

versione italiana

You grew up in Venice and graduated from Ca' Foscari with an interesting emphasis. Can you please tell us about your thesis and the process of your research?

I graduated in Sustainability and Business Design, and in Linguistics and Humanities, which means I wrote two theses, one on “Ecology and Urbanization of the Lagoon of Venice”, and the other on “Business During Times of Unprecedented Change”. So, my emphasis is on Venice and on change!

During my studies, I was particularly interested in the languages spoken in Venice in the past: Venet, Latin and Ancient Greek. I spent years poring over ancient maps of the Lagoon: What started as thesis covering Lagoon terminology, soon included examples of how the Lagoon was salvaged and shaped by Venetian engineers during critical times in the past. And in particular, I loved exploring how Venetians mastered the art of living self-sufficiently in our Lagoon, enriching food with delicious herbs and spices.

The seeds for your platform started with your grandmother, Lina. Why did you and Lina decide that the culinary heritage of Venice would be relevant to people today?

Lina opened her first restaurant in Venice in 1945, and couldn't help noticing how the food offered to tourists in Venice was different from the food eaten in the part of the Lagoon where she grew up, near Treporti. People went foraging for herbs in spring, and even used herbs and wild fruit in their staple dishes in winter!

I recognized the naturally flavored dishes Lina cooked for me in many historical recipes at Venetian libraries. I found myself distracted by recipes way too often! This was the food eaten in pre-industrial times, and it did serve a purpose: Food = health = beauty. Food was considered medicine in the Venice of the past, so we thought that during our current changing, fast-paced and unsure times, adding healthy and delicious touches to food might be useful.

We also did a few experiments, growing Lagoon herbs in the garden and using them to flavor food. Once, a summer vegetable soup made from turmeric, chili, macis blossoms, fresh laurel leaves, garden mint and parsley helped me recover almost immediately from a rather bad summer flu. We love trying out ancient recipes using herbs and spices such as fenugreek, liquorice root, cardamom and star anise, and we did see wonderful results.



How has La Venessiana evolved from the original premise when you started the platform 4 years ago?

When we started La Venessiana in June 2015, we envisaged a Venice journal explaining the secret Venice, her gardens and garden food, and the work of artisans and artists in town. And of course, we wanted to show the little known islands of this beautiful Lagoon!

Our readers soon encouraged me to write more posts on historical recipes. These posts received the most views right from the start. This is how our niche developed, going beyond just food blogging to sharing recipes so surprisingly un-Venetian at first sight, because they use herbs, blossoms and spices in unusual combinations.

For example, our recipes include Lagoon herbs and blossoms such as enula marina, sea porcelain, minutina, portulak, critmo marittimo, artemisia, lilac blossoms, elderflowers, and flowering currants. We also share recipes and background stories of seasonal ancestral food, such as orange mint-cherry cake with calendula frosting, pomegranate-artemisia butter, white lilac mousse, spring violet tangerine pancakes, or grappa-lilac cake. We also recovered the original recipe for

torta greca, a cake popular in the 13th century in Venice.

People kept asking us to share more background stories of these recipes, and we thought that creating online classes was an ideal format to tell the story of Venice and her food differently, and comprehensively.



Your original online class on Venetian Heritage is a testament to your deep knowledge and love of Venice. The multi-media course is redolent in meaningful history and wonderful anecdotes. Can you please tell us what the course offers that cannot be found anywhere else?

Our online classes share original Venetian recipes and food stories of the Lagoon, herbs and spices for the first time in English! The recipes we share were mostly written in Latin and Greek between the 13th - 18th century, so there's a language barrier you must overcome to read them. In our online classes, we want to create a new home for forgotten Venetian recipes from otherwise overlooked books, so people can see and taste them! While historical documents are well researched, Venetian food culture isn't. So we are doing critical pioneering work, distilling recipes and food stories from books in libraries such as San Francesco della Vigna and the library of the San Zaccaria monastery, of which Lina is the guardian.



