



Primo Piano - Domenico Locantore and his Sole Mio Bangkok: Italian Cuisine and Culture in the Heart of the Thai Capital

Dal nostro corrispondente a Bangkok - 23 mar 2022 (Prima Notizia

24) A long life made of travels as a messenger of Technology applied to public telephony, many countries where he has

worked and then finally landed in Bangkok where he has transformed Italian Cuisine and Music into a vehicle of shared joy and Italian creativity offered to international customers.

A life lived intensely, in the light of the specificity induced by his work, for most of his time carried out within the Technology applied to Telephony, the world of communication, in a certain sense, more and more crucial, until it became what it is today, conveyed by the dimension of handheld devices, cell phones, tablets, wireless connections. But the Millennials generation doesn't know all this. The technological "leap" from public telephony to the current availability of a very small portable phone is too great for them to have any idea. "One day I was accompanying my daughter to school - Domenico Locantore tells us - under the public telephones available inside the school structure, there was the logo of the company I was working for at that time, in fact, there were public telephones that I had bought - as URMET Marketing Manager since 1989 - and, turning to my daughter I said, "See that symbol at the base of the public telephone? That's one of the phones I had purchased here in Thailand from the company I worked for." I thought it might be a source of family pride. Instead, my daughter looks at me and assesses me in her eyes as if I were a troglodyte". Today Domenico Locantore -married and father of two girls of 12 and 13 years- accompanies this family anecdote with the smile of a pragmatic man and an expert on Life, but he also "tells" how much water has passed under the bridges of Technology to get to today, where cell phones that fit in the palm of your hand allow you to take pictures as no one could have done when the cameras were with images fixed on glass plates or films made with animal gelatine. Nowadays with a cell phone you can talk in real time with a person on the other side of the world via WhatsApp, via Line, via Telegram, you can also connect in audio and video. How will those of our generation ever be able to tell the "millennials" the excitement of listening to their mother's voice when they were in the military service or the thrill of being able to speak, in a hushed voice, with their loved one, imagining them but not seeing them? But how did you end up here in Bangkok and open an Italian Cuisine restaurant? Domenico Locantore keeps his smile on, his light eyes and his hair pervaded by gray curls are the frame My training is that of Technical Expert, this was important, it gave me a real mindset based on practicality, pragmatism, today we would call it "problem solving". Most of my working activity, since 1989, has been carried out for a company, URMET, for which I was interested in exporting public telephony. In 1990 I became Export Office Manager and I was interested in Customer Service. The first country in Asia where I did this role was

Bangladesh, the thing I remember most about that country is the smells. And the images are always populated by lots of people, by crowded places. It's hard to put into words how much trace certain smells, certain memories, the feeling of crowds all around you leave on you. In 1992 it was the turn of Thailand, an experience during which we were also able to improve the technology in the selection and use of coins, issues related to the specific weight of metals used. In short, in 1993 we made what today is called a technological "upgrade", and so the PlurimaTre machine was born. In 1997, despite a very strong economic and financial crisis, I promoted the sale of 10,000 public telephones in Thailand. I then flew to Myanmar, and during the course of my career I also travelled to Cuba, Bolivia, El Salvador and various countries in North Africa. For eleven years I worked as Product Manager and Sales Director, always in the field of public telephony, for a large Chinese company. A "turning point" came between 2003 and 2005, I was in Bangkok and I lived right next to a famous Italian restaurant in the Thai capital, "Limoncello", I was so close that they passed me dishes and pizzas through the windows, like good neighbors. To tell the truth, always in my job, I spent most of my free time in the restaurants, not only to eat but also to attend social life, dialogue, open to others. In 2006, Armando Monti, the pizzaiolo of Limoncello, we decided to open a restaurant of our own "Lumphini Pizza", among many advantages it was located at the entrance of one of the apartment buildings "Lumphini" and was the first restaurant with a web page, a page on social networks, etc.. Subsequently I traveled further to Sri Lanka, Nepal, Iran, Azerbaijan, Liberia, Ethiopia, Russia, Papua New Guinea. By the time public telephony came to a standstill, I found myself certainly no longer young. And father of two little girls. And here, then, is how I turned a previously positive experience of mine into my new job. I focused on the idea of "Sole Mio Bangkok", together with two Cuban musicians, I combined my lifelong passions: Cooking and Music, I myself play the guitar and sing. So, yours was - professionally speaking - a "return home", a return to the young and never dormant passions? Together with actors, directors, musicians, we have created a real circle of cultural activities without ever forgetting to pay particular attention to social issues. With Father Giovanni Contarin, for example, we have organized 12 charity lunches, we have carried out various activities to support handicapped or socially weak children, we have tried to give a joyful response to physical and social fragility, where it was possible. While with actors and musicians we still have live music, public readings, recitations. Here with us, the Sole Mio Got Talent also took place, with the participation of artists from all over the world, including a very successful contest for children. Of course, the Covid, has "redesigned" everything in a more closed and sad but we hope to return to "open" more and more, back to share good food, art and solidarity. Today Sole Mio Bangkok has 14 employees, each coming from different cities and countries, we are now a team, or rather, a family, where there is no difference in gender, religion, skin color. We stay together and support each other in our workplace where we spend more time than with our own family. Today, serving fresh food, typical vegetable varieties grown fresh here, directly from the producer to the consumer, garnishing it all with emotional participation and a smile is part of Sole Mio Bangkok's project: to bring people together. Sole Mio Bangkok, 81 Thonglor 13 (Soi Akkaphat), Sukhumvit 55 Road, Klontang Nua, Wattana, Bangkok 10110, Tel.: 021852399, 021852799

di Francesco Tortora Mercoledì 23 Marzo 2022

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Sede legale : Via Costantino Morin, 45 00195 Roma
E-mail: redazione@primanotizia24.it