

From Gioia Tauro to Hell's Kitchen: Authenticity and Invention

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Born to a family of restaurateurs, young chef Antonio Mermolia brings a new twist to southern Italian cooking and becomes a hit in the theater district.

Step off the beaten path the next time you are in the theater district and go to [Hell's Kitchen](#) [2] heavenly Ristorante il Punto. This Ninth Avenue locale may just become your new favorite Italian restaurant. Walking in you will find yourself surrounded by stucco walls and elegantly set tables. It almost feels as you have walked onto a movie set, but this is just the beginning. An extraordinary culinary experience awaits you. Open the menu and prepare your taste buds for a southern Italian journey with an inventive twist, and the talented and passionate young chef, [Antonio Mermolia](#) [3], as your guide.

Hailing from Gioia Tauro, located in Calabria, he owes his interest in the culinary arts to his family's restaurant located within Hotel Villa Calliope, a four star establishment. His traditional southern Italian cooking knows the importance of utilizing simple, quality products. Following his desire for



improvement he went on to perfect his craft under [Chef Pietro D'Agostino](#) [4] at La Capinera in Taormina, Sicily. That's where he truly came to understand the importance of respecting the product and how to enhance natural ingredients without compromising.

What distinguishes Antonio's cuisine from the many Italian restaurants in the city is his imaginative and youthful spin on old-fashioned Italian cooking, which in no way compromises the authenticity of the dishes he creates. His inventive methods result in beautifully plated dishes, which can easily be considered pieces of art. The raw sea bass marinated in oil, lemon and pepper and served with finely shaved parmesan cheese, shallots and lemon mousse is a true winner and a must try even for those who are not fans of crudo dishes. Another surprise comes in the form of a romaine lettuce salad, with warm shrimp and blackberries topped with a scoop of onion gelato, which becomes the dressing as it slowly melts and ties in all the ingredients, creating a playful sensation on the pallet. Antonio does not forget his roots and offers his clients a dish that is very typical if not exclusive to his area of origin, Stroncapaccheri di Gioitana. It's an old pasta from the Plains of Gioia Tauro, made only of flour and water, a very hearty dish. It is served with cream of anchovy, tomato confit, dehydrated olives and toasted bread.

Young chef Antonio is a huge fan of desserts, so don't forget your sweet tooth. Try the 100% carrot dessert, a carrot cake served with a reduction of carrot cake sorbet and a shot of heavenly liquefied carrot, which, in Antonio's hands, becomes miracle juice.

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[2] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hell's_Kitchen,_Manhattan

[3] <http://www.gazzettadelsud.it/news/57636/Antonio-Mermolia--lo-chef-di.html>

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