



## Dining Out Special. Italian Restaurants for Winter

Tommaso Cartia (December 20, 2016)



When winter comes with its chill and its darkness, so does that ancestral need of human beings to protect themselves from the cold, to protect each other. Togetherness is felt as a natural necessity and nothing brings people together more than food. One of the strongest symbolic representations of sharing, food has always brought Italian families together; its quasi-sacral liturgy—sitting together for supper and eating together during the holidays—is a long-lasting peculiarity of Italian culture.

We scouted for some of the best Italian restaurants in the city where you will find a shelter from the storms of winter, a place to spend your holidays or your romantic moments now that Valentine's day is also upcoming.

### **UPPER EAST SIDE**

#### **[Bar Italia](#) [2]**

768 Madison Avenue

☎ (917) 546-6676

CUISINE typical

AMBIENCE elegant



PRICE \$\$\$

Former Cipriani Chef Denis Franceschini and General Manager Hassan El Garrahy teamed up with Jean Denoyer and Regis Marinier of Orsay / LaGoule restaurant group to create this chic and elegant classic Italian restaurant on the glamorous Madison Avenue. The place has become very popular among Italian and American celebrities. Originally from Borgo Valsugana in the region of Trentino Alto-Adige area, Denis stayed true to his Northern Italian roots. The specialty of the house is a truffle that you can savor in the tantalizing “Tagliolini al Tartufo” dish – truffle butter and fresh burgundy black truffles. Foie gras is another luxury delicatessen alongside with liver. “Fegato alla Veneziana,” calves’ liver and onions served with grilled polenta, is a dish that can warm up the most frigid winter temperature with its cozy sensation. You also certainly don’t want to miss the seafood side of the menu. Denis offers you other exceptional dishes like “Seppie al Nero,” squids in their own ink sauce, and the Venetian “Baccalà Mantecato,” creamed dried cod.

## MIDTOWN WEST

### [Il Melograno](#) [3]

501 West 51st Street

☎ (212) 757- 9290

CUISINE traditional

AMBIENCE rustic

PRICE \$\$

At chef Alberto Tartari’s home in Northern Italy, near Valle Camonica, grows a strongly rooted Melograno (pomegranate tree) that was planted by his grandfather when Alberto was born. Also strongly rooted in that area of Italy is Tartari’s cuisine style that you can experience at Il Melograno. You can taste the genuine healthy products, feel the fresh air, and see the wildlife and the pure water that are all characteristics of that valley surrounded by the mountains and Lake Iseo. Winter time at Il Melograno is under the banner of typical country flavor. Dishes like polenta with meat, fish, or melted cheese are the restaurant’s specialty along with beef, pork, and chicken recipes. Mouth watering homemade pappardelle with sausage ragù and homemade ricotta and spin-ach ravioli in butter and sage sauce are as simple and genuine and as tasty and rich in flavor as the products they are prepared with. The wine list is 90% Italian with a quality that you rarely see in New York, but if you want to simply have a glass of wine and a snack, you should check out Il Baretto, another of Tartari’s creations, a café and wine bar just around the corner from Il Melograno.

### [Tavola](#) [4]

488 9th Avenue West 51st Street

☎ (212) 273-1181

CUISINE typical

AMBIENCE rustic

PRICE \$\$

Nick Accardi, a true Sicilian at heart, is a New York dining scene pioneer. He opened Cola’s in Chelsea in 1988, a real gamble at that time. After years of experience he took another leap of faith when he took over Manganaro Grosseria Italiana, an old-fashioned bottega that has been famous for 127 years for its cured meats, cheeses, and olive oil. Nick tried to preserve Grosseria’s original essence from the furniture to the high quality products. You can feel that the walls are drenched with history, like the two wood ovens that Accardi brought back from Naples, which are the biggest in all of America, handcrafted by the Acunto family using Vesuvius’ volcanic clay. The cuisine presents an eclectic fusion between the Italian regions of Sicily, Naples, Apulia, and also the city of Florence with new chef Giancarlo Dellanzo. Sicilian arancini and Nick’s grandmother’s recipe for caponata with a hint of chocolate from the 18th century are exceptional dishes, along with the handmade Sicilian pane nero - black bread - that Accardi’s father used to bake with tumminia, an ancient wheat flour grown in the region of their hometown Castelvetro. For the winter and the holidays you can savor recipes based on pumpkin, chestnuts, wild game, rabbit, and wild boar meatballs. For Christmas, the traditional Seven Fishes with eel, shrimp, and squids.



