
Italiano per Ristoranti

How to pronounce your restaurant menù www.unpodipepe.ca



When I'm at a restaurant and I hear 'BROO· shedà', 'FOKA ·sia', 'pra· skew· do', 'spug ·eddy', 'la· TAY', 'EX· preso' or the most cringe-worthy of all, 'GA· noh· chee'....I have to cover my ears. This article is my small effort to encourage everyone to get to know the beauty of the Italian language. Whether you are planning a trip to Italia, or to your local Trattoria, learning how to pronounce the words on the menù is worth the effort!

Italian pronunciation is very different from English. Pronouncing Italian words is easier than it looks, because every letter has a purpose. Words are pronounced phonetically-the way they are spelled. There are no silent letters as in English, except h at the beginning of a word. My name 'Cristina' has no h because there is no reason for it. In Italian, you won't find crazy words like 'enough' that don't sound at all like they are written (?inaf). If you know the sounds made by certain letters and combinations, you can pronounce all of those big long words with lots and lots of vowels. Pronouncing Italian correctly will also help with reading,

Note.... It isn't easy to 'speak' with writing, and no written material can replace listening to and speaking Italian on site! This is a basic, practical introduction....just the facts! I've written the approximate pronunciations so that someone who speaks English can understand them.

2 important things to know

- There are only 21 letters in the Italian alphabet. There is no **j**, **k**, **w**, **x** or **y**, except in imported words. **J** is used in some dialetti (regional dialects) including Orsarese, and is pronounced as a **y**
- Emphasis is usually on the **next to last** syllable. For example limone (**lee**·**MOH**·**neh**). If the emphasis is on the **last** syllable, the vowel at the end of the word has an accent. For example, tiramisù (**teera**· **mee**· **SOO**), ragù (**ra**·**GOO**), menù (**men**·**OO**), supplì (**soop**·**PLEE**), bignè (**bee**·**NYEH**), tè (**TEH**) or caffè (**caf**·**FEH**). This is very important to remember, as this is what gives the Italian language its musicality. If you pronounce everything the same, then the words will sound monotonous.

Accents/accenti are used:

- When emphasis is on the **last** syllable of a word as described above
- 1 syllable words with 2 vowels, as in può, più, giù
- 1 syllable words that can have 2 meanings, as in te (you) or tè (tea), e (and) or è (is)

Unlike other languages, in Italian the accent is almost always l'accento grave (**GRAH**·**veh**) sloping down towards the right as in **à,è,ì,ò,ù**. L'accento acuto, as in **é** and **ó** is not used often. We can safely say that 99% of the time, l'accento acuto is only used for **sé, né**, and words ending in **ché** (perché, finché, giaché, etc). In all other cases, use the accento grave.

Pronouncing vowels:

- **A** is pronounced **ah** as in Mamma or amore (**ah**· **MOH**· **reh**)
- **I** is pronounced like the **ee** sound in green, as in piselli (**pee**· **SEL**· **lee**). When followed by a vowel, **i** can also sound like the **y** in yoga, as in ieri (**YEH**·**ree**)
- **U** is pronounced like the **u** in June or the **oo** in food. Musica is **moo**·**SEE**·**ca**, nutella is **noo**·**TEL**·**la**
- **E** has 2 slightly different pronunciations that are hard to express in writing, and also vary from region to region. For the purpose of pronouncing food, we will just say that **e** is pronounced **eh** like the **e** in egg. My favourite example is pepe (**PEH**· **peh**). Many pronunciation guides for English speakers make the mistake of stating that **e** makes the sound 'ay'. This is not correct. Do **not** pronounce **e** this way unless you want to sound like Tony Soprano! There are no silent **e**'s. If it is in the word, it needs to be pronounced.
- **O** is **oh** like the **o** in no - calzone (**cal**·**ZOH**·**neh**), or like the **o** in hot- cotto (**COT**·**toh**). You may not know which sound the **o** makes unless you have heard the word spoken correctly, and there is also regional variation

Italian words are full of vowels and most words end in a vowel. If there are 2 or more vowels in a row, each one is pronounced. They may be in the same syllable, as in ciao (**CHEEAH**·**oh**) and ieri (**YEH**·**ree**). An awesome word with 4 vowels in a row is gioia (**GEEOH**·**yah**)! It means joy and just try saying it with a grumpy face☹.

