Eating in Naples

Naples has raw, high-octane energy; it’s a place of soul-stirring street life and unexpected, inimitable elegance. It’s also one of Italy’s epicurean heavyweights. Read on to find its best pizza, pasta and espresso.

50 Kalò  PIZZA ₤
(50kalò.it; Piazza Sannazzaro 39)
That this trendy pizzeria’s name roughly translates as ‘good dough’ in Neapolitan is no coincidence. At the helm is third-generation pizzaiolo Ciro Salvo, whose obsessive research into Naples’ most famous edible translates into wonderfully light, perfectly charred wood-fired pizzas, with ingredients sourced from local and artisanal producers.

Café Gambrinus  CAFÉ ₤
(grancaffegambrinus.com; Via Chiaia 1–2)
Naples’ oldest, most venerable café serves superlative Neapolitan coffee under flouncy chandeliers. Oscar Wilde knocked back a few here, and Mussolini had some rooms shut to keep out left-wing intellectuals. Sit-down prices are steep, but the aperitivo nibbles are decent, and sipping a spritz or a cioccolata calda (hot chocolate) in its Belle Époque rooms is something worth savouring.

Concettina Ai Tre Santi  PIZZA ₤
(pizzeriaoliva.it; Via Arenella della Sanità 7)
Head in by noon (or 7.30pm at dinner) to avoid a long wait at this pizzeria. The menu is an index of fastidiously sourced artisanal ingredients, used to top pizzaiolo Ciro Oliva’s flawless wood-fired bases. Traditional Neapolitan pizza aside, you’ll also find creative seasonal options.

Da Ettore  NEAPOLITAN ₤
(Via Gennaro Serra 39)
This homely, eight-table trattoria has an epic reputation. Scan the walls for famous fans like comedy great Totò, and a framed passage from crime writer Massimo Siviero, who mentions Ettore in one of his tales. The solid regional cooking includes one of the best spaghetti alle vongole in town.

Gay-Odin  CHOCOLATIER ₤
(gay-odin.it; Via Benedetto Croce 61)
Not so much a chocolatier as an institution, Gay-Odin concocts some of the city’s finest cocoa creations, including Neapolitan chocolate ‘cozze’ (mussels). For a punch to the palate, try the chocolate-coated coffee beans or the fiery pepperoncino-ciocolato (chilli-chocolate) combo. This branch also sells Gay-Odin’s sublime ice cream; the non-sorbet flavours are especially good.

Il Gelato Mennella  GELATO ₤ ₤
(pasticceriamennella.it; Via Toledo 110)
Could it be ingredients such as prized Campanian nocciola (hazelnuts) from Giffoni, and Sicilian pistachios from Bronte? Perhaps it’s the absence of artificial nasties? Whatever the secret, Mennella scoops out smashing gelato, bursting with real, vivid flavours and velvety texture. The waffle cones are made fresh on-site.

L’Ebbrezza di Noè  ITALIAN ₤ ₤
(lebbrezzadinoe.com; Vico Vetroiera 9)
A wine shop by day, ‘Noah’s Drunkenness’ transforms into an intimate culinary hot spot by night. Slip in for vino at the bar, or settle into one of the bottle-lined dining rooms to sample market-driven dishes such as paccheri fritti (fried pasta stuffed with aubergine and served with fresh basil and a rich tomato sauce).

Starita a Materdei  PIZZA ₤ ₤
(pizzeriastarita.it; Via Materdei 28)
The giant fork and ladle hanging on the wall at this historic pizzeria were used by Sophia Loren in L’Oro di Napoli, and the kitchen made the pizze fritte sold by the actress in the film. Among its 60-plus pizza varieties, our preference is still for the classic marinara.

Ventimetriquadri  CAFÉ ₤
(facebook.com/ventimetriquadri. specialitycoffee; Via Bernini 64a)
What was an old printing shop is now the city’s first speciality coffee café. The chances are you’ll find owner Vincenzo Fioretto behind the counter, carefully preparing your brew from seven single origins or the house blend.

Sfogliatella Mary  PASTRIES ₤
(facebook.com/laufogliatellamaryofficial)
At the Via Toledo entrance to Galleria Umberto I, this tiny takeaway vendor is widely considered queen of sfogliatella pastries. Usually still warm from the oven, they’re available in riccia (flo-style pastry) and frolla (shortcrust pastry) forms, both defined by a perfect balance of textures and flavours.

La Pignasecca is one of the best places to soak up the city’s street life. Located in the Montesanto district, it’s a veritable larder for locals. Join the hunt for fresh pasta, fish, fruit and vegetables, and prosciutto and saliscia (sausages). For handmade provola (provolone), hit cult-status deli Al Monti Lattari (Via Pignasecca 10).

Top tip
Sleeping

The Church
Best for intimacy
(thewhitechurch.it)
On the fourth floor of a 16th-century palazzo, this B&B is decorated with contemporary Neapolitan photography and cleverly upcycled objects, such as coffee percolator turned plant pots. Five minimal rooms are equally whimsical. The two top-floor rooms are the most coveted, and one comes with a striking in-room shower and private terrace.

Hotel San Francesco al Monte
Best for a saintly retreat
(sanfrancescoalmonte.it)
Occupying an old monastery, this hotel is magnificent. The monks’ cells have become elegant rooms, the ancient cloisters house an open-air bar, and the barrel-vaulted corridors are lined with contemporary art by Robert Rauschenberg and Hermann Nitsch. Capping it all is a lofty outdoor swimming pool with views of Capri and Vesuvius.

La Ciliegina Lifestyle Hotel
Best for style-hounds
(cilieginalifestylehotel.it)
Spacious white rooms in this contemporary hotel are splashed with blue and red accents, and each has top-of-the-range Hästens beds and marble bathrooms with water-jet showers. Take breakfast in bed, or on the rooftop terrace, which has sunbeds, a hot tub and a view of Vesuvius. In-room iPads are a nice touch.

FURTHER READING
For more on the city, pick up our Naples, Pompeii & Amalfi Coast guidebook (£13.99) or download a free city guide from our Guides app.