



LUX LUCIS

by Valentino Cassanelli

INTRODUCING

VALENTINO CASSANELLI
&
LUX LUCIS





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Born in 1984, Valentino Cassanelli grew up in Spilamberto, a small town in the countryside outside Modena. Already curious about food and greatly inspired by his grandmother who was an excellent home cook, Valentino developed a strong sense for the quality of local produce and watching and learning the processes of preparing seasonal produce to provide daily meals for the family.

Not surprisingly, these influences lead him from school straight to catering college in Serramazzone, where at the young age of just 16, he was sent for initial work experience in the kitchens of the famous London restaurant Floriana in Beauchamp Place in Knightsbridge. He then returned home to complete his course, working to gain professional experience in a more traditional restaurant in Modena.

After graduation, the lure of London's dynamic restaurant scene saw him back in England, gaining experience in Mosaic in Mayfair, Locanda Locatelli in Marylebone and Nobu on Berkeley Street.

In May 2007, Valentino returned to Italy to work under two Michelin starred Carlo Cracco in Milan, where he was to remain for three years. Motivated by the strong team, he built a lasting relationship with Carlo, joining him at events internationally and climbing the culinary ladder ultimately gaining the position of Junior Sous Chef.





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In 2010, Valentino was asked to join two chef friends at their popular restaurant Sangal in Venice. The synergy between the three young, talented chefs was immediate and with a shared philosophy in pushing boundaries with techniques and ingredient combinations, Valentino was able to grow, not just in confidence but also creatively.

Whilst still at Sangal, he received an invite from Carlo Cracco to join the team he was putting together for a pop-up at Principe Forte dei Marmi during August 2011. Around this time the hotel team were also looking to change their internal food and beverage offering and a few months later, with Carlo's recommendation, the position to lead the project was offered to Valentino. He arrived at Principe Forte dei Marmi in February 2012 and three months later, restaurant Lux Lucis opened to huge critical acclaim. It gained its first star in the Michelin Guide Italy 2017.

The restaurant of Dalmazia Beach Club also comes under the direction of Valentino. The cuisine directly connects to the location celebrating authentic flavours and ingredients, and seating ranges from outdoors on the beach, in the shade of the pergola or comfortably inside.





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Maitre Sommelier Sokol Ndreko

Born in Albania in 1978, Sokol Ndreko's journey into a career in wine was far from traditional: from helping in his uncle's bar at age 13, to studying literature and then a move to Europe and work in the construction industry in Athens. However, it was a longing to be close to his identical twin, that first brought Sokol to Italy in 2001 and would go on to change the trajectory of his career.

Working alongside his brother in a small, family-owned restaurant in Milan, he quickly gained experience in both front and back of house, adapting to the needs of the business. The pair continued to work together, moving to Osteria del Mare in Forte dei Marmi in 2003. Here Sokol began to understand the importance of the synergy between front and back of house in providing the ultimate dining experience, and he decided to specialise in wine and train as a sommelier.

By 2008, he had risen to the position of Head Sommelier with complete authority to purchase wine for the restaurant; the first sommelier to be entrusted with the budget. With a cellar eventually comprising around 1000 bottles, he found himself opening and tasting around 100 per service, allowing him to learn quickly and develop his palate as a sommelier.

In 2012, Sokol joined the hotel team at Principe Forte dei Marmi as Maitre Sommelier and, with a shared objective, they began to establish a destination restaurant in its own right. It was at this point Sokol began to change the way he considered wine; focussing more on tradition and researching smaller wineries and producers more in keeping with the dishes of the new restaurant.

Lux Lucis was born in March 2012. In 2015, Sokol was awarded Best Sommelier in Italy in the Best Italian Wine Awards and in 2017 awarded Maitre of the Year by Le Guide de L'Espresso.





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Concept

LUX LUCIS is home to the Michelin-starred cuisine of Chef Valentino Cassanelli.

Valentino's dishes are a free expression of Italian cuisine, with an unrestrained creativity, drawing inspiration not only from his own life experiences, but also the rich biodiversity surrounding the coastal town of Forte dei Marmi.

