

North Italian Fare in Williamsburg

Patricia Orioles (March 14, 2013)



An industrial-chic spot that features a mostly Northern Italian menu, the finest ingredients available and a typically Italian staff...

For a total Italian experience, [Osteria Il Paiolo](#) [2] is worth the trip on the L train to Williamsburg. This industrial-chic spot features a mostly Northern Italian menu prepared with the finest ingredients available and a staff of Italian guys who just can't help it... they flirt, no matter what. Owner Alex Palumbo is a professional host, having managed [Da Silvano](#) [3] in the Village, a favorite restaurant of celebrities and socialites. With his laid back and playful personality, he's succeeded in creating a warm, fun-loving atmosphere that's typical of a welcoming Italian [osteria](#) [4]. Osterias in Italy were originally places serving wine and simple food. Over the years, the concept evolved and the emphasis shifted to food, with a focus on local specialties such as pasta and grilled meat or fish.

"Paiolo" means a copper pot, which is traditionally used to prepare [polenta](#) [5], a northern Italian staple. The dinner menu has an entire section dedicated to the delicious cornmeal dish: polenta e



osei (tomatoes and quail), polenta concia (fontina cheese), polenta e luganighe (sausage), and polenta con gamberi e rosmarino (shrimp and rosemary).

Polenta is the real star at Paiolo even at brunch; when you order an American classic such eggs benedict, a small mound of polenta makes the dish even more delicious...and more Italian. Palumbo, who is originally from [Verbania](#) [6] on [Lake Maggiore](#) [7] in [Piedmont](#) [8], grew up on polenta. His mom even made it for breakfast, with milk and sugar. Now he's bringing authentic recipes from Italy to be served at Paiolo, as the polenta he found here had no substantial flavor.

Paiolo's cornmeal comes from a small producer who uses only the best ingredients available. And the secret to making good polenta at home? Always cook it in a paiolo – the copper keeps the polenta moist and makes it taste better.

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