

MAY 2022

TAVOLE INSIGHTS

BY STUDENTS FOR STUDENTS.
GET TO KNOW TAVOLE'S ACTIVITIES
AND ITS "BEHIND THE SCENES"



ACHIEVEMENTS ARE TO BE CELEBRATED

Dear student, if you're here reading these few newsletters' pages, it means the goals we set months ago have come to life.

When we had our first meeting as students with the Tavole staff, there were complaints and dissatisfaction on both sides. That is why it's even better to see, now, all of the changes that we made together, responding with concrete actions.

I wanna dedicate the first part of Tavole newsletter to list all of the great improvements that have been made.

In this number, you'll also find an exclusive interview with Luca Grasselli from Cascina Lago Scuro, whom we hosted as a guest chef at the beginning of April.

Don't forget to get in contact with us via email or Instagram (@tavoleaccademiche) for new ideas and suggestions.

Explore this month's Insights!

Mark on your calendar:

26TH OF MAY
GUEST CHEFS FROM
MEZZA PAGNOTTA
5TH OF MAY
PROCLAMATION OF
TAVOLE CONTEST
WINNERS

Daniele Roberto
Mikhail Pinelli
Alexandros Alexandrou
Hanne van beuningen
Anna Jäsche

This past month highlights

First thing you must have noticed this month is: we finally went back to ceramic plates and regular service! Meaning, the staff doesn't have to compress their creativity in a lunch box anymore! Even before that, thanks to collaboration with the students and constructive feedback, the general satisfaction with food has increased considerably, as the variety of offers (not to talk about the cakes!) What you may not know, instead, is that the Tavole kitchen team is finally complete, with two new girls joining in. In the picture on the right you see Tingting and Milena!

Thanks to the @tavoleaccademiche IG account, they're also managing to keep us updated whenever a new item is available and to involve us more with some "behind the scenes" stolen pictures.

Don't forget you can use it to get in contact with them and come up with new ideas and suggestions! Talking about new initiatives, many people applied for the Mettici la Faccia e le Mani Contest and we are soon gonna discover the winners, who will be announced during a proper ceremony. Can't wait for them to cook for us!

Some other volunteer students are also sporadically joining the kitchen staff, lately, during regular lunch services, to learn and give back to the community. Greetings to all of them!

Finally, we are honoured and happy to inform you that this same Tavole Insights you are reading and the previous ones have been so appreciated by the Communication Office that they are now online on the university's official website.

Here below you see a picture of all the fantastic Tavole Accademiche staff members and Luca Grasselli.



INTERVIEW WITH LUCA GRASSELLI

Unisg Alumnus, chef and beating heart of Cascina Lago Scuro, Luca Grasselli returned to Unisg in April, to delight us with his food and to close the loop of his experience here. We thought it was the perfect occasion to get to know more about him and learn a few tips.

Interviewing Luca was a great pleasure, not only because of what he does, but mainly because of the humility and authenticity in his voice.

I entered Tavole today and I saw your picture on the wall together with those of other great guest chefs. How do you feel, as an ex-student, to see your face hanging there? Also, where do you place your cuisine compared to that of other colleagues, where does it stand in the dining scene?

(Laughs) I told them to remove it, I don't belong among the GOAT chefs, they run in a different league. But in the end, they have such a different way of cooking that it's a good combination. Besides joking, I'm simply honored. I actually even got to meet some of those chefs, in the past years, through the Unisg network.



Cracco called me one day, saying "I want to spend a nice day with my family and eat good food, they told me to come to you!" and he did." "Matias Perdomo, the chef of Contraste, came too and I could tell you many other names of chefs who decide to eat at our restaurant. But we are open to anyone, our goal is to want to make it possible for anyone to come and have a good time. We're lucky to have a wonderful place, which makes it easier. But I think the main reason why people come is that we try to be as genuine as possible in everything we do.

When they ask me "What is your strength?" I always answer "Imperfection". I believe it, we understood it makes no sense to compete with a certain kind of haute cuisine and so we turned our imperfections in our signature. We work as if we were hosting people at home, serving what we picked in the garden during the day, because that is what we do.

Did coming back to Unisg bring back any specific memory? What do you feel like you brought with you from your experience here at the master?

"Well, when I was a student Tavole didn't exist, it was great to see how that closed the loop, with the opportunity now to have lunch there. And it means a lot to me, mainly because I also decided to give back to the university through cooking.

