

LA



Agostino Sciandri
“The same simple food but a new concept fitting the location—affordable,” he says of his newer ventures. “You do what you know. You cannot stand still.”

THE SCIANDRIS “My family spoke English—definitely an advantage,” says Agostino Sciandri. “Bruno probably *still* doesn’t speak English,” he adds with a smile, referring to his *amico* Bruno Vietina. Heavier now than when he arrived in 1985, Sciandri at 70 is still a dashing man.

Born and raised in the corner of Italy between Liguria and Emilia-Romagna, Sciandri may not have owned the most restaurants, but he has seen the most fame. When he opened Toscana in 1989, you couldn’t get parking, much less in the door. And when he opened Ago 13 years ago, the bar was the place for power, money and celebrity, to see and to be seen, in addition to eating the signature veal chop. “Good food, a good product—never cheat your livelihood,” he says, watching everything that’s going on over the rim of his espresso cup.

We’re in Caffé Roma on Cañon. Agostino bought it four years ago, and he’s determined to bring it back to its glory days. With a shady, sprawling patio, a private party room and a classy bar, it has 250 seats. At 1:30 in the afternoon, it isn’t packed.

“It’s good enough,” he says, his eyes circling the room. “You have to give it time.”

Given that the man has been a part of this from the beginning, I assume Sciandri knows whereof he speaks. He brought Ago to Las Vegas and South Beach. He was at the beginning of the innovative Rosti takeout chain. He still watches over a treasured trattoria, Sor Tino in Brentwood, and he just opened Toscanova in Century City.

“The same simple food but a new concept fitting the location—affordable,” he says.

“You never stop...You do what you know,” he adds, taking off his glasses. “You cannot stand still.”

“Do you miss being chef, working the line?”

“Yeah, I do. I miss it a lot.”

TOSCANOVA