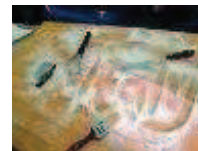


SCA visits Electrolux Professional in Italy



On a very hot day in the middle of January, 4 students and one very fortunate lecturer packed their bags and boarded an Air France Plane to embark on a culinary journey of a lifetime. As we disembarked on Charles de Gaulle Airport in Paris, a breath of fresh air at -2 degrees Celsius hit us and for the first time, as we were pulling our jackets tighter, reality sank in... We were embarking on a culinary adventure that was beyond our own comprehension. During our connecting flight to Venice, while nibbling on Croissants and drinking hot chocolate, we were wondering what we should expect. Boy, were we surprised. For an entire week we were wined and dined in a small town called Pordononne, about 85 km outside Venice. We were booked in to a small hotel and were treated to a full Buffet Breakfast every morning. Our driver picked us up promptly at 09:00 every morning, and after a few minor heart attacks from driving on the right side of the road, we would be delivered to the Innovation Centre of Electrolux Professional. Our hosts, Pasquale Esposito and Chef Silvano Constantini awaited us every morning with a fresh cappuccino and they opened their arms and their hearts to us as we were exposed to ingredients and equipment that we could only dream of. We spent most of the week focusing on cook-chill, sous vide and low temperature cooking methods and even saw that it was possible to run a complete HACCP compliant program through a setting on an oven.... I mean, seriously?

And don't get me started on the food! Every day we ate like royalty from homemade ciabatta, slow cooked short ribs, pickled artichokes and braised octopus. Each ingredient as fresh as the next. All prepared from scratch! All we did was eat! We tried everything, even though we were not always sure as to what exactly we were eating. We were treated to dinner on the Wednesday night at a quaint country restaurant and had the most inspiring 10 course tasting menu. Simplicity was the name of the game and no plate had more than three ingredients. Sea bass, Pea Puree and Roasted Rosa tomatoes will never be the same ever again. On the Thursday we went on a Road Trip definitely worth writing home about. After Three hours driving through the mist we arrived in Parma. Home of Parmegiano Reggiano and Parma ham, as well as Italy's premiere Culinary Academy, ALMA – The International School of Italian Cuisine. Set in a part of the castle that once housed the second wife of Napoleon, ALMA was a sight to behold. With a fountain as big as our car park and a lawn that stretches on forever, the real beauty for us was what was actually happening inside. Our jaws had to be constantly picked up from the floor as we were shown around the facilities and the four course lunch that was presented for us would have been fit for Napoleon himself. We also visited an old Cheese Farm where we each stocked up on over a kilo of Parmesan cheese to take home. At 14 Euros per kilo... Who could resist? The very next day we went on a journey of another sort as we set our sights on Venice. As we moved through the side streets and along the canals the mist hung around us and created a certain eeriness, like in 'Sleepy Hollow' and made the whole experience feel almost surreal. We were cold to the bone, but onwards we marched as we moved from shop to shop and vendor to vendor, sampling true Italian delights while stocking up on our 'treasure' that we wanted to take home to our families and friends.

Standing in St Marc's Square eating a homemade Ciabatta filled with fresh Buffalo Mozzarella, Parma ham and Rocket, 'just a small something' as our hostess called it when she handed out our lunch packs, we marveled at the history of a city that until a few days ago was something that we would only see on photographs. Returning back to Pordononne on the train was almost sad, as we knew that we would have to get on the plain the next day to return to our, much warmer, roots. We were lucky enough to see the weekly local market of the town folk on the Saturday Morning before we departed and I even dared to get an Italian haircut from someone who spoke as much English as I did Italian. Definitely an experience worth remembering for my biography one day! I must say, it could have been much worse. Over 5 hours wait in Paris for our connecting flight to Johannesburg the next day, was enough to bring us back to reality and made us realize that one of the best weeks in our lives had slowly started to end. The flight back was quiet as we reflected on all the wonderful experiences that we had had the honor of sharing with one another. Arriving back at OR Tambo, cameras fully loaded, stories to tell and Parmesan Cheese to get in the fridge, as we slowly started to disperse I am sure that one thing that all five of us realized over the past week was that no country in the world combines its passion for food, family, friends, and daily life more than Italy.

Thank you to Chef Billingham, Electrolux Professional and Cook. Chill, for allowing us the opportunity for our dreams to become a reality.

Viva Italia!



Story By:
Chef Carien



Italy St Marks Square



Rosanne Groenewald, Kirbe-Leigh Oliver, Chef Silvano Constantini, Chef Carien, Mallory Graham and Hailey Giltrow