

Café Amici

Cheers To Friendship And Love!



By Kim Burns & Sandra Halliday
Photography By Chuck Carroll



Amici means friends in Italian. Café Amici is the brainchild of two brothers, Massimo and Achille Nigri. The vibe at the Café is fueled by their love for bringing people together in a convivial atmosphere where friendships, and perhaps romance, could be forged and by their passion for regional cuisine that is inspired by their home town of Martina Franca in Puglia, Italy.

Massimiliano and Achille Nigri are two brothers from Puglia that run Café Amici. Our dinner was a spectacular showcase of traditional Pugliese cuisine. To stimulate our senses and prime our body for the meal to come, Massimo made us aperitif cocktails. Kim's By Amici was intended to be a bold introduction to the fine drinking world that only Massimo could provide. A combination of Mezcal, Campari, and Sweet Vermouth filled the description. Vermouth provided the sweet herbal flavor that rounded out the bitter of the brazen Campari. The smoky taste of the mezcal appears to keep your taste buds interested long after the liquid is gone from your mouth. Piazza Sandra was a tall glass of Amaretto DiSaronno, Crown Royal, cranberry juice, and garnished with a sprig of fresh mint. It had a sweet almond taste, like a marzipan dessert, combined with the smooth and creamy flavor of vanilla all in a playful tease with some cranberry tartness.

our Antipasti. Amici's bruschetta is a traditional Apulian recipe topped with fresh tomatoes, basil, garlic, and oregano. Specially created for the brothers, Café Amici's Burrata is 50% buffalo milk and 50% cow's milk. The Burrata was served on a wood block and we indulged on the creamy taste of heaven. The scintillating cream flavor that oozed from the ball of Burrata filled our senses providing us with the feeling of having just tasted the freshest milk you can receive.

Without giving us much time to recover from the delight of fresh cheese, Massimo brought to the table a rosy hued plate of Red Beet Carpaccio with Grilled Octopus. This dish was a stunning work of edible art! The beets were sliced resembling thin, delicate rose petals. The octopus was grilled with just the right amount of smokiness and grill time to provide a perfect texture to bite into.

Boasting his mother's secret recipe, Massimo brought

out his homemade Meatballs and Tomato Sauce, served with grated salty ricotta cheese and garnished with a large basil leaf. The mixture of beef, pork and veal provided a unique meaty taste that will keep you asking for more.

The brothers presented their homemade Spinach Linguini with Burrata and Bacon. Al dente and delicately drizzled with olive oil from Puglia, this was comfort food at its most elegant. Fresh pasta can provide several essential nutrients for your body. Having freshly made pasta may allow those of us with digestive sensitivities the ability to enjoy pasta again!

Café Amici's showcase culinary fare continued with The Jumbo Beef Tortelloni Alla Beluga. It made a statement with its rich sauce filling the dish with flavor. Next came the Cervellata, a traditional Pugliese sausage made from pork, beef, and veal with basil, garlic, and a sharp, dry cheese. It's high salt content left us craving for some good crusty Italian bread. Happily, for us, there was a full basket of pane. The dipping oil was an extraordinary combination of olive oil, balsamic vinegar, garlic, oregano, and grated Parmesan Cheese.

Our Tortellini and Cervallata was wonderfully paired with Poderi Angelini's Primitivo di Manduria, a full-bodied red from Puglia. Its velvety smooth bouquet of black cherry, oak, and leather immediately conjured images of the rugged beauty of a Pugliese countryside on a sultry summer's day.

Our eyes were treated to a burst of incredible colors in the form of black Squid Ink Lobster and Crab Ravioli topped with a classic mirepoix of sautéed chopped celery, carrots, and onions, served with a bright yellow limoncello reduction sauce. Achille tells us a story of how his mother created the sauce by accident. The result is a playful tease of tangy, sweet, salty, and savory that delighted our taste buds.



Just when we felt mealtime couldn't get any better, Massimo brings out his pièce de résistance: Flourless Chocolate Almond Torte. Café Amici's dark chocolate with crushed almonds flour-free torte was light with just the right amount of sweetness. This is definitely a healthy dessert option!

From the staff's avid attention to filling our glasses, as well as Massimo and Achille's personal attention, you will find that Café Amici fills you with a very special vibe—one where you would want to experience again to enjoy top notch cuisine and a warm feeling where friends are always welcome. We left the restaurant feeling restored by the simplicity of every detail, the food, and the genuine hospitality of Massimo, Achille, and their staff. Salut!

Café Amici offers monthly wine dinners that features award-winning wines from exceptional and unique wineries from all around the world. Check their web site or Facebook page for more information.

Don't forget to let them know Kim and Sandra sent you!

Café Amici
1371 Main Street
Sarasota, FL 34236
(941) 951.6896
www.cafeamicisrq.com

Hours:
Lunch M-F 11am-2pm
Dinner M-Th 5pm-10pm, Fri-Sat 5pm-10:30pm

Sundays: Closed in Summer
Check for Sunday In Season Hours