

## Discovering the Sicilian remarkable culinary delights and flavors with Almar Giardino di Costanza Resort & Spa

*The refined resort, a gem of the HNH Hospitality group, invites to discover the gastronomic excellences of western Sicily*

July 2023 \*\*\* - The Sicilian city of Mazara del Vallo is famous for its rich gastronomic tradition, rooted in its millennia-old history and its privileged location on the Mediterranean Sea. Today, we want to celebrate the excellence of Mazara's gastronomy, a cultural and culinary heritage of immeasurable value.

The cuisine of Mazara del Vallo is a true treasure trove of authentic flavors, based on the use of fresh and genuine ingredients, locally sourced or caught in the crystal-clear waters of the surrounding sea. Fishing is one of the city's main industries, and the most characteristic catch is the **red shrimp** (*ammaru russu* in the local dialect). Caught around Lampedusa and Malta, south of Pantelleria, or east between Cyprus and Turkey, where the sea reaches depths of up to 700 meters, Mazara's shrimp stands out with its intense red color, resembling coral, and the unmistakable deliciousness of its firm, white flesh. In summer, the head of Mazara's red shrimp darkens due to the presence of eggs, from which a delectable caviar is also derived. At Almar Giardino di Costanza Resort & Spa's **AquaMadre Restaurant**, the red shrimp of Mazara takes center stage in a dish the chef aptly named "My interpretation of Mazara del Vallo red prawn's textures: Tartare, dehydrated chips, tail breaded with Panko and 'his air' served with lime courgette carpaccio." It exemplifies the chef's approach, playing with tradition, skillfully rediscovering and reimagining the regional flavors using only the finest locally sourced ingredients.

One of the most renowned traditional dishes in the region is the **fish couscous**, a preparation made with durum wheat semolina accompanied by a flavorful fish broth and a variety of fresh seafood. This specialty bears the influences of Arab culture. Mazara was, indeed, the first city conquered by the Arabs in 827, and it was with their arrival that couscous also made its way here. Over time, the couscous of Mazara del Vallo has become a regional dish, distinguished from its original version. The Sicilian variation, in particular, replaces meat with fish and employs a different technique called "incocciare," which involves crumbing the semolina with wet fingertips, resulting in a coarser texture. The preparation of this dish requires specific utensils, including the special pot (referred to as the *pignatta du cùscusu* in the local dialect), a type of painted terracotta colander placed inside a tall-sided pot to allow for the steaming of the crumbled semolina.

However, western Sicily culinary delights extend beyond just seafood. The region is renowned for its other top-quality agricultural products, such as its artichokes and Nocellara del Belice olives. Cultivated near the cliffs, the artichokes absorb the essence of the seawater, resulting in a unique and intriguing flavor with hints of the sea and algae. They are a versatile ingredient that finds its way into numerous traditional recipes, imparting richness and complexity to the dishes.

And what about desserts? Typical of Trapani, the **graffa with ricotta** and the **fried cassatella** are absolute must-tries at least once in a lifetime. The graffa is a fried doughnut with a soft, fluffy

texture, filled with ricotta and chocolate chips, all topped with a sprinkle of powdered sugar. On the other hand, the cassatella (known as *cassatedda* in the local dialect) is a crescent-shaped, crumbly pastry filled with ricotta flavored with chocolate chips, grated orange zest, and cinnamon. It is best savored while still warm after being fried in hot oil.

And then the granitas! Sicily as a whole boasts a long-standing tradition of granitas with a wide variety of flavors that highlight the region's exceptional local produce, including lemons, pistachios, and almonds. In Trapani, you absolutely must savor the jasmine and red mulberry granitas, both once again influenced by Arab flavors. Traditionally referred to as *scursunera*, the **jasmine granita** offers a delicate taste. On the other hand, the **red mulberry granita** features a bolder and slightly tangy flavor derived from the fruit of these majestic Mediterranean trees.

