

Highlight Restaurant

# Vota Vota Marina di Ragusa, the restaurant which breaks the mold

di: Francesco Pensavecchio

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The True Gourmet, inspired by the most deeply felt expectations and constantly on the lookout for the perfect restaurant, is an eternally dissatisfied being. The restaurant of one's life does not exist. There will always be a better one, not yet visited, one with a genius-level chef to check out. On the other hand, the colleague, friend, relative who knows your obsessions will enjoy contradicting you, and will be very skillful in diverting your attention elsewhere.

This preface is useful for confronting an absolutely special spot which, for me, approaches the concept of the perfect restaurant. The place to always eat at, lunch and dinner, in any and every day of the year. We are talking about the new locale of **Peppe Causarano** and **Antonio Colombo**, **Vota Vota – Marina di Ragusa**, the other restaurant of the celebrated duo, already well known for their temporary restaurant on the Sampieri beach (Vota Vota – the name is the same) which has already received very flattering reviews from noted gastronomists and wine and food critics from all over Italy.

The clamorous public success at **Sampieri** (still open at the moment, but just for the summer season) shows that there is powerful desire for the sea, for relaxation, and for true high quality. On the part both of the ordinary client who arrives and the true expert as well.

And after the summer season? Here is the solution.

Vota Vota Marina di Ragusa is the chic and 365 day re-presentation of the beach format, offering in an elegant and refined way the concept first proposed at Sampieri.

It now happens that small crowds of the curious form on the promenade of Marina di Ragusa, full of vacationers, beach people and those beached on the spot, all anxious to peep into the restaurant, the dining room, and the chef at work. And the reason is soon said, the dining room is a large open space, at one with the kitchen. Accordingly, a single line of vision from the street unites the dining space and the cooking space, both perfectly illuminated. Few restaurants in Sicily have chosen this type of “theatralization”, but it is a sensation which more and more pleases, convinces, and reassures

In the dining room, in fact, the impossible takes place ...

The voyage through the senses becomes an idiosyncratic show amidst the various dishes of the chosen menu and the cocktails, beers, natural and conventional wines, sparkling wines and outstanding bottles which accompany them. The best suggestion is to order the grand tasting menu, the “Via della Seta”, ten different offerings each with its own wine. The raw and fried prawns are an off-menu offering of paralyzing goodness: the raw and fried parts two incredible sides of the same coin. A preliminary idea of the project, we cannot define it in a different way, it can be grasped by looking at the photograph.

“Sud” (South) is a rapidly sautéed dish of baby squid, soft buffalo cheese, cherry tomato juice (a crazy extraction!), and toasted bread crumbs. What is there to say about the inspired “Cozzalemon”, a bowl of opened mussels seasoned with ginger, mint, and citronella grass which totally reinvents the traditional preparation and launches it to absolute heights. It could proudly be served in a three-star Michelin restaurant.

Revolutionary the “Pasta con le Sarde” (“Pasta with Sardines”), a déjà-vu preparation of thin, fresh egg pasta made with Russello wheat seasoned with sardines, wild fennel, and pine nuts. It’s the dish we all know, a Sicilian classic, but with no resemblance whatsoever with what we thought we knew. A plate of an entirely different magnitude.

Unequaled the “Zucca e Tartufo” (“Pumpkin and Truffle”) in terms of the choice raw materials and the way they are prepared. We are talking about pumpkin-stuffed ravioli worked in a frying pan with Parmesan cheese and truffles from Palazzolo Acreide. A Sicily which administers a slap in the face to Piedmont’s Langhe restaurants.

The desserts are the physical-metaphysical sphere of Antonio Colombo. It should be said, however, that Antonio – as confirmed with our own eyes, as anyone could have done – had worked the entire meal from start to finish – antipasti, first courses and second courses as well. Evidence which does not relegate him to the role of chef-pâtissier but which demonstrates his absolute talent as a working professional.

After these words, the not to be missed “Uovo di Colombo” (“The Egg of Columbus”) is a passionate explosion of fruit and a crunchy crumble. Then a mousse of two chocolates, one 50%, the other 70%, an almond crisp, apricot and cardamom ice cream, and a canolo of cow’s milk cottage cheese with a pistachio cream and black mulberries.

Now a word about the matches between the food and the wines, controlled and directed by the matchless Valerio Capriotti, not a talented sommelier but something else entirely, the champion you would always like to have tableside, the Maradona or Pelé of his category.

To trust him with running the service of the dishes and the wines is to enjoy, exponentially, the extra-sensorial experience of the marvelous plates which arrive from the kitchen. The cellar is varied, rich in Sicilian, Italian, and international wines, some rare, some not, some ecological, others not, but all right on target and suited to the cuisine of Vota Vota. Often the matches, as already pointed out, are prepared at the table, and not all are with wine. In short, for heaven's sake, give him a free hand. Better yet without excessive worries about the cost (the bill, in any case, will not be excessively or exaggeratedly high). You will not regret it.

In general, there are two tasting menus with a series of wines as well, the more expensive one costs 100 euro, the five plate menu instead costs 50 euro, 65 with the wines. Nothing else to say ... Vota Vota will be heard from.

*by Francesco Pensovecchio*

P.S. particularly praiseworthy the dining room service offered by the personnel, truly professional.

**Vota Vota – Marina di Ragusa**

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