

Highlight Spotlight

Fuoco Food Festival, a great start!

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The Fuoco Food Festival finished on Sunday. A “pilot” edition which involved the territory around Buccheri in the province of Siracusa, a town in Sicily’s southeast. The event which was a resounding success. Strongly desired by Daniele Miccione, journalist and producer of *Tuttotonda*, a frequently prize-winning olive oil, the event enabled artisans in the Monti Iblei mountain chain to achieve greater luster and recognition to the fine food products which the territory offers: meat, characuterie, cheese, bread, honey, pastry and, naturally, olive oil.

Many the producers who participated and much the enthusiasm for the possibility of discovering the products of a little known part of Sicily.

The eleven chefs who were present took care of giving a new and greater prestige and visibility to the territory and put themselves to the proof by preparing their plates with fire (a direct cooking between food and flame, often without the use of pots and pans), the principal protagonist of this unique and truly original event.

Among the most striking dishes offered were the lemons filled with ricotta cheese, cooked in the ashes of a fire by Roberto Di Pinto from the gourmet restaurant of Milan’s Bulgari Hotel.

The plates of Michelin two-star chef Ciccio Sultano were also notable, and among them was a tartar of beef served with a light whipped tuna and caper mousse.

Notable as well were the mini-burger prepared by talented chef Giovanni Santoro who, in his restaurant on the slopes of Mount Etna, experiments a modern cuisine which nonetheless utilizes the products of the territory in which he operates.

Young Argentine chef Emiliano Lopez catalyzed the attention of the public with his exhibition of “curanto patagonico”, a method of aboriginal cooking which consists of digging a hole in which meat and vegetables cook after the hole has once again been covered.

Magical the moment in which the hole was dug, and it carried spectators – who rediscovered the concept of the sharing of food – back in time as participants in an antique and bewitching ritual.

Things concluded sweetly with the lemon-laced *panettone* of Vincenzo Tiri, a specialist in leavened pastry.

The chocolates of Manuele Francesco, prepared with olive oil, were sublime. Many other sweets such as the mandorlivo, an almond-based pastry with a candied olive at its center, are offered in his Nuova Dolceria shop at Ferla

More again: the interesting preparations of the young and highly likeable Sicilian pastry chef, Simone Masuzzo, who has now settled in Milan after a working experience at Giorgio Armani's Nobu restaurant.

Not to be missed: the cannolo filled with the ricotta cheese of the Mongibella creamery prepared by Silvana Cutrale, a true gem!

But, to tell the truth, there were countless delicacies available for sampling in a relaxed and family atmosphere, one which was, as well, entirely professional.

There were interesting master classes for producers and journalists such as the one on extra-virgin Sicilian olive oil, a product which, after the IGP (Protected Geographical Indication) status it has gained, appears destined for an important place on the market for its quality and essential goodness.

Last but not least, and very special indeed, the tasting of water guided by Giuseppe Dadà, the director of the Ferrarelle firm, an introduction to the discovery of mineral water and its unique characteristics. A true party among friends this Fuoco Food Festival, a breath of fresh air in a world, that of gastronomy and fine food often excessively formal and self-indulgent.

In short, a blazing begging for this volcanic Festival. What else needs to be added?

A great start!
