

SAUDI GAZETTE

Saudi Arabia | Daily | Circ. 60,000

22 January 2014 - Page 14

PR Value: US\$4,927

# Italian chef Francesca stars at Rosewood festival

By Selma Roth  
Saudi Gazette

JEDDAH – A woman chef cook is currently starring at the Italian food festival, held for the third time at the Habsburg Restaurant of Rosewood Corniche, which kicked off on Wednesday.

Chef Francesca Simoni flew in especially for the occasion from Bologna, Italy, where she works as the executive sous chef at the award-winning Amerigo 1934, a small restaurant that was “opened in 1934 by the grandparents of my boss” and holds a Michelin Star since 1985.

Together with Maurizio Panicali, executive chef at Habsburg Restaurant, she is preparing authentic dishes from her region Emilia-Romagna during the festival, which will continue until January 30.

It is the first time a woman chef gets invited to the Kingdom for a food festival, and the Rosewood staff were proud to host Simoni.

“We are very happy and it is unique to have a lady as a guest chef here,” said Panicali, adding that his experience to work with a woman chef was very positive so far.

Amerigo 1934 has “traditional recipes that we included in the menu of the Italian festival,” explained Simoni.

An example is passatelli, “a traditional pasta made with eggs, bread crumbs, Parmesan cheese and flour. It is usually served with prawns, olive oil, and aromatic herbs,” which Simoni supplied to the restaurant for the festival.

“We also make some traditional breads, in particular tigella, that we cook in a special device made of cast iron,” she continued. “We usually eat it cut in half and filled with salami or cheese.” During the festival, it is prepared with béchamel sauce, Parmesan cheese, Parmesan cheese ice cream and a drop of balsamic vinegar – a must try.

Emilia-Romagna, a region located in the north of Italy, may be best known for its Bolognese sauce, balsamic vinegar and Parmigiano Reggiano cheese, but the festival shows it has much more to offer, including delicious risottos, pastas served with tomato-based or cream-based sauces, seafood, and chicken dishes, though the cheese is a recurring addition to any dish. The region is also known for all its fresh and homemade pastas.

“In our region, pasta is mainly made with eggs. Tortellini, the most famous pasta of Emilia-Romagna, is made with eggs and flour,” Simoni said. Traditionally, the dough is rolled into a thin layer, filled with a mixture of veal, cheese and eggs, and sealed in a triangle shape, after which the corners are drawn together.

While guests are free to eat whatever – and in whichever order – they feel like, those who wish to dine the Italian way start off with some salad, or antipasti in Italian.

The Caprese salad in a cup, a combination of pureed tomatoes and pureed mozzarella cheese topped with some pesto and basil, is a treat that will set the right tone for the rest of the evening.

Consequently, Italians eat their primo – usually pasta, but risotto, gnocchi or soup is also possible.

During the festival, Habsburg Restaurant features a live cooking station for the preparation of pasta, risotto, and pizza.

Simoni recommended the passatelli with shrimps and Risotto ai Funghi Porcini, a creamy rice dish with porcini mushrooms topped with – surprisingly – Parmesan cheese.

However, the risotto with pumpkin and honey tastes also “just perfect”, according to Renato at the Italian Consulate.

The secondo or main dish consists is usually fish or meat, while vegetarians may opt for fried or grilled vegetables.

Do not leave without trying some of the delectable desserts. Italians from the north may finish off with some cheese and fruits.

A traditional recipe from Amerigo 1934, however, is the Chocolate Salami, which may not sound appetizing but it certainly is.

Although the name suggests otherwise, it is a sweet that combines chocolate, biscuit, and almond in a salami-shaped roll.

The Italian food festival at Rosewood’s Habsburg Restaurant is held daily until January 30 from 7 p.m. to midnight. The price is SR200 including water and soft drink.



Roberta Fedele, wife of Italian Consul Simone Petroni, Rosewood Director of Rooms Ahmed Al Bik, and Chef Francesca Simoni officially open the Italian Food Festival on Wednesday.



Chef Francesca Simoni instructs other cooks working at the Habsburg Restaurant. – SG photos by Selma Roth



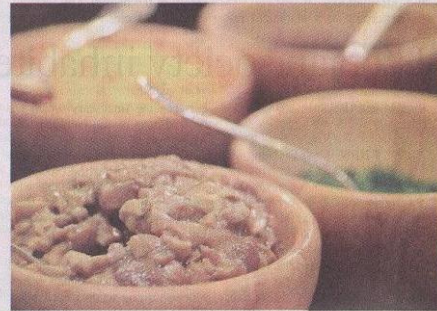
Chef Francesca Simoni



Start off your dinner with a fresh salad.



The tigella bread, prepared with béchamel sauce, Parmesan cheese, Parmesan cheese ice cream and a drop of balsamic vinegar.



The live cooking station shows guests how their food is prepared, using the freshest ingredients and aromatic herbs.