## MIDTOWN EAST

### [Osteria Laguna](#) [5]

209 East 42nd Street

☎ (212) 557-0001

CUISINE traditional

AMBIENCE rustic

PRICE \$\$

Sail with an imaginary gondola and stop by Osteria Laguna here in NYC to take in all the marvelous enchantment of Venice's famed La Serenissima with its spicy and chic flare. Serving traditional Venetian cuisine with a melting pot of other regional Italian influences, the Osteria is the perfect place to celebrate the holidays or to feel comfy during the wintertime with its family-style holiday menus crafted to make you feel exactly as you would at home surrounded by your dearest relatives and friends or by your special Valentine. The Christmas menu is varied; you can start with a soft white polenta with fresh porcini mushrooms and winter black truffles, continue with a lobster carnaroli risotto with fresh fava beans and oven roasted grape tomatoes. The main course offers you an "Orata al Forno," imported sea bream, cooked in a brick oven, tossed with almond crust, fingerling potatoes, organic baby zucchini, and grape tomatoes in a lemon caper sauce. "La famosa torta Herry's," Venetian vanilla meringue cake, is an exquisite delicacy to end the night on a sweet note. Kick off the New Year with lobster bisque, celery root and Vin Cotto soup, or Vialone Nano risotto (typical from Verona) with fresh porcini, winter black truffles, and Parmigiano cheese. Traditional Venetian Panettone with mascarpone cream and chocolate sauce will make the evening even more festive.

## FIATIRON DISTRICT

### [I Trulli](#) [6]

122 East 27th Street

☎ (212) 481-7372

CUISINE traditional

AMBIENCE sophisticated

PRICE \$\$\$

What more can you ask for than a traditional Italian restaurant with a "mamma" who makes pasta with her hands? Maybe a refined all Italian winery from which you can select the perfect bottle to accompany your pasta with? No problem, you'll both find them at I Trulli, the culinary New York landmark named after i trulli—the traditional Apulian dry stone huts with conical roofs. Inspired by the gastronomy of that Southern part of Italy, Nicola Marzovilla and his mother Dora moved from Apulia in 1970 and opened the restaurant in 1994. Rustic and family-style in a yet elegant atmosphere, the Apulian delicatessens are the signature dishes of the restaurant from the classic "Panelle," chickpea fritters, goat cheese and caponata, to Dora's Sunday meatballs. The pastas are mind-blowing; try "Orecchiette in rabbit ragù" or Dora's classic lasagna. The wood-burning oven adds to the restaurant's cozy atmosphere. Ideal dishes for wintertime are the wood-grilled whole fish and the "Coniglio alla Barese"—roasted rabbit of Bari, which has limited availability because it takes 60 minutes to cook.

## WEST VILLAGE

### [Palma](#) [7]

28 Cornelia Street

☎ (212) 691-2223

CUISINE traditional

AMBIENCE romantic

PRICE \$\$



"This place chose us. It was like when destiny unfolds in front of you. We create a real connection with people. It's more than just dining; we want to create memories. Our guests are like family; you feel that cozy feeling of when you are invited to a friend's house for dinner." The secret of this enchanting villetta is all in these words and in the heart of Palma, the Italian-American owner of the restaurant whose family has its origins in Apulia. Palma opened her restaurant with her French husband Pierre. Cupid lives in the romantic garden where you can dine surrounded by plants and flowers in a blossoming state of grace. It's absolutely perfect for your Valentine's day dinner this year. The carriage house is a rustic yet elegant space where you can have cooking class parties in the kitchen and dinner in the library for a special occasion. "Aperitivo di Palma" is another fun and vibrant space in addition to the restaurant, where you can taste a fresh and electrifying aperitif, Italian style. With a true ethnic kitchen, organic since its inception, the cuisine is mostly from the south of Italy and therefore, seafood based: fritto misto, linguine with mussels, focaccia, and special dishes like "Orecchiette alla Checca," home-made orecchiette with heirloom tomatoes, buffalo mozzarella, fresh basil, and extra virgin olive oil. For the winter holidays Palma's garden transforms into a magical winter wonderland, where you can truly feel the spirit of Christmas. Also available are a Thanksgiving menu, the traditional Seven Fishes for Christmas Eve, and a New Year's menu à la carte.

