



## Riches of Turin

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CARLA CARUSO goes to a sweet tooth's heaven

**I**T feels strangely delicious to stamp the cold out of my iceblock feet and allow the warm inside air to seep through the boot.

I'm in the northern Italian city of Turin, near the Alps, doing what the locals do best – propping up the bar while I await my brioche and coffee. It has become a twice-daily addiction – morning and afternoon tea. Who can wait for lunch or dinner?

To my left is a young Russian woman, with coiffured blonde curls and a fur-trimmed, velvet jacket. To my right a pair of gossiping Nonnas, dressed in obligatory black. Young, old, rich, poor, they all pile in. This is a lazy Saturday afternoon in Turin's famed Baratti e Milano cafe, within the glass-roofed Galleria Subalpina arcade.

It was opened in 1873 by partners Milano and Baratti, who quickly gained the title of "suppliers to the royal household".

The decor and fare remain fit for royalty. Cascading chandeliers, gold gilt framed mirrors and velvet-flocked wallpaper, complemented by delicious morsels – pastries, chocolates, candied chestnuts and tramezzini (sandwiches with the crusts removed). Plus, of course, excellent drinks.

I sample a cioccolata calda (hot chocolate) and almost get a tooth cavity from its thick, syrupy goodness. It's no surprise then Turin is the birthplace of solid chocolate, thanks to inventor Mr Doret, and that the city hosts a Chocolate Festival every February. This is a sweet tooth's heaven.

Turin may be well-known as the automobile capital of Italy (Fiat, Lancia and Alfa Romeo have headquarters there) and a host of the 2006 Winter Olympics, but culinary lovers note it mostly for its indulgent foodie habits. And, coffee and brioche breaks are



Turin's elegant Via Roma, lined with decadent coffee houses and designer shops

just the beginning. Another culinary ritual Turin can wholly lay claim to is the aperitif.

While the alcoholic teaser may be popular the world over, Turin is its birthplace, courtesy of Antonio Benedetto Carpano. In 1786, he invented vermouth – a white wine, mixed with an infusion of 30-plus herbs and spices. The appetiser has since evolved into a regular Torinesi engagement to mark the end of the day or the beginning of the evening (how ever you like to look at it).

The protocol? You meet friends over a glass of wine or a cocktail in a bar or cafe and the drinks come accompanied – for free – with food. Anything from a plate of snacks

to a complete buffet: drink prices are hiked up a tad to absorb the food costs. When in Turin, do as the Turinese do, I say. So I make an appointment with a friend for an aperitif engagement later that evening within the Museo Nazionale del Cinema, also home to five levels of cinema history.

The dining space has an uber trendy feel, with private dining areas, encircled by sheer curtains, and featuring light box-style tables, which change colour beneath your cutlery.

My friend and I take our pick from the cold cuts, cheese, omelette, pizza, sushi and roulades on display, while nursing glasses of wine (my pick: a local rose). I could live like this. 🍷



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➤ **Pizza Fest:** For two weeks every September, Naples is filled with the irresistible smell of pizza at a festival dedicated to the traditional Neapolitan. **Details:** Italian Tourism, ph 02 9262 1666



➤ **White Truffle Fair:** Thousands head to the town of Alba (including some of the world's top chefs) in October to taste this strange delicacy and watch medieval games. **Details:** [www.fiera.deltartufo.org/en](http://www.fiera.deltartufo.org/en)

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### FAST FACTS

➤ **Getting there:**

You can fly direct from Sydney to Turin

➤ **Stay:**

Pacific Hotel Fortino, Strada del Fortino 36 10152, Turin. A standard double room costs about \$135 a night; the top-range suite is about \$340 nightly. [www.pacifichotels.it](http://www.pacifichotels.it)

➤ **Details:**

Visit [www.turismo.torino.org](http://www.turismo.torino.org); follow the link to Torino and click on the British flag icon