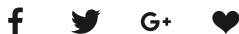


Meet Pierpaolo Ruta of Antica Dolceria Bonajuto

Meet the Local Creatives



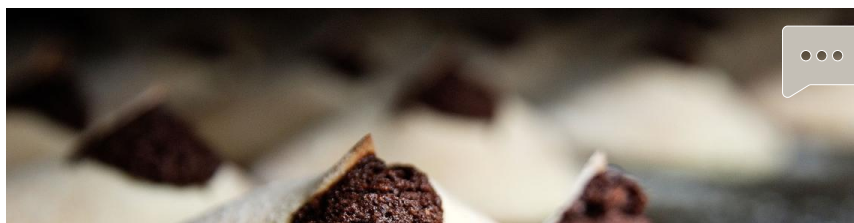
Saturated sunsets, Baroque churches and the theatre of the everyday. That's Modica – hometown of Pierpaolo Ruta, the sixth-generation manager of the oldest chocolate factory in Sicily, Antica Dolceria Bonajuto. We spoke with Pierpaolo to get a native's perspective on the Ragusan town, the region, and its history, geography and confectionery. What emerges is an eclectic picture of Modica drawn by a longtime local in ethnographic terms.

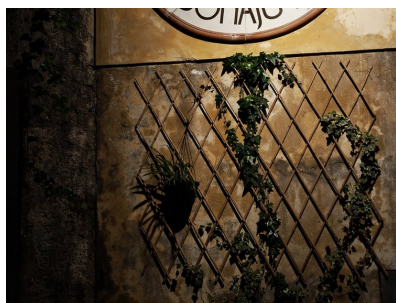


Address - *Corso
Umberto I, 159, 97015
Modica RG, Italy*



Best time to visit -
*Between 9h00 to
20h30*





What does it mean to be a local in Modica?

To me, it means breathing the same air as those who came before me. I chose this profession to keep the fragrances that my grandfather produced alive – when he decided to close the factory in 1992, my father and I took over, with the intention of continuing a family business from this memory.

How does Modica influence your work and creative expression?

We were able to introduce a series of products that made this territory unique all while turning our work into a cultural operation. The local chocolate was brought in by the Spaniards in the 16th century and hadn't evolved since. Through our products we tried to bring out a piece of the territory, turning the chocolate into a vehicle for the characteristics of this land. Since it was a feudal state, Modica was defined as *regnum in regno* – a kingdom within a kingdom. A series of sovereignties meant a series of different cultures, so even in terms of confectionary, we

What makes the place where you live special to you, culturally speaking?

The values – for example, those family values that elsewhere might have disappeared, but that here have continued to be very important. I always say that whenever you go home to your mother's in Modica, even if your head is cracked open, the first thing she asks is whether you've eaten [laughs]. This is something that doesn't change.

And geographically?

The light. When I'm abroad for periods at a time and people ask me what I miss the most about my country, and specifically this part of Sicily, I say the light, which seems to kindle at sunset like a flame, and illuminates the Baroque architecture that distinguishes the whole area of Val di Noto. Modica, Ragusa, Noto, Scicli – the entire region was reconstructed in this very heavy Baroque style after the earthquake of 1693, as though to present a challenge to nature. It is subject to an incredible kind of light that is impossible to define, yet that

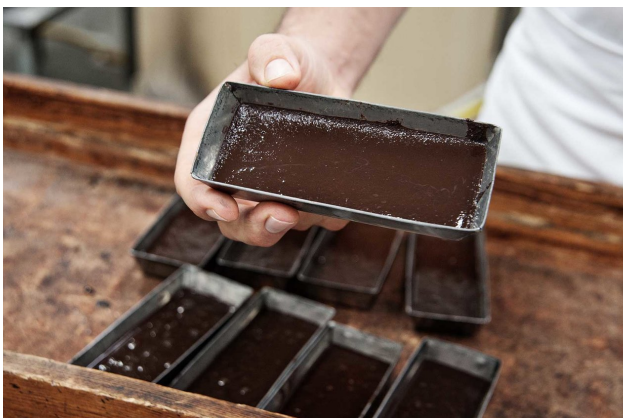


retained the kinds of products that may have disappeared elsewhere. For instance, the local Modican biscuit is made with meat and chocolate – chocolate used to help to preserve meat – so it's a very nutritious cookie, one that Leonardo Sciascia, a Sicilian author, called "a travel biscuit."

ties me to the territory over and over again.



"Quote example. A scaccia is a kind of street food, like a pizza that's been wrapped about itself a few times. It typically consists of unleaved dough and tomatoes"



Is there a dish that you think best captures the soul of your city?

Le scacce. A scaccia is a kind of street food, like a pizza that's been wrapped about itself a few times. It typically consists of unleaved dough and



tomatoes, but it can also be made with sausage and ricotta. Our most important heritage is surely our local cuisine, and le scacce encapsulate what street food can be in this region.

Is there a local tip you could share?

The Cartellone neighbourhood is great for walks. Formerly the Jewish ghetto, it's a labyrinth of small streets and alleys and it can only be accessed on foot. By walking up the incline you can observe Modica in all its monumentality; an incredible panorama of the city lies before you. It hasn't been discovered by many tourists yet, nor is it heavily populated by locals, so it's isolated and very peaceful. My grandparents lived there, so I go there to breath.



Pierpaolo Ruta is co-owner of the Antica Dolceria Bonajuto [Specify what he will do as co-host of the Sicily Tour?]

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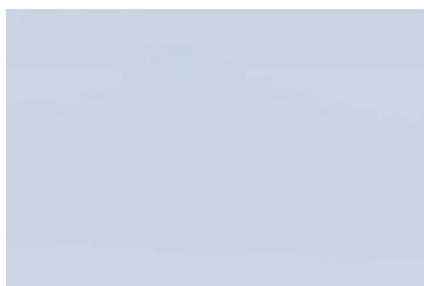
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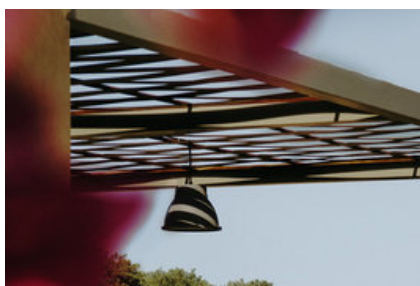


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