



Too many kitchens in the cook

Sandro hits his 8th eatery in 10 years

ASK Sandro Fioriti, pilot of the new Sandro's at 306 E. 81st St., where he last worked before launching this third Manhattan restaurant named for himself, and he points west. "Quattro Gatti," he smiles — meaning the Italian eatery on the next block.

But ask him why he stayed there for less time than Lindsay Lohan stayed clean, and he only makes a face. Many are the mysteries of this popular chef's storied wanderings.

Great to have you back, Sandro! We need more like

you — not just because your Roman-style cooking is as compelling as ever, but because the city desperately needs more chefs who are not media stars, but plain, old-fashioned characters.

Today's media-mad chefs are too full of themselves to be just wild and crazy. Umbrian-born Sandro, an amiable mammoth of a man, doesn't know from self-importance.

His colorful ways belie a cunning business sense; his new place is packed every night. It's well-run and well-financed. His partner is Tony May of San Domenico

fame, who also ran the original Sandro's.

But many regard him, affectionately, as New York's nuttiest chef.

Partly, it's the pajama-like outfits tailored by his wife, Anna, that adorn his 6-foot-4 frame. The other night they were illustrated with blue and green peacock feathers, a garish foil to the all-white dining room.

It's the tomato sauce sometimes splattered on the pajamas — although this time around, they're immaculate, because as an owner, he doesn't slave over the stove.

It's the food he gives away for free — from bruschetta and cookies at his original East 59th Street location 20 years ago, to



Elizabeth Lippman

For Sandro Fioriti, every night is a pajama party.

he laughs.

The first Sandro's lasted seven years until 1992; I remember it not only for great fennel sausage with broccoli rabe, but for strange, loud arguments in Italian pouring through the kitchen door.

He spent a few years on St. Martin, came back to town — and then the fun

began. Sandro himself has trouble remembering all his adventures.

He cooked, briefly, at Madison Avenue's much-in-the-news Nello — "very difficult man," is the most Sandro will say.

There was a second Sandro's on Ninth Avenue,

pasta after midnight at the bar at his new place, and multiflavored grappa at both.

But his oddball rep is mostly due to the fact that in recent years, he's worked at enough restaurants to justify a Zagat Sandro Survey. "Yes, a lot of them,"



Steve Cuozzo

Free Range