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## TASTE OF THE TOWN: Freshness by hand at Café Amano

Submitted by [Renee Tomell](#) on August 21, 2009 - 12:26pm

Chef-owner Marco Conte did his research in Montreal and France before opening Café Amano in Elmhurst.

"We wanted to bring a taste of Europe to Elmhurst," Conte says. "We put all the things we liked into this place."



*Chef-owner Marco Conte sautés boneless skinless chicken breast with Michigan sun-dried cherries and hazelnut liqueur in his kitchen at Cafe Amano in Elmhurst. STAFF PHOTO BY BILL ACKERMAN*

Hailing from a family of Italian restaurateurs, Conte said the word "amano" means by hand.

"Just about everything that we make in the cafe is done by hand," he says, from chocolate croissants for morning commuters headed to the nearby train station to adventurous cuisine that gives a twist to French and Italian dishes.

"We serve the freshest items that we can possibly serve to our guests in unique ways," Conte says, noting that herbs used in the kitchen are grown on the restaurant's wrap-around patio outside the 10-foot windows. "I walk out in the middle of dinner and start picking things. Everyone's asking, 'What are you going to put it in?'"

The two intimate dining rooms have French-influenced decor in earthy hues, complete with several banquettes lending sinewy curves. Near the bar, stylish white shades at the ceiling make you think "Umbrellas of Cherbourg." Wine tasting and cooking classes are an added treat.

"The food is great; we discovered that right off the bat," says Jill Chittenden of Elmhurst, who dines there regularly with husband Bill. "They are so personable; they remember who you are. You feel like you're going to a friend's dinner."

Chittenden says she has relied on the café for parties at the restaurant and catered at home.

"Even if I need a salad last minute ... for eight people, it's never a problem," she says. "It's a great addition to the town. We go a lot with friends, and it's always a nice evening."

Café Amano just celebrated its fifth anniversary. Conte shares credit with his staff, many of whom have been there from the start.

"They all take pride in .... keeping up with everything on food and wine in the world," he says.

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ITEM Amano Lump Crab Cake appetizer

PRICE \$14



ITEM Chicken Breast with Sun-dried Cherries and Hazelnut Liqueur

PRICE \$19

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ITEM Gorgonzola-stuffed Figs Wrapped with Prosciutto appetizer

PRICE \$12

**RESTAURANT** Café Amano

**ADDRESS** 105 S. York Road, Elmhurst

**PHONE** (630) 279-9333

**WEB** [www.cafeamano.com](http://www.cafeamano.com)

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