

Condé Nast

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FOR TWO
IN SPAIN

NOVEMBER 2009 £3.80

TRUTH IN TRAVEL

TRAVEL



IL POSTO ACCANTO

It's Saturday lunchtime and I'm at the bar of Il Posto Accanto, eating grilled octopus and gossiping with Beatrice Tosti di Valminuta (Bea to all her many regulars). There follows a great frittata and grilled spicy sausages, and the best spaghetti Bolognese in the city.

This is a tiny, rustic wine bar which seats about 30, and serves as a neighbourhood hangout, but also draws off-duty chefs and city politicians. 'I'm a cook, not a chef,' says Bea, who is the owner of Il Posto Accanto and Il Bagatto, the (slightly) more formal restaurant next door. You come here for the food – for the mussels and white beans, the ravioli or the lasagna – and you come for Bea, who is a force of nature, a glamorous Roman who runs her business to feed her friends. (She invented a special recipe for my fictional detective, Artie Cohen; see www.artiecohenmysteries.com for spaghetti à la Artie.)

Bea is obsessed with fresh ingredients and goes to the market in her bright-yellow Cadillac convertible, which is parked outside the restaurant. 'To find one great tomato, you must go through eight, nine, 10 boxes,' she says. 'For a good meal, everything must be perfect.' Beatrice's husband Julio Pena (who drives a pumpkin-coloured 1971 Datsun) looks after the excellent and inexpensive wine list, and her brother Gabrio runs a wine shop around the corner. Il Posto Accanto is in the tradition of New York's great family restaurants, a place to relax, eat well and catch up with other regulars.

About \$110 for two without wine

196 East 2nd Street (00 1 212 228 3562;

www.ilbagattonyc.com)

Left, porterhouse steak served with fries and creamed spinach at Peter Luger in Brooklyn. Above, Julio Pena and Beatrice Tosti di Valminuta outside their restaurant, Il Posto Accanto. Opposite, clockwise from top left: sushi rolls and Sapporo beer at Blue Ribbon Sushi, chef Haru, a whole-fish dish and the sushi bar