Inspiration too comes from his close collaboration with Maître Sommelier Sokol Ndreko, with dishes often beginning with the flavour profiling of particular wines. The results are menus that are delicately balanced and elegant, happily journeying from land to sea and delivering the very best in seasonal ingredients. This unconditional partnership between cellar and kitchen, flawlessly interweaves the restaurant's carefully curated selection of fine wines and vintages with the kitchen's natural storecupboard, perfectly enhancing the intricate flavours of Valentino's dishes.

Situated on the rooftop of Hotel Principe Forte dei Marmi, in a stunning landscape caught between mountains and sea, the 28-seat restaurant is ideally positioned to capture the aureate evening light, offering panoramic views over the town's stone pines to the Apuan Alps in the east and westwards over the Tyrrhenian Sea. The dining space is surrounded by glass floor-to-ceiling windows, and features an open kitchen and marble sculptures by Korean artist Park Eun Sun. The tailored tablecloths emphasise the table design, part of the Maxalto collection by Antonio Citterio, with their characteristic parallel legs.





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A more intimate and exclusive dining experience is available at the Chef's Table, featuring a more informal seat on a stool and the particularity of being served directly by the chefs. The seven-course journey is expertly paired with wines and cocktails by maitre sommelier Sokol Ndreko, and reserved to a maximum of four guests per service.

On the same rooftop, the award-winning 67 Sky Lounge bar offers a magnificent setting for aperitifs and after dinner. In addition to an extensive drink list comprising distinctive twists of Tuscan classics and original cocktails, during the winter season, the bar hosts the "Taste of Lux Lucis" menu, a more casual and streamlined selection of Lux Lucis' iconic dishes.

In a joint effort with the whole team of Principe, chef Cassanelli and his brigade continuously implement practical steps to become fully sustainable, paying homage to the surrounding smaller realities. Their commitment includes - and is not limited to - the elimination of single-use materials, installation of implants for renewable energy, and reduction of waste throughout the hotel. Valentino is also involved in conversations with his suppliers to select and ensure that what arrives in the kitchens is as much as possible "zero kilometres" and are sourced only from producers who respect the local environment, with the related government certifications. In his creations, there are ingredients unique to the territory, some of which have become more popular especially thanks to the collaboration with chef Cassanelli, like the Pastinoncello di Seravezza. The carrot, which was lost in the region's agricultural practices, was preserved only as study samples for the University of Pisa. After tasting it and hearing about its story, Valentino fostered a broader production of the rediscovered vegetable by making good use of it in his dishes.





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FACT SHEET

Address: Viale Ammiraglio Morin 67, 55042 Forte dei Marmi (Lucca), Italy

Telephone: +39 0584 783636

Email: info@principefortedeimarmi.com

Cuisine: Modern Italian

Chef: Valentino Cassanelli

Restaurant Manager and Maître Sommelier: Sokol Ndreko

Sous-chef: Pietro Rossetti

Weekly closure: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday (open only for internal guests)

Opening: from end of March until end of October.

Taste of Lux Lucis: mid December until the end of March.

Covers: 28

Pricing: From 130 euro per person

Website: www.principefortedeimarmi.com/en/restaurants-bars/lux-lucis-restaurant/

Principe Forte dei Marmi has achieved Global Biorisk Advisory Council® (GBAC) STARTM accreditation, the gold standard for prepared facilities.

Social Media

Facebook: [Luxlucis Ristorante](https://www.facebook.com/LuxlucisRistorante)

Instagram: [@luxlucisristorante](https://www.instagram.com/@luxlucisristorante)

Twitter: [@Principe_FdM](https://twitter.com/@Principe_FdM)

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AWARDS & ACCOLADES

Michelin - 1* (Since 2017)

Condé Nast Johansens - Best Dining Experience - 2019

Espresso Guide - Special Award Pasta of the Year - 2020

Espresso Guide - four hats - since 2020

Luxury Rooftop Restaurant for the European Continent - World Luxury

Restaurant Awards - 2020

5 Stelle d'Oro della Cucina - Associazione Italiana Cuochi (2022)

50 top Italy - Lux Lucis 29° Luxury award (2023)

La Liste - World's Best Hotel - 2023

Best Italian Wine Awards - Best Sommelier in Italy, Sokol Ndreko - 2015

Espresso Guide - Maitre of the Year, Sokol Ndreko - 2017





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