



Ristretto = Italian for short espresso = “corto”

“I’ve had a lot of coffee. Folgers to dark roast, coarse to powder, and from every contraption conceivable, and with varying degree of milk or cream, or none at all. We all have.

I think we wander around in the gourmet and grocery stores because we never can the bean or the machine that hits all the marks. We try to produce one at home, with a new machine, or maybe it’s the water. Spring water should do better, boiled and then cooled slightly, or maybe heated to just under the boiling point. We enter every new coffee shop hoping for it. But it never comes. Then, we head to Starbucks or Peets and settle for the rote ease of getting something predictable in under 4 words. Still, the coffee we desire never materializes.

But you try the next shop, willing to explain that you like more foam or less, or very hot milk, or ceramic rather than a paper cup. And perhaps we add all these parameters because the coffee may not be so good, the espresso too watery, no richness. You’ll need to milk or foam to upwardly adjust the palatability. You ask for the espresso “short” and the pierced performance artists grimaces “but you ordered a double”, eternal hope.

Monday, I trudged into Massimo Lounge, just across the street from One Market. I ordered an espresso, for here, and I said the word I love to say in Italian, “short” (“corto”) and I get a knowing nod. The small cup placed on a saucer, a golden lid of foam concealing the black syrup beneath. I savor it for a moment; if it’s good the foam will hold in the heat. The foam hits my lips. I brace for the taste and it consumes my tongue. Corto.

I silently exit a few minutes later, destined to return, hoping I have not experienced a fluke. It’s Friday now, and every day this week I have an espresso at Massimo, and each time, the experience is delightfully repeated. With a few small cookies one day, after a sandwich from there another. It is simply the best coffee available.

Today, this morning, my fifth coffee, I order a doppio espresso, macchiato, short. The same nod. The same cup, just a little more filled, and the smallest hint of milk foam, rimmed with gold.

The coffee is not distinctive in taste or aroma. It’s just true and pure.”

DCarbonaro
iL Massimo coffee lover