

*Culinary Diving in*  
**Norway**

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**Boil pasta al dente with some blue mussels, white wine and olive oil, or put some king scallops on the barbecue with fresh herbs and pesto. Add one part Italian passion, one part fresh mozzarella and two parts delightful diving, and you have a culinary adventure!**

The late summer sun was warm, and the easterly breeze promised a comfortable boat ride. We were in Søgne, on the coast of southern Norway, and the owner of One Ocean Dive Resort, the pasta king Carlo Golfetto, welcomed us to his aptly-named Culinary Adventure. It promised to be a tasty weekend, with

interesting dives and delicious meals.

I smile as I think back on our first visit with Carlo. As usual, our group of divers had brought a gas burner and several cans of soup—in our eyes, a delicacy, which could easily be prepared between dives. Carlo looked at us in disbelief, smiled his broad smile, rolled his eyes and made Italian hand gestures.

“No, no, no, you don’t need to bring lunch. This is not a Norwegian boat, it’s an ITALIAN boat,” he said with his charming Italian accent. “Lunch is compresi, don’t worry!”

After the first dive, we understood what he meant: “Compresi” means “included”! There was fresh pasta prepared on board the dive boat—al dente, of course; homemade pasta sauce; parmesan cheese and garlic

bread, served on fine, white china; and genuine Italian espresso to top it off. We did not miss our canned soup for a second, after having experienced this.

**A culinary adventure**

Carlo has run One Ocean Dive Resort in Norway for 30 years, but his manner is still delightfully Italian. He is known far and wide for his lunches on the dive boat—we just did not know it, the first time we visited him. When he announced he was having a culinary diving adventure event, we did not think twice before signing up. And now, we were here, hungry and looking forward to exciting tastes and cooking tips.

Carlo told us that we would be diving and collecting a lot of what we would be eating. The ocean in the Søgne archipelago is full of precious delicacies.

Fresh caught scallops on the grill (above); Divers on the One Ocean dive boat (top left)  
PREVIOUS PAGE: Close-up detail of the eyes of a king scallop, *Pecten maximus*





Close-up of the eyes of a king scallop

During the weekend, we would learn things like how to open king scallops and how to best prepare the catch of the day.

**Easy diving, uncomplicated tastes**

Carlo watched me as I struggled to get my gear on. Then, he lent a helping hand with my rebreather. "Diving should be easy," he said. "Like a good pasta sauce. Simple flavours are the best. Don't make it so complicated," he said in his endearing Italian-English.

The first dive of the day was on a wall, which ended on a white, sandy bottom at 20 to 25m depth. King scallops were everywhere. We just needed a handful each to use in different recipes we would try

when we got back, so we left the smallest ones.

If you just pick every third scallop, the population will not be depleted. King scallops are particular like that. If all of them are removed, there might not be more of them swimming up from deeper water. They all want to reproduce, and if they smell other scallops in the area, they are attracted to them. And they do actually swim. We learned this and many other interesting facts during the day.

At the bottom of the wall, we found lots of cuckoo wrasse. Some of them were very curious and got close to us, but we left them alone, even though fish soup with wrasse is delicious. This weekend we



Divers kitted up, ready for a dive



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King scallops on the grill

Carlo demonstrates how to open king scallops (above and right)

were picking and collecting, not hunting. The cuckoo wrasse seemed happy, as we left them to their busy schedules.

A little later, we took the mechanical lift back up into the dive boat. Soon, we were enjoying Carlo's fantastic fresh pasta on a nearby island, while our tanks were being filled from the on-board air compressor. Carlo's dog, Echo—which, naturally, was of "Italian make," a Bergamasco—became tired of being divemaster and disappeared into the woods. His ragged fur made him look like a Rastafarian.

The Søgne archipelago is littered with small islands, and many of them have piers where the boat can be moored for lunch. With such easy diving, one quickly becomes spoiled here. Following another beautiful wall dive after lunch, we chugged slowly towards the resort in the

sunshine, the catch of the day in our nets, ready to be prepared for dinner. We relaxed and enjoyed the trip.

As soon as the boat was moored at the dock at Åros Feriesenter, where the resort is located, Carlo fired up the gas barbecue. The culinary adventure was not yet over, even though we were still pretty full from lunch. It did not take long before alluring smells enticed hunger to return.

Carlo showed us the different types of scallops and mussels and told us which ones were delicacies and which ones we might as well have left on the sea bottom. We sat in the afternoon sun on the dock and learned how to open the king scallops, and how to clean and prepare them. Carlo prepared a mix of fresh herbs for different dishes we tried in which the king scallop truly was

king, and we drank wine and cold beer, hoping our bellies never filled up and the day never ended.

