




Kada se radi o ribarima, ribljoj kuhinji i ribljim restoranima, iako olinjala i zagađena, Venecija, kao vjekovni riblji eldorado, i dalje sebe drži neslužbenom europskom ribljom prijestolnicom.

/When talking about fisherman, fish cuisine, fish restaurants, although it became shabby and polluted, Venice, just like ancient El Dorado, still refers to itself as to unofficial European fish capital.

venecijanski riblji eldorado /venetian fish el dorado

— Piše/By VELIMIR CINDRIĆ Fotografije/Photos VELIMIR CINDRIĆ —



Akako je mediteranski bazen, globalno gledano, malen i napučen manje-više istom ribom, načini njena spremanja drastično se razlikuju. Prosječni domaći riblji jelac, izvan svoga dvorišta, priznat će, možda, jedino ono što s ribom rade naši prekojadranski susjedi, vjerojatno poradi stoljetnog utjecaja talijanske kuhinje na našu primorsku i dalmatinsku. S obzirom na zavidan status ove kuhinje u svijetu, s njima će se složiti i milijuni drugih.

Dobar dio talijanskoga teritorija čini obala, pa nije čudo, uzevši u obzir i temperament, da će, što se ribe tiče, u Italiji mnoge regije svojatati primat. No, promatrač sa strane, prihvatit će zaključak provjerenih znalaca da, kad se radi o ribarima, ribljoj kuhinji i ribljim restoranima, posebnu riječ vodi talijanska turistička primadona - Venecija.

Iako je kraj drugog tisućljeća, svojevršnim turističkim zagađenjem, pomalo zatamnio sliku Venecije kao ekstravagantne pozornice na kojoj se stoljećima trgovalo, bogatilo, ubijalo, ljubilo, jelo, pilo, spletkarilo i, uopće, uživalo u svim ljudskim uzvišenim i prizemnim strastima, Venecija ipak nije izgubila bit svoje draži. Venecijanski Canal Grande, žila kucavica ovoga grada, koju je Goethe nazvao "najljepšom ulicom svijeta", a koja danas za ljetnih vrućina ispušta *profume brutte* i na čijim se *vaporettima* guraju jednodnevni, od autobusa izgužvani, rumunjski turisti, još uvijek proćeljima svojih palača podsjeća da se radi o "najšarmantnijemu gradu na svijetu", "gradu ljubavnika" i *grandezze*, a riblje tržnice i restorani - o neslužbenoj europskoj ribljoj prijestolnici.

- Venecija je oduvijek imala vrhunsku ribu - nimalo lokalpatriotski tvrdi Arrigo Cipriani, vlasnik najprestižnijeg i u svijetu najpoznatijeg venecijanskog restorana, legendarnog Harry's Bara, smještenog u neposrednoj blizini Trga Sv. Marka, u uličici na kraju koje se, na Canalu Grande, uz molić zibaju čamci.

Restorani uz trg Svetog Marka

Njegov smještaj, makar simbolički zbog današnje zagađenosti lagune, na samom izvoru morskih delicija, iako se ne radi o isključivo ribljem restoranu, garancija je istinitosti riječi njegova vlasnika:

- Kasnih 40-ih venecijanska laguna bila je tako prepuna ribe, da smo imali jednoga gosta koji je imao običaj, pijuckajući Americano za aperitiv, zamoliti moga oca da na štednjak stavi lonac s vodom, nakon čega bi on otišao do svoga motornog čamca privezanog uz molić, provezao se nekoliko puta preko kanala ispred Harry's Bara, vukući iza sebe parangal. Nakon nekoliko minuta vratio bi se sa dva-tri brancina koje bi mu kuhar pripremio za večeru.

Bila ova priča vjerodostojna ili tek malo romansirana, činjenica je da je u to doba, potvrđuju nam stariji Venecijanci, ne samo kvantiteta, već i raznovrsnost lagunske ribe bila impresivna. Riba se uglavnom hranila dagnjama, kojima je, tada još nezagađena industrijskim otpadom iz obližnje Marghere, voda obilovala.

Dakako, Venecija i danas ima vrhunsku ribu, iako sva i ne potječe iz njene lagune. Većina ribe i rakova izloženih na tezgama venecijanske ribarnice, kao i onih u ostalim mjestima lagune, još su živi u trenutku kada ih kupujete. Domaćini, naime, tvrde da riba mora biti apsolutno svježja da bi zavrijedila doći u tanjur.

Tradicionalni izvor svježe ribe Venecije svakako je ribarsko mjesto Chioggia, smješteno na južnom kraju venecijanske lagune. Centar zbivanja ove ribarske luke, predstavlja živopisna riblja tržnica okružena ribarskim čamcima obojenim žarkim bojama. Jutarnja gužva i karakteristični mirisi, neminovno će vas oko podneva uputiti u neki od brojnih mjesnih ribljih restorana pristupačnih cijena, gdje ćete za neusporedivo manji novac nego li u Veneciji, moći probati mnoge lokalne pučke specijalitete, posebno one od jegulja, rakova i sipa. Najpoznatiji od njih je "El Gatto", restoran iznimno ugodna interijera, čiji je specialitet sipa na chioggianski.

