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Critics Say: The Polo Bar is a “Horror Show”, Hotel Knickerbocker Dining Room is “Insistently Anonymous” & Caffè dei Fiori is “A Gem”

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Not everything on the culinary horizon is so bleak. Now and then a new place tip-toes into town on padded slippers and softly steals the hearts of its neighbors—even when the neighbors live in the epicenter of the Silk Stocking District. That’s what’s happening at Caffè dei Fiori, on Lexington Avenue above 70th, in the block where Sette Mezzo had long ruled the Italian roost. Not anymore.



Lee Radziwill & Isabella Rossellini: Two blooming beauties at the Cafe of the Flowers

In the huffingtonpost.com, critic **John Mariani** wrote, “Caffe dei Fiori is a charming new addition to the Upper East Side, already winning the neighborhood crowd but deserving of a visit from all those who so rarely venture north of 42nd Street.”

And who is that “neighborhood crowd” it is winning over? **Lee Radziwill**, who lives nearby, is a regular. **Isabella Rossellini** and **Sofia Coppola**, who know a thing or two about spaghetti, frequent the place. Hotshot Roman couturier **Giambattista Valli** was there the other night, as was **Richard David Story**, the discerning editor in chief of Departures magazine. But for gosh sakes don’t tell anyone about these **Very Important Pasta-eaters**; the restaurant is still under the radar and they want to keep it that way.

Now about the grub. Mariani writes, “The pastas are where you will find dishes you will not find elsewhere. The carpaccio of salmon with orange and fennel is delicious. Beef carpaccio is equally finessed, with a touch of Dijon mustard, Parmigiano, greens and the nice touch of almonds. First-rate risotti, one done with baby artichoke hearts and prawns, another with black or white truffles.”



The garden at Caffè dei Fiori: Where Sprezzatura is served with the Spaghetti

Forbes.com writes that dei Fiori is a “small, romantic and charming two-floor gem that serves authentic Italian fare. Start with the burrata with prosciutto di Parma or the grilled octopus. Then try the homemade tagliatelle with beef ragout or the Dover sole *meuniere*, which is grilled to perfection. Spoil yourself with the creamy tiramisu.”

Getting hungry? I thought so. Chef **Antonio De Leso** feeds the flower children. Daliso Gulmini, the proprietor, learned his skills in the gastronomic mecca of Bologna. Caffè dei Fiori is a space to savor summer in Sorrento—without ever leaving home.