



Italian Fancy Food Goes Bio at Il Gattopardo Restaurant

Michele Scicolone (July 09, 2010)



Sampling Italian bio products as prepared by a master chef

In the days leading up to the Fancy Food Show at the Javits Center we received several different dinner invitations sponsored by exhibitors but the one we accepted was hosted by [FederBio](#) [2], an Italian organization composed of organic and biodynamic food companies. The dinner was held at [Il Gattopardo](#) [3] in Manhattan, one of our favorite Italian restaurants, and we were very interested to have the opportunity to sample the Italian bio products as prepared by a master chef. At the Fancy Food Show, we made a point of visiting the Bio Benessere booth where we saw many products represented by FederBio.

A number of items were from [Alce Nero](#) [4](a Sioux name meaning Black Elk) and [ProBios](#) [5],



companies that represent organic producers and distribute their foods. We were not surprised to find an array of Italian pastas, olive oils, honeys and biscuits, among many things, but we never expected to see basmati rice, rice milk, tea and coffee and others, which are not grown or produced in Italy. The spokesperson explained that some of these products are what is known as Fair Trade, indicating that they have been produced outside of Italy in countries such as Costa Rica, Peru, and India in a socially responsible manner and the farmers or producers were paid a fair price.

That evening, we sat in the cozy garden room at the rear of Il Gattopardo. Our meal began with a sampling of bruschette dabbed with a variety of tomato sauces. We also tasted little chunks of Parmigiano Reggiano drizzled with balsamic vinegar tradizionale di Modena DOP from [Fattorie Giacobazzi](#). [6]

A tasting of two pastas followed. One was an unusual fusilli di Kamut, dressed with pesto rosso, a fresh tasting tomato sauce. Kamut is a grain similar to wheat. It has been used since antiquity and, in fact, grains of kamut were found buried with King Tut in his tomb. Kamut means wheat in Ancient Egyptian. This grain gives the pasta a unique, nutty taste.

We also tried orecchiette made from the prestigious [Senatore Cappelli](#) [7] variety of wheat. This wheat, which is grown in the Altamura region of Puglia, is very high in protein and prized for making pasta. It was tossed with a sauce made from tomatoes grown in Emilia Romagna's Mezzano Valley inside the Po Delta. These tomatoes are particularly high in lycopene, a beneficial antioxidant. In order to preserve their flavor, aroma, and nutritional properties, the tomatoes are processed within 12 hours of harvesting.

A delicate extra virgin olive oil dressing complemented the next course, grilled steak "Piemontese" topped with arugula. A refreshing plate of fruit drizzled with acacia honey was a welcome sight, followed by a rich chocolate filled tart.

At the Fancy Food Show, visitors can see and learn about new products, and even sometimes sample them straight out of the package. At Il Gattopardo, we felt privileged to taste many of these products debuted at the show as they should be served.

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