

## “Cofano, Cofano, Cofano!”.

(by Marilù Terrasi)

I came to Makari by chance, one September many years ago, while looking for water, at the end of a summer tournée.

There was only one road, *via Timpone*: dotted with almond and olive trees, and with houses here and there along the way and with the outline of *Cofano* Mountain accompanying you step by step like a mirage.

Today I know the names, legends and secrets of that road which, at the time, I thought was the only one which led to Makari. But *via Timpone* is only the entrance which leads to the first water fountain. In addition, there are the *Sciarotta* and *Gghiara* roads leading to a second fountain, and *Bagghio Bileti* and *Via dell'acqua* leading to a third one. In the middle is the *Rocca di Mezzogiorno*, which takes its name from the fact that at noon the sun's rays hit down on it perpendicularly. Finally, there is the unmistakable *Rocca Perciata*. At one time there was a monastery here – San Giovanni Monastery - but no trace remains of it except for a patch of thick vegetation and the spring which is named after it. The older local people talk about a treasure that is supposed to be hidden there, and it seems that, from time to time, someone persists in looking for it. People also say that the limpets on the rocks were once as big as sea-urchins and whole pails were filled with them and that on the small island of *Isulidda* the fish used to jump onto the seashore and you could catch them with your hands. They say that men used to spend long months fishing on *Cofano* Mountain. In particular, there is a story about a man whose wife was calling him back home, and who answered her with a concise ‘telegram’ of just three words: “Cofano, Cofano, Cofano!”

It is true. The splendid sight of the Gulf of Cofano has a subtle fascination. The sunsets are unique: sometimes burning like a fire, at other times as soft as a water color. In autumn, when the struggle against the fast approaching winter becomes arduous, there are breaks of light through the clouds which project the dark colour of an oncoming storm. At dawn, instead, there is an unreal atmosphere, a miracle that repeats itself each day. But above all there is beauty here that takes your breath away and gives you a love and enjoyment of a life that is in harmony with the nature that surrounds you.

Inexplicable reasons and coincidences have brought me to make the same choice as the anonymous fisherman in the story: "Cofano, Cofano, Cofano!" For me, it has been an irresistible attraction that has turned into a way of life.

So, little by little, *Pocho* has taken shape. At the beginning it was a restaurant, today it is also a small hotel, set on a superb terrace overlooking the sea, with the tower of *Isulidda* looking over it and with an exceptional neighbor – Erice - just opposite.

Actually, I have some difficulty in defining *Pocho* either as a hotel or as a restaurant. I prefer to consider it as a theater where every day one of the oldest performances of the world is played out: the performance of giving hospitality and of living well. Undoubtedly, I bring with me a background which comes from having spent a part of my life on the stage, but I think that, given how exceptional this setting is, some aspects of the theater are appropriate to it.

Family recipes together with my own research into local cuisine are the main components of meals that I supervise personally, faithfully following Epicurus' principle that: “The beginning and origin of all well-being is the delight of the stomach: wisdom and everything that comes from it is connected to pleasure”.

Consequently, it is not surprising that a Sicilian puppet peeps out from among the tables of the restaurant, or that an arm-chair might be occupied by a now tired marionette, or that the hallways

leading to the guest rooms speak the language of the stages of the old Sicilian plays for marionettes.

*Pocho* is a small kingdom made up of many memories and many realities, like those of the Sicilian songs that I have collected patiently and that I re-propose after dinner on summer evenings, together with the music of the many countries that I have learned to know and love while wandering around the world.

And often the magic repeats itself. One arrives at *Pocho* by chance, and then comes back, each year.

*Italy without Sicily is not complete, only here do you find the key to it all.*

J.W. Goeth, *Viaggio in Italia*