



Venice, Island of San Giorgio Maggiore

## **6 April marked the opening of the "San Giorgio Café with Filippo La Mantia", the café/restaurant of the island of San Giorgio in Venice**

*The gastronomical project, decided on by the Giorgio Cini Foundation to optimise the reception services of the island of San Giorgio Maggiore, has been created by D'Uva with the host and cook Filippo La Mantia*

Visitors to the **Island of San Giorgio Maggiore** in Venice were already offered many opportunities for experiencing art and culture. Apart from the Palladian architecture of the Basilica of San Giorgio Maggiore, with the paintings of Tintoretto, these included: the monumental complex with the interventions of Buora and Longhena and, more recently, of Michele De Lucchi; the sites of the Stanze del Vetro (Glass Rooms) and the exhibition centre "Le Sale del Convitto" (College Rooms); the Squero, the old workshop for the repair and building of typically Venetian boats, transformed into a modern Auditorium. Extraordinary places of the **Giorgio Cini Foundation**, a prestigious, world-famous cultural institution whose statute states its mission to promote the island of San Giorgio Maggiore. From **6 April 2019**, the attractions of the island will be added to with a new area reserved for the **art of cooking and Italian gastronomical culture**: the *San Giorgio Cafè with Filippo La Mantia*.

The project for the area dedicated to the café/restaurant was greatly cherished by the Cini Foundation, which has for years devoted itself to improving the reception facilities for the residents and visitors to the Island. The project has been entrusted to **Ilaria D'Uva**; with her company, which has been developing museum technologies and services since 1959, she already manages the guided tour service at the Foundation.

The *San Giorgio Cafè with Filippo La Mantia* Is the only refreshment place on the Island of San Giorgio, and it offers **80 place settings** (about 50 of which in the covered outside section) in renovated, comfortable premises next to the Benedictine walls of the Foundation, directly overlooking the basin of St. Mark's with an atmospheric view over the quay of the Island and the Riva degli Schiavoni.

The new area **will be at the same time a bar, café, bistro and restaurant** and offers various services every day of the week except Wednesday, starting with a lavish breakfast served from 10 a.m. onwards, then continuing with the kitchen which is open all day, up to **dinner**, which for now is

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available on **Fridays and Saturdays** or on request for special events. The *San Giorgio Café* also proposes to become a meeting place for cocktails in town; a charming view of the lights of the lagoon at sunset is guaranteed.

The *San Giorgio Café* completes the experience of the visitor whether they be tourists, lovers of art and cooking and it makes it a unique, generously sensual experience. The interiors contribute to this harmony, the leading role however being left to the Venetian atmosphere, to the views towards St. Mark's, Riva degli Schiavoni and the inner part of the island. Thus design and colour, material and texture are balanced together in a mixture of warmth, grace, tradition and innovation.

The *San Giorgio Café* proposes a high-level service which also intends to exploit the particular resources of the island and Venice. La Mantia's cooking style, in which raw materials are fundamental, **also makes use of the products of the cellar of the Benedictine Monks of San Giorgio.**

The cook **Filippo La Mantia** is famous for his cooking which abounds in flavours, aromas and feeling, but also for his hospitality towards his clients. *"I like the idea of being able to recreate in San Giorgio an old-time atmosphere, when the cook used to offer seasonal produce and the landlord welcomed you reciting the menu. So I too wish to offer a relaxed environment where guests can feel at home. I like new challenges, I like forcing myself to rethink things, always and in any case, I like meeting people through food. I've slightly modified my gastronomical project for the San Giorgio Café, adapting it to the visitors, both foreigners and Italians. I've tried to make it simple, captivating and traditional. I've played around with my own tradition and the Venetian one, because I respect all the regions of Italy even though I always give precedence to my own Sicily, starting from Palermo. In my opinion, people coming to Italy must absolutely eat Italian, spaghetti with tomato and spaghetti with clams will be always on the menu. The carta will vary continuously, it must be a kind of prolongation of home, like "I'm going shopping, then I'll cook", and that's it. I hope to be able to make frequent use of the kitchen garden of the Benedictine monks, our neighbours, and use all their produce which is grown with such care and love. In the end every project to do with hospitality and food is an act of love. I want everyone sharing this adventure with me always to have a smile on their faces. Hospitality, art and food are the elements which best represent Italians all over the world. But I hope it'll be the facts that speak for themselves, not just words".*

