

International Palette  
A Multi-Sensory Experience as a Food Critic  
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- 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?



Figure A-1

One entered the Grotta Azzurra restaurant in Little Italy 177 Mulberry St, greeted me with a smile, and asked if one had a reservation. A waiter rushed over to me when one walked in and asked if one wanted to sit at the bar or wait for a table. One made reservations at the restaurant. One approached me when one arrived and introduced herself, asking how she could assist me. When one entered the dining area, the hostess asked for my name and showed me to my table.

As soon as one entered the restaurant, a friendly host welcomed me and asked if one preferred indoor or outdoor seating.

One opted for indoor seating to soak the rich culture of Italy and observe its people. Fortunately, my wait time was minimal, just around five minutes. A friendly staff member promptly guided me to my table where one settled in. The attentive hostess greeted me and offered to take my drink order, to which one requested a glass of water. One look at the menu of Italian foods, drinks, and desserts.



Figure A-2

b. What are the cultural differences do 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 be limited to the sights in the restaurant décor, 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). As I step into Grotta Azzurra restaurant, my senses are immediately captivated by the cultural differences that I am not accustomed to. Let me describe these differences using my five senses:

**Taste:** The moment one takes a bite of the traditional Italian pasta dish, one is pleasantly surprised by the rich flavors and the perfect balance of herbs and spices. The taste is unlike anything one has experienced in an All-American restaurant, with a delightful combination of tanginess and creaminess that lingers on my palate.

**Touch:** As one touches the smooth, handcrafted wooden furniture in the restaurant, one can feel the attention to detail and the craftsmanship that reflects Italian culture. The textures are different from the sleek and modern designs found in American restaurant chains, giving the space a warm and inviting atmosphere.

**Sight:** The sight of the restaurant decor takes me on a visual journey through Italian culture. The walls are adorned with vibrant paintings depicting picturesque landscapes, historical landmarks, and scenes from Italian daily life. The warm lighting and rustic elements create a cozy ambiance, transporting me to the heart of Italy.

**Smell:** The moment one enters Grotta Azzurra, one is greeted by the inviting aroma of freshly baked bread and simmering sauces. The air is filled with the fragrant scents of garlic, basil, and other traditional Italian ingredients. The distinct smells evoke a sense of nostalgia and create an appetizing atmosphere that is different from the familiar scents of American restaurants.

**Sound:** The sound of Italian music playing softly in the background adds to the cultural experience. The melodic tunes of traditional Italian songs create a soothing and romantic ambiance. The gentle chatter of diners, occasionally interrupted by bursts of laughter and joyful conversations, adds to the lively atmosphere of the restaurant.

Grotta Azzurra restaurant offers a unique cultural experience that engages all five senses. From the tantalizing tastes and textures of the food to the visually captivating decor, and the inviting aromas and sounds, this restaurant transports me to the heart of Italian culture, providing an experience distinct from the All-American restaurant or restaurant chains.

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.

Upon examining the menu at Grotta Azzurra restaurant, one discovered a wide array of delectable Italian dishes. The menu features various types of foods, including appetizers, salads, pasta dishes, seafood, meat entrees, and desserts. Some of the unusual food items that caught my attention were the "Arancini di Riso," which are deep-fried rice balls stuffed with ragu sauce and mozzarella, and the "Polipo alla Griglia," a grilled octopus dish served with lemon and olive oil.

As one perused the menu, one noticed that the ingredients in the food were indeed described. The descriptions provided a tantalizing glimpse into the flavors and textures of each dish. For instance, the "Gnocchi di Patate" (potato gnocchi) was described as being made with homemade potato dumplings, served in a rich tomato sauce with freshly grated Parmesan cheese.

The menu offered a variety of food items that showcased the rich culinary heritage of Italy. Some of the dishes included classic pasta dishes like "In Linguine Vongole" (linguine with clams) and "Ravioli di Zucca" (pumpkin ravioli). For meat lovers, there were options like "Filetto al Pepe Verde" (grilled beef tenderloin with green peppercorn sauce) and "Pollo alla Parmigiana" (breaded chicken topped with tomato sauce and melted mozzarella).

