

# Dining all'italiana in the U.S.

by Nancy Pawloski

**Primi**  
**West Los Angeles**  
**10405 Pico Boulevard**



The photograph captures the comfortable and tranquil atmosphere of the Primi restaurant in West Los Angeles. The owner, Piero Selvaggio, at right, is already noted for his Valentino restaurant in Santa Monica.

Three years ago, Piero Selvaggio, owner of the internationally known Valentino restaurant in Santa Monica, opened his second restaurant, Primi. And even he was surprised at how popular his second venture proved to be.

Primi features a wide variety of mini portions of exquisitely prepared hot and cold appetizers, salads and pastas, a policy that assures a good sampling

of different flavors. However, heartier appetites are not turned away, since there are some substantial preparations on the menu as well.

A native of Sicily, Selvaggio went to the United States with his family at the age of 17. The Selvaggios settled in Brooklyn and their son quickly got a job washing pots and pans in a cafeteria. Soon afterward, he went to Los Angeles, where an uncle was working

as a waiter. He soon discovered that he enjoyed being around "pretty people eating fine food." So he attended school during the day and studied the restaurant business at night. Eventually, he and a friend put up \$4,500 each to buy the premises now occupied by Valentino.

Selvaggio now speeds back and forth between his restaurants — in his Ferrari — so that he can personally oversee operations in both. Primi's high-tech decor and Selvaggio's emphasis upon small but numerous portions at reasonable prices has clicked with the dining public.

Among the most interesting hot and cold appetizers are the orange-cured salmon wrapped in slices of eggplant and zucchini (\$8), chicken *involtini* or rolls, asparagus and sweet peppers with a Pinot Noir sauce (\$8), duckling crêpes with Cremona *mostarda* (\$9) and grilled eggplant and sweet peppers with *aceto balsamico* (\$7).

Pasta dishes include lobster *cannelloni* (\$12) and *spaghettini cacio e pepe*, or *pecorino* cheese, olives and red



The Primi cellar is well stocked with Italian wines but also offers fine products of California and French vineyards.