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Assignment #1: International Palette
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Emilio's Ballato: Italian

- a) How were you addressed when you went into the restaurant? Did you need to make reservations? How long was the wait before you were seated?**

On the outside of Emilio's Ballato restaurant, there is a huge bright red awning that guests are made aware of before entering the establishment. One enters through the front door which is very incognito as it has no windows and gives off a feeling like you are entering a New York City apartment. Upon entering one is greeted by the host who politely asks "how many?" If the restaurant isn't full then the party is immediately seated. The decor of the restaurant is quite decorative and seems quite antique. The space isn't too large yet doesn't feel uncomfortably small either. The walls of the space are completely filled with picture frames of many notable famous celebrities and influencers who have been to the restaurant which gives the impression that their food is famous and well-renowned. One of the biggest eye-catchers in the restaurant is the bright chandelier that hangs atop the ceiling making the experience feel much more intimate and relaxing.

Emilio's Ballato does not take reservations and does business on a first-come, first-serve basis. One may just simply walk into the restaurant and then a host will either ask you to wait for the next available or immediately seat you if there is open space to be seated. Typically the best time to go to get seated instantly is in the afternoon hours for lunch as it is not as busy as it would be later in the day for dinner. The waiters were extremely polite and were dressed in professional attire which included black dress pants and a white button-up shirt with a black tie to match.

b) What are the cultural differences you notice? Using your five senses of taste, touch sight, smell, and sound describe some of the cultural differences that you are accustomed to in comparison to All American restaurants or restaurant chains. For example, One can describe but not be 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. Be sure to write in the third person... One will or would see, smell, etc...

Culture as a “Primary Socialization” in large groups of people pertains to symbols and meanings as well as shared understandings, and classifications of the world around us. Culture can be influenced by gender, religion, ethnicity, and social class (Adomaitis, 2002, International, P. 1). When it comes to Italian culture, so much of it is represented at Emilio’s Ballato. This allows one to become truly immersed in not only the food of Italy but also the feeling of having some of Italy right in the heart of SoHo. According to the Ballato’s website “Having spent his entire life cooking, owner Emilio Vitolo seeks to bring a taste of his native Naples to Manhattan. Today, he can be found at his usual table at the front of the restaurant greeting all of his fans and first-time customers” (Ballatos, 2023).

The scent of various cuts of Italian bread as well as olive oil is prevalent when one walks into the restaurant. The smell comes directly from the kitchen which is located at the back of the restaurant and has no door that separates it from the main dining area which is why the scent can easily be smelled when either sitting down or walking around the restaurant. The pairing of bread and olive oil is an Italian staple that has undoubtedly stood the test of time. Gambero Rosso International states that “It is an ancient pairing, after all, dating back to both the ingredient's history. The bread was baked by Homo erectus in the Stone Age; olive oil draws its 7000-year-old origins from Mediterranean civilizations. These two simple products, when put together, represent a solid identity for Italy” (Becchi, 2021). This displays how some cultural traditions are truly ones that span from generation to generation and ultimately will never die. The type of music that one would hear while they enjoy their meal are the stylings of artists such as Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin. The volume is set at a low setting that way guests would be able to speak amongst themselves without having to raise their voices much, this creates a very calming environment for individuals to enjoy themselves without getting a headache.

- c) Look at the menu. What are the types of foods they offer? What are some unusual items? Do they describe the ingredients in the food? List various food items from the menu. What menu items did you order? Is there more than one language used to describe the food?**

The menu at Emilio's Ballato contains English and Italian words. This includes a variety of pasta, antipasti, insalate, and secondi. Some items that are not on the menu may still be available and offered by the waiter such as fried calamari. Other notable food items that are offered are the antipasto d'Illa casa (*assorted cheeses/olives*), salsiccia e broccoli di rabe (*sweet sausage and broccoli*), petto di pollo alla parmigiana or milanese (*chicken parmesan, or breaded chicken with arugula*). A description of the ingredients is also included for all of the items on the menu.

According to the waiter, Emilio's Ballato is famous for a number of different dishes including but not limited to their costello d'Vitello alla parmigiana or milanese (*breaded veal chop topped with tomato sauce and fresh mozzarella or breaded veal with arugula*), gamberi alla Emilio (*shrimp sautéed in white wine, lemon, butter, and capers, served with linguini*), gamberi fra diavolo (*shrimp sautéed in spicy marinara sauce with linguini*) and lastly the pesce del giorno which is a weekly hand selected dish by their top chef Anthony. (Ballatos, 2023). Each and every one of these dishes is the main course that is sure to satisfy.

The costello d'Vitello comes served as a family-sized cut of breaded veal topped with savory red tomato sauce and fresh melted mozzarella cheese. The veal is cooked to perfection as the outside breading has a slightly crusty feel while on the inside the veal is tender and supple. The pairing of sauce, cheese, and breaded veal works together in perfect conjunction to create such a delectable dish. If one decides to order this dish one should highly consider sharing this item as it can feed up to three people.

- d) Is a traditional salad offered? If not, describe what is offered. What types of bread are offered (flat, pita, tortilla chips)? What type of desserts (cheesecake, fortune cookie, coffee)? What are they like?**

There are several salads offered at Emilio's Ballato including the mixed house salad as well as the "Tre colore" (*arugula, radicchio, endive, and pecorino cheese*), "Rucola" (*arugula, capers, parsley, and pecorino cheese*), and lastly a classic caesar salad. Sliced Italian bread alongside a plate of olive oil is offered as a starter upon sitting to all guests who enter. There is currently no dessert menu. The traditional caesar salad is served as three big strips of romaine hearts dressed in a classic caesar sauce and topped with grated romano cheese and sliced croutons.

