



Mondo - Giglio Trattoria Fiorentina: a nook of Tuscany transplanted to the heart of Bangkok

Dal nostro corrispondente a Bangkok - 29 giu 2022 (Prima Notizia 24) It is not only a lovely and intimate trattoria of typical Tuscan cuisine, it is also a place of Mediterranean flavors and fragrances that one can approach in the Thai capital, included in the Michelin Guide 2022, we talk about it with chef and manager Manuolo Pintore.

Manuolo Pintore approaches with politeness and a bright smile, he has the traits of a Mediterranean man, you could say he is Italian, Greek, Spanish, Middle Eastern. "I have been a chef in the Middle East for a long time, in fact"-he responds to questions in a calm and quiet manner, inside a delightful Tuscan corner literally teleported to one of the hearts of the City of Bangkok, the Silom District, where many ultra-modern skyscrapers like the Mahanakhon Building tower. And I am struck by the coincidence of my initial intuition, related to his somatic features that remind me of a song by Gianna Nannini where, precisely, she speaks of a handsome man "with his Middle Eastern profile". But when did you then decide to move to Bangkok? And how come -coming from such a pleasant and joyful nation and region to live in- you changed your direction and planned to work and live in Thailand? It all happened in 2008 I was, indeed, a chef in Oman. During a vacation in Thailand and Bangkok, I matured the decision to move here and open my own restaurant, Giglio Trattoria Fiorentina. To tell the truth, I was attracted by the energy that Bangkok emanated, a set of vibrations-if we can say so-that made me feel good. Since that time, do you find that Thailand has changed a lot? Yes, there has been a continuous and progressive change in the face and nature of this country, especially since 2016 I felt that everything has been speeding up, in that sense. Bangkok, from this point of view, is kind of the allegory of all of Southeast Asia, where everything seems to be developing, moving, here you really feel that things are shifting and changing, there is ferment. A climate and a spirit of evolution or change that I no longer find in Italy but also not in all of Europe. From here it becomes even more evident that our Nation, our Continent, is still standing still, anchored in a glorious past on which, however, we today live off our income. As I am wont to say, "Our grandparents gave a good image of us in the world, they worked well." After that, however, we slowed down. And when you slow down while the world all around you is running, it means you have practically stopped. Thank goodness, the great and world-famous Italian brands in culture, football and sports, in clothing and styling, in motoring and engineering, as well as the historic and great success of Italian Cuisine in every corner of the Planet, make it easier for us, we are anticipated by a good reputation. The location of this diner on the urban territory of Bangkok is really strategic-what was here before it became a restaurant? Has everything changed a lot in this District? Previously it was a family home, a family that

revolved around the world of construction, building construction, the set of buildings and constructions-here in this slice of Bangkok's territory-was characterized by buildings built generally around the 1950s-60s. The family who lived here previously reported to me that just across the street ran a stream. Hard to believe today, with a massive futuristic building complex standing in front of Giglio Trattoria Fiorentina, with no trace of that river and past. Living in Silom, Sukhumvit, Sathorn today certainly means enjoying privileged positions, not surprisingly they are Districts favored by the Thai upper class or wealthy managers from all over the world. At the same time, however, just the repeated and progressive building construction, the creation of roads, skyscrapers, road and elevated communication routes, the big big malls, have congested the metropolitan center of this megalopolis, one thus enjoys, a wide range of services and high prestige, in some cases but -at the same time- it is easy to get caught up in the traffic and metropolitan frenzy. When will Giglio Trattoria Fiorentina be born in Bangkok? It happened on May 2020. It was all planned long ago, all planned in every detail. But no one could have foreseen that we would soon experience the downfall of such a momentous event as the Covid pandemic. In August 2021 we even experienced a hard lockdown here in Bangkok, it was all suddenly very difficult. At the same time, however, as the restrictions eased, we also saw the change in the flows of our clientele. When, in fact, travel was restricted, it was mainly Thai customers who frequented our restaurant. Today, as those restrictions have been greatly revised, we have begun to see Thai people resume traveling across borders and our clientele to include many foreigners as well. Has the clientele of Giglio Trattoria Fiorentina, from your professional point of view, changed over Time? Today the customer of an Italian restaurant is already educated and prepared, Italian Cuisine in the world has worked in competitiveness with other Kitchens and has increasingly chosen to work on attention to detail, respect for its roots and History, has its own clear identity. That is why we too have chosen a clear line, the will to be a Tuscan trattoria, where quality and customer service are our main musts. Speaking of imported rather than local products, what can you say about the difficulty of finding suitable and reliable suppliers locally? It takes a lot of patience and experimentation. In Time it happens that with some suppliers you even become friends, it often happens -for example- among Italians. Shenanigans can happen or that you meet a supplier who wants to bamboozle you, just as you can find a supplier who will do everything to best meet your requirements and thus become, a fundamental point of reference. It is difficult to explain to an undifferentiated audience what the importance of a good supplier is, because much of our work is based precisely on the consistency and security of supply. Suffice it to say that with suppliers, every day, I spend at least an hour of my working time. There is also to be stressed, then, the role of Nature, here we live in a tropical Nation, when you are in the middle of the monsoon season, crops are literally buried by water, it is also difficult to manage and ensure the supply of some products of the earth (one example among many: tomatoes) and therefore, the climatic factor also becomes an important element to consider. What kind of evolution is taking place in this specific field? I notice that, especially in the youth groups, there is a lot of entrepreneurship that is looking more and more at typical national crops, young Thai people are taking special care of the whole chain of fruit and vegetable production especially in the direction of eco-sustainable production. The same happens in steer breeding, to give another

example, where they are constantly trying to raise the quality of the product and thus, compete better and better with productions from Australia, from other Asian Nations and eventually present themselves in foreign markets with outstanding products, as happened with rice, with shrimps, with chickens and poultry products derived from them, with pork, where Thailand exports all over the world and has long been at the top of the world exporting countries.

di Francesco Tortora Mercoledì 29 Giugno 2022