



Piadina

EMILIA-ROMAGNA'S DAILY BREAD by Mary Gray

My technical first encounter with the *piadina* tradition happened in a way that would make any red-blooded *romagnolo* wag his finger—and possibly tell me, rightfully so, that it didn't really count. I was in Piedmont, of all places—specifically, just a few feet from Turin's National Museum of Cinema—and going about lunch the way one should *never* go about lunch when exploring a new region.

Which is to say, hurriedly, and hungrily, and after spending too much time on my feet in a museum. I don't remember many of that convenience-driven meal's specifics, beyond the guilt I felt in doing *Emilia-Romagna*, the flatbread's true home terroir, a grave disservice.

My first *real* (or at least memorable) encounter with *piadina*, then, was several years later at an outdoor birthday party in rural *Emilia-Romagna*—a much more appropriate setting for one's introduction, even in the midst of a pandemic-tainted summer.

We'd made the three-hour, impossibly snaky drive from Florence to the countryside *B&B Nido d'Ape* ("Honeycomb Hotel", sweetly enough). The rustic cabins

were just a few miles outside sleepy *Cesena*, where one 2015 viral YouTube video is the most exciting thing that's happened in at least a few decades.

Save for the *piadina* spread we found at this party: flatbreads stuffed with grilled eggplant and summery vegetables, flatbreads exploding with soft *squacquerone* cheese and spicy sausages, all arranged just sloppily enough on antique trays, matronly lace tablecloths tucked unselfconsciously beneath them.

Piadina, at least in its homeland of *Emilia-Romagna*, is less a flatbread than a ubiquitous utensil, present at any party table, any *antipasto* spread, worth their salt. Strictly for illustrative purposes, the closest approximation