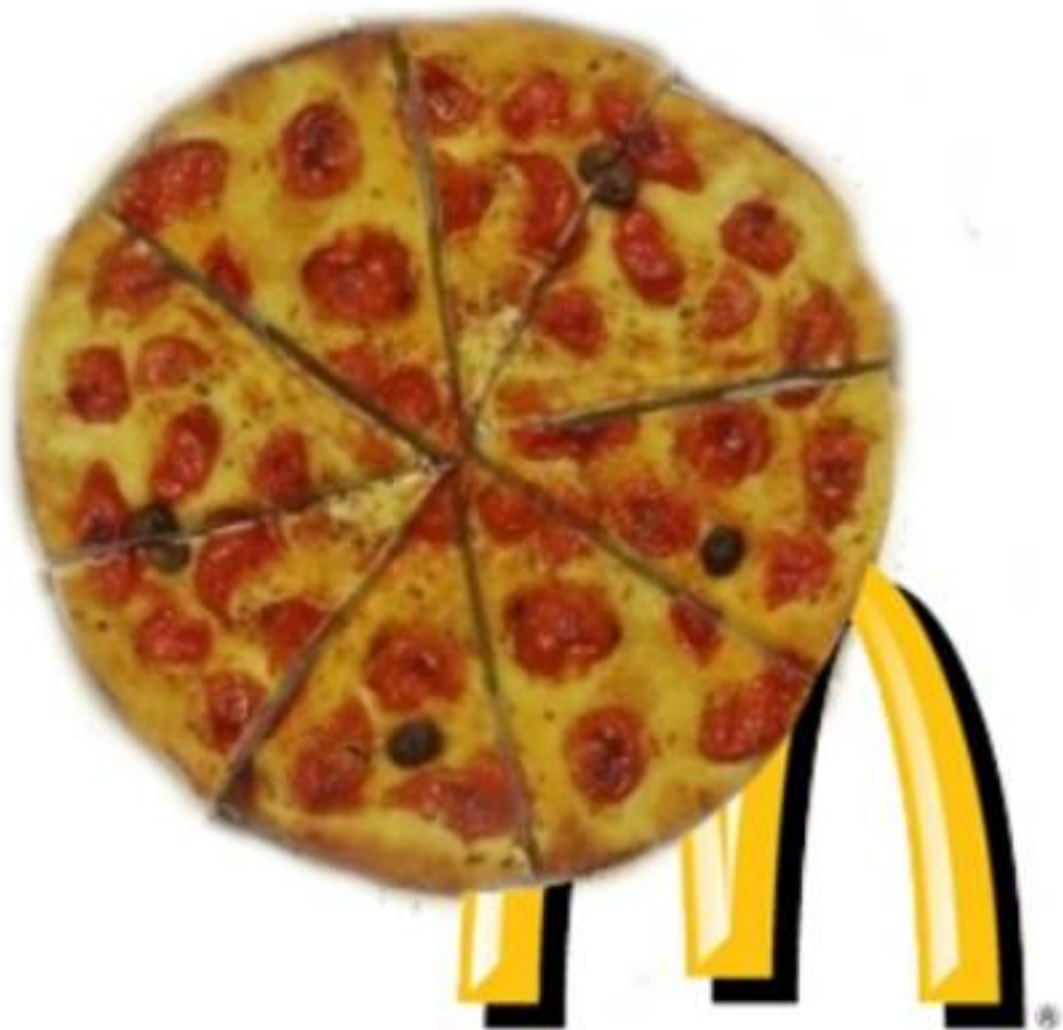




Focaccia Blues. When David defeats Goliath

Marina Melchionda (June 05, 2009)



Set in a little village in the Apulia Region, Altamura, “Focaccia Blues” tells the story of a bakery that puts a recently opened Mc Donald’s out of business. The American preview will be held at the Italian Cultural Institute on June 5, 6 pm



We know a place in this world where David can beat Goliath. This place is Altamura, in the province of Bari, Puglia. This modern day legend is told in “Focaccia Blues”, the protagonists being the King of Hamburgers, Mc Donald’s, and a very small focaccia shop, owned by baker Luca Digesù.

