

Elem



Grocery List

You might think you know these beloved Italian ingredients, but these Canadian chefs are creating innovative dishes that present them in unique ways.

By Renée S. Suen

Vish Mayekar
(Elem) VANCOUVER
THE INGREDIENT: BURRATA
DI PUGLIA



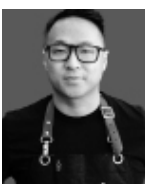
Vish Mayekar—renowned for his work in Vancouver’s top Italian kitchens—celebrates both local and global flavours at Elem, where burrata stands out as his favourite Italian treasure. “It’s unmatched in texture and flavour,” he says of the humble yet “indulgent” ingredient. In his thoughtfully prepared burrata dishes, Mayekar lets the cheese shine in delicate gem-lettuce cups with fermented local wild rose and chili crunch or with charcoal-roasted tomatoes that have been dressed with tomato-water vinaigrette, aged balsamic and Sardinian olive oil.

Emiliano Del Frate
(Radici Project) TORONTO
THE INGREDIENT: EXTRA-VIRGIN OLIVE
OIL FROM ITRANA OLIVES



For Emiliano Del Frate, olive oil is more than an ingredient—it’s a cherished link to his roots. At the newly opened Japanese-Italian fusion spot Radici Project, he uses Itrana-olive oil from his hometown of Priverno to cook and finish dishes. “It’s a tradition—a living symbol of where I come from,” says Del Frate. For example, he loves to gently poach halibut in the versatile ingredient because it “keeps it incredibly tender and imparts a soft, fruity richness.” He also praises how even just a drizzle “adds surprising depth and fruitiness to desserts like rhubarb tartlets.”

Christopher Cho (Little
Grouse on the Prairie) SASKATOON
THE INGREDIENT: MANTOVA
EXTRA-VIRGIN OLIVE OIL



Like many pros, restaurateur and acclaimed mixologist Christopher Cho swears by extra-virgin olive oil (EVOO). Citing its rich, fruity flavour, aroma and health benefits, Cho uses the pantry staple to fat-wash alcohol, explaining that “it adds depth, texture and complexity to a spirit by infusing flavours and texture.” At his Saskatoon restaurant, Little Grouse on the Prairie, a vesper martini gets upgraded to a velluto martini via a silky EVOO-washed vodka, which marries seamlessly with gin’s botanicals and Lillet Blanc’s bright citrus notes.



Photography, Aditya Pawar / V. Mayekar

Anna Chen
(Alma) TORONTO
THE INGREDIENT: FRESH PASTA



Billed as a modern Chinese restaurant, Michelin Bib Gourmand-recognized Alma showcases chef-owner Anna Chen’s Hakka Chinese roots and her experience in Italian kitchens—think scallion bao served with stracciatella cheese or Parmesan-tapioca fritters. Chen’s favourite Italian ingredient is pasta, which she makes fresh for specials, such as a chitarra-like noodle dish that’s studded with peas and morels and finished with egg yolks à la spaghetti carbonara. “Pasta is so versatile,” says Chen. “You can dress it up or down.”

Photography, Audrey Eve Beauchamp / Cabaret l'Enfer

Domenico Giammarella
(Mimmo) HONG KONG.
THE INGREDIENT: MASCARPONE



At his new Hong Kong restaurant, Mimmo, Montreal-born Domenico Giammarella crafts Italian-inspired pastries with French techniques and Asian flavours, like using milk tea instead of espresso in tiramisu. His go-to Italian ingredient? Mascarpone. “It’s my jack of all trades,” he says, adding that he uses it to stabilize creams and ice creams, rescue splits or add richness and moisture to cakes. Giammarella says he likes the touch of acidity and fresh cheese flavour mascarpone adds to his desserts without the sweetness.

Massimo Piedimonte
(Cabaret l’Enfer) MONTREAL
THE INGREDIENT: STRACCIATELLA



At Cabaret l’Enfer, chef-owner Massimo Piedimonte serves an Italian-French menu that highlights his maternal Northern Italian roots most of the year, and shifts to his father’s central-southern heritage in summer. One way he does so is with the velvety homemade stracciatella that he uses in a burrata antipasti and that has become a signature of the restaurant. Piedimonte says it’s a perfect match with raw Matane shrimp from Quebec. “Being able to recreate this Italian classic combination with local produce is very exciting,” he says. ●