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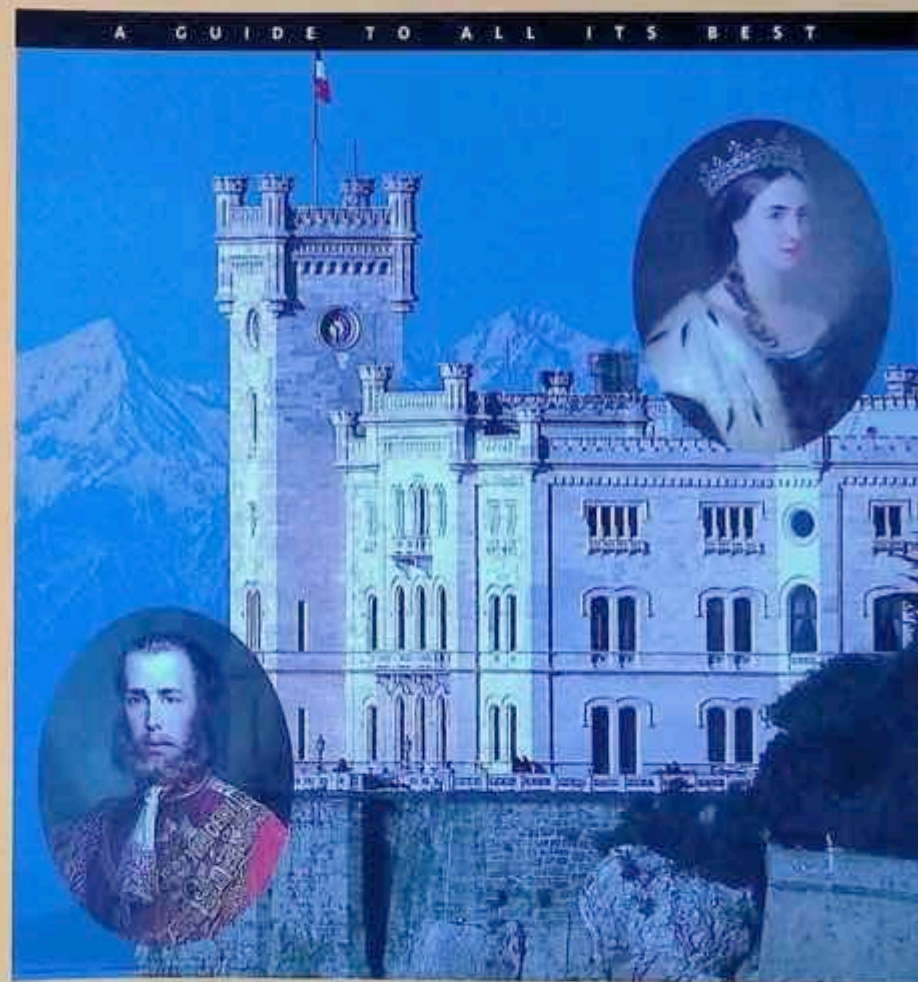
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FRIULI VENEZIA GIULIA

A GUIDE TO ALL ITS BEST



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Friuli-Venezia Giulia: Miramare

AN EMPEROR'S DREAM

by ELENA MARCO

A fairy-tale castle on the sea was an archduke's token of love for his beautiful and beloved bride. Then fate put an end to their idyll

Can a man literally be bewitched by a rocky and barren promontory without a trace of grass? The victim of this mysterious spell testified that one day he had to use all his strength to resist the magnetic force of the sea thundering below. This is said to have happened to Maximilian of Hapsburg, younger brother of Francis Joseph, the emperor of Austria and



king of Hungary, in the mid-19th century. He was at least metaphorically struck by lightning when he visited the cape of Grignano near Trieste, the city that had for centuries been a flourishing port for the great empire governed from Vienna.

Young Maximilian, a Hapsburg who was more a lover of nature and philosophy than of the military arts, immediately purchased land on the cape. In his heart he knew that he could find no more perfect spot for construction of the castle of his and his wife's dreams. As architect he chose Carl Junker, whose design for the castle was inspired by the neo-Renaissance style then popular in the Germanic countries and in England.

Thus begins the story of Miramare: on a late afternoon of 1855, Maximilian, newly appointed admiral-commander of the Austrian fleet, had been residing in Trieste for five years. He fell deeply in love with that wild and windswept promontory. And as if time had stopped, visitors can still admire today the result of a small

miracle—the transformation of that inhospitable and rocky cape into a magical garden out of a fairy tale. The park is still one of the attractions of the area around Trieste, on Italy's far northeastern border, the last stop in the West before crossing the threshold of East Europe.

From the outset, Maximilian had a clear idea of what he wanted at Grignano. With typical Hapsburg efficiency, in 1856 he signed the contract with the landscape architects for the garden. Specifications were worked out. Actual construction of the garden was to be complete by the end of 1856. A maximum cost was established. Alas, difficulties multiplied day after day, and costs soared well beyond the amount specified in the contract. The barren rock first had to be covered with a blanket of earth if a garden was to grow and flourish there. Special white stone for the castle was ordered from the faraway quarries of Orsera, a tiny town in Istria, in what is now Slovenia. Work proceeded slowly.

