In the Mood for Amatriciana? Try Sora Lella!

Marina Melchionda (March 26, 2009)



By crossing the threshold of Sora Lella restaurant, you enter an environment where rustic elegance is well blended with the strong and intriguing smells of the popular and rich Roman cuisine. There an ordinary dinner in Soho easily becomes a scene from William Wyler's “Vacanze Romane”

It is a beautiful warm evening, a light wind accompanies your wanderings and thoughts while your eyes look around in search of something to be surprised or charmed by. You meet with a couple of friends, your best pals, and continue walking around with no destination ‘til you start feeling a little hungry. You must make up your mind and decide where and what to eat. After all, you are in New York, the options are infinite, choosing is almost impossible. Japanese? Chinese? Indian or Moroccan? Or perhaps that Tex-Mex restaurant you heard about on the radio…

No, nothing like this. You feel like Italian. Who knows, maybe some pasta with Genovese

or pesto sauce or some well-seasoned lamb or pork. Or even a cup of minestrone prepared with

fresh, seasonal veggies, accompanied by a filet of lake fish and a goblet of white wine. Manhattan is packed with Italian eateries, but the variety and originality of the menus they offer is not going to be what will make you prefer one place to another. You need an additional guarantee; you must make sure that these Italian delicacies are prepared the “Italian way”. No alterations, no substitutions of ingredients, no alternative cooking methods. You want the original recipe. So, the first issue is: where will I find a place like this? The second is: what kind of Italian cooking do I feel like tonight?

Neapolitan, Sicilian, Tuscan, Roman? In other words, do I want pasta with ragù sauce and babà, penne with fresh eggplant and cannoli, ribollita and cantucci with vin santo or bucatini all’amatriciana and maritozzi? One of your friends walking with you is from Rome, he moved to the United States just a couple of years ago. So he still has the carbonara sauce aftertaste in his mouth, he still remembers how his grandma used to season the puntarelle, he knows better then the rest of you. He is going to be your guide, there is no question about it. “Come with me, I’ll take you to a place I have known forever, but that was inaugurated just a week ago”. In no time you get to Soho, one of the most fascinating neighborhoods in Manhattan. Situated at the north end of Greenwich Village and just less than two miles from Times Square, the area is vibrant and romantic at the same time. Mazes of narrow, cobblestoned streets plunge into the large, noisy avenues where the hurry of the taxi cubs overwhelm the soft talks of lovers walking hand in hand.

You get to Spring Street, you are looking for number 300. There it is: a small door and a huge window, you found Sora Lella Restaurant. Wait a minute… you know this name, you read it somewhere, didn’t you? Yes, of course! Your Roman friend, Mario, told you about it already. He had told you of that date when he took his wife-to-be out for a dinner on the “Isola Tiberina” in Rome, in the Quattro Campi neighborhood. He had told you that Sora Lella is one of the most famous and popular restaurants of the capital, the place where tourists from all over the world-and fellow Romans go as well- go to taste real, authentic local cuisine. Carbonara, amatriciana, abbacchio and carciofi alla giudia, are some of the delicious recipes they serve.

When you enter the eatery, a ray of light knocks you down: the pale yellow and orange walls give the room a bright look while the light wood of the shelves surrounding the dining room give the whole environment a modern yet at the same time cozy, rustic atmosphere. From the ceiling, branches of wrought iron become original chandeliers that illuminate the numerous tables covered with pastel tablecloths. The hundreds of bottles of wine surrounding you and your friends make it difficult to choose which brand, type of grape, aroma should accompany your dinner.

The menu is rich, a collection of recipes coming from Rome, the Lazio region and also some other areas of Italy. Among the appetizers, shish kebabs of mozzarella cheeseand cherry tomatoes with the addition of basil leaves give the composition the look of the Italian flag:: it is a specialty that originates in Naples and generally takes the name of Caprese salad. You will also find rolls of eggplants stuffed with smoked ham and Italian cheese, typically Sicilian. Your eyes scroll down the menu and skip other delicacies to dwell on Roman specialties. You really can't choose, you ask the waiter about the chef’s specialty.

So, this is going to be your dinner: suppli alla romana (fried balls of rice with tomato sauce and mozzarella cheese, a variation of the Sicialian arancino); then a good helping of Paccheri Pasta with Amatriciana sauce (a soft blend of smashed pealed and cooked tomatoes and small cubes of pancetta (bacon) or guanciale) topped with savory Roman cheese; some fresh puntarelle to "refresh" your mouth and then coffee (espresso, of course) and dessert (salame di cioccolata, sbriciolata, ice cream, everything you might desire is there to make you happy).

