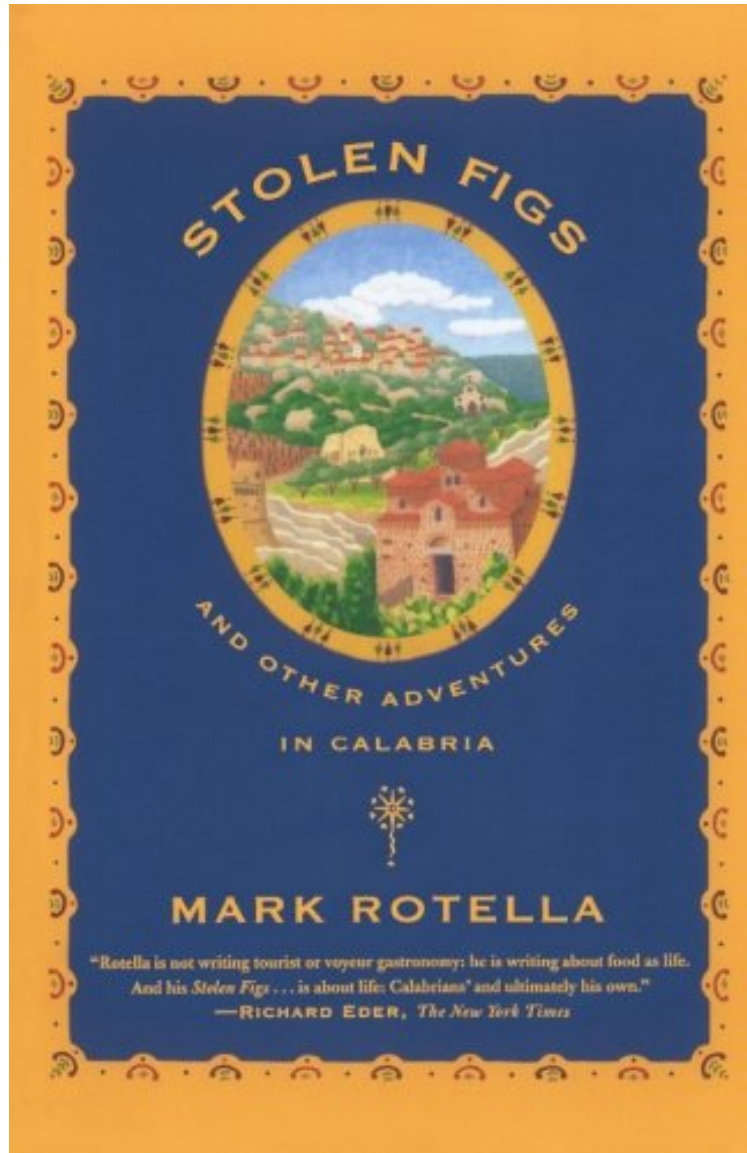


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Stolen Figs: And Other Adventures in Calabria

Mark Rotella

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#696226 in Books Mark Rotella 2004-05-01 2004-05-01 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.50 x .72 x 5.501, .82 #File Name: 0865476969320 pages Stolen Figs And Other Adventures in Calabria | File size: 47.Mb

Mark Rotella : Stolen Figs: And Other Adventures in Calabria before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Stolen Figs: And Other Adventures in Calabria:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A Must Read for Anyone With a Love of Southern Italy By M.C. Shopper This is a wonderful, visual, conversational book that I'd consider a must read for anyone with a southern Italian heritage, or an interest in the region. Rotella has the ability to make you feel as though you were accompanying

him to Calabria on his adventures. I gave this book as a gift to a family member before her trip to Italy. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An Excellent Book about Calabria By William Scalzo I am 3/4 Calabrese and most of my family hailed from the same tiny town of Gimigliano as the author's family, so my family and I have had a great time reading this book. I live in Niagara Falls, NY so I especially enjoyed the waitress in the little shop asking Mark Rotella if he was from Niagara...seems half of Gimigliano ended up in my hometown. This is the best sort of travel book, because it really makes you feel like you are right there with him traveling the byways of southern Italy. I suggest opening up google earth while reading this book so you can do street view and see the lay of the land that Rotella describes here. I also highly recommend Rotella's book AMORE which tells the story of Italian-American pop music in a unique and highly entertaining way. Both books are very enjoyable and I recommend them highly. 12 of 13 people found the following review helpful. Disappointed By Frank Ruffa Having grown up in that area (a few miles as the crow flies), I'm familiar with most of the locales and customs the author describes. I was excited to finally buy this book (it was on my Wish List for a very long time). I admit, I stayed up late to read it! In retrospect, I realize that I was hooked because I wish to relive some of the good times I enjoyed in Calabria ('60s and '70s), but the author did a rather poor and disappointing job. The narration is repetitive and tedious with far too many typos in the text. Aside from factual errors regarding historical events (mentioned in other comments), the author misspelled several of the local dialect expressions which pepper the text. If you're going to use local idiom, please have enough respect to spell it correctly! For example, it's "culu" not "cullu" (trans: ass). And there are many more ... as in "Giallorosso" instead of "Giallorossa" (wtf!). And, if the author returned in July with family, how could he have witnessed a procession of screaming soccer fans following a tie match of the Catanzaro team? There is no Serie (A, B, C) soccer in July!!!!!! I guess it must have been a [pathetic] artistic license. Was this meant to be a novel or a documentary? It succeeded as neither. When writing about Capo Colonna, he focused on the lone standing greek column (which is impressive enough); but how could he not highlight the fact that just a few feet away there are ruins of a roman villa and a byzantine church!? Within the space of an acre you can 'witness' layers of culture and history spanning 2500+ years!! Talk about an opportunity to illustrate the concept of a land at the center of [ancient and medieval] universal greed and aggression! I am disappointed. It's like eating a cannolo made without sugar!

