



Rome's Best Rooftop Restaurants: "Some Enchanted Evening"

by Lucy Gordan | Food |



Most cities around the world count numerous skyscrapers and many of these hugely tall buildings house restaurants with panoramic views on their top floors. Rome, because of its underground rivers, has no skyscrapers, but nonetheless counts numerous rooftop restaurants.

With summer around the corner, there's no better way to view the Eternal City in all its glory than from one of its many romantic rooftop restaurants. The website www.rooftoprestaurants.com/no-r-or-b-restaurant-Rome presents an exhaustive list organized by neighborhood so you can easily find the ones nearest you, but I've narrowed it down to the six best even if, because of the bill, they're for very special occasions only. All have one Michelin star except "*La Pergola*", which has continuously been awarded three since 2005. It's still the only restaurant in the Eternal City with three Michelin stars.

"*Imàgo*" is the oldest rooftop restaurant in Rome. In 1956, German-born Oscar Wirth, scion of a Swiss and German hotelier family and owner of the luxurious Hassler Hotel at the top of the Spanish Steps, resolved to cover the terrace, thus creating Rome's first panoramic restaurant. Initially considered a controversial move, it went on to welcome scores of Italian and international V.I.P.s as regular guests.

Sixty years after his father's innovation, Roberto, one of the world's few remaining



Francesco Apreda

independent-owner hoteliers, entirely renovated the restaurant and renamed it "Imàgo". That same year he hired Neapolitan Francesco Apreda as "Imàgo"s Executive Chef. Apreda had risen through the ranks at The Hassler and, when working elsewhere, remained under Roberto's benevolent

surveillance. He revisits traditional Italian flavors with a touch of exoticness having worked both in Japan and in India, where he and Roberto are consultants to two Italian restaurants in Oberoi hotels, "Vetro" in Mumbai and "Travertino" in New Delhi. Recommended: Breaded scallops with shitake mushrooms and black truffles and Duck Tandoori-style.



Apreda's golden tomato risotto



Fabio Ciervo

In the past the Wirth family also owned the nearby Eden Hotel, today owned by the Dorchester Collection. It reopened a month ago on April 1 after nearly two years of complete refurbishment. Its rooftop restaurant, "La Terrazza", only open evenings and closed on Tuesday, features "creative and

health-conscious Mediterranean cuisine" prepared by Executive Chef Fabio Ciervo. His curriculum includes working at *Masterchef's* host Carlo Cracco' namesake *Cracco* in Milan

(two Michelin stars), alongside Michel Roux at the *Waterside Inn* in Bray, England, and with Martín Berasategui in San Sebastian, Spain (both with three Michelin stars). Recommended: Spaghetti with pecorino and Madagascan wild black pepper, flavored with rosebuds and Crispy red mullet with seaweed tartare and kalamata olives.



Ciervo's stuffed Zucchini flower



Stefano Marzetti

Farther uphill at the top of Via Veneto in The Splendide Royal, one of Roberto Naldi's six five-star, like the Hassler, "unchained" hotels (in Lugano the Splendide Royal and Grand Hotel Eden, in Paris the newly-opened Splendide Royal, and elsewhere in Rome the Mancini 12 and Parco dei Principi Grand Hotel and Spa) is "Mirabelle" overlooking the *Villa Borghese* Park to the Vatican. Executive Chef here is Roman Stefano Marzetti who's previously worked in a Forte Village in Sardinia, two Relais & Châteaux properties in Tuscany: "*Villa Arceno*" and "*Borgo San Felice*", at Rome's prestigious "*Antico Arco*" on the Janiculum and at "*La Pergola*".

Recommended: Risotto with foie gras and liquorice powder.

