



*hand-crafted Neapolitan cuisine*

#### **CHEF MICHAEL BOLOGNA - BIO**

Chef Michael Bologna's mother and father hailed from the region of Basilicata in southern Italy—ironically, they came from villages only a single hill away but never met until they had arrived in New York.

They hail from a region where residents are known for their lust for life as well as their resourcefulness. Their reliance on scratch preparation and locally sourced ingredients was passed down to Bologna and still influences the menu at Vingenzo's today.

Bologna's father owned a grocery and butcher in Westchester County, NY, and put his son to work not only to help keep the business afloat but also to teach his son about quality ingredients—the basis of Italian cuisine. Meanwhile, his mother trained young Michael in her kitchen, where his love for fresh food developed into the inklings of a career. The elaborate Sunday feasts he helped to prepare were the first of countless memorable meals.

The chef went to college, but his heart was still in passionately for all things food. He went back to work for his father for a while where that love of cooking drew him back into the culinary world. Bologna applied to the Culinary Institute of America (in Hyde Park, NY, just a short drive from his Westchester home) and was accepted. After graduating from CIA and teaching there for a year on fellowship, he returned as manager of purchasing operations, creating and implementing food specifications for the Institute. He went on to open Nightingale's Country Bistro in New York, a restaurant repeatedly rated with four- and five-star rankings and honored as one of the nation's top 25 restaurants.

After moving to the South in the early 90s while working with a company doing new restaurant concept development, Bologna was hired as the foodservice manager for the Olympic Village in Atlanta. There he was responsible for the specialized, high-calorie diets of more than 10,000 top athletes from all over the world—you could say the Atlanta Games were fueled by the chef's hard work.

Not long after serving the world's top athletes in '96, Bologna served up a new course to help train a legion of new Atlanta chefs to bear the standard of classical training and obsessive care over ingredients. The Center for Culinary Education at Chattahoochee Technical College in Marietta, GA, just outside of Atlanta, has been Bologna's baby from the ground up. "The passing of the toque is to carry on all that has been created in the past and will be created in the future so our industry never dies. It's not just what I have done but what chefs have done before me and what will surely be created in the future that makes me so glad to be teaching and a part of the legacy of chefs.

The program Bologna coordinates is a comprehensive education for beginning chefs interested in truly making a career in the hospitality industry. That means not just learning the skills necessary to master the classics and express creativity in the kitchen, but also how to run a restaurant as a business.



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That's how Bologna decided to open Vingenzo's. He decided to look into opening a restaurant and had watched the Woodstock area's growth with interest. When he felt the time was right, he took over the space where a local coffeehouse had once been, and Vingenzo's was born. Bologna still teaches his classes in the mornings while running the Vingenzo's kitchen at night. He is a member of a number of national and international culinary and slow food movement organizations, as well as a recipient of culinary and public service awards.

While watching Woodstock and wondering the future of the charming small historic downtown area Chef Bologna was taking yearly trips to Italy. During this time he began to wonder how he could create a dining experience authentically based on the true cuisine of Italy. The conception of Vingenzo's made this Chef into a culinary pioneer of sorts, as a re-education was in play for his customers to experience the reality of pure, fresh house-made ingredients set the standard for this critically acclaimed destination restaurant in the past 2 1/2 years. This exposure has developed into a faithful following that is now known all the way in Italy where his customers include Italians that literally drive up as soon as their flights arrive to dine upon their return visits to Atlanta.

In addition to teaching and his restaurant, Chef Bologna is also a consultant for the industry in all arenas. His expertise includes a focus on specialized culinary artisan execution such as: charcuterie, pasta & cheese making and production, meat butchery, incorporation of local farms into development and planning.

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