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## Q&A with Chef Carlo Bigi

**Born and raised in Turin, Bigi is the Executive Chef at Il Principe in New York City.**



**Epicurious: How did growing up in Piemonte influence your cooking?**

Carlo Bigi: My family used to own a restaurant in Torino, the main city in Piemonte, so I was very fortunate to be able to have access to great food and amazing dishes all the time. For very special occasions, when the entire family was gathered, my father would cook *fritto misto alla Piemontese* [a selection of pan-fried items], which includes fruits, vegetables, different cuts of meat, offal, etc. I didn't really learn how to cook with my family, but I understood what the flavors are and what I love in a dish. I learned from my dad that sweetness in a dish can come from a single carrot, and a few drops of vinegar can completely change a dish. I'm happy that I can share my region and my land with other people, so they can experience a little bit of culinary history and traditions of Piemonte.

**Epi: What regions in Piemonte have the most distinct flavor profiles and dishes?**

CB: Piemonte's location, geography, and historical reputation as a place of commerce have created amazingly varied food traditions. The region is divided into three main culinary areas. In the wooded mountains up north, close to the French border and the dairy farms of Valle d'Aosta, you'll find braised meats, roasted game, and cheese fondue. The lower part is influenced by the maritime climate of nearby Liguria, with lighter dishes and fresh vegetables. And the central area (home to Turin), with its carnaroli rice fields and rivers that deliver seafood from the coast, is known for *bagna cauda* [an anchovy dip], the iconic *vitello tonnato* [veal with tuna sauce], and risotto.

**Epi: What products, ingredients, or types of dishes make the cuisine of Piemonte unique?**

CB: Cheese, stuffed house-made pasta, risotto, chocolate, and, of course, appetizers. The valleys and pastures offer the ideal location to grow wheat and rice; the hills offer themselves well to the growth of grapes for wine production. Cattle thrive in Piemonte, making this region one of the greatest Italian producers of cheese—especially blues like Gorgonzola and Castelmagno. Freshwater fish and eel are popular as well. There are also many famous wines from Piemonte, and they use it in the kitchen—like the acidic Gavi that helps tame the richness of the risotto, Barolo with its tannins that goes very well with braised beef, or the floral Moscato that makes *zabaglione* taste so soft and light.