

Highlight Restaurant

# The cuisine of Ninni Radicini at the Locanda Gulfi in Chiaramonte

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Palermo moves forward and strikes again with its talent. This time it is yet another chef from the capital of Sicily to surprise us while working “on the road”. I first found him at Modica several years ago and with great pleasure indeed. Onofrio **Radicini**, **Ninni** to his friends, has a measured approach to his profession, a methodical one but, at the same time, a warm and welcoming one as well. His cuisine pampers with its exquisite raw materials, worked to reassure and relax.

I was, therefore, somewhat startled when I ran into him in early summer of 2016 at one of the Sicilian monuments to Organic Wines, the **Gulf** cellars of Chiaramonte in the province of Ragusa. The province is a fantastic source of unique flavors – it should be sufficient to cite wine, olive oil, meat, cheese, vegetables, fruit, and aromatic herbs – and the combination wine-restaurant-hotel is enough to make one’s mouth water. And – a great advantage for tourists – the new airport of Comiso is just a short distance away, ten minutes by car.

The Resort-Cellars is located on a low hill which looks over two valleys. It extends over one main body, but there are also a few small and comfortable rural edifices scattered over the estate and the vineyards. A lovely swimming pool is available to guests. The restaurant has its own attractive view over the interior of the cellar, from which it is separated by a large glass panel.

The suggestions of Ninni begin with the intriguing two course lunch menu "according to the inspiration of the chef" at € 25. There are a four course meal at € 45 and the Grand Menu at € 65 as well. Among the dishes offered are a summery plate of raw fish and seafood; a succulent beef tartare seasoned with Avola almonds and an anchovy sauce; and an eggplant Parmesan, a homage to Sicily where it was born. And, talking about origins, there are also pasta with a sea urchin sauce and spaghetti dressed with sardines and an anchovy mayonnaise. Fabulous, and with the thinnest possible sheet of pasta made from chick pea flour, are the stuffed tortelli, ravioli stuffed with cottage cheese in a sauce of wild greens and tomatoes "confit", the latter given a lengthy, low temperature cooking to concentrate and sweeten their flavors. Masterful and a perfect plate for those with a gluten intolerance. Second courses include seared tuna with smoked onion petals and spinach; a splendid assortment of the deep fried fish of the house served with home-made mayonnaise and ketchup; rack of lamb with roasted peppers and potatoes seasoned with fragrant aromas of rosemary. Fresh and elegant the soup of fruit and ice cream as a dessert.

The tasting menu can – but, it should be said, ought to – be accompanied by a selection of the wines produced by the house (three glass offered for € 15). The various wines of its Nero d'Avola cru in Pachino – NeroBaronj, NeroBufaleffj, NeroMaccari, and NeroSanloré – are a worldwide reference for this grape variety. Other Italian and European wines, however, are by no means lacking. Quite to the contrary, there is a very ample choice indeed!

#### **Locanda Gulfi**

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