

At home with... **Vincenzo Livia**

There are exciting things happening at the Italian Forum this year, with a handful of new businesses having come to life over the last month or so.

Whether you're in the mood for a snack, apéritif or dinner, stop by and check out the Forum's most exciting new venue, La Tavernetta. Vincenzo Livia is head chef of this newly opened restaurant and here he chats to Ciao about his passion for food and Sophia Loren...

How long have you been a chef? Tell us a bit about how you started out in the industry.

I've been a chef for a good 30 years now, but I've spent about 39 years working in the kitchen. When I was about 15 years old I realised I wasn't as crazy about going to school as I was about following my Sicilian nonna around, especially when she would make her homemade bread. A friend of mine then convinced me to follow my passion so I dropped out of school and haven't looked back since.

Where did your passion for food come from?

I came to the realisation that I had a passion for food and cooking when I used to watch the chefs in professional kitchens whip up the most amazing dishes. They were so quick and so precise. They turned something simple into something extraordinary and from there I knew I wanted to do the exact same thing.

Can you tell us a bit about what you'll be offering at La Tavernetta?

At La Tavernetta I want to offer my 30 years of experience and knowledge of Italian cuisine. I'm working with young innovative people so it's the perfect fusion of old school, classic and new trendy ideas.

What kitchen utensil can't you live without and why?

My tongs! It's not very sanitary to pick up food with your hands so it's the one utensil I use as an extension of my arm.

What ingredients are essential in your kitchen?

Fresh herbs, good Italian olive oil and salt.

If you could have anyone over for dinner, whom would you invite and why?

This is personal but perhaps Sofia Loren [he admits with a giggle], because she is still the most beautiful woman in the world.



Vincenzo's the new kid on the Forum block

Vincenzo's Ricotta e Melanzane Dessert (Ricotta and Eggplant)

Makes 2 stacks

Ingredients

- 1 large eggplant
- 500g fresh ricotta
- 3 tablespoons icing sugar
- Vanilla essence
- Melted chocolate

Method

1. Cut your eggplant into circles, grill and set aside.
2. Combine the fresh ricotta with 3 tablespoons of icing sugar and a little vanilla essence. Mix well.
3. Melt enough chocolate to make 1 cup of chocolate fondue.
4. Prepare the dessert in layers like a lasagna. First layer is one eggplant circle, second layer is a spoonful of the ricotta mixture spread over the eggplant and third layer is the chocolate fondue on top. Repeat this process three times to make a ricotta and eggplant stack.
5. Once completed, place in the fridge for a minimum of an hour.
6. Serve cold.