



Andrew Harnik/Examiner

By Alexandra Greeley
Special to The Washington Examiner

Diehard foodies are clapping with glee: executive chef Fabio Trabocchi — formerly of the now-closed Maestro restaurant at the Ritz-Carlton at Tysons Corner — is back in town. He now runs and cooks for his very own restaurant — Fiola, in Penn Quarter.

Born in the Le Marche region of Italy near Umbria, Trabocchi grew up on a farm, and eating well was part of life. “My dad was a farmer,” he said, “and I was always with dad and with other farmers. And since I was 14, I have been cooking. It was part of the family’s lifestyle.”

Since his family relied on farm-fresh ingredients, Trabocchi learned at an early age the essence of farm-to-table cooking: to rely on prime ingredients, and to respect their quality and flavor. “This is very trendy for chefs and restaurants right now,” he said, “but it’s been that way for hundreds of years in Italy.”

Enrolling in the prestigious Istitute Alberghiero Panzine

If you go

Fiola da Fabio Trabocchi

- » **Where:** 601 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
- » **Info:** 202-628-2888
- » **Hours:** Lunch, Mon.-Fri., 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.; Dinner, Mon.-Thurs., 5:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m., Fri., 5:30 p.m. to 11:30 p.m.; Sat., 5 p.m. to 11:30 p.m.; Closed Sun.

in Senigallia, Italy, Trabocchi apprenticed in several local restaurants. By the age of 16, he had been hired as a pastry chef at the 3-star Michelin Ristorante Gualtiero Marchese; when he turned 18, management of a 1-star restaurant in Moena, Italy hired him as sous chef.

Since those early days, Trabocchi’s culinary life has whirled on at tremendous speed: He moved to England, where he cooked at the celebrated Floriana. There followed cooking stints in the US and

Spain before moving to the Washington to cook at Maestro.

By that time, Trabocchi had developed his own culinary style, based on the foundational cooking of his youth. “It is both traditional and contemporary Italian food,” he said of his recipes. “Some of the dishes are faithful to regular Italian cooking, but others are interpretive. We use the very best ingredients and present them in a simple way using good techniques.”

Now with his very own restaurant, Trabocchi will surely set some pretty high standards. Consider how in the past food critics and the dining public alike have applauded his talents: In 2002, he was named Food & Wine’s Best New Chef; in 2005 the Restaurant Association of Metropolitan Washington’s Chef of the Year; and the James Beard Foundation’s Best Chef – Mid-Atlantic in 2006.

As it turns out, several others also appreciate his talents. “My kids love my cooking,” he said. “They are adventurers, and my wife and I try to expose them to any kind of food. They love pasta, but will eat anything.”

- » 3 hard-boiled eggs
- » 10 oil packed anchovy fillets
- » 1 garlic clove, roughly chopped
- » ¾ cup extra virgin olive oil
- » Canola oil

Season the flesh of each fillet lightly with salt and pepper. Sprinkle salt, pepper, and half of the shallots over the bottom of a baking dish large enough to hold the fillets in a single layer. Arrange the fillets skin side down on top of the shallots. Cut or break the bay leaves into pieces and sprinkle over the fillets. Sprinkle the thyme over the fish, carefully pour the wine over and around the fish. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 2 hours.

Meanwhile, prepare the salsa del papa: in a small bowl, combine the bread, vinegar, and wine and set aside to soak for 10 minutes.

Separate the yolks and whites of the eggs; save the whites for another purpose or discard. Squeeze the soaked bread to remove excess liquid. Place the egg yolks in a blender, along with the anchovies, soaked bread, and garlic. Pulse to blend. With the blender running, slowly drizzle in the olive oil, blending until the sauce is the consistency of mayonnaise. Season to taste with salt and pepper and transfer to a sauceboat or serving bowl.

Prepare a charcoal fire or preheat a gas grill. Or preheat a cast-iron grill pan over high heat. Remove the fillets from the marinade. Pat dry. When the grill is hot, clean the grill grate with a wire brush. Lightly rub the grate or grill pan with vegetable oil, place the fillets on it, and cook, turning once, for 2 to 3 minutes on each side. Serve immediately, with the salsa del papa on the side.

