The Sorrentinos
Author:
Virginia Higa
Reader's name:
Jamie Mullin

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In the early 1900s, the Vespolini family immigrated from Sorrento, Italy to Mar del Plata, where they opened a hotel and an Italian restaurant, Trattoria Napolitana, which was the first to serve sorrentinos, a round pasta traditionally stuffed with ham and cheese invented by their oldest son, Umberto. Following Umberto's death, Chiche, the youngest of five siblings, takes over the trattoria.

Los Sorrentinos introduces us to many colorful personalities, and none more so than Chiche. A gracious and welcoming host to guests with high standards for food and service, Chiche loves movies, traveling to Italy, has deep love of family and tradition, a few close friends, and a few quirks. Chiche is fond of using nicknames for staff and is meticulous in his use of the Vespolini family's own distinct vocabulary for describing types of people and the quality of things.

The story is narrated in the third person in a direct, almost conversational tone. The backstory of the family's history, the staff and activities in the trattoria kitchen, and Chiche's relationships with family and friends are often recounted through anecdotes and family stories, some comical and others heartbreaking. Storylines are not over-explained, and the reader is given enough information to fill in the blanks and develop a strong sense of who the characters are.

The variety of plotlines blend together well. Central characters emerge and are well developed, along with other memorable characters including a priest, a bossy chef and an oracle who makes a prediction that adds a bit of mystery to the story. Many family members are mentioned briefly and just as we're trying to keep up with the numerous cousins, nieces and nephews, it becomes clear that there's no need to. Soon, it's as if we're guests at the table reserved for the Vespolini family at the trattoria, listening to stories during after dinner conversation, well-versed in their language and anxious to hear more.

Although not mentioned in the book, Los Sorrentinos is based on the author's family, and many aspects of the story reflect real people, places and events. It tells an original, colorful tale of an Italian family in Argentina from a unique perspective that is certain to engage US readers.

I believe that Los Sorrentinos is an excellent candidate for translation and that the subject matter would be well received.