

A big hello from us at fluentintuition and welcome to our 2010 Christmas newsletter

Time flies when you are enjoying yourself and it seems the months have passed in a blink of an eye since we were celebrating Christmas last year. Even the snow is déjà vu. This year our newsletter is aimed at entertaining and inspiring with a set of short articles on places we love, great books to read, historical traditions and language tips for all. So curl up in that armchair and get comfy...

In this edition you'll get to find out what's on in the area over the festive season (What's On), you can read about the spirit of old European Christmas traditions and even get to practise your Italian with our delightful mulled wine recipe (Food & Drink) – go on, give this recipe a go, there's even a non-alcoholic version all you chauffeurs can indulge in!

If you're still thinking about your Christmas list, we're also reviewing one of our favourite books Quo Vadis Baby? (Books We Love) and provide you with an insight into the top apps and sites guaranteed to make you cheer (Language Tips)! What's more, we bring you the latest news and courses from fluentintuition. This month we're featuring an exclusive Spanish experience in Toledo (Places we love). And although the finer details are still under wraps, the secret is out about our corking offer of a Talk and Taste wine trip (fluent Updates).

We hope you enjoy reading this issue and take some great language tips into the New Year with you. We love hearing your thoughts so if you have any great articles you'd like featured in the next issue, want to share some language tips or just have some suggestions please give us a call on 01483 768500 or drop us a line at nikki.op@fluentintuition.co.uk, we would love to talk to you.

Lastly, here at fluentintuition the whole team would like to wish you and your loved ones a merry Christmas and happy New Year. Joyeux Noël! ¡Feliz Navidad! Buon Natale!Wesołych Świąt Bożego Narodzenia! Shèng dàn kuài lè!

Happy reading,

Nikki & the fluentintuition team

FI What's On

The must-see exhibition of 2010

Event: Gauguin

Date: 13.09.2010 to 16.01.2011

Opening times: daily 10am-6pm; Fri, Sat and Sun 10am-10pm

Venue: Tate Bankside Modern London SE19TG

Contact: +44 020 7887 888

Fee: £13.50, concessions (£10)

Website: visit visiting.modern@tate.org.uk for all current details

Ooh la la in the city: French fun, with cookery, property, food, wine, literature and fashion all in the mix

Event: The France Show

Date: 14.01.2011 to 16.01.2011

Opening times: Fri and Sat 10am-6pm; Sun 10am-5pm

Venue: Earls Court, London

Fee: £13.00, online reductions

Website: visit www.thefranceshow.com/ for all current details

Three centuries of beautiful Qing Dynasty historic royal robes of the last ruling dynasty of China

Event: Imperial Chinese Robes Exhibition

Date: 07.12.2010 to 27.02.2011

Opening times: daily 10.00am-5.30pm; Fridays 10.00am-9.30pm

Venue: Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Fee: £5.90, see website for discounts

Website: visit www.vam.ac.uk/collections/asia/imperial-chinese-robres/ticket-information/index.html for all current details

Mulled wine and gingerbread in Winter wonderland

Event: German Christmas market

Date: 19.11.2010 to 03.01.2011

Opening times: daily 10am-10pm

Venue: Hyde Park, London

Fee: free

Storytelling in a style reminiscent of Dickens' own readings with mince pies and mulled wine

Event: A Christmas Carol by Two Fine Fellows

Date: 15 December 2010

Opening times: 6.30pm, performance begins at 7pm

Venue: the Lightbox, Chobham road, Woking

Fee: £9 adults, £6 children, advanced booking required

Website: visit www.thelightbox.org.uk/ for all current details

Places we love: Toledo

Tantalising Toledo is a seductress of a city that tempts visitors with her heady swirl of art, music, and culture.

Toledo is an uncut Spanish gem often forgotten against the backdrop of sun-kissed Mediterranean beaches, beautiful Barcelona and the majesty of Madrid.

The tides of history have ebbed and flowed over Toledo, with nations and races each leaving their imprint and a little of themselves on the tiny cobbled streets leading to the citadel of the Alcazar.

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Toledo has provided a home to the Romans, the Visigoths of the Dark Ages, the Moors and now a vibrant, café and tapas society. Turn a corner in any winding street and you come face to face with thousands of years of proud heritage and culture.

Spain and Toledo in particular is the place where East once brushed against West, where Moors met Christians. In those days, the blade was mightier than the pen - and Toledo crafted those swords and daggers of Hannibal and many knights and generals who followed.

The sights and architecture of this city bear witness to history with ruins of the Roman theatre, heavy Moorish influence in many buildings and the later grandeur of the Catholic kingdom. The streets spiral round the mountain in ever decreasing circles to reach the 13th century cathedral dominates the skyline of Toledo, sitting on the mountaintop high above the Tagus River.

