

## What did the ancient Romans eat?

A chef is **unearthing** recipes from one of the world's oldest cookbooks to reveal the origin of Italian food.

**Unearth (verb):** find sth in the ground by digging

It's sunset in Rome, outside the city walls. Golden light filters through umbrella pines and casts its glow on a straight stretch of smooth **basalt** stones that changed the course of history. This is the Appian Way, the first road built in Rome, where more than 2,000 years ago soldiers **set out** to conquer distant lands and **returned in** triumph.

**BASALT (NOUN) [U]:** a type of dark rock that come from Volcanoes.

**SET OUT (PHR V):** to begin a job, task, etc. with the particular aim or goal.

She **set out to break the world record.**

They **succeeded in what they set out to do.**

**RETURN IN (PHR V):** come back, return home



The road is the heart of Rome's Appia Antica Archaeological Park, an expansive green **wedge** that stretches from the edge of the city's historical centre to the hillside villages of the Castelli Romani.

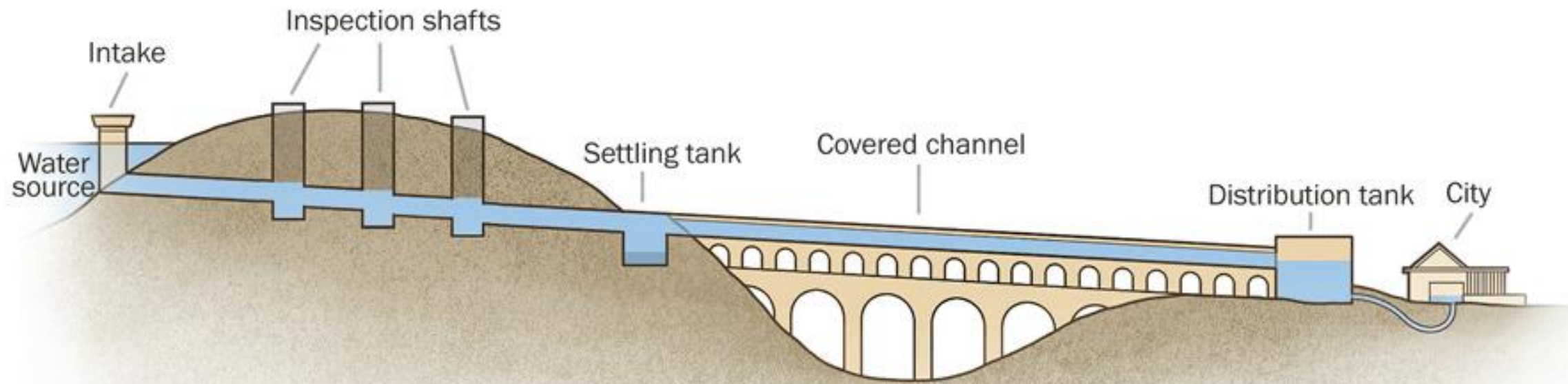
**WEDGE (noun):** a piece of wood, rubber, metal, etc. with one thick end and one thin pointed end that you use to keep the door open, to keep two things apart, or to split wood or rock.

He hammered the wedge into the crack in the stone.

(figurative): I don't want to drive a wedge between the two of you (= to make you start disliking each other).

This 4,700-hectare **oasis** is the second largest urban park in Europe – dotted with aqueducts, nature reserves, archaeological sites, vineyards, pastures and villas owned by such luminaries as designer Valentino and actress Gina Lollobrigida.

**OASIS** /əʊˈeɪsɪs/ (noun): a pleasant place in the middle of sth unpleasant.  
A green oasis in the heart of the city.





Less than 3km from the Colosseum's crowds, the parco gives travellers a place to **slow down** and leisurely experience the Roman countryside, complete with birdsong and sightings of shepherds leading their flocks.



The **scattering** of **ruins** adds a certain **memento mori** that **enchanted** painters and poets of the Grand Tour, as you feel the circle of life standing on this old road: soft breeze carrying the scent of fresh grass, **crumbling** stones carrying stories from the past.

**SCATTER** (verb): to throw or drop things in different directions so they cover an area of the ground.

*They scattered his ashes at sea.*

**ENCHANTED** (Adj.): delighted, filled with great pleasure

*He was enchanted to see her after so long.*

**Crumble** (verb): to break into very small pieces.

Crumble the cheese over the salad.

As this is Italy, good food must complete the **idyllic** scene. Enter Paolo Magnanimi, of the Appian Way's Hostaria Antica Roma. The restaurant is located within sight of the park's iconic Mausoleum of Cecilia Metella and fronted by a flower and vegetable garden **tended** by Magnanimi's father, Massimo.

**IDYLLIC (Adj.):** perfect

**TEND (verb):** to care for sth/sb

**Well-tended gardens**

Inside, the menu lists dishes that can't be found at any other restaurant in the city, or perhaps in the world. Behind these creations is Magnanimi, a cook passionate about creating and serving meals that are deeply rooted in this park's history, from the days of ancient Rome.

For most, ancient Roman food doesn't sound appealing. What first comes to mind are **freakish** scenes like Trimalchio's banquet in the 1st-Century AD story Satyricon, where a **nouveau riche** host throws an **ostentatious** feast that includes such "delicacies" as bull's testicles, sow's udders and a hare decorated with wings to resemble Pegasus.

**FREAKISH (Adj.):** very strange or unusual

*A freak weather conditions*

**NOUVEAU RICHE (noun) (disapproving):** a person who has recently become rich and likes to show how rich they are in a very obvious way.

**OSTENTATIOUS (Adj.) (disapproving):** expensive or noticeable in a way that is intended to impress people, SHOWY.

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**DELICACY** /'delɪkəsi/ (noun) (pl. **-ies**): a type of food considered to be very special in a particular place, **SPECIALITY**

**UDDER** (noun): an organ shapes like a bag that produces milk and hangs underneath the body of a cow, goat, etc.

But Magnanimi keeps it real, recreating delicious dishes that regular Romans ate, not the **exotic fare** that was reserved for the super elite. A chef and historian who has spent more than 25 years studying ancient recipes, Magnanimi says Romans were nature lovers and sensual pleasure seekers who greatly appreciated good food, though **over-indulging** was very "un-Roman".

**EXOTIC (Adj.):** unusual

**FARE (noun) (formal) [U]:** food that is offered as a meal.  
The restaurant provides good traditional fare.

**OVER-INDULGE (verb):** to have too much of food or drink