

Culinary Wonders of Abruzzo

Otylia Coppola (June 03, 2016)



With her devastating smile and torrent of energy, Rosanna di Michele began her culinary “emigration” from Abruzzo, eventually landing in New York and the greater metropolitan area. Careful to preserve tradition, Rosanna serves up the genuine flavors and gastronomic treasures of her homeland.

Brought up among pots and pans, the smells of basil and fresh-cooked pasta, and the flavor of authentic tomatoes, Rosanna is used to gathering around a table for good food. “When I was a young girl, my job was to cook for my little sisters,” she says. “While my friends were cooking for their dolls, I had real people to feed, since my parents were at the restaurant.”

You can see where this is going, right? A young girl grows up to run the family restaurant. Wrong.



Rosanna decided to pursue a different thing altogether. Yet she never abandoned her passion for cooking.

What is sometimes taken for granted is the courage it takes to leave a secure job and try cooking not only for Italy but New York, the city of her dreams.

Rosanna Cooking's American Adventure "During dinner one summer, one of my guests was an American couple. They were getting their first taste of dishes from my region. That August evening is when my American adventure began."

Partly for fun, partly as a challenge to herself, Rosanna invented a new world: she began traveling to New York to cook for the couple and hold events. Her first was at the Marymount School. "On those occasions, I realized that my simple, authentic recipes with real Abruzzese flavors were piquing people's interest."

So, trip after trip, as she got to know more and more people in the American community, Rosanna realized that the great city, the image of which she'd grown up with on the TV, might have room for her and her brand of Abruzzese cooking.

"Both in my kitchen and my day-to-day life," she says, her eyes shining, "I try to combine my experience in Italy with my experience in New York. The result is a perfect mix of New York scruple and organization, and the carefree flair of nostra bella Italia."

Abruzzo: the Rugged and the Gentle

Abruzzo is often overlooked by people who, right or wrong, are only familiar with the country's famous cities, Venice, Florence, Rome. Yet once you encounter Abruzzo, you're not likely to forget it.

The Huffington Post recently called the region, with its mountains on one side and sea on the other, "the world's fifth factor into our local products and have spawned our 'surf and turf' cuisine. Obviously, change is synonymous with growth, and Abruzzese cuisine is constantly evolving. For example, its use of spicy chili pepper. You could never do our dishes without it, but increasingly it is used as a final touch, to make our dishes mild..."

Nevertheless, one characteristic of Abruzzese cooking is to respect tradition. "Our mountains and sea are the foundation of many recipes handed down from generation to generation to preserve our customs. Some examples are Campotosto mortadella, Solina bread, Ventricina dell'alto Vastese (Vasto-style sausage), Seven Virtues Minestrone. Then there's Mazzaferrata di Cupello artichoke, Bocconotti, Ricotta cheesecake, Caciocavallo di Grotta, Aquila-style salami, Mosto Cotto, Vasto-style soup..."

Rosanna could keep going

Of course you could speak as highly about the wine, beginning with Montepulciano di Abruzzo, one of the best know wines in the world, and lighter rosés like the famous Cerasuolo. For a long time, Rosanna has collaborated with the Abruzzese company Collefrisio, becoming the brand's ambassador and promoting good quality reds and whites.

"We also have Trebbiano, the most widely planted varieties of white grape in the region. And then there's Pecorino, an excellent wine that has been called "a red disguised as a white"; our region holds the record in Italy for producing the most Pecorino. Falanghina IgT is one of the oldest varieties - probably the oldest in the world - and was adopted by our neighbors in Campania. It can be found in Abruzzese cellars at its most pure. In recent years Abruzzo is producing a lot of sparkling wine,



too, i.e., the classic Abruzzo DOC Spumante.”

We hope you'll get a chance to sample one of Chef d'Abruzzo Rosanna Cooking's dishes soon!

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