

Martha's Italy Travel Blog

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A Taste of Tuscany - Florence's Mercato Centrale

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Post and photo of the Conti family with Monica Hildebrand (center), submitted by Monica Hildebrand, An American Writer Living in Florence. Click on the photo to see it larger.

Italy is a feast for all the senses. To truly experience the culinary delights of Florence, make sure to visit one of the more notable Florence markets, the *Mercato Centrale San Lorenzo*. It is located in the shadow of the church of San Lorenzo, who is the Catholic patron saint of cooks.

This charming market is a haven for the new and experienced food aficionado. It is the largest of Florence's produce markets and sells just about every kind of fresh food including fish, cheese, fine fruits, vegetables and much, much more.

While visiting the Mercato Centrale, I had the pleasure of stopping by the Conti booth. Owned by Stefano and Grazia Conti, these delightful Florentines offer some of the best fresh and preserved food products from Tuscany. Together with their children Manuel and Stella, the family has more than 60 years experience of providing tourists and locals alike the best of Tuscany flavors. In 1900, Giuseppe Conti opened the family's store on Via Nazionale and in 1929 the family moved the store inside Mercato Centrale.

Conti's products include seasonal fruits and vegetables that are vividly displayed in the front of the booth, fresh and dried porcini mushrooms, preserved truffles, organic honey, pasta, jams and dried spices, to name just a few.

To the delight of my palate, I had the opportunity to sample a wide array of Tuscan olive oils, including the Conti family's own special oil. *Delizioso!* In addition, I sampled the most incredible balsamic vinegars that were aged for 6, 12 and 30 years. Once you have sampled balsamic vinegars such as these you will be hard pressed to ever use the store-bought variety again! For more than two hours, I experienced a cultural excursion that tempted my taste buds and showed me a taste of Tuscany that I will long remember.

The Conti family is friendly, helpful and will surely make your visit to Florence's Mercato Centrale very memorable. American tourists also will soon have the opportunity to experience all the Conti family has to offer with the opening of its premiere store in San Francisco, California, later this year. Visit [Tuscany Flavors](#) for more information.

Buon appetito!