



LUCIANO PELLEGRINI
EXECUTIVE CHEF & PARTNER

Biography

Bergamo, Italy is the birthplace of one of America's most established chefs, Luciano Pellegrini. Pellegrini began his culinary experience in his mother's kitchen and at age 13, he enrolled at San Pellegrino, one of Italy's most prestigious hotel schools. He spent his teenage years attending school and gaining experience at various restaurants throughout Italy. After graduation, Pellegrini was exposed to dining at its finest when working at Locanda dell'Angelo in Bergamo.

At the age of 18, after Pellegrini completed his required one-year of military service as a parachutist, he gained experience and expertise working for an impressive list of top Italian restaurants. In 1985, he took a brave step by moving to the United States to work with restaurateur Piero Selvaggio, who had achieved a solid reputation for bringing genuine Italian cuisine to California.

By 1987, Pellegrini was quickly developing his cooking and leadership skills as a pasta chef at Selvaggio's restaurant, Primi, and then in 1991 as head chef at Posto restaurant in the San Fernando Valley. Pellegrini was immediately recognized for his talents and was critically acclaimed by Max Jacobson, Larry Lipson of the *Los Angeles Daily News* and S. Irene Virbila, restaurant critic for the *Los Angeles Times*, who commented that his kitchen excels at "the kind of rustic main courses you might find in the Italian countryside."

To further perfect his culinary art, Pellegrini returned to Italy. While there, he learned the art of grilling on the "fogolar," a traditional, flavorful way of cooking on a wood-burning grill. He also spent a great deal of time with Bruno Libralon, a renowned Italian Chef. Libralon, leader of the Italian Chef Association, is often referred to as the "King of Fish." Pellegrini enhanced his skills worked with a local sausage connoisseur to perfect the art of sausage-making. During different stages in his travels, Pellegrini has worked with some of the most creative and respected Italian chefs in the world including Gianfranco Vissani, Fulvio Pierangelini, Paola DiMauro and Nadia Santini.

When he returned to California and showcased his new talents, the James Beard Foundation listed him among the Top 10 chefs in Los Angeles. He maintained this position for six consecutive years.

In 1999, Pellegrini was given the chance to use his creativity and lead the kitchen as executive chef and partner when Valentino Las Vegas debuted. His dedication has turned Valentino into one of the leading Italian restaurants in Nevada. Backed by his culinary expertise, Valentino Las Vegas has received numerous awards including the esteemed DiRoNA (Distinguished Restaurants of North America) Award of Excellence, six *Las Vegas Life* Epicurean Awards for Best Italian Restaurant and a 2007 Epicurean Award for Best Wine List. Valentino Las Vegas has also received the Grand Award from *Wine Spectator* annually since 2002 for its extraordinary wine list.

Pellegrini is also a partner at Giorgio Ristorante E Caffè, a more casual restaurant concept located at Mandalay Place on the Las Vegas strip. The menu, partly created by Pellegrini, reflects the chef's versatility in designing a selection of simple yet authentic Italian dishes with wide audience appeal.

In 2003, Pellegrini was the only chef in Las Vegas nominated by the James Beard Foundation. He received the prestigious award for Best Chef in the Southwest for his achievements in setting consistent standards of excellence by the Foundation in 2004. Pellegrini is a frequent guest chef for some of Italy's leading culinary events, including the Bacco d'Oro di Brunello wine dinner in Montalcino, *Gambero Rosso* magazine's dinner gala in Rome and the *Guida L'Espresso* celebration dinner in Palermo.

Numerous food critics have given Pellegrini rave reviews for his culinary talents and for bringing "a taste of Italian countryside" to America. He continues to command respect and admiration from his peers, culinary journalists and faithful guests.

Pellegrini is now testing his skills in front of a camera, filming cooking segments for "Cheflive". You can view some of his early work on www.cheflive.com.