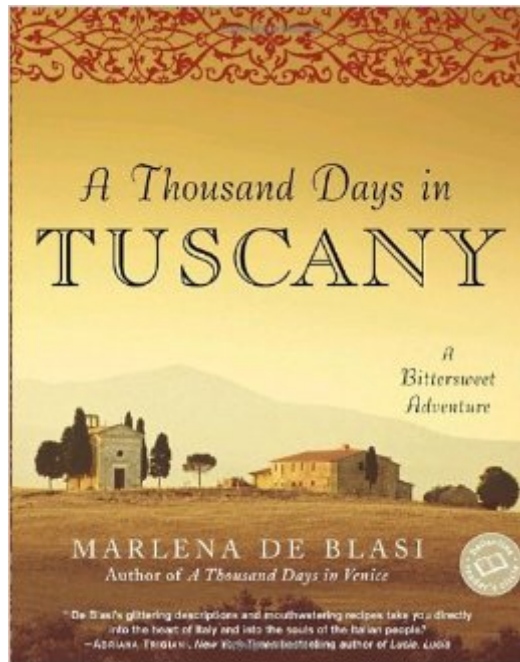


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A Thousand Days In Tuscany: A Bittersweet Adventure



Synopsis

They had met and married on perilously short acquaintance, she an American chef and food writer, he a Venetian banker. Now they were taking another audacious leap, unstitching their ties with exquisite Venice to live in a roughly renovated stable in Tuscany. Once again, it was love at first sight. Love for the timeless countryside and the ancient village of San Casciano dei Bagni, for the local vintage and the magnificent cooking, for the Tuscan sky and the friendly church bells. Love especially for old Barlozzo, the village mago, who escorts the newcomers to Tuscany's seasonal festivals; gives them roasted country bread drizzled with just-pressed olive oil; invites them to gather chestnuts, harvest grapes, hunt truffles; and teaches them to caress the simple pleasures of each precious day. It's Barlozzo who guides them across the minefields of village history and into the warm and fiercely beating heart of love itself. *A Thousand Days in Tuscany* is set in one of the most beautiful places on earth—and tucked into its fragrant corners are luscious recipes (including one for the only true bruschetta) directly from the author's private collection.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Having lived and worked in Italy during the 60s and early 70s, I found Marlena De Blasi's recounting of her time spent in a very small town in Tuscany more in sync with what actually happens in such a place. It was easy for me to bring forth a picture in my mind and actually feel as if I was there. Mrs. Blasi's characterizations of persons encountered was complete. I would highly recommend "A Thousand Days in Venice" as an accurate interpretation of what happens in Italy on a daily basis.

Do yourself a favor and read de Blasi's "A Thousand Days in Venice" before embarking on the sequel "A Thousand Days in Tuscany". It is not required reading, but you would be missing out on a delightful and unusual love story which sets up this book so perfectly. Do not mistake this book for a cook book. It is so much more. De Blasi's writing is a feast of sumptuous descriptions of not only food, but life in Tuscany and the joy of knowing she is living her life exactly as she wants to. After reading the book, I was taken aback to find how strongly I wanted to meet this person and be a part of her circle of friends. She is as warm and sensuous as the olive oil drizzled on the crusty, roasted, Tuscan breads. This book could have been filled with photographs, but they weren't necessary. De Blasi's descriptions will fill your mind's eye with amazing visuals of life in rural Tuscany. I hope when you finish the book(s) you will feel, like I do, that your heart and soul have been amply nourished and your taste-buds truly inspired!

A small gem! Every once in a while a book comes along that really moves me with its quiet beauty; "A Thousand Days in Tuscany" fits easily into this category. Wonderfully written and easy to read with its soft descriptive prose; the words transport you from your comfortable sofa to a magnificent area of Italy that is renowned for its people and its unique landscape. The book follows two new arrivals to the Tuscan region of Italy and tells of their interactions with the local residents; people who soon become part of their daily routine. Each chapter is a small vignette describing a situation (usually with a local personage), a trip and, above all, food; in fact all chapters get around to the discussion of, or preparation of food. Most chapters end with a recipe for the main dish that was described in the chapter involved. All in all, a warm, quiet and beautifully descriptive short book about an area of the world that all of us would probably love to visit at least once in our lifetime. Highly recommended.

By the time I was halfway through *A Thousand Days in Tuscany* by Marlena de Blasi, I wanted to get up at six each morning and bake the day's bread with rosemary and olive oil. I wanted to walk up a hill and go to breakfast at a local bar and chat with the duke, a local man who took Marlena and her husband under his wing and showed them what life in the Tuscan village where they settled for a thousand days was really like. Reading this book was a wonderful experience for me as I followed this couple through their days of integrating into the life, lives and especially the foods, wines and cooking of this area of Italy. Harvesting grapes for wine, picking olives and chestnuts are all part of a way of life that hasn't changed for centuries in this part of the world, and de Blasi does an excellent job of taking us in our armchairs into that world. The natural romance of the area just

adds to the romantic relationship that de Blasi and her husband have, and as the reader I experienced every lovely minute of their time in Tuscany. The only thing I would have liked in addition to de Blasi's lyrical writing was a collection of photos from her time there, but maybe the imagination does a better job.

If you can, read Marlena De Blasi's earlier book "A Thousand Days in Venice" before reading this one. I was glad I knew about De Blasi's life in the U.S. and Venice, and how she met and married her "Stranger" as she calls her Venetian husband Fernando. Fernando has a tendency to melancholy and melodrama. He feels trapped by his past of unhappiness and his stifling job in a bank. Marlena is horrified when he comes home and announces that he has quit his secure, life-long job. She's a city girl, in love with Venice, and he has decided to move to a rural Tuscan village. But Marlena is also adaptable and adventurous, and makes the most of the beautiful Tuscan countryside, amazing food experiences (she is a former chef and food writer), and people who embrace her and make her feel welcome. I expected a book like "Under the Tuscan Sun", where the writer has buckets of money and views the locals as humorous bumpkins and overpriced servants, but De Blasi becomes close to the natives of her new home and learns about the privations of their past and the sorrows of their present (the subtitle of the book is "A Bittersweet Adventure"). She falls in love with the "Duke", who was born in the building her new apartment is in and who remembers the hunger of the war years. He takes the younger couple under his wing and teaches them the lessons that go with the food De Blasi loves: during the hungry periods, chestnuts were all the Tuscans had to eat. They ground the shells for coffee, and made a paste of the nutmeats and water, and baked it into cakes. There was no olive oil, honey, or cream to make it sumptuous. Soldiers returning to their home were not feted by their families with the roasting of the fatted calf, but with starvation. They ate the grass. Marlena reveals that money is tight for her and Fernando, \$75.00 per week must cover everything. There is worry in the winter as the woodpile is depleted too quickly, and the bread is set to rise under the bedcovers, the only warm place in the house! They harvest grapes and olives with their new friends, learn to prepare wild boar, and learn to love the land. If you love food and travel, read this book!

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