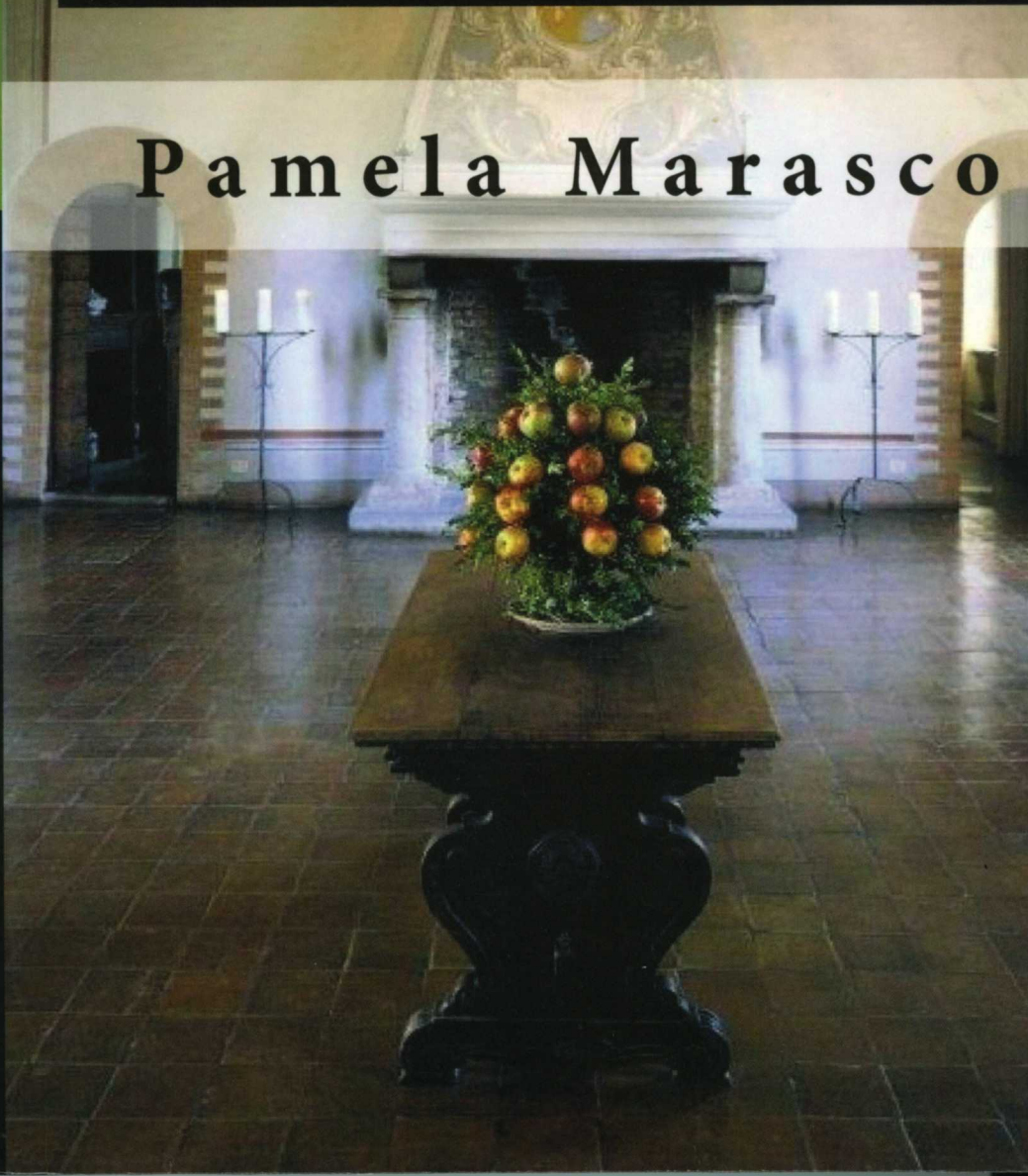


# *Seeing and Savoring Italy*

P a m e l a M a r a s c o



## Chapter 34 A Country House in the Bolognese Hills

*Wanted . . . a charming bed and breakfast among the windswept hills south of Bologna with a most gracious host who makes her guests feel as if she has been waiting for them to arrive and welcome them home.*

Finding a place like the one described above is what dreaming of Italy is all about. For me that dream was realized in a country house in the Bolognese hills that I could enjoy with my eyes wide open. Each year as I travel in Italy with my Italian family and friends, I realize that place matters. Not just the places you visit in the guide books but the places of the heart where the Who and Where of travel is just as important as what you see. So on my way from Milano to Tuscany on the A1 Autostrada, passing through Bologna I drive a little further south to the town of Monzuno to spend the night at one of my all time favorite places to stay in Italy, the Lodole Country House.

