

## **Food Studies and Sustainability Program: Arizona State University Student learns about Coop, Italy's sustainable supermarket chain**

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Going to Italy without shopping at Coop is like going to Paris without seeing the Eiffel tower. The Coop logo is visible all across Italy, but few people know what those four red letters actually represent. Coop is a large supermarket chain, where the members are part-owners - hence the name "Coop". Today, Arizona State University student Lynnsey Bogash visited Coop, discovered its business model and learned about its passion for sustainable food production.

Bogash is enrolled in the Food Studies Program, a curricular concentration that applies an interdisciplinary approach to the study of food and sustainability. The program consists of three courses in food studies, one of which is the Sustainability class. This course focuses on the radical increase in food production over the last 50 years and the ecological and social problems it has created, as well as on some possible solutions: the organic movement, Slow Food, innovative food technologies, and the shift towards local food.

Bogash is majoring in Nutrition, but has pursued her passion for food by studying abroad in Italy at the Umbra Institute. "My class and I were informed on how Coop works, their philosophy on their business, and the way in which decisions are made to benefit the consumers. We also learned about the different brands that Coop produces for their consumers and they let us sample them. I thought learning about how Coop works was very interesting."

Elisa Ascione who teaches the Sustainability class likes to show her students what the sometimes vague concept of sustainability means in real life by taking them on regular field trips across Italy. From visiting an urban garden to tasting beef at a local butcher's shop, Elisa makes sure her students get to witness sustainability practices firsthand. "I really enjoy the sustainability class. Elisa is very passionate about the subject, she makes the class interesting and interactive," comment Bogash.

Today, she took her students to Coop: "Coop believes that products must be good, ethical, convenient, and ecological. Being a cooperative of consumers the politics and investments of the Coop are much more in the hands of consumers and members, than the average private supermarket," says Ascione.

Because of Elisa's class and the visit to Coop, Bogash was able to compare Italy with the United States: "I think America needs to improve their sustainability, I feel like my knowledge on the subject has been greatly improved. I cannot think of a business in America that runs the same way, so it was cool to see how Coop operates."

### **About the Umbra Institute:**

The Umbra Institute is an American study abroad program located in the central Italian city of Perugia. Often called a "big university town in a small Italian city," Perugia is the ideal setting to [study abroad in Italy](#), with fine arts, business, and liberal arts courses. It also offers a wide range of service-learning offerings including academic internships and community-based courses. For more information about the Umbra Institute, see the website above.



*Arizona State university student Lynnsey Bogash at Italian supermarket Coop*