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Italian Michelin-starred restaurants face mixed reviews as diners favor value and authenticity over prestige

Study finds lesser-known venues often outperform famous establishments in customer satisfaction and value for money across Italy

Thursday, September 4, 2025



A recent study has taken a close look at how Italy’s Michelin-starred restaurants are rated by everyday diners, using Google Reviews from the past two years to see which establishments live up to their reputation and price. The research, conducted by Italian Street Kitchen, compared 395 Michelin-starred restaurants across Italy, analyzing customer sentiment, value for money, and overall review scores.

The study was designed to provide a fresh perspective on the Michelin Guide’s selections by focusing on real customer experiences rather than just expert opinions. According to a spokesperson from Italian Street Kitchen, the goal was to highlight not only the established stars but also newer venues that have recently earned their first Michelin star. The spokesperson said these findings could help travelers make more informed choices about where to dine in Italy, regardless of how many stars a restaurant holds.

The data shows that some lesser-known trattorias and countryside restaurants are outperforming more famous establishments in terms of customer satisfaction. At the top of the list is Assonica in Sorisole, near Bergamo, which received an average Google review score of 4.9 out of 5 over two years. Diners praised Assonica for its value for money and memorable food. Other high performers include Villa Maiella in Abruzzo and Il Tiglio in Montemonaco, both of which have one Michelin star but consistently receive excellent feedback from guests.

The study also found that having a Michelin star does not guarantee top marks from customers on Google. For example, Oro Restaurant in Venice, despite its Michelin recognition and high profile, received an average score of just 2.79 out of 5, with many reviewers citing poor value for money. Similarly, Enoteca Pinchiorri in Florence, which boasts three Michelin stars and a large social media following, has an average Google rating just above four stars.

Italian Street Kitchen commented that while a Michelin star is often seen as a promise of an exceptional meal, sometimes the experience can be more about presentation than substance. They emphasized that true Italian dining is rooted in warmth, generosity, and lasting flavor rather than luxury alone.

The study’s findings suggest that travelers looking for memorable meals in Italy should consider not only the number of Michelin stars but also recent customer reviews. Some restaurants with only one star are delivering experiences that exceed expectations and offer better value than more expensive or well-known venues.

Among the lowest-rated Michelin-starred restaurants on Google were several high-profile names in major cities such as Venice and Rome. These included Quadri in Venice (3.71/5), Aroma in Rome (3.85/5), and La Capinera in Taormina (3.97/5). Common complaints focused on high prices not matched by service or food quality.

On the other hand, restaurants like Equilibrio in Dolcedo (4.95/5), Re Santi e Leoni in Nola (4.86/5), and Contrada Bricconi in Oltressenda Alta (4.81/5) were praised for their excellent value and passionate cooking.

The research highlights a growing trend among diners who rely on peer reviews to guide their choices rather than solely trusting traditional guides like Michelin. As travel resumes and food tourism continues to grow in Italy, this data may influence where visitors choose to spend their time and money.

The full dataset used for this analysis is available from Italian Street Kitchen for those interested in exploring further details about individual restaurants’ performance over the last two years.