



WINNING BY A NOSE

It wasn't **Lucinda O'Sullivan's** nose that grew during her meal at Pinocchio, it was her stomach, while the welcoming atmosphere, delicious food and all-round fun vibe ensured she left feeling full — very full — of Italian cheer

No sooner do I discover the rustic Italian delights of Campo di Fiore in Bray, an eaterie which I recently wrote about, than I learn that Marco Roccasalvo of Campo di Fiore is now involved in Pinocchio, a new cafe-deli-wine bar in Ranelagh. This will be blissfully convenient for those of you on the Luas line, as Pinocchio is actually located at the Luas station. The cafe is larger inside than its exterior suggests. One side of the room has a deli counter and bar stools for a glass of vino and a bite, while on the other side of a dividing partition are four neat tables in a row, facing the glass-fronted kitchen.

The two other owners are Marco Giannantonio and Maurizio Mastrangelo. After three short years in business they recently won the Permanent TSB Emerging Ethnic Entrepreneur of the Year Award. 'Flavour of Italy' is the all-embracing name under which they run the Italian School of Cooking in Rathgar, as well as Cater Italy and Flavour of Italy Travel, which runs cookery and ancient tradition tours to largely undiscovered destinations in the Molise region on the eastern side of Italy. Sounds great. They have a number of websites linking to each business so you can take a look — but remember, I haven't been myself.

We liked the atmosphere, and the staff were very friendly and welcoming, despite some not having a lot of English. The place was awash with wine bottles and artisan breads, while Italian music blazed away on the stereo. The menu included a half dozen oysters (€14) proclaiming "no sauces, no Tabasco, we don't use it, only fresh lemon". Caprese salad (€9.50) promised "the best buffalo mozzarella on the market with tomatoes, fresh basil, and good olive oil"; while *tartara di tonno con avocado e pomodoro* was, they said, "not easy to explain, so we suggest you try it". If my almost non-existent restaurant Italian is anything to go by, I guess it should be raw minced tuna with avocado and tomato. *Gran misto di mare* (€16) promised a selection of "sea delights", while *grande misto di*

salumi, formaggi e verdure grigliate (€16), proffered Italian meats and cheeses, with mixed grilled vegetables.

Mains included fillet of beef on rocket, and grilled tuna loin with mussels and clams, both €24.50. There were a couple of specials on the board, but we had our eye on a pasta-fest of *linguine con vongole* (€16.90) and *rigatone alla Amatriciana* (€14.50). Something got lost in translation. We had asked the waitperson a couple of times, to be clear to be clear, if we could have half-portions each of the *gran misto di mare* and *grande misto di salumi* as starters, as we were following up with pasta. The chef kept smiling out at us from the kitchen and nodding — probably thinking: "Jeez, what great trencherwomen", or, possibly: "Greedy guts".

Four platters, two fishy, two meaty, arrived. Our request for half-portions had not been understood or something, and we were faced with, and paid for, the full *grande mistos* at €16 each. The fishy plates had smoked salmon, oysters, a melange of baby octopus and squid, diced, with carrots and celery; and stuffed tomatoes in oil. The meat ones had cured hams, salamis, artichoke hearts, black olives, sundried tomatoes, peppers and mushrooms in oil, all of which we mopped up enthusiastically with good breads, and a bottle of Musaragno prosecco 2006 (€27). The linguine followed, featuring a baker's dozen of lovely wild clams. It was delicious, with plenty of garlic, and judicious use of tomatoes.

Kate had a bowl of big chunky rigatoni with cured pancetta, onion and cherry tomato, also delicious.

Really hard aground, we passed on pudding and with two *doppio espressos* at €2.40 a pop, our bill, with optional service, came to €106.10. This place will be fun when it gets going. **■**

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