



champions of



|| ... especially taking swings at my punching bag between shifts... ||



Angelo was born in a small Italian town called Monte San Giacomo thirty-six years ago. In 2001, the country's national census estimated that the town only had a population of 1 682 people. The most common perception of good quality Italian food is that it must traditionally come from a small village in the Italian countryside. If this is the case, then Angelo definitely has an excuse for the exceptional cuisine served in his Vera Vita restaurant.

Roughly translated as "experience true life", Vera Vita has evolved from sharing the same premises as Leeways Nursery just over three years ago, to establishing itself as an entirely new venue with a new look and menu situated barely 100m up the road from where it was.

"I wanted to bring the real taste of Italy to the southern suburbs of Johannesburg," explains Angelo. "I can now confidently say that I've done just that."

Although not a chef by trade, Angelo was 16 years-old when he first started out in the hospitality industry. "I learnt a lot by being in the kitchen at such a young age," he says. "However, my determination and creativity got the better of me and I had to leave to do my own thing. I love food so it's only natural that I opened Vera Vita. To be a good chef you have to enjoy what you do."

Angelo doesn't look like your average chef. His left arm is heavily tattooed up to his neck, his glasses resemble trendy eyewear from the catwalks of Milan, and for a chef, he's in decent shape. "I enjoy a good run and workout," he says. "Especially taking swings at my punching bag between shifts."

Angelo feels that the South African wine industry provides excellent value for money, but in terms of supplying top quality wine, he's "unbiased" as




to which country deserves the title. Outspoken and energetic, he urges every person in the industry to be unique and take pride in what they do. "I really enjoy watching the BBC Food show 'made to order' with the Rubino brothers. That's what cooking is all about – fresh ingredients, interesting meals and the focus is on each of the brothers' skills."

Vera Vita's patrons enjoy Angelo's charismatic, professional yet almost casual approach to managing the restaurant. They want to feel relaxed but still expect the best service when they eat out – Angelo and his team strive to meet this objective everyday.

"Communication is extremely important in any business," he says. "I just think that the industry needs

to talk more and experiment with new ingredients and ideas. Introduce unique meals and specials in your business. If they don't work, great! At least you now know what your customers like, what they don't like and what they're willing to try every now and then."

Angelo says that he gets his energy from his staff and customers. He thrives on being around real people and absolutely despises anything false and contrived. From humble beginnings to the truly good life, Angelo and Vera Vita still have many "dolce" moments between them. 



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