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Ambassador class 親善大廚

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From humble Italian-family kitchen to Michelin-starred greatness as an ambassador of Italy's cuisine in Hong Kong, chef Umberto Bombana has come a long way. 由意大利家庭簡樸的廚房出發，到躋身米芝蓮星級大廚之列，在香港被視為意大利廚藝大使的名廚Umberto Bombana，多年來走過漫長的廚藝旅程。 **By Chris Dwyer**

Ambassador class

親善大廚

Umberto Bombana already had seven Michelin stars tucked under his apron, but the recognition of peers is crucial to any self-respecting chef, and so the Hong Kong-based Italian was thrilled to receive a prestigious Diners Club Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2017 Asia's 50 Best Restaurants ceremony in February. When the accolade was announced at the Bangkok gathering, 600 guests – including many of the greatest chefs in the region – all rose to their feet, cheering and clapping at the modest culinary giant's deserved triumph.

Hailing from a village in Bergamo, a province in the northern-Italian region of Lombardy with a rich tradition of hospitality, Bombana has described himself as an "ambassador for Italian flavour". He was gracious and humble at the awards ceremony, effusively thanking his team, including those at his much-lauded 8½ Otto e Mezzo Bombana restaurant in Hong Kong, the only Italian dining room outside of Italy to attain the three-star Michelin rating.

Bombana moved East from Italy almost 25 years ago to take up a position at The Ritz Carlton, Hong Kong. As an aspiring chef, he had studied his art at a culinary school in Italy, and he was apprentice to one of the Mediterranean country's most revered master chefs while still a teenager, but his training actually began in the family kitchen, where two generations of women instilled in him the fundamentals of home-style Italian cooking. "In my house," recalls the chef, "I spent Sunday morning, and sometimes Saturday afternoon, with my mother and grandmother preparing a great meal for Sunday."

While Bombana was pleased to discover that helping out at home could result in modest financial reward ("When you are young," he says, "you

對廚師而言，同行的肯定毫無疑問是至高榮譽。難怪當意大利名廚Umberto Bombana於2月舉行的「2017年亞洲50最佳餐廳」頒獎典禮上獲頒Diners Club終身成就獎時，定居香港多年、名下已擁有七顆米芝蓮星星的他依然難掩興奮之情。典禮於曼谷舉行，在宣布獎項一刻，在場600位賓客，包括不少亞洲頂級名廚均全部起立，為這位謙厚的廚藝巨匠獲得實至名歸的榮譽而歡呼拍掌。

Bombana出生於意大利北部倫巴底大區貝加莫省的一條村落，當地人向來熱情好客，他形容自己為「意大利美食親善大使」。在典禮上，這位名廚表現親和、謙厚，並衷心感謝自己的團隊，包括在屢獲殊榮的香港餐廳8½ Otto e Mezzo Bombana的同僚：該餐廳是唯一一家位於意大利境外而獲得米芝蓮三星榮譽的意大利食肆。

Bombana約於25年前來到東方發展，加入香港麗嘉酒店。他以廚師為志業，曾於意大利一家廚藝學校就讀，少年時也曾跟隨意大利一位備受尊崇的大廚學藝。不過，他最早的廚藝訓練卻是在自家的廚房開始，從祖母及母親那裡學到意大利傳統家常菜式的基本烹調技巧。Bombana憶述：「在老家，每個星期日早上，有時候連星期六下午，我都會與媽媽及祖母一起準備周日的大餐。」

雖然幫忙做家務可以獲得「豐厚」打賞讓Bombana感到高興不已（他解釋：「年輕人收到少少零用和打賞就會覺得自己很富有」），但真正推動他前進的，卻是對烹飪的熱愛。13歲那年，他報讀位於貝加莫省Clusone鎮的廚藝學校Centro di Formazione Alberghiera。到17歲，他加入位於米蘭西面的著名餐館Antica Osteria del Ponte，跟隨名廚Ezio Santini學習。

Chef Umberto Bombana
名廚Umberto Bombana



get pocket money and tips – you think you’re rich”), it was his passion for cooking that drove him forward, and at the age of 13 he enrolled at the Centro di Formazione Alberghiera culinary school in Clusone, Bergamo. At 17, he became an apprentice to Chef Ezio Santin at the renowned Antica Osteria del Ponte restaurant just west of Milan.

