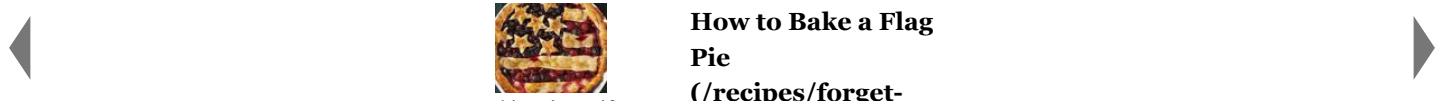


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Brooklyn’s Antica Pesa Tips the Scales in Diners’ Favor

Apr 22, 2016 | 4:58 pm By Lauren Mack (<https://www.thedaily meal.com/users/lmack>)

Say ‘Andiamo a mangiare’ to an authentic Roman meal at Antica Pesa

Walking into **Antica Pesa** (<http://www.anticapesa.com/>), it’s likely one of the Panella brothers, Francesco, Lorenzo and Simone, will warmly welcome you with a friendly greeting and a smile, a prelude to one of the most authentic Italian dining experiences outside of Italy.

The modern, dark wood accented dining room populated with brown leather sofas and banquettes on Berry Street in Williamsburg is a world away from Rome's Trastevere neighborhood, home of Antica Pesa's original restaurant, but that's where the contrast ends and the similarities begin.

Since its opening in 2012, the family-run restaurant has quietly drawn celebrities and locals alike to its unpretentious 65-seat dining room, which is open for dinner only.

Enamored with New York City, the brothers chose the Brooklyn neighborhood over Manhattan because the neighborhood reminded them of Trastevere, which looks at Rome across the water in the same way Williamsburg looks across the water to Manhattan. Both neighborhoods have undergone a resurgence in popularity.

"People have to enjoy 100% the experience," said Lorenzo Panella, who likes Manhattan but was attracted to the larger spaces in Williamsburg and the less hectic pace that allows him to take time to talk with diners.

The Brooklyn outpost is a more casual take on the original Antica Pesa, which was opened by the Panella family in 1922 in Trastevere. The restaurant's name (literally "The Old Scales" in Italian) is named for the scales that were used to portion out food brought by local farmers to give to the poor in the Roman neighborhood.

Both establishments aim to rework traditional recipes from Roman cuisine while utilizing local, seasonal and mostly organic products.

The Daily Meal was recently invited to dinner to try the spring cocktail and dinner menu that features seasonal, re-imagined Roman cuisine classics along with the family's signature dishes. The menu, which is not too expansive or

overwhelming, changes seasonally and is an exact replica, from recipes to ingredients, as the one served in Italy (a third Antica Pesa in Doha, Qatar serves a modified menu with the family's same ideology and passion).

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A pleasant surprise is that many dishes like the *antipasti crudo e Bufala croccante* (Prosciutto di Parma, cured for 20 months, served with fresh Bufala mozzarella cheese wrapped in paper thin, perfectly crisp filo crust) can be made vegetarian or gluten free upon request without compromising the taste, presentation or experience. The delicate, yet hearty, starter sets the tone for an expertly crafted culinary journey that makes diners swear they are in a historic Italian town and not hipster heaven.

The *insalata primaverile* (frisée, baby arugula, asparagus, fennel, Blu di Bufala cheese and hazelnuts with Meyer lemon vinaigrette) is a refreshing lead-in to the hefty homemade pastas like *Schiaffoni all'Amatriciana* (imported Italian pasta, guanciale la Quercia, San Marzano tomatoes and Pecorino Romano Fulvi cheese) and the simple, yet exquisitely prepared and hugely satisfying, spaghetti *cacio e pepe* (imported Italian pasta and Parmigiano Reggiano DOP and Pecorino Romano Fulvi cheeses with black pepper).

In true Italian fashion, the tour de feast continues with secondi that aim to add a modern twist to classic Roman dishes, like the signature *la porchetta di Agnello*. Traditionally served with pork roast, the dish has been re-worked with slow cooked, smoked and then grilled D'Artagnan lamb belly coupled with classic flavors like a star anise glaze, eggplant pâté, and orange zest. The labor-intensive dish is served with grilled and marinated red bell peppers, a classic Italian side served with Roman sandwiches, and pizza Bianca, a Roman, grilled crunchy focaccia.

The culinary crescendo comes with dessert. A ubiquitous staple of Italian restaurants worldwide, there is nothing pedestrian about Antica Pesa's tiramisu. The *tiramisu della Nonna* is the perfect blend of *savoiard*i cookies soaked in just the right amount of amaretto liquor and espresso and blended with a light, yet rich, mascarpone cream and sprinkled with finely crushed chocolate. There is more than enough to share, but you may find it hard to be polite about it. Even the cappuccino, which is often overlooked even at high-end restaurants, is pure perfection, tipping the scales of culinary greatness in Antica Pesa's favor with diners serving as the benefactors.



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