



• GRAFFIATO •

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## **CHEF MIKE ISABELLA OPENS ITALIAN-INSPIRED RESTAURANT, GRAFFIATO, IN WASHINGTON, D.C.**

*Top Chef All-Stars* Runner-Up Opens His First Restaurant on June 23

**WASHINGTON, DC** – *Top Chef All-Stars* Runner-Up Mike Isabella will open his first restaurant, Graffiato, in the Chinatown neighborhood of Washington, D.C., on June 23. The no-frills two-story eatery, composed of bricks, cinder blocks, wooden booths and teak composite countertops, is a raw space reminiscent of the Italian bistros Chef Isabella grew up frequenting in New Jersey, yet the menu is anything but traditional Italian fare. Artisanal pizzas, house-made seasonal vegetable dishes, locally procured meats and cheeses and Italian-inspired small plates comprise the menu, which is sourced almost entirely from the East Coast.

“Every Sunday, my grandmother used to make an Italian feast, eight to 10 dishes shared among a dozen or more family and neighbors — more than enough for everyone to taste each dish. With Graffiato, I wanted to recreate that experience by offering a large menu of small plates, personal pizzas, cured hams and local cheeses,” said Mike Isabella, Chef/Owner of Graffiato. “The format is patterned after those family meals, the flavors are Italian-inspired and the atmosphere is neighborhood casual. Grab a pizza and a beer late-night after watching a game, or order the Chef’s Tasting and allow me to entertain your palate for the evening.”

Chicken thighs with pepperoni sauce, king crab legs with sea urchin and guanciale and bone marrow with cured lemon are a few of the dishes you will find coming out of Graffiato’s wood oven. Warm, fresh-stretched mozzarella, locally cured hams and spiced red beets with pork fried almonds are sure to be popular first courses. Hand-cut pasta and toppings for artisanal wood-oven pizzas may vary by season, but one thing you will not find on Graffiato’s menu are zeppoles. Chef Isabella will prepare 15 to 20 orders of the sweet fluffy dough balls each evening, and guests who know to ask about the zeppoles will be rewarded with warm treats dusted with strawberry powered sugar and served with balsamic chocolate dipping sauce.

In addition to sourcing from local farmers, Graffiato offers a large local selection of wine, beer and spirits. Beers from DC Brau Brewing, Flying Dog Brewing and Port City Brewing represent The District, Maryland and Virginia. The mostly domestic wine list features selections from California, Idaho, Maryland, New York, Oregon, Virginia and Washington. Graffiato Red 1.0 is a Nebbiolo bottled by Breaux Vineyards in Purcellville, Va., exclusively for Graffiato. While the Montelvisi Prosecco is made in Italy, it is also the only sparkling wine you can find on tap in Washington, D.C. The entire wine list, with more than 50 selections, is available by the glass and the bottle.

### **The Space**

Graffiato is a two-story 5,000-square-foot space with industrial finishings. The steel-covered wood oven is the centerpiece of the first floor, surrounded by a cinder-block bar and chairs for a dozen guests to dine while interacting with Chef Isabella and his pizzaiolos. Concrete floors, original exposed brick and barn lights bring an outdoor feel inside. Wooden tables, handcrafted by Chef Isabella and his father-in-law, complement the wooden booths and the simplicity of the design.

The second floor seats about 100, including a ham bar with a table-height wooden counter for seven guests. Cured meats and fresh-stretched mozzarella are prepared at this station. Unlike a traditional charcuterie bar, the hooks hanging above the counter display various meat cleavers instead of hams.

For photos and events information, visit the Graffiato news page at [www.GraffiatoDC.com](http://www.GraffiatoDC.com) and follow Graffiato on Facebook and Twitter (@Graffiato).