

THE PIERO AFFAIR...with side trips

CONTENTS

PIERO in Williamstown, Massachusetts

Side trip 1 Rome

Side trip 2 Monte Oliveto Maggiore

Side trip 3 Florence

PIERO in The Uffizi, Florence

Side trip 4 Pergine (life in the village)

Guelph and Ghibelline: The Towers

Side trip 5 Arezzo

PIERO in Arezzo

Side trip 6 Civitella

Side trip 7 Coltibuono

Side trip 8 Monsanto, San Gimignano, Monteriggione

PIERO in Monterchi

Side trip 9 Volterra

Side trip 10 The Wine Tour, Castello Brolio

Flowers of Tuscany

Side trip 11 Sansepolcro

PIERO in Sansepolcro

Side trip 12 Siena and Pienza

PIERO in Urbino

Side trip 13 Orvieto

Ciao

Postscript: *PIERO at the Frick Museum*

INTRODUCTION

A newspaper reporter recently asked me, "Who would be the top three people (alive or dead) with whom you would like to have dinner?" I replied, "Jerry (my husband), Bink Noll (a poet friend), and Piero della Francesca (the great pre-Renaissance artist)."

This book is about a love affair with Piero's breathtaking art and with Tuscany. Piero della Francesca (1420-1492) has only recently been re-discovered for the great artist he is. Because so few of his works survive and most are in rural Italian areas, he has been little studied. Known for six centuries for his mathematic accomplishments (he wrote three famous books on the subject) he was recalled to artistic glory by the many artists who cite his influence during the past century. Born in Tuscany and always a Tuscan, he epitomizes the pre Renaissance. His colors are soft, his light glowing, and his subjects commanding.

Yes, the book is about a love affair with Piero, his art and with Tuscany. It is, also, a memoir of my forty-four years visiting Italy and my adventures there. The book design is modeled after a plan view of the Piazza del Campo in Siena. The brick piazza floor is shaped like a giant fan with triangles, or folds, radiating out from the locus. Think of Piero as that focal point, the handle of the fan, and all of the "side trips" in the book are the many folds that flow out from it. As you read, you will turn the fan back and forth to reveal Piero and Renaissance art; Tuscan countryside and cities; Piero; Italian history; diary entries of adventures; Piero; wine and menus of meals we prepared for guests in our rented villa. The fan forms a tapestry woven through time with the eye and soul of an artist responding to and loving Piero and Tuscan life.

I am a painter and sculptor and have been since I was four years old. Through books, I have known Italy and Italian art all of my life, but I was unprepared for what Tuscany, would come to mean to me. Over time, it opened its soul and, as if bestowing a gift, enriched my life with so much.

Tuscany gave me my affair with Piero, his soft, glowing color, and the shapes of eyes painted by his hand; but also, harrowing history... the aftermath of the 1966 great Florence flood and the massacre of a remote village in World War 2. It bestowed the sacred and the sublime... meeting a young American monk on a Tuscan hilltop and an artichoke in Orvieto. It imparted flavors and aromas...the silky swallow of a Chianti Reserva and smoky wood fires on bitter cold, foggy mornings. It offered a gift of gentle kindness from those who inhabit the Tuscan land, and, everywhere, seduction of the senses. Sounds, smells, tastes, and textures are part of the gift, but insistently important, is what your eyes see.

This story was created from years of memories, diary entries, letters, and visits to the area, ranging from a few days to ten weeks. It has been a remarkable journey and it is one on which I am about to take *you*. There is so much I want to share. Let's begin with my first intimation of the Piero affair.

Pat Musick 2011



Scala

Museo Civico Sansepolcro



This fresco cycle occupies a special place in the Tuscan heart...perhaps the heart of the world. It is a masterpiece created at a pivotal point in the development of Western art, by a genius of mathematics and a master of visual art. We were incredibly lucky that it was not destroyed during World War 2 by either the Germans or the advancing Allies. I know of no such miraculous saving of Piero's art in Arezzo as occurred in Sansepolcro during the Great War. Yet, the fact that the works exist has the aura of "miraculous." What an artistic feat rests in stucco upon the walls of San Francesco! The paintings contain all of the elements of his genius, perhaps unique in the history of art because the contributions of art and geometry are equal. Their impact upon me is difficult to describe but often, in my daily life, I pause and visit Piero in the chapel and am enriched by the scenes that fill my mind's eyes.

Antipasto

Good Italian Sausage, sliced
Fresh Pecorino or Mozzarella cheese, sliced
Bruschetta with tomato
Green Italian Olives
Bruschetta with fava beans
Bruschetta with liver pate
Alici

Crostini is made from sliced Italian baguette bread (1/2" slices). Bake in a slow oven, watching closely until faintly brown. Then add a topping and you have a bruschetta.

Tomato: dice vine-ripened fresh tomatoes and garlic. Finely chop fresh basil and add to tomatoes with black pepper and olive oil. Layer on crostini toast and top with a section of canned anchovy.

Fava bean: Use any large white bean. Soak for two hours in cold water, rinse and cook on stove until tender. Place beans in food processor with rosemary, salt, pepper, olive oil, add garlic, mash or beat until it forms a paste. Layer on the bruschetta toast and top with a section of canned anchovy.

Liver pate: Poach chicken livers in water, cooking gently. Drain and place in food processor with cream, olive oil, salt and pepper. Mash until it forms a paste. Layer on crostini toast and top with a sage leaf.

Use your own judgment about amounts of ingredients. One of the fun things about cooking is to create your own "mix". And, of course, serve with a good Chianti!!!! Buon appetito!



Turkey Rollatini (serves four)

4 turkey scallopini or cutlets
tomato sauce (from Coltibuono)
1 head radicchio
black seedless olives (calamattas)
onion, bay leaf and oregano
1 glass each red and white wine

Prepare the radicchio/onion. Slice thinly and sauté in a non-reactive pan with a little olive oil/pepper, add red wine, oregano and simmer. Set aside.

Using a *batta carne* pound the scallopine until they are about ¼ inch thick.

Lay a slice of the meat on the counter and stuff it with ¼ of the radicchio mix. Roll and place in the casserole, seam side down. Continue until all four are stuffed. Top meat with the tomato sauce, sprinkle more oregano and bay leaf, white wine and black olives.

Tomato Sauce. (From Coltibuono) The sauce can be made in advance and then frozen. 250 gr ripe or good canned peeled tomatoes a little carrot, celery and onion chopped extra virgin olive oil salt and pepper to taste

This simple sauce can be made in advance and then frozen. When cooking with it you can add herbs of your choice.

