

Lodging Spotlight

Aeolian Report 2016: the Signum is Salina

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30 august 2016



The fourth number of the Aeolian Report. The island of Salina, together with Lipari the largest of the archipelago, offers each and every year strong emotions to visitors and food lovers looking for Italy's finest hospitality.

Luca and Martina Caruso

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The island's standard level is a high one indeed. But here it is necessary to start with the **Hotel Signum** near **Malfa** and its starred restaurant. **Clara Rametta**, the inspiring and driving force behind the work of this elegant spot, is – together with her husband **Michele** and her children **Martina** and **Luca** – a non-stop source of ideas. The events she promotes are of international importance. Around this Aeolian hamlet with fewer than thirty rooms, immersed in a citrus fruit grove with, interspersed, palms, jasmine, and fragrant fruit trees – an international jet set of visual artists, writers, journalists, actors and directors, musicians, and cinema stars moves like a flock of migrating birds.

Suite design, dettaglio poltrona

News of all sorts need to be recounted. The hotel, recently renovated thanks to the fusion of rooms aimed at creating larger areas from the available space (and have now become spacious and refined suites, almost all with terraces) has been enlarged by the addition of three very large "design suites" with a retro look and a new and ample wine cellar. Each of the new suites has elements of 50's décor, antique furniture, and large bathrooms. The effect of a fusion between the interior and exterior spaces is startling. The details can be seen in the photographic support to be found at the foot of this article. The small building which houses the new suites, a separate body below the garden, was previously a fermenting space and a wine cellar. Entirely restructured, it has been made available to guests for a few days now.

Moving from the hotel to the restaurant, our favorite subject, just increases the adrenalin. Run by **Martina Caruso**, born in 1989, it now makes its debut as a Michelin star locale. In addition to this recognition, Martina has, for a few months, been part of the JRE circuit, the association of **Jeunes Restaurateurs d'Europe**. This type of recognition, though important, adds nothing to the fundamental work of this chef, which is a fully committed effort to investigate the cooking of the island. Martina's ideas oscillate between, the raw, an incisive re-proposition of the flavors of the sea, the reassuring solidity of the ingredients of earth and soil and a complex reworking of taste, done with the finesse of a fine jeweler, on a creative dish. Hold your breath and dive in.

Gelato al Cappero / Ice cream

Gelato al cappero / caper ice cream

We can cite the fresh and summery taste of a red shrimp from Salina with local Vulcano cottage cheese and Tomato H²O, i.e. tomato water; the intense and pleurably biting raw red mullet marinated in a raspberry and zucchini vinegar; the truly delicate sea bream with its crunchy skin served with a citrus fruit and fennel mayonnaise; the earthy herb-laced rabbit in an anchovy and candied fruit sauce, a marriage of sea and soil; or, yet in addition, the "Absolute" of red mullet, an incomparable, not to be missed classic which we had already tried a year ago. The meal can finish with a caper ice cream, a roller coaster ride of the sweet, the savory, and the bittersweet.

The wines are a detail which further enrich the experience and could be considered a chapter on their own. The cellar is fully stocked, starting with a hundred different Champagnes, a selection of the best houses of Reims and Epernay served in the attractive line of Zalto crystal stemware. Under the watchful eye of **Luca Caruso**, sommelier **Francesco Previtera**, organizes personalized series of tastings which range from white wines from the hills of Pachino to the Ribolla Gialla of Friuli and the Chenins of Vouvray on the Loire all the way to the Riesling of the inlets of the Moselle. If you should like, there are also "natural" or bio-dynamic wines (for example, we tasted some splendid bottles from Damijan Podversic, but this is another story altogether). The new wine cellar enables the bottles to be fully visible to connoisseurs who wish to be further inspired by this visual contact. In addition to all this, if the dinner should occupy too much time for their taste, guests can choose as an alternative the "gourmet & cocktail" offering, a notably satisfying one.

Raffaele Caruso, bar-chef

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Raffaele Caruso not only is one of the finest bar-chefs of Italy but also the inventor of refined cocktails which are suitable for accompanying a dinner. His creations can be the leitmotiv of a romantic dinner with a view of the sea and the island of Stromboli. The offering can start with a platter of charcuterie from the Nebrodi mountains and then go all the way to a total food experience called "Cenando in Terrazza", "Dining on the Terrace". The cocktail list is a very varied one with five different versions of a Negroni available to measure the depth of XXX and includes, as well, such classics as the Aperol Spritz, the Kir Royal, five Margaritas, seven Martinis, and it goes all the way to such pre-Prohibition pearls as the Hanky Panky, the Ford, and the Martinez.

Hotel Signum

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