

A Multi-Sensory Experience as a Food Critique

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Mamo Restaurant: Italian Cuisine

a. How were you addressed when you entered the restaurant? Did you need to make reservations? How long was the wait before you were seated?

The outside of *Mamo* has sheet glass cut squared shapes with cream colored trim which accentuates the versatility of the restaurant. The restaurant's outdoors has beautifully displayed dining tables with white table cloth along with elegant cream colored wooden dining chairs. The table set up includes four crystal clear wine glasses with properly folded silverwares *wrapped* in white table napkin. Entering the atmosphere of *Mamo* felt like one's in a *French* inspired setting greeted in a dimly lit waiting area. The whitewashed brick wall complements the stairway to the main dining room on the second floor, greeted with the warm feeling of small pillar candles inside a cylinder glass vase. The vibrant ambiance makes it intriguing as another red velvet curtain covers a partial part of a room where parties of twelve are accommodated in a special intimate atmosphere on the ground floor. The heavily draped red velvet curtains welcome guests to the hostess stand while they ask for the reservation's guest list. One must book a reservation three days in advance. Five short minutes later, the hostess led the way to the seats. Right next to the hostess stand is a French film poster "Una Ragazza a Saint-Tropez" by Jean Girault covered by an artificial palm tree plant. The addition of a *French aesthetic* to this place drawing inspiration from the rich tradition and heartfelt warmth instilled by his Italian grandfather, Angelo 'Mamo' Mammoliti, he was brought up in the restaurant business in the southern region of France alongside his father (Mamo, 2024, par. 1). The "modern twist" to the restaurant's concept connects with the owner's personal story, sharing it with those who dine in and immerse them in *Italian* culture.

b. What are the cultural differences you notice? (Use class notes) Using your five senses of taste, touch, sight, smell & sound (remember Eicher & Roach-Higgins (1992) definition of Dress) describe some of the cultural differences that you are not accustomed to (in comparison to All-American restaurant or restaurant chains, but do not write the actual comparison to American restaurants). For example, one can describe but not limited to the sights in the restaurant decor, odors from unusual foods, and sounds from music. One should use all five-senses in this cultural experience in detail. Each of the five senses should be in a separate paragraph.

Culture is a "primary socialization" in a main way we learn and fit in with our group. The use of symbols and meanings in society, fostering shared understandings, categorizing the world around us, predicting, and coordinating activities. It is essential to note that culture is diverse and not uniform, with influences from factors such as gender, religion, ethnicity, region, social class, and more shaping its dynamics (Adomaitis, *International Culture & Human Behavior*, p. 1). Culture is a complex belief shared among social groups which constantly evolves socially and

economically. The *French-Italian* culture complement well together with its *French* concept of art and *Italian* cuisine relating to a personal story giving the restaurant a character.

The smell of citrusy scent coming from the main entrance entices the appetite. The refreshing scent of citrus brightens up the mood with its lively aroma to dishes ready to be devoured. The air is filled with rich savory *Italian* dishes bringing warmth and comfort surrounding the main room with a sense of connection. The aroma of fresh garlic, herbs, and tomato sauce paired perfectly with the red wine, the ritual of taking a moment to savor its aroma before each sip elevates the overall tasting experience. This place captures a spectrum of aromas, offering a nuanced exploration that unveils the wine's quality and distinctive characteristics.

The taste of *Italian* cuisine is almost as close to the taste of Italy. The balance of flavors is filled with sweet, salty, bitter, and sour crafting a harmonious flavor profile in every dish. The richness of flavor like garlic and onions enhances the taste as well as the herbs and spices such as basil, parsley, oregano, rosemary, and thyme. The savory flavor of cheese in different varieties like parmigiano reggiano, mozzarella, and pecorino made an exquisite addition known for its unique flavor. From delectable pastas to savory meats and succulent fish, the diverse range of flavors presented caters to every craving.

The setting of *Mamo's* intimate dining room sets the mood with its dimly lit room with bar seating of a marble table and tall bar stools. The place is filled with brightly *Italian* and *French* movie posters along with exposed beams, leather banquettes, and tweed stools (Bird, 2015, par. 2). Each dining table was set with four main wine glasses and a single lit pillar candle. The central focal point steals the spotlight with its captivating bar setting in the middle of the dining room, adorned with a diverse array of alcoholic beverages neatly arranged on the shelf, each illuminated by its own dedicated spotlight. A strategically positioned elongated mirror in the corner of the restaurant imparts a sense of spaciousness, visually expanding the room and enhancing the overall dining ambiance.

