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Now call them childish grown-ups! Catering and the role of youth



An Italian government minister called them “*bamboccioni*” (‘childish grown-ups’). As is well known, many young people find it hard to get by, but let’s be honest, what’s to blame is not only our Italian family culture. The youth find themselves surrounded by numerous obstacles and an inflexible job market where “who you know” seems to be the norm.

Italy may not be a place of opportunity for young people, but – and I stress *but* – there is a strong trend in the **restaurant/catering business** in which young Italians are assuming positions of responsibility in Italy and abroad, such as **Vincenzo Donatiello**, who in 2013 at the age of 28 began working at Enrico Crippa’s **Piazza Duomo (3 Michelin stars)** in **Alba** as a sommelier, and who is now in charge of the wine cellar and the dining room; or **Maria Rosa Tartaglione**, who, from a small town in Molise worked her way to become Senior Sommelier at **Marea in New York (2 Michelin stars)**. These are a few of the people I’ve had the opportunity to meet at **Progetto Vino Collisioni**, an event now in its tenth year.

Collisioni has given me unforgettable experiences as well as the conviction that in the restaurant business young people can make a difference and chart a course toward their future.

The first confirmation came from “**Locanda del Pilone**” (1 Michelin star), a restaurant in the hills around Alba founded by the **Boroli** family. Here we concluded one of our intense wine tastings during the **Collisioni** 2018 event. A splendid dinner with impeccable food and décor, and with **Achille Boroli**, who proudly announced that the average age of the staff was 30. At the end of the event I asked to meet them all, beginning with the chef, **Federico Gallo** (just over 30), the sous chef **Luca Bendinelli**, the director **Sofia Diretti**, the sommelier **Marco Loddo** (34-35 years old) and the commis, **Enrico Amadio** (just over 20). An incredible team; professional and capable of a Michelin star, if not more. But success doesn't come out of nowhere, especially in this field. While chatting with Federico Gallo, he tells me how he got here: four years at Iside De Cesare's **La Parolina**, two years at Antonino Cannavacciuolo's **Villa Crespi**, and then abroad: in Mexico, at the 11th ranked restaurant in the world. This all seems simple, but imagine Federico's courage at the age of twenty when he packed his bags and left, not to manage a kitchen, but maybe just to wash dishes and learn by watching others. For Federico, and for the Boroli family, opportunity knocked when the previous chef left without warning. A critical time that gave birth to a star, because Federico – who at the time was sous chef – was chosen as chef, and who in his first year secured a Michelin star, which he has maintained ever since.

Collisioni is a time to greet others and “compare notes”. Again this year in Barolo, producers came from all over Italy, even from **Apulia** (as usual, my region, Lazio, was not represented . . . but I never lose hope). The dinner organized in the courtyard of the castle organized by the **Movimento Turismo del Vino Puglia** enabled me to meet another young and successful chef, **Alessio Di Micco**, who at 30 is the soul of the kitchen of “**Corteinfiore**” in **Trani**. The tastes are those of Apulia, with elegance and quality. The smile is that of a young man with the desire to excel after having travelled for years in the restaurant business.

To some of you these reflections may seem banal for a blog like mine, which rarely mentions gastronomy. But it seemed to me a just decision to dedicate time and space to positive examples for young people who are often captivated by talent shows dedicated to cooking. They must always remember that the road to success is achieved through hard work and the desire to want to learn, as the above examples prove.

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