



That's amore: CiboDivino is a tribute to all things Italy

By [Emma Ruby](#) | January 30th, 2024



Italian food is the most famous, and most misunderstood, in the world. According to Daniele Puleo, a native Sicilian with a penchant for tradition, that is.

Daniele and his wife, Christina, live in Kessler Park and own and operate [CiboDivino Marketplace](#), a spot where the menu quality overshoots the restaurant's laid-back, family-oriented atmosphere. As a founding restaurant at West Dallas' Sylvan 30, the "workaholic" couple has brought Italian fare to our neighborhood for nearly 10 years.

"Everybody thinks they know Italian cuisine, but there's so much more. It's not only about (the same) 10 recipes," Daniele says. "I am doing this because I want anyone to get to know what real Italian cuisine is."

Daniele has lived in the United States for longer than he lived in Italy. He immigrated at 22-years-old and bounced around Scottsdale and Los Angeles before landing in Dallas where he started restaurants [Daniele Osteria](#) and [Brix Pizza & Wine](#), both Sicilian-inspired and well-respected in the dining scene.

10 years ago, he sold both stores to open CiboDivino. Cibo was his chance to teach.

In a marketplace area, customers will find the Italian pasta brand [Alberto Longo Pasta](#), which they likely have never heard of, seeing as CiboDivino is the only store in the country to sell it. Alberto is a good friend of Daniele and Christina, and they sell his wine as well. For customers who need sauce to go along with their pasta, CiboDivino sells their signature recipe by the jar, made and packaged by Daniele himself.

At the bar, bottles of wine are sold at market price rather than a restaurant markup to encourage accessibility. Daniele knows many of the winemakers personally, and loves to talk about each bottle with customers.

"I always try to bring in something special, because I want to raise the question from the customer, 'I have never seen this.' It gives me a chance to talk," he says.

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Many of the CiboDivino recipes are ones that have been passed down through Daniele's family. They are beyond personal to him, and Christina says trips to Italy wouldn't be complete without bickering over who knows a recipe better.

"He and his mother talk on the phone daily, and they almost exclusively talk about food," Christina says. While Christina is a Texas native with a background in business banking, she naturally transitioned to the "behind the scenes" aspect of the restaurant when Cibo opened, happy to let Daniele be the "rockstar" in the kitchen.

The menu semi-rotates seasonally but is always packed with familiar favorites — Margherita pizza made in an Italian-imported oven, rigatoni with bolognese sauce, caprese paninis — but more experimental dishes are options too, such as the Di Fica pizza topped with gorgonzola cheese, dried figs and hot honey.

If Daniele is out of town, Christina is the person he trusts to source ingredients that meet his high standard of freshness.

"I'm standing (in a market) with all of these chefs and cooks and restaurant people, and I'm holding up everything like, 'I need you to take out every single branzino and let me look it in the eye, because if it's cloudy, (Daniele's) gonna say it's no good,'" she says.

But sourcing fresh ingredients is one of Daniele's biggest rules in the kitchen. "Buy one (ingredient) that is good," he says, and the dish will come together.

He insists that adding or subtracting any ingredient from a recipe changes the dish completely.

"I'm not trying to reinvent the wheel. I believe if you change the ingredients you need to change the name (of the dish)," Daniele says. "If you call carbonara carbonara, then you have to follow the recipe. You can't just put fish in it or chicken in it, then it's not carbonara anymore."

After 10 years at CiboDivino and 20 in Dallas, Daniele still hasn't tired of the kitchen. When he finishes running the kitchen, he goes home and cooks for himself and Christina.

"I told him I was going to start cooking more this year and he was like 'Why?'" Christina says. "And I was like, 'You're right.'"

Each year, Daniele returns to his home country to visit family and source ingredients. He and Christina also lead group trips to Italy to further educate people about the region's cooking and wine.

But when he is in the United States, his cooking is what maintains his connection to Italy and brings him comfort. In his experience, Italians become "even more Italian" once they have left the country.

"Once we live outside of Italy, we care about Italy more," he says. "It's also a sense of comfort, you know, it's a sense of knowing that what I come from, I will never forget."

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