

■ BY MOTHER MARTILA

“When in Rome, do as the Romans do” is a proverb attributed to St. Ambrose of Milan. According to *Wikipedia*, “St. Monica and her son St. Augustine found out that Saturday was observed as a fast day in Rome, where they planned to visit. It was not a fast day in Milan, where they lived. So they consulted St. Ambrose, the bishop of Milan, about whether they should keep to their daily routines. Apparently he answered, ‘When I’m here in Milan, I do not fast on Saturday; when I’m in Rome, I do fast on Saturday.’ Hence the proverb, which means that it’s advisable to follow the conventions of where you’re residing or visiting.”

That’s exactly what Pennsylvania born-and-bred Kenny Dunn has been doing since 2009 when he and his Mexican wife, who works at the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization, moved to Rome. In 2011 he founded first “Eating Italy” and subsequently “Eating Europe” and ever since has helped tourists to follow St. Ambrose’s advice in Rome and subsequently in Florence, London, Prague, and Amsterdam.

“Eating Europe” is the largest tour operator specializing in culinary tours and activities across Europe. Kenny’s *LinkedIn* profile tells us, “Eating Europe has agreements with the travel industry’s leading distribution platforms including Expedia, Viator, and Tourico; and preferred partnerships with major tour operators such as Carnival Cruise Lines, Globus and Rick Steve’s Tours. The company has received media coverage in the *NYTimes*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Forbes*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, and the *BBC*. [to name a few]. Since 2011, Eating Europe has welcomed over 80,000 clients who’ve left over 5,000 positive reviews on TripAdvisor and other review online sites.” Lonely Planet, Rough Guide and Fodor’s Guidebooks recommend the tours.

I first heard of “Eating Europe” in 2014 from Wibke Carter, the company’s PR Manager. She invited me on one of the first tours in Florence. Recently, with seven other clients I participated in the Rome tour, “Taste of Testaccio.”

Originally the port of ancient Rome, this once working-class neighborhood turned “chic” gets its name from the artificial 3-storey-high mound of *testae*, fragments of broken amphorae, discarded here. In short, the mound was the port’s garbage dump. For during the first two centuries AD Rome was the world’s largest city, its pop-

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Stefano Novazzi Illustration

ulation at least one million people. *Wikipedia* tells us: “It’s been estimated that the mound contains the remains of 53 million olive oil amphorae, in which 1.6 billion US gallons of olive oil were imported.”

With our super-knowledgeable guide Giuliana we visited a bread and pastry shop, *Panificio Passi*, to sample *pizza marinara* and *pizza con patate*; the winebar *Mastro* for samples of local cheese, prosciutto and wine; the restaurant *Mastro Donato* for a paper cone filled with fried vegetables and apples; the neighborhood’s new market where at Marco’s stall I sampled my most delicious ever *suppli*, a Roman rice ball filled with melted mozzarella and fennel seeds; the Protestant Cemetery where the English Romantic poet John Keats and other foreign dignitaries are buried; the former slaughterhouse, which functioned from 1888 to 1975 and made the neighborhood famous for food, especially Roman specialties from the *quinto quarto* or innards; the restaurant *Velavevodetto* (which in Roman dialect means “I told you so”) for samples of pasta: *cacio e pepe*, *all’Amatriciana*, and *carbonara*; and finally *Giolitti*, a historical artisan *gelateria*.

At the moment “Eating Europe” has 8 different tours in Rome: “Taste of Testaccio,” “Trastevere for Foodies,” “Twilight Trastevere Food Tour” (by far the company’s No.1 hit), “Vatican Area for Foodies,” “Rome’s Sunday Food Tour,” “Testaccio’s Supper Stroll,” “Italian Wine and Food Pairing Class” and “Rome’s Evening Wine and Food Stroll.” In Florence it has 3 tours: “The Other Side of Florence Food Tour” across the Arno River from downtown in the Oltrarno district, “Authentic Florence Home-Cooking Class,” and “Firenze Sunset Food Tour”; in London four: “London Old Docks-Historic Pubs, Food and Beer Tour,” “East End Food Tour,” “Twilight Soho Food and Cocktail Tour,” and “Brick Lane-Flavor of India and Beyond”; in Amsterdam two: “Jordaan Food and Canals Tour” and “Jordaan’s Food Tour”; and four in Prague: “Prague Food Tour,” “Prague Craft Beer and Food Tasting Tour,” “Prague Evening Food Tour” and “Prague Cooking Class.” Before the end of 2018 Kenny hopes to add tours in Venice and Paris.

Select your choices, all lasting from 3 to 4 hours, by clicking on the website www.eatingeuropetours.com. It’s even possible to buy them as gift certificates for friends and family. Each tour is limited to 12 participants but it’s possible to book your own private tour.

“Our mission,” Kenny told me, “is giving travelers an unparalleled, non-touristy, food-related experience in undiscovered neighborhoods of the most fascinating cities in the world.”

Kenny Dunn and clients on Beer Tour in Prague; *fritti* at *Mastro Donato*; pizza at *Panificio Passi*; *Lampredotto*

