



How to eat your way through Emilia Romagna



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Foodies, rejoice. Italy's [Emilia Romagna](#) region is your version of heaven. A journey along the Via Emilia, an old Roman Road dating back to 187 BC, is a veritable cornucopia of indigenous products, from Parmigiano Reggiano to Prosciutto di Parma and Pancetta Piacentina to the famed balsamic vinegars of Modena and Reggio Emilia. The region produces dozens of comestibles labeled with the coveted Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) label, including olive oils from Brisighella, garlic from the Ferrara area and Patata di Bologna taters. Let's sample.

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The Big Cheese:

Museo del Parmigiano Reggiano in [Soragna](#) is located inside an old dairy. It melds together the history and traditions of the so-called King of Cheeses. Learn all about the centuries-old cheese industry, the Consortium of Parmigiano-Reggiano which regulates it and the making of Parmigiano Reggiano itself.



Photo courtesy of Laura Powell

If your desire is to watch cheese being made, the Consortium offers opportunities to visit official Parmigiano Reggiano Dairy Farms. Learn about everything from the strict regulations regarding the raising and feeding of cows (Emilia Romagna cows *are* happy cows) to the process of churning milk into cheese to the aging and inspection processes that make Parmigiano Reggiano the real wheel.

Parma, please:

You've likely heard of Parma ham, but don't know about the secrets of its success. Well, the silence of the hams is no more once you've been to the Museum of Prosciutto and Cured Meat Products of Parma. Note that it's cased within a former cattle market in the town of Langhirano.



Photo courtesy of Laura Powell

For salami specifics, head to Felino Castle, an ancient stronghold dating back to 890. The Felino Salame Museum offers a meaty tour, beginning with historical accounts of the burg and the product that has become its symbol. The museum even holds the first written document in which the word "salami" appears.

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Balsamic balms:



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Discover how balsamic vinegar is made at a B&B&B. Acetaia Bonini is a bed, breakfast and balsamic haven on the outskirts of Modena. A visit includes an explanation of the process, what makes traditional Modena balsamic authentic, and how the type of wood used for each barrel influences flavor. After a tasting, there's the option of staying overnight in an ultra-modern room located in the same building as the vinegar lab.

Ice cream for gelato:



Photo courtesy of Laura Powell

Gelato is *not* ice cream. You'll learn that fact and more at Gelato University in Bologna. Would-be gelato artisans can learn how to make the sweet stuff on the campus of the Carpigiani company (which manufactures gelato-making equipment). Choose from courses ranging from one hour to half a day. Aside from making a flavor of your choice, taste as much as you'd like at the onsite gelateria and scoop up some history at Carpigiani's Gelato Museum.