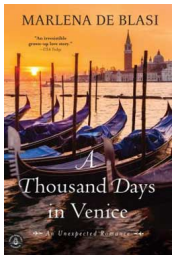


A THOUSAND DAYS IN VENICE: True-life love story sings in pages of memoir

Written by Terry Mathews
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Imagine a chance encounter with a handsome Italian in a café while on a girls-only Venetian holiday. Imagine you have lunch with the handsome man and he tells you he fell in love with you several years back, when he saw you on vacation with another man.

As fantastic as it seems, that's what actually happened to American chef Marlena De Blasi. In her memoir, "A Thousand Days in Venice," De Blasi shares her story of meeting, falling in love and then following her heart to be with a man she hardly knew.

De Blasi's style is charming, forthright and fluid. I read the book in one sitting, as I couldn't wait to find out if "the stranger," as she calls him, was a mass murderer or a true romantic. I needn't have worried.

At the end of the book is a chapter called "Food for a Stranger" that includes recipes like Fresh Pasta with Roasted Walnut Sauce, Sleeping Plums, Traditional Tuscan Tomato Porridge and Lemon Gelato with Vodka and Sparkling Wine.

What fun it would be to take a trip to Venice and follow De Blasi's footsteps to see where the once-in-a-lifetime romance developed and how the author and her true love carved out a life for themselves in one of the world's most romantic cities.