Alice, (pronounced Al-ee-che in Italian) the owner, is a true Renaissance woman. A master of the art of hospitality she deftly combines traditional Italian charm with contemporary Italian design to create a sanctuary of rest and relaxation in the Bolognese hills. I met Alice midway through my taste travels in Italy when I was looking to experience a bed and breakfast in the countryside near Bologna. My good fortune led to me Lodole. Alice and Daniele bought the property when it was little more than a vision and a ruin and transformed it into a destination where they have realized their dream of creating an informal yet exclusive country house with a peaceful, relaxed



atmosphere. Located among the endless hills and valleys of the northern foot of the Bolognese Appennines, Lodole Country House is named after the lodole, a small falcon like bird (*lodolaio* in Italian) who inhabits the windswept hills of the region. The atmosphere and accommodations at this Italian Bed and Breakfast are exceptional. The decor is a modern interpretation of provincial Italian country with a decor that is antique chic. You get a sense of the timeless beauty of artisan Italian furniture and design but all fresh, new and updated. No musty rooms full of old furniture or outdated plumbing. The beds are comfortable, the showers invigorating, the rooms restful and there is a wonderful well kept pool on a hill that has a panoramic view of the countryside. At night our taste travelers sat on a loggia that overlooked the course of the *Il Molino del Pero* Golf Club and listened to music wafting over the hills from the clubhouse. Each room is named after a celestial manifestation; *Alba*, *Sole*, *Cielo*, *Stelle*, *Tramonto* and *Luna* (Dawn, Sun, Sky, Star, Dusk and Moon). I have always stayed in *la camera Tramanto*, a double room at the top of the stairs and have been most comfortable, sleeping well and waking up to a breakfast that is never lacking. The assortment of meats, cheeses, tarts, cereals and honey was *fantastici*. Alice also makes a mean cappuccino, flavorful and frothy. It is one of the best I have had in Italy and her semolina breakfast cake is phenomenal.

At the Lodole Country House everything is done with great care and attention including planning activities in and around Lodole. You can enjoy golf (one of Italy's most challenging courses is down the road), go mountain biking, horseback riding, visit archeological sites and museums, sample local Emilian farm products or just sit by the

stunning pool overlooking the valley below. One afternoon Alice and I were discussing a trip to the Luigi Fontini Celtic Etruscan museum in nearby Monterenzio when she invited me to her house across the pavement from where we were staying. Yes, she is a hands on host, never far from the wants and needs of her guests. From the outside the house is the quintessential rustic Italian farmhouse I have been coveting for years. Each stone and tile incorporates centuries of tradition and the timeless character of Italy. From the inside it was like walking into the pages of the Italian version of House Beautiful. The kitchen was contemporary Italian and exquisite, the living space had a massive mid century modern Eames style fireplace that was the center of the room together with a frosted retractable section of floor that opened to a eight person whirlpool facing a wall with a flat panel TV. There was a room with a sauna and a second floor with a surrounding iron balcony. The modern art on the walls was exceptional especially a stylized map of the world with countries whose leaders were women highlighted in dots of red. But perhaps the most unique and impressive work of art hidden behind the closed doors of this *casa colonnica* was a glossy red sculpture of a woman's body hanging on a crucifix suspended from the wall on the balcony. It was large and a definite focal point in the room. In some ways it represents all the strong and persistent women I have met in Italy like Alice. The traditions of Italy are reinvented and given new life by the entrepreneurial spirit and love of Italy they all share.

One year when I was in Italy in March I noticed bouquets of tiny yellow mimosa and banners in every city with the words *festà delle donne* (festival of women). It was March 8<sup>th</sup>, Women's Day, and Italy