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# The French Connection - How A New Chef Gives New Life To Fig & Olive



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One chef, [Alain Allegretti](#), has made that his mission. The French-born, award-winning chef of Fig & Olive is recreating the south-of-France lifestyle, one salad niçoise at a time, and in doing so, is elevating the already popular restaurant brand to another level all together.

On a recent visit to experience Chef Allegretti's new menu at the group's Meatpacking District location, I was taken to the Cote d'Azur, by way of Spain's northern coast, the Italian Riviera, and a little bit of Paris thrown in for good measure.

[Fig & Olive](#), a restaurant group with six locations across the country, may seem like an unlikely landing spot for Allegretti. The chef paid his dues in Michelin-starred restaurants throughout France and New York including the three-star culinary temple Le Louis XV in Monte Carlo under Alain Ducasse. He was lauded as the "king of modern French cuisine" by the New York Times and says that he is excited at the prospect of raising the bar Fig & Olive, which is formerly known more for its casual fare than its now world-class cuisine.

Allegretti was hired by Fig & Olive's new CEO Alexis Blair, who recognized that as challenging as the past 18 months have been for everyone in all avenues of hospitality, the opportunity for reinvention was too much to resist.

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"As we look to the future and to a strong emergence from the pandemic, it is our goal to give our guests something exciting while still staying committed to the core DNA of our restaurants," she says. "Chef Allegretti's style of cooking allows us to do exactly that. It is our mission that with each visit our guests feel as if they are being transported to the South of France and that we inspire the joie de vivre spirit in each of them."

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From my firsthand experience, I can tell you that a visit does.

To start, the airy Meatpacking District location was buzzy and vibrant on a Saturday night with a chic crowd filling the tables and an "I'm on vacation mood" in the air. The wine list had creative and affordable selections from all over the Mediterranean while the cocktails and tequilas, mezcals and other spirits were expansive and interesting.

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Branzino a la Plancha at Fig & Olive FIG & OLIVE

Now let's get into the food—it took me straight to the South of France where I have been many times before and regard as one of the top culinary destinations in the world. Whatever you eat is colorful, fresh and sings of the current season

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urchin was complex, yet simple and loaded with flavor, and the branzino a la plancha- wow. Perfectly crispy skin, moist fish and the kind of dish you can eat everyday.

Desserts made for a refreshing ending—one that wasn't sickly sweet. The citrus crème brulee with grapefruit granita and the lemon rosemary bundt cake with pine nut brittle are as worthy of acclaim as the courses before and just the way we wanted to cap the night.

Here's a fun fact: I've followed Allegretti for several years on Instagram and drool over the food pictures he posts. If there's one chef on social media that resonates with me the most, it's him. To visit Fig & Olive, meet him and taste the cuisine I've been admiring virtually for so long was like a fantasy come true and one that I want to live again.

“I am thrilled to bring some of the dishes which have been the glory of The South of France and adding my unique twists to the menu for guests to experience a true taste of the regions of the Mediterranean Sea,” he told me. “It is my hope to bring guests on a culinary journey through the coasts of the Mediterranean and the ability to capture the true meaning of “joie de vivre” dining - conjuring moments of happiness that will leave guests craving the Fig & Olive experience.”

Yes, Chef Allegretti we do crave it and are now regulars who will come again and again to get our fix.

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