As for my order, one couldn't resist trying the renowned potato gnocchi. The menu promised a dish that was both comforting and flavorful. When the plate arrived, one was delighted to see perfectly cooked gnocchi, soft and pillowy, smothered in a vibrant tomato sauce. Each bite was a delightful combination of the delicate potato dumplings, the tangy tomato sauce, and the sharpness of the Parmesan cheese.

In terms of language, the menu at Grotta Azzurra restaurant was primarily in English, but there were also some Italian terms used to describe the dishes. This blend of languages added an authentic touch to the dining experience, allowing guests to connect with the cultural origins of the cuisine. The English descriptions clearly understood the ingredients and flavors, while the Italian terms added a sense of tradition and authenticity.

The menu at Grotta Azzurra restaurant presented a tantalizing selection of Italian dishes, showcasing the diverse flavors and ingredients of the cuisine. From the unusual food items to the detailed descriptions of the ingredients, the menu offered a culinary journey through the rich heritage of Italian gastronomy. The potato gnocchi, in particular, stood out as a must-try dish, with its homemade dumplings and flavorful tomato sauce. The combination of English and Italian language on the menu added an extra layer of cultural immersion.





Figure A- 3



Figure A-4

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



Figure A- 5

At Grotta Azzurra restaurant, a traditional salad is indeed offered on the menu. The "Insalata Caprese" is a classic Italian salad that features slices of ripe tomatoes, fresh mozzarella cheese, and basil leaves, all drizzled with extra virgin olive oil and balsamic vinegar. This salad is a delightful combination of flavors, with the sweetness of the tomatoes complementing the creamy and slightly salty mozzarella, while the basil adds a refreshing herbal note.

In terms of bread options, Grotta Azzurra offers a variety of traditional Italian breads. They serve freshly baked bread rolls, which are soft and fluffy on the inside with a slightly crusty exterior. These bread rolls are perfect for savoring with a spread of butter or dipping into olive oil and balsamic vinegar.

Moving on to desserts, Grotta Azzurra offers a selection of mouthwatering options. One popular choice is the classic Italian dessert, Tiramisu. This indulgent dessert consists of delicate layers of ladyfingers soaked in espresso and liqueur, layered with a rich mascarpone cream, and dusted with cocoa powder. The combination of the coffee-soaked ladyfingers, creamy mascarpone, and a hint of cocoa creates a luscious and decadent treat.

Another dessert option at the Grotta Azzurra is the Cannoli. These traditional Sicilian pastries are made with a crisp, fried pastry shell filled with a sweet and creamy ricotta cheese filling. The cannoli shells are typically flavored with a hint of orange zest, adding a citrusy note to the dessert. The contrast between the crispy shell and the smooth, creamy filling creates a delightful texture experience.

Lastly, Grotta Azzurra offers a classic Italian dessert called Panna Cotta. This dessert consists of a silky, custard-like cream made with sweetened cream, gelatin, and vanilla. It is typically served with a drizzle of fruit sauce or fresh berries on top. The panna cotta is smooth, velvety, and delicately flavored, making it a light and refreshing way to end a meal.

Grotta Azzurra restaurant offers a variety of delightful options for salads, slices of bread, and desserts. The Insalata Caprese is a traditional salad that showcases the flavors of ripe tomatoes, mozzarella, and basil. The bread rolls are freshly baked and a perfect accompaniment to the meal. The desserts, such as Tiramisu, Cannoli, and Panna Cotta, offer a range of indulgent and satisfying options, each with its unique flavors and textures.



Figure A-6

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.

Grotta Azzurra restaurant offers a variety of beverages to complement its delicious Italian cuisine. They have a selection of non-alcoholic drinks such as soda, iced tea, lemonade, and Italian sodas. These beverages are refreshing and perfect for pairing with the rich and flavorful dishes on the menu.