The views across the countryside of Castilla are open with big, blue skies. With just a little thought, you can imagine Don Quixote, one of the cities famous literary heroes, tilting at his windmills on the plains below.

The Church of Santo Tome in the Place del Conde houses another masterpiece - the 16th century '*El Entierro del Conde de Orgaz*' by El Greco, who lived at Toledo from 1577, until his death in 1614.

Toledo may have roots in the past, but this passionate city also lives for today. Standing in the shadows of history are fabulous restaurants, cafes, and bars serving tasty tapas,

wonderful wines, magnificent Manchego cheese, and the city's famed sweet marzipan.

If the hot and sunny days in Toledo are a delight of heritage and culture, the nights are handed over to food, wine, music, and... romance.

If you've been inspired by the beautiful city of Toledo and would like to find out more please give us a call. When we visited Toledo we had such a lovely time that we decided to set up a fluentinspain package with our Spanish partner. To find out more about this course here and abroad see our Updates below or visit our website. Take me there!

A Taste of Christmas

Despite celebrating the same festival, most countries have their own recipe for family dinners and parties around Christmas and the New Year.

In **England**, the traditional feast is roast turkey, roast potatoes and vegetables followed by Christmas pudding and brandy butter.

In times past, popular drinks to wash down the meal would be wassail - a cider-based punch or egg nog. Today, you'd be hard-pressed to find anyone in England who has ever drunk wassail and most people toast the season with wine and beer. Perhaps a more familiar tradition nowadays is raising a glass of mulled wine, warm full-bodied red wine infused with delicious, fragrant spices. As long ago as 1869, the recipe for mulled wine graced the cover of Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management. More than a century and a half later, this robust popular drink lives on, particularly at Christmastime.

Yet, the custom of supping away through the chill winter nights, is not just confined to Olde England. In the region of Alsace in France and several German-speaking countries, this Christmas spirit is known as *Glühwein*, and is indeed offered and drunk at *Weihnachtsmärkten*. Brewed with berry or cherry wine, it is enriched with cinnamon sticks, vanilla pods, cloves and citrus, often times laced with rum or liqueur. A similar version exists in the northern regions of Italy, here this punchy brew is called *vin brulé*. Back in France, meanwhile, the national label is *vin chaud* (hot wine).

In crossing Europe we find the variations are many. The mulled wine popular in the Czech Republic is *svařené víno* ("boiled wine"), a slip of pronunciation and in Poland it becomes *grzane wino* ("heated wine"). In Romania we have *vin fiert* ("boiled wine"), whereas in Bulgaria it's *greyano vino* ("heated wine"). In Latvia, the brew is made with Riga Black Balsam and known as *karstvīns* ("hot wine"). Most intriguing is the Moldovan recipe, *izvar*, made from red wine with black pepper and honey; and let's not forget the Belgian variation on the theme: "Glühbier", or mulled beer.

Travelling northwards to Denmark, Estonia, Norway, Sweden and Iceland, our mulled friend mutates with the help of some stronger kindred spirits: vodka, akvavit or brandy, into the delightfully onomatopoeic 'Glögg'. By all accounts we may have come full circle since this Nordic blend is apparently much akin to modern 'Wassail' or mulled cider.

And what better way to comfort your party guests charged with Santa's chauffeur duties than by offering them the fruity, sans-alcohol version? Easily achieved you simply flame off the

alcohol to ensure the excess spirits take flight. Sweet and delicious, but son of a lesser 'Glögg, perhaps. If you'd like to try some winter recipes read on....

Food & Drink

Warm your soul with mulled wine Italian style: Ricetta Vin Brulé: Riscaldatevi l'anima

Cosa occorre:

- 1 litro di vino rosso scuro e corposo
- 2 stecche di cannella
- 200 grammi di zucchero
- 8 chiodi di garofano
- 1 arancia
- 1 limone
- mezza mela tagliata a cubetti

Metodo:

1. Iniziate a sbucciare in superficie il limone e l'arancia, la buccia deve essere priva del bianco, in un pentola mettere i chiodi di garofano e la cannella
2. Aggiungete pian piano un po' di vino e lo zucchero, poi le buccia dell'arancia e del limone... Mescolate in modo tale che lo zucchero si scioglia un po'
3. Ora portate ad ebollizione per un paio di minuti ricordandovi ogni tanto di mescolare, meglio con un cucchiaio di legno
4. Adesso dovete far evaporare l'alcol, facendo molta attenzione, fiammeggiando la superficie
5. Attendete qualche minuto prima di servire. E' consigliabile filtrare il Vin Brulé con un colino
6. Aggiungete la mela e correggere con un po' del vostro liquore preferito

What you need:

- 1 litre of full-bodied red wine
- 2 sticks of cinamon
- 200g sugar
- 8 cloves
- 1 orange
- 1 lemon
- ½ an apple cubed

Instructions:

1. Start by peeling the orange and lemon, put the peel without pith in a saucepan with the cloves and cinnamon
2. Slowly add a little wine and the sugar, then the peel and mix so as to dissolve the sugar a little
3. Now bring to the boil for a couple of minutes, keep stirring, preferably with a wooden spoon
4. Now you must make the alcohol evaporate by flaming the surface, taking great care
5. Wait a few minutes before serving. It's a good idea to strain the Vin Brulé through a sieve
6. Add diced apples and your favourite tipple

Variations:

Low/no alcohol version: replace the wine with pear juice or repeatedly flame the alcohol until completely evaporated.

