

The Dolce Vita Diaries

Cathy Rogers, Jason Gibb



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A deliciously different travelogue

In 2005, Cathy and Jason threw in successful careers as TV presenters and producers to become olive farmers in Italy. With their one year old daughter and Italian dictionary in tow, they found themselves in the middle of a European nowhere untouched by modernity.

They were on a steep learning curve in more-or-less everything – finding out how to prune an olive tree so that a sparrow can pass through its branches, learning what beauty products are de rigeur in the changing rooms of a local Italian football team, being trained, by a local Italian choir, how to sing in English but with an Italian accent – and learning the rigorous rules of when one is allowed to consume a cappuccino. Armed with their indefatigable love of food, they headed off many a potentially tricky situation by cooking their way out of it, a sure route to the heart of any Italian.

They discover that olive farming is dominated by the big boys and desperate to turn their new home into a way of making a living they cast around for ideas of how they can do so. A flash of inspiration led them to launch an 'Adopt-an-Olive-Tree' scheme. For a fee buyers could adopt a tree, receive produce from it and even go and visit it to give it a hug. The scheme became hugely popular with trees selling out way ahead of expectations. A contract with Selfridges followed and suddenly Cathy and Jason's dream is realised. Or nearly anyway. It's a hard slog and they meet every challenge with fortitude and humour but what they hadn't expected was that the biggest challenge would be the quiet of the countryside. Soon they find themselves hankering for the sounds and stench of the city and facing a difficult decision on what they should do next.



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