- e) What types of beverages are offered? Do they have an alcohol menu? What is not typically offered in an American chain restaurant? Be sure to address what is different in the menu.**

Emilio's Ballato offers an assortment of white, red, and rose wines as well as champagne. Wines have to be purchased either by the bottle or by the glass with their signature house red wine. Prices range anywhere from forty-five dollars all the way up to one thousand dollars. For individuals who do not drink alcohol, they provide either sparkling or regular water. All of the wines that are on the menu are imported straight from Italy which explains the higher price point. The waiter had recommended purchasing the house wine by the glass at a price of sixteen dollars a glass. The drink menu is certainly different from a typical American chain restaurant because of the sheer variety of sophisticated wines that are imported from Italy.

- f) How is the food reflective of the cultural geography and the economic geography? Describe approximately where in the world (continent and location) and from the country, this culture's food is best known.**

The food at Emilio's Ballato is certainly reflective of the cultural and economic geography of Italy. Cultural geography refers to "how people live their lives in different regions of the world or country, and economic geography refers to the distribution of industrialization and wealth" (Adomaitis, 2022, Fashion. P.1). Emilio's Ballato's selection of food is definitely

indicative of Italian culture geographically and economically. The main menu of pasta and various parmigiana dishes is a perfect example of this.



Figure 1 “ Map of Southern Italy”

The pasta was introduced to Italy in the thirteenth century and according to PBS “noodles had existed in China and Asia long before pasta had appeared in the Mediterranean world, and the legend goes that Marco Polo had brought pasta to Italy from China in the 13th century” (Avey, 2012). Once pasta had reached the Mediterranean “The process was refined, and durum wheat became the ingredient of choice for pasta flour because of the high gluten content for high shelf life ... The warm climate of Italy is suited to growing fresh vegetables and herbs, which meant that Italians could get creative with a delicious variety of pasta sauces” (Avey, 2012). During the late 19th century, when a large group of immigrants relocated from Italy to America (most from Naples), pasta became a common food in the United States.

The globalization of pasta, parmigiana and the overall culture of Italian food is indicative of the economic geography of Italy, which is part of the G8. Italian restaurants all around the world profit from the rich and unique culture that Italy emanates from. If it weren't for the wave of Italian immigrants who came over to the United States in the nineteenth century we might not have been so exposed to such rich Italian dishes as we are today.

g) Describe the dress. (Dress is inclusive of all five senses - you smell perfume, hear jewelry, see make-up, etc...) What are the employees, such as hostesses or wait staff wearing? Please use Eicher-Roach Higgins's (1992) article to define the dress and answer appropriately. Be sure to use all five senses in each description.

According to Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins as well as Joanne B. Eicher, “ Dress includes both body modifications, supplements to the body because dress functions as a means of communication in social interaction and influences people to establish identities for themselves and others. Individual self-incorporates identities based on assigned and achieved positions within social structures” (Roach-Higgins, 1992, P.1, Par.1). At Emilio's Ballato the wait staff are dressed in classic white dress shirts and black dress pants and are complimented with black tie. They do not have any body modifications or supplements that reflect the cultural background of the food that they serve. Their dress was simply reflective of their current position in a professional restaurant setting. The host as well as all of the other patrons inside the restaurant were dressed in casual attire as Emilio's Ballato does not have a dress code; typically one would wear clothing that reflects the weather in New York City during the time of year. One wouldn't be able to discern any sensory description besides sight when describing the dress inside Emilio's Ballato restaurant. The only smell one would encounter when inside is the magnificent scent of all of the Italian seasoning and spices that are emanating from the kitchen in the back.

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, and quality and price should range from A-F (“A” being best) Explain why you chose this rating.

Overall I would give Emilio's Ballato an “A” rating. The taste of the food is certainly delectable and savory with each and every bite your senses are never not satisfied. You can tell that all of the ingredients are fresh and certainly authentic as it pertains to the culture of Italy. So for taste, I would give the restaurant an undeniable “A”. The service was definitely phenomenal

as well every member of the staff was welcoming and helpful. One is typically seated ASAP depending on availability and is treated with the utmost respect and courtesy. When one asks for either details or recommendations they are met with an array of selections as well as detail down to the finest point. For customer service, I would also give Emilio's Ballato a resounding "A". The decor and cleanliness are certainly up to par with what a high-level restaurant should offer to receive an "A" rating. The environment was quite quaint yet sophisticated which provided a comfortable and romantic setting for any occasion. The only area I would give Emilio's Ballato a "B" for is its price point. Emilio's Ballato is certainly more on the expensive side of dining and not everyone would be able to afford to eat there. I would say that one who decides to pay this higher price point of food will be paying for the quality, authenticity, as well as overall experience. Another reason for this higher price point is the supreme clientele that Emilio's Ballato has served their customers go anywhere from the likes of Barack Obama to Denzel Washington and many other notable names.

i) What did you learn from this experience that you could contribute to a multicultural experience in a class discussion?

One learns of the many aspects of the restaurant's culture and history that are hidden within the restaurant in various locations. One would appreciate the culture of the restaurant by viewing the photographs of Emilio and his family as children alongside his grandmother to show exactly the history of where the food comes from. Additionally, one may learn about Italian history and the country's role in this world by going to restaurants like Emilio's Ballato and writing reviews such as this one. In particular, they can learn about the origins of the combination of bread and olive oil or even the history of pasta and parmigiana. Ultimately, in class discussions, one would be able to speak about not only the cultural background but also the economic geography while having a better understanding of these topics.

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