Grilled Orata With Anchovie Sauce

(Orate all ‘Anconetana con Salsa del Papa)

Serves 6

- » 6 orata (dorade), snapper, or tilapia fillets, 6 to 8 ounces each, skin on, any pinbones removed
- » Kosher salt and freshly ground white pepper
- » 1 cup minced shallots
- » 2 bay leaves, preferably fresh
- » ¼ cup finely chopped thyme
- » 1 cup dry white wine, such as Verdicchio or Pinot Grigio

Salsa del Papa

- » 3 thick slices white bread, crusts removed
- » 2 tablespoons white wine vinegar
- » ¼ cup dry white wine such as Verdicchio or Pinot Grigio

Scott Greenberg » The Vine Guy Spanish wine values

What do Italy, Australia, New Zealand, Chile, Argentina and Portugal all have in common? At one time or another, each of these wine-producing countries was considered the little darling of wine values. There’s now a new country in town — Spain. While there is nothing new about Spain producing wine, it is now gaining a reputation on the world wine stage as making very good wines at very reasonable prices.

With over 1,612,014 acres of wine growing throughout 17 designated wine regions, Spain is the third largest wine producing country in the world. In addition, capital investments in modern winemaking equipment and a new breed of young winemakers with contemporary winemaking ideas have revolutionized the industry. This combination has added up to one great bang-for-the-buck for the American consumer. There are some terrific white wines under \$10 and a plethora of delicious red wines for under \$25. Surprisingly, many of the red wines can be enjoyed at both a young or considered for long-term cellaring, thanks to prominent tannin structure.

While I hope to one day make it to Spain to taste the wines in their native environment, I will have to be content for the time being with the invitation to a recent “road show” of over 100 Spanish wines, courtesy of importer/distributor Winebow when passing through town. Below are a few of my favorites that are available in our area. Retail prices are approximate.

» If you’re looking for a sparkling wine, then the **Juvé y Camps Non-vintage Sparkling Brut Rosé** (\$18) from the Cava region should definitely be on your list. Made from Pinot Noir grapes, it offers notes of violet, honey and toasted bread on the nose and flavors of strawberry and cherry fruit feel creamy in the mouth, beautifully balanced by crisp acidity. The bright little bubbles provide a palate-cleansing finish.

» For a summer white wine treat, try the **2009 Protos Verdejo** (\$14) from

the Rueda region. Produced from 100 percent verdejo grapes and fermented in stainless steel vats, the wine features floral scents of honey-suckle, green apple and nectarine. Flavors of apple, orange blossom and tropical fruits are buoyed by delicate mineral notes and nice acidity.

» One does not often hear about wines from the Coast Brava section of Spain, but the **2009 Oliver Conti Turo Negro** (\$15) could change that. Turo Negro is Catalan for the “black hill” that sits at the edge of the estate, located in the Empordà region. A red wine blend made from separately vinified and aged cabernet sauvignon, merlot, granacha, cabernet franc and a touch of carignano, it spends about one year aging in French oak barrels, just enough time to give the juicy black cherry fruit, plums and licorice flavors a chance to mellow and meld with the refreshing acidity. The touch of pepper on the deep finish is just right.

» The **2004 Castillo Labastida Rioja Reserva** (\$19) from Rioja is made exclusively from old-vine tempranillo grapes. It is superbly balanced and refined with notes of ripe red cherry, cocoa and vanilla on the front of the palate and hints of tobacco and smoke on the elegant finish.

» An example of a remarkable value in hand-crafted wine is the **2006 Convento San Francisco Crianza** (\$25) from Ribera Del Duero. The fruit, a blend of 90 percent tempranillo and 10 percent merlot, is sourced from a number of vineyard sites around Ribera del Duero, including 50 percent from pre-phyloxera old vines. The wine is aged in a combination of French and American barrels for 14 months and sports a bouquet of black plums and tobacco. Stylish flavors of blackberry, dark plum and cherry dominate the palate. Lovely notes of licorice and tobacco mingle with soft tannins and bright acidity to provide remarkable balance and structure on the lingering finish.

DRINK THIS

Juvé y Camps Non-vintage Sparkling Brut Rosé (\$18) from the Cava region.

