

## A true trattoria



**HONEST TO GOODNESS** Pinocchio, Luas Klosk, Ranelagh, Dublin 6.  
Tel: 01-4970111; pinocchiodublin.com. Wheelchair access: yes

### DOORLEY

A great big bowl of mussels and clams, with a tangy broth flavoured with tomato and lots of parsley, would make a fine light supper for €9.80. And there was grilled bread for mopping.

A tortino di verdura was feather-light, based on grated zucchini: a little cake served with a creamy, cheese sauce, this could have been a real clodhopper but turned out to be one of the best starters I've tasted in ages. This weighed in at €9.

You can argue forever about fresh pasta versus the dried stuff. For most purposes, I think, really good dried pasta is fine. And heavy, leaden fresh pasta will always be a burden on the palate and the digestion. But silky, thin homemade pasta is the stuff of the sweetest dreams and so it proved with lasagnette al ragu d'agnello, hand-formed sheets of gossamer pasta layered with roughly minced lamb and a creamy sauce (none of your floury besciamella here). There was a refreshing hint of mint and, weirdly but rather wonderfully, a drizzle of dark chocolate on the side. Every element came together to make something more than the sum of its parts. This pleasure on a plate came at €19.90.

At first sight, four baby squid – squidlets? – stuffed and served with a little sauce seemed expensive for €21.50. But then I tasted them. They were immaculately tender, stuffed with a fine combination of breadcrumbs, Parmesan and leek, and each came with a teaspoon or so of sauce: intensely green-tasting parsley, bright yellow sweet mustard, earthy orange pumpkin and tart terracotta tomato. It may not have amounted to much more than a starter in quantity but its quality was – and I don't often say it – outstanding.

Green salad was the usual sliced cos leaves with balsamic and a pleasantly peppery olive oil on the side.

We finished with a shared portion of soft, vanilla ice-cream, made in-house and drizzled with aged balsamic vinegar. Once again, weird but distinctly wonderful.

With a couple of fine espressos, mineral water and a bottle of red wine, the bill came to €91.80, service not included. Pinocchio is a functional kind of place. All of the effort goes in to the food and making you feel welcome. That's a great formula and not one that you're often lucky enough to encounter.

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### The Smart Money

Clams and mussels with a glass of wine and an espresso leaves change out of €20.

Read Megabites, Tom Doorley's blog, at [irishtimes.com/blogs/megabites](http://irishtimes.com/blogs/megabites)

### Wine Choice

Much of this all-Italian list is directly imported and some of the saving is passed on to the customers. There are four wines at €17.90: a crisp Chianti Classico, a cool-climate Cabernet, a simple Pinot Grigio and, unusually, a fragrant Muller-Thurgau from Friuli. Anselmi Prosecco is good fizz for a remarkable €29.80 and Il Blu di Brancaia, a serious Tuscan, is keenly priced at €79, as is Carmignano Farnete at €56. Our Sangiovese La Berta, at €21.90, was light, fruity and savoury.

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**RESTAURANTS:** AS FAR AS the basics for a successful restaurant go, Pinocchio in Ranelagh has location on its side (it's under the Luas bridge, right beside the station) and in less than a year this small Italian (the chef is from Modena of balsamic fame) has gathered an intensely loyal following – mainly of people who are sick and tired of what passes for Italian food in the average Irish tratt, writes **TOM**

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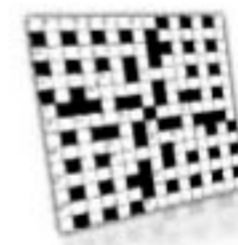
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