The lively chatter of people is the initial soundtrack, gradually fading into the background to cozy and inviting ambiance with smooth jazz music. As one steps inside, melodies of warm and soothing music filled the air. The décor creates a relaxing atmosphere along with soothing jazz tunes. As one settles into the seat, the chatter and music mingles along with the conversations. Creating a wonderful atmosphere for enjoying each other's company before the main course arrives, setting the stage for a truly memorable evening.

The soft *textures* of the tablecloth and table napkin shows the luxury feel in the restaurant. The cloth was draping gracefully once seated and its delicate woven fabric added depth. The *texture* of the wine glasses laid out on the dining table with no rough edges running one's finger on its thin surface and its sturdiness. The silverware that was carefully curated showed a clear reflection of the spoon and fork along with a butterknife and a good craftsmanship with intricate details engraved on handles. The smooth texture and elegance of the table placement gives an outstanding visual appeal of the table.

c. Look at the menu. What are the types of foods they offer? What are some unusual food items? Do they describe the ingredients in the food? What are the ingredients? List

various food items from the menu. What menu items did you order? Is there more than one language used to describe the foods on the menu? Please write in detail.

Mamo Restaurant's menu presented the guest with their brown leather textured book accompanied with a list of long wine selections from dry to sweet. The menu is listed in Italian along with a small font of English description on the bottom. The thickness of the paper menu is *inserted* through the pockets of the booklet. The "*Antipasti*" menu stimulates one's appetite to prepare for the main entrée. From refreshing salads to burratas to simply a selection of breads.

The restaurant is known for their truffle dishes, the classic pizza named '*Focaccia al tartufo*' which contains parmesan cheese, *cantal* cheese and shaved fresh truffle. The '*Raviolini al tartufo*' which was made with rich white special sauce and top grade black truffle to top off. One asked the waitress for *Mamo*'s popular dinner menu, *antipasti* comes with *Come a Capri* (heirloom tomatoes, burrata, basil), the *Pesce* (fish) selection has *Branzino, pesto di broccoli, cavolfiori riso venere* (branzino, broccoli pesto, cauliflower, black rice), the meat selection has *Polletto arrosto con verdure di stagione* (roasted chicken, seasonal vegetables), *Tagliata di manzo, patate saltate* (12 oz New York Strip Steak, sauteed potatoes), and *Vitello alla milanese con insalata* (veal milanese, green salad, cherry tomatoes) (Mamo, 2024). Some foods they offer are complex for one's palette but one characteristic about *Italian* food is how bold flavors compliment one another. The variety of choices from pasta to meat dishes

The ingredients listed in the menu are found on the bottom to provide transparency and clarity for guests highlighting the sustainable ingredients used for every meal. This form of communication entices customers to try unique dishes they offer in the restaurant and step out of their comfort zone. Featuring top quality ingredients shows the restaurant's dedication to serving only the best to their guests. Once seated, the waiter asks what drinks to be served first while waiting for the meal. The bartender combines vodka, triple sec, cranberry juice, and a splash of freshly squeezed lime juice concocting a vibrant pink *Cosmopolitan* drink served in a chilled martini glass. The flavors explode on one's palate—tart cranberry, zesty lime, and the subtle bite of vodka. The variety of selections for the *Antipasti* led to the choice of *ricotta* toast with grated fresh black truffles and a drizzle of sweet honey for balanced flavors.

As dishes arrived, the main entrée *Rigatoni all'Amatriciana* (rigatoni, crispy bacon, tomato sauce, *pecorino*) and *Tagliata di manzo, patate saltate* (12 oz New York Strip Steak, sauteed potatoes). The pasta's large, tube-like shape captures the savory flavors of the dish. Cooked to al dente perfection, the rigatoni has a satisfying bite and texture complementing the crispy bacon's smoky flavor. The acidity of the tomato sauce balances the *pecorino* cheese with its freshness indulging in every bite. Along with the New York Strip Steak, its oblong shape with marbling of fat highlights the succulence and rich flavor of the meat. The richness of beefy flavor compliments well with the spices used like thyme, garlic, and herbs. The pairing of sauteed potatoes and the tenderness of medium-rare steak creates a balance of in-depth flavor and texture that satisfies the taste buds, making every bite a delightful symphony of savory goodness. The inclusion of Italian terminology on the menu not only extends a warm welcome to guests but also cultivates an inviting ambiance, immersing diners in the rich tapestry of Italian culture.

d. Is a traditional salad offered? If not, describe what is offered. What types of desserts (cheesecake, fortune cookie, coffee)? What are they like? Describe each in detail.

