

FOOD & WINE

placestravel

I'arte di cucinare

Master planner: Chef Michele Topor, who has long given tours of Boston's Italian North End, expanded her territory to Sicily a dozen years ago. **Services:** Topor's twice-a-year weeklong tour "A Taste of Sicily" explores the simple yet innovative *cucina povera* of ordinary Sicilians as well as the baroque cuisine of the aristocracy. **Highlights:** Il Ristorantino, a Palermo restaurant in the "new Sicilian" cooking style. The animated owner, Pippo Anastasio, is a well-known cooking lecturer (011-39-091512861). La Pasticceria Grammatico Maria in Erice. Maria Grammatico, whose life story is told in the fascinating book *Bitter Almonds* (cowritten with Mary Taylor Simeti), sometimes gives marzipan making demonstrations (011-39-0923869390). Donna Fugata Aziende Vinicole, a superb winery in

Marsala (011-39-092-3999555). **Privileged access:** Groups watch a shepherd make sheep's milk ricotta cheese, breakfast on a bowl of it (sprinkled with olives), then taste other cheeses in various stages of aging. A long lunch is shared with the extended family that owns the estate. A similar upclose experience is offered at a *frantoio* (olive-oil producer), culminating in lunch with the owner and his family and the pressing of just-picked olives and the bottling of the oil. At another stop, AnnaMaria Domenici, a caterer and teacher, explains the Palermitana methods of cooking fish and making cassata, the renowned Sicilian sponge cake filled with ricotta and chocolate. **Details:** \$2,749 for one week; 617-523-6032; www.cucinare.com.