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DECEMBER 2014



Holiday Classics

20 GREAT DESSERT TREATS TO BRIGHTEN YOUR HOLIDAY TABLE

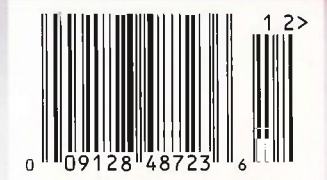
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PLUS VIN SANTO-
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FEAST OF
LA VIGILIA

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CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS IN VENICE/HOLIDAY CLASSICS/FEAST OF LA VIGILIA

Hollywood Style

HEART AND SOUL OF VERONA,
IN HOLLYWOOD

BY SUSAN VAN ALLEN

When I'm missing the Bel Paese, I've discovered the next best thing to actually being there is to slip into a good Italian restaurant. Lucky for me, a few blocks from my Hollywood home is Fabiolus. The restaurant is among those that have earned the Gold "Q" seal, which is the Marchio Ospitalita Italiana. This means the restaurant has been certified by the Italian government, passing rigorous testing to insure that customers get an authentic Italian dining experience.

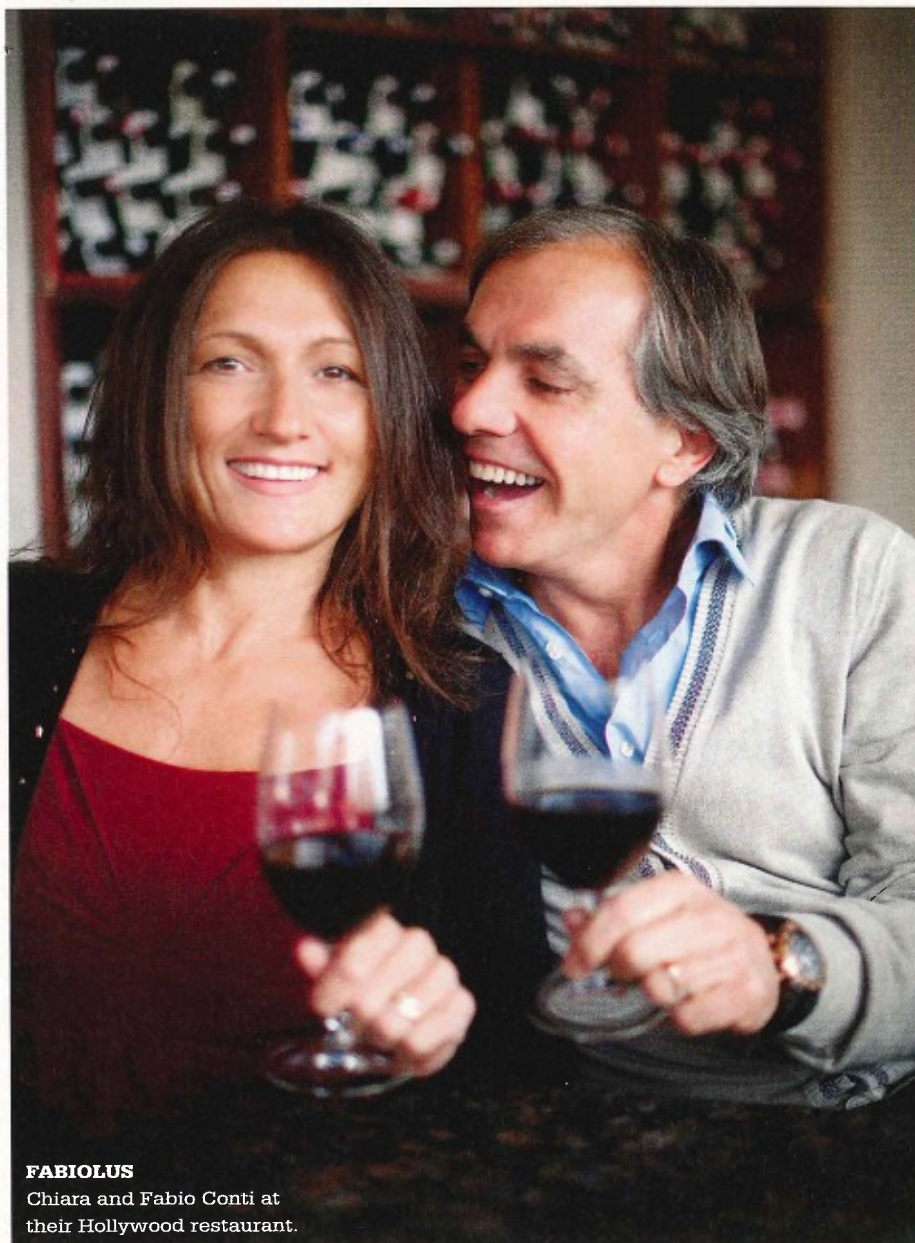
Restaurants all over world that have the "Q" use quality imported products, have a menu of specialties prepared according to tradition, and must have an Italian speaking person on site to engage with the customers. At Fabiolus, that person is the charming owner Fabio Conti, a signor who personifies the Italian style of La Bella Figura, which literally means "beautiful figure" or fine impression.

