

OUR JOURNEY BEGINS WITH US

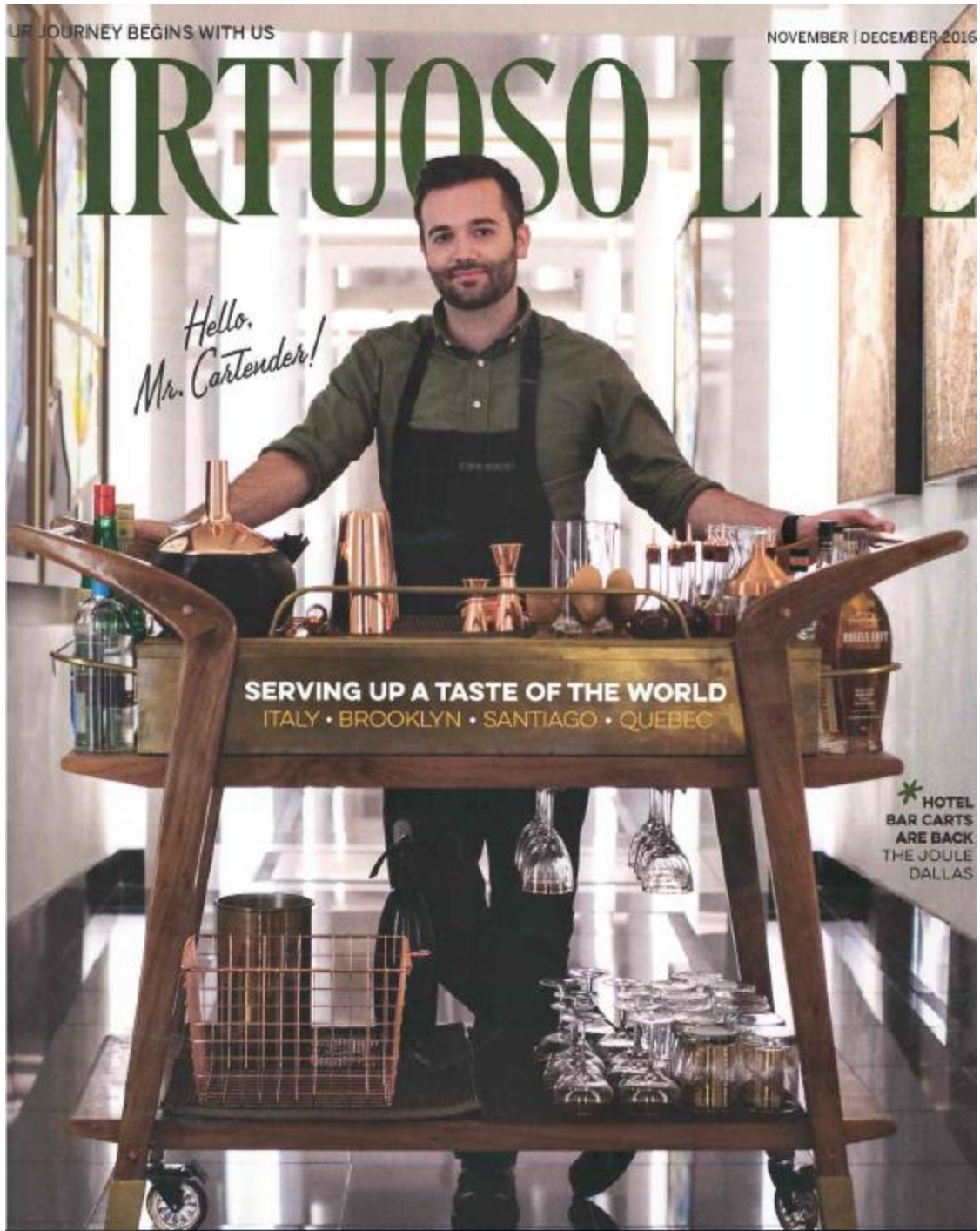
