

TRATTORIA MOLLIE: A HOSPITALITY SUCCESS STORY



In difficult economic times when people are finding it hard to gain employment in the hospitality business, Trattoria Mollie is an example of how someone can create his or her own job as long as he or she has the passion for food and drinks. Trattoria Mollie is an Italian restaurant in Santa Barbara, CA, owned by Chef Mollie Ahlstrand and managed by Ali Ahlstrand. Famous guests have included President Obama and Oprah Winfrey. The restaurant and Chef Mollie have been featured in "O" magazine, and National Geographic Passport to the Best has recognized Trattoria Mollie as one of the "Ten Best Destination & Special Restaurants in the World." Eating out is expensive, and most people do not do it, unless it is a treat. Eating at a fine restaurant is not just about the food or beverages, but about the experience. Trattoria Mollie offers an unhurried social experience, with plenty of time to interact with dining companions. It is located near the beach in Santa Barbara, where there is plenty of parking. The servers do not rush people when they eat, and are patient in explaining what is on the menu. When people cannot decide what to have for dessert, the staff knows to make the situation less awkward by suggesting a sample of everything. Employment in the restaurant business means smiling and greeting guests to create a setting for relaxed conversation and enjoyment of food and wine. A great hostess is someone gracious and confident. The host controls the flow of the restaurant and knows what is going on at each table at all times. On busy nights, a host has to make decisions under pressure to accommodate each guest, making sure each person has the best experience. Trattoria Mollie is appropriately busy, but not crammed so full that the noise level becomes intolerable. It does not offer gimmicks, such as coupons or discount meals to make guests paying more feel cheated. The tables are spaced far enough apart that guests feel like others are listening to their conversations. The food at Trattoria Mollie, and some of the staff speak Italian, and really understand the difference between Spaghetti con Pancetta e Ricotta salata and Gnocchi alla Sorrentina. The seafood is real. The cooking is simple without too many ingredients, but still some novelty in the flavors. The dishes are fresh. When people leave after lunch or dinner, the guests are thanked. Maintaining composure at all times while working in hospitality is what keeps a venue warm and welcoming.

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