



 Dow Jones Reprints: This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers, use the Order Reprints tool at the bottom of any article or visit www.djreprints.com

• See a sample reprint in PDF format.

• Order a reprint of this article now

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

WSJ.com

FOOD & DRINK | SEPTEMBER 24, 2011

Sweet Nothings

Three quintessentially Italian treats that are as unfussy as they are irresistible

Off Duty Italy Special



Pernille Pedersen

Photographer Pernille Pedersen snapped these iPhone photos on a recent trip across Italy, with stops in Rome, Perugia, Sicily and on the island of Ischia.

Travel

- [Finding Fellini](#)
- [Valley of the Car Kings](#)
- [Only In...Florence](#)

Food

- [Sweet-Nothing Italian Desserts](#)
- [Lunch, Italian Style](#)
- [On Wine: The World's Best Food Wines](#)
- [Cucina Confidential](#)

Fashion

- [Muriel Brandolini's Moment](#)
- [Rossana Orlandi, La Donna di Mobili](#)

Design and Decorating

- [Muriel Brandolini's Moment](#)
- [Rossana Orlandi, La Donna di Mobili](#)

Cars

- [Italy's Multicultural Motorcycle](#)

Forget towering tiramisus and colossal cannolis: for most Italians, dessert means a perfectly ripe peach sliced into a chilled coppa di vino, plump figs stuffed with mascarpone or a platter of crisp anise-scented biscotti. Elaborate architectural pastries and intricate cakes may take center stage on holidays and feast days, but when it comes to everyday dolci—sweets nibbled with an aperitif or an eye-opening espresso—simplicity and seasonality rule.

Still, simple hardly equals unsophisticated. With their desserts as with their savories, Italian home cooks seem to have a savant-like talent for elevating humble staples such as fresh fruit, nuts and cocoa to elegant heights. Their gift: knowing when an ingredient is at its peak and being unafraid to let its singular virtues shine. Evidence of that talent is on every page of "Dolci: Italy's Sweets," a new cookbook by food historian Francine Segan that brings together a canon of authentic recipes collected from the people who really use them—homemakers, chefs, nonnas and bloggers. Excerpted here are a few standouts: a hearty cake sweetened with thickly sliced apples that's ideal for autumn, when orchards grow heavy; a playful "salad" of dried fruit and candied citrus—so abundant in the South—perfumed with liqueur and tossed with shards of chewy nougat torrone; and a century-old chocolate confection that can be thrown together without even turning on the oven. Stealing a bite of the sweet life has never seemed easier.

—Sarah Karnasiewicz