

Filippo Giaccone, the most authentic and unpredictable innkeeper of the Alta Langa, is closing his business.

Exactly 15 years after taking on the great challenge of reopening a little corner of paradise where it all began in his early thirties—where his father, Cesare, honed his mastery in cooking—Filippo will throw the last piece of coal into the fireplace at the end of February. That same fireplace has perfectly cooked rabbit and lamb to the delight of his clients, who braved the winding roads to reach Albaretto Torre from all over the world. From the greatest winemakers to renowned chefs, artists, and passionate gourmet lovers, many came to know and appreciate him, allowing him to carve out his own identity beyond the weighty legacy of his father.

And this is not just a figure of speech.

We received the news directly from Filippo over the phone—while in Kyoto, at the restaurant *Dei Cacciatori*, owned by Tadato Nagata in Japan. Nagata, who spent years working alongside Cesare, asked for permission to use the Giaccone family restaurant name, a tribute to the sacrifices he made learning the craft.

"I arrived in Kyoto in mid-December, and I'm staying for a month to cook *peperoni con bagna cauda di topinambur, zampini di maiale con nuvole di patate, coniglio al Barolo, and zabaione con torta di nocciole,*" Filippo said.

"When I step out of the kitchen and into the dining room, the Japanese guests hug me enthusiastically. We are always fully booked for both lunch and dinner."

"But the real news will come when I return home."

He explains: "In early December, just a few days before I left for Japan, one of my dearest clients in Albaretto Torre—an accomplished entrepreneur—came for lunch. At the end of the meal, he asked me to sit with him and made an offer to buy the entire restaurant. He wasn't the first to do so, and I had always refused. But this time, I decided it was an offer I couldn't turn down."

And so, at the end of January, when he returns from Japan, Filippo will reopen the restaurant for just one more month—"to say goodbye to all our friends and clients who honored my restaurant. This is the right time to close this amazing chapter, which has given me so much satisfaction. But certainly not to retire," he adds. "I'm only 51 years old and still have so much passion left in me. If the right opportunity arises, you'll find me once again in a kitchen somewhere in the Langa, the place to which I owe everything. I'm just a small chef, but the Langa is everything—its products, its quality, its people, its well-being, its lifestyle. I'm glad I was able to share its culture with so many, whether through a slice of *salame* or a seasonal vegetable."

But the ever-unpredictable Filippo may surprise us again. Before arriving in Albaretto Torre, he traveled the world to develop his own style after years of working alongside Cesare. His

journey took him to Germany, Austria, the Greek island of Mykonos, and Los Angeles, where he worked at the famous *Osteria Angelini* in Hollywood, to name just a few.

"When you have a father like mine, it's both a blessing and a burden. I went through many hardships and took big risks. But in the end, I can proudly say that I made it."

Fifteen years ago, all it took was his wife, Silvia, to convince him to step behind the stove and cook. "I was terrified—I feared being compared to Cesare. Then I found my own path. It all started with a plate of *spaghetti aglio, olio e peperoncino*, which won Silvia's heart."

A name, a destiny. "I'll never stop loving her and thanking her, just as I'll never stop listening to Vasco Rossi. He's my spiritual guide, my inspiration, my answer to life's questions. I've never had the chance to meet him in person, but I've followed him for years and never miss a concert. My biggest dream was to cook for him at Albaretto Torre. I won't get that chance now, but who knows?"

"This isn't a goodbye or a farewell—it's just a *see you later*."

-Article translated from "LA STAMPA" by Roberto Fiori, published on 31/12/2024.

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