When I left Pollenzo, I had it in my mind; I learned and got so much there that I wanted to return something. When I saw my picture on the wall I felt like "I finally really did it, we're even now". Being backward was also humanly beautiful and joyful, it was an excellent chance to reunite with people and professors who meant a lot to me and significantly impacted my path"

When I came to Cascina Lago Scuro, I was impressed by the fact that it is at the same time a farm, a cheese factory, a garden, a restaurant, a place for events and more. What about you? If you had to introduce yourself, what are you, what's your role?

That's a good question. Well, I'd say I work as a "humanity developer". What I always tell people when they come here, both guests and workers, is: "be yourself". La Cascina really brings out what is inside of you. Good and bad sides. I like to call it a magnifier of sensations, emotions. And my job is to try to get the best out of them, that's my main task; to manage different sensitivities, trying to find a balance between them. I think that's my primary skill and responsibility. If you ask me what I like to do in practice, instead, well I love to make bread, if I had to choose. But I learned by developing this place that I need to be able to milk cows, cook, make cheese, work in the gardens and have an eye on everything.



I like to be feel comfortable, to be in a peaceful environment, so we try to create a friendly energy. And that is something you can't fake, or, at least, you can, but people feel it and it's a hard job to maintain. So we try to just work in a humanely and authentically and to be ourselves; it's easier if it comes naturally. Of course it can't only be about the chilled atmosphere; you also need to give an original experience and to have strong foundations foodwise.

What would you tell a student asking you for professional advice?

To buy a farm. (Laughs) No, well, I would say to just go for it. To start his project without overthinking it, because if you look at everything that could go wrong or try to plan every detail in advance, you will never do it. We still don't know how we make it work at Lago Scuro, sometimes, but, in the end, we do. Things come naturally with time. In the beginning, particularly, you need to go at full speed. It does not mean to be foolish, but also not to expect you to know perfectly where you're headed. I mean, my first idea was to make soups for babies and we had a kindergarten for ten years.

My second recommendation would be to stay open to others, not ever believe you know everything. We never stop learning. Every time someone new joins the team, I'm ready to question myself and the way we work. And I want others to do it too, guests included. I'm tired of people coming over to judge the plate; stop focusing on criticizing the dish. Indeed, food must be good, for sure, but it's not only about that. This approach is luckily already declining. We should relearn to enjoy the meal.

WILDEN: HERBS MIXING

You don't always have the chance to sit in a round on the grass and chat with the founder of a super cool company.

The Teatime with Nicola Robecchi was a super informal one, drinking kombucha and beers in the sun. His company, Wilden, produces curative herbs, infusions, and cool drinks. The idea came from his experience working with professor Pieroni on ethnobiology and ethnobiology projects when he was still a student. He went back to that world and knowledge years ago with a friend who's an expert in both nature and medicine.

The project aims at combining the growing demand for new beverages and his passion for herbal properties.

He truly believes people should rediscover the benefits of consuming spices and plants containing tons of curative phytochemicals.

They also give great relevance to selecting the best areas of production for each plant, in which the conditions allow it to grow with no irrigation and any treatment. They have in their mind to include foraged plants in their produces, but they're researching how to do the dodo they do them without destroying the ecosystem by overexploiting them.

Nicola was super open and honest about his motivations and goals, and we hope his products convey his beliefs to the consumers for their health and pleasure.

Who doesn't want a beer that contains an "anti-hangover" herbal mix?



PERFECT CLOSING

This month was very intense for many of us, with study trips and exams making it look as if it flew away, it seems like we deserved to take a break and finish it in the best way possible.

The 29th was graduation day for many colleagues and Sveva Sagramola, documentarist and television presenter of the famous program Geo, previously known as Cose dell'altro Geo. There is no Italian guy who was a kid from the late 90s who didn't explore the natural world through Sveva's eyes. For this, but also for her crucial role in scientific dissemination, she received an honoris causa degree.

I sit in the library while I'm writing this, the window is open, and I can see the ceremony here. There isn't a better way to enjoy it. The sun shines, I hear the proclamation speeches, the Terra Madre music band just stopped playing (their dancers in the picture on the right). Glasses and forks are tinkling from a distance while preparing the aperitivo at Tavole.

"We want this beautiful day to be a breath of fresh air, after these two years of the pandemic, to celebrate the return of freedom and joy," someone's saying, and I feel like it fits this month's Tavole good news too.



THANK YOU GUYS FOR READING,
WE CAN'T WAIT TO SHARE WITH YOU MORE INSIGHTS FROM TAVOLE.
'CAUSE WE ALL CARE ABOUT FOOD AND THE PEOPLE BEHIND IT

