

BE NATURE'S GUEST

Words and photos by Andrea and Alessandra Recchia



I had the chance to interview Alessandra, owner with her husband Giuliana of Masseria Montenapoleone – in Puglia, to learn more about their philosophy and how it is connected to the concept of sustainability.

"WE WANT TO TRANSLATE THE PAST INTO AN ETERNAL PRESENT, TREASURING THE LESSONS OF OUR ANCESTORS AND RESPECTING THE PLANET"

BMJ : WHAT ARE THE 3 WORDS YOU WOULD CHOOSE TO DESCRIBE MASSERIA MONTENAPOLEONE?

A : Authenticity, Creativity, Sustainability.

BMJ : WHAT KIND OF EXPERIENCE DO YOU WANT TO OFFER TO YOUR GUESTS?

A : We love to take our guests to the heart of Apulian rural life. Observe, listen, smell, touch, taste are the senses enhanced by our 5 senses experiences together with the magical sense of place you feel while being surrounded by the Love for Nature. We are an organic farmhouse promoting biodiversity. All our experiences are connected to our "farm to table" production: we organise cooking classes, wine and extra virgin olive oil tastings, cycling tours, picnics, cheese tastings, as well as lunches and dinners in our vineyard. Every time we create an experience: we love to imagine an outdoor living room, with green walls and fresh open air, while celebrating the goodness of our beloved Puglia. During winter time, we have our Giardino d'Inverno or "winter garden" that enable us to create green experiences all year round.

BMJ : WHAT ARE YOUR FAVOURITE CORNERS AT THE MASSERIA?

A : The Masseria is full of magical green corners: the Orange Garden, the Vineyard which faces the Adriatic sea, the ancient Olive Grove, the flowered Old Porch, the Hammocks field. Some of my favorite corners are hidden. Following the white rabbit of your imagination and wandering among the inner paths of your mind, you will reach The Capers' Cave or the Rural Stone Benches, places where you can think, read, reflect, write and listen to music. Places where, above all, you can dream.



BMJ : CAN YOU DESCRIBE HOW A DAY GOES AT MONTENAPOLEONE – FROM AWAKENING TO THE BED TIME?

A : The eyes are still closed when the senses awake with the amusing soundtrack of curious birds twittering behind the windows. The wonder of creation is ready to be enjoyed outdoor.

It's breakfast time, a cut moment to be spent among colourful flowers and luxuriant plants, tasting homemade products while being surrounded by original old stables. According to the season, after breakfast, you can have a walk among the fields, breathing some energising fresh air, go for a cycling tour or explore the local beautiful villages. If it's too hot, we imagine you jumping into our pool, sunbathing and relaxing. In any case, soon it will be lunch time and you are in Puglia, a place of wonders for gourmands! Food-wise, it's a matter of season and thanks to our "farm to table" production we have an endless range of choices. During summertime, "orecchiette crudaiaia" or "friselle" made with an extra virgin olive oil and fresh tomatoes are a must for lunch. In the afternoon you can enjoy one of our experiences, such as a cooking class or a wine tasting, waiting for a breathtaking sunset. Infinite shades of pink embrace everything, while you sip a glass of our Summanello red wine admiring the beauty of Nature and the Adriatic sea in the background. When the stars appear, you realise that they seem to be closer here and you can have an outdoor dinner at our La Paleogalleria restaurant by the pool. Food and Love are deeply connected for us and all our dishes tell the story of a precious and wonderful seasonality. Flavours and colours of Puglia are combined to make our guests falling in love with our tradition which is reinterpreted with a touch of contemporaneity.

BMJ : THIS SOUNDS LIKE A DREAMY DAY! WHEN WE MET BACK IN SEPTEMBER YOU MENTIONED THAT MASSERIA MONTENAPOLEONE ENABLES A SLOW WAY OF TRAVELLING. HOW DOES IT ENABLE THIS APPROACH?

A : We are always open because we strongly believe in the beauty and in value of the rhythm of Nature. Each season has its own peculiarities in terms of colours, fruits and tastes. Having the chance to understand why Nature needs Her time to produce, is a unique experience. When you live here all year long, you start realising how unnatural it is to force and change the production cycle. We invite our guests to share our mindset, being more conscious of the importance of the unwritten laws of sustainability.

BMJ : WHAT IS THE PHILOSOPHY EMBRACED BY THE MASSERIA?

