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Ear ear...this pasta's just like Mamma used to make!

When *Nonna* Lina Deluca flew into Birmingham from Italy for a weekend, she was anticipating nothing more than enjoying a family wedding. She certainly didn't imagine herself delivering a cooking master-class to the staff of a Birmingham restaurant.

But that is exactly what happened when the sprightly 83-year-old *nonna* – grandmother in Italian – arrived at the Radisson SAS Hotel in Beetham Tower, where her son, Sebastiano, is chief engineer.

Over breakfast in the hotel's award winning restaurant, Filini, Lina chatted to the chefs – and offered to teach them how to make one of her hand made pasta specialities, *orecchiette* or "little ears", so named because of their shape.

"She was talking to the Filini staff about Italian food and how impressed she was with their ability to create such authentically Italian dishes, which she had sampled the night before," explains Kit Wilcke, sales and marketing executive at the hotel. "She was ecstatic to see that one of her favourites was on the menu and she then said she'd be happy to teach them how to make the *orecchiette*, a speciality in her native Apulian region of southern Italy, the way it was passed down to her by her *nonna*.

"So off she went into the kitchen and gave the chefs an impromptu training session in recipes and methods particular to southern Italy, including pasta, which is still made daily in many traditional Italian homes. Not only did the staff learn a lot, they had great fun too – and so did *Nonna* Lina. Her passionate *joie de vivre* and vibrancy were inspiring!"

Filini's executive chef, Chris Duffy, added: "Having *Nonna* Lina here to give us some tips and advice was invaluable – she is a formidable cook and it was a privilege to get the benefit of her experience.

"She certainly seemed to approve of what we're trying to do at Filini, which is serving up authentic dishes that taste of their natural product and origin, without the need for unnecessary garnishes and flavours. Our menu is based on good quality Italian produce that complements the seasons."

Situated on the first floor of the 18-storey Radisson SAS Hotel in Holloway Circus, Filini won a prestigious Gold Standard Italian Restaurant Award 2007 from the Pizza, Pasta and Italian Food Association for its "outstanding" authentic cuisine and dining experience and was named as one of the top ten pasta restaurants in the UK by *The Times* newspaper.

- **Note to editors: For more editorial information or photography, please contact Kit Wilcke on 0121 654 6372 or kit.wilcke@radissonsas.com**