

A culinary shopping spree in Bologna

From Palermo to Trieste, there's almost too much to see in Italy, but I still somehow visit the same place over and over again. Each spring while traveling to the *Bierra dell'Asno* beer festival, I pass through the somewhat gritty northern city of Bologna and stroll through its ancient market quarter, the *Quadrilatero*. Between the *Piazza Maggiore* and *Via Castiglione*, a couple of short blocks to the east, the neighborhood shows off the bounty of what has to be Italy's culinary capital, the hometowns of tortellini, tagliatelle, mortadella and *ragù* Bolognese. So many cheeses, hams, oils and vinegars originated in the surrounding region of *Emilia-Romagna*.

Shopping in the *Quadrilatero* is an almost overwhelming sensory experience. When you walk through the creaky doors of one of the district's great delis, like *Tamburini*, the rich aromas of hanging hams and the giant, aged blocks of *Parmigiano-Reggiano* and other cheeses hit you square in the nose. The creak and scrape of rusty old bicycles cut through the crowds on narrow streets in front of places like the *Gilberto enoteca*, which stocks great wine, spirits and chocolates, and its own *limoncello*.

The greatest impressions, however, are visual: hundred-year-old shop interiors, filled with dark wood and gleaming

brass fittings, multicolored variations on pastas, and foods with confusing names, like "*ravioline arancia-mortarda*," that you'll want to look up later — in this case, a soft, sugar-dusted cookie with a bittersweet orange-mustard filling.

Despite its age, the *Quadrilatero* now has several new arrivals, including a bookstore-meets-trattoria branch of *Eataly*, the Italian culinary powerhouse. *Eataly* has branches all over the world, from Chicago to Tokyo. But in the old shops of the *Quadrilatero*, you get the impression that you're seeing — and hearing, smelling and tasting — something with a very real sense of place. *EVAN KOST*



The aromas of hams and *Parmigiano-Reggiano* greet visitors to *Tamburini*, one of the great old delis in the *Quadrilatero* neighborhood of Bologna.