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# DREAM OF ITALY

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# Like An Episode of FRIENDS

When I dream of Italy, I dream of... Francesco's laughter when his businesslike reserve breaks and he says, "I feel like I'm in an episode of *Friends!*" Earlier in the day, Francesco told the four of us that he and his wife love this television show and that Joey is his hero!

Now, in his parents' kitchen in *Salerno*, we laugh with Francesco. At the opposite end of the table, *Pasquale*, his dad, asks for an Italian translation. Pasquale then chuckles, raises his glass of deep red wine from *Campania* and we all laugh. *Lina*, Francesco's mom and our patient cooking instructor, offers more *ravioli*, more *parmigiana di melanzane*, more *polpette*. Smiling, we extend our empty plates.

My husband Joel and I had a similar experience in 2014 during our first stay at *Salerno Centro Bed and Breakfast*, their small family-run business that Francesco manages. In 2017 we introduced our friends Patti and Gary to both the bed and breakfast and to the private cooking class with Lina.

During our lesson, Patti and I take notes, make ravioli under Lina's careful guidance, and laugh. To maintain clear communication, Francesco moves quickly between the kitchen and living room where the guys watch television. Joel comes to the kitchen to photograph our efforts as Francesco translates the next step of the recipe. Then, from the living room, we hear a mixture of English



Francesco and parents

and Italian followed by the universal language of laughter.

Soon we gather around the table covered by vinyl cloth stamped with pictures of pasta shapes, clusters of tomatoes, and

*pepperoncini*. Still wearing our orange-trimmed yellow aprons, Patti and I tell the guys how hard we worked and we fill plates and glasses. Conversation settles into mumblings of "delicious" and "oh, wow!" I translate basic phrases, but Francesco easily involves all of us as shared stories invite laughter that flows among friends.

Francesco is right. *Siamo amici*. We are friends.

—Frances Daniel

# The CASTLE and GARDENS of San Giovanni d'Asso

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