

Italian Food Glossary

The great thing about the Italian food vocabulary is that we already know many words since we've adopted them directly into the English language. Words like pizza, pasta, gelato, and spaghetti need no translation.

Then there are the English words that we've borrowed from Italian food, but then modified them slightly, such as "zucchini" instead of the Italian word *zucchine*; or words that we've taken but then changed the meaning: for example, we've taken the Italian word *peperoni*, which refers to sweet peppers, and made it pepperoni, which are the sliced pieces of salami that we put on pizza.

This discussion of Italian food terms could go on and on, but it's probably more useful just to list them and their translations into food words we know in English.

Italian Food Dictionary

Acciuga: anchovies
Acerbo: sour; unripe
Aceto: vinegar
Aceto balsamico: balsamic vinegar
Acido: sour, acidic; sharp-tasting
Acqua: water; (acqua minerale is mineral water)
Affettati: cold cuts, sliced meats
Affumicato: smoked
Aglione: garlic
Agnello: lamb
Agrodolce: sweet/sour
Agrumi: citrus fruits
Al dente: firm; literally, "to the tooth"
Alici: smelts
Amaretti: crisp cookies made with bitter almonds
Amaretto: a sweet liqueur flavored with almonds
Amaro: bitter; also after-dinner drinks
Ananas: pineapple
Anguilla: eel
Anguria: watermelon
Anice: anise
Anisette: a colorless liqueur flavor with anise
Antipasto: literally "before the meal;" appetizer course
Aragosta: lobster
Arancia: orange

Arancini: fried rice balls with ragù and peas
Arborio: medium-grain rice used for making risotto
Arrostito: roasted (adj.)
Arrostato: a roast (noun)
Asparagi: asparagus
Asperigno: somewhat tart or sour
Assaggio: a taste
Baccalá: salted cod
Barbabietola: beets
Basilico: basil
Ben cotto: well done
Bere: to drink
Bevande: beverages, drinks
Bibita: beverage, drink
Bicchiere: drinking glass
Birra: beer
Biscotti: cookies (lit: twice cooked)
Bistecca: (beef) steak
Bocconcino: any bite-sized food, a little mouthful
Bollicine: bubbles
Bosco: woods; forest
Botte: (wine) barrel
Bottega: shop
Braciola: chop of cutlet, usually pork but also lamb, beef, or game (and even fish)
Bracirole: stuffed rolls; can be meat or sometimes fish
Brasato: braised beef or pot roast
Brioche: generically breakfast pastries; (pronounced as in French)
Brodo: broth
Bruschetta: toasted bread rubbed with garlic and drizzled with olive oil
Bucatini: long thick spaghetti with a small hole
Buongustaio: someone with good taste; gourmet
Burro: butter
Caffè: coffee, espresso
Calamari: squid
Calice: wineglass
Cameriere: waiter
Cannella: cinnamon
Cannellini: white kidney beans
Cannoli: pastry filled with ricotta
Capesante: scallops
Capocollo: a hot, spicy ham
Caponata: eggplant side dish
Capperi: capers
Capra: goat

Carciofi: artichokes
Carne: meat
Carote: carrots
Carpaccio: sliced raw beef
Cassata: a Sicilian cream-filled layer cake
Cavolfiore: cauliflower
Cavolo: cabbage
Ceci: chickpeas (garbanzo beans)
Cena: dinner
Cibo: food
Cicoria: chicory
Ciliege: cherries
Cinghiale: wild boar
Cioppino: shellfish stew
Cipolla: onion
Colazione: breakfast
Coniglio: rabbit
Conserva: preserves
Cotolette: cutlets
Cotto: cooked
Cozze: mussels
Crema: egg custard
Cremoso: creamy or thick
Crespelle: crepes
Crostata: a sweet or savory tart
Crudo: raw; cured
Cucina: kitchen; cuisine, style of cooking
Cuoco: cook, chef
Dolce: sweet
Dolci: sweets and pastries
Dragoncello: tarragon
Equino: equine as in horse, donkey, or mule meat
Fagiano: pheasant
Fagioli: beans
Fame: hunger, appetite
Farcitura: stuffing or filling (noun)
Farcito: stuffed, topped (adjective)
Farina: flour
Farro: a whole grain similar to spelt
Fegato: liver
Fico: fig
Filetto: tenderloin, filet mignon
Finocchio: fennel
Fior di latte: mozzarella cheese made from cow's milk