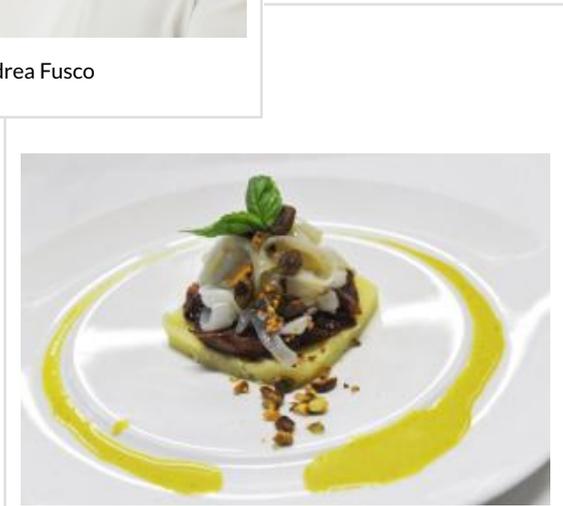


Marzetti's crispy red mullet with puntarelle, burrata and anchovies



Andrea Fusco

Instead at the bottom of Via Veneto in the Bernini-Bristol Hotel is "Giuda ballerino!", only open for supper. The Executive Chef here is another Roman Andrea Fusco, who worked with world-famous top chef turned TV star Gianfranco Vissani, the owner of his namesake restaurant *Vissani* (once three-, now two-Michelin-starred) in Baschi, Umbria, near Orvieto. Recommended: Sea bass with frozen raspberries.



Fusco's tagliatelle with octopus, red onions, and lime sauce

Farther afield in the 17th-century *Palazzo Manfredi*, built on the site of a long-ago-



Giuseppe Di Iorio

disappeared gladiator barracks, is "Aroma", recipient in 2016 of the 5-star Diamond Award from the American Academy of Hospitality. It looks out directly on the Colosseum so book a table to watch the sunset. Like Marzetti, Executive Chef Giuseppe Di Iorio worked under Giuseppe Sestito at "Mirabelle". Recommended: "Ponza" sea

bream in tomato "guazzatto", sea urchin, baby squid and yellow potato. For a more laid-back and informal meal at more moderate prices but with the same chef and still a view of the Colosseum, you can eat across the hall at "Aroma Bistrot".



Di Iorio's "Liquid Core" dessert



Heinz Beck

Last but certainly not least is extra-special "La Pergola", only open evenings and closed Sunday and Monday, impeccably managed by Simone Pinoli, so book well in advance. Its Bavarian health-conscious Executive Chef Heinz Beck owns two other restaurants in Italy: "Café Les Pailletes" in Pescara and "Heinz Beck Season" at Castello di Figline near Siena (one Michelin

star), one in the Algarve, two in Dubai, and two namesake restaurants "Heinz Beck" and

"Sensi by Heinz Beck" in Tokyo. He's also developed a line of sauces with the Abruzzese pasta-maker De Cecco: Ragù alla Bolognese, Sugo con Basilico, Sugo all'Arrabiata, Sugo con Verdure, Sugo al Pomodoro, and Sugo con Olive". All of Beck's cooked-to-order dishes are unique works-of-art, especially his "Garden of Water" and his "Sun". In addition "La Pergola"'s cellar, under the tutelage of

Sommelier Marco Reitano, counts over 53,000 bottles from 1888 to the present and its dining room service is synchronized like a ballet performance at the Bolshoi. Not to mention the after-dinner adjoining "Cigar Lounge".



Beck's "Garden of Water"



Beck's "Sun"

Nota Bene: Wherever you choose, don't forget your camera to record your very own enchanted evening. Then back home you can also revisit "Imàgo", The Hassler, Francesco Apreda and his recipes in the volume, "Apreda at Imàgo: Haute Cuisine on Rome's Rooftops" by journalist and food critic Antonio Paolini. It's available in Italian or English at www.liberiacoletti.it. As for Heinz Beck you can purchase his several volumes: "Heinz Beck", "Heinz Beck on Pasta", "Finger Food", and "Vegetarian" in English or Italian, and "Arte e Scienza del Servizio", and "L'ingrediente segreto: la filosofia e le passioni di un grande maestro del gusto", available only in Italian from www.bibliotecaculinaria.it. For more information see my 2014 interviews published in *Epicurean-Traveler* and on my website:

www.lucygordan.com "Heinz Beck: Twenty Years at 'La Pergola' (October 2014) and Francesco Apreda: Celebrating Ten Years as The Hassler's Executive Chef" (June 2013).

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