

Pristine Caribbean isles get more accessible, p.36

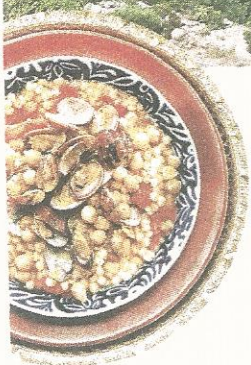
From mezcal to pulque, where to drink in Mexico City, p.40

Travel

FEAST FOR THE EYES

The gorgeous island of **Sardinia** has Italy's best (and healthiest) food

A 12-PAGE GUIDE TO THE BEST SPRING DESTINATIONS



Thanks to a Mediterranean diet and lifestyle, Sardinians report increased longevity and happiness. Fregola (above) is a signature dish.

By JACKIE COOPERMAN

GIOVANNI Scanu starts his days among chickens, goats, banana sage and zucchini, tending the vibrant 11,000-square-foot vegetable garden at Cala di Volpe. It's a storied luxury resort on Sardinia, an island surrounded by pristine waters 120 miles west of mainland Italy.

Often, 73-year-old Scanu plucks a handful of strawberries or a bouquet of basil and plops them into curious guest's hands, a puckish smile under his trim gray mustache.

"Prego," he says with a flourish — "you're welcome," or "here you go," in Italian — before returning

to his beloved produce (images of which he posts, with disarming earnestness, on his Instagram account, @Giovanni.Scanu14).

Scanu and his colleagues in the Cala di Volpe kitchen are enthusiastic champions of one of Sardinia's claims to fame: its remarkably localvore diet and its citizens' longevity, cited in Dan Buettner's books about "Blue Zones," parts of the world where people live longer and report being happier.

"It's beyond just the ingredients, which have rich properties. It's also the lifestyle," explains Maurizio Locatelli, 58, the hotel's executive chef. He left his home in Brescia, in Italy's far north, to relocate to Sardinia in 1981 — and never looked

back. "The calm that's here is one of the things I love the most."

Locatelli rattles off a long and impressive list of Sardinian ingredients and their nutritious properties. Among them: sheep's milk cheese like pecorino; wild artichokes and asparagus, which help to detoxify the blood; olive oil, which is rich in antioxidant-like compounds called polyphenols; and a flat hard-grain bread called *pane carasau*, which has no added oil or yeast, contains very little gluten and is easily digestible. Local fish and seafood like mussels, tuna, mackerel and (the now endangered) giant clams are rich in other antioxidants as well as omega acids, which benefit the heart and mental health,

among other effects.

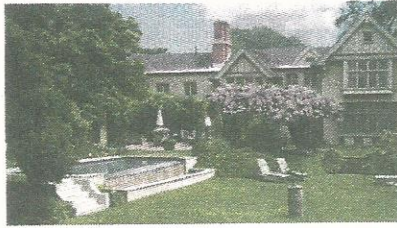
Sardinians also love fregola, sometimes called Israeli couscous, which they make by creating a dough of semolina grains and water, then breaking down the gluten as they knead the grains against the surface of ceramic bowls, yielding delicious little spheres. And then there's wine. Sardinia's robust red Cannonau, the local name for Grenache grapes, is particularly high in polyphenols and anthocyanins and grows throughout the 9,300-square-mile island.

Together, these ingredients create balanced diets and, some geriatric researchers say, promote longevity. They also, Locatelli notes, share humble origins.

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Shutterstock; Getty Images (inset)

Spring Travel Destinations

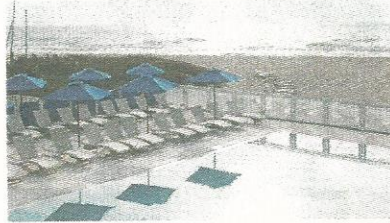


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