The *San Giorgio Café* project fits perfectly into the activities of the Giorgio Cini Foundation and its original vocation. **Pasquale Gagliardi**, General Secretary of the Cini Foundation, does not hide his deep satisfaction. *"We're happy to be able finally to complete the offer of the Island with a high-quality*

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*cafeteria/restaurant, a worthy crowning element in the process of improving the reception areas and services for people taking part in our activities, a process which began almost 20 years ago on my arrival on San Giorgio. This project has a fundamental strategic value for us. By improving the reception services, particularly those linked to catering, we are aiming at making the island a place which is not only to be visited but also to be lived in. Today, thanks to the Giorgio Cini Foundation, the Island has never been so close to its age-old monastic vocation, that of offering refuge and spiritual and sensuous nutrition. By sensuous nutrition, I mean all the experiences which are broadly speaking aesthetic: the visual arts which satisfy the sight; music which satisfies the hearing; but also the experiences of smell and taste, because the ability to combine scents and flavours is no less honourable than the ability to combine colours and sounds. With this opening, we are at last putting an end to an unacceptable paradox: the impossibility of enjoying a decent meal in the place which boasts the most beautiful refectory in history: the cenacle of Palladium, enhanced by the Wedding at Cana by Paolo Veronese. For this reason too, we consider this initiative to be a fully-fledged cultural operation".*

It was **Ilaria D'Uva**, the Florentine entrepreneur, lover of art and architecture, innovation and islands bewitched by Venice, who accepted the task of creating a restaurant on the Island at the invitation of the Cini Foundation. In 2018, with her company D'Uva, which creates museum services and multimedia devices combining technology and commentary, she developed for the Foundation a reception system for visitors which will soon be extended: ticket office, bookshop, signage, guided tours and video guides in Italian, English, French, German, Spanish and Russian, and ticket office for the concerts at the Squero. *"Many people ask me what I and my company have to do with a restaurant", says Ilaria D'Uva, "and I answer that we are new to the world of catering, but we have a consolidated presence in the cultural heritage sector, where we offer interactive and personalised experiences with our museum and multimedia services spread over many highly-prestigious locations including: St. Mark's Basilica, the Doge's Palace, the Scuola Grande di San Rocco, La Fenice Theatre, all in Venice; the Duomo of Milan, the cathedrals of Florence, Siena, Pisa; the Holy Convent of St. Francis in Assisi; the Pantheon, the Colosseum, the Roman Forum, all in Rome; the excavations of Pompeii and those of Herculaneum. So when someone asks me what I've got to do with a restaurant, I answer that this is a museum cafeteria which is part of an innovative project for integrated reception services on Treasure Island, the Island of San Giorgio Maggiore. A coordinated management of all the services will also allow us to create offers which more and more effectively combine the experiences of architecture, art and landscape with that of the culinary world, by means of packages which include the visit or concerts plus breakfast, lunch, tea, cocktails or dinner".*

The creation of the San Giorgio Café has been possible thanks to the restoration works of the **Inter-Regional Education Authority for the Veneto, Trentino Alto Adige and Friuli Venezia Giulia Regions**. A fundamental role has also been played by the **technical sponsors**: despite the restricted



spaces for setting up a professional kitchen with the most modern equipment, **Electrolux Professional** has succeeded in combining productive capacity with an adequate flexibility for meeting the demands of the new restaurant. The innovative technologies of the **Reggiani SpA** company have fulfilled the need for performing but relatively uninvasive products: the white Sunny LED lights in fact ensure an elegant, refined lighting in line with the style of the interior design project prepared by the studio of the architect **Paolo Richelli**.

Finally we wish to thank **Gruppo Lunelli** and the **monastic community of the Abbey of San Giorgio Maggiore**.

#### **SAN GIORGIO CAFÉ OPENING HOURS AND SERVICES**

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Friday and Saturday 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Closed Wednesdays

Direct bookings can be made on the site [www.sangiorgio.cafe](http://www.sangiorgio.cafe)

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