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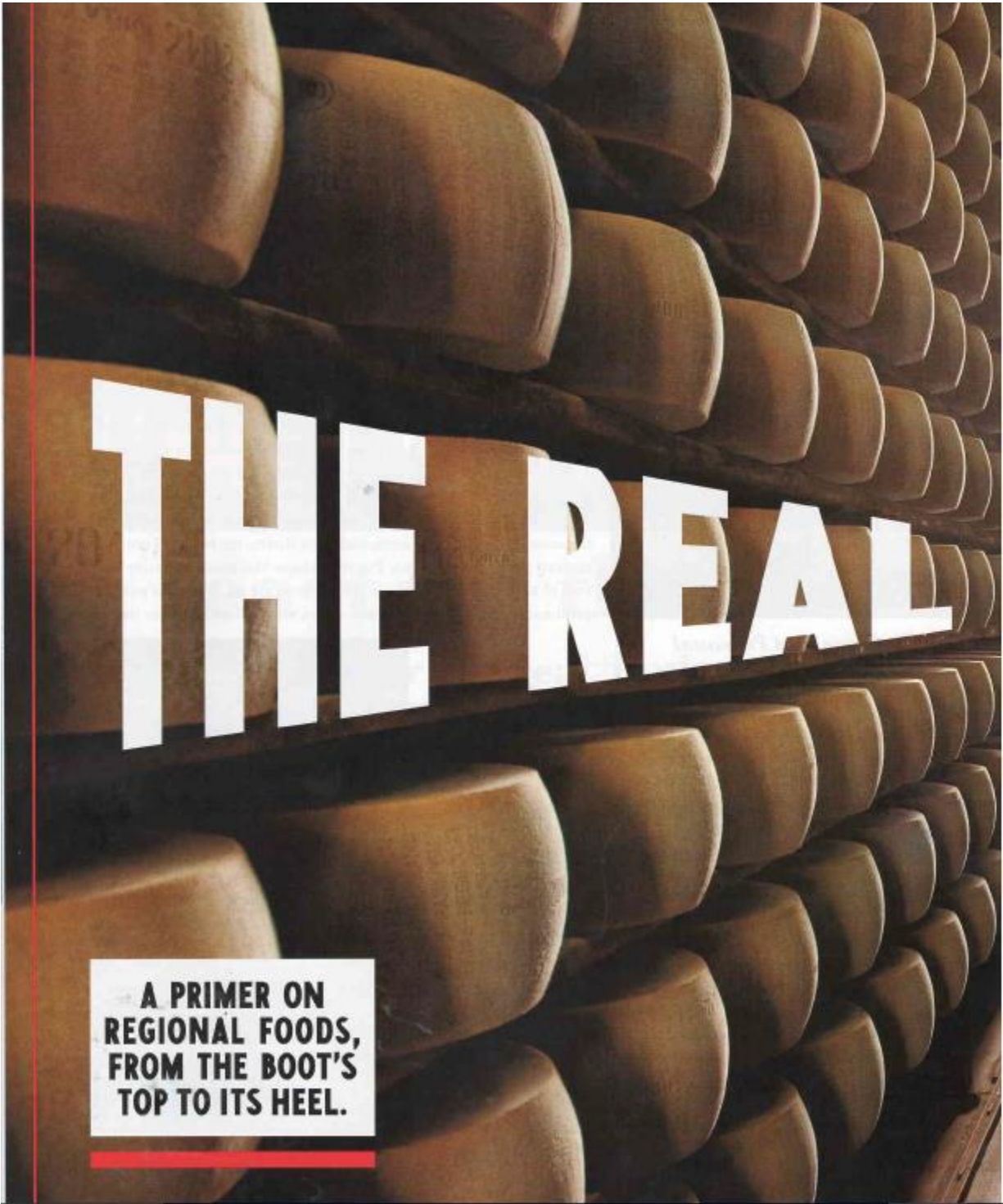
# VIRTUOSO LIFE