The whole dinner is seasoned with long laughs and soft chats, the atmosphere is perfect for an evening with friends. However, seated at the tables surrounding you, are old and young couples and families too. This place is appreciated by all kinds of people! At the end, the big surprise comes with the bill. In dozens of other Italian restaurants in New York City a dinner like that would have cost you a real fortune – making a dinner into a present you can afford to give yourself only every once in a while. This is not so at Sora Lella's , where the prices mirror the spirit on which the business is built: every client is a guest to be treated as a member of the family. So, lots of domestic warmth and

small charges make smiling faces multiply.

You leave the restaurant and start walking back home. From now on your wanderings in the streets of Manhattan will be accompanied by a new awareness: whenever you are in the mood for Roman cuisine, you can just go towards Soho. There you will find your corner of the Italian capital, the place that for at least one evening will make you feel as if you are living your own, perfectly-tailored “Vacanze Romane”

THE MENU

Antipasti / Starters
Insalata di Arancia e Olive con Olio, Sale e Pepe

Fresh Orange Salad with Extra Virgin Olive Oil, Black Olives, Salt and Pepper $8.00

Frittata alla Paesana con Mozzarella di Bufala
“Roman Country-Style” Omelette with Seasonal Mixed Vegetables
Served with Fresh Buffalo Mozzarella $13.00

Polpettine della “Nonna”
“Grandma’s Style” Meat Balls with Fresh Tomato Sauce $9.00

Misto di Salumi Caserecci
Selection of Traditional Italian Sliced Cured Meats $14.00

Prosciutto di Parma(Stagionato 24 Mesi) e Mozzarella di Bufala
24 Months Aged Parma Prosciutto with Buffalo Mozzarella $16.00

Terrina Fredda di Melanzane e Gamberi al Timo
Cold Eggplants Terrine with Shrimp and Tyme $15.00

Le Minestre / Soups

Pasta e Broccoli al Brodo di Arzilla
Home Made Fresh Pasta, Broccoli, Skate Fish Broth,
Garlic, Tomato,Roman Pecorino Cheese and Chile Pepper $11.00

Pasta e Ceci con Vongole Veraci
Home Made Fresh pasta, Chick Peas, Clams,Garlic, Rosemary, Tomato and Chile Pepper $13.00

Primi Asciutti / Pasta Dishes

Tonnarelli alla Cuccagna (since 1961)
con Salsiccia, Pancetta e Noci
Home Made Squared-off Egg Pasta
Served With Sausage, Cured Pork Belly and Walnuts
And a Touch of Heavy Cream $18.00

Ravioli Ricotta e Spinaci al “Sugo di Nonna”
Home Made Square Pasta Shape Filled with Ricotta Cheese and Spinach
Served with “Grandma’s Style” Sauce (Veal, Fresh and Dry Porcini Mushroom, Fresh Tomato Sauce)
$20.00

Fettuccine Casarecce al Ragù Bianco di Animelle di Vitello
Home Made Long Flat Pasta
Served With a White Veal Sweetbread Sauce and Parmesan Cheese $18.00

Paccheri “all’Amatriciana”
Traditional Roman Recipe “Paccheri” Dry Pasta “Amatriciana Style“
Fresh Tomato and Cured Pig Cheek Sauce and Roman Pecorino Cheese $16.00

Rigatoni al Sugo di “Coda alla Vaccinara”
Traditional Roman Recipe Ribbed Dry Pasta “Butcher Style Sauce”
With Oxtail, Fresh Tomato, Pine Nuts, Raisins and Roman Pecorino Cheese $16.00

“Bavette” Con Pesto di Vongole, zucchine, Aglio, olio, peperoncino
Traditional Roman Recipe “Bavette” Dry Pasta with clam Pesto , zucchini, garlic , olive oil, chilli pepper

Secondi di Carne / Main Course

Pollo Ruspante “alla Romana” in Umido con Peperoni
Free-Range Farm Chicken “Roman Style” Slow Cooked in Tomato Sauce and Red Bell Pepper $17.00

Coda di Manzo alla Vaccinara
Traditional Roman Recipe “Butcher Style” Oxtail Stew
Braised with White Wine, Tomato, Pine Nuts, Raisins and a Side of sautéed Baby Carrots $.22.00

Ossobuco di Vitello con Cipolline in Agrodolce
Veal Shank Braised with a Rich White Wine Onion Sauce Served with Sweet and Sour small white Onions $31.00

