

Chocolate cigars and caviar, 45 types of gelato, Italian wine and coffee cover the shelves of a cosy, modernly furnished cioccogelateria on Calea Victoriei, across George Enescu Museum. A mix of sweet, sourish and spicey fragrances have gathered here to please the tastes of the most demanding consumers. Around 50 customers come here every day, including at weekends to indulge in chocolate and gelato flavours, sip a glass of wine or have a strong coffee at the bar. The only Venchi cioccogelateria outised Italy opened in Bucharest in 2008. Another opening followed in Constanta and the concept will be expanded in the top ten second tier cities of Romania, among which Iasi, Brasov and Cluj, George Sotiroulis, Venchi managing partner in Romania told Bucharest Herald.

B.H: How did you set up this business and when did you open the first cioccogelateria?

George Sotiroulis: We set up the business in 2007, but in the first year we made distribution for small shops and four and five star hotels. After a year, in 2008 we decided to open the first Venchi cioccogelateria in Europe, outside Italy. Venchi is one of the first chocotale and gelato producers in Europe and opened its first store 130 years ago. The firm's ownership includes three shareholders. Two of us started this business two years ago, after 17 years of working in multinational companies in Romania, England, Austria, Greece and Germany.

B.H: What types of ice cream are you preparing here and what kind of unique ingredients are you using?

George Sotiroulis: We are preparing gelato, not ice cream and this means a completely different process, compared to the normal ice cream. We only use natural ingredients: fresh milk and eggs and for the fruit gelato we use fruit for colour and taste, instead of fragrances and preservatives. We sell white mint gelato, not green, because the mint extract is white and we should use green colorant. We have over 45 gelato assortments, among which lemon, apple, apricot, banana, black berries, figs, mango, melon, chocolate, chocolate with cinnamon, chocolate with coffee, white chocolate, cocos, coffee.

B.H: Are you also selling sugar free chocolate and gelato for diabetics?

George Sotiroulis: We are trying to make sugar free gelato, but we have not managed yet. We are selling sugar free chocolate, sweetened with maltitol, which is not a chemical sweetner, it is fructose. The chocolate with maltitol has less calories than the chocolate with sugar and the difference is unpercievable because we are using a natural, not a chemical sweetner.

B.H: What types of chocolate are you selling and what is the best selling product?

Luxury chocolate gains ground in Romania

Written by Administrator

Sunday, 05 July 2009 23:59 - Last Updated Tuesday, 07 July 2009 04:05

George Sotiroulis: We have all types of chocolate with milk, with various percentages of cocoa- 60 per cent, 85 per cent, 90 per cent, chocolate with pistachio, with oranges, with Piemonte nuts. Another special product is the chocolate cigar. Our flag product is the chocolate caviar, the only chocolate caviar in the world, accepted by the organizers of the Nobel Prizes to be served at the prize awarding. It contains two types of cocoa from Central and Southern America and is produced in Italy, in Piemonte.

B.H: What type of customers do you have and how many people enter the ciocogelateria every day?

George Sotiroulis: The store is open 7 days a week, between 9 and 22. We have around 50 customers daily, but the people do not come here only for chocolate and gelato, but for the experience also. This is an Italian concept and there are evenings with wine and fruit and chocolate tasting. Because we are a niche business and we are targeting the people with incomes over the average, our customers are generally stars, politicians, businessmen.

B.H: What are your expansion plans? Do you also have other stores in the country, besides the one in Bucharest? □

George Sotiroulis: We opened another ciocogelateria in Constanta, with a local partner and we are planning to expand in the first ten second tier cities of Romania, among which Cluj, Timisoara, Sibiu, Brasov and Iasi.

B.H: What was the investment in the Bucharest location?

George Sotiroulis: The investment was quite high because the equipment was very expensive. We invested 200,000 Euro in total.

What is Venchi?

Venchi was set up in 1878 in Turin, Italy when the young Silvano Venchi opened his first confectionery laboratory. Venchi is producing today more than 25 specialities. In Italy the company distributes to 6,000 delicatessen and has 100 employees and 100 sales agents on the national territory. Venchi sales points in Romania: Calea Victoriei 214, ASA Diplomatic Shop (Str Radu Beller 35), Henri Conda Airport- Otopeni, Aurel Vlaicu Airport- Baneasa, City Flowers (Constanta).

Ciocolata de lux castiga teren in Romania

Trabucuri si caviar de ciocolata, 45 de sortimente de gelato, vin italienesc si cafea, acopera rafturile unei mici ciocogelaterii, modern mobilata, de pe Calea Victoriei, vis-a-vis de Muzeul George Enescu. Un mix de arome dulci, acrisoare si picante s-au adunat aici pentru a satisface gusturile celor mai exigenti consumatori. Aproximativ 50 de clienti vin aici zilnic, inclusiv in weekend-uri pentru a savura diverse arome de ciocolata si gelato, a sorbi un pahar de vin sau a bea o cafea tare la bar. Singura ciocogelaterie Venchi din afara Italiei s-a deschis in Bucuresti in 2008. A urmat apoi o alte deschidere in Constanta, iar conceptul va fi extins in cele mai mari zece orase din Romania, printre care Iasi, Brasov si Cluj, a declarat pentru Bucharest Herald, George Sotiroulis, managing partner Venchi in Romania.

