



The Golden Palate *by* Fred Bollaci

Birthday wishes, Italian style, that promise many happy returns!

NO MATTER HOW MANY BIRTHDAYS I have celebrated in my life, I look forward to each one with the anticipation of a little kid about to have his biggest wishes come true.

As you may know from reading my column, I am passionate about great healthy gourmet food, with Italian cuisine being a family favorite due to my Italian heritage. So it should come as no surprise that I often choose to celebrate my birthday at one of my favorite Italian restaurants.

Last year on September 30th, I enjoyed a birthday lunch at Ristorante Caterina de Medici at The Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York, happily dining on an insalata mista and a perfectly grilled salmon, with a glass of Barolo. The restaurant is as authentic as you can get. The setting resembles a Tuscan villa with its own herb garden. Its simple, classic Italian food is prepared and served by some of America's future great chefs. Halfway through our meal, I remarked to my dining companion that the only thing I could think of for my birthday that would top this, would be to attend a culinary school in Tuscany. Before I could manage a sip of my espresso, my cell phone rang. It was my good friend, Sandy Loevner from Florida. After wishing me a "Happy Birthday," she got right down to business.

"Fred, how would you like to attend cooking school in Tuscany?" she asked. It was like she had overheard my conversation. "Absolutely, it has always been a dream of mine," I responded.

Sandy is a fellow food and wine connoisseur who has served as chair of the prestigious Florida Winefest & Auction, an annual event in Sarasota that has contributed over \$8 million to children's charities since its inception in 1993 www.floridawinefest.org. One of their partner companies is Toscana Saporita, a premier cooking school located near Lucca, Italy, owned by renowned chef and cookbook author, Sandra Lotti. Sandy was scheduled to spend a week at Toscana Saporita, but something came up and she couldn't go. She surprised me by asking if I would like to take her place. Then, she said, "Just one thing, it is in two weeks!" A dream come true!

Ten days later, I landed in Rome en route to Toscana Saporita, looking forward to what would be one of the finest culinary experiences of my life.

While in Rome, I had the privilege of naming my first 75 Golden Palate Italia recipients with the expert guidance of fellow connoisseur, Roman friend and Advisory Board Member, Giorgio Cazzaniga (his father is a world famous jeweler, www.cazzaniga.net), some of my Roman favorites include: Nino (Chianina steak), Dal Bolognese (people watching and Bolognese cuisine), Checco er Carettiere (Carbonara), Osteria Romana di Simmi (Bill Clinton's favorite), Pizza Re', Giolitti (gelato), Caffè Sant' Eustachio and Tazza d'Oro (coffee and granita di caffè, respectively), Camponeschi (tripe and zabaglione), and Molo 10, Quinzi e Gabrieli, Assunta Madre, and La Rosetta (seafood).

A few days later, I was off to Tuscany to cook! Toscana Saporita conducts classes in the spring and fall each year at a beautiful working Tuscan "agriturismo" (farm). Students stay in a villa where famed composer Puccini



Left: Sandra Lotti, founding chef of renowned Tuscany, Italy cooking school, Toscana Saporita, Fred Bollaci Enterprises inaugural Golden Palate Partner Italia and 2015 Charter member.

Below: The Golden Pear Cafe, a 30-year Hampton's, Long Island legendary bakery cafe in Southampton, Bridgehampton, East Hampton, and Sag Harbor. Chef and owner, Keith Davis, is a Fred Bollaci Enterprises Golden Palate Partner, 2014 Signature member, and 2015 Charter member.



once lived. I was in heaven!

During our culinary classes, the school's founding chef, Sandra Lotti, and son Alessio, along with, Chef/Instructor, Chris Covelli from the U.S., showed us how to expertly prepare fresh pasta, sauces, pizza, meat, seafood, dessert, and more! In addition to being honored as one of my inaugural Golden Palate Italia Partners, I recently named Toscana Saporita my first 2015 Charter Member in Italy. I am looking forward to attending the Advanced Class in November 2015. Anyone seeking the experience of a lifetime, should attend Toscana Saporita. Please tell Sandra Lotti I sent you! www.toscanasaporita.com.

For a complete list of my Golden Palate Italia Partners, and to read more about my travels in Italy, visit www.fredbollacienterprises.com and follow me for more healthy and tasty destinations!

Back in the states, I am thrilled to announce The Golden Pear Café www.goldenpearcafe.com a Hamptons legend for nearly 30 years, as my second U.S. Charter Member for 2015! The Golden Pear, with locations in the Hamptons' oceanfront resort villages of Southampton, East Hampton, Bridgehampton and Sag Harbor, is one of my favorite East end eateries. The Golden Pear features some of the best breakfast, coffee, lunches, and baked goods on the east end, as well as many fresh, "lighter gourmet" options including chopped salads, vegetarian chili and a spa breakfast burrito.

Their signature line of organic coffees and organic trail mixes, as well as the full line of Golden Pear products, can be enjoyed all year long. If you haven't experienced this much loved "home away from home" café, where everything is made from scratch—you must. Please tell chef owner, Keith Davis, I sent you!

In Good Taste,
Fred