On July 27, 1857, Maximilian was married. His bride was Princess Charlotte

Construction of Miramare Castle was not completed until four years after Maximilian's execution by a firing squad in Mexico, where he had vainly tried to oppose republican forces. The castle was built on the barren promontory of Grignano, outside Trieste. All the earth and plants in the now-lush park had to be brought in. Opposite, Maximilian and Carlotta.





in Villa Lazarovich on the hill of San Vito, where Maximilian had lived for five years after 1850, was not adequate. They then decided to build a small but comfortable Castelletto, or Little Castle, on the land of the new Miramare park. They would live in this smaller castle until the great one was finished. And there the couple resided until Christmas 1860, when they moved into the big white castle that became their official residence. Only the first floor was finished at the time.

The gleaming white tower of the main castle is a landmark for sailors on the Gulf of Trieste. Inside, the architecture is classic but at the same time spectacular, perhaps because the decoration is so heterogeneous. Exquisite paneling and precious inlays on the walls bear the Miramare coat of arms, designed by Maximilian himself, bearing pineapples and anchors on a blue field.

The Hapsburg archduke was a keen collector, and his eclectic hoards are still displayed in the castle, along with paintings illustrating the most significant moments of the couple's life together. Each hall is decorated in a style typical of 19th-century taste. The Blue Room has copies of original Dutch Rococo furnishings. The private chapel is a tribute to the neo-Gothic style. A Japanese and Chinese drawing room add Oriental exoticism.

Maximilian himself designed his own

apartments in a nautical style. He wanted them to resemble a ship's cabin, even if this meant sacrificing luxury and space. His private study, the Novara Room, was to look like the bow of the frigate Novara, on which he had sailed as a young man. Marine motifs were repeated in the Hall of the Seagulls. And wherever the sea was not represented in draperies or other decorative elements, the real thing could be seen through the great windows facing onto the Adriatic Sea.

The library, in which he spent hours writing his memoirs and travel diaries, reading, and studying his favorite subjects (especially botany and archaeology) is secluded in a remote, almost hidden corner of the castle. Charlotte's presence, too, is almost palpable. Her grand piano, the music she played on it, and her paintings are still in place.

Maximilian, a skilled amateur botanist, devoted enormous attention, as well as time and money, to the vast park. He personally directed the first stages of its construction. The area covered twenty-two hectares, and the criteria used in reshaping the surface of the territory were eclectic. In some areas perennial plants from all over the world would be grown; elsewhere the ground cover was to be as rustic and natural as possible, as in classically romantic German or English gardens. Tropical gardens were tucked into sheltered



Above, the castle was built in white Istrian stone in a style that Maximilian personally adapted by mixing on the use of such medieval elements as crenellations and towers. Right, the view from a terrace.

of Saxony, the beautiful seventeen-year-old daughter of the king and queen of Belgium, Leopold I and Marie-Louise of Orleans. Maximilian had recently been named governor of the state of Lombardy-Veneto, and he was obliged to leave for Milan with his new wife shortly after the wedding. There he found a heavy agenda of diplomatic crises to deal with. Worse still, after various disagreements with his brother, he was obliged to give up the title of governor of the Lombardy-Veneto regions.

Maximilian and Charlotte returned to Trieste. There they decided that their residence



Above, the grand staircase provides access to the two huge wings of the castle. Its windows command views of either sea or park. The statues represent pages in 16th-century garb.

VISITING MIRAMARE

Castle: Open daily 9 am to 6 pm April-September; 9 am to 5 pm March and October; 9 am to 4 pm November-February. Guided visits in English available; minimum ten people. Tel 040/224143.

Park: Open daily 8 am to 7 pm April-September; 9 am to 6 pm March and October; 9 am to 5 pm November-February. Free admission. Exhibitions are held in the summer stables. One of the most recent was an exhibition on the subject of the popular Sissi (Empress Elisabeth of Austria), wife of Emperor Francis Joseph. During July and August there are evening Sound and Light shows, and occasional chamber music concerts are performed in the park. In greenhouses in the park is a Butterfly Garden that houses various species of butterflies.

corners. In an open area there was a lake where swans glided across the water. One pavilion was devoted to Alpine flora, and a humid grotto was created to house ferns of many types. A long staircase leading to the small private port of the castle was adorned with rare roses, and an enigmatic Egyptian Sphinx guarded the port itself.

The young couple often boarded their yacht *Fantasia* to set out from Miramare for a cruise along the splendid Dalmatian coast, in what is now Croatia. They would also sail from Miramare to Sicily, Madeira and even Brazil. These were the halcyon years, and private delights went hand in hand with public success. In 1863 Maximilian was offered the crown of Mexico by Napoleon III. For it he gave up, without particular displeasure, his right of succession to the Austrian throne.