“In Italy, you start quite young, and I think it’s right to get introduced to the real world at an early age,” Bombana says. “You start to work in the garden, looking after the flowers and herbs. Then you start cleaning dishes, helping the ladies, you work a bit in the bar, and then you start to help the chef. Wherever you are needed, you go, so you quickly get an idea of what the industry is all about. It was a learning process – a good starting point if you wanted to go deeper in the kitchen, or focus on the dining room, but the kitchen was always my thing.”

Bombana fondly recalls his time at Antica Osteria del Ponte, a bastion of Italian culinary excellence and one of Italy’s finest kitchens. The restaurant obtained two Michelin stars while Bombana was working there (later earning a third), and he credits Santin not only with teaching him technique, but to have the greatest respect for ingredients and to take nothing from nature for granted. It’s a philosophy that stayed with Bombana when he went on to work his magic in Los Angeles, Paris and New York.

In 2003 he moved to Hong Kong, and seven years later would open his own restaurant. He has never looked back: tables at his three-Michelin-starred fine dining restaurant 8½ Otto e Mezzo Bombana, located in the heart of Hong Kong’s Central district, are always booked-out well in advance, and in 2012 he opened a second outpost of the restaurant in Shanghai; it was awarded two stars in the first edition of the Michelin Guide Shanghai 2017. A third opened in 2015 in Macau, and it has one star in the Michelin Guide Hong Kong & Macau 2017.

At 8½ Otto e Mezzo Bombana, the chef is constantly pushing the boundaries of traditional Italian cuisine, with a boundless creativity that nevertheless puts prime importance on quality produce and the honest food.

Bombana is perhaps best known for his love of truffles. While black truffles feature prominently on his menus, it is white truffles in particular that seem to hold a special place in his heart – perhaps partly because

This page: Chef Bombana mentors a young chef in the kitchen at 8½ Otto e Mezzo Bombana
Opposite, clockwise from top left: Veal Cheek Agnolotti; and Langoustine Salad, both at 8½ Otto e Mezzo Bombana; Bombana with students at a cooking demonstration at ICI

本頁: Bombana指導在8½ Otto e Mezzo Bombana 廚房裡工作的年輕廚師
對頁左上圖起順時針: 8½ Otto e Mezzo Bombana招牌菜小牛臉頰意式餃子及小龍蝦沙律; 名廚Bombana在國際廚藝學院主持廚藝示範後, 與學員合照留影

📖 In my house, I spent Sunday morning, and sometimes Saturday afternoon, with my mother and grandmother preparing a great meal for Sunday

在老家, 每個星期日早上, 有時候連星期六下午, 我都會與媽媽及祖母一起準備周日的大餐。 📖



Bombana解釋:「在意大利, 人們很年輕便入行, 我覺得早點開始接觸真正的工作環境是好事。當時, 由照顧花園裡的花草和協助洗碗碟的女士, 到負責酒吧的工作和協助廚師, 哪裡需要你就要去哪裡幫忙, 因此很快就會明白餐飲行業是怎麼回事。這是學習過程——不管之後希望在廚房發展, 還是想當樓面工作, 這都是很好的起點; 而我一直喜歡廚房的工作。」

Bombana懷憶在Antica Osteria del Ponte工作的時光。那是意大利烹飪藝術的橋頭堡, 也是意大利的頂級食肆。Bombana在餐廳工作期間, 它已是米芝蓮二星級食府, 後來更獲得三星的肯定。在餐廳主廚Santin身上, Bombana不僅學到烹飪技巧, 還學會尊重食材, 不要將大自然的贈予視為理所當然。後來, 他帶著這個理念到洛杉磯、巴黎和紐約發展。

2003年, Bombana移居香港, 七年後在香港開設自己的餐廳。他一直馬不停蹄: 位於香港中環心臟地帶的米芝蓮三星餐廳8½ Otto e Mezzo Bombana, 訂座經常一早爆滿; 2012年在上海開設第二家8½ Otto e Mezzo Bombana, 並於2017年首次推出的《上海米其林指南》內獲選為二星級餐廳; 2015年在澳門開業的第三間餐廳, 亦獲得《香港澳門米芝蓮指南》的一星肯定。





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讓新一代知道我們所做的事情、認識廚師的世界，這點十分重要。
我們必須主動接觸新一代