Mamo Restaurant offered Julius Salad which consisted of baby arugula, cherry tomatoes, shaved *parmesan* and an addition of mozzarella and avocado. The greens added creates a bitter taste which pairs well with the sweet and tangy flavor of cherry tomatoes topping it off with aged cheese to add a nutty flavor. *Pane Pugliese* which is a peasant-style sourdough bread (Flavours Holidays, 2023) with folded salami on the side were also offered upon waiting for the main dishes. As for desserts, there were an assortment of options to choose from, the traditional *Italian* Tiramisù dessert which consists of ladyfingers dipped in coffee, layered with mascarpone mixture, and topped with cocoa powder. The restaurant also offered *Affogato alle fragole* (vanilla ice cream, warm strawberries), *My Son's Sundae* (vanilla, chocolate and salted caramel ice cream crumble, whipped cream, hot chocolate sauce), *Crema bruciata*, *frutti di bosco* (crème brûlée, berries), *Budino al cioccolato*, *frutto della passione*, *cantucci*, *panna montata* (chocolate pudding, passion fruit, almond cookies, cream), and the dessert one has to try at least once is *Millefoglie al pistacchio e lamponi* (pistachio, raspberry and thousand leaves pastry). The waiter introduced this dessert as it was made with the same *croissant* puff pastry in a thin square shape.

e. What types of beverages are offered? Do they have an alcohol menu? What is not typically offered in an American chain restaurant? Describe each in detail.

Instead of the typical soda offerings like Coca-Cola products, the restaurant presented a refreshing twist with traditional Italian sodas—particularly noteworthy when paired with a hint of lemon. The alcohol menu showcased an extensive selection, featuring a diverse array of wines and cocktails. From renowned red wines ranging from Bordeaux to Napa Valley to an array of unique cocktails, including their own signature concoction, there was a drink to suit every taste.

The wine list stood out for its comprehensive options, offering both whole bottles and by-the-glass selections. Notably, the menu featured a standout red wine—the Château Tour de Pressac, St. Emilion Grand Cru. During the dining experience, the waiter graciously shared insights into the wine's origins and the meticulous process it underwent before gracing the dinner table. This wine proved to be a truly spectacular and memorable choice.

f. How is the food reflective of the cultural geography and the economic geography (use class lecture notes for each definition)? (i.e. spices are abundant in India which is rich in spices & fish (sushi) is popular in Japan & it is part of the G8). Describe approximately where in the world (continent & location) and from country this culture's food is best known. Be sure to research the country about geography, spices, foods, etc.....be sure to use APA in-text citations and references.

Cultural Geography shows the exploration in diverse ways individuals lead their lives across various regions and nations (Adomaitis, Fashion Economics, p. 1). *Italian* food reflects cultural geography mainly on its regional diversity with its culinary tradition and the influence found in its cuisine as it is located by the Mediterranean. From the citrus fruits of Amalfi Coast and Sicily to truffles of Piedmont and Tuscany, this gives a historical background of its culture and place.

Italy's geography is bordered by France, Switzerland, Austria, and Slovenia. Its coastline extends to the Mediterranean Sea with sandy beaches and rocky cliffs. *Italy* has several islands, but the biggest ones are Sicily and Sardinia. Overall, *Italy* has a rich and diverse geography, featuring everything from tall mountains and gentle hills to beautiful coastlines and charming islands.

