

Roaming Romans

Eatery from Italy's hippest hood opens in Brooklyn's

By Eli Rosenberg
The Brooklyn Paper

When in Brooklyn, do as the Romans do. Williamsburg is home to a new Italian restaurant straight from the boot-shaped country itself, after an Italian family chose the hip neighborhood for the opening of their second restaurant because they say it reminds them of their own hip hometown.

"We chose Williamsburg in Brooklyn because it reminded us of Trastevere, the neighborhood in Rome in which we are located," said Francesco Panella, who owns the new spot Antica Pesa on Berry Street with his brother.

Panella said the Italian and the American neighborhoods were similar in that they are both removed from other parts of the city by a river—the Tiber in Rome, the East River in New York City—and both went through periods of turbulence before emerging as successful and highly developed today.

Others, like Brooklyn Courier photographer and Milan-native Stefano Giovannini, had a more straightforward take on the neighborhood's similarities.

"Trastevere is like the hipster neighborhood in Rome," he said.

The restaurant serves Italian pasta staples like spaghetti cacio e pepe and homemade gnocchi with tomato and pesto, as well as heavier fare like braised beef cheek with carrots and thyme and Roman salt cod.

And while Italians have made Brooklyn

their home for generations, the owners of Antica Pesa say they meet many newly arrived Europeans in Brooklyn, mainly Parisians, and that they're the first of a soon to come Italian wave.

"In Europe, Brooklyn is considered one

of the coolest spots right now," said Panella, who was a TV host in Italy for Sky broadcasting, and will soon film a show about Brooklyn cuisine for the TV station.

"I probably consider myself one of the first Italians here, but am honored to be

able to partake in this cultural phenomenon."

Antica Pesa [115 Berry St. between North Seventh and North Eighth streets in Williamsburg, (347) 763-2635 www.anticapesa.us]



On the menu: (Clockwise from top left) Bartender Michale Tjader holds the "sigaro affumicato," a chocolate cigar at Antica Pesa in Williamsburg. Diners can also enjoy a chilled cocktail and a white fish dish with a sunflower and pumpkin seed crust.

Williamsburg of Italy

Across the river from the economic center of the city, there's a small, neighborhood defined by its artisan traditions and grit, a place that artists eventually discover, before the inevitable waves of development push them out in favor of upscale bars, restaurants, and an international crowd. Sound familiar?

TRASTEVERE, ROME	Neighborhood	WILLIAMSBURG, BROOKLYN
Santa Maria Church, where oil sprung miraculously from the ground when Christ was born, according to lore.	Historic landmark	McCarren Park Pool, where more than 1 million gallons of water miraculously appeared when Mayor Bloomberg reopened the site this year.
Ponte Sisto, built by Pope Sixtus IV in the 15th Century.	Link to the 'main' city	The Williamsburg Bridge, constructed by engineers in 1903.
The home of "true Romans."	Pre-gentrification reputation	The home of true artists.
261,000	Google results for nabe and 'hipsters'	445,000
Rome	Roads lead to	Bushwick