Mexico was to be his final destination. Together with Queen Charlotte, he set sail for the Americas in April 1864. Their departure was troubled, and it was opposed by some of his

adversity. Maximilian, however, was both idealistic and ambitious. But when they arrived in Mexico two months later they found a difficult situation. And the problems became more serious with each passing week.

Hoping to remedy a situation in a far-off country whose emperor he had just become, Maximilian refused to flee but insisted upon his wife's return to Europe for safety. Back in Europe she tirelessly sought help for him, but aid was not forthcoming. Overtaken by events, Maximilian was taken prisoner, condemned to death and executed by a firing squad on June 19, 1867.

Three years had passed since the frigate *Albatros* had set out from Miramare's tiny and elegant port with the sovereigns aboard. Now it returned, bound for Trieste, carrying the body of the young emperor, which was to be buried in Vienna. Charlotte was alone. Desperate, she slowly began to fade into a deep and unrelenting depression. She returned to her native Belgium, where she lived for another half-century, dying in the Castle of Boehoude in 1927.

Maximilian was dead and Charlotte in a state the Victorians described as "delirious." Work on the castle nevertheless continued for three years after his execution. For a time

Vienna continued to provide funds for its upkeep, but gradually gardeners and caretakers were sent home. The fairy-tale love story had come to an end.

However, the tale lives on in the park and castle of Miramare, a magnet for visitors who come from all over the world to see the magical garden created a century and a half ago. Many visitors sense the place's melancholy. One legend has it that whoever owns the promontory will die a premature death far away in a foreign land. This legend was reinforced when Italian duke Amedeo of Aosta, who resided there from 1931 to 1938, died in Nairobi, Kenya.

During World War II the castle served as headquarters of the German command and, after 1945, it was commandeered by the Allied command. Aware of the legend, a general from New Zealand refused to sleep in the castle, preferring to set up a tent outside in the garden.

Right, the main landing of the grand staircase.

Below, the Throne Room. Maximilian was never to be enthroned here; he was killed before it was completed. The painting on the left pictures portraits of all of the Hapsburgs, tracing their descent from the Holy Roman Emperor.



In 1955 the entire complex became a museum. The surrounding waters have been designated an underwater nature reserve. Maximilian's private realm is now an eden for plants and animals.



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SPORT AND TRADITION

An area of contrast, with high mountains and a dramatic shoreline.

Friuli-Venezia Giulia is a sports-loving region. Sports are an essential part of the broader culture of this region, which also includes fine wines and good food, a wealth of cultural events and a host of popular diversions. On offer are the fun of amateur sports events and the edge of pro competition. In 2000, Friuli hosted the first *Settimana Tricolore* (Italian Week) a seven-day Italian road cycling championship.

The *Giro (Tour)* of Friuli for professionals, another major cycling event, has been generating wide interest and genuine enthusiasm for many years. Professional cycling has spawned a keen interest in amateur cycling. On September 16, 2001, the first *Gran Fondo di Europa*, a major European non-professional race, will include 142 miles of roads—

fine for the most ambitious amateurs—and a less taxing 80-mile itinerary. And everyone is welcome at the Udine *Pedale* event, which sends 50,000 bicycles pedaling through the streets and roads of Friuli's capital.

Sailing is enjoying a real boom in the waters off Trieste, Grado and Lignano. Trieste is still the star, thanks to the *Barcolana*, a regatta known throughout the world for the sheer number of boats that participate (no less than 1,500). The *Barcolana* takes place every second Sunday in October.

Among the preliminaries of the race are nighttime regattas combined with music, concerts, and other events.

While the *Barcolana* is open to everyone, the elite of world-class sailing have another option in the *Nations' Cup*. The first match race, in which the competition included teams

