also means that you can't get upset if someone who paid after you knows what they want and walks out with their gelato before you do.

Cup or cone? - The word for cup is "coppa" (KOH-pah) and cone is "cono" (KOH-noh). For "one cup" ask for either "una coppa" or "un cono," . Sometimes, you'll see several different kinds of cones on display, so be prepared to point to the one you want.

How many scoops? - Unlike in some ice cream shops outside Italy, the size of the cup or cone you're getting doesn't pre-determine how many scoops of gelato you'll get. I've seen people cram three flavors into even the smallest cups. So after you've chosen the vessel for your gelato, you'll need to say how many scoops you'd like. In Italian, the word you'll use is "gusti" (GOO-stee), which literally means "flavors." So technically you're telling them how many flavors you'd like, and they're going to give you one scoop per flavor.

GELATO FLAVOR TRANSLATIONS

Most stores will show the translations but at times the smaller family owned shops do not. The shops will also offer a taste before you decide on a particular flavor so don't be afraid to ask for a sample taste.

The Chocolates

“Cioccolato” (cho-koh-LAH-toh) is basic chocolate, but the variations on this theme are nearly endless. It's all the rage to pair chocolate with other complementary flavors, like hot pepper or orange, and there are also different kinds of chocolate even when it's all by itself.

Cioccolato fondente (cho-koh-LAH-toh fawn-DEN-teh) – Dark chocolate lovers, this is the label to look for. And if you see cioccolato fondente extra noir, I think you'll understand that we're talking about the darkest of the dark chocolates here.

Bacio (BAH-cho) – Named for the famous chocolate candies that come from Perugia, this is a chocolate hazelnut combination not unlike Nutella (which is another common gelato flavor), often with bits of hazelnuts in the mix.

Gianduja or gianduia (jahn-DOO-yah) – Either way it's spelled, it means the same thing – a creamy combination of milk chocolate and hazelnut.

Cioccolato all'arancia (cho-koh-LAH-toh ahl-ah-RAHN-cha) – This is chocolate orange, and is a personal favorite. It's most often a dark chocolate, not a milk chocolate, and may have either just an orange flavor or may also include candied bits of orange peel.

Cioccolato con peperoncini (cho-koh-LAH-toh kohn pep-pehr-ohn-CHEE-nee) – Another trendy chocolate addition, besides orange, is pepper – and this is often how you'll see it on the flavor placards. It's basically a hot pepper infused chocolate (usually dark chocolate) and can vary in terms of heat.

GELATO FLAVOR TRANSLATIONS

The Nuts

Pistacchio (pee-STAHK-yoh) – I'm not going to define this one, because if you read English you'll know what it is. The important thing here is to learn that the "ch" in the middle of this word has a "k" sound (not an "sh" sound). Also good to know – it's a very popular flavor.

Mandorla (mahn-DOOR-lah) – Almond

Nocciola (noh-CHO-lah) – This is hazelnut all by itself (not combined with chocolate, as listed above).

Castagna (kahs-TAHN-yah) – This is chestnut, and isn't nearly as common as some of the other nut flavors.

The Creams

Fior di latte (FYOR dee LAH-tay) – Perhaps the base flavor for all cream (or even chocolate) flavors, this is literally "flower of milk" and it's a wonderfully subtle sweet cream flavor.

Crema (KREH-mah) – This is a kind of egg custard flavor, and shouldn't be confused with vanilla.

Zabaione (zah-bah-YOH-nay) – This is based on a dessert of the same name, made from egg yolks and sweet Marsala wine. So it's a custard type flavor, with an overtone of Marsala.

Cocco (KOH-koh) – Coconut

Caffè (kah-FAY) – Just in case you aren't getting enough coffee flavor in your daily morning espresso, here's the gelato version.

Amarena (ah-mah-RAY-nah) – Though it has fruit in it, it's a cream base – it's basically fior di latte with a sauce of sour cherries kind of mixed in. The cherries have been stewed in something, but they're chewy and delicious, and you're likely to get at least one whole cherry in your scoop.

GELATO FLAVOR TRANSLATIONS

The Fruits

Technically, these aren't really considered gelati – instead, they're sorbetti (sorbetto in the singular) because they're made without milk. The fruit flavors are so intense, you'll be amazed at how much they taste like the real thing.