Focaccia: flatbread
Formaggio: cheese
Forno: oven; bakery
Fragole: strawberries
Frantoio: olive press
Frittata: an omelet
Fritto: fried
Frutta: fruit
Frutti di mare: seafood
Funghi: mushrooms
Fuori stagione: out of season
Gamberetti: little shrimp
Gambero: shrimp
Giardiniera: mixed pickled vegetables
Gassato: carbonated
Gnocchi: pasta dumplings served with a sauce or in broth
Grana Padano: a cow's milk hard cheese
Granchio: crab
Grappa: liqueur made from the must of grapes
Grissini: breadsticks
Grano: grain; wheat
Griglia: grill
Gusto: flavor
Imbottito: stuffed
Impanato: breaded
Insalata caprese: sliced tomatoes and mozzarella with fresh basil and olive oil
Invecchiato: aged, seasoned
Lamponi: raspberries
Lardo: cured pork fat
Lenticchie: lentils
Lepre: hare
Lesso: boiled
Limoncello: lemon liqueur
Limone: lemon
Lombata: loin
Lumache: snails
Macinato: ground; minced
Maiale: pig; pork
Mandorle: almonds
Manzo: beef
Marinara: a plain tomato sauce
Marinare: to marinate
Mascarpone: creamy, soft, mild cheese
Melanzane: eggplant

Mela: apple
Melagrana: pomegranate
Menta: mint
Mercato: market
Merluzzo: cod
Miele: honey
Minestra: soup (usually thick)
Minestrina: thin soup
Minestrone: thick mixed vegetable soup
Mortadella: a large cured and spiced pork sausage
Mozzarella: a white soft cheese
Nocciole: hazelnuts
Noci: nuts; walnuts
Odori: herbs; (synonym: erbe)
Olio di Oliva: olive oil
Origano: oregano
Ostriche: oysters
Orzo: barley
Pancetta: salt-cured pork; similar to bacon
Pane: bread
Panella: fried chickpea bread
Pangrattato: bread crumbs
Panna: cream
Panna Cotta: literally "cooked cream," served for dessert
Parmigiano: a hard cow's milk cheese
Pasta Frolla: pastry dough
Pasticcio: pie, pastry, or cake
Pastella: batter
Pecorino: sheep's milk cheese
Peperoni: sweet peppers
Peperoncini: hot peppers
Pesto: a sauce from grinding ingredients, such as basil, pine nuts, Parmigiano, oil
Pepe nero: black pepper
Peperonata: stew of sweet peppers, onions, and tomatoes
Pesca: peach
Pesce serra: bluefish, mackerel
Pesce spada: swordfish
Piccante: spicy
Pinoli: pine nuts
Piselli: peas
Pollame: poultry
Pollo: chicken
Polenta: a type of cornmeal
Porchetta: whole, deboned roast pig cooked with herbs and garlic

Porcini: meaty wild mushrooms
Polpette: meatballs
Polpettone: meat loaf
Polpo, polipo: octopus
Pomodoro: tomato
Pompelmo: grapefruit
Porco: pork
Porro: leek
Pranzo: lunch
Prezzemolo: parsley
Prosciutto: cured ham
Provola: fresh buffalo's milk cheese
Prugna: prune, plum
Rabarbaro: rhubarb
Ragù: meat sauce for pasta
Razza: skate; ray
Rape: broccoli rabe
Ribollita: Tuscan bread and vegetable soup
Ricotta: a fresh, mild cheese
Ripieni: stuffed
Riso: rice
Risotto: rice cooked and stirred with broth until creamy
Romano: a hard Pecorino (sheep's) cheese
Rosmarino: rosemary
Ruspante: free-range
Rustico: rustic, simple
Salami: ground meat cured, seasoned and shaped like a sausage
Salsa: sauce
Salsiccia: sausage
Sale: salt
Saltato: sautéed (literally "jumped!")
Salumi: collective name for cured meats
Salvia: sage
Sambuca: a liqueur made from anise
Scaloppine: thinly sliced meat
Sedano: celery
Scorfano: an ugly Mediterranean fish often used in soups
Seppia: cuttlefish
Sgroppino: a Venetian after dinner drink made from sorbet and vodka or other alcohol
Sgusciati: shelled (meaning, a shellfish that has been taken out of its shell)
Sfogliatelle: pastry filled with flavored ricotta
Soppressata: a type of salami
Spiedini: anything cooked on a skewer
Strega: a yellow liqueur made from herbs

Stufato: stew
Sogliola: sole
Speck: a type of smoked prosciutto
Spezie: spices
Spigola: sea bass, striped bass; syn: branzino
Spinaci: (pl.) spinach
Spuntino: snack
Timo: thyme
Tonno: tuna
Torta: cake; tart
Totano: squid
Triglia: red mullet
Trotta: trout
Unto: oily, greasy
Uova: eggs
Uva: grapes
Uvetta: raisins
Vaniglia: vanilla
Verdure: green vegetables
Vongole: clams
Vitello: veal
Zabaglione: dessert of egg yolks, sugar, and Marsala wine.
Zafferano: saffron
Zampone: sausage-stuffed pig's hooves
Zenzero: ginger
Zeppole: a fried pastry
Zuppa: soup
Zucca: pumpkin; squash, winter squash;
Zucchero: sugar
Zucchine: summer squash, zucchini