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Claudio Mengoni, Resident Chef at Assaje restaurant of Aldrovandi Villa Borghese, tells us what he has in common with poets, rock stars and tuna belly

Harper`s Bazaar: Claudio, you have been awarded with 1 Michelin star after only nine months since the Assaje opening. To your mind, why did it happen so unprecedentedly quickly?

Claudio Mengoni: Definitely thanks to my team. Somebody thinks that a Chef is the lonely rock star on the kitchen. However, there are also a guitar player, bass guitar player, drummer and keyboardist. Working with my colleagues made everything smoother. On top of this there was great determination to reach the common objective.

HB: For what are you most grateful to Andrea Migliaccio? *(Andrea Migliaccio is the Executive Chef of several Mytha Hotel Anthology restaurants, including 2 Michelin-starred L`Olivo where Claudio worked for 5 years – Editor.)*

CM: My experience at the L`Olivo was the most important at a professional level. Here I learnt the Mediterranean flavors, respect for the ingredients and the management of the kitchen.

HB: That is why you change the menu every three months?

CM: I wouldn`t use the verb `change`. I always keep in the menu some traditional dishes such as suckling pig or braised beef cheek. But sometimes I look at the recipe and see what can be improved as if a poet would take the first line of his poem and then write a different paragraph with it. To surprise the guests we do not always have to do extraordinary things, often the simplest things are what impress the guests the most. At times adding some ingredients like seasonal vegetables or fruits is enough to improve traditional dishes. Besides I like to experiment. Lately I have been working with tuna belly and it has really amazed me for its intense savor.

HB: If you were an Assaje guest, what would you order and why?

CM: It is difficult for me to imagine myself being an Assaje guest because I always assess dishes from the point of view of a creator. I often eat here, and try to eat dishes which at the moment are less understood by the guests.

HB: Every Italian Chef likes to recall his childhood when his grandmother cooked the most delicious risotto on Earth. Do you have the same memories?

CM: Yes, indeed. But I remember my grandmother`s ribollita – a Tuscan vegetable soup, and panzanella – a classic Tuscan salad. She cooked very traditional dishes which I liked very much and still do.

What to order at Assaje: Claudio`s choice

Starter

Spring onions cream with broccoli, anchovies, vine tomato, black olives, lemon and anchovies sauce.

It's a great example of a dish with a simple execution, in which only the fresh material can make the difference.

Main course

Homemade lemon tagliolini pasta with burrata cheese, raw red prawns, sea weed asparagus and oyster leaves.

This dish represents the Mediterranean and Italian food at its best.

Dessert

Chocolate and passion fruit milk chocolate mousse, passion fruit and tropical fruits sorbet.

This dessert has unexpected flavors and textures to challenge your taste buds in the best way possible.