



Eating... Our Words

100 Favorite Dishes

100 Favorite Dishes 2013: No. 89, *Porchetta e Fagioli* at Giacomo's Cibo e Vino

By Kaitlin Steinberg Tue., Sep. 3 2013 at 9:00 AM

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Photo by Kaitlin Steinberg

This year, leading up to our annual Menu of Menus issue, Kaitlin Steinberg counts down her 100 favorite dishes as she eats her way through Houston. She'll compile a list of the 100 dishes she thinks are the most awesome, most creative and, of course, most delicious in town. It's a list of her personal favorites, things she thinks any visitor or Houstonian ought to try at least once and dishes that seem particularly indicative of the ever-changing Houston food-scape. It's a list to drool over.

Sitting at the bar at [Giacomo's Cibo e Vino](#) recently, slowly savoring *mozzarella in carrozza*, a grown-up grilled cheese, and a bubbling bowl of *porchetta e fagioli*, I felt I could just have easily been enjoying a quiet meal in a Florentine trattoria. I had a crisp glass of rosé, a good rapport with the bartender and nowhere to be but there, eating, enjoying the evening.

I have a bit of an obsession with pork in any form, but the pork butt is one of my favorite cuts due to its generally long cooking time that allows it to fall apart with a whisper. The pork butt in the *porchetta e fagioli* is no exception. The menu says it's aggressively seasoned, but I would argue that it's appropriately seasoned with generous helpings of fennel and rosemary to accentuate the earthiness of the pork.

The pork butt is stewed in a mixture of tomatoes, garlic and cannellini beans for up to six hours so all the herbs and spices mingle together in glorious harmony. Every couple of bites, there might be a standout flavor -- a pop of sage, a slow burn of garlic, a bright tomato. And mellowing everything out are the buttery cannellini beans, a staple of Tuscan cuisine and the ideal partner for rosemary, sage and pork.

It's soothing food, the kind of dish I'd want to eat in the middle of winter, when the sky is overcast and the trees are rattling in the cold wind. I got a half order of the dish, but I could easily see a family sharing a full order, scooping out hunks of tender pork and full cloves of roasted garlic until the bowl is empty and their bellies are full.

As soon as I left Giacomo's after eating there for the first time, I called my mother to gloat.

"It reminded me of eating in Florence," I told her excitedly.

"I don't even want to hear it," she said, knowing my descriptions of the perfect porchetta would make her jealous.

I told her that next time she was in Houston, I'd take her to Giacomo's, and if she was lucky, she might even get to meet Giacomo himself. I didn't tell her that Giacomo is the name of the owner's dog, and not actually an amiable Italian gentleman who would sweep by our table and inquire about our meal in sing-song Italian. Some fantasies are better left unmarred by the truth wagging its furry tail.