

# 25hours Hotel Florence

Interview by Alessandro Casagrande  
Photography by Albert Rano



Alessandro Casagrande (AC) — The 25hours hotel motto “you know one, you know none” its pretty self explanatory about the concept of the company about the unique experience, character and design, you can have in each of the hotels of 25hours. About the hotel in Florence, what makes this location so unique in its own individuality?

25hours Hotel (25hH) — Inserted between the magnificent and renewed Piazza Santa Maria Novella, vis à vis with the new wing of the Museo del Novecento, the complex of the Hospital of San Giovanni di Dio and the splendor of the Lungarni, 25hours Piazza San Paolino occupies an entire city block between the elegant street of antique dealers – Via de’ Fossi – and the popular Via Palazzuolo. The challenge is to stitch together these two urban areas that have never before interacted. 25hours Piazza San Paolino occupies the spaces of what was once the “Monte de’ Pegni”: the historic Loan Company of the Cassa di Risparmio di Firenze. The hotel’s central nucleus of 66 rooms is in the original convent adjacent to the homonymous Church of San Paolino. A spectacular design and architectural intervention oversaw the controlled demolition and renovation of 4500 square meters. Ancient spaces and annexes have been converted into a place of strong contemporaneity and dynamic creative energy.



(AC) — The design of the Florence 25hours hotel, designed by interior designer Paola Navone, follows Dante's poem "The Divine Comedy." There are rooms in paradise and hell. How is that received and which category is more in demand?

(25hH) — The "shock" factor is always present because of the intensity of the design in both categories, but once that initial "wow factor" wears off, the guest just basks in childlike enjoyment. There are objects to play around with in the rooms, like the angel wings hanging in the shower, and it's all about having fun. There is a 50-50 split between requests for heaven and for hell, which is a great surprise! It will be interesting to see if over time one category takes precedence over another.



(AC) — Customization is a trend taking shape across many industries and Customer interests are evolving very quickly, the hotel industry is no exception. How must a hotel evolve today to keep up with the times?

(25hH) — One of our main goals is gentrification, especially considering the opportunity we have within the Santa Maria Novella neighborhood. The role of a hotel is that of being a gatekeeper in the city, and as much as we look forward to hosting international guests, we want 25Hours to be a place for the local community, too. We're constantly looking for ways to cater to the Florentine audience, including bringing locally-loved realities into the space, like books from "Libreria Todo Modo" and baked goods from "S.forno" at the Alimentari. Our goal is to bring our guests out into the city, while at the same time bringing the city into the hotel.



(AC) — Being able to deliver tasty, exciting dishes is a prerequisite for success in the hospitality industry. What are the characteristics that in your opinion a restaurant must have today to satisfy customers?

(25hH) — In our mind, a restaurant today wins with flexibility, style, and sensibility. The concept of a hotel is centered around "hospitality", which is the art of providing for people and moreover anticipating their needs. At 25hours Piazza San Paolino we are fortunate to have a diversified f&b offer, from the Alimentari (an all day deli counter in collaboration with a local bakery) to the more sophisticated, full-fledged restaurant at the core of the property. We want people to be happy, at any hour of the day and with whatever formula they like.



(AC) — The San Paolino restaurant offers a combination of popular, traditional Tuscan dishes and modern Italian cuisine using only fresh, local produce from the region. How would you describe your cuisine and the philosophy behind it?

(25hH) — The cuisine mimics the atmosphere: energetic, dynamic and with a hint of creativity. The chef, Nicola Schioppo, claims that the ownership gave him just one criterium: simplicity. We want a simplified menu of the essentials, with clean, decisive flavors. Our dishes are inspired by Italian tradition with a certain sensibility for Tuscan authenticity.

We asked Chef Nicola Schioppo of the San Paolino restaurant to prepare and share a Baccalà recipe for this Feature.

#### **Fried Polenta with Baccalà Mousse**



### Ingredients – Polenta

500 g cornmeal flour

2 liters water

Salt to taste

### Ingredients – Baccalà

300 g soaked and rinsed Baccalà

700 g milk

2 cloves garlic

30 g EVOO

100 g corn or seed oil

Freshly chopped parsley

### Preparation

Bring 2 liters of water to boil with salt, gently pour in 500 grams of cornmeal flour, stir over high heat until combined. Pour into a rectangular mold, let cool and cut into one-centimeter-thick slices. Fry the slices in boiling oil and set aside.

Remove the skin and any remaining bones from the Baccalà.

Place fish in a small pan with garlic and milk and leave to cook on low heat until all liquid is absorbed.

Allow the Baccalà to cool completely, then pour it into a container and blend using a hand mixer.

Slowly incorporate the oil while whisking steadily to obtain a soft mousse-like texture. Finish with extra virgin olive oil and chopped parsley.

Spread the mousse over the fried polenta and serve!

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