Economic Geography is the way industrialization or wealth is spread in different areas (Adomaitis, Fashion Economics, p. 2). The agricultural production of *Italy* famously known for its tomatoes, grapes, olives, wheat, and fresh herbs carries part of their economic prosperity through trade as well as being part of the G8. The spice trade in *Venice Italy* achieved great wealth by imposing substantial tariffs. Since Europeans lacked direct access to Middle Eastern suppliers, they were compelled to pay the steep prices imposed by Venice. Even affluent individuals struggled to afford spices, prompting them to take action to address the situation (The Silk Road Spice Merchant, 2024, par. 5). This brought a distinctive flavor in the *Italian* cuisine influencing dishes such as pasta sauces like Ragù alla bolognese, Cacio e Pepe, Pesto, Marinara, Arrabbiata, Carbonara, and meat sauces added to pizza and lasagna. Moreover, *Italy* is also known for *Arancini, Focaccia, Ossobuco, Risotto, Truffles,* and Gelato (Hotel Mousai, 2022). *Italy's* reliance on agricultural production has cultivated the country with its traditions and the recipes remain the same for decades.

g. Describe the dress? (Dress is inclusive of all five senses-you smell perfume, hear jewelry, see makeup, etc.....) What are the employees, such as hostesses or wait staff wearing? Please use Eicher-Roach-Higgins (1992) article to define dress and answer appropriately. This must be used and written in at least two paragraphs with correct in-text citations and references discussing all five (5) senses.

Upon booking the reservation, the restaurant requested proper attire allowing guests to dress accordingly. One started off with *body modifications* by starting on some *skin* prep to be ready for *make-up* application. Then, squeezing a minty toothpaste onto the toothbrush to clean one's *teeth* followed by a swish of cool mouthwash for a fresher *breath*. After the *skincare* preparation, one proceeded to *apply* concealer, bronzer to contour the face *structure*, blush for a radiant glow and to *adhere* the overall *appearance*, one added the final touch up of light ribbon pink lip tint. Furthermore, the *volume* using a hair roller was added to the *hair* along with a long-lasting hairspray to hold it in place.

While getting ready, one *wrapped* a bow tie on a black satin halter neck top and a black leather *textured* pants. One *inserted* a pair of black patent kitten heels to elevate the evening look. The *color* choice suits the evening followed by *insertion* of thick gold earrings *shaped* like a seashell. The *proportion* of the flowy top and a tight bottom creates a balanced silhouette. Finishing off the look, an added *modification* was the *scent* of wooden fragrance with a hint of floral, musk, and sandalwood. Lastly, accessorizing in a small cognac brown purse provides completeness and functionality. While waiting for the dishes to be served, the attire of waiters in a fine dining restaurant were dressed in an elegant manner wearing white dress shirt, sleek black trousers, *wrapped* in black waistcoat, and paired with patent dress shoes for a polished look.

h. Rate your experience as a food critic (as in the LA Times or Houston Chronicle). Ratings should be dependent on taste, service, decor, cleanliness, authenticity, quality and price

and should range from A-F (“A” being the best). Explain why you chose this rating. Be thorough and detailed in your explanations. Be sure to write at least two paragraphs. Use details to explain.

The experience at *Mamo* turned out to be quite enjoyable. The service stood out, with the staff being friendly and attentive. The atmosphere exudes luxury, complemented by the soothing background jazz that sets a sophisticated tone. The food, particularly the truffle pasta, was a unique treat, not commonly found elsewhere. The steak was well-cooked and seasoned to perfection. The highlight of the evening was the exclusive pistachio raspberry pastry dessert, adding a delightful touch to the overall dining experience. Giving *Mamo* an 8.9 rating, the only drawback observed was the close proximity of the booth tables. Nevertheless, *Mamo* comes highly recommended as a must-visit spot in SoHo, offering an outstanding and memorable dining experience.

i. What did you learn from this experience that you could contribute to a multi-cultural experience in a class discussion? Give details in your writing of a complete paragraph.

This culinary experience offered a glimpse into how Italian culture shapes its cuisine. Certain dishes reflect an American influence, yet they adhere to traditional Italian cooking methods. The exploration delved into the diverse world of wines, highlighting how their taste and aroma vary based on their place of origin. Notable among the dishes were the truffle pasta and steak, embodying a fusion of tradition and innovation.

The truffle pasta, crafted in the authentic Italian fashion and garnished with truffle shavings, stood out as a representation of culinary tradition. Similarly, the NY strip steak, although cooked with an American approach, incorporated an Italian twist by simmering in red wine during the cooking process. This interplay of cooking styles exemplifies the heart of Italian cuisine – a commitment to exceptional food and service, especially in the realm of fine dining.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7

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