

TOO MUCH OR TOO LITTLE

HAVING BEEN BORN AND RAISED IN THESE HERE UNITED STATES, WHEN IT COMES TO FOOD, I'M JUST LIKE ALL OF YOU... BREAKFAST, LUNCH AND DINNER WITH MAYBE A FEW SNACKS THROWN IN FOR GOOD MEASURE. YOU KNOW THE AMERICAN ROUTINE; SAME OLD EGGS, TOAST AND BACON FOR BREAKFAST, SANDWICH AND SOUP FOR LUNCH AND A DINNER THAT CONSISTS OF AN APPETIZER, MAIN COURSE AND A NICE SWEET FINISH.

WHENEVER A NEW PLACE OPENS, THE FIRST THING ONE LOOKS FOR IS THE "SIZE" OF THE PORTIONS. HOW MUCH DO THEY GIVE YOU? HUGE SALAD? SMALL SALAD? CHICKEN BREAST IS TOO SMALL! BIG PIECE OF CAKE OR A SLIVER? IS IT, " I CAN'T BELIEVE HOW SMALL THOSE PORTIONS WERE"! "I WAS HUNGRY RIGHT AFTER DINNER", OR "ALL THAT FOOD"! "I WAS SO FULL BEFORE MY DINNER CAME, I COULD HARDLY FINISH".

IT'S NOT THAT I DON'T UNDERSTAND OR UNDERESTIMATE THE IMPORTANCE OF PORTION SIZE. OF COURSE, WHAT IS NOT ENOUGH FOOD FOR ONE MAY BE TOO MUCH FOOD FOR ANOTHER. THE COST FACTORING WHEN DESIGNING YOUR MENU IS KEY TO PROFITABILITY AND I BELIEVE THAT THOSE OF YOU INVOLVED WITH BARS/RESTAURANTS THAT SERVE MORE FOOD THAN ALCOHOL UNDERSTAND THIS BETTER THAN OTHER OPERATORS. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU NOT GIVE TOO MUCH, BUT AT THE SAME TIME, NOT GIVE TOO LITTLE. I REMEMBER WHEN THE TAPAS PLACES STARTED OPENING AROUND TOWN AND THE BUZZ WAS THE SAME..."IS **THIS** IT"? "ALL THAT MONEY FOR THIS"? THE REASON WAS CLEAR! IT WAS BECAUSE WE WERE ALL RAISED ON NICE BIG PORTIONS. I SUPPOSE THAT IS WHERE THE OBESITY PROBLEM IN THIS COUNTRY ORIGINATED. PROSPERITY IN THE POST WAR ERA BROUGHT US LOTS OF EVERYTHING, BIGGER AND BETTER EVERYTHING INCLUDING BIGGER PORTIONS. (P.S. I CAN TELL YOU THIS, IF PEOPLE ARE TAKING A LOT OF LEFTOVERS HOME , YOU PROBABLY CAN CUT BACK A LITTLE ON YOUR PORTION SIZES).

AND SO THIS BRINGS ME TO MY RECENT EATING TOUR THROUGH SOUTHERN ITALY. ALL I HEARD BEFORE I LEFT WAS HOW AMAZING THE FOOD WAS. WHAT A CULINARY ADVENTURE I WAS ABOUT TO EMBARK ON. AND I HAVE GOT TO TELL YOU, THEY WERE RIGHT, THOUGH NOT NECESSARILY IN A GOOD WAY.

THERE WAS NOT A DINNER THAT DID NOT TAKE A MINIMUM OF TWO AND A HALF TO THREE HOURS. I HAD NEVER REALLY EXPERIENCED A SIX COURSE DINNER THE LIKES OF WHICH THEY SERVED THERE. IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO UNDERSTAND HOW ANY RESTAURANT I VISITED MADE MONEY. FIRST, THE LARGE DISH OF FRIED CALAMARI, THEN THE LARGE TOMATO MOZZARELLA SALAD, THEN THE *FIRST* OF **TWO** LARGE PASTA DISHES. NOW, I HAVE TO STOP AT THIS POINT TO EXPLAIN THAT HERE AT HOME, THIS IS WHERE MOST OF US ARE DONE. THESE ARE NOT SMALL PORTIONS! THE REAL PROBLEM IS THAT THERE ARE STILL THREE MORE COURSES TO COME, NONE OF WHICH I, OR MY PARTY, WAS ABLE TO GET DOWN. NO OFFENSE TO THOSE GREAT CHEFS BUT THERE SIMPLY WAS NO ROOM IN THE BELLY. THE ITALIANS, IT SEEMED, ALWAYS SERVED "TOO MUCH" REGARDLESS OF WHAT MEAL IT WAS OR WHAT IT COST. IT IS JUST *THEIR WAY* AND IT IS EXPECTED WHAT'S MORE, THEY HAVE NO PROBLEM DOWNING THE WHOLE THING ALONG WITH A COUPLE OF BOTTLES OF VINO TO BOOT.

FROM A RESTAURANTEURS PROSPECTIVE, AT LEAST IN **THIS** NECK OF THE WOODS, YOU COULD NOT SURVIVE SERVING THOSE QUANTITIES OF FOOD FOR THE AMERICAN DOLLAR. BUT THAT'S A GOOD THING. IF OUR SOCIETY HAS BECOME OBESE ON THE PORTION SIZES WE CURRENTLY SERVE, HAD OUR RESTAURANTS SERVED US IN THE ITALIAN STYLE OVER THE LAST 40 YEARS, TODAY, WE WOULD HAVE MORE HOSPITALS THAN RESTAURANTS!

MY POINT BEING THAT I BELIEVE HOW VERY IMPORTANT IT IS THAT YOUR CUSTOMERS FEEL THAT THEY ARE GETTING "THEIR MONIES WORTH", BUT GIVING THEM TOO MUCH IS A WASTE OF FOOD AND BAD FOR THEIR HEALTH AND TO GIVING THEM TOO LITTLE DISCOURAGES REPEAT BUSINESS AND HURTS THE BOTTOM LINE. FIND THE RIGHT MIX OF QUALITY, PRICE AND PORTION SIZE AND YOU WILL CERTAINLY PROSPER.