

dining & entertainment

**GAZETTE
RESTAURANT
Of The WEEK**

by Teresa Barile

TRATTORIA L'INCONTRO

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Trattoria L'incontro Celebrates 7 Great Years

Seven years ago, Owner and Executive Chef Rocco Sacramone opened Trattoria L'incontro with the goal of creating a successful restaurant that would not only accommodate and please his customers, but, as he said, "wow" them as well. It's rather obvious that his goals have been surpassed, judging from the dining rooms full of happy diners. A meal at Trattoria L'incontro is a singular dining experience, whether it be a weeknight dinner after work or a Saturday night celebration, you'll certainly be wowed by the sights, aromas and taste of the delicious, inventive Italian cuisine. "Everyone is made to feel welcome in his humble home," says manager and maitre d' Vincent Vizati, who runs the spacious dining rooms with great skill and expertise.

Sit back and relax with a bottle of

our waiter described at least 15 special salads, appetizers, pasta dishes and entrees, all of which made for excellent choices. Certainly, one can order their favorite dishes off the menu, but, Trattoria L'incontro is famous for its nightly specials, which often defy description. When asked where he gets his inspiration, Rocco replied, "From the fresh ingredients I receive each day." His purveyors know well to bring only the freshest and finest produce, fish and meat so he can create magic in the kitchen.

We were treated to a tasting menu of several of the daily specials, starting with a white tuna carpaccio. Paper-thin slices of white fish were assembled atop a tiny mound of baby frisee and fennel, all drizzled with an intense veal reduction. Blue marlin carpaccio, surrounded by persimmon and ginger coulis and toasted pignoli nuts, melted

being arugula, sliced pears, walnuts and gorgonzola cheese with a special dressing.

All the pasta served at Trattoria L'incontro is handmade, and served with a variety of slowly cooked meat sauces or tossed with fresh vegetables or seafood and served piping hot. One of my favorite dishes is Tagliarini L'incontro, fresh spaghetti tossed with tender asparagus and peas. The pasta is then formed into the shape of a bird's nest and wrapped in prosciutto, creating a beautiful presentation and a delicious dish (\$16.95). Fettuccine Rocco is tossed with fresh shrimp, creamy mascarpone cheese and leeks for another tantalizing meal. We tried two varieties of their home-style ravioli, one stuffed with four different cheeses and topped with a light sauce made with porcini flour and walnuts, and the other filled with green apple and fluffy ricotta and topped with butter and sage. Both are excellent, as is the hefty rigatoni with a rich veal sauce, one of Sacramone's specialties. All pasta dishes can be ordered as a first course, a main course, or shared as an appetizer. The expert waiters provide excellent French style service throughout your meal.

Fresh fish is always featured at Trattoria L'incontro, with grouper becoming one of the most requested dishes. This flaky, white fish is topped with spinach and mascarpone with a sprinkling of crisp breadcrumbs. Black sea bass fillet is prepared with roasted red peppers, while fillet of branzino, a Mediterranean fish, is sautéed with oranges, ginger and Grand Marnier sauce (\$24.95). Plump shrimp are grilled golden or served atop tilapia fillet for yet another great choice.

Tender rack of lamb is nearly always available, as are hefty veal chops. Veal paillard is pounded then topped with chopped salad or bread and fried in Milanese style. Beef short ribs are braised and slow cooked for hours until the meat falls from the bone. Double cut pork chops are stuffed with fontina cheese and spinach and topped with a sauce of four different mushrooms. Trattoria L'incontro also serves high quality game meats, such as medallions of ostrich, venison and rabbit.



Rocco Sacramone

In the main dining room stands a wood-burning brick oven from which comes delicious pizza with fresh toppings. These individual pies are great for lunch, to satisfy finicky kids, and a treat for adults of all ages. Lunch is served starting at noon, with a host of great lunch specials offered as well.

Desserts are nothing less than extraordinary, with selections such as mini lemon cheesecake, ice cream so good it could be homemade, pastries and individual chocolate soufflé with a warm, melted chocolate center. Enjoy all these delights with a steaming cup of espresso to complete your meal.

Never one to sit and relax, Sacramone is currently working on a cookbook that will feature some of his legendary dishes. He will be cooking at Macy's Herald Square on April 18 from 5:30 to 8 p.m. and he'll also be demonstrating his cooking techniques on a cruise to Nova Scotia this August. More details are available at the restaurant.

Make a reservation for a wonderful meal at Trattoria L'incontro, where you will feel welcome and leave completely satisfied with the delicious food, wine and excellent service. Trattoria L'incontro means 'the meeting place', and it's a great place to meet your friends or family for a great meal. Congratulations to Rocco Sacramone for seven spectacular years, and here's wishing many more.



wine from Trattoria L'incontro's extensive, temperature-controlled cabinets. Vintages start at just \$20 and come from all over the world. Vizati suggested a fine Montepulciano from the Abruzzi region of Italy, Sacramone's birthplace. Warm flat bread, straight from the wood-burning oven, was swiftly brought to our table by our professional waiter, along with a savory sun-dried tomato tapenade to spread on top. We listened closely as

on our tongues. Menu antipasti include fresh steamed mussels in tomato or white wine sauce and lots of garlic. Grilled escarole and cannellini beans are drizzled with olive oil, rosemary and lemon (\$8.95). Buttery mozzarella is served with either roasted red peppers, sliced tomatoes or grilled vegetables, served in a pastry basket. The salads are artfully prepared and combine the freshest greens and cheeses, one example