

FOOD NETWORK

# FISHING SEASON

Milan restaurateur Enrico Buonocore's seafood chain, Langosteria, now opening in St. Moritz, has become a destination for foodies and fashionistas alike.

BY JAY CHESHES PHOTOGRAPHY BY DANILO SCARPATI



**SEA CHANGE** Langosteria founder and CEO Enrico Buonocore at one of the restaurant group's four Milan outposts. The newest branch has just opened in Saint Moritz, Switzerland.

**T**HE NEW ski-in, ski-out Langosteria that just opened at the foot of the slopes in St. Moritz has many of the same features as the original name-sake restaurant in Milan's Design District: plush-red banquettes, wood-fired robata grill, high-piled seafood towers. But there are Alpine peaks out the window. And the waitstaff navigate the 150-seat dining room and an equally expansive terrace in parka-topped uniforms custom-made by Moncler.

This season, the St. Moritz menu includes seafood with white-corn polenta and king crab fregola—new dishes developed for the chalet branch, specifically—along with baked potatoes served with a choice of four caviars, as part of a collaboration with Caviar Kaspia in Paris.

The opening, Buonocore's seventh Langosteria—and second outside of Italy—continues an ambitious push that began in 2018 when Remo Ruffini, chairman and CEO of Moncler, took a 40 percent stake in the brand through his investment vehicle, Archive. “We’ve been regular [Langosteria] customers, me and my family, since 2011,” says Ruffini’s son Pietro, who works with his father as managing director of Archive. “We really appreciated the way it was always innovating, evolving, opening new restaurants, changing the menu, year after year.”

The Ruffinis made the original introductions that helped bring Langosteria to Paris, opening in the LVMH-owned Hotel Cheval Blanc in September 2021. “We have the same ideas about quality, positioning, creativity,” says Buonocore of his partners. Together they’re planning a second stand-alone Paris branch to meet the high demand along the Seine. “We have a very long waitlist,” says Buonocore of the Cheval Blanc restaurant. Other European cities are also on the drawing boards. “I love London, I love Madrid, I love Copenhagen, too,” says Buonocore, reciting a wish list of Langosteria locations.

The restaurateur, whose family came from the Amalfi Coast, grew up in a working-class suburb of Milan, in a tight-knit family that came together, he says, around the dining room table. “We are a very typical southern Italian family,” >

he says. “We want to eat well every day.”

After a short-lived career in his early 20s hawking hair-care products for Corani & Partners (“After six months I was the best seller at the company,” he says), he opened his own Milan bar and restaurant, Caffe Savona, launched in 2004. The dinner menu included his mom’s signature eggplant Parmesan. “When I’d say, ‘This was made by my mamma,’ everyone would order it,” he says.

Catering to the surrounding design businesses earned him a fashionable following, and a built-in clientele for his next venture, the first Langosteria, which he opened just up the street. Buonocore oversaw every element of the high-end seafood restaurant, which was inspired by classic brasseries he’d visited in Paris, like Bofinger and Au Pied de Cochon, and by the conviviality inherent in sharing a generous seafood platter. (The name is a portmanteau of *langoustine* and *osteria*.) “I designed it myself, because I had no money for an architect,” he says. “Langosteria is my university. I’ve learned on the job, year by year.”

To ramp up the energy, he packed the tables in tight—a hallmark of every restaurant he’s opened since. “A little bit of confusion is good for the crowd,” he says. In the kitchen he installed high-powered odor extractors. “One of the problems of a fish restaurant is after dinner you go home with the smell on your clothes—oh, *mamma mia*,” he says.

Buonocore made ingredient sourcing a priority, scouring the continent for premium seafood—Mazara red prawns from Sicily, blue lobster from Brittany, baby squid from the Adriatic Sea. He returned from a trip to Boston smitten by the king crab legs he ate there and soon tracked down an Italian supplier—the ingredient was largely unknown in Milan at the time, he says. The supplier eventually became a Langosteria investor. Recently Buonocore found a new source in Norway for top-shelf live langoustines. He was so impressed by the quality that he committed to buying up the entire catch. “When they don’t catch any, we don’t have any langoustines—no problem,” says Buonocore. “I think it’s important to put the best on the table, but the best is not every day.”

The second restaurant of the group, the slightly less formal Langosteria Bistrot, opened around the corner from the original in 2012. The more-casual-still Langosteria Café (“very fast, very American style,” he says) debuted near the Duomo in 2016. A beachfront outpost followed a year later, facing the sea at the Bagni Fiore resort near Portofino; a regular at the Milan restaurants had approached with the deal. Last summer, at Buonocore’s suggestion, former Dior CEO Pietro Beccari opened a Dioriviera pop-up



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—ENRICO BUONOCORE

shop in the villa Buonocore owns next door.

Networking with the high-powered diners who fill his restaurant dining rooms, Buonocore has expanded his business over the years. At a Dior Cruise fashion show in Seville, Spain, last spring, he met Ramon Mac-Crohon, CEO of the Caviar Kaspia Group, which has also been growing internationally at a rapid clip.

They launched a collaboration in Milan in December, serving signature Caviar Kaspia dishes—with co-branded plates and serving vessels—to diners at Langosteria Cucina, the tasting menu restaurant with a focus on family-style dishes that Buonocore opened in late 2021. “We started sharing each other’s passions,” says Mac-Crohon, “not only as restaurateurs but as experience creators.” ●



**GOOD CATCH**

From top: Paccheri with sea bass, a Langosteria standard; a new polenta dish created for Langosteria St. Moritz.