The Best of Italy in a Scoop

Giada Gramanzini (July 11, 2018)

Summer has brought with it a “frozen” air in New York City. Chef Giacomo d’Alessandro and his team of professionals and lovers of Italian gelato and pastries are are having great success in Little Italy since the opening of Polosud Gelato, Coffee and Pastries, their Sicilian-style gelato store located at 166 Mott St.

The New York Post restaurant critic Steve Cuozzo [2] has elected their vanilla the best he has ever tasted. **Chef Giacomo d’Alessandro** and his team of professionals and lovers of Italian gelato and pastries are are having great success in Little Italy since the opening of Polosud Gelato, Coffee and Pastries **[3]**, their Sicilian-style gelato store located at 166 Mott St.

Perhaps not everyone knows…

The Italian origin of gelato is recognized in most of the world, but it was its introduction in France

that made it famous throughout Europe. A famous urban legend is linked to a Florentine food lover who soon became very famous thanks to a preparation that included cream, eggnog and fruit. He would have prepared ice cream for the wedding of Caterina de 'Medici and Enrico d'Orleans. However, beyond the legend, there is no trace of this event, presumably invented by contemporary historiography.

Certain news about ice cream as a "business" is on Francesco Procopio dei Coltelli, a Sicilian chef who, in 1686, managed to prepare the mixture that we all know today. He arrived, after many failures and subsequent improvements, up to Paris. Discovering the use of sugar instead of honey, and salt mixed with ice to make it last longer, he made a qualitative leap and was welcomed by the Parisians as a brilliant inventor. Because of this, he opened in 1686 the Café Procope where a great variety of ice creams were served.

A return to the origins

Chef d'Alessandro's project comes from his previous experience in Australia, where he had worked for six years. Then, he decided to go out on a new adventure in the Big Apple. The choice of Little Italy was dictated by the desire to retrace those immigrants' steps who arrived in the New World with the famous cardboard suitcase. "Opening an artisanal gelato shop here in New York was a nice way to remember them, as I am an emigrant of the 21stcentury as well," said d'Alessandro. At the moment of signing the lease contract, he googled just out of curiosity the address of the building and among the images that appeared, he saw one photo dating back to 1910 of Gaetano Venezia Caffè, the first ice cream and candy store in the City. After 45 years, it was replaced by a Chinese button shop. "As fate would have it, the random choice of the location was just a cycle of traditions and a return to the origins."

The idea, developed together with his partners in this initiative, is to propose something that few can do. The big franchise chains import ice creams already made from France or Italy, while the concept behind the "gelato artigianale" is to produce and sell it within the same day. "Ice cream and gelato are two worlds apart. It is not easy to explain Americans the difference between them. They can only understand it once tasted," said the Sicilian Chef, "But it is also true that American people, especially those coming from New York, are more erudite because they are used to traveling. Our customers are exactly those people who, after being in Italy and having tasted gelato in Palermo, Naples, Rome or Florence, come back here with the desire to try again those same unmistakable and authentic flavors."

It takes time, passion and quality

Compared to the common American ice cream, Polosud gelato is made of milk 60% less fat. It is produced specifically by a farm located Upstate New York, found by chance on one of d'Alessandro's trips. "We import the ingredients from Italy: Pistachio from Bronte, hazelnuts from Piedmont and fresh fruit, which is selected in the markets. This allows us to obtain a high quality product."

Polosud has a wide selection of flavors, precisely 21, such as "Amore e Odio" with fresh mint and rum; "L'Americano" with bananas and peanut butter and others prepared with caramel in order to bring Giacomo and his team closer to the American public. There are some vegan flavors as well, without milk and with fruit or dark chocolate as main ingredients. In fact, it is possible to ask for "The Polosud," the flavor of the day.

Besides gelato, the menu includes traditional Italian and espacially Sicilian desserts: Tiramisù, Cannoli, Cassata and so on and so forth. Even the sheep's milk ricotta is imported from San Biagio Platani, in the Province of Agrigento, with a freezing process to reproduce the same real taste of original Sicilian cannoli.

Future projects

At the moment, Polosud has a cart in Hell's Kitchen between 57th St. and 9th Ave., but, for the next year it intends to position other three or four around the city. Then, d'Alessandro would like to bring his products outside Manhattan.

In addition, “Chocolate Surprise” will be the flavor he will bring on August 11 and 12 to the Gelato Festival America [4], a contest taking place in Jersey City where the ice cream makers of 8 different cities will be judged by a half-popular and half-technical jury. The 7 winners will compete in Italy with 7 other ice cream makers selected throughout Europe and 7 other Italians and all for the title of Best gelato maker.

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