### [Dante](#) [8]

79/81 MacDougal Street

☎ (212) 982-5275

CUISINE typical

AMBIENCE stylish

PRICE \$\$

Dante is an extremely fitting name considering the cafe's artistic atmosphere. It was very popular in 1915 among the hip Bohemian crowd of the Village. The old "South Village" was once a primarily Italian neighborhood. Personalities like writers Ernest Hemingway and Anaïs Nin, photographer Robert Capa, and Patti Smith graced the place with their presence making it legendary. In 1971, the Flotta family bought the place, which became famous among celebrities, like Al Pacino, Whoopi Goldberg, and Bob Dylan. Though the restaurant was recently bought by a New York based Australian family, it didn't lose its Italian footprint at all. The café represents a perfect fusion between traditional Italian flavors and the preferences of the American palate. Fanciful appetizers include soppressata with house pickles and savory crackers; and San Daniele with black figs, arugula, and balsamic dressing. Flavorful pastas are pappardelle with wild boar ragu, red wine, tomato, parmigiano; and orecchiette with pesto, sweet corn, pickled garlic scapes, and ricotta salata. Solid second courses consist of roasted cod cioppino with spicy chorizo, manila clams, prawns; and roasted free range half chicken with lemon, thyme, garlic and roasted squash panzanella. Their aperitivo and "Negroni sessions" are unique with a variety of Negroni drinks—the traditional Italian cocktail first mixed in Florence by Count Camillo Negroni when he asked to add gin to his "Americano" rather than soda water.

### [Piccolo Angolo](#) [9]

621 Hudson Street

☎ (212) 229-9177

CUISINE typical

AMBIENCE cozy

PRICE \$\$

A popular Italian proverb says: *nella botte piccola c'è il vino buono* ('the small barrel preserves the best wine' or 'good things come in small packages'), and that's exactly the case of this lovely, cute Italian boutique in the Village, and not only for its refined wine selection! A best kept secret among an affectionate following, Piccolo Angolo established itself thanks to an enthusiastic word of mouth. Run by the Migliorini family since 1992, this little corner of Italy serves pure authentic Italian food and is specifically popular for its large portions. The star dish is unquestionably "Linguine con polpetta"—linguine with meatballs. The meatballs are 100% beef and a classic family recipe. Lobster



cannelloni stuffed with fresh lobster covered in vodka sauce and an on-the-bone veal parmigiana with fresh mozzarella always get rave reviews from the guests. And you always want to save room for the giant, chocolate-lined cannoli with tangerine-tinged ricotta.

### [Pizzeria Brunetti](#) [10]

626 Hudson Street

☎ (212) 255-5699

CUISINE traditional

AMBIENCE rustic

PRICE \$\$

Pizzeria Brunetti is an authentic Neapolitan pizzeria and restaurant with locations in both the West Village and Westhampton Beach, opened by Michael and Jason Brunetti along with Anthony Abenante. Brunetti is popular for its oven that was custom-built on-site, brick by brick, by the famous oven builder Stefano Ferrara. The history of the restaurant tells the story of a reunion. After 18 years apart, Michael Brunetti (aka Pop) and his son, chief pizzaiolo Jason Brunetti (aka Sonny), decided to go into business together. They created their proprietary dough recipe for pizza, yielding a crisp, delicate outer crust, aromatic with a cornicione puff and a tender chewy inside. The cuisine offers a perfect balance between a classic pizzeria and a good Neapolitan restaurant with its signature dishes and recipes. The winter seasonal special menu features a “hen and boar,” burrata cream, hen of the woods mushroom, wild boar sausage, garlic, and arugula with a side of Calabrian pepper sauce and the “Mad apple” - eggplant, Mt Vesuvius tomatoes, imported scamorza, pecorino, and organic basil. The genius of Jason Brunetti also came out with the festive Thanksgiving pizza made of goat cheese, roasted spiced pumpkin, organic turkey sausage (turkey leg, duck confit skin, Grand Marnier, white wine, and a proprietary mixture of fresh herbs and spices that evokes the flavor of the turkey stuffing), fresh sage, and Brussels sprouts. The pizza is then finished with an housemade compost of cranberry, apple, and pearl onion. The special kids’ menu makes the pizzeria an even more fun and cozy environment for families.

