

## Supermarkets & Food Shopping

First, please note that the smaller Italian supermarkets accept only **cash**. The larger ones will accept debit cards, but acceptance of credit cards is still rare. Also be advised that most shops are closed on Mondays. Opening hours are typically 8am to 12.30pm and again from 3.30pm to 7pm. The street markets are all over by lunchtime so early rising is essential! Free off-street car parking is available in all the local towns; when parking on-street make sure that you set your parking disk to your arrival time – especially in Aulla where traffic wardens are constantly on the prowl.

### Everday essentials / Where to get your cappuccino!

We tend to get our everyday essentials from Filattiera. The original town is high up on the hill but there is not much of interest there – it has an ancient borgo (worth walking through – once), uninspiring churches, a truly dismal bar (to be found in the main square) and the town hall/police station. The commercial part of the town incorporating the railway station, supermarket, bakery (panificio), bank (Monte dei Paschi di Siena), post office, newsagent, garage, tourist office, museum and an historically important church (the Pieve di Sorano) is just off the SS62 Pontremoli-Villafranca road. We used to go Bar 2000 (located on the opposite side of the SS62 from the filling station) for our morning cappuccino, but these days tend to frequent “Facebar” located in the modern complex further up the road (nearer the Ekom supermarket).

The supermarket in Filattiera is an Ekom (previously known as Eurospin Discount) - Via Volpino, 54023 Filattiera: Tel & Fax: 0187458535. This is a basic, but cheap (less so since its modernisation and re-branding in the spring of 2010) and the wine is worth a look - there is a limited selection: the whites are uninspiring (except for the prosecco), but the reds are very palatable. The fresh food, frozen food, bread and preserved meats and cheese are all fine. Opening hours are 0800 to 1330 and 1500 to 2100 Mon-Fri, 0800-2100 Sat and 0800 to 1330 Sun.

Villafranca has two supermarkets of note. Doro Centry opened in 2007 and can be found to the right of the SS62 road as you enter Villafranca from Filattiera (open 8.30am to 8pm Mon-Sat & 8.30am to 1pm/4pm to 7.30pm Sun). A bit more difficult to find is Conad (located on the corner of via Malaspina & via Arpiola) which opened in 2014 and which is in the centre of the town just after the railway station. (Coming South from Pontremoli turn right at the first set of traffic lights and then bear left past the station. Conad is on your left. Open 8am to 8pm Mon-Sat, 8.30 to 12.30 Sundays).

We've yet to find a supermarket in Pontremoli that impresses us much. The Conad is OK but is difficult to find if you are a newcomer. There is also a Euro Più (opened in 07) which overlooks the river on the West side - OK except that the choice of fresh food is limited & the quality is so-so. It's a bit like Aldi/Lidl, offering cheap (sometimes bizarre) special offers each week.

### Notes:

- A one Euro coin is required to release a shopping trolley from the supermarket trolley park.
- Most supermarkets charge for plastic shopping bags (una borsa, due borse etc) so you need to ask for the number you require before beginning to pack at the checkout.
- Matches, cigarettes, newspapers/magazines and phone top-ups are not sold in supermarkets. Matches & cigarettes are to be found in tabaccherie (tobacconist's shops) whilst newspapers and magazines are to be found at edicole (news-stands).
- To buy fruit and veg in most supermarkets (but not Ekom) you must put the item(s) you want in a plastic bag, note the number on the price ticket attached to the display shelf, go to a weighing machine, enter the number on the touch pad, remove the self-adhesive bar-coded docket from the weighing machine's printer and then attach it to the bag.
- In the interests of hygiene, it is normal practice to put on a disposable polythene glove (supplied by the supermarket) before handling food items.

## **Traditional Food Shopping**

For those who want to try their hand shopping at traditional Italian establishments, there is no shortage of places to go. If you drive straight down to the valley through Caprio you will eventually come to a T-junction on the main SS62 Pontremoli-Filattiera road across which is a parade of shops (known as Scorcetoli - confusingly located a long way from the railway station of the same name, which is actually at Cantiere). Turn left, and half-way to Filattiera you will pass through Migliarina where there is a further parade, this time on both sides of the main road.

Note that Italian shops display their produce “ready to eat” - Italians don't buy unripe items with the intention of letting them ripen at home. Hence, any attempt to squeeze the fruit to check on its condition will not be appreciated – the proprietors will assume that you are implying that their produce is unfit for sale!

The best local fish shop is “Rosy & Ricky” in Villafranca (Via Baracchini 33: 0187-494112: open Tues-Sat 8am to 1pm) – on the right as you exit the town along the main SS62 road towards Aulla. Opposite is our favourite bar – good coffee and cakes served by a very friendly family. (There is a wonderful fish market in La Spezia which is worth a visit if you are a dedicated foodie).

The street markets in Pontremoli and Villafranca have a charm which appeals to many. Note however that you must get up early if you want to visit street markets – many stalls are beginning to pack up by midday!

## **Butchers & Bakers**

Bread & cake shops (le pasticcerie) open very early and most of the stock has gone by 11am. They usually close for the day at 12.30pm.

Butchers (le macellerie) are rather intimidating places. Most of the stock is kept in the fridge round the back and there isn't usually much on display. To complicate matters, the cuts of meat are not the same as in the UK. All in all butcher's shops are best avoided unless you are particularly adventurous or you have significant Italian language skills.

## **Pastificio (Pasta Shop)**

If you would like to try the Italian version of ready meals, visit “da Cristina” in Pontremoli. Some staff speak English but all are very friendly and helpful, and all the products are on display so you can easily point to what you want. Every kind of pasta dish (and a good few rice and pastry dishes) are on offer at reasonable prices, all ready to stick in the oven. To get there, enter Pontremoli from the South on the SS62. Turn left over the first river bridge, continue over the second bridge, and da Christina is in the first square (Piazza San Francesco) on your left. (See: [www.pastificiocristina.it](http://www.pastificiocristina.it))

## **Directions to Conad Pontremoli & Conad Terrarossa**

To reach Conad Pontremoli, enter the town from the South and turn left across the main bridge (it is signed Conad). Go over second bridge and then right opposite an estate agent, signed Cervara. Follow the road for a short way and then turn to left and go down the left hand side of Bar Moderna. You will then see signs for Conad which has its own car park.

The biggest supermarket in the area is Conad at Terrarossa which is on the Northern outskirts of Aulla. This is like a large-ish Tesco and has a wide range of fresh food and fish. It is not cheap, though. To get there head towards Aulla from Villafranca. Terrarossa is at the start of the Aulla conurbation and the supermarket is low down to the left next to the river. It is part of a (generally tacky) shopping complex but has a large car park. The DIY store Brico is nearby.