B.H: Cum ati inceput aceasta afacere si cand ati deschis prima ciocogelaterie?

George Sotiroulis: Am inceput afacerea in 2007, dar in primul an am facut distributie pentru mici magazine si hoteluri de patru si cinci stele. Dupa un an, in 2008 ne-am hotarat sa deschidem prima ciocogelaterie Venchi din Europa, din afara Italiei. Venchi este unul dintre primii ciocogelatieri din Europa si a deschis primul magazin in urma cu 130 de ani. Actionariatul firmei este format din trei persoane. Doi dintre noi am pornit acest business acum doi ani, dupa 17 ani in care am lucrat numai in companii multinationale in Romania, Anglia, Austria, Grecia, Germania.

B.H: Ce fel de inghetata preparati aici si ce ingrediente unice folositi?

George Sotiroulis: Noi nu preparam inghetata, ci gelato, care presupune un alt mod de preparare fata de inghetata normala. Folosim numai ingrediente naturale: lapte si oua proaspete, iar pentru sortimentele de gelato din fructe, folosim fructe pentru culoare si gust si nu arome si conservanti. Noi vindem gelato de menta alba, nu verde, pentru ca extractul de menta este verde si ar trebui sa folosim colorant verde. Avem peste 45 de sortimente de gelato, printre care lamaie, mar, caise, banane, mure, smochine, mango, pepene galben, ciocolata, ciocolata cu scortisoara, ciocolata cu cafea, ciocolata alba, cocos, cafea.

B.H: Comercializati si gelato si ciocolata fara zahar, pentru diabetici?

George Sotiroulis: Incercam sa facem gelato fara zahar, dar nu am reusit inca. Vindem ciocolata fara zahar, indulcita cu maltitol care nu este un indulcitor chimic, este fructoza. Ciocolata cu maltitol are mai putine calorii decat cea indulcita cu zahar si folosind un indulcitor natural si nu unul chimic, nu se simte diferenta comparativ cu ciocolata cu zahar.

B.H: Ce tipuri de ciocolata vindeti si care sunt produsele cel mai bine vandute?

George Sotiroulis: Avem toate sortimentele de ciocolata cu lapte, cu diverse procente de cacao- 60 la suta, 85 la suta, 90 la suta, ciocolata cu fistic, cu portocale, cu alune de padure din

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Piemonte. Alt produs deosebite este trabucul de ciocolata. Produsul nostru emblema este caviarul de ciocolata, singurul caviar de ciocolata, dintre toate tipurile, acceptat de organizatorii Premiilor Nobel sa fie servit la decernarea premiilor. Contine doua sortimente de cacao din America Centrala si de Sud si este podus in Italia, in Piemonte.

B.H: Ce tip de clienti aveti si cati intra zilnic in ciocogelaterie?

George Sotiroulis: Magazinul este deschis sapte zile pe saptamana, intre orele 9 si 22. Avem in jur de 50 de clienti zilnic, dar oamenii nu vin aici numai pentru ciocolata si gelato, ci pentru experienta. Este un concept italienesc si sunt seri in care facem degustari de vin cu ciocolata si degustari de fructe cu ciocolata. Pentru ca suntem un business de nisa si vizam persoanele cu venituri peste mediu, clientii nostri sunt in general vedete, politicieni, oameni de afaceri.

B.H: Ce planuri de extindere aveti? Detineti si alte magazine in tara, in afara de cel din Bucuresti?

George Sotiroulis: Am deschis o alta ciocogelaterie in Constanta, cu un partener local si intentionam sa ne extindem in primele 10 orase din Romania, printre care Cluj, Timisoara, Sibiu, Brasov, Iasi.

B.H: Care a fost investitia in locatia din Bucuresti?

George Sotiroulis: Investitia a fost foarte mare, pentru ca masinile de produs si vitrinele au fost foarte scumpe. In total am investit 200.000 Euro.

Ce este Venchi?

Venchi a fost infiintat in 1878 in Turin, Italia, cand tanarul Silvano Venchi si-a deschis primul laborator de dulciuri. Venchi produce peste 25 de specialitati. In Italia compania distribuie produse catre 6.000 de delicaterii si are 100 de angajati si de agenti de vanzari la nivel national. Puncte de vanzare Venchi in Romania: Calea Victoriei 214, ASA Diplomatic Shop (Str Radu Beller 35), Henri Conda Airport- Otopeni, Aurel Vlaicu Airport- Baneasa, City Flowers (Constanta).