*Hello,  
Mr. Cartender!*

**SERVING UP A TASTE OF THE WORLD**  
ITALY • BROOKLYN • SANTIAGO • QUEBEC

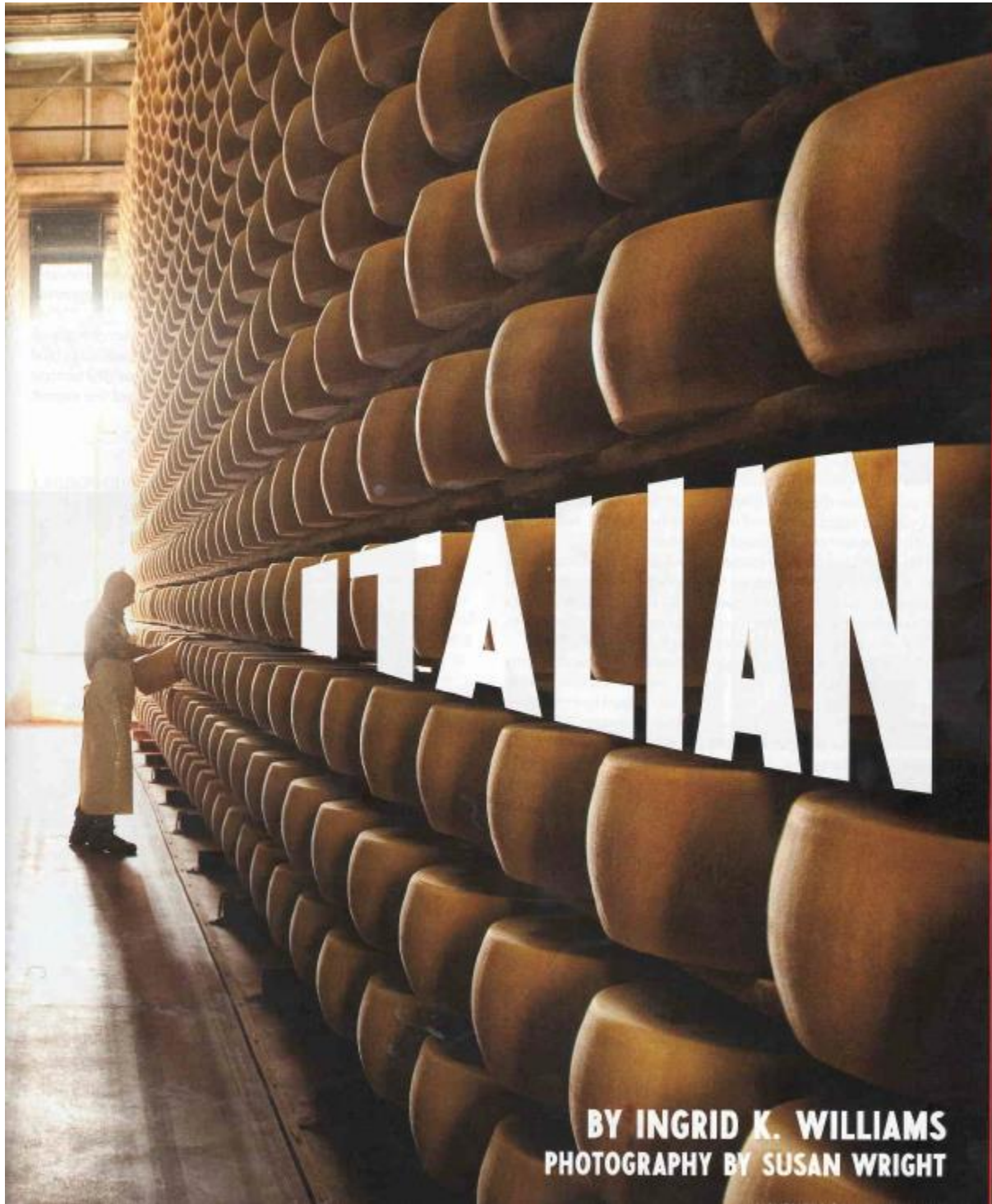
 **HOTEL  
BAR CARTS  
ARE BACK**  
THE JOULE  
DALLAS





