

The Savor of Sorrento

Michele Scicolone (March 26, 2010)



Two Neapolitan chefs present "The Savor of Sorrento" at New York's Giuliano Restaurant.

Despite the cold rain falling outside Monday night, the welcome we received at Restaurant Giuliano was warm and inviting. The dining room is comfortable and intimate with exposed brick walls, flickering oil lamps, and enormous windows that look out onto the bustling streets of New York's Theater District. The restaurant, which occupies the former Roberto Passon space at Ninth Avenue and 50th Street, opened in November.

We were there to preview the Savor Sorrento menu created by two Neapolitans, Vincenzo Borriello,



Head Chef of the Parco dei Principi Hotel in Sorrento, and Giuliano Matarese, Head Chef for Restaurant Giuliano and the entire New York City Restaurant Group. Chef Matarese began his career working in the restaurant business in Naples and came to New York in 2001. His experience working in America has resulted in a unique and personal approach to classic Italian dishes.

The special menu consists of four courses and will be available for one week as of March 24. We began with large shrimp in a crunchy sesame crust resting on a creamy puree of potatoes accented with ginger. A crisp fried zucchini flower stuffed with ricotta accompanied the shrimp. With this we had the Falanghina Pompeiano IGT 2008 from Azienda Vinicola Sorrentino, a classic and refreshing white wine of the region.

The next course was Ravioli Sorrento style, round pasta pillows filled with fresh ricotta in a sweet, light cherry tomato sauce. The pasta was slightly chewy because it was made without eggs. This is typical of the Sorrento area. The main course was a roulade of red snapper on a bed of escarole sauteed with raisins and pine nuts. The bittersweet flavor of the escarole made a fine counterpoint to the fish.

The description of the dessert listed on the menu had me expecting a version of La Pastiera, the classic Neapolitan Easter cake, but what arrived instead was a semifreddo of ricotta flavored with orange flower water and cinnamon and garnished with fresh fruit. With it we enjoyed a glass of limoncello brought from Sorrento.

We were getting ready to say our goodbyes when the Chefs Giuliano and Vincenzo came out of the kitchen bearing a surprise -- an enormous platter of hot, sugar-dusted and chocolate-drizzled graffe, Neapolitan donuts. Though we thought we could not eat another thing, we quickly dove in. It was the perfect last taste of warm, sunny Sorrento before we plunged back onto the rainy streets of New York.

Restaurant Giuliano is located at 741 Ninth Avenue at 50th Street. The phone number is 212-582-5599.

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