

Celebrating Spaghetti al Pomodoro

Natasha Lardera (January 19, 2014)



In order to protect the authenticity of Italian products and cuisine, the Italian Trade Commission Office of NYC and the GVCI, the Virtual Group of Italian Chefs, in collaboration with the International Culinary Center, led by Chef Cesare Casella, organized celebrations. The International Day of Italian Cuisine, in its 7th edition, focused on Italy's #1 pasta dish: Spaghetti al Pomodoro.

Italian culinary specialties are known for being simple yet delicious and one of the staples of Italian cuisine is Spaghetti al Pomodoro. You need just a few ingredients: spaghetti, extra virgin olive oil and tomatoes (fresh or canned). Then to season the prepared dish you might use some fresh basil and/or



grated Grana Padano.

A simple Spaghetti al Pomodoro is probably one of the No1 choices of any hungry Italian and on January 17th, this delicious dish was celebrated worldwide (in New Zeland, in the USA, in China, in Italy, in South Africa and in the Emirates) during the seventh edition of the International Day of Italian Cuisine. In New York City the celebrations were held at the Theater of the International Culinary Center and were led by Chef Cesare Casella, the school's Dean of Italian Studies.

The event, organized with the collaboration of the Italian Trade Commission Office of NYC and of GVCI, the Virtual Group of Italian Chefs, a “network of chefs, restaurateurs and culinary professionals working in the Italian cuisine industry outside Italy,” is a further effort to say NO to imitations and fake, Italian sounding products that are multiplying all over. It is also a way to promote not only real Italian ingredients and recipes, but also chefs and restaurateurs who are fighting every day to protect authenticity.

“Here at the International Culinary Center we teach students to respect the ingredients and the simplicity of Italian food. We realize that people around the world use what they find at hand but following the need to make sure what they make is made the right way,” chef Cesare Casella said. “When I make Spaghetti al Pomodoro I use Italian noodles, Italian canned tomatoes and Italian extra virgin olive oil.”

The day started with demonstrations & a tasting where the ingredients of Spaghetti al Pomodoro were presented individually: First Italian Extra Virgin Olive Oil, introduced by Livia Rinaldi of the Consorzio Nazionale degli Ovicoltori, then Grana Padano cheese, explained by Elisabetta Serraiotto, and Tomatoes, introduced by the event's moderator Alessandra Rotondi. All three emphasized the importance to look out for fakes and look for the signs that are there to guarantee authenticity.

For example how can you recognize real Grana Padano? “Outlined diamonds containing the words “Grana Padano” are branded on the rind of the forms at origin. This mark, permits the identification of Grana Padano even if sold in pieces or grated, as it appears on the packaging of any product. “Each form is made according to strict rules,” Lou di Palo explained but each product has its different nuances. It all depends on the region of Italy where the cheese is produced and the individual characteristics of the producer. It is always good to ask the person selling you the product where it comes from and its age. A younger piece is more mild while an older one is more pungent and granier, less creamy.”

Right after that, the Best Emerging Italian Chef in New York Award and the Italian Cuisine in the USA Awards were handed out. The honorees were: - Lou Di Palo, owner of Di Palo Selects in New York City, Chef Francesco Farris of Restaurant Zio Cecio in Dallas, Texas and Walter Potenza, chef and owner of Potenza Restaurant and Italian Cooking School in Providence, Rhode Island Lastly. The Grana Padano Italian Cuisine Award for the Best New York Emerging Chef was given to Justin Smillie, Executive Chef of Il Buco Alimentari e Vineria.

The event continued with a step by step preparation of the recipe by three talented chefs, all three under 35: Luca Signoretti from Ristorante Roberto's in Dubai, Matteo Bergamini from Ristorante SD26 in New York and Enrico Bartolini from 2 star Michelin rated Ristorante Devero in Milan. Each chef had his own tricks and techniques but no matter what all three preparations were equally delicious... and all three perfectly cooked al dente!

During the demos there were live video conferences with restaurants in Italy: the President Restaurant in Pompeii and the Villa Torretta Hotel in Milan. There we could see local chefs celebrating the International Day of Italian Cuisine. When asked what his secret is, chef Paolo Gramaglia of the President Restaurant answered “there are no secrets, only good ingredients.”

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