Focaccia Blues is the story of a small bakery owned by Luca Digesù and his brother Giuseppe that in 2002 put a recently opened 550-seat Mc Donald’s out of business. The movie features a cast of well-know Italian movie stars (and politicians!), including Renzo Arbore, Lino Banfi, Michele Placido, Nichi Vendola, Onofrio Pepe. They agreed to participate in “a project that celebrates the triumph of local traditions over fast-food philosophy”.

Producer Alessandro Contessa and director Nino Cirasola presented the movie in Rome in April 2009, and by the end of the same month the 117 minute production was screened in hundreds of cinemas throughout Italy, becoming a great success with the public. The movie has also been awarded the “[Nastri D’Argento](#) [2]” (Silver Ribbons) prize, one of Italy’s most prestigious recognitions in the cinema field.

On June 5 the Italian Cultural Institute of New York will host the American preview of the movie, a “movie of resistance” as it was first defined by producer Contessa.

Baker Luca Digesù started his business Antica Casa Digesù right after the new Mc Donald’s opened in the centre of the town. He claimed it was not his intention to challenge the fast-food chain, but just to “offer an alternative” to the local population.

But Mc Donald’s is always Mc Donald’s. At the beginning people of all ages seemed to be crazy for its French fries and chicken nuggets. But slowly things started to change and locals showed preference for their own version of “fast food”, based on thick pieces of focaccia with many different toppings.

It was the colossal eatery that actually started the “war” against the small bakery, offering all kinds of promotions to regain popularity in town. So kids from school were authorized to visit the kitchen, the restaurant was offered for free for children's birthday parties and TV screens were set-up to watch soccer matches. But the strategy did not work at all.

Already in 2002 the story of the focacceria attracted the attention of the media when the leftist French newspaper [Libération](#) [3] recounted what happened in Altamura, in southern Italy, describing the closing of Mc Donalds with these words: “The long red mat was taken away secretly during the night and the “enormous M” over Piazza Zanardelli was also packed up surreptitiously. The windows were covered like a shroud on the victim of a culinary battlefield.”

The huge space is now divided into two businesses: a jeans store and a bank

Altamura, defined as the “City of Bread”, is proud of this small but important victory over the “Bic Mac”. The small town is in fact well-known nationwide for its D.O.C. Bread, a recipe based on a mixture of flour, water, yeast, olive oil, and salt. The bread is protected as unique in European Union regulations, but already in ancient times it was defined as a unique delicacy. Horace, in 37 B.C., described it as “far the best bread to be had, a treat to bring in long and adventurous journeys”.

“Focaccia Blues” is a homage to all of this and much more. It is a funny, family movie that teaches that sometimes traditionalism is “the way to go”, and that simplicity and quality can still win.



[Slow Food](#) [4], a non-profit, eco-gastronomic member-supported organization to counteract fast food and fast life, the disappearance of local food traditions and people's dwindling interest in the food they eat, also showed great appreciation for the movie. Sponsored also by the region of Puglia and the [Apulia Film Commission](#) [5], Focaccia Blues was presented at the 2009 edition of [Slow Food on Film](#) [6], where those attending had a five-sense-experience: after the screening, they could taste and touch the soft and unique goodness of focaccia di Altamura.

Focaccia Blues

June 5, 2009 (6 pm)

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A percentage of the earnings of "Focaccia Blues" will be donated to 'Orphans Dream Foundation', a no-profit organization.

The movie also features a short cartoon by Luigi Porzia, "It's your time", awarded at the Giffoni Film Festival 2008

Related Links: <http://www.focacciablues.it/> [7]

<http://www.anticacasadigesu.it/> [8]

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[2] <http://www.cinegiornalisti.org/>

[3] <http://www.liberation.fr>

[4] <http://www.slowfood.it/>

[5] <http://www.apuliafilmcommission.it>

[6] <http://www.slowfoodonfilm.it/>

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