Abbacchio Disossato al Forno Farcito con Carciofi e Erbe Aromatiche
Boneless Roasted Milk-Fed Baby Lamb Stuffed with Artichokes and Aromatic Herbs
Served with a Rosemary Potato Pie $28.00
Parmigiana di Melanzane con Ricotta, Miele e Noci
Eggplants “Parmigiana Style” with Ricotta Cheese, Honey and Walnuts $19.00

Piatti di pesce / Fish dishes

Baccalà in Guazzetto “alla Romana”
“Roman Style” Dried Salt Cod Fish
Served with Onion and Fresh Basil Tomato Sauce Garnished with Pine Nuts and Raisins $22.00

Coda di Rospo al “Cannellino di Frascati”
Con Brunoise di Pomodorini e Mandorle Croccanti
Pan Seared Monk Fish Slow cooked in “Cannellino di Frascati” Sweet Wine Served with Cherry Tomato and Crunchy Toasted Almonds $25.00

Saltimbocca di Tonno “alla Romana” con Broccoli Affogati
“Roman Style” Pan Seared Tuna Fish with Parma Prosciutto and Sage Served with a Side of Withe Wine Sautéed Broccoli
$28.00

Contorni / Side dishes

Misticanza con Frutta Fresca a Pezzi
Mix Green Salad, Seasonal Fresh Fruit, Extra Virgin Olive Oil, Salt and Pepper $8.00

Broccoli o Cicoria in Padella con Aglio, Olio e Peperoncino
American Broccoli or Chicory Sautéed with Extra Virgin Olive Oil, Garlic and Hot Chile Pepper $8.00

Puntarelle “alla Romana” con Salsa di Alici
Traditional Roman Recipe Wild Chicory Spears “Roman Style”
Served Raw and Dressed with Extra Virgin Olive Oil, Vinegar, Garlic and Anchovies $13.00
Carciofo “alla Giudia”
Fried Whole Artichokes “Jewish Style” $11.00

Carciofo “alla Romana”
Steamed Whole Artichokes “Roman-style” Stuffed with Anchovy Paste, Garlic and Mint $11.00

Patate Fritte
Home Style French Fries $6.00

Dolci Fatti in Casa / Home Made Dessert
Torta di Ricotta con Marmellata di Visciole
Ricotta Cheese Tart with Bitter Cherry Jam $10.00

Sbriciolata con Pasta di Mandorle e Arancia Amara
Crumbly Butter Almond Cake with Bitter Orange Jam $10.00

Sformatino di Ricotta con Cioccolato Fondente e Pistacchi di “Bronte’
Ricotta Cheese Flan with Dark Chocolate and “Bronte Pistachios” $10.00

Salame di Cioccolato Guarnito con Mandorle Croccanti,Salsa al Caramello e il suo Sorbetto
Chocolate “Salami Roll with Crunchy Almonds, Dry Cookies and Caramel Sauce Served with Chocolate Sorbet $10.00

Gelati Fatti in Casa / Home Made Ice Cream

Gelato di Zabaione con Aceto Balsamico Tradizionale di Modena Invecchiato 12 Anni
Marsala Wine and Whipped Egg Yolks Ice Cream With a Drizzle of 12-Year Old Balsamic Vinegar from Modena $13.00

Gelato di Torroncino “Affogato allo Strega”
A Nougat Candy Ice Cream Poached in Strega, a Saffron Flavoured Italian Liqueur $12.00
Gelato di Cannella con Miele allo Zenzero
Cinnamon Ice Cream Served with Ginger Honey $10.00

Sorbetto di Cioccolato con Scorza d’Arancia e Nocciole
Chocolate Sorbet with Hazelnuts and Orange Zest $10.00

Panini “d’Autore” / Signature Sandwiches

Salmone Affumicato e Provolone Piccante
Smoked salmon, Hot Provolone Cheese, Radicchio Salad
Extra Virgin Olive Oil, Salt and Pepper $12.00

Gamberi e Groviera
Shrimp, Swiss Cheese
Extra Virgin Olive Oil, Salt and Pepper $12.00

Puntarelle e Pecorino Romano
Chicory Spears and Roman Pecorino Cheese
Extra Virgin Olive Oil, Vinegar, Garlic and Anchovies $12.00

Broccoli e Salsiccia
Sautéed Broccoli and Sweet Sausage

Extra Virgin Olive Oil, Garlic, Chile Pepper $12.00

All Sandwiches are Made with Italian “Ciabatta Bread”
Served with a Side of Green Salad or French Fries

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