

DINING IN PRISON: ULTIMATE CULINARY EXPERIENCE



Not far away from Pisa, a famous prison, the Fortezza Medicea, has been a place of punishment for the most serious criminals for about 500 years. The building itself resembles a large majestic castle. It was built by Lorenzo the Great in the 1500s and belongs to the top high-security prisons in Italy. It is also a stage for an extraordinary social experiment. An Italian restaurant was recently opened here. The entire staff was recruited from the rough inmates serving their long-term sentences at the Fortezza.

The restaurant itself is apparently guarded more heavily than Vatican. Upon entering, the visitors are required to pass through security checks and metal detectors. Cell phones are absolutely prohibited as well as all sharp or metal objects. One may wonder what makes the visitors actually think it's worth all this hustle. Well, the bizarre setting and the experience itself. The mind wonders what it is like to get served by murderers and thieves - the thrill is unexpectedly hard to resist and thus, the restaurant has become one of the most appealing places in the area.

Being served delicious Italian dishes on plastic plates, and eating with plastic cutlery may sound unusual, yet it is undoubtedly an unforgettable experience. The restaurant is housed in a deconsecrated chapel. Even though the music is provided by Bruno, a pianist serving a life-sentence, the setting is not overly luxurious. Plain tables and wooden chairs - not too fancy, yet the more impressive.

The prisoners' response is very positive and the experiment seems working. The inmates master their skills and if they ever make it out of the prison, they have a chance of starting over. It may not take long, before a similar restaurant is opened elsewhere - clearly, it's working.

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