

## A Good Place to Eat in Bevagna, Umbria (Italia)

The day of *Il Mercato delle Gatte* in Bevagna, outside in the streets it was unbearably hot so around noon we sought refuge inside. We were turned down at every restaurant—they were already packed. I soon realized that we should have made a reservation.

Fortunately, we happened upon *Ristorante Onofri's* menu posted on a wall. I had eaten there a few times and loved it, so we wandered around until we found the place. Since Onofri is in a neighborhood away from the festivities, the place was practically empty—and cool.

We decided that a long lunch would be a good idea—to escape the heat. The interior had all of the charm and warmth you'd expect in a nice Italian *ristorante*. Arched brick ceilings, ancient polished brick floors, dark wooden chairs with rush seats, and a fireplace at the end of the room. I suspect the thirteen mini apartments in the Onofri *Locanda* (inn) are just as lovely.

The wine list boasts over four hundred wines—local, Italian, and foreign. And everything on the menu sounded delicious—traditional flavors with a contemporary flair. For antipasto, Bill ordered *Brie con pancetta e patate* (with bacon and potatoes) for 6.5 euro. A warm 3-inch round of brie arrived wrapped in a few crisp pieces of pancetta, sitting on a bed of chopped lettuce and a few slices of roasted potatoes. The soft brie and the rich, salty bacon were lovely together; the greens and potatoes were superfluous. I ordered *Fiori di zucchini gratinati con ricotta di bufala, su crema di pomodori arrosto e olio al basilico* for 8.5 euro. Three beautiful zucchini blossoms arrived, filled with creamy, heavenly ricotta and topped with melted cheese and a dusting of fine bread crumbs. I've never tasted ricotta so fresh and sumptuous in the USA. The roasted tomato sauce under the flowers was light and delicious with a whiff of basil.

For my next dish, I ordered *Picchiarelli con fave, guanciale e pecorino*—thick, handmade egg-less spaghetti, a traditional local pasta. It was an excellent choice. The fava beans were fresh and plentiful. Guanciale—similar to pancetta but more delicate and delicious—and pecorino cheese added richness and saltiness to the otherwise bland pasta. Bill skipped the pasta and went straight to *il secondo piatto* (the second plate), *Tagliata di vitello bianco da latte con fave, piselli e fagiolini* (milk-fed veal steak with fava beans, peas, and green beans) for 15 euro. The thick steak, sliced into medallions, was tender and juicy. In Umbria, meat is usually cooked until well done, but Onofri cooked it perfectly, to order. We ended the meal with an *insalata mista* (mixed salad)—we were too stuffed to eat dessert.

To date, this is the best meal we have eaten out.

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Closed Wednesday