Books We Love

Books We Love - Quo Vadis Baby?

Giorgia Cantini is 39-years-old, lives in the Italian city of Bologna, drinks too much and is a private investigator.

A dark curtain in her mind that hides the past is slowly pulled back as she is forced to remember people, places and events she would rather forget when, Aldo, a friend and confidant of her sister, Ada, delivers a box of letters that stirs her mind.

The pain of these memories takes Giorgia back 16 years to when Ada went to Rome to find fame and fortune as an actress but instead The years have changed Giorgia and Bologna, but she embarks on a quest to solve the riddle of Ada's death - and in doing so is forced to examine her own life.

Quo Vadis, Baby? - a famous line from Marlon Brando in the movie *Last Tango In Paris* - is a tour through the smoke-filled bars and cafes of Bologna with Giorgia to look for answers but seems to uncover yet more questions.

By her side is Gaia, destined to replace Ada in Giorgia's affections - a sad and symbolic relationship.

As the story unravels we have to decide whether Giorgia is seeking the truth about her sister or looking for answers about herself.

Writer Grazia Verazoni styled a dark and sometimes distressing film-noir from the shadows of Giorgia's mind with punchy dialogue and an ability to reveal the little things in life that really do matter but are often overlooked.

QUO VADIS, BABY? By Grazia Verasoni - Available in Italian or French via Amazon (Prices vary). Also available in Italian as a movie on DVD starring Angela Baraldi as Giorgia, directed by Gabriele Salvatores from Amazon (£4.99)

This is definitely one for the Christmas list of our all Italian Book Club (Club dei lettori) members, so we'll be giving it our ****/10 in a future edition of **Books We Love**. To join the waiting list for any of our book clubs, just drop us a line at the address below. And, calling all Russophiles! If you're a book-lover, your Russian's up to it and you fancy starting a new club, then get in touch on 01483 768500 or info@fluentintuition.co.uk as we've had quite a few expressions of interest.

Language Tips

Keeping in the Christmas spirit we have some great language tips to pass on.

Writing in their 'Tastings' column in the Wall Street Journal recently, husband and wife team Dorothy J. Gaiter and John Brecher reveal how they often find people are very nervous about saying the names of wines and drink in front of them. Thankfully they've highlighted some useful web links to help you put your Spanish, French, German or Italian pronunciation to rights.

It also makes a great party game: so, how do you say **Albariño, Amarone, Denominazione di Origine Controllata, Erzeugerabfüllung** or **Vacqueyras**?

If you're not sure, why not explore louislatour.com? This family-run company, Maison Louis Latour, is one of the most highly-respected négociant-éleveurs in Burgundy. On their site you'll find a fab sound library with audio pronunciations of many important wine names. Then for a similar fun aid try Berry's Wine Pronunciation Guide at www.bbr.com/wine-knowledge/pronunciation. And what's more, on the home page you'll find a yet another great game to keep everybody entertained.

If you're still feeling awkward, but lucky enough to have an iphone, why not add **Winesay** - the new wine pronunciation app - to your Christmas present list, and for just £0.59, you can download the most important wine words and names of wines directly to your mobile phone.

And for one final piece of December cheer, take a peek at this youtube clip, there's a **Spanish Drinking Song** guaranteed to bring a light-hearted smile from the very first note:
http://www.youtube.com/watch_popup?v=NLjuGPBusxs&vq=medium

Cheers! Brindiamo! Prosit! Santé! Salud! Na zdrowie! Kong chien!

FI Facts & People

The latest from around the globe

French first lady and former supermodel **Carla Bruni-Sarkozy**, 42, is filming with **Woody Allen** in his latest movie "Midnight in Paris." She plays a museum director in the romantic comedy. She has had small roles playing herself in Robert Altman's "Pret-a-Porter" (1994) and Alain Berberian's "Paparazzi" (1998).

