

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Belmond exalts Mediterranean diet as 'Euro Summer' heats up

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Recognized by UNESCO for the value of its Intangible Cultural Heritage, the culinary and lifestyle practices of Italy are celebrated in the travel brand's latest programming. Image credit: Belmond

By EMILY IRIS DEGN

LVMH-owned hospitality group Belmond is saluting the slow food practices of a beloved region, currently filled with flocking tourists.

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Taking consumers on a gastronomic journey, the land-based and hyper-local diet of the Mediterranean is celebrated in the latest "Taste Travel: Journeys into Local Flavor" campaign. Tapping chefs, longtime preservers of culinary heritage and traditional farmers on the Amalfi Coast, Belmond is shining a light on this intimate part of the Italian identity.

Down to earth

Recognized by UNESCO on its List of Intangible Cultural Heritage, the Mediterranean Diet is a pivotal piece of the region's dominant lifestyle.

Seasonality at its core, the way people live along the sea in this area acknowledges the shifting tides of nature, starting with the ingredients they cook with. What goes on the table is reflective of what is taking place in the local environment, residents sticking largely to what grows and swims nearby rather than importing goods from elsewhere.

Belmond's Caruso location hosts a deep dive into the Mediterranean Diet for the brand's campaign

As mentioned throughout Belmond's four-and-a-half-minute video, this is not just about food.

The Mediterranean Diet could just as easily be called the Mediterranean Mindset, as the philosophy of honoring the surrounding ecosystems, not taking more than they give, abiding by the seasons and honoring tethers to nature extends to other lifestyle choices.

Belmond acknowledges this in its many assets that add to the effort, from social media posts to a dedicated landing page to the short film released. Labeling it "the art of living," the brand states that its Mediterranean-based locations, including Caruso, are ambassadors of the discussed diet.



Chickpeas, lemons, heritage grains, goat cheese, heirloom tomatoes and thyme are just a few ingredients that make up the Mediterranean Diet. Image credit: Belmond

Rather than painting over local's traditions with its global lens, Belmond is working to tell the stories of "the people behind the ingredients" and honor their perspectives.

Showing the process of gathering, harvesting, cultivating, developing and raising food, each figure at the efforts' helm makes mention of the Mediterranean Diet applying to their other choices. They also emphasize the immense pride and sense of belonging they feel in its framework.

Armando Aristarco, head chef at Belmond's Caruso hotel, contributes his thoughts first, informed by years in the professional culinary world.

"For me, cuisine is not just about cooking, but is about respecting local producers and nature," Mr. Aristarco says in Italian.



A Belmond chef is carrying on the ancient ways of the region, turning to what naturally grows around him for inspiration. Image credit: Belmond

"It's a culture," he says. "I consider the Mediterranean Diet a lifestyle.

"It's about going back in time and reaping the benefits."

As he discusses his outlook on the ancient diet, much beloved by modern, conscientious eaters, he harvests native plants like fennel with Giovanna Voria, a worldwide Dieta Mediterranea ambassador, who speaks to the importance of UNESCO's recognition of the food rituals.

Ms. Voria sums up the lifestyle of which Mr. Aristarco speaks in one phrase: "To eat well is to live well."

The latter action is explained by the rest of the featured cast, including Carmela Baglivi, another chef, who names conviviality as one of the cornerstones of her beloved diet and overall well-being.



Belmond sums up the Mediterranean Diet's framework in five rules: think local, gather your friends, set the table (beautifully), more red (wine) and take breaks. Image credit: Belmond

Ms. Baglivi also brings up the age-old trend of "peasant food" gaining popularity among more affluent individuals, and how it turns out that simple, wholesome dishes are not only delicious, but often some of the healthiest options out there.

"Often, when we speak of peasant dishes from the past, we call them 'cucina povera,' poor cuisine," Ms. Baglivi says.

"I get very angry about this, because it's not true," she says. "The cuisine is not poor, because when you have good oil, good vegetables and good flour to make pasta, and assemble everything together, just these three ingredients are enough to make a dish fit for a king."

Rosa Maria Antonucci, a farmer, Enzo Barlotti, a dairy farmer and artisan, Fabrizio Vastola, a native vegetable farmer, and Alferio Romito, a vigneron who is involved in responsible viticulture ([see story](#)), all agree with her sentiments and love of straight-from-the-earth food.

The Mediterranean Diet's Rulebook.

Whether it's a nutritious meal shared in conviviality or an aperitivo enjoyed while dining at sunset, culinary moments are lived with charisma.

Here are our 5 rules to La Dieta Mediterranea: <https://t.co/yuU278OcbH>

[#TheArtofBelmond](#) pic.twitter.com/iydPS0ZEJk

Belmond (@belmond) July 21, 2023

These ideas of hospitality, farm-to-table ingredients and historic recipes are highlighted by Belmond, which ties the values to its own offerings in the region, such as al fresco dining opportunities and an educational feast happening on Sept. 17, 2023, with Ms. Voria.

Italian wave

After years of lockdowns and slow recovery on the part of the tourism industry, this 2023 vacation season is widely considered to be "Euro Summer" due to the sheer amount of people making up for lost time.

It is impossible to open social media platforms without being reminded of the rise of these "Revenge Travel" trips ([see story](#)), as *CNN* reports that the number of Americans coming to the continent alone is 55 percent more than last year, which totaled in a figure 600 percent higher than 2021.

Now, even as flight cancellations and the war in Ukraine spark logistical chaos, international visitors continue pouring in, especially favoring the sunny oases of the Mediterranean.



Belmond puts the people and their relationship with food at the heart of its latest sensorial campaign, rather than its hotels. Image credit: Belmond

The crowds in Italy specifically have gotten so extreme, that short-term apartment rentals in historic town areas are getting banned by government officials around the country, all the while videos are going viral on Instagram of favored photo op spots being so packed that tourists can barely move. Locals are raising prices on indulgences such as gelato to counteract the unsustainable phenomenon, both benefiting from boosted economies and suffering due to overtourism's environmental and social issues.

While Belmond is celebrating the food, provenance and traditions such as "villeggiatura," an Italy-specific concept of a prolonged stay in one place, putting those who are from the region centerstage in the programming allows locals to control the narrative.

Not only that, but in-person activations are limited in space, making the digital-only assets the stars of the campaign in a move that allows consumers to partake in the nation's customs without contributing to the "Euro Summer" explosion. In fact, Belmond's hotels were not even pictured short of a quick flash where its rooftop, unidentified, appeared in front of the sea.

villeggiatura/vil leg gia t ra/: the Italian art of savouring a prolonged stay.

With long, leisurely summer vacations in Italy on the horizon, find your Villeggiatura moment here: <https://t.co/rGkMSRj9kr> #TheArtOfBelmond#Italy pic.twitter.com/deXU9fmKJc

Belmond (@belmond) August 2, 2023

This campaign will cause many to want to visit Italy, but it also brings it to them, offering up ways for people to enjoy Bel Paese through sensorial imagery, educational information pages and respectful participation in the Mediterranean Diet.

It may not be a straightforward act of responsible tourism, but its positioning of community members and resources given to those who want a piece of Italy from afar grant it points of that nature.