



## Raphael' s Effortless Grace

### *The Owl*

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Dear Inquiring Traveler,

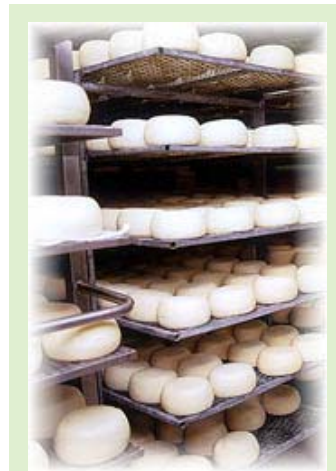
Even popes have weaknesses. Among them, Clement XIV, otherwise praised as a virtuous man and perfect example of integrity, was fond of a local cheese produced in Raphael's hometown, the Casciotta d'Urbino—a sweet, yet slightly acidic cheese made from sheep and cow milk that has received a PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) classification from the European Commission.

But somebody much more famous than Pope Clement XIV took action to secure a steady supply of Casciotta. Read on to find out more.

Regards,

*Catherine Lapp*

Editor, *The Owl*



*Served with pasta, salad  
or just by itself, the  
Casciotta d'Urbino is  
simply delicious.*

Photo courtesy of  
[www.casciottadiurbino.it](http://www.casciottadiurbino.it).

## A Grand Master and the Unsung Influence of his Origins (part 2)

by Duncan Campbell

Urbino crept into Raphael's introductions to both Florence and Rome, in the former case through a letter from the Duchess of Urbino to a senior-ranking city official. During the four years sometimes known as his Florentine period, Raphael continued to develop his own style while also assimilating the influence of the art around him, none more so than the work of Leonardo da Vinci. The evolution of his relationship with the other grand master of the time, Michelangelo, had to wait until his move to Rome in 1508, and it was there that he produced the works of renown that still seduce visitors at the Vatican.

## Rome and Michelangelo

Raphael's move to Rome came as a result of a direct request from Pope Julius II. There are claims that the invitation was made at the suggestion of architect Donato Bramante, who also hailed from the Urbino area and was himself distantly related to Raphael. Bramante had recently been commissioned to rebuild St. Peter's basilica, and upon his death in 1514, Raphael was named architect of the new St. Peter's.

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During his time in Rome, it was Raphael rather than Michaelangelo who came to be regarded at the time as "the pope's painter." This, along with Raphael's gift for incorporating other influences into his style, did not sit well with Michelangelo, and his rancor for and competitiveness with his fellow artist continued well after Raphael was gone. In 1541, more than 20 years after Raphael's death, he was still complaining that "everything he knew about art he got from me."

Ironically, Michelangelo himself also had a rather curious relationship with Raphael's birthplace, Urbino. So taken was he with its Casciotta d'Urbino, a cheese made from sheep and cow milk, that he bought land in the area and installed one of his servants there to ensure a constant supply.

## Truffle Paradise

Raphael's birthplace, Urbino, is nestled in the heart of the Italian region of the Marche. Located in central Italy, between the Adriatic Sea and the high Apennine mountains, the Marche is a treasure chest rich in history, nature, art, folklore, and culinary traditions—most of it off the beaten track for tourists.

The Marche is a paradise for truffle lovers. There are numerous species of *tartufi*, but the two types worth killing for are the *tartufo bianco* or white truffle and the *tartufo nero* or black truffle. The white is the finest and most expensive; *tartufi bianchi* can cost well over \$1,500 a pound depending on the quality and seasonal abundance. The black truffle is much more affordable. Both add a perfect touch of luxury to any meal. Most Italians don't acknowledge the sub-par truffle oil found in the United States; they insist that the only way to serve truffles is fresh—shaved over pasta. Plan to visit Le Marche in October and then again at the end of December for the *bianchi* and between December and March for the *neri* to taste them fresh.

In the summer any fresh truffles to be found on restaurant menus will be the *tartufo d'estate* or summer truffle, a pale shadow of its noble sisters. You may wonder what all the fuss is about if you haven't tasted the real deal.

Italian truffle hunters dig up around 100 metric tons of truffles a year with the help of dogs and pigs specially trained for the job. If you would like to go truffle hunting, head to [La Tavola Marche](#), a pleasant farm on over 500 acres of picturesque rolling hills just 15 miles southwest of Urbino. The famed black truffle is found on the property and if you visit in the fall, you can taste its unique flavor. The surrounding wooded areas are perfect for excursions to gather wild berries, delicious wild mushrooms, or even participate in the search for fragrant truffles under old oak trees with the guidance of an expert truffle hunter.

The young American couple that runs La Tavola Marche knows about everything about the gastronomic pleasures of the region. They will cook for you, take you shopping in the local markets, direct you to the best wines and cheese of the region, and if you wish, give you cooking lessons.

*La Tavola Marche*  
*Agriturismo Ca' Camone*  
*Via Candigliano*  
*61048 Sant' Angelo in Vado (PU), Italy*  
Tel: +39 331.525.2753; [info@latavolamarche.com](mailto:info@latavolamarche.com).



### Searching for Raphael in Today's Urbino

Today, Casciotta d'Urbino is still a staple of the Marche town's fare, as is its Renaissance appeal. As for traces of Raphael, the town serves more as a showcase for his youthful environment than for his work, the vast majority of which was created elsewhere. You won't find much more to remind you of him than the modest house of his early years, the statue on the summit of the hill, and his *La Muta* (*The Silent One*) in the *palazzo ducale*. (That is, of course, if you don't count the predictable proliferation of commercial enterprises that have adopted his name).

But perhaps as you wind through its twisting streets or amble in admiration through the classical Renaissance elegance of its *palazzo ducale*, you'll find something of the spirit of *sprezzatura* that prompted the town's most noted courtier, Baldassare Castiglione, to reflect wistfully upon the great artist's death: "Thou didst rouse the gods to jealousy."

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### **The Owl Turns One! Our New Photo Contest.**

*The Owl* celebrates its first birthday! We journeyed to a number of fabulous countries together during the last 12 months, from Italy to France, Great Britain, Greece, Turkey, and even China. We traveled in the riveting company of Lord Byron, Claude Monet and Antonio Canaletto, to mention just a few.

Join in the celebration! Select a photo of a birthday party or of a festivity of any kind that you participated in in Europe, add a short commentary to let us know where it was taken, and e-mail it in jpeg format to: [theowl@agorapublishinggroup.com](mailto:theowl@agorapublishinggroup.com).

Should you win the contest, we'll publish your photo in *The Owl*, offer you a free subscription to our travel magazine, *International Living*, for two years, and send a complimentary copy of our anthology of the masterpieces of ancient literature, *The Essential Classics*.

Photos are accepted until the end of August. The winner will be selected in September.

#### **Terms and conditions**

- By submitting your picture you agree that you took it and are not infringing anybody else's copyright or privacy.
- The winner of the contest grants *The Owl* the non-exclusive right to publish his/her picture in the context of "The Owl Turns One" Photo Contest.
- The cash value of the price (\$123.95) is not redeemable for cash or any equivalent products.
- Our photo contest is entirely free. No purchase is necessary.

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