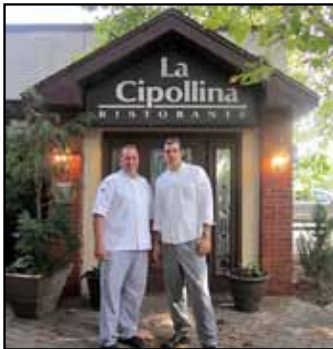


## Brandeis' Cooking Class at La Cipollina: A Culinary Coup!

*By Michele Sweifach*

“Cook with your senses,” advised La Cipollina chef and owner Anthony Braica.

“Use your eyes, nose, mouth and ears. Cooking is not about the recipe. It’s an art.” His impassioned comments throughout the afternoon, displayed his enthusiasm for his subject to us – a group of 30 Brandeis members attending the cooking class and four course lunch.



Chef Matt Higgins, co-owner of the restaurant, 27 years old and nominated as one of the best 25 chefs in the U.S., demonstrated the preparation of the elaborate lunch. He was assisted by enthusiastic volunteers, Steffi Isaac and

Lisa Frederick, Marilyn Sabo and Bridget Voorand. As he cooked, he explained every step of the way going so far as to bring around the pan to show each of us how the food should look at every point along the way. He emphasized having utensils ready and ingredients prepared before beginning to cook. As he prepared each dish, we were served it from the kitchen. Amid the laughter and joking, we all learned a lot.

The lunch was sumptuous. First, Matt prepared Escarole and Bean Soup with Sweet Sausage. We enjoyed it with a loaf of crusty bread dipped in olive oil. Next was the pasta course – Penne Filetto. Made with prosciutto and fresh basil, the flavor was amazing. As Matt prepared it, we learned many secrets of his sauce. The highlight was the main course – Chicken Madeira with shitake mushrooms, risotto, and goat cheese polenta. It was truly sensational. At that point, Anthony taught us how to plate it using various heights and textures. Then what could be a better finale to the meal than tiramisu?

What are some of the things we learned? As far as using garlic, if you smash it you get the mildest flavor, slice it and get a medium strength; mincing is the strongest and could be bitter. It’s not the brand of tomatoes you use for sauce – it’s where they come from that counts. According to Anthony only one place will do – San Marzano. To avoid crying when you dice an onion, breathe through your mouth. And never cheat when you cook with wine. Use the good stuff!

La Cipollina is a Freehold institution, having been there since 1986. Set back in a shady nook off Main St., it is a charming retreat with outdoor tables and gardens

with the feel of Italy. The restaurant serves both Northern and Southern Italian cuisine. Although the food is not inexpensive, Anthony feels that his guests receive good value, particularly with the price fixed dinners. He markets daily – all food is fresh and nothing is ever frozen.

We left La Cipollina not just with delighted tummies, but with minds filled with fresh new ideas that we could use in our own kitchens. Several of the women are planning to bring their husbands for the dinner cooking class. Thanks to Marcy Kupferman and Beverly Grush for arranging this special afternoon.



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