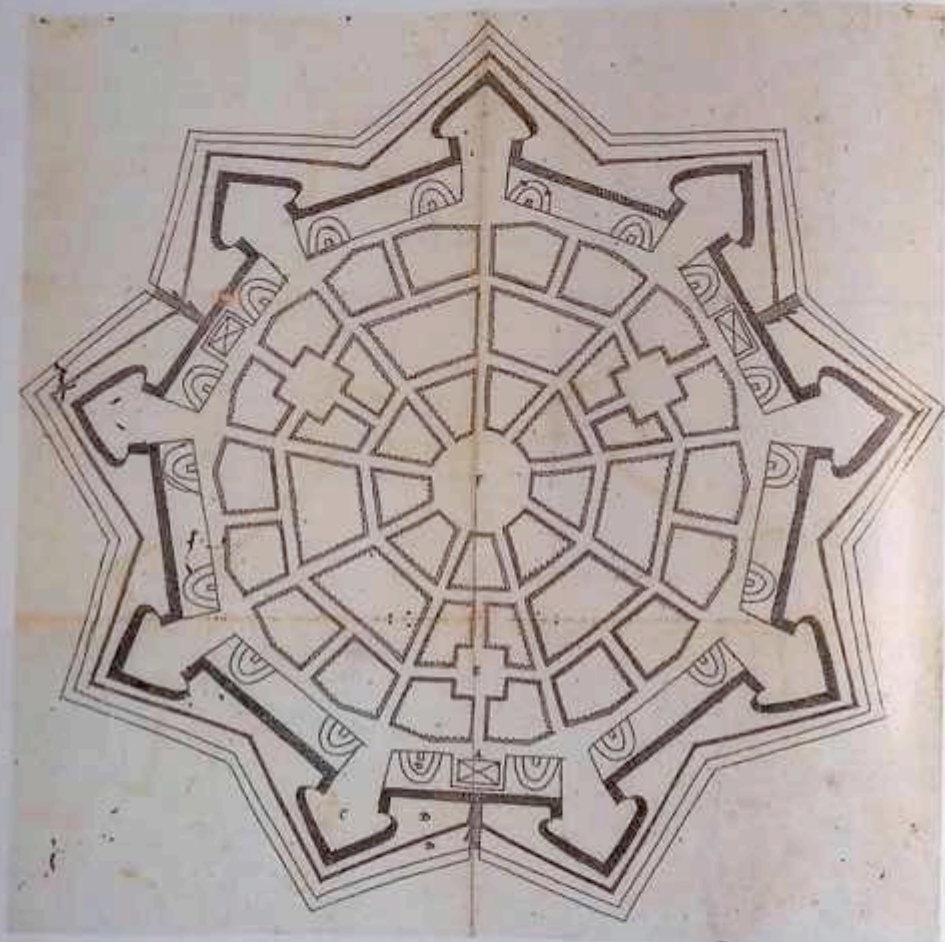
from the recent *America's Cup* was organized in Trieste's new and efficient *Sani Giusto Marina*, in the heart of the city, and also involved the ample service facilities of the port of *Sani Rocco* at nearby *Muggia*. Trieste has scheduled the *European Marathon* organized by the *Baviera* for May 6. From the 42.2 kilometers (26 miles) of the competition to the 21 kilometers (13 miles) of the half-marathon to the 8 kilometers (5 miles) of the *Baviera*, the event is open to men and women, and to young and old.

Enthusiasm for sports in Trieste and Friuli-Venezia Giulia extends to a range of other activities. In mid-July the *Cinque Nazioni* (Five Nations) beach volleyball competition will take place on Trieste's spectacular downtown seashore. Every year in August the world's top acrobatic pilots converge on Trieste to perform their breathtaking aerial maneuvers. In September, in the mountains of Friuli, *Forni di Sopra* will host the world finals of grass skiing. Also in early autumn, a mountain race is held at *Arta Terme*.

Trieste is one of the venues in the calendar of powerboat races, having made a brilliant debut as host of this sport in 2000. Winter brings the winter *Universiade*, or *University Games*, which will be hosted by *Tarvisio* and the other Friuli ski areas in the year 2003. The games include ten days of Alpine and Nordic skiing, snowboarding, a biathlon, ice skating and ice hockey, curling and, for the first time, a winter triathlon that will include a footrace, cycling and cross-country skiing. More than 2,000 athletes from universities throughout the world are expected.

Mauro Siegel





Friuli-Venezia Giulia: Palmanova

AN IDEAL FORTRESS

The brightest star in the constellation of Venice's defenses, this fortress was conceived as a perfect military machine. Not incidentally, it also embodies Renaissance ideals of proportion

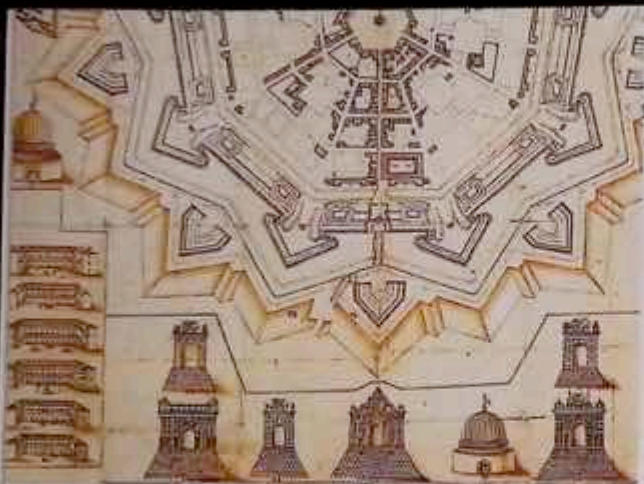


Above, a watchtower on the bastions.
Center, a Turkish-Hungarian invader wielded this gilded sword in the 1550s.
Opposite, a plan of Palmanova dated 1600. Actually, the town has six small piazzas instead of four, and the main piazza is octagonal.

by SILVANO BERTOSSI

Born as a citadel, the little city of Palmanova is actually a romantic fortress that has laid down its arms and looks like something out of a story-book. Nevertheless, it testifies to the ingenuity of man. Palmanova is a living monument, challenging the passage of time and offering a tantalizing glimpse into the past.

