



Italian partitives

The partitive

Constructed from di and the words Alcuni, qualche and un po' di

By the very nature of its name, a partitive represents a part of a whole. In English we usually convey this thought with words like some or any. It is a non quantitative expression. We create a partitive by using the contractions created by combining the word di and the definite article required by the whole that we want to express a part of. These are the same contractions we made when we studied prepositions as shown below;

	IL	LO / L'	LA/L'	I	GLI	LE
di	del	dello / dell'	della / dell'	dei	degli	delle

Here are a few examples of these in use;

Vorrei del vino.	(di + il)	I'd like some wine.
Ho comprato dei fiori.	(di + i)	I bought some flowers.
Posso avere dell'acqua?	(di + l')	Can I have some water?
Ho visto degli amici.	(di + gli)	I saw some friends.
Hai delle sorelle?	(di + le)	Do you have any sisters?

There are a few other ways to create a non quantitative expression. We can do this by using the words qualche, alcune and un po' di. Let's start with un po' di. You can use this when the partitive (some) means a little bit. Examples;

Vorrei del vino.	I'd like some wine.
Vorrei un po' di vino..	I'd like a little bit of wine.
Posso avere dell'acqua?	Can I have some water?
Posso avere un po' d'acqua?	Can I have a little bit of water?



Alcune and Qualche can be used when some means a few. Qualche is invariable and is only followed by a singular noun. Alcune or Alcuni is always followed by a plural noun.

Ho comprato dei fiori.	I bought a few flowers.
Ho comprato alcuni fiori.	I bought a few flowers.
Ho comprato qualche fiore.	I bought a few flowers.
Ho visto degli amici.	I saw a few friends.
Ho visto alcuni amici.	I saw a few friends.
Ho visto qualche amico.	I saw a few friends.

In addition, qualche is also used in conjunction with other word much in the same way we use the word some with other words. Here are a few examples;

Qualcuno	Someone
Qualcosa	Something
Qualche volta	Some times

Finally the distinctions, "un po' di" is fairly easy because it is just a little bit but how do you know when to use alcuni/e, qualche or the "di" partitive. Here are a few differences:

1. Qualche can mean some in the singular sense meaning just one such as somebody, something, some day, some reason, etc. In addition qualche (unless combined with another word) is always an adjective.
2. Alcuni is always plural and can be used as a pronoun as in some would say. Further more it can form a negative sentence in the sense of 'any' "Non ho alcun contanti. (I don't have any cash). It is also taught that alcuni is more appropriate to use when referring to a "specific" some such as "here are some of the books I told you about" or "some of our flights were late".
3. The "di" partitive on the other hand is used for more generalized statements like "I would like some milk" or "I need some butter".