### THE BRONX

#### [Enzo's Restaurant](#) [11]

1998 Williamsbridge Rd.

☎ (718) 409-3828

CUISINE traditional

AMBIENCE rustic

PRICE \$\$

The Bronx is known for being one of the most typical Italian neighborhoods in all of New York, and it brings you back to the true spirit of a small Italian village where you know everybody and everybody’s family, from the baker to the butcher, the grocer, and of course the restaurant owners. Enzo created a family style atmosphere, “It’s not just good food... it’s good company,” is the restaurant’s slogan. It truly is a place to go to feel at home with the possibility of booking special private parties. Enzo’s offers fresh ingredients for a comprehensive menu that showcases all the nuances of Italian cuisine. For cold winter temperatures the simple but tasty Pasta e Fagioli, bean and tubettini soup, is an Italian must. Also available is a vast selection of typical pasta dishes and second courses, such as traditional parmigiana and the special “Veal alla Enzo”-sautéed veal scaloppini with cipollini onions, Italian sausage, and green beans.

### QUEENS

#### [SoleLuna](#) [12]

40-01 Queens Blvd, Sunnyside

☎ (929) 296-3942

CUISINE traditional

AMBIENCE friendly





PRICE \$\$

From the foggy atmosphere of the decadent and hip winter in Milan to the sun-drenched Apulian summer gently aired by the sea breeze, Sole-Luna has a vibrant ambience enriched by different personalities and gastronomic suggestions. "We love people. We love food. We love our neighborhood," states Valerio, the Milanese restaurateur that opened the place after years of work and friendship with Gina and Francesca, two other restaurateurs from Cisternino, a small village in Apulia. From "lunar" Milan you can taste chef Valerio's special "Fagottini alla Valerio"-fresh pasta ravioli style filled with pear and cheese in a butter and rosemary sauce. Another strong pasta dish is "Gnocchi alla boscaiola"-potato dumpling with ham, mushrooms, and green peas in a creamy sauce. "Solar" Apulia presents you "le Pucce"-the typical homemade flatbread stuffed with different ingredients: "Puccia Tricolore," tomato, mozzarella, and basil, or "Puccia Valtellina," cured beef, arugula and cream cheese. Fresh fish and meat are available all day, along with the breakfast and brunch menus. On Monday from 5pm onward enjoy an oyster night!

BROOKLYN/CLINTON HILL

[Locanda Vini e Olii](#) [13]

129 Gates Avenue  
☎ (718) 622-9202  
CUISINE traditional  
AMBIENCE rustic  
PRICE \$\$\$

Catherine and Francois Louy have been soldiered in the food industry in New York for years; she was a manager at the famous Balthazar, and he was the GM of Cipriani before taking over the historical Clinton Hill apothecary that had been closed for 103 years. They restored and renovated the original wood interior, creating an elegant and hip space that in 2001, thanks to Executive Chef Michele Baldacci, who crafted a typical and organic menu, became one of the city's best places for original Tuscan food. Now run by Baldacci, sommelier Rocco Spagnardi, and General Manager Michael Schall, the locanda stays true to her Florentine flare. It is a place to go to escape the winter chill with a warm "Ribollita," traditional Tuscan bread soup with kale, squash, cannellini beans and carrots, or Sage pappardelle al cinghiale," wild boar braised with juniper berries and bay leaves. The Locanda is famous for its "Wine dinners" with a menu that focuses on seasonal Italian culinary traditions and a five-course meal designed by chef Baldacci to pair with five different wines from a specific producer or region. Definitely one of the best dinner plans for your Valentine's day! The "Wine Dinner" menu for January 2017 is in the works.

STATEN ISLAND

[The Stone House at Clove Lakes](#) [14]

1150 Clove Road  
☎ (718) 442-3600  
CUISINE typical  
AMBIENCE elegant  
PRICE \$\$\$

A historical stone building on Staten Island emerged in the fairytale atmosphere of Clove Lakes, and it's ready to embrace every kind of important occasion you want to celebrate this winter, from weddings to elegant and romantic Valentine's Day dinners for two, or family-style brunches on Sunday. Chef/Owner Peter Brotos grew up in a primarily Italian neighborhood on SI, where he learned not only all the secrets of Italian gastronomy but also the Italian art of hospitality. Fantastic food brings people together, this simple but important lesson stayed with Peter, and that is how he approaches his luxury service at the restaurant. With an ever changing family-style menu, The Stone House is great for catering the holidays. A Christmas Eve/Christmas Day sit down dinner at a fixed price is available upon reservation. Special dishes include Seafood Fra Diavolo-linguine, shrimps, clams, mussels, lobster tail, spicy tomato broth, and basil oil-and the Lamb Shank-red wine



braised with whipped potato and roasted root vegetables.

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