在8½ Otto e Mezzo Bombana，這位大廚不斷以無窮的創意將傳統意大利菜推向極限，但萬變不離其宗，最重要的依然是以優質食材烹調真正的美食。

Bombana對松露的熱愛遠近馳名，餐牌上任何時候都有以黑松露入饌的菜式，但白松露對他來說擁有更特別的位置，部分原因可能是這種食材大部分來自意大利，尤以埃蒙特大區阿爾巴鎮郊區的作品最為著名。在10月中至12月白松露收成期間，熱愛白松露的饕客一定要到8½ Otto e Mezzo Bombana朝聖，品嚐Bombana特別炮製的白松露菜式。Bombana素有白松露之王美譽，擅長以簡單的食材襯托這種名貴菌，突顯其濃烈而獨特的味道。

除了前述的三家高級食肆，Bombana在香港也開設了兩間氣氛比較輕鬆隨意的餐廳。CIAK – In the Kitchen首先於2013年開業，同樣位於中環，自2015年起每年均獲得米芝蓮一星餐廳的榮譽。同品牌的第二家食肆CIAK All Day Italian則於2016年在香港島東的太古城開業，並於2017年獲米芝蓮「車胎人美食推介」殊榮。

「我一直渴望在頂級餐廳工作，所以便朝這方向走。不過就算預算不高，也可以做出可口美食。例如CIAK的有機發酵薄餅，價錢不貴但非常美味，所以關鍵是把事情做好，不要只想著要成為星級名廚。」

the majority are found in Italy, most famously in the countryside around Alba in Piedmont. When in season – white truffles are harvested from mid-October to December – 8½ Otto e Mezzo Bombana is a prime destination for truffle devotees, with Bombana, often hailed as the king of white truffles, offering special menus that showcase the coveted fungi alongside simple ingredients that allow its intense and distinct flavour to shine.

Aside from his three fine dining establishments, Bombana has opened less-formal eateries in Hong Kong. CIAK – In the Kitchen, also in Central, launched in 2013 and it has been awarded a Michelin star each year since 2015. A second location, CIAK All Day Italian opened in Taikoo Shing, to the east of Hong Kong Island, in 2016 and this eatery was awarded the Michelin Bib Gourmand in 2017.

"I had this passion that I wanted to be more in fine restaurants, so I followed this path, but you can do great food even if it's not very expensive. For example, at CIAK we do organic fermented pizza, which is very good and inexpensive, so the point here is to do something right," says Bombana. "Don't always try to be the superstar."

Never content to rest on his laurels, as the expansion of his culinary empire thus far has shown, Bombana has recently launched a third

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雖然已擁有如此規模的飲食王國，但Bombana永遠不會滿足於現狀。他最近推出第三個餐飲構思——於今年7月開業的Octavium意大利餐廳，就是他探索新意念的地方。這家小巧精緻的餐廳，菜式會不時變換，有點像私房菜館與美食實驗室二合為一的空間。Bombana會在這裡嘗試各種新的烹飪概念，但用心烹調、對烹飪懷抱熱忱的核心理念不會改變。新餐廳與位於中環的8½ Otto e Mezzo Bombana只有舉步之遙，Bombana打算兩邊兼顧，而Octavium將會是他發揮創新烹調方法的好地方。

Opposite: Aged ham, cheese and truffles are on the menu at 8½ Otto e Mezzo Bombana

This page: Chef Bombana with his beloved white truffles

對頁：陳年風乾火腿、芝士和松露都是8½ Otto e Mezzo BOMBANA常用的食材

本頁：名廚Bombana與他喜愛的食材白松露

concept. Octavius Italian Restaurant opened in July as a space in which Bombana can explore new ideas. A small and constantly-changing menu will be served from the private kitchen-like space that doubles up as an experimental culinary laboratory. Bombana hopes to employ some new concepts to present his cooking, but plans to stay true to his culinary philosophy which is cooking with heart and passion. Within walking distance of 8½ Otto e Mezzo Bombana in Hong Kong's Central, the chef aims to spend time in both establishments, with Octavius offering a prime opportunity to develop new and innovative ways of creating his acclaimed cuisine.