Pronouncing consonants

C and G:

- **C** and **g** are 'duro' or hard (as in **corso** or **grande**) -- except if followed by an **e** or an **i**.
- **C** or **g** followed by an **e** or **i** are 'dolce' or soft, like the **ch** in **church** and the **g** in **gem**. Examples are **cibo** (**CHEE·bow**) and **gelato** (**ge·LAH·toh**). **Cucina** (**koo·CHEE·nah**) is a word with both a hard and soft c
- If **c** or **g** are followed by an **h** and then an **e** or **i**, the pronunciation is hard once again

Examples:

Ci = chee	chi = kee
Ce = cheh (as in check)	che = ke (as in keg)
Gi = gee	ghi = ghee
Ge = jeh (as in jelly)	ghe = as in ghetto

Pesce (**PEH·sheh**) = fish, **pesca** (**PES·kah**) = peach, **pesche** (**PES·keh**) = peaches

If you want **succo di pesca/pesche** (peach juice) but ask for **succo di pesce**, you ordered fish juice.

Yuck! Don't make my Bellini with that!

H (acca/AK·kah)

- **H** is **muta** (**MOO·tah**=silent).
- **H** is used to change the pronunciation of **c** and **g** to hard (see above). **H** is only used with **c** or **g** if followed by **i** or **e**, not if followed by **u**, **a** or **o**. Remember this handy rhyme: '**cu ca co, acca no' 'gu ga go, acca no'**'.
- **H** is also used with the verb **avere** to distinguish the meaning of 2 words that sound the same (anno/hanno, o/ho, ai/hai, a/ha)

Gn/Gl

- **Gn** is '**nyuh**' like the n and y in 'can you', or 'canyon' if you say it quickly and nasally – try **bagno** (**BAH·nyo**) and **gnocchi** (**NYOK·Kee**). The sound is similar to the Spanish letter **ñ** as in **señor** and **piñata**. It should not sound like a hard **g**.
- **Gl** is '**lyah**' like the l and y in 'will you' said quickly. **Gl** is followed by **ia** or **io** as in **foglia** (**FO·lyah**) or **aglio** (**AHL·yoh**)

S combinations

- **Sce** is **sheh** like the **she** in **shelter**... **pesce** = **PEH·sheh**
- **Sci** is **shee** as in **prosciutto** (**pro·SHEEOOT·toh**)
- **Sb** is **zb** as in **sbottonata** (**zbot·toh·NAH·tah**) = unbuttoned, **sbriciolata** (**zbre·cheeh·LA·tah**) = crumbled, **uovo sbattuto** (**zbat·TOO·toh**) = beaten egg

R's are rrolled. **T**'s sound like **T**, not like **D**

Double consonants are **both** pronounced. The sound needs to be held for an extra fraction of a second. Take **cappuccino** for example. You pronounce 2 **p**'s and 2 **c**'s. It's **cap·pooch·CHEE·no**, not **cap·a·chee·no**.

Double **r**'s are rreally rrolled as in burrata (**boor-RAT-ah**)

Pronouncing double consonants as single can completely change the meaning of the word and can even lead to embarrassing situations. For example, if you want to order penne (**PEN-neh**) al pomodoro, but you ask for pene (**PE-neh**) al pomodoro, you have just ordered penis in tomato sauce! Yuck!

Plurals

Unlike English and Spanish, adding an **s** to the end of a word does not make it plural! In Italian, every thing (noun) has a gender.

- Masculine things usually end in **o** and are made plural with an **i**.
- Feminine things usually end in **a** and are made plural with an **e**.

Biscotto (**bees-COT-toh**) is singular, biscotti (**bees-COT-tee**) is plural. Do not ask for a biscotti. You ask for 1 biscotto or 2 biscotti.

The plural of birra (beer) is birre, so the order is una birra (**BEE-rah**) or due birre (**BEE-reh**)

The plural of panino is panini. Since panini is **already plural**, paninis is like saying 'sandwicheses'! It sounds just as silly in Italian!

Many food items have been given a sex change in North America. Remember that zucchini, fettucine and linguine are all female and do not end in **i**.