### Mozzarella and Parma ham

Day two started like the first one, with sunshine, a slight breeze and happy people. Out on the ocean, we chugged along towards the first dive site. The direction was southwest, and the weather permitted pretty much anything. We wondered what interesting edibles we would find today.

Carlo had a surprise for us: The Mozzarella Man. His name was Andrea Maggioni, an Italian who loved cheese so

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Divers enjoy the fresh catch of the day







Divers board the *One Ocean* dive boat (above); Andrea Maggioni prepares a delicious starter course of rolled mozzarella in the tiny galley (left)



with us. He was going diving.

After a nice dive along a wall with several reef terraces, we arrived at a shallow plateau. The sea bottom was sandy and festooned with kelp, and the water was warm. Hundreds of gobies and shrimp darted away from us, as we swam towards shore. They were too small to become a meal, so we left them alone.

The dive boat was already moored by the picturesque little pier, and we got to make lunch together with Andrea. Everything happened in the tiny galley on the dive boat. Andrea had brought fresh mozzarella, which he patted into a flat square, like a thick pancake. He then spread air-dried Parma ham and homegrown rucola on it before it was all rolled up into a delicious, tasty roll.

With his chef's knife, he quickly sliced the roll into smaller pieces. The culinary delight was brought to perfection with some imported olive oil, which Andrea keeps in an unmarked bottle. Secret. A

little flaked salt was sprinkled on top, and we finally got to taste it. He had two varieties: a plain and a smoked mozzarella. We took the first bite. The cheese melted in the mouth and made one's taste buds want to do cartwheels of joy. So easy—and so delicious. Echo followed each bite with longing eyes... but there were no leftovers.



Rolled mozzarella stuffed with air-dried Parma ham and rucola

much he started his own cheese factory in Lillesand, about an hour's drive away from Søgne. He did absolutely everything himself, by hand. Fresh milk from a nearby farm became the most delicious mozzarella—a classic, with a Norwegian touch and lots of Italian love, *con amore*. He used no artificial additives and as little packaging as possible to keep the product as nature-friendly as possible. And now, he was here



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The dive boat stops for lunch (above)—the Søgne archipelago has many small picturesque islands that have piers where boats can be moored; Pasta with fresh caught king scallops and mussels (left); Diver with lion's mane jellyfish (right); Sea anemone (bottom left)



## Blue mussels and ricotta with coffee

The second undersea adventure of the day offered yet another great wall. We found more king scallops and some edible crabs on the sandy bottom below. Happy and content, we docked at the dive resort, put our equipment away and made ready for another culinary adventure on the dive boat. Today, we were having pasta with blue mussels in a white wine sauce. Carlo brought us into the galley to show us how he prepared the mussels and what he used to make the sauce taste like heaven.

We could have picked the mussels ourselves, but since they sometimes contain poisonous algae, one always has to call

the authorities to check if they are okay. Carlo had done just that. Since we were advised not to eat mussels from the area, he had had some delivered from a local fisherman, which had been checked and cleared. It was a good idea to make sure the guests avoided stomach problems.

Carlo had the pasta under control. When he said, "three minutes now," it was because the remaining cooking time was exactly three minutes—not three and a half. It had to be perfect. Italian pride was noticeable when he served us, and it all tasted heavenly with the blue mussels. The day was close to perfection.

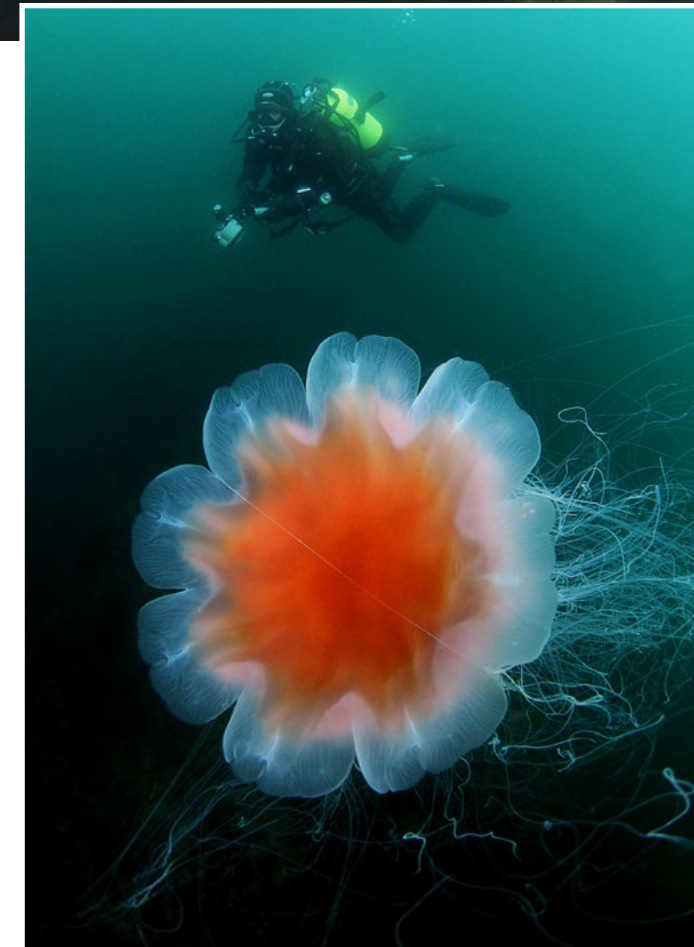
When dessert arrived, it was the famous finishing touch.

