

The Anatomy of an Epic Italian Dinner

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Dinner in Italy is a leisurely affair that begins around 8 p.m. and continues late into the evening. We settle in together around the table for course after delicious course, each perfectly timed to maximize flavors, enjoyment, and yes, even digestion.

Explore our guide to dining like an Italian, then bring the experience to your own home or visit [your local Eataly](#) [2]!

ANTIPASTO

Dinner begins with an antipasto, which appropriately translates to "pre-meal." Often enjoyed with a cocktail or glass of sparkling wine, this small course is intended to awaken the appetite (much like [aperitivo](#) [3]), preparing us for the full and delicious meal to come.

Typical antipasti include [pesce crudo](#) [4], [salumi-and-formaggi platters](#) [5], and [bruschetta](#) [6].



PRIMO PIATTO

Now, we're ready for the primo piatto. For the "first plate," we look for something slightly heavier than our antipasto that will satisfy our hunger but not fill us fully — after all, we'll only be halfway through dinner!

[Risotto](#) [7], [polenta](#) [8], and [pasta](#) [9] are among favorite primi piatti.

SECONDO PIATTO

The "second plate" is the pinnacle of any Italian dinner. The heartiest of all courses, il secondo piatto should be savored slowly in good company, preferably along with a robust red wine.

Secondi piatti range from [fish](#) [10] to [pork](#) [11] to [steak](#) [12].

DOLCE

Finally, dinner ends with dessert, of course! We love to enjoy the final course with an [amaro](#) [13], [digestivo](#) [14], or [espresso](#) [15]; the slightly bitter drinks not only balance the dessert's sweetness but also traditionally help us digest the long meal.

Delicious dolci could be [creamy tiramisù](#) [16], espresso-gelato [affogato](#) [17], or [crunchy cantucci](#) [18] and dessert wine.

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