

The tastes and history of Italy

in the North End of Boston

Three Rivers native shares her love for all things Italian



Michele Topor starts off her tours with a little bit about her background and her visits to Italy.

The North End of Boston is home to a vast amount of bakeries, Italian markets, coffee shops, and is a great place to get lost for a day. The scents are enticing but the tastes make you feel like you are in the countryside of Italy.

Learning about the many tastes of Italy by a woman who grew up in the small town of Three Rivers, Mass., Michele Topor is of Polish nationality, but her heart belongs to Italy and the North End neighborhood she has called home for almost 50 years. Michele attended Palmer Schools and then headed off to Boston for nursing school, where she found the city to be where she wanted to stay.

Michele moved to the North End after college and fell in love with the atmosphere, the people

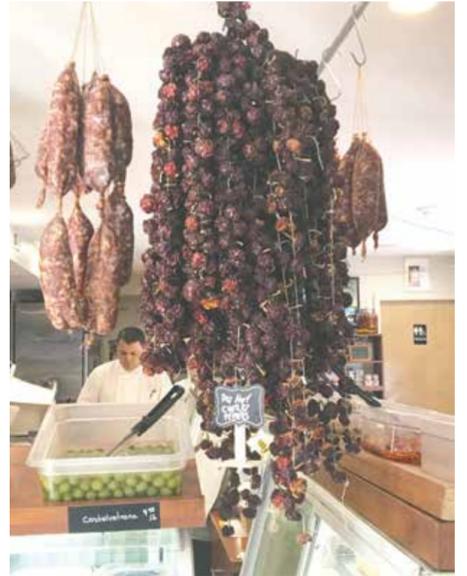
and the cuisine. She has toured Italy many times, attending cooking classes and exploring the region. For many years she enjoyed taking her family and friends around the North End and teaching them about the food and treats. Then 25 years ago she decided to make a career change and open a business giving tours to people and sharing her love of the neighborhood with others.

Spending a recent morning with her, we tasted everything from Olive Oil, Prosciutto, fennel, figs, pasta and cannoli. Learning about what to look for in these products when you buy them and the history of their origins. She guided us into a variety of shops that she has found, although there are many others to see as well.

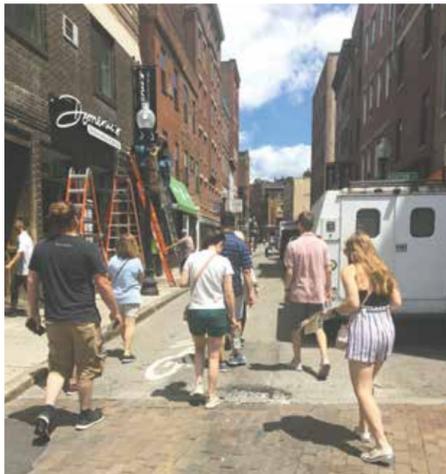
The people of Italy follow a

true Mediterranean diet, which many believe is the healthiest way to eat. There diet is all about food digestion, and what you should eat and when you should eat it. Pasta is not a huge staple that many would believe it to be, but more of an appetizer to your meal. Salads are consumed as the last course to help with the digestion of the meal, not as an appetizer we see in our restaurants.

Michele has truly made herself at home in the North End and walking down the streets on tour she is greeted by many of the other residents of the area. The North End is a very welcoming community and a treat not far from home. For more information go to bostonfoodtours.com.



Dried hot cherry peppers hang from above the cases in the salumeria.



Heading down the narrow streets of the North End, to begin our journey.



Olives, Prosciutto and capocollo along with parmesan and pecorino cheeses were among the tasty treats sampled



Prosciutto and soppressata hang above the cases of delicacies.



Michele started off the tour at the Bread bakery, explaining the simplicity and the American adaptations, along with a sample of bread with olives.



Wonderful selection of fresh cheeses available.



Coffee flavors overwhelm the senses when entering into the coffee shop.



Some of the many breads available to purchase.



Tour participant Diane, from Indianapolis, tries a cannoli sample.



At Cirace's we learned the history behind the wine and liquors present on the Italian table and how an aperitif's bitters aid in digestion.



Coffee beans are ground to order, as well as teas of all different varieties.



Display of handmade pastas available at a shop in the North End.



A few samples from the green grocer, fresh figs, kiwi, orange slices and fennel.



Italian candies were among treats to take home.



Spices of all kinds are ready for purchase, many flavors to compliment your food and beverages.