Fragola (FRAH-go-lah) – Strawberry

Lampone (lahm-POH-nay) – Raspberry (oh-so good with a dark chocolate flavor)

Limone (lee-MOH-nay) – Lemon

Mandarino (mahn-dah-REE-noh) – Mandarin orange

Melone (meh-LOH-nay) – Melon (usually cantaloupe)

Albicocca (al-bee-KOH-kah) – Apricot

Fico (FEE-koh) – Fig

Tarocco (tah-ROH-koh) – Blood orange (not very common)

Frutti di bosco (FROO-tee dee BOHS-koh) – These aren't fruits belonging to some guy named Bosco, this means “fruits of the forest,” generally things like blueberries and blackberries.

Mela (MEH-lah) – Apple (also look for mela verde (MEH-lah VEHR-day), or green apple)

Pera (PEH-rah) – This is pear, and one of my favorite fruit flavors. It's a really subtle flavor, but one of the best features of well-made pear gelato is the texture. You really feel like you're eating a pear.

Pesca (PEHS-kah) – Peach

FLORENCE - GELATO RECOMMENDATIONS

Vivoli - This is one of the oldest gelato shops, since the 1930s and is still owned by the same family for over 4 generations in Florence. One of the most famous gelaterie in Florence, Vivoli also makes its gelato fresh, and they won't sell you anything that they haven't made that same day. The flavors, which change often, include pear with caramel and chocolate with orange. Just don't be surprised by some of Vivoli's quirks: Given its fame (and pride), it's some of the more-expensive gelato in Florence, the portions aren't huge, and, like many other artisanal gelaterie, they'll refuse to give you anything but a cup (cones distract from the gelato flavor). But it's a must stop when you are in Florence. This is my all time favorite gelato shop in Florence. Located in the Santa Croce district. Via dell'Isole delle Stinche 7r, right by Santa Croce.



FLORENCE - GELATO RECOMMENDATIONS

Venchi Cioccolato and Gelato - Venchi gelato is the ultimate expression of this centuries-old, renowned artisan tradition based on few, selected ingredients of controlled origin and simple recipes adjusted to offer traditional as well as new, delicious flavors. Made fresh every day using the best raw materials nature has to offer. They have a shop in the city centre at Piazza Signoria.



<https://www.venchi.com/it/negozi/firenze-piazza-signoria/>

VILLAS-AND-VINES.COM

FLORENCE - GELATO RECOMMENDATIONS

Gelateria della Passera - This hole-in-the-wall shop in Santo Spirito on the Oltrarno side of Florence serves a decadent selection of rich, creamy gelato with strong flavors at some of the best prices in all of Florence! Flavors change daily depending on what ingredients are in season. Some of the best recurring flavors are hazelnut, chocolate-orange, and Mona Lisa, made with apple, orange blossom, walnuts, and raisins steeped in cognac. Like many gelato shops, there is no seating indoors, but there are a few benches in the little piazza in front. This is one of my favorite gelato shops if they have a good choice of flavors at the time you visit. This is a fun neighborhood for dinner followed with a gelato for dessert. Via Toscanella, 15/red, 50125 Firenze



FLORENCE - CAFFÈ SHOP

Caffè degli Artigiani - This tiny coffee shop is across from their gelato shop Gelateria della Passera in the Oltrarno. If you enjoy traditional Italian caffè espresso, cappuccino, macchiato this is some of the best.



FLORENCE - GELATO RECOMMENDATIONS

Il Procopio - Gorgeous, fresh-made gelato with lots of texture! Il Procopio offers about twenty seasonal flavors daily, depending on which ingredients are at their peak. Most of their varieties have a generous portion of toppings stirred through the batch, giving each bite a unique crunch. Their award-winning, signature flavor (named after the shop) is an almond gelato with candied orange peel, toasted pistachios, and almond slices. Other popular flavors include a refreshing lemon basil sorbet and sacher torte, with huge pieces of Viennese chocolate cake swirled in. Every cup or cone comes with a baby cone on top. Located in Sant'Ambrosio, a little off the tourist track but well worth the detour.



