

## Differences and Similarities between Italy and the UK

# General Customs, Uses and Habits

(including housing and accomodation)

All countries have some peculiar social customs and Italy is no exception. Take greetings, for example: if you are introduced to an Italian, you should say "Buongiorno" (good-day), and shake hands. "Ciao" (Hi/Hello) is used among close friends and young people, but isn't considered polite when addressing strangers unless they use it first. "Buongiorno" used to intend good morning becomes "Buonasera"( good evening) anytime after the lunch-break (around 1:00 pm). Titles should generally be used when addressing or writing to people, particularly when the person is elderly. Professionals should be addressed by their qualifying titles, such as Professor, Doctor, Engineer, etc. Italian families and friends usually kiss (on both cheeks) when they meet.

Another custom regards invitations. If you are invited to dinner in Italy, you should take a small present with you, like flowers, chocolate or a small plant, to thank the 'lady of the house'.

For Italians presentations and first impressions are all-important, and are referred to as a lovely impression or "bella figura".

Some customs in England also concern: invitations, greetings, dining and punctuality. In fact, the British make a great effort to arrive on time. It's considered impolite to arrive even a few minutes late. Greetings are the same as in Italy, because it is proper to shake hands with everyone and appropriate to respond to an introduction like: "Pleased to meet you!" (lieto di fare la Sua conoscenza). In Britain when you accept a dinner invitation, you should tell your host if you have any special dietary necessities, in the case of allergies or the strict observance of a prescribed diet (but not likes or dislikes!). The evening meal is generally the main meal of the day for families in most parts of Britain - although people do eat much earlier than in Italy. Food may be served in one of several ways:

- family style (help yourself to the food on the table!)
- buffet style (popular at parties and celebratory meals)
- served at table (the hosts serve their guests).

To be continued...