Bombana keeps busy in other ways, too. Having spent decades honing his skills, he is constantly sharing those skills with those around him, influencing the next generation of chefs in Asia, both within his own kitchens and outside them. The acclaimed chef recently hosted a culinary demonstration at the International Culinary Institute (ICI) – where five of his kitchen staff at 8½ Otto e Mezzo Bombana in Hong Kong are graduates from – joining an illustrious roster of culinary legends that includes Joan Roca from Spain's El Celler de Can Roca, Lanshu Chen of Le Môt in Taiwan, and Virgilio Martínez Véliz, whose flagship restaurant Central Restaurante is in Peru, as honorary advisors.

The chef demonstrated a selection of his most popular dishes from 8½ Otto e Mezzo Bombana, including his Mayura signature tenderloin, featuring his favoured ingredient in the form of truffle jus and “melanosporum” black truffle. He was helped in the kitchen by two members of his team, Steven and Eddie, both of whom are alumni of ICI.

“I’m so proud to be part of this,” Bombana says. “It’s very important to show the new generation what we do – what the chef’s world is. We must go out to the new generation.”

Having the opportunity to learn from one of the greats, with multiple Michelin stars to his name, is a privilege. But Bombana is keen to share that he is still learning, as should the next generation of top-flight chefs throughout their careers, whether they end up working in Michelin-starred kitchens or in any other of an enormous array of catering opportunities that exists. “You have to have a ‘wow’ every day,” the Italian says. “There’s always something. It’s a learning process, as is life.”

This page: Charles Reed, Group Managing Director, Asia's 50 Best Restaurants presents Bombana with the Lifetime Achievement Award

Opposite, clockwise from top: Dining room at 8½ Otto e Mezzo Bombana; Lemon Tart, Lemon Curd, Soft Meringue, Vanilla Ice cream; and Prawn Fettuccine, both at CIAK – In The Kitchen

本頁: Bombana從亞洲50最佳餐廳集團董事總經理Charles Reed手上接過終身成就獎
對頁上圖起順時針: 8½ Otto e Mezzo Bombana餐廳; CIAK – In The Kitchen餐廳的檸檬撻配檸檬醬、軟蛋白霜餅和雲呢拿雪糕, 以及大蝦意大利闊條麵

“You have to have a ‘wow’ every day. There’s always something. It’s a learning process, as is life.”

你每天都要發掘『驚歎』的事物, 總有什麼能令你驚歎的。
廚師工作跟人生一樣, 都是學習的過程。



Bombana不僅忙著發展其飲食王國, 鑽研廚藝數十年的他, 也不時抽空跟身邊的廚師分享烹飪心得, 以及向亞洲區內的年輕廚師 (對象並不局限於自家餐廳廚房裡的員工) 傳授技藝。他與多位飲食界傳奇人物, 如西班牙餐廳El Celler de Can Roca的Joan Roca、台灣樂沐法式餐廳的陳嵐舒及於秘魯開設旗艦餐廳Central Restaurante的Virgilio Martínez Véliz, 均為國際廚藝學院的榮譽顧問。不久前, 這位知名大廚才於國際廚藝學院主持烹飪示範。

他當天示範了多道在8½ Otto e Mezzo Bombana大受歡迎的拿手好菜, 包括黑松露Mayura招牌臉頰肉 (採用他喜歡的食材黑松露烹調, 以牛臉頰肉配黑松露汁和一片片的黑松露) 等。在示範裡擔任助手的廚師之中, 也有兩位國際廚藝學院的畢業生——Steven和Eddie。事實上, 在8½ Otto e Mezzo Bombana的廚房裡共有五位ICI畢業的廚師。

Bombana說: 「我很榮幸能擔當這角色。讓新一代知道我們所做的事情, 認識廚師的世界, 這點十分重要。我們必須主動接觸新一代。」

年輕廚師能夠有機會向擁有多顆米芝蓮星星的大師級名廚學習固然難能可貴, 但大師卻表示自己也仍然在學習當中, 並認為新一代的廚藝精英, 不管是躋身米芝蓮星級餐廳, 還是從事任何其他餐飲工作, 都應該畢生學習。他說: 「你每天都要發掘『驚歎』的事物, 總有什麼能令你驚歎的。廚師工作跟人生一樣, 都是學習的過程。」

PORTRAIT BY MOSES NG; OTHER PHOTOS BY ASIA'S 50 BEST RESTAURANTS; 8½ OTTO E MEZZO BOMBANA; CIAK- INTERNATIONAL CULINARY INSTITUTE

