

THE SECRET ITALIAN MAP OF BRITAIN

Longing for real Italian food? Find out where Britain's cognoscenti go to satisfy their cravings – from the perfect bowl of pasta to the most authentic gelato

Words TONY NAYLOR Photographs ROMAS FOORD



Lorne Blyth at Sprio & Co, Edinburgh

BEST ITALIAN CAFFÈ

SPRIO & CO, EDINBURGH

Walking into Sprio & Co is like walking into a caffè-bar in Italy. It's owned and run by an Italian couple and a Scot. They listen to Italian radio and you can pick up *La Repubblica* or *Corriere della Sera* there. There is homemade soup, pannini and a little display area where they sell pasta flour, olive oil, really nice Italian orange juices and lovely biscotti and cantuccini, the little almond biscuits.

But for me it's the great coffee that's the draw. They use Bei & Nannini coffee from Lucca in Tuscany. In Sprio & Co, as in Italy, cappuccino is served at a drinkable temperature with a glass of water as standard. In certain high street coffee chains you get this massive, boiling hot, wishy-washy milk drink, which you have to leave for 20 minutes until it cools down. That's not part of Italian coffee culture. If somebody asks you for a coffee, you know you're not going to be spending hours with them. You go, stand at the bar, have a coffee and a quick chat, and off you go. In Italy the rule is cappuccino before lunch and then just little espressos after. Capuccino £1.70.

■ Sprio & Co, 37 St Stephen Street, Edinburgh (0131 226 7533)

RECOMMENDED BY LORNE BLYTH

Inspired by her love of all things Italian, Lorne set up Flavours Holidays to offer bespoke regional Italian cookery courses. Ten years on, the company has a network of classes running across Italy, held in private villas.

● For more information on Italian food, go to bbc.co.uk/food