

# Primo pesto, more on Windstar tours

By Kristy Alpert

With only 500 inhabitants, Portofino, Italy, has long been favored by A-list celebrities for its luxe location, luring the likes of Ava Gardner, Giorgio Armani, Leonardo DiCaprio and more since the early 1950s.

Although it still draws the celebrity crowd, nowadays the picturesque port is also a favorite stop for foodies on the Windstar Star Breeze in the Mediterranean.

It's through Windstar's culinary connections, formed by its chefs and sommeliers visiting the markets and restaurants at each port over the years, that guests aboard Windstar's Yachting the Riviera and Glitter & Glam of the Rivas cruises can book one of two excursions while in port in Portofino: the Splendido Olive Oil and Lunch or the Walking Tour & Wine Tasting at Brown Castle.

## Splendido Olive Oil and Lunch

This tour starts with a short, guided walk from the harbor to the main square, where a minivan quickly shuttles guests to the Belmond Splendido Hotel, which offers arguably the best view of the harbor in the village.

Guests are greeted at the hotel with a chilled Bellini, made with local peaches and prosecco, and appetizers that range from fried anchovies and stuffed squash blossoms to local olives and sunbaked almonds. Once the table is set, the maitre d' walks guests through a tasting of olive oils from the region.

Almost as soon as the staff delivers generous pours of local white wines to guests, waiters appear with gorgeous slices of bruschetta overflowing with juicy mozzarella and fresh tomatoes and plates of trofie with pesto sauce (a local pasta dish).

## Brown Castle wine tasting

Starting from the landing pier, a guide meets the group to take them on a journey through the narrow streets of shops, villas and gardens. Olive trees, tropical plants and ancient stone pathways guide the way to the church of St. George, where the group will stop to take in the colorful views.

From there, it's only a brief journey to the Brown Castle, where a spread of local specialties awaits, including freshly baked focaccia and thinly sliced prosciutto. Under the guidance of chef Guido Porrati, from specialty market Parla Come Mangi, the group embarks on a flavorful journey through Portofino's favorite high-quality wines.

While everyone sips the first of three of wines in the tasting, Porrati tells the secret to making authentic *pesto alla Genovese*.

Armed with his grandmother's mortar and pestle, the chef combines fresh Genovese basil, garlic, pine nuts, Parmigiano-Reggiano and pecorino cheeses, a pinch of sea salt and, the secret ingredient that makes all the difference, Ligurian extra virgin olive oil.

Both the Splendido Olive Oil and Lunch and the Walking Tour & Wine Tasting at Brown Castle shore excursions are priced at \$149.



Portofino, Italy, is one of the stops on Windstar's Yachting the Riviera and Glitter & Glam of the Rivas cruises. Shore excursions in Portofino include the Splendido Olive Oil and Lunch and the Walking Tour & Wine Tasting at Brown Castle.

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