# THE REAL

**A PRIMER ON  
REGIONAL FOODS,  
FROM THE BOOT'S  
TOP TO ITS HEEL.**



# ITALIAN

BY INGRID K. WILLIAMS  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SUSAN WRIGHT

## I KNEW WHAT WAS COMING

before the waiter opened his mouth to speak. At the table next to mine in a small osteria on the Italian Riviera, a Dutch family had just tried to order a favorite Italian dish for their young son: spaghetti Bolognese.

“*Signori, no,*” the waiter implored, his hands pressed together as in prayer. “*Siete in Liguria!*”

You’re in Liguria!

Everyone got the message: In Italy, you eat what’s local. And in Liguria, a crescent-shaped province hugging the Mediterranean, that means bright-green pesto, lemon-doused anchovies, or fresh mussels pulled from the sea. Try ordering anything “Bolognese” here and you just might be offered directions to Bologna, mere hours away in the neighboring region of Emilia-Romagna.

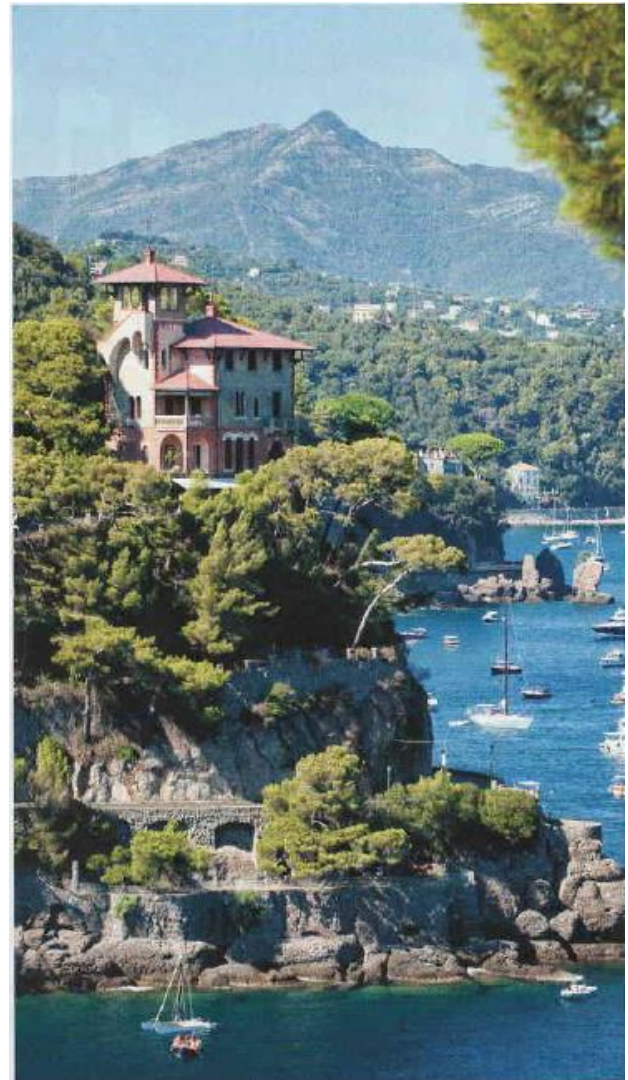
This scene illustrates the extent to which culinary differences exist across Italy. The country may be famous for its pizza and pasta, its espresso and gelato and tiramisù, but with 20 regions spanning a vast area from the snowcapped Alps to the sunbaked southern heel, Italy is home to a range of cuisines as diverse as its geography.

