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LIFTING THE LID ON ROMAGNA

For earthy recipes and exceptional seafood, Romagna is second to none. Chef Claudio Di Bernardo pays homage to the birthplace of Italian cuisine

“For Romagnoli, love of food is in the blood,” says Claudio Di Bernardo, executive chef of La Dolce Vita restaurant at Grand Hotel Rimini. “One’s culture, lifestyle and family structure revolves around it: mothers make pasta daily, fathers go to the port to buy blue fish and grandmothers prepare the piadina.”

Given that it is home to produce such as Parmigiano Reggiano and Parma ham, it would be easy to assume better-known Emilia is the culinary heartland of Emilia-Romagna. Yet Romagna, which spans the south east of the region from the Apennines to the Adriatic, has its own generous serving of culinary clout.

Di Bernardo is well placed to comment on the area’s cuisine. His creative fine dining plates are laced with nostalgia and have their roots in recipes passed down for generations. “In Romagna there’s a local saying, ‘nobody beats mother’s tagliatelle’. Everything is homemade,” he says.

Romagna’s most famous son is Pellegrino Artusi, author of the defining recipe collection ‘La Scienza in Cucina e l’Arte di Mangiar Bene’ (Science in the Kitchen and the Art of Eating Well) which was published in 1891, two decades after Italy’s unification. The first to gather recipes from all 20 of Italy’s regions, the book was so influential that Artusi is considered the father of Italian cuisine. This tome of 790 classic recipes can still be found in most kitchens, including Claudio’s.

“The great seafood of the Adriatic is the real element that distinguishes Romagna’s cuisine from Emilia’s,” reflects Di Bernardo, citing poveracce (clams) as a highlight. As well as the Adriatic, Romagna is bordered by the forested Apennine Mountains, famed for game such as boar – cured and used in rich ragus – and white truffles.

Di Bernardo is particularly passionate about Romagna’s dairy products including Pecorino di Fossa, a semi-hard cheese dating back to the 12th century that was granted PDO status in 2005. “It’s still aged underground in tuff pits which gives it a spicy, intense aroma,” he explains.

Like the most memorable meals, a trip to Emilia Romagna is best savoured at a leisurely pace. As Di Bernardo observes: “It’s hard to comprehend this many world-famous flavours were born and are still crafted along just 250 kilometres (155 miles) of road.”

For more info please go to italia.it/en



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Mortadella and prosciutto selection showcased in a local deli



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Bologna food market

“FOR ROMAGNOLI, LOVE OF FOOD IS IN THE BLOOD



Piadina romagnola