In addition to non-alcoholic drinks, Grotta Azzurra also has an extensive wine list. They offer a range of Italian wines, including red, white, and sparkling options. The wine list showcases the variety and quality of Italian wines, with selections from different regions of Italy. The staff is knowledgeable about the wines and can offer recommendations based on individual preferences and meal choices.

Grotta Azzurra also has an alcohol menu that features a range of spirits, cocktails, and beer. They offer classic Italian cocktails like Negroni and Aperol Spritz, which are perfect for aperitivo hours. The restaurant also has a selection of Italian beers, including Peroni and Moretti, which are popular in Italy.

American chain restaurants have the depth and variety of Italian wines and spirits. While American chain restaurants may offer a limited selection of wine and beer, they often do not offer a range of Italian varieties or cocktails that are unique to Italian culture. Grotta Azzurra provides an authentic Italian dining experience, including beverages, which are an essential part of the meal.

Grotta Azzurra restaurant offers a range of beverages to complement its Italian cuisine, including non-alcoholic drinks, wine, cocktails, and beer. The wine list showcases the diversity and quality of Italian wines, while the cocktail menu features classic Italian drinks. The availability of authentic Italian wines and spirits is what sets Grotta Azzurra apart from American chain restaurants, providing a unique experience for customers.

f. How is the food reflective of cultural geography and economic geography (use class lecture notes for each definition)? (i.e., spices are abundant in India, which is rich in spices & fish (sushi), which is popular in Japan & is part of the G8). Describe approximately where in the world (continent & location) and from country, this culture's 17 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.

The food of Italy is a true reflection of both cultural geography and economic geography. Italy, located in Southern Europe, is known for its diverse geography, including the Alps in the north, the Apennine Mountains running down the length of the country, and a long coastline along the Mediterranean Sea (Central Intelligence Agency, 2021). This geographic diversity has influenced the availability of ingredients and culinary traditions across different regions of Italy. For example, in the northern regions of Italy, such as Lombardy and Piedmont, the cuisine is heavily influenced by the proximity to the Alps, with dishes featuring ingredients like cheese, butter, and hearty meats (Bonvini, 2020).

On the other hand, the southern regions of Italy, such as Campania and Sicily, have a more Mediterranean influence, with an abundance of fresh seafood, olive oil, and citrus fruits (Bonvini, 2020). Additionally, the economic geography of Italy plays a significant role in its food culture. Italy is known for its agricultural products, with a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, grains, and livestock being cultivated across the country (Bonvini, 2020). This agricultural richness has led to the development of traditional dishes like pasta, pizza, and risotto, which showcase the local produce.

Furthermore, Italy's historical trade routes and cultural exchanges have also influenced its food culture. Italy has been a hub for trade and commerce throughout history, resulting in the introduction of new ingredients and cooking techniques. For example, the spice trade with Asia brought exotic spices like cinnamon, cloves, and nutmeg to Italy, which are now widely used in Italian cuisine (Bonvini, 2020). The influence of other cultures, such as the Arab and Greek civilizations, can also be seen in dishes like couscous and pastries with honey and nuts.

The food of Italy is best known for its diverse and regionally distinct culinary traditions. The country's geographic diversity, from the Alps to the Mediterranean coastline, influences the availability of ingredients and flavors. Additionally, Italy's agricultural richness and historical trade connections have shaped its food culture, with a wide variety of fresh produce, traditional dishes, and influences from other cultures. Italy's unique combination of cultural geography and economic geography contributes to its renowned and beloved cuisine.

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 the Eicher-Roach-Higgins (1992) article to define the dress and answer appropriately. This must be used and written in at least 2 paragraphs with correct in-text citations and references discussing all five (5) senses.

