

"Pasticciotto A Obama": an Italian Delicacy from Campi Salentina to NYC

Marina Melchionda (March 01, 2009)



Angelo Bisconti owns a pastry shop in Puglia, Italy. He created the chocolate version of a traditional pastry of his area, the pasticciotto, and dedicated it to Obama. Being one of his greatest admirers and supporters, he is now in the US hoping to meet the president and present him with this special and delicious treat.

Many foreigners might not know that in Italy there is a territory called "Salento" that can boast some of the most beautiful landscapes and seashores of the country. It constitutes the south-eastern extremity of the Puglia region and is sometimes described as the "heel" of the Italian "boot". Along its rocky coasts and the sides of its low mountains and hills there are dozens of small towns where people live a simple and quiet life. Their daily, ordinary activities change only in summer time, when waves of tourists come to spend their holidays there and enjoy the crystal clear waters of the Ionian and Adriatic seas.

But there has been something in the last few months that added a hint, a sprinkle of zest and energy



to these people's lives. It was Obama's election as the new President of the United States. The echoes of his speeches, his appearances on public television reached as far as the people living in Salento, to the point of really conquering them.

Angelo Bisconti is one of his greatest supporters. In 1995 he opened Patisserie Chèri in Campi Salentina, a town of 11.000 inhabitants, where he lives with his wife and two children. In his laboratory he produces all kinds of goodies together with his 8 helpers. Among his specialties, the pasticciotto stands out. It is a typical pastry of the Salento area that consists in a shell of short crust filled with lemon cream.

It was during last autumn that he decided to "twist" the recipe a little bit and make a chocolate version of it. "This pastry is the fruit of many experiments. Many of my colleagues simply add cocoa to the recipe, altering the natural equilibrium of the ingredients this way. I, on the other hand, wanted to offer something new to my fellow citizens but I didn't want to spoil the original delightfulness of this treat. So it took me a lot of patience and efforts to find the perfect combination of cocoa, sugar, flour, butter and milk. When I finally achieved my goal I was so glad... During those days Obama was elected as the new President of the United States. The first thing I thought was that my pasticciotto was as good and original as Obama is. So I decided to offer it to him as a sort of tribute, calling my creation "Pasticciotto A (to) Obama".

And he really meant it! Angelo is now in the United States together with one of his collaborators, Andrea. They are offering their creation to the patrons and clients of a famous and renowned Italian restaurant in Manhattan, Brio. Its owners also come from Salento and welcomed the undersigned and her colleagues from i-Italy in their elegant and modern location. The pastry chef offered us a taste of the delicious treat accompanied by an espresso coffee, as the best Italian tradition asks.

Angelo told us that the pasticciotto has become a symbol of Obama's rising in his town and both children and adults just fell in love with it (and the President). "I would like to meet the President and tell him how much my people love him and are proud of him. For us, he is going to be the person who will help save the world from the huge crisis and problems we are going through. I wanted him to know that everybody in Salento supports him. That is why I came here: I would like to meet Obama and present him with my creation".

Angelo considers his visit to this country as a mission: although he does not speak English and never came to the United States before, he wants it to become an opportunity to introduce foreigners the beauties and opportunities of the Salento area: "I am not an self-centered person. I feel I owe a lot to Campi Salentina, the town that welcomed me and my family with so much kindness. This is why I also prepared the classic version of the pasticciotto tonight: I did not come here to promote my pastries but to give New York a taste of our exquisite products", he told us.

The mayor of the town, Massimo Como, encouraged Angelo to carry out the mission and come here for "the benefit of the whole town". The centre-right politician was so enthusiastic about this initiative that he conferred honorary citizenship to the pasticciotto and made of it a Denominazione Comunale di Origine -De.Co.- (Comunal Denomination of Origin) product

Angelo is proud of his creation: he made registered its trademark and dedicated to the Pasticciotto A Obama a very cute website and an account on Facebook and YouTube: "Some of my friends that often come to my laboratory suggested that I do it. The account on Facebook has also become a way to keep in touch for all the people who emigrated from Salento. The website, on the other hand, has been a great success: eight hundred people already signed in, many more than we expected! When we will reach the 1.000-members-goal I will organize a great party, the Obama Night at Campi Salentina":

Angelo will remain in New York until Wednesday. While looking for a way to meet the President, he is delighting Brio Restaurant's clients and owners with his Pasticciotti A Obama. To thank them for their hospitality, he also donated his personal recipe to the latter. Thus this famous Italian restaurant, already a preferred location for many high-ranking Italian officials and gourmets living in the city, will become the only eatery in the whole country to offer its customers this unique and exquisite Italian goodie.



Brio Restaurant is located at 786 Lexington Ave Frnt 1 New York, NY. Phone: 212-980-2300.

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