

Le Marche Food and Wine Dinner at Felidia Restaurant

Michele Scicolone (October 21, 2009)



Chef Fabio Trabocchi prepared an outstanding menu from Le Marche paired with the regions outstanding wines.

“Wine is to the body what love is to the heart”, said the great composer Gioachino Rossini, who was born in the Marche region of Italy. Those of us fortunate enough to taste the wines of the region at Felidia Ristorante on Thursday surely agreed.



The dinner was hosted by Alberto Mazzoni, Director of the Istituto Marchigiano di Tutela, Giuseppe Cristini, a Marche wine expert, and Fabio Trabocchi, a Marche native who is the recently-named head chef of New York's Four Seasons Restaurant.

Le Marche is a small region that borders on Umbria and Tuscany to the west and the Adriatic Sea to the east. Using the natural ingredients from the region, including mushrooms, sheep's milk cheeses, seafood and truffles, Chef Fabio prepared a menu to highlight Le Marche's extraordinary white and red wines.

The evening began with a Fazi-Battaglia Verdicchio del Castelli di Jesi DOC 2008, the classic white wine of the region. It was a perfect compliment to the baccala salad stuzzichino, served in little china spoons. Once seated, we were treated to a salad of scampi on a bed of chunky mashed potatoes mixed with olive oil, basil, and tomato. I loved the simplicity of the flavors and can't wait to try to recreate this one at home. The Boccadigabbia Le Grane Maceratesi Ribona DOC was a great match. This wine is made with 100% ribona grapes, a variety unique to the Macerata area of Le Marche.

Handmade passatelli pasta tinted black with nero di seppia, and sauced with calamari, mussels and crab in a light tomato sauce was next, served with the La Monacesca Mirum Verdicchio di Matelica DOC made from 100% verdicchio grapes. Risotto with Pecorino di Fossa, pears, and black pepper showcased the cheese, which is made from sheep's milk and aged in specially dug caves where it matures and develops an assertive flavor. The Luciano Landi Lacrima DOC 2008, a red wine made in the Morro d'Alba section of the Marche, was a daring but delicious match with the risotto.

I really enjoyed Chef Fabio's version of Steak Rossini. Instead of the typical beef filet, the chef braised flat iron steak until it was fork-tender, then topped it with the customary foie gras (a favorite of the great composer's) and a slice of black truffle from the Marche. The foie gras melted onto the beef creating a rich, luscious sauce. Organic polenta on the side was earthy and full of flavor and the dish was paired with the robust Umanso Ronchi San Lorenzo Rosso Conero DOC 2006.

Three different pecorino cheeses from the Marche were drizzled with honey and accompanied by the last wine of the evening, the Le Terrazze, Sassi Neri Conero DOCG 2004. The evening ended on a sweet note with piconi, sweet ravioli filled with sheep's milk ricotta served with tangy sheep milk ricotta ice cream.

The superb wines and foods were an inspiration for me to plan a return to this gorgeous region of Italy.



REMINDER: Charles and I will be teaching an Italian wine and food class at De Gustibus at

Macy's on Thursday, December 3. For more info, go to www.degustibusnyc.com [2]. Hope to see you there!

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