All customers are greeted warmly by Fabio, who with his lovely wife and co-owner Chiara, have created a place that has the ambience of restaurants they grew up around in Verona, an enchanting town in the northern Veneto region. Together they bring heart and soul to Fabiolus, serving the range of customers—from studio workers to local families and tourists—and helping the local community's church and public schools with their volunteer work and generous donations.

Chiara oversees the menu, inspired by her native traditions. There are lots of delicious polenta specialties to choose from, homemade pasta, and pizza. Also, as Verona is home to VinItaly, Italy's largest wine fair, Fabio has an excellent wine list, including the beloved vintages of the Veneto, from Amarone to Valpolicella and Pinot Grigio.

The Fabiolus garden is colorfully landscaped, inspired by Fabio's mamma, who owned a flower shop in Verona. Enjoying a dinner there, just steps away from busy Sunset Boulevard, immerses me in the spirit of one of Italy's most romantic towns.

Many associate Verona with Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, which is set there. A rec-



FABIOLUS

Chiara and Fabio Conti at their Hollywood restaurant.

reation of the heroine's balcony is a popular tourist spot in the historic center, but more impressive is the 2,000-year-old Roman Arena, home to an internationally acclaimed summer opera festival.

At holiday time, Verona's vias and piazzas are covered with twinkly lights, displays of presepe (nativity scenes) fill the Arena, and there's a lively Christmas market. Bakery windows display enticing sweets, including nadalin, a Veronese star shaped cake, and pandoro (gold bread), that's shaped like panettone and dusted with sugar.

Meanwhile, back in Hollywood, at Fabiolus, Chiara has established traditions for her Christmas family dinners. Here she shares with us an invention that's a twist on

the popular beef dishes of Verona—a roast encrusted with coffee and vanilla. And as the Veronese are proud of their pandoro during this time of year, she uses it instead of ladyfingers to make tiramisu. Thanks to Chiara, you can enjoy the tastes of Verona wherever you are. See www.fabiolus.com for more on the restaurant. For information about USA Certified Italian Restaurants in Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York, Chicago and Miami, see www.italiantourism.com/epicurean.html.

Susan Van Allen is the author of *100 Places in Italy Every Woman Should Go* and the *Golden Days in Italy* blog. She travels frequently to Italy, the native land of her grandparents, and lives in Los Angeles. susanvanallen.com

Pizza Margherita

- 1 teaspoon dry yeast
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1½ cups warm (110°F) water
- 4 cups unbleached flour, plus more for dusting the pizza balls
- 1 teaspoon salt
- Extra virgin olive oil, as needed
- 8 fresh basil leaves, shredded
- ½ pound mozzarella, chopped into ½-inch cubes
- 1 (28-oz.) can peeled tomatoes, drained

Pour the yeast and the sugar into the warm (110°F) water. Let it stand a few minutes, then mix it together and pour it into the bowl of a stand mixer, fitted with the hook attachment.

Add the flour and run the mixer at low speed until the dough comes together. Add the salt toward the end of the mixing.

Rub your hands with some olive oil so the dough won't stick to your hands. Remove the dough from the bowl.

Divide the dough into four equal parts and shape into balls. Oil each ball and wrap each one loosely in plastic wrap.

Place the dough balls in a warm place (perhaps on a tray in an unheated oven). Let them rise for 2 to 3 hours, until the dough doubles in size.

Place the pizza stone on the top rack of the oven and preheat the oven at 500°F for at least 30 minutes. The hotter the better.

Run the peeled tomatoes through a blender or food processor to crush them.

Spread some flour on a counter, and with your hands and maybe with the help of the rolling pin, spread one ball in a large circle, about 1/4-inch thick. Top the dough with the crushed tomatoes.

Cook one pizza at a time. Slide one onto the hot stone in the oven with a spatula, and cook for about 5 minutes, half of its cooking time.

Remove from the oven, add the chopped mozzarella, slide it back into the oven, and cook until the cheese melts.

Remove from oven, sprinkle with the shredded basil, and serve.