Set amidst such a bountiful land, Almar Giardino di Costanza Resort & Spa captures its aromas and flavors in the exclusive recipes of its AquaMadre Restaurant and the snacks at the **Turchinu Lounge & Terrace**. The restaurant takes its name from one of the most renowned symbols of the surrounding Mazara area: the salt pans. It is within these salt pans that "aqua madre" is formed, a highly concentrated seawater that lingers in the clayey depths after the crystallized salt has been harvested. The salt, sourced from the salt pans along the southwestern coast, stands as a primary ingredient in the culinary offerings of **AquaMadre Restaurant**. A sophisticated selection of 10 types of locally crafted and flavored salts, sourced from the ancient Culcasi salt pans in Nubia, a recognized Slow Food Presidium, enriches the preparation of various dishes. These salts are unique to the western Sicilian region, where traditional manual salt harvesting has been practiced once a year for over a century.

To present the unique and authentic cuisine of this land through a true sensory journey, Almar Giardino di Costanza has crafted the **Turchinu Street Food Package**. Guests will savor an authentic Sicilian apéritif served on the panoramic terrace of the Turchinu Lounge & Terrace. The **Trinacria Mojito** combines the classic ingredients of a mojito with the authentic scents of Sicily, including limoncello, lime, and orange, accompanied by a selection of typical Sicilian street food delicacies: arancini, panelle, panzerotti, fried pizza, and caponata.

The package also includes a **wine tasting at the Gorgi Tondi Estate**, situated within the Lago Preola and Gorgi Tondi Integral Nature Reserve, a WWF oasis. Spanning 130 hectares in a unique and captivating environment, the vineyards border the reserve's four small lakes formed within a karst depression. The vineyards are cultivated under certified organic practices, eschewing synthetic chemicals, and irrigation is employed sparingly to preserve the authentic aromas and flavors of this enchanting corner of Sicily. The exploration of the estate's products commences with a visit to the cellar and barrel room, culminating in a tasting of the finest selection of Gorgi Tondi wines, showcasing the family's four "Cru" labels.

Additionally, the package includes a €50 gift voucher to be utilized during the 2023 season.

Indeed, with its Turchinu Street Food Package, Almar Giardino di Costanza Resort & Spa offers an unforgettable journey through the authentic flavors of this picturesque part of Sicily.

# ALMAR

GIARDINO DI COSTANZA

FIVE STAR RESORT & SPA



***Almar Giardino di Costanza Resort & Spa** is one of the flagship properties of the **HNH Hospitality Group**, the leading independent Italian hotel operator in the 4 and 5-star hotel and resort segment. The Resort has 88 junior suites and suites, all equipped with private balconies and terraces. The large hall, decorated with white marble embellished with furnishings and finishes characterised by typically Sicilian notes, overlook the central courtyard of the Resort. A scenic waterfall leads to the swimming pool and sun terrace. The culinary offer of **AquaMadre Restaurant** is strongly inspired by local tradition and use only the best local raw materials. The main bar of the Resort is called **Turchinu Lounge & Terrace**, a name prompted by the turquoise colour of the Sicilian tiles of the terrace. Its **Almablu Spa** takes inspiration from the well-established concept of the award-winning Almablu Wellness & Spa of Almar Jesolo Resort & Spa and offers a wide range of body and face massages rooted in the Traditional Chinese Medicine. Just 15 km away and reachable with the Resort's shuttle is the **Lido di Costanza**, the Resort's private beach, equipped with catering services, sunbeds and umbrellas. The **Almablu Spa** – including an outstanding wet area, indoor pool, fitness area and 5 treatment cabins – takes up the well-established and award-winning concept of Almablu Wellness & Spa of Almar Jesolo Resort & Spa and offers a wide range of body and face massages inspired by Traditional Chinese Medicine. Among the activities organized by the Resort aimed at letting Guests experience the territory there are fishing trips accompanied by fishermen from Mazara, wine and olive oil tasting, and tours of the salt pans of Trapani, Marsala and Mozia.*

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