



PN24 FOOD - Bangkok: Armenio's Modern Grandma, the most classic Italian cuisine but with a modern twist

Dal nostro corrispondente a Bangkok - 07 apr 2025 (Prima Notizia 24) The most classic of Italian culinary traditions but presented with a more modern twist: these are the ideas of Sam Armenio, a single man but with many lives behind him.

The scene of Italian Cuisine in the land of Thailand, especially in its Capital City, Bangkok, has been further enriched over the years through the expansion of the offerings and through the raising of the quality offered, with typical products, of an ever-increasing quality and of an ever-higher level. Today, Italian cuisine is the banner among the main ones representing Italy and its peculiarities. After the pioneering era of the first attempts to export typical Italian cuisine to Thailand, today in Thailand -for tourists from international backgrounds, as well as for Thais in the middle and upper-middle economic ranges- pizza, tiramisu, and coffee are everywhere and are an integral part of contemporary daily life, especially in large urban centers, as are bread, cheeses, wines, olive oil, pizza, fresh pasta, and-most recently-true “must-haves” have become burrata and Prosecco. Italian Genius has also made itself known in many other fields, of course, through the contribution made by the world of motors, cars, scooters, Engineering, Science, there is certainly no shortage of events of a cultural nature, the result of the dialogue in that direction initiated long ago between the two nations, Italy and Thailand. But Cuisine, with its approach dictated by immediacy and fascination, was one of the first steps on the path of mutual acquaintance. On June 18, 2023, another such piece in the great mosaic of Italian Cuisine was born in Bangkok, the city that never sleeps, the Capital of the Kingdom of Siam: Armenio's Modern Grandma. “You know“-says Sam with his handsome face that you would never believe is of an Australian but of a Mediterranean man-”I came to the restaurant business through a very long and winding road. My whole life has been like a continuous roller coaster, a continuous up and down made up of many peaks reached but also deep thumps from which I got back up with great effort.” As a young man, among the various roles he held, the most challenging was as a designer for big Brands in the world of Sports, mainly Lotto, for which he designed and developed a model of socks with a pocket that contained the shin guards. In this way, it was not necessary to have the shin guards to be attached to the leg with special bands and then covered with the socks. It was an innovative idea and one that -in its own way- was reminiscent of the kangaroo pouch, an animal and symbol of the nation where Sam was born, Australia. Little more than 20 years old, then, Sam proposed a strongly innovative but above all very practical idea. The implementation of this project, the creation of mechanical machines that could make this innovative type of sock-guards, however, was a much more complex matter. And it did not turn out in the end, to be a winning thing. Too many

obstacles, too many implementation difficulties, the project was gradually shelved. “I had traveled extensively between Australia, Brescia, Thailand. My project for Lotto had great prospects for development, but its implementation, specifically the packaging of the finished product in large quantities and its delivery on a tight schedule, were difficult stakes to overcome. I had lavished my personal experience as a soccer player, as a young man I had played in soccer teams in Australia reaching what could be compared to Serie C in Italy. My role was that of a midfielder with offensive propensities. I had to stop because of a leg that no longer allowed me to compete competitively. In the Lotto project then, I had used my know-how acquired in played soccer. Unfortunately, this was not enough. I had to re-invent myself completely.” And so, Sam, found himself as a trader working with big international brands such as Coca-Cola, Pepsi, Fuji, Kodak. He operated in major world events such as the 1994 and 1999 World Cups. In 1993 he married, a marriage he had a son from. Various experiences in the world of marketing, management, for companies that operated in packaging, advertisement, also in the field of entertainment and Music. But there was no shortage of thumps, material and existential. Marriage ending in a divorce in 2013, Sam again found himself at a crossroads. “Success, fame, money, everything had become too big for me to live a 'normal' life. Excesses became the dominant feature of my life. At that time I was not a good guy to be around, I did things I am not proud of nowadays.” Sam felt the need to do a deep reset, to fern, reflect and meditate. For a year he lived in the Isaan “The nearest 7-Eleven was several kilometers away and I only went there to buy water, the nearest Macro was 127 kilometers away. I became a farmer, I liked growing plants and herbs, rice and tomatoes.” He returns to Australia, to care for his mother suffering from Dementia. Alongside his godmother, day by day, he learns the innermost secrets of Apulian cooking, of his families, in Molfetta. He can thus serve his mother the most favorite local dishes but slowly, he finds that he enjoys cooking, preparing good food for others. “I saw the happy eyes around me, of my family members of friends, my godmother (“commara” in local slang language) began to compliment me on my progress and my constant desire to improve. Out of all this came the naming of my current restaurant in Bangkok “Armenio's Modern Grandma,” grandmother's cuisine with a modern twist.” In between, upon returning to Australia and Thailand in a settled way, there were the expressions of “Scoosi” (to be read “Sorry”), an initiative that started in a small space and then very quickly became a much larger reality, “Da Notte,” an entertainment business, “Pizza Pizza,” which later became a group of 8 pizzerias, and today Armenio's. Sam met Love, in the eyes of Kat, in Hua Hin, on 2013 he saw his present and his future: “It was in an occasionally moment, I met her face and I said to myself, “She is the one!”. It has been absolutely not easy but -in the end- now we are supporting each other, Kat is my greatest source of inspiration, my Muse, my guide, I feel safe with her”. Sam lavished in Armenio's all his experience accumulated in Australia, alongside his grandmother, the best teacher he could have ever had in this regard. Today his “Focaccia Barese” is made with the best products and of the highest quality, prepared daily for his select clientele, a real dive for those who come to this restaurant from Italy, from the South specifically. But Armenio's also offers a wide range of typical Mediterranean, Italian offerings, such as Taranto-style Mussels, Meatballs, Cuttlefish, Lasagna, Penne alla Vodka (a dip into the 1990s), Truffle Ravioli, Fresh Pasta with Porcini mushrooms,

Seafood, Carbonara, Spaghetti alla Bottarga, Ribs, Southern Italian-style Sausages, various types of meat and equally varied origins, such as Spanish Pork. And to finish Affogato al Caffè or Tiramisu. In short, a feast of Mediterranean colors and flavors, from Apulia, Sam's historical and cultural roots. Armenio's and Sam's life stories are an experience worth trying, a corner of the Mediterranean and Puglia in the heart of Bangkok, between Lumpini Park and Sathorn, beating hearts of a tireless megalopolis always full of surprises. For indeed, Armenio's is a true and bright surprise. Armenio's Modern Grandma, 48 Soi Saphan Khu, Rama 4 Rd., Thung Maha Mel, Sathorn, Bangkok, Thailand, Bangkok, Tel.: 096 948 4389 Email armenio.moderngrandma@gmail.com.

di Francesco Tortora Lunedì 07 Aprile 2025