At the dawn of the 15th century, the Republic of Venice conquered Friuli, the region in northeastern Italy that for many years had been ruled by the patriarchs, the prince-bishops of Aquileia. Venice's rival in conquest was the Austrian Empire. Eager to strengthen its overseas commercial network, Austria had long had its eye on the ports of the northern Adriatic Sea. Venice also had to defend itself from the Turkish Empire, encroaching on its eastern border. The Turks had already conquered Bosnia. They were also staging incursions into Croatia, Slovenia and Carinthia, and had then begun to



Above: an 18th-century drawing of the fortress shows buildings and details of city gates. Right: the fortress had three gates, each well protected by flanking bastions.

Despite the victory at Lepanto, the war between the Turks and the Venetians was not over. The Ottomans never again reached Friuli, but life in the Venetian Republic was anything but quiet. There were conflicts with the Austrians and with pirates from the Balkan territories who, with their fast launches, disrupted Venice's sea trade and staged quick but damaging incursions by land. Precisely for these reasons, the Venetians decided to build a fortress to defend their eastern border.

At that time, fortresses were one of the few means of defending a territory. With the introduction of gunpowder, it became necessary to redesign fortresses so they could resist cannon fire. Bastions, the mighty structures that jut out from defensive walls at regular intervals, had to be strengthened. The length of the walls between the bastions was

To make the earthworks that surround Palmanova, thousands of laborers hauled earth from the ditch that was dug to create the moat. Some 40,000 cartloads of dirt were used to form the embankments, which were faced with stone. Under the Venetians, the fortress had two lines of outer defenses. Napoleon added another.



press westward toward Friuli.

The first of the invasions feared by the new Venetian occupiers of Friuli came in 1472, when the Turks threatened Rocca di Montebelluna. Venice was also obliged to defend its territories from invasion by sea. In the momentous Battle of Lepanto in 1571, the Venetian navy was pitted against the Turks in what military historians say was the largest battle of the modern era involving ships powered by oarsmen. The Venetian ships had 1,815 cannons and 74,000 men. Their fleet was composed mainly of galleys, a flat and narrow type of ship widely used from the Middle Ages until the 18th century. There were also six galassies (ships larger than galleys) and thirty smaller ships.

One hundred and five Venetian galleys were commanded by Sebastiano Venier. His fleet was flanked by 79 Spanish galleys under the command of Andrea Doria of Genoa, and a dozen papal galleys under Marcantonio Colonna of Rome. Three more galleys were sent by the Duke of Savoy, three by the Order of Malta. The Turkish fleet was composed of 222 galleys and 60 galliots (smaller and swifter than galleys), with 750 cannon and 88,000 men. The outcome was disastrous for the Turks: Fifty of their ships were destroyed and 117 were captured; 8,000 Turks died and 10,000 were taken prisoner. The Venetians lost a mere 15 galleys, though 7,500 men in all were killed in the fierce combat.



increased to adapt to the longer range of the new weapons. The walls had to provide shelter within them for troops, and they had to defend the entrances of the fortress and offer secure positions for cannons.

All of this required a new way of conceiving the design of fortresses, in which military needs took priority over civil ones. Whereas Renaissance architects imagined ideal cities that had regular geometric shapes and urban plans offering a minimum of comfort to their inhabitants, military architects preferred radial plans, with streets leading directly to the bastions and city walls, for maximum efficiency in emergencies. Civil architects, by contrast, proposed grid-shaped plans with streets leading to the city gates. Early in 1593, three architects presented projects for the proposed fortress. The Senate of Venice chose the project drawn up by Giulio Savorgnan, with some later changes. The plan of the city itself was influenced by the ideas of Benvenuto Lommi and Vincenzo Scamozzi, a pupil of the great architect Palladio. Scamozzi held that the piazzas should have closed corners (according to previous tenets of urban planning, the streets leading to the city gates should initiate at the corners of the main piazzas).

A number of military and civil engineers took part in the construction of the fortress. It

was Savorgnan, however, who played the most important role, even though the fortress he had built at Nicotia had been taken easily in an assault. Savorgnan attributed this failure to the weakness of the garrison; to the winding roads of the old town, which slowed down the troops; and to the fortress's vulnerable position at the foot of hills from which the enemy could easily fire inside the walls.

Palmanova has nine lanceolate bastions that give it a starlike plan. The interior was laid out on a geometric plan based on the number three and its multiples. Three streets (called borghi) lead from the large central piazza directly to the three monumental city gates, beyond which were three rural estates. The interior has six neighborhood districts, each with a smaller piazza at its center.