A : We want to translate the past into an eternal present, treasuring the lessons of our ancestors and respecting the Planet. The deep respect we have for our tradition is always combined with a desire for creativity. We have an atelier where we produce our own pieces of furniture and each room is unique. What we love the most is telling old stories which are still powerful. They help us to better understand the world and the other human beings. Nature can teach us so many things, and this is the reason why we thought about our motto "Be Nature's Guest".

BMJ : HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR LIFESTYLE?

A : Puglia is a lifestyle destination. Puglia means good food, good wine, sunshine, kind people and stunning Nature. These are for sure the key elements we combine to design our 5 senses experiences. When I decided to come back to my roots after travelling around the world, I chose the quality of life we have in Puglia. You can eat outside almost every day, feeling embraced by the warm hug of this truly magic land. You can go to the beach whenever you like, the Adriatic Sea is very welcoming and a source of wellness. In Puglia, there will always be someone who will smile you back, day or night, if you are alone or not.

BMJ : WHAT DOES SUSTAINABILITY MEAN TO YOU?

A : Our hospitality world is focused on sustainability and our design supports a "sustainability project". We love to give a new life to the old objects that we found in the farm or in antique markets. We believe that they still contain so many untold stories to share. The processing of local materials, such as stone and wood, is the basis of the conservative recovery work, together with the use of biological and eco-sustainable materials. The commitment made towards the environment protection led us to meet the partial energy needs of our company with the use of renewable energies. Our photovoltaic system produces electricity. The use of the latest generation of solar panels and the biomass system allow us to produce domestic hot water and thermal energy, in order to heat our rooms.

BMJ : HOW DO YOU DEFINE A CONSCIOUS TRAVELLER?

A : A conscious traveller is a traveller who chooses an eco-friendly and sustainable holiday. A conscious traveller is a traveller who takes care of Mother Nature while exploring the world. A conscious traveller is a traveller that takes into consideration the impact of her trip on the environment. At Masseria Montenapoleone we try to respect the Planet, through the use of renewable energies, promoting our upcycling philosophy and separating the bins for different kinds of waste, both indoor and outdoor. Furthermore, we promote a slow way of travelling, suggesting to discover our area all year long, avoiding the busiest time as well as enjoying our seasonal, fresh and organic food experience.

BMJ : WHAT ARE YOUR FAVOURITE PLACES IN APULIA?

A : I'm in love with the Itria Valley! an enchanted and mysterious place where a special energy comes from the white stones and the red earth. Here, "trulli" – typical constructions – are scattered all around the countryside, the air is pure and the human feelings are truly authentic. I was born in **Lecce**, a small village in the heart of this valley. Lecce is on the hills, with its round shape its unique white washed "cummerie" and flowered balconies. The perfume of just cleaned pavements as well as the meat balls and "brasciole" ones are happy childhood epiphanies to me. I feel so good every time I have the chance to walk down the charming narrow streets of the old town. I also love the land of the Ancient Olive Trees in Fasano, where the Masseria Montenapoleone is located, just in between the coast and the hills. This is a sunny and mesmerising land. If the Itria Valley can be painted with a light and shadow technique, the Fasano area is like a super bright painting that expresses a deep joy for the sunniest part of life. The sea is a fundamental element in Puglia, being always by our side while giving us strength and health. The Ostuni beach area is stunning, crystal clear water embrace you and make you feel loved and secure. I feel the same vibrations near Otranto, in the Salento area. I can say that Puglia is worth exploring, from the North to the South, because every corner is different and special. There are so many nuances to discover that once you come you need to come back, until it becomes your home away from home.

BMJ : A LITTLE BIRD TOLD YOU ARE WORKING ON A NEW EXCITING PROJECT CALLED HERBARIUM, WHAT IS THIS GOING TO BE?

A : Our Herbarium is a place for holistic experiences, a place created with the desire to generate a harmonious relationship between the human being and the environment. Ethnobotany, which aims to establish a more complete relationship between man and plants, is at the heart of our project. Our massages and our treatments are based on the use of the botanical wonders of Puglia. Respecting the biodiversity and preserving the ecosystem, we make our plants, flowers and fruits stronger and richer, achieving a greater effectiveness of their extracts. Keeping genetic diversity intact, we draw precious substances from Nature which, combined with the knowledge of different massage techniques, favour the psycho-physical wellbeing.



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