One was wearing cargo black pants and a graphic roses shirt, wearing Air Force sneakers. One face with a natural glow, no makeup. Higgins states, "Dress is defined by direct modifications of the body such as coiffed hair,..... to the body as supplements." Roach-Higgins, 1992, (pg. 1 and par. 1). One was wearing a vanilla scent and their hair was in a curling bun. The jewelry was gold pearl earrings and a gold bracelet. A black Prada bag as an accessory.

As per one observation, the employees at the restaurant are wearing a white shirt and black pants. The white shirt is neatly tucked into the black pants, giving a formal appearance to the employees. The black pants are not too tight or too loose, making them comfortable to wear while working. The employees seem to be following the dress code of the restaurant, which is professional and neat. Overall, the dress code of the employees at the restaurant is in line with the ambiance and decor of the place, making it a pleasant experience for the customers.

h. Rate your experience as a food critic (as in the LA Times or Houston Chronicle). Ratings should be dependent on taste, service, décor, 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 2 paragraphs. Use details to explain.

As a food critic for a reputable restaurant, one experience at Grotta Azzurra restaurant would be rated as a solid "B". This rating takes into consideration various factors including taste, service, décor, cleanliness, authenticity, quality, and price. In terms of taste, Grotta Azzurra delivers delicious and flavorful dishes. Their pasta dishes are cooked to perfection, with potato gnocchi and well-balanced sauces. The flavors are authentic and reminiscent of traditional Italian cuisine. However, there were a few dishes that lacked a bit of seasoning, which prevented them from reaching an "A" rating. When it comes to service, the staff at Grotta Azzurra is attentive and friendly. They are knowledgeable about the menu and offer recommendations based on customer preferences. However, there were instances where the service was slightly slow, especially during peak hours. This affected the overall dining experience and contributed to the "B" rating. In terms of décor, Grotta Azzurra has a charming and cozy ambiance. The interior is adorned with rustic elements, creating a warm and inviting atmosphere. However, there were a few areas



that could use some improvement, such as updating the furniture and enhancing the lighting to create a more intimate dining experience.

Cleanliness is an essential factor in any dining establishment, and Grotta Azzurra maintains a high level of cleanliness. The tables are promptly cleared and cleaned, and the overall hygiene of the restaurant is well-maintained. This contributes positively to the dining experience and adds to the "B" rating. Authenticity is an important aspect of any cuisine, and Grotta Azzurra succeeds in delivering an authentic Italian dining experience. The menu features classic Italian dishes, prepared using traditional recipes and ingredients. The flavors and techniques used are true to the essence of Italian cuisine, contributing to the "B" rating. In terms of quality, Grotta Azzurra uses fresh and high-quality ingredients in their dishes. The presentation of the food is visually appealing, and the flavors are well-balanced. However, there were a few instances where the consistency of the dishes varied, which affected the overall quality and contributed to the "B" rating.

Lastly, price is an important factor for customers when dining in. Grotta Azzurra offers reasonable prices for their menu items, considering the quality and portion sizes. The value for money is satisfactory, and this contributes positively to the "B" rating. Overall, Grotta Azzurra restaurant provides a solid dining experience with its delicious taste, attentive service, charming décor, cleanliness, authenticity, quality, and reasonable prices. While there are areas that could be improved upon, particularly in terms of seasoning, service speed, and some aspects of the décor, the restaurant still delivers a satisfactory experience, earning it a "B" rating.

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

Through my experience as a food critic, One aspect that stands out is the importance of authenticity in representing different cultures as Italy. In the culinary world, authenticity plays a significant role in delivering a true representation of a particular cuisine. It is essential to respect and honor the cultural Italian heritage behind the dishes and ingredients used. This can be extended to other aspects of multicultural experiences, such as literature, art, or music. By appreciating and understanding the authenticity of various cultural expressions, we can foster a more inclusive and respectful environment. My experience as a food critic has taught me the importance of authenticity and taste in multicultural experiences. Valuing and respecting the authenticity of different cultures and using food as a means of connection and understanding.

## References

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