

# Ristorante Sandolo

Hyatt Regency Scottsdale Resort at Gainey Ranch



Anyone who grew up in an Italian family fondly recalls their mother and grandmother bustling about the kitchen as aromas of braised meat, fresh garlic, basil and oregano simmering in a pot of tomato sauce tempted grownups and kids alike to sneak a taste. Those recipes, handed down from one generation to the next, have been duplicated in Italian neighborhoods from New York to California, and those who cherish their Italian heritage continue this tradition of “cooking from the heart.”

Diners at the popular Ristorante Sandolo count their blessings that executive chef Jim Palmeri spent a lot of time in his mother's kitchen, learning the traditional ways of preparing classic Italian dishes. Calling his cooking style, “Cucina Compania,” Palmeri and his staff prepare dishes the old-fashioned way, by simmering the freshest ingredients for hours to create rich robust flavors.

“Nowadays, people's idea of sauce is marinara with a few fresh herbs thrown in. But using the right ingredients and cooking a sauce over time gives it depth,” Palmeri explains.

A friendly Italian bistro located at Hyatt Regency Scottsdale Resort at Gainey Ranch, Ristorante Sandolo not only offer diners singing waiters in a fun and relaxed setting, the intimate restaurant also serves some of finest Italian cuisine in the Valley.

Newly revised by Palmeri, Sandolo's menu offers choices like Cannelloni Ripioni de Carne with Sugo di Maiale, which features hand-filled egg pasta and traditional Sicilian tomato sauce with braised pork, meatballs and homemade Italian sausage.

On the lighter side, Palmeri includes Seared Chilean Sea Bass with tomatoes, olives, oregano and balsamic as well as Vegetarian Eggplant Parmesan. Palmeri prepares a unique risotto appetizer each day, which might feature seafood one day and wild mushrooms the next. One item that remains the same is Sandolo's popular house salad, a favorite choice of regular diners.

While Ristorante Sandolo remains a romantic favorite year-round, February brings Palmeri's memorable Valentine's Day dinner. This annual dining extravaganza includes the restaurant's classic dessert, Sandolino, a crème brûlée with fresh berries served in a thin cookie shell shaped like a gondola. For a truly romantic evening, guests can top off the dinner with a complimentary gondola ride complete with singing gondoliers.

**Ristorante Sandolo**  
7500 E. Doubletree Ranch Road  
Scottsdale, AZ 85258  
480-483-5550

## chef & answer

Jim Palmeri

**PM: You said that your mother taught you about Italian food. Who taught her?**

JP: My grandmother; her mother-in-law. My grandparents were emigrants from Sicily, so their recipes came from the old country.

**PM: What's the key to traditional Italian food?**

JP: The best ingredients, of course, but also using things like braised pork in the sauce and simmering it for hours to give it depth.

**PM: What ingredient could you not live without?**

JP: The most obvious is salt, but there are a few ingredients that are equally important for authentic Italian food; the freshest garlic, tomatoes, onions, great olive oil and braised meats.

**PM: Why are there so many different shapes and sizes of pastas?**

JP: Pasta is shaped according to the type of sauce it's paired with. For instance, delicate angel hair pasta works with an Alfredo sauce, while rigatoni or mostacelli are sturdier pastas and pair well with a robust Sicilian tomato sauce.

**PM: If you were stranded on an island, what's the**



Jim Palmeri

**one type of pasta you'd want to have with you?**

JP: Fresh pasta sheets because you can make anything with them.

## chef close-up

As a child, Jim Palmeri says he drove his mother crazy in the kitchen. The youngest of six in an Italian home, he used to hang around his mother's feet, pestering her while she cooked.

“I always wanted to help her, so one day she gave me a pan of water, a wooden spoon and salt and pepper shakers. She put the pan on the floor heating grate and told me to cook there,” Palmeri recalls with a smile.

Nowadays, Palmeri's cooking technique is much more sophisticated, but he remembers well the skills he learned in his mother's kitchen.

Trained at the culinary school of Kendall College in Evanston, Ill., today Palmeri is executive chef of the Hyatt Regency Scottsdale Resort at Gainey Ranch. He reminisces fondly about the day he applied to the school.

“I had been working in a grocery store and I really thought being a chef was a pipe

dream, but my girlfriend (now wife) encouraged me to check into culinary school.” When he went in to talk to the chef instructors, Palmeri says they were brutally honest. Being very particular, they didn't believe Palmeri had what it took to become a successful chef, but still, they offered him a spot.

Taking the challenge, Palmeri laid a solid foundation for his future by learning classic French cooking. When he graduated, he began his career with Hyatt Hotels in Coral Gables, Fla. He has worked in diverse locations like Chicago, San Diego, Las Vegas and the Caribbean, including a two-year stint in the Cayman Islands when his kitchen was chosen as one of the top five kitchens in the Caribbean by *Wine Spectator* magazine.

Nine promotions later, Palmeri says that he is still living his dream.

“This job is like stealing because I get such great satisfaction from it.”



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## food

Table Setting by Two Plates Full  
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## Cannelloni with Braised Pork and Sicilian Tomato Sauce

**Jim Palmeri**  
*Ristorante Sandolo*

### PORK

- 2 ounces extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 pounds country-style pork ribs
- 1 cup medium-diced yellow onion
- 8 garlic cloves
- 1 cup basil leaves
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup oregano leaves
- 1 bottle Chianti Classico
- 6 pounds canned roma tomatoes
- 2 cups tomato paste
- 1 quart water
- salt and pepper to taste

Using the extra-virgin olive oil, sauté ribs in a large pot. Brown pork on both sides, then add onion and garlic cloves (slightly browned), and cook until tender. Add tomato paste and cook out for approximately 2 minutes. Deglaze with the wine and reduce the amount of cooking liquid by one half. Wrap basil and oregano leaves in cheesecloth and add them to the pot. Next, add tomatoes and reduce heat to medium simmer. Cook out until pork is completely falling apart.

### PASTA

- thin pasta sheets blanched and cooled, cut into 3 inches in width and 4 inches in length
- 2 ounces freshly grated Parmesan

- 2 ounces ricotta cheese
- 2 buffalo mozzarella balls (per plate)
- 6 basil leaves (per plate)
- 2 ounces olive oil

Remove pork and shred with forks. Season the pork with Parmesan, ricotta and olive oil. Roll in cooked pasta sheets to form tubes and place in an ovenproof dish. Spoon the sauce over pasta tubes and top with thinly sliced buffalo mozzarella. Cook in oven until the sauce is hot and cheese has melted. Garnish with olive oil drizzle and chiffonade basil.

*Serves 6*

## wine pairing

Copertino Riserva—1999

**This little Italian wine is great for any occasion. With a sharp, brick-red color, the wine leads with the soft touch of thyme and soft red cherries. It's the perfect wine for those days when you want to grab a pizza and enjoy an evening at home. Cost is \$13.99.**

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