

Vegetarian & Vegan Tuscan Cuisine

Part 1: Starters and Main Courses

Tuscany is a great travel destination for **meat lovers**. From renowned *Bistecca alla Fiorentina* to *Prosciutto Toscano* and other [affettati](#) (cured meats in Tuscan dialect) including *Finocchiona*, *Salame*, and *Salsiccia*, the array of dishes prepared with meat is endless.

While Tuscan cuisine is nowadays renowned for animal-based recipes and products, in the past, meat was a luxury reserved for the noble and wealthy. Authentic Tuscan cuisine developed around simple ingredients that peasants could source and afford to buy, mainly **vegetables, legumes and bread**. In short, Tuscany is a vegetarian and vegan friendly destination, plentiful of **rich plant-based dishes**.

If you follow a vegetarian or vegan diet, don't limit yourself from experiencing the true essence of Tuscan cuisine: there are many safe and tasty dishes to choose from. Read this short guide and discover the best vegetarian and vegan starters and main courses for your next trip to Tuscany.

Vegetarian & Vegan Tuscan Cuisine: Top starters

Tuscan starters or *antipasti* are a great way to **inaugurate your lavish experience**. This is your opportunity to taste fresh quality ingredients, prepared in simple and genuine ways.

Cheese board (vegetarian)

As humble as it may sound, a plate of [Tuscany's best cheese](#) is a delight. Restaurants will typically prepare a selection of **local cheese** such as *pecorino*, *caciotta*, and *caprino*, accompanied by honey and home-made jams.

Sformati

Similar to flan, a *sformato* is prepared using seasonal vegetables and a batter consisting of egg and cheese. Many restaurants also offer a vegan version of this **comforting wintery antipasto**.

Bruschetta

This is a **popular antipasto among vegans**. Bruschetta can be served with many different toppings — garlic and Extra-Virgin Olive Oil, chopped fresh tomatoes and tapenade to name a few. Keep an eye out for bruschetta with black cabbage, this delicacy is in season from November to April.

Sottoli

Preparing *sottoli* is an art passed down through generations. When the harvest season is abundant, all the extra produce is **preserved in Extra-Virgin Olive Oil**. It is common to find ingredients such as aubergines, bell peppers, courgettes, artichokes and mushrooms.

Polenta Fritta

Fried polenta is a common dish in most of Italy, **great for any time of the year**. In this recipe, corn flour polenta is prepared, left to cool, cut into big chunks and then deep fried until golden and crispy. This recipe is usually served with lard or sausage, but if you prefer a meat-free dish, ask for it plain or with mushrooms.

Vegetarian & Vegan Tuscan Cuisine: Top main courses

Now that your palate is awake, it's time to dig into the main course. Italian mains are divided into **primi** (pasta, rice or soup) and **secondi** (meat or fish). A *secondo* is usually accompanied by a *contorno* (side dish) which typically includes a salad or seasonal vegetables.

Fresh egg-pasta (Vegetarian)

Tuscany is a great place to taste **fresh homemade pasta** such as *tortelli* and *tagliatelle*. These are typically served with ragù, but you can opt for a mushroom sauce or simple butter and sage.

Gnudi Toscani (Vegetarian)

Gnudi in Florentine dialect translates into naked. This **peculiar Florentine dish** is made with the filling of *Ravioli*, but without the pasta coating. These balls of spinach and ricotta are either served with tomato sauce or butter and sage, and are light, delicate and full of flavour.

Frittata di Cipolle (Vegetarian)

This is a dish, typical of the Tuscan countryside. This simple **omelette with caramelised onions**, is perfect with a salad or even inside a panino.

Panzanella

Made with stale bread, fresh tomatoes and onions, Panzanella salad is a **must-try summer recipe**. Despite how it sounds, we can guarantee that Panzanella reflects the simplicity and flavours of a traditional Tuscan dish.

Soups

Ribollita, Aquacotta, Pappa al Pomodoro are three **staple Tuscan soups** that share two common ingredients: bread and vegetables. As fun to make, as to eat, these recipes make a great vegan dinner party menu.

Fagioli all'Uccelletto

This is a great alternative to frittata, soup or pasta, for your choice of main course. Traditional to Florence, this bean stew in a rich tomato sauce, is a great **source of plant-based proteins**.

Enjoy these dishes at your local [restaurants near your villa](#), or speak to our [concierge team](#) to organise a **gourmet Tuscan dinner** or private cooking class at your villa in Tuscany.

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