FLORENCE - GELATO RECOMMENDATIONS

Perche No! (Why Not!) - Their gelato is handmade daily with regional Italian ingredients, such as Bronte pistachios, Langhe hazelnuts, Tuscan rose, and San Gavino saffron along with a few high-quality imports. Their classic gelatos are fantastic, but they are best loved for their creative flavors, like sesame honey, rose, and matcha green tea. They usually have around 6 to 8 vegan and dairy-free choices on offer, too, any of which can be served on top of a gluten-free cone. Located near the Duomo, there is always a line here, but it moves quickly. They have a shop in the city centre at Piazza Signoria.



FLORENCE - GELATO RECOMMENDATIONS

Gelateria dei Neri - A local favorite, this artisanal gelateria boasts some particularly unusual flavors, like gorgonzola and rice, alongside classics like straciatella (chocolate-chip), caramel and mango. Serving more traditional gelato, this popular shop offers a wide range of flavors, emphasizing classic tastes done very well, like salted caramel, pistachio, and dark chocolate. Their huge selection also showcases a few experimental flavors, fresh fruit sorbets, and frozen yogurts. Seasonal offerings include decadent semi-freddos (like an ice-cream cake/frozen mousse) in the winter. Conveniently located right in between the Uffizi and Santa Croce Basilica, with plenty of seating and always open until midnight.

Via dei Neri 26r, a 5-minute walk from Ponte Vecchio



FLORENCE - GELATO RECOMMENDATIONS

Carapina - Carapina's gelato is made fresh each day, in-house, and whatever's leftover in the evening is thrown out. The ingredients are all-natural, and the flavors, like ricotta, cherry, fig, or jelly biscuit, change seasonally. It's a little less-central than some of our other favorite gelaterias, but believe us: It's worth it.

Via Lambertesca 18/r 055291128 (Ponte Vecchio)



FLORENCE - GELATO RECOMMENDATIONS

Cantina del Gelato blends the top local and regional Italian fruits, nuts, and dairy with a variety of tropical ingredients from Brazil, especially açai. They offer classic and modern flavors with an exceptional selection of cheese-based flavors, such as gorgonzola and apple, chèvre and walnut, or mascarpone and Nutella. Their signature flavor is hazelnut gelato with Nutella and almonds, while passionfruit sorbet, black rice, and turmeric fig are their most popular choices. This cozy gelateria sits at the south end of the Ponte Vecchio, just a little away from the crowds.

Via de' Bardi, 31, 50125 Firenze FI, Italy



FLORENCE - GELATO RECOMMENDATIONS

Edoardo Gelato - This is good but it wasn't worth the 30 minute wait in line. We have found plenty of excellent gelato in Florence that is much better. Stylish, retro-themed gelateria; the first 100% organic gelato shop in Tuscany. Homespun flavors are a mix of traditional and modern, with ingredients such as gianduja (chocolate hazelnut), white wine, lavender, and cinnamon, with several dairy free sorbets and vegan gelatos included. Their waffle cones are handmade in-house throughout the day. Edoardo is located behind the Duomo and uses a ticket system, so take a number from the machine outside and wait to be called up.

Piazza del Duomo, 45/R, 50122 Firenze FI, Italy



FLORENCE CAFFÈ RECOMMENDATION

Rivoire - Located in one of the most popular piazzas in Florence at Piazza della Signoria, you are paying for the views. In 1872 Enrico Rivoire, chocolatier of the Savoy royal family, he opened his own restaurant in Florence at the side of Piazza della Signoria. Here you can enjoy coffee and chocolate desserts accompanied by expertly prepared, according to old recipes, from pastry chef and chocolatier masters who, even today, as then, they work in our laboratories on the lower floor. There is always a beautiful display of their chocolates and confections. **This is the place to try the famous "hot chocolate" that is famous in Florence or the Negroni cocktail as an aperitif.** (I don't care for the Negroni cocktail but the Florentines love it. It has a bitter taste that I don't appreciate. Not really recommended for lunch or dinner just snacks.



FLORENCE CAFFÈ RECOMMENDATION

Caffè del Borgo- The cafe itself is so cozy and charming, with really cute fruit art, and it is centrally located in the heart of the city, near Palazzo Vecchio and Santa Croce. The coffee and gelato are delicious, and the staff are some of the kindest, warmest people that you will meet in Florence. Enjoy a cappuccino and biscotti. The prices are reasonable and it's a quick place for a snack, coffee or light meal.

