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The Sweetness of Sicily: Zafferana Etnea

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Fruits and nut display at Ottobrata Festival in Zafferana

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Situated on the eastern coast of [Sicily](#) upon the dramatic slopes of Europe's highest active volcano, Mount Etna, [Zafferana Etnea](#) is a true survivor. Despite the town's destruction from lava flow from volcanic eruptions and major earthquakes from the 1600s to the 1800s, the city was rebuilt in a classic Baroque style, reflected by the white stone staircase of Saint Mary Providence Church and the Tourist Center, once the City Hall.

Below sits the main squares of Umberto I and Piazza Bellevedere. The black lava rock formations throughout the town and beyond to the seaside, add a unique character to the miles of greenery and lush vineyards. Zafferana has become a summer retreat and second home for many escaping the high energy and crowds of the neighboring city of Catania.

This friendly village of Zafferana Etnea, with just under 10,000 residents, is considered the sweetness of Sicily. The area produces 35% of Italy's [honey](#), and not just ordinary honey. There are a myriad of flavors to choose from: including orange blossom and eucalyptus to acacia, chestnut, and pistachio, to name a few.

Just up the hill from the two main roads of Via Roma and Via Garibaldi, stands the [Oro d'Etna](#), where 30 tons of honey are produced each year amid 900 families of bees, with 80,000 bees inside each family. Besides tasting the unending flavors, the visitor will be given a small tour and explanation of the honey making process. On display are eight different kinds of honey, along with the other products produced from the honey: natural cosmetics and candles from the wax to antibiotics and royal jelly made from the pollen for energy boosting.

The sweet tastes of Zafferana's honey can also be sampled in such desserts as mostaccioli, sometimes known in Calabrian as nzudda, a well-known Sicilian pastry with figs, honey, orange zest, and nuts. Foglie da Te, a crunchy and nutty chip, and the sciatore, biscuits dipped in dark chocolate, can cure any sweet tooth. All of these can be enjoyed with the gracious service at the Italian café Donna Peppina in the main square opposite the church.

Just walk through the town to obtain its true flavor. From the local pescheria, or fish market, you can actually see spada or swordfish being sliced from head to tail, and buy some salmon, clams, lobster, and squid, all just caught fresh from the sea.

Every Sunday in October, the town and main square attract hundreds of people to the Ottobrata, a festival featuring the local products and handmade items of the region. All the sweet delicacies, along with the wide array of honey choices, are on hand to sample and take home to savor and delight in the true dulce or sweetness of Zafferana.



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