

## The Travelling Gourmet

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### Perfetta Pane (Bread) & Olives from Puglia!

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**MAGNIFICENT** is one of many adjectives you can apply to Perfetta Pane from Altamura. This is no ordinary bread. It is the first bread protected by the DOP of the European Commission! DOP means Denominazione di Origine Protetta. This guarantees the quality and artisanal production of the bread plus protecting its name from imitators. At a very special lunch in the official residence of my friend, HE The Italian Ambassador to Singapore, the Ambassador himself as well as the producer of the famous bread and fabulous olives of Puglia, waxed lyrical about these natural healthy gourmet delights! They were not exaggerating.

**Anacleto Felicani, the charming and distinguished Italian Ambassador**, showed me around his exquisite residence and the inviting swimming pool. The house was designed by the celebrated Italian Architect, Ettore Sottsass and has a very futuristic, rationalist quality to it.



### The King of Bread and the Bread of Kings!

In the Spring of AD 37, in the earliest written reference to Pane di Altamura, renowned Roman poet Horace described this extraordinary bread in his “Satires”. Horatio recalled that he tasted “the world’s most delicious bread – so delicious, in fact, that the discerning traveler stocks up on it for the rest of his journey.” The statute of the town of Altamura in southern Italy outlines the duties of the town’s bakers including the taxes they had to pay.

### Artisanale Bread

There is a fascinating story behind this bread. Traditionally made in large loaves with natural yeast

was kneaded at home, then taken to the town's public ovens for baking. The baker would stamp the the initials of the head of the family that owned the dough. The durum-wheat semolina flour is mill "Apulo", "Arcangelo", "Duilio" and "Simeto" varieties produced in the area. The jovial Presidente **Consorzio per la Tutela e la Valorizzazione del pane di Altamura**, Guiseppe Barile, chuc told me an amusing story about how as a boy, he had to collect the bread dough from all the differe Guiseppe would take a "piccolo porzione" (little bit) of dough from each batch and then make his o himself! The Consorzio (Consortium) represents more than 20 producers that make the bread. Whe the bread, you bite through the 2mm thick super crispy crust into the fragrant, spongy well aerated center. The secret to the crunchy crust is that **after baking at 250C, the oven door is open minutes** so the vapour will escape and the crust becomes ultra-crispy. Another unique characteri bread is that it can keep for a long time without refrigeration. The shepherds used to bring it with t hills for a week or more and they would enjoy it with extra virgin olive oil. The loaf weighs at least 5 in 2 shapes. The first type is the "**u skuanete**" or folded loaf while the second type is called "**u cap prevete**" because it looks like a Priest's hat!



**From left to right, Signora Barile with Pane di Altamura, Ambassador Anacleto & Gi Barile**

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### **The Lamborghini of Olives!**

I also met energetic Guiseppe Dibisceglia, the Direttore of **Il Consorzio di Tutela Oliva da Me La Bella della Daunia-cultivar Bella di Cerignola**. His Consortium represents what can only be the "Lamborghini of Olives"! These DOP certified (since 2000), titanic olives have no artificial preservatives or colours. They are the biggest table olives you have ever seen! The variety is named **Mensa DOP La Bella della Daunia**. The green olives are made using the "Metodo Spagna" which originates from Sevilla in Spain while the ninja-black olives are made with the "Metodo California". American "Metodo California" the olives are sprayed for 7 to 9 days with compressed air which gives them their characteristic black colour through oxidation. For the green olives, hand picked at the beginning of October, Malo-Lactic fermentation changes the intense green colour to a softer, lighter matt green. The difference is that the black olives are picked when they are riper, from October to November each year. The flavoursome black olives are more tender, slightly saltier than the green ones which have a more "chewy" bite to them plus a more herbaceous flavour.

Turn your head to the left to look at these King Kong sized olives! {:~)



It was absolutely heavenly to taste the olives, Pane di Altamura bread, and also assorted canapés w Falanto 2009 red wine from Puglia. This full bodied robust red is made with the **Primitivo** grape · has wonderful flavours of red forest fruits and Espresso coffee. Incidentally, Primitivo has been sh clone of Zinfandel in California by DNA typing. The original grape variety was **Crljenak Kaštela** Croatia.

Puglia which is the heel on the 'boot' of Italy is one of my favourite Italian regions of Italy. I shall n the time when I was in Gravina di Pugliua looking at the full moon...and a bellissima ragazza sar "When the moon hits your eye like a big pizza pie, that's Amore... To savour two of its best and mo products at the same time, as well as meeting the producers was truly a divine pleasure! I have to grazie' to HE The Italian Ambassador for his kind and warm hospitality.

**Buon appetito e salute!**

**Piatto ricco mi ci ficco! {:~)**



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