Because of its size, Palmanova is one of the most ambitious projects carried out in the Renaissance. It was a unique "military machine," a model for other star-shaped cities built in Europe up to the mid-18th century. Construction began with the measuring of the land on October 9, 1593, when the positions of the bastions were defined. The earth dug up to create the moat was used to raise the bastions and the defensive walls. The tools employed were very simple, and great numbers of them were required. They included pickaxes, shovels, wheelbarrows,

EXPLORING THE CITY

Palmanova's strategic location, chosen by the 16th-century Venetians for military purposes, also suits today's travelers. It is simple to include a visit to Palmanova in a tour of some of the other intriguing destinations in the area, all within easy reach. The cities of Udine and Trieste are an ideal base; they are well connected by bus, train and highway with the other places of interest in the region. The airport of Ronchi dei Legionari is about halfway between the two. Udine's Piazza della Libertà is one of Italy's most beautiful, and Trieste's vast Piazza dell'Unità d'Italia is another. Both cities have a medieval core, and each can boast some fine old churches and an impressive castle that now serves as a museum as well as a vantage point with fine vistas. Castles and massive medieval cathedrals are some of the more imposing attractions of the many cities and towns in the region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia in northeast Italy, along with a beautiful seashore and thickly wooded mountains. The smaller towns in the region harbor some artistic treasures as well. In Aquileia, an extraordinary 6th-century mosaic pavement stretches from one end to the other of a thousand-year-old basilica set among the ruins of an ancient Roman city. The charming town of Cividale has preserved its medieval appearance and a gem of a chapel built by the Lombards in the 6th century. Northward, toward the Austrian border, the town of Gemona del Friuli has a magnificent medieval cathedral. On the coast are the romantic castle of Miramare, Grado's picturesque port, and Trieste's splendid seashore promenade.



carts and *zarietti* (containers for transporting earth that were strapped to the backs of the laborers).

Special mechanisms were used for digging and hoisting weights. The earth piled up for the defensive walls was packed and shored up with stone and brick. This laborious work proceeded slowly. Several times it stopped altogether. But by 1599 the main structures were in place. Building the rest took another thirty years and the toil of 7,000

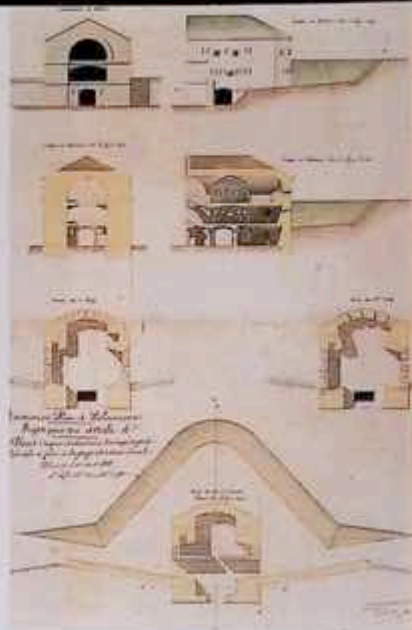
Above, the aqueduct that carried water to the fortress. Palmanova was designed to withstand siege; it successfully resisted attacks by Austrian troops in 1809 and 1813.

men. It was not easy, at the time, to construct a fortified enclosure almost 4.5 miles long, with underground passages almost 3.5 miles long, in addition to the rest of the structures. The construction of the outer for-

fications of the walls alone required moving 40,500 cartloads of material.

Palmanova has three rings of fortifications. These were built at different times and give the city the appearance of a star, or a snowflake. The first and the second rings were built by the Venetians. The second consists of the outer fortifications that protect the three city gates. The third and outermost ring was initiated in 1806 by Napoleon. A system of covered galleries and exterior passages that offered cover from enemy fire provided a safe and direct

Below, typically Venetian in design, Renaissance obelisks decorate the top of a city gate. Right, a military architect's drawing of the new guardrooms that Napoleon added to the fortifications. Tunnels connect the walls with the interior of the fortress.



link between the city's innermost fortifications and the outermost defensive positions. Thanks to this new defensive concept, the fort was able to withstand Austrian sieges in 1809 and 1813.

Today Palmanova remains just as it was originally planned by those 16th-century architects. The city offers a tangible, fully accessible example of how a fortress could be built to defend a border, a territory, or an entire civilization. With its star-shaped plan, its three monumental city gates and its defensive walls framed by a deep moat, Palmanova has an important place in the history of architecture.