No, vratimo se u Veneciju. Kao i svaka turistička meka, i Venecija nudi mnogobrojne načine utaživanja gladi armije svojih posjetitelja. I ovdje, u brojnim turističkim klopnama, možete jesti najgori objed života, a usprkos reputaciji ribljeg eldorada, i usmrđenu ribu. Jedino što je sigurno jest da ćete sve masno platiti. No, srećom, za upućenijega namjernika, u Veneciji možete jesti i vrhunsku ribu i morske plodove za malo novca, kao i riblju večeru svog života, doduše, s nešto dubljim posezanjem u džep.

Najveća koncentracija ribljih restorana u Veneciji nalazi se neposredno iza Trga Svetog Marka, koji uz ulaze, na ledu, izlažu impresivnu dnevnu ponudu morskoga blaga. O svježini ribe svjedoče ribarske kočice privezane uz, par desetaka metara udaljenju, Rivu degli Schiavoni. Ovdje ćete svuda jesti pristojno, ponegdje i vrhunski, ali morate znati da ćete turistički najdostupniju lokaciju, itekako dobro platiti.

Onim opreznijima, koji žele kvalitetu koja odgovara novcu, bit će pametnije

blagovati u malenom restoranu “Al Conte Pescaor”, otmjenoj, poput broda dekoriranoj “La Caravelli”, nekadašnjoj sakristiji “Al Graspò de Ua”, i u već spomenutom “Harry’s Baru” (svi kvart San Marco).

Škampi s Kvarnera

Oni koji vole istraživati dalje od centra, riblju gozbu pronaći će u kvartu San Polo, u jedinom gradskom restoranu s Michelinovom zvjezdicom, “Osteria da Fiore”, zatim u najstarijem restoranu u Veneciji “Antica Trattoria Poste Vecie”, te živopisnoj “Trattoriji alla Madonna”. U kvartu Castello, to će isto naći u “Corte Sconta” te, posebno, u jednom od najboljih ribljih restorana u Veneciji “Hostaria da Franz”, dok će se u kvartu Dorsoduro, moći sladiti u, naročito ljeti, lijepom “Agli Alboretti” te “Linei d’Ombra”, koja služi rijetke venecijanske riblje specijalitete, dok će vas na Cannaregiu

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dočekati otmjena “A La Vecchia Cavana” sa svojim jednostavnim ribljim jelima.

Dakako, neće pogriješiti ni oni koji se upute na neki od otoka lagune, gdje su također smješteni brojni “skriveni” dragulji trpeze, o kojima ćete najpouzdanije čuti od samih domaćina.

Bilo da nakon pomnog odabira krenemo u neki od brojnih ribljih restorana ili, nekom ludom srećom, sjednemo za trpezu u domu Venecijanaca, pravi gurmanski riblji objed u Veneciji može uključivati, primjerice, *bottargu* - lagano prženu ikru tune začinjenu maslinovim uljem i limunovim sokom, *risotto di pesce* (venecijanski dijalekt za ribu, *pesce*), *granzevolu alla veneziana*, u kome ljuštura raka služi kao posuda u kojoj se jelo poslužuje, a potom, slično nama - bijelu ribu ili škampe na žaru, ponos Venecijanaca (preferiraju primjerke ulovljene na Kvarneru), ali i neku od delacija pučke kuhinje, kao primjerice, jegulje.

No, svega ovoga ne bi bilo da nije vrijednih ribarskih ruku (dakako, i onih hrvatskih) čiji trud širokim potezima oslikava ranojutarnje bogatstvo venecijanske riblje tržnice uz most Rialto koje tako strastveno opisuje legendarna britanska gastronomska spisateljica, Elizabeth David:

“U Veneciji i obični list ili raža prelijevaju se predivnim ljubičastim tonovima, srdela sjaji poput hrpe srebrnjaka, a ružičasti su škampi debeli i svježi, beskrajno zamamni na blijedom svjetlu zore”.



Although, a Mediterranean is, observed globally, small and over inhabited with more or less the same fish species, however the ways of its preparation for consumption are dramatically different. Outside own kitchen, an average domestic fish consumer, will acknowledge, maybe only the preparation skills practiced by our Adriatic neighbours. Most likely rooted in their centuries long influence on Dalmatia and Primorje. Thanks to its envious position in the World, many others will endorse to the same opinion.

A large portion of Italy is directly exposed to the sea. Therefore it is no surprise, taking in consideration Italian temperament that many regions in Italy are competing for popularity in fish preparation. In spite of that an observer will agree that when it comes to fisherman, fish cuisine and fish restaurants, a special attention is given to the Italian tourist prima donna - Venice.

