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Cafes of Catania

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Scardaci's tempting desserts

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If you are craving an aromatic cappuccino or café with a freshly baked brioche or scrumptious sweet, **Catania** overflows with indoor and outdoor **cafes** at every corner to satiate your appetite. **Sicily's** second largest city situated on the east coast, Catania is a survivor of the 1669 volcanic eruption and 1693 earthquake, which basically annihilated the population and covered the area with black lava. But the city rose like a phoenix from the ashes, and the sculptured rock formations of lava add to the city's scenic charm. It touts elaborate baroque architecture and the UNESCO World Heritage Piazza del Duomo, the busy square adjacent to the city's grand avenue, Via Etnea, riddled with cafes, shops, and monuments as far back as Roman times.

The following are some top cafes and pasticcerias of the area for your caffeine fix and sweet tooth along the center of town and just beyond. This is but a morsel of the endless choice of outdoor eateries.

Perhaps, one of the most popular is **Caffe del Duomo**, smack in the main square that it's named after and overlooking the famed fish market, fountain, elephant monument, and cathedral. There are lots of outdoor seating and an ample amount of umbrellas to cover you when sunshine seeps through. The fresh baked biscuits are not only pleasing to the eye but to the palate.



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· Further along the main Via Etnea going north sits the outdoor **Café Tabbacco**, a good spot for breakfast brioche or lunch. Noted for their gelato and crostata, Italian baked pie or tart. Owner Marco gives his customers a friendly greeting to add to one's comfort. Further up the avenue, you will discover a double enticement of two cafes neck to neck, **Café Savia** and **Spinella**.

· **Café Savia**, at the corner opposite the Bellini Gardens, makes the best arancino ragu, a fried dome of rice filled with a flavorful array of cooked vegetables. The endless counter exhibits a great range of cannoli, baba rum cakes, and cartocciata (a baked pastry stuffed with prosciutto, mozzarella cheese and mushrooms). Seating is both outside and inside. Their gelato ice cream is worth a visit.

Right next door, and almost attached, is **Spinella Pasticceria**, which also has a great selection of gelato, dulces (sweets), and is a good spot for breakfast and lunch for outdoor dining. Prices tend to be a bit higher at both places due to its central location near Bellini Park and bus stops.

· Further north up the main via is **Pasticceria Mantegna**, mainly indoor seating with some outdoor tables, popular to locales and open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Try stuzzichini da aperitivo, small bites or array of appetizers served with drinks, which can be quite filling. Prices are reasonable for quality and quantity of food.

· As you approach Via XX Settembre, going north on Via Etnea, turn right and you will soon arrive at Piazza Trento and **Bar Trento**, a pleasant outdoor setting and place to sit, relax and chat with a friend or colleague, or just people watch. Parking is also better here than near Via Etnea, if you have arrived by car. Breakfast and lunch are served under a canopy seating area with pleasant servers.

Continue now along the grandiose boulevard of Corso Italia, with upscale shops and

restaurants, to Piazza Europa in view of the sea. Here you encounter one of the city's most popular cafés of tourists and locales alike, **Café Europa**. It is the perfect setting to relax, reconnect, and reflect.

For the elegant atmosphere and plentiful appetizers that are presented gratis during noon for customers, this establishment is a refreshing find. The glass case display of fanciful desserts can be overwhelming at first. Whether you choose an arancino, calzone, or pizza for a light lunch, you will leave pleasantly satiated with a true taste of Catania.

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