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.

From *Publishers Weekly* Starred . The jacket copy defines PW Forecasts editor Rotella's narrative as a "model travelogue," but it's much more. Even without a conventional conflict and plot, the author's intensity and personal commitment to a country and its inhabitants cast a spell. Anecdotes range from comedic--a long unseen relative scolds Rotella's father, "Thirty years and you don't write!"--to curiously romantic, as when the author's wedding ring slips off his finger while swimming and a "crazy aunt" exclaims, "That's good luck. Now you will have to return!" Descriptions of delicacies such as *soppressata*, *capicola*, *fettucine* and *rag*—simmered with pepperoni incite a desire to be there just for the luscious, succulent meals, supporting Rotella's belief that you simply can't get a bad meal in Italy. Calabria is a particularly vivid character; readers learn how much the region has been through: spoiled by drought, destroyed by earthquakes and plundered by barons and kings. Rotella points out the effects of Mafia control in Bianca, a small, decrepit city, and the economic destruction it causes, without belaboring or stereotyping the Italian-Mafia connection. Playful moments are equally memorable, detailing petty fig heists from trees belonging to unknown farmers. Such likable protagonists as Rotella's loving father, his wife, and guide Giuseppe are woven unobtrusively through the tale of a culture that counts among its children Tony Bennett, Phil Rizzuto and Stanley Tucci. The book is a love letter, and Rotella reinforces that feeling when he writes, "I am a romantic. With each trip back to Calabria, I've felt myself becoming not only more Calabrese but more Italian." Readers, whether Italian or not, will find themselves captivated by so much meticulously drawn history and enchanting terrain. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. From *Booklist* Rotella introduces the world of contemporary Calabria, the southernmost tip of the Italian peninsula, Rotella's ancestral home and that of most Italian Americans. This rugged land offers little agricultural bounty save those hardy Mediterranean natives: olives, figs, oranges, and grapes. Rotella and his father pay a visit to the family village, Gimigliano, perched on a crag. There they begin encounters with those relatives who chose not to flee to an easier life in America. So successful is the family reunion that Rotella vows to return biennially. Over a series of journeys, he witnesses growth in Calabria's tourist trade by those who love things Italian but who cannot afford trendy Umbria and

Tuscany. Tales told by local Calabrese intertwine with Rotella's father's stories of growing up in Connecticut. Exhausting the chronicles of his ancestral town, Rotella sets out with the indefatigable Giuseppe to traverse the rest of Calabria. Stories flow easily from Rotella's pen, and his portrait of Calabrese life will no doubt encourage more to visit the south of Italy. Mark Knoblauch Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved “Mr. Rotella is not writing tourist or voyeur gastronomy; he is writing about food and life. And his *Stolen Figs*, with its travels and sights and encounters, goes beyond any of these things. It is about life: Calabrians' and ultimately his own.” ?Richard Eder, *The New York Times* “Rotella's account of his travels there, combined with family history and memories, is a charming digression from the unbearably lush memoirs of Tuscany and other more romantic parts of Italy.” ?The *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* “Italian Americans of a new generation are discovering their homeland, and they could not ask for a better guide than Mark Rotella.” ?Gay Talese “*Stolen Figs* is a charming, entertaining, graceful, warm-blooded tale, a genuine contribution to what we know about who we once were.” ?Bill Tonelli, editor of *The Italian American Reader* “Calabria deserves to be discovered and Mark Rotella is an enthusiastic and compassionate guide, traveling from the top to the toe of this least-known region of Italy to uncover the people, the food and the folk traditions that make up his Calabrian heritage.” ?Mary Taylor Simeti, author of *On Persephone's Island: A Sicilian Journal*