



# Stolen Figs: And Other Adventures in Calabria

*Mark Rotella*

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Calabria is the toe of the boot that is Italy -- a rugged peninsula where grapevines and fig and olive trees cling to the mountainsides during scorching summers. Calabria is also a seedbed of Italian-American culture; in North America, more people of Italian heritage trace their roots to Calabria than to almost any other region in Italy.

Mark Rotella's *Stolen Figs* -- named a Best Travel Book of 2003 by *Condé Nast Traveler* -- is a marvelous evocation of Calabria. A grandson of Calabrese immigrants, Rotella persuades his father to visit the region for the first time in thirty years; once there, he meets Giuseppe, a postcard photographer who becomes his guide. As they travel around the region, Giuseppe initiates Rotella -- and the reader -- into its secrets: how to make a soppressata and 'nduja, and, of course, how to steal a fig without committing a crime. *Stolen Figs* is a model travelogue -- at once charming and wise, and full of an earthy and unpretentious sense of life that now, as ever, characterizes Calabria and its people.

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