Stylish **Penelope Cruz**, 36, who is six months pregnant with her first child with husband Javier Bardem, was spotted jetting out of Heathrow after filming the latest Pirates of The Caribbean offering "On Stranger Tides". Younger sister Monica stands in for distance shots while Penelope relied on the wardrobe department to hide her bump in the close-ups

Hollywood movie and TV star **Ryan Reynolds**, 35, is the sexiest man alive according to the US magazine People. He celebrated with a night out in New York with wife **Scarlett Johansson**, 26.

Russian beauty **Irina Shayk**, 24, is considering legal action against GQ Spain after she saw nude pictures of herself in the December issue - despite wearing underwear for the duration of the shoot. Ms Shayk dates Real Madrid footballer Cristiano Ronaldo.

Zhang Yimou, the man behind the spectacular 2008 Olympic ceremonies in Beijing, is smashing box office records with his low-budget love story with unknown lead actors "*Under the Hawthorn Tree*." The story tells of love of the son of a high-ranking Communist Party official (**Shawn Dou**) for the daughter (**Zhou Dongyu**) of a jailed political rebel in 1970s China. Shot for under US\$10 million, moviegoers have handed over more than more than US\$22 million at the box office in China alone.

And we can't go to press without a mention of our home-grown VIP **Chinese trainer, Hong Zhao**. Hand-selected by the Hanban/Confucius Institute, Hong has just returned from an all-expenses-paid trip to Beijing for an intensive 7 day training programme on the development of latest Chinese language teaching materials. Hong reports back: "The training course was very intensive. We had to cope with jet-lag while training every day. But it was worth attending, we got chance to talk to the developers first hand." Well done Hong!

And finally, **Roger Federer** won the season-ending title at the O2 Arena for the fifth time with a three-set victory over world number one **Rafael Nadal** in London. The Swiss player won 6-3 3-6 6-1 in one hour and 37 minutes. Not such a Bon Nadal then for our Spanish friend!

Fluent Update

Inspired & Ready for 2011?

At fluentintuition our job is to make learning a language fun, and that's why our recipe for success is mixing language with the great things in life: food, wine, culture, and music.

Over the last year we've been busy developing new courses and experiences for a better learning experience and are pleased to bring you some great new courses for the New Year.

All packages make excellent New Year pick-me-ups for recharging your batteries after the seasonal festivities.

If you are still looking for a great gift for that someone special in your life, then maybe immersing yourself in the lifestyle and language of a new country hits the spot.

Inspired to speak Spanish?

FluentinSpain is our shiny new course - an exclusive and unique chance to learn Spanish in Toledo and in the UK, providing you the best of both worlds. Courses start just after Christmas so you'll have to be quick to get yourself on one of these - see www.fluentintuition.co.uk/Study_Abroad::Spain.html for the latest availability and prices.

Cook & Talk

Our Cook & Talk Tours for travellers with an appetite for fine wines and dining let you learn some intimate Italian while picking up tips on making more than passable pasta. Places are available now for Cucina e Chiacchiere experiences.

We're also about to lift the wraps on our new Cook & Talk Wine tasting package email <mailto:info@fluentintuition.co.uk> or call +44 (0) 1483 768500 if you can't wait to find out the details.

If you can't find the time to jet out to a place in the sun, then you can still learn a new language like Spanish, French, Italian, Chinese or Russian with one of our courses in Surrey or learn at your own pace with a personal trainer package developed around your skills and needs.

Personal Language Trainer

A special way to learn at your own level and at your own pace with a course tailored to you. We'll put a learning plan together that matches your skills and experience. Makes a great gift for a friend. Download a brochure from <http://www.fluentintuition.co.uk/documents/Personal%20LanguageTraining%20eBrochure.pdf>

English in England

For anyone visiting England to live, study or work, learn English as a foreign language at our training centre in Surrey, on the outskirts of London. With the date of Friday 29th April 2011 now set for the Royal Wedding at Westminster Abbey, Spring in England promises to be packed with romance!

New Year...New opportunities

With a new year comes the chance for new excitement – and our new courses starting in January give you a chance to jump in to beginner's Italian, Spanish and French, so book on line now! We'll be celebrating the Chinese New Year too with a brand new beginners' Chinese course (31st January).

If you're a false beginner, January also sees the start of our Polish, Mandarin, and Spanish Beginner Plus programmes. We have fresh starts for Italian post-beginners and pre-intermediates. And there's still a little room on our popular French and Italian for intermediates, so save your place now! [Take me to Group Courses!](#)

Until the next time

All that's left to say is thank you for all your support and happy holidays! We hope you've found this newsletter of interest and that you've picked up some things along the way. We're always happy to hear from chirpy learners so please do drop us a line or give us a call if you'd like to talk through anything featured in this newsletter. And don't forget, if you see a package you like, you can find out more on the fluentintuition website at www.fluentintuition.co.uk/ or we would love to talk you, so call us on +44 (0) 1483 768500.

Happy holidays from Nikki and all the fluentintuition Team.