

## SPAZIO NIKO ROMITO

Spazio Niko Romito is a unique new format in the restaurant business. Created by chef and entrepreneur Niko Romito in 2013, it has come to comprise three locations. The first of these is the original restaurant and lab that launched the concept, at Rivisondoli – in the remote, pristine mountains of Abruzzi –, where students of the Niko Romito Academy perfected their culinary skills on the former premises of the Reale restaurant. A second is in Milan, on the fourth floor of Il Mercato del Duomo overlooking the Cathedral Square and Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II; the third location is in Rome's Piazza Verdi, in the heart of the Pinciano/Parioli district.

### Identity and vision

Spazio offers a style of contemporary Italian cuisine based on research and creativity, with special focus on raw materials and lightness of preparation. Simple yet sophisticated dishes that enable the natural ingredients to shine through.

Spazio's culinary identity is aligned with Romito's philosophy yet wholly original. The menus for all three locations are developed in the kitchens of the 3-Michelin-star Reale restaurant at Castel di Sangro, which informs the philosophy, techniques and protocols employed, albeit adapting them to a more casual context. Such Niko Romito classics as the “*Sauté*” – whose name varies based on the season and vegetables used –, the “*Tagliatelle with parmesan, lemon and mint*” or “*Braised lamb with thyme, marjoram and artichokes*” are flanked by new recipes with each season, original dishes that reflect Romito's signature approach in ever fresh, surprising

ways. Fans of the Castel di Sangro restaurant will find the Spazio menus to share much of the Reale DNA – similar sources and intuitions, distinct degrees of intensity.

Coordinating the three teams of Rivisondoli, Rome and Milan is Spazio Niko Romito Executive Chef **Gaia Giordano**, *L'Espresso* Chef of the Year in the magazine's 2018 Guidebook to the Restaurants of Italy. Staff consists of professional cooks and students of the Niko Romito Academy, who complete their curriculum in the Spazio kitchens.

### **Variations on a common theme**

The three venues' menus all come under the common aegis of Niko Romito and his Academy, albeit with distinct identities: at Rivisondoli, in Abruzzi – where it all began – the bond with the Academy is strong, and students are key players both in the kitchen and the dining area, as they experiment every facet of the restaurant business and take their very first steps in the job market. In Milan and Rome, Spazio is characterized by a higher, more *recherché* profile, an international business clientele and a role as culinary hotspots for the two cities.

As more restaurants opened, the formula for Spazio gradually evolved: though fundamentally still midrange in price points and wine list, it has shifted towards the higher end both in substance and philosophy, in menu and dining room identity – characterized as it is by painstaking care in execution and presentation. Some elements, however, remain a constant: the essential simplicity of setup – what is known in the business as *mise en place* –, the cozy ambience, seamless and attentive service, reasonable pricing.

### **Pane e Caffè**

In Rome, the restaurant is flanked by Pane e Caffè (literally, “Bread and Coffee”): a fun, informal, contemporary eatery offering hot and cold fare, breakfast, lunch, aperitif, dinner or snacks – Italian classics, revisited in the style of Romito. Breakfast is modeled on the Casadonna *colazione* with sweet rolls, jams and fresh fruit juice; throughout the day, the spotlight shines on Romito’s signature fresh bread, handmade at PANE the bread baking lab at Castel di Sangro, which morphs into a wide variety of delicacies, from sliced bread with assorted seasonings to sandwiches, focaccia, toasted bread and whole loaves, available for purchase.

The kitchen provides diners with light, scrumptious *antipasti* such as vegetable pies and savory flans, luscious, traditional first courses like lasagna and *gnocchi alla romana*, classic Italian deli entrées like roast veal or cockerel, salted codfish and chips. And, for the first time ever in Rome, Bomba – the ball of fried yeast dough that Romito has transformed from an exclusively sweet version to savory, thus creating an all-Italian new street food. Finally, mixologist Mauro Cipollone conjures the perfect aperitif for each meal and customer, based on individual tastes, versatility and ideal pairing with courses, as with a choice selection of cold cuts and cheese.

[www.spazionikoromito.com](http://www.spazionikoromito.com)