



OSTERIA DI GIOVANNI IN FLORENCE

by Samuel Sondak

“The Importance of Being Called Earnest” by the writer-dramatist Oscar Wilde has certainly given that name an aura of significance.

Notwithstanding that Giovanni is quite common, it rings with a sound of authority - when followed by the surname Latini - in Florentine gastronomy.

And such is the case in reference to the first - rate son, of the renowned Narciso Latini, who left his father's nearby trattoria to rule the roost at Osteria di Giovanni.

The kitchen is in the magic hands of his daughter Caterina whose Tuscan cookery background has been expanded as being a graduate of the prestigious French Culinary Institute at New York.

Moreover this was followed by six months of restaurant experience in the “Big Apple” city.

Wines and spirits have been selected by daughter Chiara whose attendance at a course for sommeliers has aptly prepared her for this delicate task.

Last but not least, wife Carole provides that memorable ending with her delicious homemade cakes.

Osteria di Giovanni's crowning summit of recognition is, being included as one of the 110 selected dining establishments in Italy, to be a distinguished member of the “Ristoranti del Buon Ricordo” (“Restaurants of Fond Memory”).

This organization instituted in 1964 by the Italian Touring Club authorizes its members to offer a plate to diners who have consumed the restaurant's speciality.

The first logotype plate that bears varied elements of Italian cuisine, highlights the lobster, and Giovanni has the distinction of being the only restaurant to offer a plate for this delectable crustacean.

I can heartily reccomend that eye - ravishing dish which brings forth 5 succulent ravioli-like pasta with a lobster filling (tortelli ripieno di aragosta) plus a glorious half lobster.

Moreover, a glass of Paul Bara champagne will certainly find favor as a perfect accompaniment.

Tuscan dishes of Bygone days can still be savored here with a tasty soup of spelt and white beans or a tomato and bread soup flavored with basil and extra virgine olive oil (pappa al pomodoro).

As for the main course, you'll sit-up and take notice of that well known standby - a gargantuan Florentine beefsteak with roast potatoes.

Adventurous steak lovers will find satisfaction ordering a grilled sirloin with an innovative sauce of anchovies and capers on a bed of maroon colored lettuce from the Veneto region (radicchio).

Rabbit braised in white wine with grapes and green olives, is another rewarding experience in store for diners. Carole's sweet closures can change according to her fanciful whims.

My fortunate experience was a peerless pear and almond cake while a nearby guest was enthusiastically devouring a luscious chocolate cake.

Beyond doubt - without any but's or maybe's - Osteria di Giovanni is a plate restaurant for discriminating palates!