Andrea served us homemade ricotta mixed with Italian coffee, which he had lovingly worked into the white, creamy cheese. Perfect. We sat for a long time and watched the sunset before we headed inside. A nightcap and off to bed we went. It had been a long day with lots of impressions, both above and below the surface. Our taste buds were satisfied, but our bodies needed a few hours' sleep to digest it all.

## Mackerel and wreck diving

Can it get any better? Yes, actually, it can. When the sun rose on the third day, the ocean was as calm as a freshly-painted floor. Not a cloud in sight. There was talk of a wreck dive. I am

not the greatest fan of wrecks, and besides, one should not eat seafood collected on wreck sites. There is no knowing what pollutants and heavy metals might be present. Still, I wanted to see something else other than spectacular walls for a change, so a wreck was a welcome diversion. The weather was great, and all options were open to us. Several of the wrecks outside Søgne were in exposed locations and could only be visited when Mother Nature offered good conditions. Today, it was perfect.



We decided to visit the Monsøy, an 18m-long fishing vessel built in 1933. The wreck was still partly





Underwater photographer on wreck (left) and sea kelp forest (above)

## Norway

### FACT FILE

#### TRAVEL

One Ocean Dive Resort is located at Åros Feriesenter in Søgne in southern Norway, approximately 20 minutes by car, west of Kristiansand.

#### DIVING

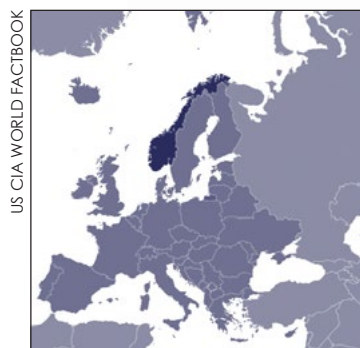
We joined the Culinary Diving Event, where the participants collect scallops and seafood during their dives. The catch is prepared on board the dive boat for lunch, and at the dock for a light dinner later, after returning to the dive resort. The area offers many great wall and nature dives with great opportunities to fill a net with delicacies. There are also many great wreck dives in the area.

#### FACILITIES

The spacious dive boat has an elevator and on-board air-filling station, toilet and kitchen. The resort has very good air- and gas-filling facilities with trimix automat, a changing/drying room with shower and a large pool. Accommodation comprises small cabins or apartments at Åros Feriesenter. A gas barbecue is on hand to prepare the catch of the day.

#### SEASON

There is diving all year round, but it depends on what you want to experience. The visibility and therefore the wreck diving is best during the winter, while the fish life and water temperature is at its best/highest in the fall. King scallops and most other delicacies can be found all year round. ■



Location of Norway on map of Europe

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Location of Søgne archipelago on map of Norway

intact and was standing on its keel at 27m depth. We descended along a wall and found the pretty wreck on the sandy bottom without any problems. After a few rounds around the wreck, we moved on and found another mighty-steep wall, fringed with kelp along the top. The safety stop became a long one, as the marine life was prolific and there was a lot to see. When we surfaced, all of us were happy—and hungry. Perhaps Carlo had another secret pier on a beautiful island in store for us? It was soon lunchtime, but first we had to find something to eat—we did not collect anything during the dive! Luckily, Carlo had a plan. He gave us fishing gear! If we could catch some mackerel on the way, it would be a perfect lunch. And mackerel we got! Carlo

made a sauce based on the blue mussels and wine from yesterday, masterfully preparing a special variety—a hot sauce with garlic and chili, sautéed in olive oil. The last dive completely blew our minds. It exceeded all expectations: a magnificent dive at the very last skerry before the open ocean started—a spot

where one could only dive when the weather was truly perfect. Like today. There was not a crease on the surface; the ocean was calm as far as the eye could see. Below the water, we found a great kelp forest and several spectacular canyons with bright orange dead men's fingers, teeming with fish and crustaceans. It was some of

the best diving we had ever had! When we returned to the dock, we were satisfied with both natural and culinary experiences, yet we still had the day's last meal to look forward to. I'll leave it to you to imagine how good it tasted... After this, there is no way we are going to miss Carlo's culinary diving event next year! ■



The dive boat moored at one of the small rocky islands of the Søgne archipelago