It is not only the edible treasures that you explore but you have also published a definitive guide to Carnevale and an extensive garden guide. Can you share with us what additional subjects you will be exploring in your e-courses beyond the culinary series?

After finishing the culinary series dedicated to ancestral food and seasonal herbs and spices, we are planning to publish online classes on self-sufficient gardening in the Lagoon and unknown Lagoon islands. In 2020, we plan to publish a class dedicated to historical Venetian beauty products and perfumery. We are also working on a heritage class for responsible travelers, and language classes.



I was fascinated when you told me that your community of readers is comprised of both visitors to Venice and Venetians. What has been the reaction to your work?

The reaction I received in Venice was very mixed at first! Especially my family, with the exception of Lina who supported this project right from the start, was rather skeptical that anyone could be interested in Venetian history and cuisine, told so very differently. By now, they want me to include their own ideas, businesses, and recipes! And quite a number of people from my neighborhood ask us to share their shops and restaurants in the blog, e-guides and online classes.

I write the blog and online classes in English to reach as many people as possible, which draws readers from the US, Great Britain, Canada, and Australia. We also have many friends from France, Spain, Greece and Austria, who comment on the blog, or write to me privately, asking questions on Venice and Venetian food.

Our historical recipes, food guides, Lagoon stories and gift guides dedicated to promoting specialty food, books, and artisan work receive most page views amongst the visitors to Venice, and the Venetians.



You've expressed a unique idea to create a Clear Roadmap using the ESG approach to understanding the issues facing Venice and sustainable solutions. Can you explain to us how this would work?

During the past five years, I noticed that the international press Venice gets is mostly about cruise ships, high tides and the number of inhabitants decreasing.

In my opinion, covering downsides and risks *only* isn't balanced and won't support Venice and the Venetians in the long run. So, what about sharing opportunities and ideas for creating a revitalized and lively city? If we really want to position Venice as viable city with a future, we need to be aware of positive developments in Venice as well. For there is progress made every single day, perhaps on a much smaller scale, but there is! In order to show opportunities *and* risks put in perspective, we need an accountable reporting system to get started, gauging both progress and setbacks towards reaching our aims.

Call it a dashboard showing where Venice stands. And from there, we can set out to develop a balanced and comprehensive masterplan and roadmap to transform the city in three ways: Economy, environment, and society.

We need masterplans able to cover *and* communicate these multidisciplinary steps that will make

Venice fit for life in the 21st century. Historical cities like Venice may evolve as well, in my opinion: They may act as role models for post-industrial lifestyle, embracing the benefits of digitalized life while showing its boundaries at the same time.

Large international banks use dashboard models such as the ESG System, to assess and support the sustainability aspects of corporate clients. These are models covering and communicating complex issues in a succinct and clear way, and they could function as roadmap to implement the necessary and interdependent steps Venice needs to turn into that *humane city*: A city teaching balanced lifestyle and how to gain security in unstable times are the important topics in life. This is the essence of Venice in a nutshell, and the reason why we have this unique city in our lives.



There is worldwide concern for Venice. We see the struggles but often feel helpless to know how to make a difference. What advice would you give to people who want to support Venice?

As a visitor, there's one really important impact you can make: Shop at the small *botteghe* at the Rialto Market and in artisan stores in Venice, helping them get through these times of transition, while enjoying quality products only Venice can offer. It's these Venetians, the artisans and shop owners in the neighborhood who will have to, and want to, accomplish the next steps in positioning Venice as expert in arts and crafts, and as role model for post-modern society.

The next 5-10 years will be decisive to the survival of Venice because she must take the opportunity to own her space while playing out all her strengths. You will see the outcome of this process by the year 2025.

[la Venessiana](#)

[Venetian Heritage Course](#)

[Spring Flavors and Ancestral Food of the Lagoon](#)

[Carnival in Venice e-guide](#)

[The Venetian Christmas Bakery](#)