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VICTOURS INTERNATIONAL PRESENTS COOKING AND CULTURE IN SICILY

TORONTO, CANADA April 16, 2009 – Victours International, Canada's leading Tour Operator and Air Consolidator is proud to announce an exclusive collaboration with Contessa Vacations, offering unique packages combining food and culture in one of Italy's richest regions, Sicily.

Shelley D'Angelo, owner and founder of Contessa Vacations knows that excellent Italian cooking is about freshness, flavour and fun.

Food brings people together," says the Canadian entrepreneur, "and I love sharing good food with good friends. The school is both a culinary and cultural experience," explains Shelley, who has successfully run a restaurant in Toronto and taught cooking lessons in Northern Italy. "While there is hands-on cooking, the focus is on how the fabric of Sicily is the **culture**, the **food** and the **people** and to truly appreciate one you must understand all three."

Each day, her guests will take an excursion to the varied culturally-based businesses and sites on the island.

"For instance, we go to Modica, the town of the 100 churches in the heart of south-east Sicily," says Shelley. "Modica is famed for an extraordinary and unique product: chocolate produced with an ancient and original Aztec recipe."

In addition to Shelley, the teachers include outstanding local chefs who will conduct daily hands-on classes. "And our guests will dine with business owners, historians and regional celebrities who will give our visitors the true flavour of this Italian paradise," adds Shelley. "My aim is that our clients will come as guests and leave as friends of the region."

Guests of Contessa Vacations will stay at the elegant Grotta Di Ferro, located in the beautiful southeastern corner of Sicily, 15 kilometers from the town of Ragusa. The renovated summer home of Baron Federico Grimaldi, Grotta Di Ferro is the perfect combination of the old and new. Lovingly restored, this 52 hectare estate accommodates up to 14 in its large modern rooms with air conditioning, satellite television and in-room refrigerators. A swimming pool, expansive grounds and terraces make Grotta Di Ferro the perfect vacation spot to relax and get to know fellow guests who will quickly become friends.

"The estate's many kitchens are perfectly designed for our "hands-on" brand of teaching," says Shelley. "An indoor professional kitchen, terrace-side kitchen with traditional pizza oven and outdoor kitchen accommodate preparation of the divine cuisine of the region beautifully."

This is the perfect location to learn why the natives refer to Sicily as God's Kitchen.

"It's because Sicily grows an amazing assortment of fruits, olives, grapes, tomatoes, figs and spices," explains Shelley. "The influence of many has salted the food of Sicily: the Greeks are said to have introduced wine to the region; the Romans brought dishes made with goose; the Byzantines brought sweet and sour flavors; and later the Arabs brought sugar, citrus, saffron, rice and peppers – all of which are still used in Sicilian dishes."

Four holiday options are available:

- **Beyond Closed Doors** – 6 nights accommodation with meals, 5 afternoon cooking classes, 3 excursions with English-speaking guide, 2 excursion to the local markets and seaside, 5 "Mini" Italian lessons, the Contessa's "Book of Sicilian Delights"
- **Glimpse of Sicily** – 3 nights accommodation with 2 afternoon cooking classes, 2 excursions with English-speaking guide, 2 "Mini" Italian lessons, the Contessa's "Book of Sicilian Delights"
- **Slice of Sicily** – 1 afternoon cooking class followed by an evening meal with wine, recipes of the day
- **La Dolce Vita** – one-week vacation with accommodation in the ultimate suite, private transfers to/from Catania airport by luxury vehicle, personal guide for excursions, 3 cooking classes, private wine tasting, personal visit with olive grower, dinner at private local residence with owners and tour of the estate, Contessa's CookBook and other special treats

Join Shelley in Sicily, you will fall in love!

For bookings or inquiries call Victours International www.victours.ca Contessa Vacations' exclusive agent for North America.