

# EVERETT POTTER'S TRAVEL REPORT



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**KNIFE & FORK**

## Cortina's Cucina

*An Italian ski Area where food & wine rival the snow*

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Vino & Views: High alpine après-ski in Cortina, Italy. PHOTO CREDIT: www.bandion.it

By Rochelle Lash

Cortina is not simply a ski resort.

It is an *Italian* ski resort, ergo food and wine are as fundamental as great snow and challenging trails. Maybe more.

A storm of new snow blanketed the Dolomite Mountains during my visit in early 2017, but even with utopian powder skiing, I was knee-deep into dining and drinking.

I felt at home in Italian, starting with prosecco, vino and aperitivo, then moving onto bruschetta, pesto, pasta and risotto, with main courses of carne and winding up with dreamy dolce and espresso.

And of course, I know my way around pizzerias and trattorias, but in Cortina I sampled a half-dozen types of home-cured ham at my first prosciutteria.

Cortina's reputation is one of glamor, but it is homespun at heart, with robust alpine cuisine, ingredients from local farms and many businesses owned by the same family, going back 100 years.

A surprise bonus — the prices in Cortina for food, lodging and skiing are moderate compared to many other European resort areas. Below are a few culinary highlights.



Ristorante Rifugio Col Drusciè is a fabulous lunch and après-ski restaurant high atop a mountain in Cortina, Italy. Credit: Ristorante Rifugio Col Drusciè

**ON MOUNTAIN:** Atop the glorious Tofana Cable Car lies Ristorante Rifugio Col Drusciè, arguably the best of Cortina's many mountain refuges – simply a *fantastico* restaurant, airy and bright, with country pine furniture, vintage skis on the walls and spectacular views of sky, mountains and valleys.

I wondered where all these talented chefs come from, considering this *rifugio* serves a huge menu of terrific food at a towering 5,833 feet (1,778 metres) above sea level.

Among Col Drusciè's healthy and hearty dishes are pasta and white bean soup, venison stew, sausages, charcuterie and polenta, as well as Cortina's staples such as puccia, the popular dark bread spiked with fennel and dessert apple fritters with whipped cream atop.

At Col Drusciè's outdoor patio, a bartender pours vin brûlé (hot spiced wine) and bombardinos, a wicked parfait of hot brandy, VOV egg liqueur, coffee and cream.

Delish, but with a 30-per-cent alcohol content, a bombardino might be grounds for skiing-under-the-influence, so it's best to board the cable car for the trip down. (Col Drusciè; [www.freccianelcielo.com](http://www.freccianelcielo.com)).



Grappa and other gourmet goodies at Primizie Morano. Credit: Cortina Marketing

**THE GOURMET:** Cortina's bella gente – beautiful people — don their furs and fashions and meet along the Corso Italia daily from 5 p.m. for the sociable ritual of *passaggiata*, a promenade and schmooze-fest, Italian-style.

To brace for the winter air, stop by Primizie Morano, an exquisite gourmet shop where owner Stefano Morona offers tastings of grappa, the potent Italian digestivo, every afternoon.

“Best’ is too big a word for grappa,” he said. “It is even bigger than wine – we have grappa from grapes, berries and even herbs such as juniper.”

Morano has been an epicurean paradise for 60 years (formerly owned by Stefano's father), stocking an excellent choice of Champagne and delicacies such as porcini mushrooms, speck, figs, pasta, fine olive oil and balsamic, plus hand-crafted sweets. Great for foodie gifts. (Via Stazione)

**THE WINE:** My customary order of “vino rosso robusto” (robust red wine) felt artless at Enoteca Cortina, a wine bar where you can sip the world, nibble on artisan *salumi* and stock up vino, grappa or brandy from a choice of more than 800 labels from

Europe and beyond.

This intimate tasting bar, wood panelled with special brass glass holders, has become an institution and a top place to sip and socialize. It's shoulder to shoulder at wine time.



The Italian bounty hails from Veneto, Tuscany, Liguria, Puglia, Piedmont, Umbria and Abruzzo. (Enoteca Cortina, Via del Mercato, [www.enotecacortina.com](http://www.enotecacortina.com))

*Gerry Gaspari, owner of the vintage wine bar, Enoteca Cortina. PHOTO CREDIT – Cortina Marketing*



*The regional dumpling-like canederli, at Ristorante Crignes in Cortina, Italy. Credit: [www.bandion.it](http://www.bandion.it).*

**THE LOCAL:** Ristorante Crignes is local with a capital L. Most of the clients are savvy Cortina residents who are hip to great Veneto food at great prices.

Good service, good wine and an unpretentious air make this place a great stop for friends or families.



Owner Marco Verzi oversees the menu of regional specialties such as liver mousse, lard slices, roasted pork shank or leg of lamb, as well as the rich dumpling-like canederli.

Thursday is theme night, which can mean feasts of anything from Tuscan T-bone steaks to sushi. (Ristorante Crignes, Via Lungoboiti, [www.ristorantecrignes.it](http://www.ristorantecrignes.it)).



*The landmark Hotel De La Poste in Cortina, Italy, has formal dining and a distinguished history that includes VIPs such as Ernest Hemingway. Credit: Hotel De La Poste*

**THE TRADITIONAL:** Hotel De La Poste is at the very soul of Cortina, a classic on the Corso Italia where etiquette and tradition endure. Watch the passing parade in the tiny lobby of La Poste and you'll see Range Rovers pulling up with sports gear and fur-clad women weighed down by shopping bags.

In the dining room, the maitre d' sports a tux and the waiters wear white jackets, all ready to filet your fish, sauce your beef and flambé your shrimp. White damask tablecloths and silver flatware set a formal tone.

Go for the classics – foie gras, sea bass from Venice's markets, risotto, or osso buco, lamb, veal and beef raised on the centuries-old farms that surround Cortina. (Hotel De La Poste, Piazza Roma: [www.delaposte.it](http://www.delaposte.it)).



*Dining room at Rosapetra Spa Resort, Cortina. Credit Rosapetra*

**THE CHIC:** The stunning boutique hotel Rosapetra Spa Resort is an ode to contemporary design and cuisine. It has reinvented the rugged mountain chalet with natural materials such as stone, wood and slate throughout the suites and the lobby.

Dinner here is a new twist on the traditional, as well. Executive Chef Alessandro Favrin fashions exquisite presentations of local favourites such as veal tartare, baked goat cheese, beef stew, pumpkin soup, venison or braised veal cheeks. This is truly nuova cucina (new cuisine), formally executed from antipasti to digestivo. (Zuel di Sopra, [www.rosapetracortina.it](http://www.rosapetracortina.it)).



*Rochelle Lash is a passionate skier who is thrilled to have experienced Cortina, where the rugged splendor of the Dolomite Mountains meets Italy's luscious lifestyle. A career news editor and lifestyle columnist, Rochelle writes a weekly travel-hotel column for the Montreal Gazette and Postmedia affiliates, and also has written business, lifestyle and travel for the National Post, The New York Times, Robb Report, the International Herald Tribune, The Globe and Mail, Skiing Magazine and Town & Country Magazine.*

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