

marco eagle

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Above: Chef Matarese makes fresh pasta for his classic linguini alla vongole veraci. **Jenine Ouillette/Eagle Correspondent (2)**
Right: Giuliano Matarese, executive chef at Sale e Pepe at the Marco Island Beach Resort. **Submitted**

Innovation & tradition

GIULIANO MATARESE JOINS SALE E PEPE AS EXECUTIVE CHEF

By **JENINE OUILLETTE**
Eagle Correspondent

Celebrate the holiday season feasting on fabulous food featured in Sale e Pepe's innovative new gourmet menu created by the restaurant's new executive chef Giuliano Matarese that made its debut Monday. The Neapolitan native recently arrived straight from the Big Apple where he was executive chef at Convivio, a one-star Michelin restaurant. Actually a prestigious honor, said Chef Matarese, considering that the Con Vivo restaurant was one of only 46 restaurants Michelin awarded one star and only seven made three stars in a field of 805 restaurants in New York City.

Here's more.

"I grew up in a family of restaurateurs in Abruzzi. I was born with the passion — a vocation to be a chef and learned about the techniques and recipes of Italy's different regions from my grandmother and also worked in Sardegna and Veneto. So, I have the traditions of Italy but with a modern twist, so I followed my dream and came to New York in 2001 to expand my mind to new experiences and techniques, to discover diverse cultures and cuisine," said chef Matarese, noting he started as sous chef in a few restaurants to learn about the American kitchen and subsequently worked as house chef at the Italian Culinary Institute.

In 2008 he was hired as corporate chef at a major restaurant group where he supervised all aspects of kitchen and staff management of the company's multiple restaurants. Among his exciting New York experiences, Matarese counts the time he was invited to create the Barilla Italian Luncheon presentation at New York's esteemed James Beard Foundation as well as being invited to participate in prestigious food shows. He was also a celebrity chef on Food Network's "Chopped" and only a final unfinished dish that kept him from winning the \$10,000 prize.

"You can't have innovation without tradition. My philosophy is based on neoclassical cuisine and classic dishes but my twist is contrast tradition with the unexpected — play with the presentation as well as the combination



SALE E PEPE
Marco Beach Ocean Resort
480 S. Collier Blvd.
(239) 393-1600
Reservations recommended

Breakfast: 7 to 11 a.m.
Lunch: 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Happy hour: 4 to 5 p.m.
Dinner: Sunday, Monday, Thursday 5 to 9 p.m., Friday and Saturday 5 to 10 p.m.



Chef Matarese's semifreddo ala cassata, a traditional Sicilian-style ice cream dessert.

of fresh ingredients with exotic herbs and spices. My goal is to elicit an emotional response from the guest's dining experience," declared Matarese.

Sale e Pepe's exciting new menu created by chef Matarese includes popular stuzzichini — small dishes that can be

shared — such as polpettine d' agnello, mini lamb meatballs with pine nuts and raisins; acciughe marinate, marinated white anchovies with lemon zest and chili pepper and crudi, a raw selection of fresh seafood including caprese di mare, marinated sea scallops with roasted tomato and basil oil evoking Italy's national colors.

There's also an extensive antipasti section that features an ethereal vitello tonnato of fork tender, thinly sliced pale pink veal lavished with velvety tuna sauce and Sicilian capers and an exotic seared Mediterranean octopus appetizer that gives Maine lobster a run for its tenderness, taste and texture.

The insalate or salad offerings feature organic greens and a symphony of flavors in the innovative dressings such as the carciofi, garlic and mint infused baby artichokes atop organic greens, Parmesan cheese drizzled with saba, the must or juice from grapes before fermentation into wine.

The zuppa del giorno, of course, is chef's inimitable daily soup that has a twin with risotto of the day.

Although the primi piatti are a pasta lover's dream come true, to list every fabulous home-made pasta dish would take away the pleasure — you really have to come and see for yourself. Well, maybe one dish, the linguini with cockle clams, garlic, evoo, spiced up with authentic Calabrian peperoncino which chef describes as "to give you the same sensation as eating in an Italian house."

With the thought that actually tasting one of chef Matarese's Secondi Piatti is worth more than a thousand descriptions, the entrée's section of the menu offers succulent veal, lamb and steak selections, such as a piquant Roasted Lamb loin paired with sautéed broccoli rabe, toasted pistachios and yellow peach puree. Notable among the seafood selections is a Sale e Pepe signature, flown in fresh Mediterranean branzino prepared "acqua pazza" in the chef's innovative twist with roasted tomato and white wine. There's also pesce ala griglia, and that's grilled fresh catch of the day to you, mate! There's always room for dessert, and the menu features a delectable quartet of Italian classics dolci including Chef Matarese's semifreddo ala cassata, traditional Sicilian-style ice cream dessert.