Although the end of second millennium somewhat darkened the overall picture of Venice as an extravagant stage, with so called tourist pollution, a stage where for centuries people were practicing trade and intrigue, becoming wealthy, killing, loving, eating, drinking, and generally indulging in both low and exalted passions, still Venice didn't loose its charm.

Restaurants next to St. Mark's Square

The Venetian Canal Grande - the vein of the city whom Goethe called “the most beautiful street in the World”, today during hot summer days it is hard to escape parfume brutte, yet when walking by its house fronts it still reminds us of that “most charming city”, “the city of lovers” and grandezze while fish markets and restaurants suggest that we are in the unofficial European fish capital.

Venice has always had first class fish - states, without local patriotism, Arrigo Cipriani, the owner of most prestigious and most famous Venetian restaurant in the World, located in the immediate vicinity of the St. Mark's

Square, in a street where, at its very end, number of small boats are swaying along the pier, legendary Harry's Bar.

Although it is not exclusively a fish restaurant its location, due to the current pollution of lagoon, is only symbolically at the very source of sea delicacies and the words of its owner reassure us of his sincerity:

- In late 40's Venetian lagoon used to be abundant with fish. We used to have a guest who would often ask my father, while drinking Americano for appetiser, to place a dish full of water upon the stove. Next, he would go to his own motor boat tied to the pier and started fishing in front of the Harry's Bar. In several minutes he would return with two or three sea bass, which our chef would prepare for his dinner.

Whether this story is true or a bit over romanticized, it is the fact, which many senior Venetians do confirm that at that time, not only the quality, but also the variety of the fish caught in the lagoon, was impressive. Before the water pollution problem caused by industrial waste from Marghera, fish was mainly feeding on mussels living in the sea.

However, even though it doesn't originate from the lagoon, still these days Venice has first class fish. Most crabs and fish presented at the Venetian Fish Market, as well as other markets along the lagoon, are still alive while being purchased. Natives strongly believe that fish has to be absolutely fresh in order to deserve to be served upon the plate.

Traditional supplier of fresh fish to Venice is a small fisherman village named Chioggia, located at the southern portion of the Venetian lagoon. The central place of interest is the local, picturesque, fish market surrounded by fishing boats painted in bright colours. Morning crowd and characteristic scents, shall later on undoubtedly lead you to any one of affordable local fish restaurants. Some of the most delicious meals based on crabs, eel and cuttlefish are served there. The most famous restaurant there with pleasant interior is "El Gatto"; its specialty is Cuttlefish ala Chioggia.

Nevertheless, lets return to Venice. Like any Tourist Mecca, Venice offers a variety of local dishes to the "army" of visitors. The largest concentration of fish restaurants in Venice is immediately behind St. Mark's Square. There next to their entrances reaturants display carefully selected variety of fish species. Their freshness is easily verified when gazing at numerous trawl boats tied, usually only few meters away, to Riva degli Schiavoni. The prices there are quite high.

For those seeking more value for money, it will be better to eat in a small restaurant "Al Conte Pescaor", distinguished, boat-like decorated "La Caravella", former sacristy "Al Graspò de Ua", as well as in the "Harry's Bar".

The Kvarner Scampi

Those who like to explore further, will enjoy perfect fish feast in the block San Polo, in a restaurant with Michelin star, "Osteria da Fiore", the most ancient restaurant in Venice "Antica Trattoria Poste Vecie" and lively "Trattoria alla Madonna". In the block Castello, the same stays for "Corte Sconta", "Hostaria da Franz" (one of the best fish restaurants in Venice), while at Dorsodura, one could benefit from dining in "Agli Alboretti" and "Linea d'Ombra". In Cannaregio there is stylish "A La Vecchia Cavana" with its simple fish dishes.

Nevertheless, even if you would decide to explore the lagoon islands, you wouldn't miss much. In case you



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decided to eat out in some restaurant or are invited as a guest to your Venetian friend's home, than your real fish feast could consist of following dishes: softly fried tuna fish-roe spiced with olive oil and lemon juice, risotto di pesse (Venetian dialect for fish named pesce), granzevola alla veneziana, where crab scale is used as a dish for serving meal. Following that, the pride of Venetians, white fish and grilled scampi will be served (preferably a fish caught in Kvarner) along with plebeian delicacies like eel.

Then again, all that would not be possible without diligent fisherman (naturally, including Croatian fisherman) whose efforts are so colourfully evident in the abundance of Venetian fish market, next to the bridge Rialto and so passionately described by legendary British writer, Elisabeth David:

- In Venice simple sole or ray are iridescent in purple, pilchards shines like a pile of silver, and rose scampi are fat and fresh, endlessly attractive in pale dawn light... /