The city-fortress is also beautiful. The clean lines of its nine-point stellar plan rest lightly on the vast plain, as if it had blown in on the wind and had set itself down there to be admired. Presently, Palmanova is a small city with a population of 3,500. It is a friendly place, where people know one another and value human relations. Fortunately, it was never destroyed by war. However, it would have been razed were it not for a timely intervention that prevented the destruction of this great example of 16th-century military architecture. The "military machine" withstood the attacks and the assaults of war. It would have been a real shame if all that work, the mental and physical labor of thousands, had been lost forever. □

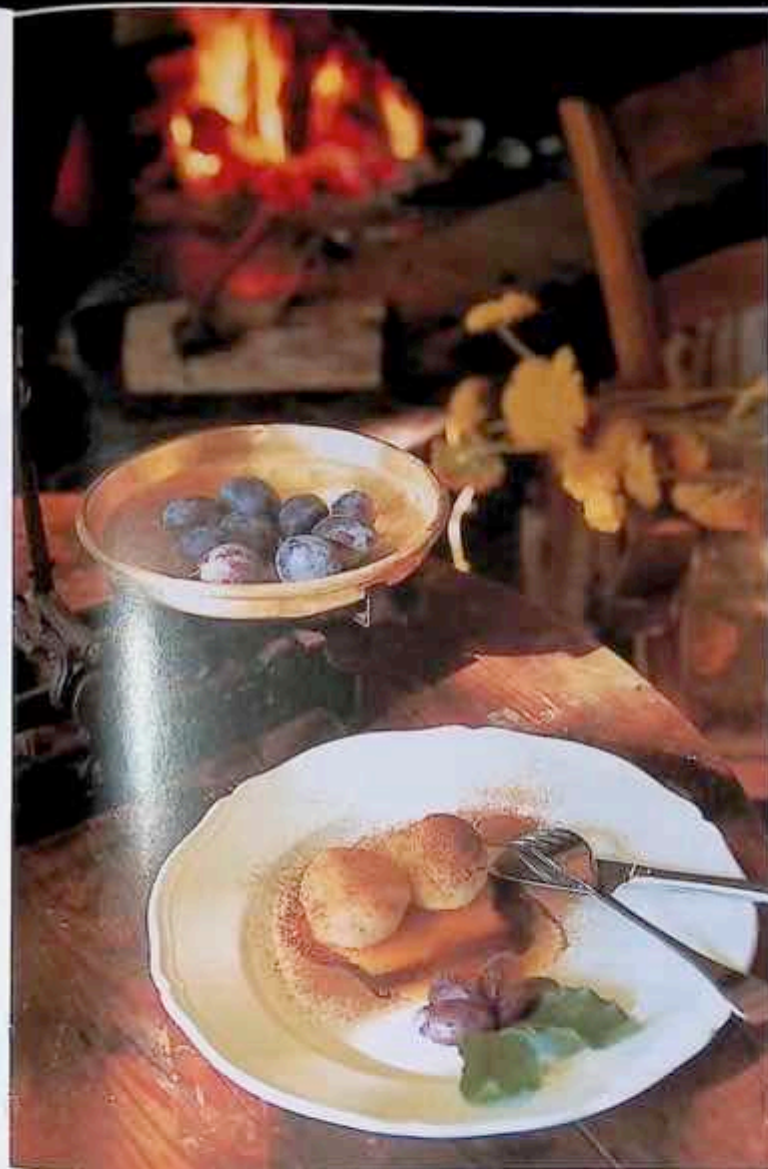
Eating and drinking in Friuli-Venezia Giulia

A CUISINE OF MANY CULTURES

by D. D'Amico

Time seems to stand still in Friuli-Venezia Giulia. Castles rise imposing and impregnable against the clear sky, guarding lush valleys and hills covered with vineyards. Higher up, where the vegetation thins to reveal the bare rock of the mountains, stands of chestnut trees are interspersed with patches of broom, flowering in

There is more than a taste of Central Europe in this region's food specialties. From hearty soups to appetizing cheeses and the delicate goodness of one of Italy's best prosciuttos, this is food to be savored with satisfaction and enjoyed with the region's great wines.



Left, prune dumplings with cinnamon and sugar, a regional dish with a Central European accent. Opposite, delicious Prosciutto di San Daniele is a very special kind of ham.

Gnocchi di susini

Prune dumplings

serves 6-8

A specialty of Al Ceccatore restaurant in Cormons, these dumplings can also be made with dried apricots. Calculate about two prunes per person.

2 lbs potatoes
1 3/4 cup flour
1/2 cup less 1 tbsp butter
1 egg
milk
sugar
dried prunes
bread crumbs
cinnamon
salt

Soak the prunes in warm water. When soft, remove the pits and place 1/2 tsp sugar at the center of each. Boil and peel the potatoes and mash them well. Spread the mashed potatoes on a board, sprinkle with salt and cool until lukewarm. Add the flour, egg, 1 tbsp butter and a few spoonfuls of milk. Blend the mixture well, adding more flour if it is too soft. Cut the dough into large gnocchi, placing a prune at the center of each and closing the dough over it. Brown bread crumbs in butter with cinnamon and sugar. Cook the gnocchi in boiling, salted water. Remove as soon as they come to the surface and drain. Arrange the gnocchi on plates, add the bread crumb mixture and serve immediately.

sunbursts of bright yellow. Here and there a farmhouse can be seen, its smoking chimney denoting the briskly burning fire on the big hearth that is typical of these parts. The central fireplace has a room-size hood sheltering benches where the family gathers around the fire in the evening. In the air is the pungent

aroma of turnips fermenting in vinaccia (marc, which is the residue of grape pressing) in large vats to make brovade, a relish served with almost every winter dish.

