

Meet The Maestro Of Italian Cuisine

Food is an act of love -Heros De Agostinis

A passionate leader and culinary genius with more than 20 years of experience in multi Michelin-starred restaurants and luxury hotels across the world, Heros De Agostinis- Executive Sous Chef at the Ritz-Carlton, Bahrain oversees all aspects of the culinary operations at the hotel. This jovial chef who is an ardent ambassador of Italian cuisine is determined to take the culinary experience of the hotel to new heights. He demonstrates his exceptional skills as a chef at the hotel's Italian restaurant- Primavera. It was an exciting and educational experience for me to interview chef Heros while immersing in a journey of flavors through the newly introduced menu items at Primavera.

You have worked for over 20 years in 9 countries. When did you start your career as a chef?

I began my culinary journey as a 14 year old. I studied a hospitality management school where we were required to do a project. So, during the summer holidays while most children were enjoying their time off, I chose to be trained by working in the kitchen at starred hotels. Being a chef was not glamorous in the 1990's. My family thought that I would get over the urge to be a chef but I was determined and they supported my decision. Therefore, at the age of 18 I graduated from culinary school. After graduating, I worked in different countries to learn more about various cultures and cuisines.

Why did you select this career line? Did anyone inspire you to be a chef?

During my childhood, I was very fortunate to spend time with both my Italian grandmothers. One of my grandmothers was born in Eritrea, Africa, while the other grandmother was born in Italy. My grandmother in Africa imparted the knowledge about spices while I learnt about Italian cuisine from my other grandmother. The concept of sharing and eating together with the family was prevalent at my home. The aroma of food that was being cooked would always fill the home. Being the first grandchild, I was showered with unconditional love and good food. My grandmothers showed their affection towards me through food. Food is an act of love.

Have you utilized any of the recipes that you learnt from your grandmothers in the restaurants that you have worked at?

Well, let us talk about countries in the Middle East. The people here have a different palate because they are used to more spices. Customers are considerate about the food that they eat, as the lifestyle is different as compared to decades ago. They are concerned about how the food is prepared, the ingredients that are used and source of ingredients. We are looking at sustainability and healthy eating. The food that was prepared by my grandmothers was prepared with love without counting calories while using traditional methods of cooking and liberal

amount of organic ingredients.

Hence, we try to develop the flavors of home by utilizing different techniques to ensure that the food served to our customers is light and healthy yet authentic and delicious.

Can you share some interesting facts about Italian cuisine with our readers?

According to me, Italian cuisine is the most complete cuisine in the world; complete in terms of nutrition. Italian cuisine is not just pasta and pizza like everyone describes it. Italian cuisine has developed over time. Italian cuisine is a guide to the Mediterranean diet because it is rich in all proteins, carbohydrates, fiber, vitamins and minerals. We have a huge variety of products owing to our large ecosystem. We have mountains, seas and lakes that supply us with different types of products that form the Italian cuisine. We have the best fish, game and poultry, the best vegetables, fruits and nuts. For example, the best scampi comes from the Adriatic Sea, you can find excellent chestnuts in the north while kiwis are found in the south. All these products make their way into a variety of Italian dishes.

We discussed that you have worked with several Michelin starred restaurants. How does that compare with working at the Ritz-Carlton?

I was always curious about American managed hospitality firms. I heard that they are good

in training, motivating and helping their staff to grow and the Ritz-Carlton is very famous for that. Therefore, when I got the opportunity to join the team here, I was very keen in learning their management style, as I am already a skilled chef.

Name an ingredient that you must always have in your kitchen.

Olive oil- I always use olive oil for cooking and dressing salads.

Tell us about some of the ingredients that you use in the kitchen which are flown in from other countries.

We do fly in some of the ingredients that we use from Italy. Flour, tomatoes, olive oil, parmigiano cheese, garlic, and celery are a few of these ingredients. We source some of our meat products from France and Australia. I do not believe in importing fish so we locally purchase the best available seafood. We do get good prawns, hamour and seabass in Bahrain.

How do you fulfill the expectations of diners at Primavera?

We use original/authentic Italian ingredients and elevate the flavor of these ingredients



to heighten the senses of our guests. 70% of our ingredients are flown in from Italy. The concept is to provide guests with the real Italian experience in a contemporary style. Our mission is to make our customers happy with our food. Whether it is a date for two, a business meal or a family get together, Primavera is the ideal place to indulge in the true flavors of Italy.

A Delizioso Trip to Italy

Primavera at The Ritz-Carlton is definitely the destination to relish unparalleled Italian dishes and Italian hospitality.

Dim lights, tasteful interiors and soothing Italian tunes matched with great food. What more could I possibly require to complete my Italian culinary adventure? Primavera at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel has been one of those restaurants where you can dare to expect. Dare to expect quality, originality, authenticity and flavor. The attentive team cares to learn your name, ensuring a personal touch the moment you walk in. Did I instantly begin to feel at home? Absolutely!

Each dish flaunts gastronomical techniques and what is more pleasing is the fact that these techniques when presented on the plate are not intimidating but simple yet immensely sophisticated. The thought process behind the selection of each ingredient and its involvement in the recipe is simply genius.

Ms. Carolina Campita who was recently promoted to Associate Director of Public Relations and Marketing at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel kept me company in this mesmerizing journey.

After I sipped on a chilled glass of watermelon juice, a delicate **Parmigiano Chip** topped



with **Avocado Cream** and a zing of lemon was daintily presented as the amuse-bouche. Crispy and lightly salty from the parmesan, but well balanced with the creaminess of the sweet and tart avocado cream, this first bite was getting my hopes up.

This was followed by **Foie Gras** (duck liver) that was perfectly cooked and coated in a balsamic glaze that paired perfectly with the foie gras fat which was astonishingly turned into a white powder, a sweet red berries sauce, white asparagus and

lemon yuzu vinaigrette to tie it all together.

The next dish presented to us was the **Marinated King Salmon**. The salmon was extremely fresh, coated with crushed pink pepper and served with blanched asparagus, a refreshing basil sauce and white balsamic dressing.

Spaghetti di Gragnano was like a warm, comforting hug. Al dente spaghetti tossed in a warm Sorrento lemon cream sauce with a delightful surprise of almond cream worked well with

the prawns and spinach. The lemon cut through the richness of the creaminess that helped to keep this dish light.

Black Angus Beef Fillet was my favorite dish of the day. The beef fillet was done just right; tender, juicy, oozing flavor. I sprinkled it with a bit of cracked black pepper and it was simply perfect. I loved the finesse with which the eggplant parmigiana was prepared and served alongside the beef fillet. Thin layers of eggplant and tomato sauce with its intense flavor made

me love vegetarian food for that moment. The paper-thin tomato 'chips' that surrounded the eggplant parmigiana instantly grabbed my attention.

We winded up this delectable journey with dessert. Two breathtaking desserts were presented to us.

Being partial to chocolate, I chose the **Dark Valrhona Chocolate** while my dining companion selected the **Coconut Mousse**. The chocolate dessert had several elements such as chocolate gel pudding,

a quenelle of Tonka beans ice cream, hazelnut cream, chocolate cookie crumb, hazelnut oil powder, salted caramel and dark chocolate shards. It was truly a harmonious melody of textures and flavors.

A hot cup of green tea was the perfect way to complete this magnificent meal.

Chef Heros Agostinis visited every guest to ensure that they were happy. He encourages anyone wanting to experience authentic Italian food and hospitality to visit Primavera.

