

June-July 2022

TAVOLE INSIGHTS

by students for students
get to know tavolo's activities
and its "BEHIND THE SCENES"



HAPPY ENDING

This month's issue is not only the last of the academic year, but also the last one to be written by the Student Tavole Team members.

This last semester was what I would call a revival for Tavole and for the university in general. Restrictions being less severe, extra-curricular activities started flourishing again.

This month we had four students cooking at our canteen and presenting their own recipes to the rest of the campus.

We decided to dedicate this last issue to their experience and commitment to this amazing contest.

We interviewed them, so that you are able to compare their stories, to get a bigger picture of what working within the university meant to them. We hope this can inspire other people and promote activities that actively involve students and give them the opportunity to express and improve their skills.

On the 30th of June, Tavole arches also hosted the last aperitivo of the season, which was a great example of how to combine fun and education.:

Ted talks from professors and students took place to tackle some very important gastronomical topics, students also arranged food and wine stands, the Tavole staff made their amazing focaccia and the guys from Slow Food Youth Network organised a disco soup with leftovers from the market that producers donated to them.

The day was playful, but also a great opportunity to strengthen our community and to witness and listen to great initiatives.

We want to thank all of our fellows for this amazing year. We can't wait to see our successors carry on our work, improve it, change it and keep getting creative.

Don't forget to reach out to the Tavole member via email at ristorante@unisg.it or IG [@tavoleaccademiche](https://www.instagram.com/tavoleaccademiche)

Get on to meet our Contest Winners!

MEET THE CONTEST WINNERS

THEIR STORIES

Students end up at Unisg coming from the most different backgrounds.

Misha comes from hotel school and, after traveling and working, chose to deepen their knowledge and open their minds to the present and future of gastronomy before continuing his path. Daniele, on the other hand, also attended hotel school, but he saw Unisg more as a break after many years of hard work as a chef in fine dining. Unisg seems to also be very much related to one's origins. Alexandros, from Greece, says "Most of my childhood photos include food". Nine years have passed from when he first heard about the university to the time he got here, but in the meanwhile he conducted two activities of his own, welcoming visitors and tourists to his bistrot in Lemons. Daniele actually learned about it from his mum "she is Northern Macedonian and she had been involved with the Slow Food movement within the country, which was a very strong presence, for not even 2 million inhabitants and 5 presidia".

For some students, this program is kind of a natural extension of their previous experiences, as it was for Hanne, who I interviewed last month: she studied Environmental Studies and then worked in a bakery for years, so she combined these two aspects in her master at Unisg. For Anna, instead, coming here was quite a break with the past: "I was actually teaching German as a foreign language at a university to international students. Somehow, whenever we had time we'd talk about food or organize projects where we ended up cooking together or going to the market. So I also had this dream of bringing cultures together and teaching languages while and through cooking. While Covid I felt very frustrated with online teaching and now I'm here!"



Up here, Daniele preparing pasta in Tavole's kitchen
Below, all the students contest winners:
Daniele, Alexandro, Misha, Anna and Hanne



THEIR RECIPES: WHY?

Misha cooked Brandacujun (in the picture on the right). That's how he commented it:

"I chose brandacujun for two reasons. One one hand, it really represents my region, Liguria, as it includes codfish, potatoes, olives and oil. Also, I have been preparing it since I was a child, I would often prepare it on the weekends with my mum and grandma. Thanks to my work experience I discovered the 2.0 version of it. My re-interpretation is modern and enriched, but not distorted. Traditionally we use salt cod, we let it soak for two days to desalinate and then simmer it in milk with potatoes. The name (cujun is the Ligurian dialect for balls) comes from the fact that you later have to stir the mixture for a long time while adding oil, all of this keeping the pot between your legs. Some others say it refers to the fact that the job is so long and boring that even/only dumb people could do it."



Daniele cooked Pasta e fagioli, pasta with beans, which you can see on the left. He says:

"I chose to cook pasta & fagioli because the same day that the contest was announced, our class was working in the food lab on some sustainable recipes with local ingredients. My team's recipe was pasta e fagioli and it happened to be a success. I decided that it could have been fun to cook it for a larger audience. It is both a dish of cultural significance to Italian culture and it's also vegan, perfect for everyone basically. The two main ingredients pasta and fagioli, perfectly encapsulate the two main cultures that constitute my cultural heritage, Italian and Northern Macedonian, pasta and gravce na tavce combined in one! When I was little my mom cooked pretty often and I never liked it. I guess it was also time to honor her by making it to my taste. Unfortunately I was only 78% satisfied with my result but that's the curse of every cook: we're never fully happy with what we put on the table and we always think of some things that we could have done better. An opportunity to improve, that's what it is!"

Alexandros made two dishes, Moussaka (the one on top on the right) and Gemista (underneath). He observed:

We choose two different plates to give options also to people who don't eat meat. Moussakas is one of the iconic plates of Greece. It's an ambassador of Greek cuisine. Normally visitors in Greece don't find a good moussaka because of touristic places and low quality of the ingredients. So, I decided to introduce this plate again to Unsig peeps and share the recipe of my mother. Each bite of moussakas is a cream bite of eggplant, bechamel and potato with cinnamon flavor of the ragu. Gemista is also a very well-known plate of Greek cuisine. It reminds me of summer days, when my grandmother was preparing this plate for us and eating it with Greek salad and feta cheese on the side. We made a nice feta cheese-yogurt sauce. The flavor of mint, the sweetness of the cooked onions and the sense of pepper. A refreshing combo with feta sauce.



Anna prepared a simple and delicious potato salad with trout (picture on the left). Her dish is a special memory:

"I chose that salad because it fit the requirements of the contest and because it is a family tradition.