From mountain pastures comes cow's milk for one of the region's savory cheeses, Montasio, a semi-hard cheese that is said to



Uovo con pistum di maiale ed aceto balsamico

Egg with ground pork
and balsamic vinegar

This is a typical regional dish
as served at the Al Giarretto
restaurant in Cormons.

serves 4

4 eggs
2 1/2 oz valerian
5 oz ground pork
1 oz fresh pancetta
4 tbsp balsamic vinegar
coriander, cinnamon
fennel powder
extra virgin olive oil
1/2 cup dry white wine
salt and pepper

have originated at a Benedictine abbey in Moggio Udinese. Even now, Montasio is made in the slow, traditional manner, using strictly fresh milk from a specific geographic zone. Fresh Montasio is aged for a period ranging from sixty days to five months, and is smooth and delicate in flavor. The Mezzano type of Montasio, aged from five to ten months, has a more pronounced, more aromatic taste. Montasio Stravecchio is aged for more than ten months and is yellowish in color. It has a light brown crust, and is pleasantly piquant. Montasio is produced throughout the region; its quality is controlled and guaranteed by a consortium based in Rivolto di Godricio, in the province of Udine.

For a winning combination of wine and Montasio, gourmands might choose Friuli's fine Pinot, Sauvignon or Chardonnay for the fresh cheese. Tocai or Merlot for Montasio Mezzano, and Refosco dal Peduncolo Rosso, a full-bodied red for Montasio Stravecchio.

The Friuli-Venezia Giulia region is also home to one of Italy's finest prosciuttos,

pink, sweet and tender, it bears the brand of San Daniele del Friuli, and it may have been developed by Celtic invaders of the region, who introduced their own methods of curing meat. The local climate and prevailing winds took over from there. The area around the town of San Daniele has a perfect microclimate, with just the right air quality and amount of humidity to dry the hams without excessive salting. Production methods are even now those hallowed by past experience, while modern technology allows a constant control of quality.

The pigs are exclusively Italian, and the hams have to weigh at least twenty-two pounds each. Their size is important because it determines the percentage of fat on them and the time it will take to salt and cure them. They are cured naturally, with sea salt, no chemical additives are used. Excess salt is removed by hand, a process that requires considerable expertise. At this stage, no moisture should remain in the prosciutto, and the color should be even, inside and out. The hams are

Boil the eggs for 6 minutes, remove from heat and cool. Peel them gently, leaving them whole, and set aside. Grind or process the meat together with the pancetta, 1/2 tsp salt, a pinch of pepper, a pinch of coriander, a pinch of cinnamon and a pinch of fennel. Put the mixture in a bowl and add white wine. In a skillet, brown the pistum, or meat mixture, in 1 tbsp olive oil. Arrange the valerian on individual plates and add the pistum. Cut the eggs in halves and arrange them on the plates. Reheat the skillet in which the pistum was browned, add the vinegar and reduce the liquid by half, and spoon the sauce onto the plate.

pressed into their characteristic, flattened shape, then they are hung to dry in controlled-air environments. They hang for three months, and are checked almost every day. They are then washed and trimmed before being seasoned for another eight months. The hams are tested individually, by hand, for softness and surface elasticity. They are slathered with a natural paste of pork fat or lard and cereal derivatives to keep them from drying out too much.

Experts test them by pricking them with a long bone needle that penetrates the hams and absorbs their aroma. These keen-nosed experts can tell what stage of seasoning they have reached simply by smelling the needle. The Consortium of San Daniele controls the quality and number of hams that

Opposite, pistum, served with valerian and egg features local pork and pancetta. Tasty local sausages and salami are reminders of the region's Austrian heritage.



will be marketed under the prestigious name of Prosciutto di San Daniele.

Along the coast of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, the landscape changes, and the vast coastal plain planted with endless fields of corn is fringed with sandy beaches. Trieste, with its memories of the Hapsburgs who ruled here when it was part of the Austro-Hungarian empire, is a crossroads of cultures. The customs and flavors of Central Europe have left a firm imprint on the region's way of life and in its way of cooking, as well. As a result, traditional dishes include curried soups, hearty goulashes, rich chocolate cakes and dumplings made with whole, ripe fruit. The influence of the sea on regional cooking can be savored here in tasty fish soups, which usually include turbot and eel. Fish soup in Trieste comprises eight to ten different kinds of fish and mollusks, including crab.

The quality of the region's excellent wines, which include those from the Collio, Colli Orientali del Friuli and Grave zones, is hailed by connoisseurs in Italy and abroad. And grappa, another traditional regional product, is attracting attention as a trendy after-dinner drink. An aromatic distillate, it is made from grapes or fruit, sometimes with the addition of herbs.

Above, the kitchen brigade takes time out at a villa hotel near Bordone. Gourmands consider this cuisine of this region one of the most interesting in Italy because of its cosmopolitan blend of several culinary influences.

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