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La Dolce Vita in Orinda

By Linda U. Foley



Welcome to Pizzeria Amoroma Photo Linda U. Foley

overseeing their work is Moragan Libby Havlicek, the Private Dining Manager.

I see familiar and not so familiar faces and meet some new ones. Elle Falahat, a candidate for District Attorney for Contra Costa County, is a long time friend of the owners. Bearing a striking resemblance to the former Empress of Iran, she sparkles with excitement for her friends' milestone event.

Lavecchia-who has restaurant blood in his veins having grown up the son of a successful Chef in Rome-walks with the air of a patrone, making sure every detail is attended to. He steps up to the mike. Gracious and charming, he makes his guests feel like famiglia.

He introduces Vera Ciammetti, founder of Slow Food Alameda. The global non-profit grass roots Slow Food Organization links the pleasure of food with a commitment to community and environment. The Slow movement originated in Italy in 1989, in protest to the opening of a McDonald's near the Spanish Steps in Rome. Ciammetti, an icon on the food scene, is the perfect guest here at a perfect venue, whose foods are made from scratch, using the freshest seasonal vegetables.

Ciammetti addresses the plight of the small farmers who were devastated by a recent earthquake in Italy's Abruzzo region. Good, healthy, natural food transcends the final presentation of the dinner plate. It is a century-old way of life for many, many families. Ciammetti makes a plea to support ravaged Abruzzo to help re-establish farms, families, villages and products enjoyed world-wide grown by artisan producers (www.sustainabruzzo.org provides detailed information.)

The jazz combo featuring Lake Merritt gondoliere Angelino Sandri overlays the animated crowd with a European party flair. I'm wondering just when they might all start to sing or dance. . . This is my kind of party-la dolce vita. But, all good things must come to an end; in this case it is merely Ari vi derci Pizzeria Amoroma.

Pizzeria Amoroma, 65 Moraga Way, Orinda, 925-253-7662. Open daily 11 a.m.-10 p.m.

Featuring small plate appetizers,

thin-crust pizza, and skewered/grilled entrees around \$12.

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It was a hot time all around in Orinda on June 23 at the by-invitation-only Grand Opening of Pizzeria Amoroma. The invitation asked for donations for the farmers affected by the recent earthquake in Italy's Abruzzo region.

Co-owners Hafiz Haidari, Noe Castro, Michele Lavecchia and Hamid Haidari exude the kind of natural Mediterranean charm, create food and atmosphere that travelers seek and treasure when in Europe. Well, this long-time quartet of friends has successfully brought Europe to our doorstep-again.

The Pizzeria-located in the heart of Orinda in the former Orinda House- is freshly painted, featuring a refurbished bar and new chairs. Structurally unchanged, it still sports a wood-burning pizza oven and accommodates ninety patrons. Like its kin, Ristorante Amoroma in Moraga, there is a welcoming atmosphere reflected in the setting-sun yellow of the walls and the subdued lighting.

The rooms fill quickly. Mouth-watering appetizers are served by an ebullient and friendly young staff. Efficiently