

## About Peggy

Peggy Markel, entrepreneur, gastronome and world traveler, has designed and directed culinary tours since 1991. Her love of food and travel have developed into a livelihood as a cultural translator; opening doors to experiencing and understanding culinary traditions at their source.

A long-time member of SlowFood, her programs immerse fellow culinary adventurers into the very soul of a regional cuisine to know its origins from field to table. Relationships are strengthened not only to food, but to ones self, the land and between cultures.

She founded **La Cucina al Focolare** ("Cooking by the Fireside") in 1992 with Silvia and Roberto Pincitore of the *Fattoria Degli Usignoli* (Farm of the Nightingales), one of the first Tuscan cooking schools established by an American.

'I felt I knew what Americans were missing and what they were looking for. I wanted to offer others the same experience that I discovered through my own exploration. Something closer to the bone of coming back, reconnecting, as it were, to simple prepared foods, from the freshest organic ingredients. Tuscany offers a rich palate of food sources to choose from. It's tangible, and the entire culture lives and breathes good food and values conviviality at the table. It's earthy and sophisticated at the same time, steeped in deep philosophy of what makes life sweet: *la dolce vita*.

She found this same 'recipe' could be applied to other regions of Italy. She found herself going here and there being introduced to new people and places. "It all happened organically. I didn't try to make anything happen. It would literally unfold in front of me. A new contact, a new spot, a new regional specialty, it would almost create itself".

In 1993 she started **The Ligurian School of Poetic Cooking (1993–2000)**, with Angelo Cabani, master chef and proprietor of *Locanda Miranda* in Tellaro, a small village on the Italian Riviera. The program focused only on fish. "Angelo would take poor rustic recipes of the ancestors that survived lean times and embellish them in a refined way. Never using cream, he works with emulsified olive oils and fresh herbs. The fish was plucked out of the sea and into the pan. The pastel colors of the *Cinque Terre* made it all seem like a dream."

Elba was next, born out of her friendship with Luciano Casini, who used to take her fishing. "It was like hanging out with 'the old man and the sea'." **Elba: Rustic Tuscan Island Cooking** (1996), was started in the late 90's as an adventurous culinary excursion, taking people into the village and into Luciano's kitchen as if we were all friends coming for a holiday. Elba's relaxed lifestyle mingles well with fishing and cooking the day's catch. Here it's rustic Mediterranean. Everything goes into the pot. It's the freshness of the ingredients that create the dish. Not the cook.

**Sicily: A Different Italy** (1998).came out of a trip Peggy took with a friend. "My curiosity was getting the best of me. It was time to venture south, down into unknown territory. What I found was a treasure waiting to be discovered. I knew Sicily would have to be explored as in 'a moveable feast'. She needed to be known from top to bottom, inside and out. She is as diverse as the many foreign cultures that conquered her. She is friendly and unspoiled. Her bounty is endless and she has no limits on hospitality. Being a southerner myself, I could relate to this. Sicily is full of delicious surprises."

**Morocco: A Feast for the Senses** (2001). Again, a trip to follow some attraction to Morocco's color and texture. That's all I knew. I went with a few friends on a holiday, and it turned out an instant connection. When I met Meryanne and Gary Martin, their ideas and mine clicked. They had a guest house in the Palmereraie and I had culinary adventurers, always looking for new experiences. It was a dovetail. Morocco keeps unfolding her mysteries and we are there to receive them. (I was there on 9/11.) The importance of cultural exchange is paramount. Personal experience goes much further than propaganda and suspicion. We have landed in an exotic land full of flavor, kindness and over a thousand years of culture, still visible and touchable.

Other adventures are scheduled: Thailand, India and traditional Japan, to name a few. These have been put on hold. The world demands a lot from a traveler at the moment, not to mention a travel operator. Stay tuned.

Peggy splits her time between Boulder, Colorado and Florence, Italy ... that is, when not conducting moveable feasts around the Mediterranean. She has two grown children, Emily and Graham, and Catfish, the family cat.

### *About the Programs*

All of Peggy Markel's Culinary Adventures are hand-crafted and designed with you in mind. We share and work with the most authentic chefs and food artisans from our favorite regions, and skillfully arrange a balanced, yet full immersion into local food culture and lifestyle. This thread is maintained within each unique program

These courses are presented to you like award winning recipes for a delightful, delicious and meaningful holiday. Each course will offer you an experience like no other; indeed, there are no other courses like them.

Heartfelt attention to detail, language skills and excellent relationships make for a happy and safe traveler.

### *Press to Date*

For accolades and links to articles about Peggy Markel, visit:

[http://www.peggymarkel.com/new\\_press.html](http://www.peggymarkel.com/new_press.html)