



Be Beautiful: Carry your Body the Italian Way

Natasha Lardera (July 23, 2012)



Italian pilates instructor Flavia Bruni is inspired in her work by the sensuality of her native country where art, flavors, and beauty pervade everyday life. She has designed programs that help women develop fit and healthy bodies that move with the natural elegance of stars like Sophia Loren.

“The quality that gives pleasure to the mind or senses and is associated with such properties as harmony of form or color, excellence of artistry, truthfulness, and originality,” this is the definition of beauty per [The Free Online Dictionary](#) [2], while the [Merriam-Webster](#) [3] calls it “the quality or aggregate of qualities in a person or thing that gives pleasure to the senses or pleasurably exalts the mind or spirit.”

Both definitions focus on the roles of the mind and of the senses, but what about the body itself and the way it moves? That definitely contributes to the general picture. “I think the way we move is incredibly important and that is often ignored,” Flavia Bruni, an Italian dancer and pilates instructor in New York affirms. And what about Italian beauty? “Italian beauty is defined by pure joie de vivre



and enjoyment of our own senses. Living life with a respect for them all opens up our bodies and this makes Italians so very attractive.”

A native of Bologna, Flavia has become a resident of New York just 8 years ago and in March 2012, she was voted by [New York Magazine](#) [4], the best in her field in the Best of New York issue. The blurb goes: “It’s all Pilates instructors’ duty to leave you with burning thighs and aching abs. Flavia Bruni, however, goes beyond that call, empowering her clients with a new *je ne sais quoi* in the way they carry themselves (from \$105 for a private session) and employing mat work and the Reformer. The Italy native and professional dancer, who recently began teaching at new Soho wellness center Ethos Collective, teaches muscle memory and focuses on the moves that prompt her mostly female clientele to walk with an upright, attractive posture, which is as effective at taming back pain as it is for scoring a date.”

“My classes are a synthesis of movements taken from pilates with the addition of what I call Tools for Grace, secrets taken from the past that teach us to move in a more elegant and graceful way,” Flavia explains, “As a result, beauty is not just a well defined body but a specific posture and way to move, which is totally Italian. Italian because I teach posture through the senses and the joy in employing them. I come from Bologna a city where in every corner you can smell something mouthwatering, hear melodic music or see breathtaking art. My senses were and are always on the alert. Our senses respond to all this beauty and open us up, they help the natural beauty of our body to come to the surface and carry us with innate elegance.”

The women of the fifties and sixties are, according to Flavia, the embodiment of this natural beauty. Sophia Loren being the icon par excellence. Now, at 78, she is still seen as an ageless beauty and an inspiration to women of all ages.

“Asked to share her secrets, Sophia Loren attributed her natural beauty to “a love of life, spaghetti, and the odd bath in virgin olive oil.” The practice of bathing in olive oil dates back to her Roman ancestors,” one of the old secrets that Flavia calls [Tools for Grace](#) [5]. Sophia Loren is not her only muse: her grandmother is too. “She was real, she was open to life and all its senses. She taught me how to be a real woman,” Flavia said.

“I teach people to be natural and that automatically is gracious. The body must be used the way it was designed. When we move in harmony with our structure we as women, are comfortable in our own skin.” This concept of beauty is studied in Flavia's [Be Beautiful](#) [6] Pilates classes, sessions where movement exercises are paired with discussion and the revelation of ancient secrets, knowledge that is out there, it has been for ages, but that we often disregard.

“I must admit that yes, people come to me just because I am Italian,” Flavia adds, “They have been to Italy and they are not numb to the natural charm of Italian women. They want that too and I am here to teach them.”

Some think that a woman's wedding day is one of the most important days of her life, and because of that Flavia has designed a program called Fit and Fabulous for the bride-to-be who wants to look gorgeous and glide effortlessly down the aisle. “My promise is that on her wedding day the bride will illuminate the room walking down the aisle with grace and poise and she will be glowing with health.”

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[2] <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/beauty>

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[4] <http://nymag.com/bestofny/beauty/2012/pilates-for-women/>

[5] <http://www.toolsforgrace.com/>

[6] <http://www.ethoscollective.com/flavia.html>