

Sicily on a Plate at Giusto Priola's "Cacio e Vino"

Natasha Lardera (May 10, 2013)



At his 2nd Avenue restaurant, Giusto Priola serves the food of his childhood. The restaurant's classic menu consists mostly of dishes from the province of Palermo. Sicilian cuisine features a lot of fish and vegetables, so it's great for vegetarians, too.

In *Search of Lost Time*, [Proust](#) [2] took a bite of a madeleine and was captured by memories of his childhood in Combray; on Second Avenue in Manhattan, Marie, a 76-year-old woman dining at [Cacio e Pepe](#) [3], had [bucatini con sarde](#) [4] (pasta with fresh sardines, pine nuts, fennel, raisins, and bread crumbs) and was immediately transported to her grandmother's table back in Sicily.

Food often triggers involuntary memory, and, needless to say, some of our best memories are at the dining table. "I was moved to see this older woman getting so emotional," Giusto Priola, owner of [Cacio e Vino](#) [5] said. "I want to serve people authentic food and I was successful."

Giusto, who was born in [Misilmeri](#) [6], a little town 15 minutes outside of Palermo, left Sicily fifteen



years ago. "I was amazed by NYC, mostly by how easy it is to do business here. First, I opened a small pastry shop, but my goal was to open a restaurant". In 2004, he opened Cacio e Pepe, a Roman trattoria named after the pasta specialty. "Cooking is my passion. I never attended culinary school, but back in Sicily, I went to the best school around: my mother's kitchen.

At Cacio e Pepe, I began to slip a few Sicilian specialties on the menu. The customers' feedback was great, and they said I had to open up a new place serving only Sicilian food." Thus Cacio e Vino was born, serving only classic Sicilian fare, mostly from the province of Palermo (cuisine changes from town to town), like arancini, rice balls with saffron, beef ragù, peas and tomato sauce, or pasta alla Norma, rigatoni with tomatoes, basil, eggplant, and dried, salted ricotta.

"People of all nationalities enjoy Sicilian cuisine because it is good and healthy, not heavy at all. It features a lot of fish and vegetables, so it's great for vegetarians too. Think of caponata con panelle (sweet and sour eggplant with chickpea fritters), involtini di melanzane (eggplant rolls stuffed with bread crumbs, pine nuts, raisins, orange zest, and sweet and sour onions), or busiate al pesto trapanese (pasta with tomatoes, basil, garlic and almonds). These dishes are the same ones I prepared with my mom. My menu features what I ate growing up. The recipes are 100% homemade." (And they're approved by his mom!)

Cacio e Vino

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