

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Maggie Swendseid
Telemark Communications
845/373-8399, tel.
mswend@bestweb.net

Renovating San Pietro: The Amalfi Coast, Starting in Year One A.D.

New York, NY, July 1, 2004 – San Pietro, a landmark Manhattan restaurant and keeper of the Campania culinary tradition, has just completed an inspired renovation of its interiors.

To complete the luxurious new look, the *fratelli* Bruno, San Pietro's owners, researched and gathered fascinating relics and commissioned scores of beautiful ceramic murals that depict the Amalfi Coast from the year 1 A.D. to the Renaissance. Of the renovation, Gerardo Bruno, president of San Pietro, says: "We wanted to bring the historic Amalfi Coast, the crossroads of so many cultures, back to life. At San Pietro, our approach has always been to preserve the special culinary tradition of southern Italy, so we wanted the décor to reflect more of our historic culture and customs."

From the stunning damask draperies personally selected by Gerardo to the inlaid cherry and mahogany wood to the colorful murals, the new interiors of San Pietro convey a warm and elegant timelessness. Renowned Italian art dealer Ciccarelli was so impressed by the renovation that he chose to link his own eatery – Ristorante 59, in Rome – to San Pietro, referring his Italian customers to his "brother" restaurant in New York. Ciccarelli's business cards now proudly bear San Pietro's logo.

--more--

Italian Masters

The Brunos hired Michelangelo and Raffaello Rubino, artisans *par excellence*, to do all the murals and woodwork for the refurbishing. The Rubinos learned the art of ceramics from their father Sergio, a renowned artisan on the Isle of Capri.

“The design scheme was to create the feeling of sitting on a balcony overlooking the Amalfi Coast,” says Michelangelo. “We wanted to incorporate all the art work that was done through the centuries in southern Italy, including the ornate woodwork, the carvings and scenery, especially of *Le Repubbliche Marinare*, or the ‘Sea Republic.’” Amalfi was the first Sea Republic of Italy, and flourished from the ninth to the 11th centuries. The four Republics – Amalfi, Pisa, Genoa and Venice – were bustling ports, vital to international trade. The cultural interaction of commercial ships coming to and from Asia and Africa had a significant impact on the region’s art and architectural development.

One of the challenges Michelangelo faced was to transform a small, stuffy corner of San Pietro into an inviting haven. He did so by creating three striking murals of ships, which can be construed as the three vessels that Columbus sailed to America, or as merchant boats during the Renaissance. Forming a handsome border above the murals is a series of family crests, all done in terra cotta, from the province of Salerno, in Campania, where the Bruno family originates. The Rubinos always work with Italian terra cotta (“it is more refined than American clay,” says Michelangelo), glaze it, then paint on top of the glaze. All work is completed in their Jeffersonville, New York studio, then transported to their clients’ locales.

The Woodwork

Working closely with Gerardo, the Rubinos also designed and supervised the inlaid wood paneling and floor work. “The key motif at San Pietro is the “keys of St. Peter opening the gates of heaven,” says Michelangelo. The brothers fashioned a huge medallion of San Pietro’s logo in the restaurant’s upper level floor. Mixing Italian styles from the Gothic to the Baroque periods, the Rubinos created much of the wood paneling *a la* Venetian design, with interweaving wood; and crafted recessed paneling closer to the Sorrento style of inlaid wood. They used cherry and mahogany woods exclusively. The Rubinos work with numerous Italian artisans who now live in America, including fellow Capri Islanders Ivan Schettino, who did most of the woodwork for San Pietro; and Mario Pannullo, who installed all the ceramics and tiles.

One of San Pietro’s most subtle but easily missed accents is a corner showcase, a *bacheca*, near the wait staff station at the restaurant. Here, Gerardo and Michelangelo worked together to create a museum of southern Italian history. There is a *gillet*, an Italian vest of the 1700s; ancient Roman lamps; old keys and other objects of antiquity.

Says Michelangelo: “While your mouth wants to enjoy San Pietro’s exquisite flavors, your eye also needs to be entertained. You appreciate the food more when you are surrounded by beautiful things.” This is San Pietro at its best, combining cuisine, art and history.

San Pietro (www.sanpietro.net)

18 East 54th Street (between Madison and Fifth Avenues)
New York, NY 10022
Tel.: 212/753-9015