We usually don't eat it with trout, but with herring, as it is much more available in the Baltic sea where I am from.

So, yeah, it reminds me a lot of growing up and my grandmother cooking. She would also pickle the herrings sometimes. That's a special spring dish to me, we would have it whenever it was herring season. "

COOKING AT TAVOLE: THE EXPERIENCE

There's one thing all the four of them agreed on:

cooking at Tavole was super cool.

Both due to what they learned and to the welcoming and relaxed atmosphere they found, which, we know, it's unfortunately way too rare in professional kitchens.

The Tavole staff built something really special and what students shared with us proves it.

In Daniele's words:

I had a lot of fun cooking at Tavole, I hadn't been in a professional kitchen in over 8 months, I was excited to go back to it. The team is amazing, with a capital A. There's a very relaxed and convivial mood which allows for great and creative dishes to see the light everyday. As a student I feel proud of the Tavole team and of what they put on our tables daily.



Up here, Anna serving her dish for lunch.
Below, Misha also during service with Andrea
from Tavole's staff.

He goes on saying:

"I see a dynamic team of ethnically diverse, skilled and passionate individuals who are genuinely thrilled to express themselves and to please others through their cooking. I couldn't have been in better hands. I also really enjoyed cooking for friends and fellow alumni alike, a last thankful gesture and personal signature for this one amazing year in Pollenzo."

He's not alone having such a great opinion of the staff. Misha was also super enthusiastic when I snuck into the kitchen while he was cooking:

"Cooking at tavole was a wonderful experience. The brigade and the vibe in the kitchen are super unique, challenging and inspiring. I surely learned a new and more friendly and kind way of relating to colleagues."

But being in the kitchen was also a great experience to test and improve their skills.

Anna says: "It was actually the perfect ending for me for my master of Applied Gastronomy. Before that I only cooked at home or at the food lab, for a maximum of forty people, but never in such a big kitchen so that was very useful and interesting."

To someone else, cooking in a professional kitchen brought memories back:
"It was an amazing experience. It reminded me of when I was in the army with the cook position. Yes in Greece, the army service is still obligatory for every man for 9 months"
Alexandros shared with us
"And I had to cook every day for more than a hundred people. The big pots, the huge ovens, the big amount of ingredients. The difference is: Tavole team is super cool and supportive. They helped a lot. I was free to decide for my recipe and be responsible for it."



Up here, Alexandros washing vegetables in Tavole's kitchen.
Below, he's together with Daniele and Milena from the staff



SWEET DREAMS

It's good to learn other people's future plans, dreams and ideas. Not to enter into competition and compare, but rather to get inspired from others and to normalise having doubts, fears, ambitions and paths that don't look like an Instagram reel, but more like human.

Coming from very diverse backgrounds, Unisg students also meet very different futures. And that's great, 'cause the benefit of being a gastronome is that you can work in so many fields and reinvent yourselves in a lot of jobs.

So I asked the contest winners "What are you up to once graduating, what are your dreams?"

Misha: "My best friends and I dream about opening our own farm with a restaurant in it. It's been two years since we started our very own garden and we love it. It's still just a dream, but it's good to have one. I still have time before graduating, so I will probably change my mind again until then."

Alexandros: "Good question. I don't have a clear answer. I came to study here because I wanted to live abroad and open my mind. I had the chance to meet people from all over the world and with several backgrounds. I have some ideas but not something specific. I wrote a cookbook about the gastronomy of Lemnos Island and I surely want to publish it in English. The plan is to create an interactive gastronomy notebook for every one who wants to discover the gastronomy of Lemnos and Greece in general. I also want to continue working in the food and hospitality sector. I enjoy hosting, being with people and traveling around the world. See you guys, walking into our future!"

Daniele: "I'm currently set to move to Copenhagen and join Noma's team. Very exciting, it's a position I've aspired to for a very long time. I'll spend the next three months working with them on their last seasonal menu and after their closing I'd also like to hopefully join them on their new project."

Anna: "I honestly don't know what I'm gonna do once I graduate. I wanna work in food education, but I would also be open to working in a kitchen for quite some time. But, frankly, I'm gonna be open and take life as it comes and, as long as I'm happy, I'm happy!"

And we love this attitude.



This is a short letter from the Tavole team to our volunteers.

Our team of volunteers was formed with the purpose of involving the students more in our gastronomic project.

We could not have been luckier. Each and every one of them has incomparable potential, young people with unique personalities and unbreakable will.

To be quite frank, we would have not made it without their support. With kind comments and constructive criticism, they helped us drawing a roadmap that allowed us to understand our community and offer them more and better options.

We are grateful for every minute of your time.

From the bottom of our hearts, the Tavole team thanks you once and again.

What you see up here is the heart-melting letter the Tavole members insisted that we'd publish on this last issue.

I was hesitant at first, as I feared that to be perceived as arrogant.

But, as I gave it a second thought, I realised the power of sharing these words. They testify to the significance of this experiment.

I said it already in the past and I'm going to say it one more time: collaboration is priceless.

I take this opportunity to thank the Tavole team for believing in us. By asking for our help, they have shown to trust us and our capabilities. They gave us the chance to put them into practice and improve them and to re-shape Tavole food together.

I believe being so humble to admit you have to improve is much more worthy than any Michelin star. These guys worked very hard on meeting student's' preferences and expectations and always listened to our opinion with an open mind.

That is a very good heritage to leave to the next generation of students. As Daniele said, we're lucky to have such a great team of people who love what they do.

In a world where working in a professional kitchen most of the time means competition, stress, hazing and exploitation, we're proud to have such a good example of passion and equality.

In this university, we hear everyday that food is about people and their relationships, it's about respect and cooperation.

This journey has been about implementing those values.

Your Student Tavole Team and Tavole Staff members