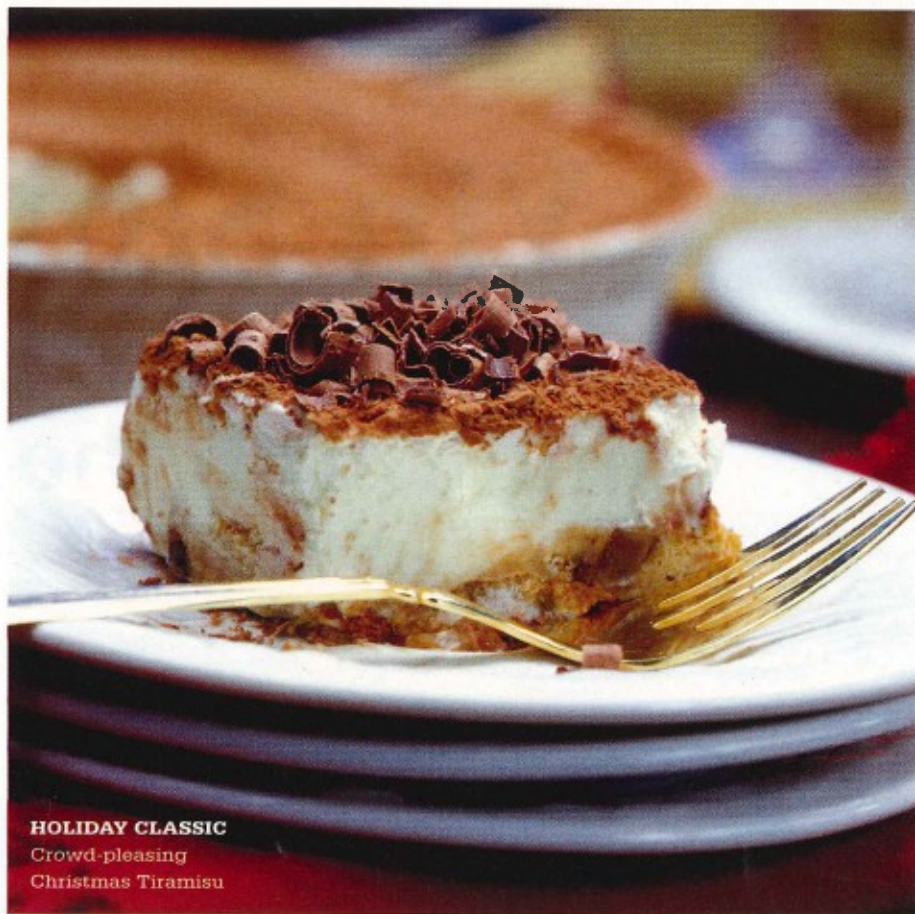
Makes 4 small pizzas.

Chiara's Coffee and Vanilla Crusted Rib Eye Roast

- 4 teaspoons salt
- 1 vanilla bean
- 4 tablespoons fine ground espresso coffee
- 2 teaspoons ground black pepper
- 1 rib eye roast, about 5 pounds, preferably bone-in

Put the salt in a small bowl, cut the vanilla bean lengthwise and scrape the seeds into the salt. (You can use the salt to help scrape the seeds out.) Add the coffee and pepper to the salt and vanilla bean seeds. Mix well.

Rub the roast with the mixture. Pour the



HOLIDAY CLASSIC
Crowd-pleasing
Christmas Tiramisu

excess on the top, and spread it around the meat.

Put the meat in the roasting pan and let it stand at room temperature for at least a couple of hours.

In the meantime, preheat the oven to 450°F.

Put the pan with the roast in the oven and cook 20 to 30 minutes, depending on the size of the meat. The bigger the piece, the longer it needs to cook.

Lower the temperature to 400°F and cook for an additional 20 minutes for medium rare. Add more cooking time for medium or medium well.

Remove the roast from the oven, but leave it in the pan. Cover the pan with aluminum foil and let it rest for about 30 minutes before slicing. Serve the roast with its juices and sauce.

Makes 6 servings.

Christmas Tiramisu

Though tiramisu is usually made with ladyfingers, this recipe honors the version from Verona that uses pandoro, a Veronese sweet Italian yeast cake similar to panettone, that's commonly served during the Christmas holidays. It is available in most Italian markets and in many gourmet and specialty stores.

- 5 large pasteurized eggs
- ½ cup sugar
- Pinch of salt
- ⅛ teaspoon fresh lemon juice
- 2½ cups mascarpone
- 1 cup espresso
- ½ Pandoro, cut into 3/4-inch slices
- ½ cup cocoa

Separate the yolks from the egg whites. Using an electric mixer, beat the yolks and the sugar until light and fluffy. In another bowl, beat the egg whites, salt, and lemon until the whites form stiff peaks.

Stir the mascarpone into the egg yolk mixture until thoroughly combined. Gently fold the egg whites into the egg yolk/mascarpone mixture.

To assemble:

Dip the pandoro slices one at a time into the espresso to lightly moisten them. Make a layer of soaked pandoro slices on the bottom of a 7- by 13-inch serving dish. Spread half of the mascarpone mixture over the pandoro. Make another layer of soaked pandoro and top with the rest of the mascarpone mixture. Sift cocoa evenly over the top.

Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least two hours before serving.

Makes 12 servings.