



PRESS RELEASE

THE CREMONINI GROUP: Agape, “The Gourmet Train with famous chefs” departs

Famous Italian chefs board the Eurostar. This is an initiative of the Cremonini Group that with its Chef Express brand, provides restaurant services on the Italian State trains.

In practice, some of Italy’s most renowned gastronomic chefs will, in turn, offer dining car customers specially prepared gourmet menus on the ETR 500 on the Rome-Milan-Rome route (the ETR 9414, departing from Rome at 12.30 p.m. - the ETR 9429, arriving at Milan at 18.00).

This innovation commences on 30 September and will continue throughout the month of October. The first Chef to “manage” the kitchen of the dining car will be Antonello Colonna, noted for his restaurant at Labico, in the Rome province. This restaurant is recommended and highly praised in all the most important gastronomic guidebooks and well known amongst aficionados of the traditional roman food that Antonello Colonna has wisely personalized.

Antonello Colonna is famous abroad as well as in Italy, above all in the United States: his “Vabene” restaurant heads the list of the “in” restaurants in New York. He is an eclectic chef, therefore, dedicated to spreading the art of cooking throughout the world and has been chosen by Agape to make meals on-board the “Gourmet” even more “magical”.

The first “Gourmet” train was inaugurated in May '97 and over the years has been extremely successful. Agape, with this initiative, which further enhances the quality standards of the “Gourmet” train, has taken into account the precise needs of the passenger to travel in even more comfortable and enticing circumstances.

Antonello Colonna has prepared five menus, one for each day of the week that from Monday to Friday will tempt the Chef Express customers. Menus which offer, for example, rollè of guinea fowl with chestnuts, butterfly pasta with a mushroom and sweet pepper sauce, beef nodino in a pillow of pastry, a selection of cheeses, mushroom vol-au-vents, all accompanied by an excellent wine list. The price, for the full menu (excluding beverages), remains unchanged at Lire 58,000, but it is also possible to select a first or second course only.

In order to continue to maintain the same standard of quality, the Chef Express personnel will be accompanied on-board train by Antonello Colonna himself, or by one of his assistants. This will take place from the commencement of meal preparation, that is, in the Agape “terminals” before boarding the train. The logistics in the terminals are, in fact, extremely efficient and diversified: as is necessary to ensure guaranteed quality, product freshness and adequate technology for loading and unloading fresh produce on-board the trains.

Agape has two principal "terminals", at Rome and Milan, and 14 peripheral "terminals" located throughout Italy.

This operative capability has secured, for the Railway Division of Cremonini S.p.A., the sought after recognition from the International Rail Catering Group (the international association of all the companies in the railway restaurant sector). The I.R.C.G. has, in fact, designated Cremonini as "the most innovative rail caterer" of 1999; confirmation of its role as Europe's leader in catering services on-board trains. It is evident that the high standards achieved by Agape in the provision of on-board train restaurant services is due, to a major extent, to the perfect synchrony and synergy between the ground and "on rail" services

The restaurant service proposals offered by Chef Express on all other Italian State railway trains continue to be ever more enticing. In total Agape provides services on 770 trains, with carefully chosen and varied proposals that are particularly directed towards satisfying the diverse needs of the passengers. This includes complete meals, subdivided into traditional dishes, light menus, with a smaller number of dishes, quick snacks and mid-morning and mid-afternoon breaks, with deserts and beverages. The bars adjacent to the dining car are always well stocked with cafeteria products.

The results from these menus have been completely gratifying, particularly when one takes into account the fact that when Cremonini S.p.A. commenced providing services on the State Railway trains, the customers served totalled about 3 million, with a turnover of Lire 36 billion; whilst today, after 9 years, the Railway Division serves more than 22 million customers and the turnover exceeds Lire 100 billion.

Agape is also on-board numerous trains going abroad with its Chef Express brand: on the French TGV which travels on the Milan-Turin-Lyon route, and on the modern "Cisalpino" trains which connect Italy to Switzerland and Germany. The French Railways have recently renewed, until 2001, the contract with Cremonini S.p.A. for restaurant services on board the TGV, which confirms the good results attained.

Agape offers a wide range of restaurant services on the ground at the principal Italian railway stations (including Rome Termini and Tiburtina, Florence, Turin, Genoa, Mestre, Pisa, Ferrara, etc.). The company holds a leading role in this sector with a market share of 30%. Last April Cremonini S.p.A. also won the tender for the Buffet management at the French railway station Lyon Perrache. This constitutes a starting point for a development strategy projected towards Europe.

The Press Office

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