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## EXECUTIVE CHEF NICOLA CHESSA ARRIVES AT VALENTINO SANTA MONICA

### VALENTINO RESTAURANT GROUP ANNOUNCES ADDITION OF EXECUTIVE CHEF NICOLA CHESSA TO ITS FLAGSHIP RESTAURANT IN SANTA MONICA

Sardinian-born chef has spent most of the past decade with the Valentino Restaurant Group in Las Vegas

The Valentino Restaurant Group (VRG) is proud to announce the addition of Executive Chef Nicola (Nico) Chessa to its flagship location in Santa Monica. Chef Chessa, originally from Sardinia, has been a part of the Valentino Restaurant Group in Las Vegas for the better part of the last decade - most recently as the Executive Chef at Giorgio Ristorante (Shoppes at Mandalay Place), Valentino Las Vegas' (Venetian Resort, Hotel & Casino) more casual sister restaurant. Starting this month, Chef Chessa will oversee kitchen operations at the Michelin-starred Valentino Santa Monica, working alongside legendary restaurateur Piero Selvaggio inside his iconic restaurant that is largely responsible for the birth of Italian fine-dining in the United States. Selvaggio is excited with the addition of Chessa to his signature California location.



Photo Courtesy of Valentino Restaurant Group

“Chef Nico is a great member of the Valentino Restaurant Group and a very talented chef who embraces our ideology about fresh, seasonal and and inspiring Italian cuisine,” said Selvaggio. “He has been doing a great job in Las Vegas as Executive Chef at Giorgio Ristorante, but we feel that the environment inside Valentino Santa Monica will better suit his creativity in the kitchen and allow him more freedom and flexibility to cook the food he loves.”

According to Chef Chessa, “from the start - I was born with a passion for food. I’m thrilled with the opportunity presented before me and the ability to have a hand in what’s being served at Valentino Santa Monica, one of the most respected Italian restaurants in the United States.”

Chessa got his professional start to cooking by mastering the foods of his native land while serving as an apprentice at The Il Ginepro Restaurant, located on the coast of Sardinia. As many up-and-coming Italian chefs do, Chessa spent much of his time as a young cook traveling to various northern and southern Italian regions in line with the different tourist seasons. His travel provided an opportunity to develop a hands-on knowledge of each region’s signature techniques, ingredients and cooking styles. In addition, Chessa received personal guidance from many highly-regarded professional chefs specific to each region, lessons he still reflects on today.

In 1992, Chessa moved to Rome to work in special events and catering at the prestigious Petrolini Banchetti. During this time, he had the opportunity to present his talent for several of Italy’s elite. Pope John Paul II even received the pleasure of tasting a delight from Chessa during many events held in Vatican City, including one in 1996 where he served as the Executive Chef at the gala reopening of the Sistine Chapel.

In 1998, Chessa set his sights on North America and was hired as the chef at Arcodoro in Houston, Tex., recognized by restaurant critic John Mariani as one of the best Italian restaurants in the United States. Eventually, Chessa relocated to Washington, D.C., and served as executive chef at Café Milano, where he honed his craft cooking for congressional leaders, dignitaries and world-renowned entertainers - which seemed the perfect segue to a career in Las Vegas.

Chessa joined James Beard Award-winner Piero Selvaggio’s renowned Valentino Restaurant Group in May of 2003, where he worked for several months alongside Chef Pellegrini at Valentino Las Vegas before taking the helm as Executive Chef at Giorgio Ristorante. Chessa will continue to oversee the menu at Giorgio Ristorante and expects to travel quite frequently so he’s able to spend time in both the Santa Monica and Las Vegas restaurants.