What’s on the menu can vary greatly from north to south, from province to province, even from town to neighboring town. These regional traditions evolved over centuries, shaped by everything from the terrain to politics to the economic situation. For proof, look at the more prosperous north, where rich dishes with butter and meat are typical. In the sunny but disadvantaged south, however, tomatoes and eggplants, often grown in a backyard garden, are common staples. The only constants that can be traced across the Italian peninsula are the simplicity of the recipes and the ingenuity of the cooks, who transform leftover pork bits into tasty cured sausages or turn nothing but water and flour into an endless variety of pasta shapes.

Today, vacationing Italians make a point to seek out the *prodotto tipico* (typical local product), whether that happens to be risotto in Milan or paper-thin slices of buttery lardo in the Tuscan hamlet of Colonnata. The Slow Food movement, a grassroots organization founded in the Piedmont region, has spent nearly 30 years working to spotlight hyperlocal culinary specialties, helping travelers discover deep-seated traditions instead of contributing to the globalization of gastronomy. Although an unusual, hand-pressed chickpea pasta might cost more than a hamburger, the approach has caught

on. In Italy, the annual Slow Food guide, *Osterie d’Italia*, has become Italians’ go-to guidebook, and restaurants included among the carefully chosen listings proudly display the Slow Food seal of approval: a sticker depicting a snail.

So instead of traveling to Italy for “Italian food” – there’s really no such thing, anyway – do as the Italians do and focus on finding (and tasting) what’s regional, local, and *tipico*. From Veneto in the north to Sicily in the south, here are six regions’ specialties to get you started.





GASTRONOMIC GOLD

# EMILIA-ROMAGNA



LOOK FOR:

tortellini al brodo, tagliatelle al ragù Bolognese

Even those who have never heard of the wealthy Emilia-Romagna region are likely well acquainted with at least one of its celebrated products. Perhaps it's Parma's famous Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese or its prosciutto di Parma (sometimes called Parma ham). Maybe it's Modena's *aceto balsamico* (the pinnacle of balsamic vinegars). Or Bologna's mortadella sausage (not to be confused with deli-counter baloney).

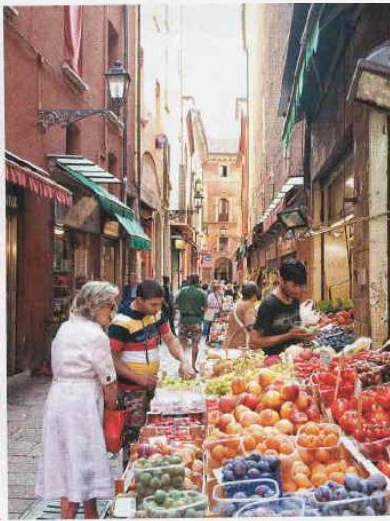
Thanks to Italian and EU laws that regulate and protect the country's finest foodstuffs, it's possible to purchase many authentic, made-in-Emilia-Romagna products outside Italy. (Look

for the label marked DOP, or *denominazione di origine protetta*.) But there are some things you just can't ship, such as Bolognese *ragù*. The dish that inspired spaghetti Bolognese hails from Bologna, where the rich, meaty sauce is served not with boxed spaghetti but atop soft ribbons of fresh tagliatelle, typically made by hand with egg yolks that impart a sunny yellow hue. The same hand-kneaded dough is also rolled, stuffed, and twisted to make plump tortellini whose fillings – mortadella, prosciutto, pork, veal – reflect the richness and heartiness of the region and its cuisine.

## TIP

"In Bologna, visit the recently opened **Sfoglia Rina** on Via Castiglione. They sell fresh pasta but also have a large restaurant devoted to their incredible pasta dishes. Visit early – they're only open for lunch."

– Jane Hedge,  
Virtuoso travel advisor,  
Bologna, Italy



From left: Tortellini al brodo at Modena's Hosteria Giusti, market bounty in Modena, and Ristorante Diana's tagliatelle al ragù Bolognese.

### RESTAURANTS

- Ristorante Diana, Bologna
- Hosteria Giusti, Modena
- Osteria Francescana, Modena\*

\*Osteria Francescana topped this year's prestigious "World's 50 Best Restaurants" list.