



THE VINTAGE AND RETRO CLOTHING STORE, LI BOH



CONTEMPORARY JEWELLERY DESIGN AT R - 01 - IOS

ROME'S LOCAL GEM

First Trastevere, then Testaccio. Now any visitor to Rome should investigate its latest trendy quarter, Pigneto

Words Marc Zakian Photography Sean Finelli

THE PIGNETO TRIANGLE IS A 19th-century suburb of zigzagging, sun-bleached low-rise houses and apartments built for working class Romani. The 'village', as some locals call it, is outside Rome's historical centre.

The hundred or so market stalls along Via del Pigneto, the main street, are open each morning and are at the heart of this community. It's where you'll find a grandmother shaking a melon next to her ear to make sure it's fresh, but also the new young Pigneto hipsters.

Come midday, these students, artists, actors and poseurs congregate in Bar Necci,

hoping some of its romance will rub off on them. Necci has been here since 1924, and has earned its credentials. It was once the hang-out of local boy Pier Paolo Pasolini, who shot part of his debut film here. The wall of the bar sports a black and white photograph of President Obama shaking hands with Necci's chef.

The restaurant menu (printed in the style of a 70s photo-romance) includes snacks, dinner and drinks. But order a Coke and they will bring you the Roman drink, Paoletti Spuma. "It's what the bar served when it first opened," explains Massimo, one of the owners. "We'd rather

provide Italian drinks than give money to a large corporation."

At restaurant Primo Pigneto, Marco Gallotta is also sticking to tradition. The fast-speaking owner is more of an underground food-artist than a traditional chef. You won't find his restaurant on the internet. "If people want to eat here, then they will decide for themselves," he reasons. Serving only high-quality ingredients from independent producers, he uses three different types of tomato to make his *amatriciana* sauce. In the kitchen you'll find 12 varieties of olive oil, each one matched to a particular dish.

Another artisan success story is La Gelateria Del Pigneto. "We serve Sicilian gelato, using traditional recipes," enthuses ice-cream maker Filippo. "Each morning we buy fresh fruit, and then make our gelato by hand." Filippo is a local boy who gave up a career as a surveyor to make ice cream. He also helps Bangladeshi kids with their homework outside the shop. "I'm not concerned about money," he says. "If I were, I would have set up next to the Colosseum. I am interested in the quality of life and the community I live in." Food, books and culture are often served together in Pigneto. At Lo Yeti café and library the owners buy their ingredients each morning from Pigneto market. They offer panini, vegan cake and Aurelia coffee (an obscure Roman brand)

to hipsters and families with kids, and along with the food there's a library, theatre and regular poetry events.


Hobo on Via Ascoli Piceno is a wine bar and café for bibliophiles. Its owners source the food from local farms, handpicking all the ingredients themselves. There are shelves of music books for customers to browse, reflecting co-owner Francesco Accolla's background as a composer. With live music, and DJ sets, Hobo really gets going in the evening.

Pigneto's shops reflect the mix of old and new that characterises the area. Li Boh is a retro and vintage clothes and furniture store run by Maria Claudia Catelli. She opened Li Boh because she loves the area's friendliness. "Pigneto is a small country within the city, where we all work together," she says. "When a delivery comes, the guys will always stop to help me unload – they never accept money from me." R - 01 - IOS is the flagship store of two Italian designers, Roberta Paolucci and Paolo Giacomelli. The pair specialise in silver, gold and bronze jewellery, frequently fused with hand-carved crystals. The pieces are displayed in the shop's beautifully tiled mosaic interior. Prices range from €100 to €1000. Further along the road is Ex Merceria, which sells limited edition and hand-made Italian clothes.

One of Pigneto's biggest fans is Rome guide Sean Finelli. "It's an area that

maintains its values and traditions," he says. "The people who work here are dedicated to producing quality."

"There aren't many places in Rome where you can go into just about any restaurant and be sure of a good meal. And if the shops and boutiques are a bit more expensive, it's because they are producing individual hand-made works. But the best part is that it's one of the most friendly places in the city."

So if you've tired of following in tourists' footsteps in Rome, take a taxi to Via del Pigneto and join the alternative crowd who are enjoying one of the city's most quirky and dynamic neighbourhoods. 

MAKE A NOTE

- ◆ **Pigneto 41**
Via del Pigneto 46,
+39 06 701 382
www.primoalpigneto.it
- ◆ **Bar Necci**
Via Fanfulla da Lodi 68,
www.Necc1924.com
- ◆ **La Gelateria Del Pigneto**
Via Pesaro 11
- ◆ **Lo Yeti**
Via Perugia 4, www.loyeti.org
- ◆ **Hobo Café**
Via Ascoli Piceno 3
- ◆ **Ex Merceria**
Via del Pigneto 57,
+39 06 9811 86615
- ◆ **Li Boh**
Via del Pigneto 52, +39 06 7030
4648, www.liboh.it
- ◆ **R - 01 - IOS**
Via del Pigneto 39a,
www.ioselliani.com
- ◆ **Guided Tours: Sean Finelli**
www.TheRomanGuy.com



TANTALISE YOUR TASEBUDS AT BAR NECCI