- Things ending in **e**, whether masculine or feminine, are made plural with an **i**. For example, a glass is un bicchiere, 2 glasses are due bicchieri (**beek-KYEH-ree**), un salame, due salami.
- Things ending in **io** become plural with just the **i**. Kiss is bacio (**BAH-cheeoh**), many kisses are baci (**BAH-chee**).

Some words don't change when plural:

- Words that are abbreviations like auto and euro (eoo-roh)
- Imported words like computer and taxi. These are usually masculine
- one syllable words
- Words that end in a consonant or an accented vowel (il caffè/i caffè).

There are exceptions to these. For example egg-l'uovo (**oo-oh-voh**) is masculine, but the plural is the feminine le uova (**oo-oh-vah**)-not 'uovi'.

Il dentista, il programma and il problema are masculine, but end in **a** because they come from the Greek word, ending in 'ma' or 'ta'. Sometimes the exception is simply because it sounds awkward.

Using the wrong vowel at the end can completely change the meaning of a word. For example, if you want to order agnello alla menta (lamb cooked with mint) but you ask for agnello al mento (lamb with chin) I'm not sure which body part will be brought to your table!

Now you are ready to read the menu at Trattoria 'Un po' di pepe'..... Buon appetito!

IL MENÙ

Trattoria 'un po' di pepe'

ANTIPASTI

Focaccia Genovese
Mozzarella di bufala Campana
Prosciutto e melone

PRIMI

Gnocchi al Pomodoro
Tagliatelle al cinghiale
Penne all'arrabbiata
Orecchiette con cime di rapa
Spaghetti aglio, olio e peperoncino
Risotto ai frutti di mare

SECONDI

Pesce spada con salsa di acciughe
Polpette della nonna
Coniglio arrosto con patate
Melanzane ripiene al forno

DOLCI

Crostata con nutella, mascarpone e pere
Panettone con mandorle
Zabaglione

Il menù Trattoria Un po' di pepe

Focaccia Genovese (**foh-KACH-cheeah Jen-oh-VEH-seh**)·Genoa style focaccia

Mozzarella di bufala Campana (**motz-za-REL-la dee BOO-fa-lah Cam-PAH-nah**)·Fresh mozzarella made with the milk of water buffalo from the region of Campania

Prosciutto e melone (**pro-sheeooot-toh e meh-LOH-neh**)·Prosciutto wrapped melon

Gnocchi al pomodoro (**NYOK-kee ahl poh-moh-DOH-roh**)·Gnocchi with tomato sauce

Tagliatelle al cinghiale (**ta-lyah-TEL-leh ahl ceen-ghee-AH-leh**)·Tagliatelle (ribbon-like pasta) in a wild boar sauce

Penne all'arrabbiata (**PEN-neh ahl ar-rab-BYAT-tah**)·Penne in an 'angry' spicy sauce

Orecchiette con cime di rapa (**oh-rek-KYET-the con CHEE-meh dee RAH-pah**)·Orecchiette (Pugliese pasta shaped like little ears) with rapini

Spaghetti aglio, olio e peperoncino (**spah-GET-tee AHL-yoh ohl-yo eh peh-peh-ron-CHEE-noh**)
Spaghetti with garlic, oil and chili pepper

Risotto ai frutti di mare (**ree-SOT-toh ahee frut-tee dee MAH-reh**)·Seafood risotto

Pesce spada con salsa di acciughe (**peh-sheh spa-da con sal-sa dee ach-chee-OO-geh**)·Swordfish in anchovy sauce

Polpette della nonna (**pohl-PET-teh del-la NON-nah**)·Nonna's meatballs

Coniglio arrosto con patate (**coh-NEE-lyoh ar-ROS-toh con pah-TAH-teh**)·Roast rabbit with potatoes

Melanzane ripiene al forno (**meh-lan-ZAH-neh ree-PYEH-neh**)·Baked stuffed eggplant

Crostata con Nutella, mascarpone e pere (**cro-STA-tah con noo-TEL-la, mas-car-POH-neh e PEH-reh**)
Nutella, mascarpone and pear tart

Panettone con mandorle (**pah-net-TOH-neh con man-DOR-leh**)·Panettone sweet bread with almonds

Zabaglione (**zah-bah-LYOH-neh**)·A custard type dessert made with egg yolks, sugar and marsala

Buon Appetito!

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