

In-House

with Tony Abou-Ganim



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Me & My Negroni



I recently did some cocktail seminars aboard Crystal Cruises' *Serenity*. I met up with the ship (I learned quickly not to call it a boat) in Venice, where I first enjoyed several Bellinis at Harry's Bar before going aboard. Two days later we docked in Livorno, the gateway to Florence. I was about to begin my quest to find the birthplace of my favorite tippie, the Negroni.

According to Lucca Picchi, head bartender at Caffè Rivoire, in his book *Sulle tracce del Conte: la vera storia del cocktail 'Negroni' (On the Tracks of the Count: The True Story of the Negroni Cocktail)*, Italian count Camillo Negroni started adding gin to the classic Americano to give the drink more of a kick. Apparently the bar he frequented in Florence, circa 1920, was Bar Casoni on the famous Via Tornabuoni, and the gentleman working behind the stick was Fosco Scarselli.

I attempted to search out Bar Casoni and found it to have been closed up long ago. But I did happen into a charming restaurant called Trattoria La Madia, where I had a delicious risotto with fresh porcini mushrooms and met bartender Gennaro Fabbrocino, who had worked at Caffè Rivoire and knew Lucca Picchi. He claimed that the drink was actually first mixed at a joint called Café Giacosa, also located on Via Tornabuoni. He made me a wonderful Negroni, on the rocks with

a slice of orange, as they like to serve them in Italy, and told the story of Count Negroni adding gin to the Americano. (The Americano is also known as the Milano-Torino, from the origin of its ingredients: Campari from Milan and Cinzano from Turin).

I set out to find Café Giacosa, and find it I did, still in operation, though closed that afternoon in honor of All Saints Day. It is now located inside Roberto Cavalli's beautiful showroom—great bars giving way to high fashion, a bit of a shame. So I decided to seek out Caffè Rivoire and ask Lucca himself. I located the classic caffè in the Piazza Signoria, only to discover that Lucca was not working. I did, however, enjoy one last masterful Negroni in the city that made this cocktail famous before heading back to the ship with fond memories and a great desire to return.

I, for one, must get to the bottom of this, but for now I'll settle for getting to the bottom of a final Negroni back onboard the *Serenity*.



Negroni

1 oz. Plymouth gin
1 oz. Campari
1 oz. Martini & Rossi sweet vermouth

In an ice-filled mixing glass, add Plymouth gin, Campari and Martini & Rossi vermouth. Stir until well blended. Strain into a chilled cocktail glass. Garnish with a burnt orange twist.

Americano

1 oz. Campari
1 oz. Cinzano Rosso sweet vermouth
chilled soda water
Build in an ice filled tall highball glass, top with chilled soda water, stir. Garnish with a slice of orange. ■■