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Kid in the Kitchen

Everyone has a favorite

By Brandon Cohen
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The sky is blue, the plate is white, I wonder what I'll have tonight? I am at one of my favorite restaurants right now. It is called Il Forno Trattoria. I have been going to this restaurant since I was born, and I absolutely love it, and everybody who works there including the owner, Joseph Suceveann, the manager, Soren Costache, and my personal favorite waiter, Michael Giudice.

Il Forno is a semi-dressy restaurant that serves northern Italian cuisine. Il Forno is located at 2901 Ocean Park Blvd. in Santa Monica. It's a great place to go for parties and anniversary dinners. Sometimes when I go there, I sit down at the counter and watch the wonderful chef (Dominico Salvatore, who has been a partner in the restaurant since it opened 24 years ago) prepare food for their loyal customers. Food is really an art.

When you sit down at the table, one of their knowledgeable waiters quickly and efficiently comes over and asks for your drink orders. Around the same time that they bring you drinks, they also bring out their freshly baked Panne al Il Forno bread, butter and my favorite, Il Forno's homemade bruschetta made with tomato, basil, garlic and balsamic vinegar. I just love putting all of those sweet, juicy tomatoes, fresh-picked basil and oil onto a piece of bread. It tastes so good!

After they bring out the bread and drinks, they tell you about all their daily specials and then they ask for your food order. After you order, you have a little bit of time to just kind of relax, talk a little, until the appetizers come out, and then later, the main course.

I would highly recommend getting the pasta e fagioli soup, the insalata dell' ortolano or the melanzane alla caprina (rolled eggplant with tomato sauce and goat cheese) as an appetizer. For a main course I would either order the tortellini nuovi or the pappardelle all' abruzzese (lamb sauce), as they are my favorites. If you would like an entrée instead of pasta I would recommend trancio di salmone (herbed salmon), filetto agro dolce (filet mignon in a port wine and balsamic reduction) or the petto di pollo Il Forno (not your traditional chicken marsala).

Then there's always their pizza, which comes with thin, crispy crust with many different toppings. My favorite is alla salsiccia, but I have them caramelize pearl onions instead of peppers. It melts in your mouth.

And then my favorite part: dessert. Il Forno is known for its tartufos, which are completely delicious chocolate-covered domes of ice cream served on a white plate. They come in all sorts of flavours like: zabaione (which tastes like eggnog to me,) white chocolate chip, vanilla bean and of course chocolate. If you have a party (or not), you can order from a choice of several delicious cakes, including lemon hazelnut torte, flourless chocolate cake, carrot cake, apple torte and their handmade cheesecake which will send you to heaven with your first bite.

And for the adults, Il Forno has a very wide selection of red and white wines. I haven't tried them, but my parents say they are delicious. They also have kid-friendly drinks and will make half orders of any pasta for the younger crowd.

Il Forno is a very busy restaurant, so the waiters and busboys are always on the move. So if you go there and see a line to get in the door, just know it is because the restaurant is so good, people are willing to wait for their food.

The décor of the restaurant is clean and contemporary. They have two rooms and outdoor seating when weather permits. They have paintings and plants hanging on the walls. The overall ambiance of this restaurant is a neighborhood hangout. Whenever I go there I see people I know. It is the sort of place that the whole neighborhood would want to go to for a nice night out.

It's amazing how much I love this restaurant. I would recommend anyone and everyone go there for lunch or dinner. If this restaurant were being graded like me in school, it would get an A+!

Brandon Cohen has lived Santa Monica his whole life. He resides in Sunset Park with his family. He loves food, restaurants and writing. Brandon is 11 years old.