

Carpaccio



Wednesday, 24 September 2008



Nick Dent loves Norton Street ristorante Carpaccio.

Norton Street – where we go when the weather turns warm to eat gelato and stand around saying ‘ciao, ciao’. Norton Street – where, if you squint your eyes, every man looks like Marcello Mastroianni, every woman like Sophia Loren, and the Leichhardt Town Hall looks almost exactly like the Colosseum.

The close proximity of the recently gayed-up Clarence Hotel is another good reason to venture into Sydney’s Italian quarter this summer. And here’s one more – ristorante Carpaccio, which has cleverly hedged its bets as both a classy pizza joint and a place you can get a proper four-course blow-out as only the Italians know how to deliver it.

Dr Love and I take our seats outside on the portico, and order a bottle of chianti and some garlic woodfired pizza crust and olives (\$11). For antipasto, we decide to share a tuna carpaccio (\$17) doused in olive oil. Spiced with chilli and coriander, this slippery tuna is just divine, especially when piled onto the accompanying slices of sourdough.

For the entree I select roast duck and mushroom ravioli (\$19). These lovely al dente parcels of shredded anatra sit in a dark broth of wild mushroom, pancetta and broad beans that I’m compelled to scoop into my mouth once the ravioli have gone. The doctor’s linguine (\$25) comes with Moreton Bay bugs, halved Damien Hirst-style. The flesh is easily scooped out and twirled along with the pasta ribbons, hints of garlic, chilli, spinach and sun-dried tomatoes. Also available as mains, these pasta dishes are perfectly sized as primi to leave room for secondi.

A traditionalist, I like a nice veal scallopine. Carpaccio's is generous in size, accompanied with broccolini, zucchini and French beans, and two chargrilled king prawns in the shell. The vinsanto and tarragon cream it's served in is a little heavier than expected – almost, dare I say, French – but this is a very hearty, good value main for \$29. Dr Love is on a protein kick and pounces when the waitress mentions a T-bone special (\$36). It's big, a perfect medium rare, and anointed in red wine jus; Il Medico di Amore declares himself most pleased.

Stuffed fuller than Piazza San Pietro at Easter, I'm reluctant to look at the list of dolci, but Dr Love demands chocolate ganache pudding (\$13.50). And it's a monster: a mountain of a pudding, topped with a biscotto like a steel girder. We came, we saw, but we were conquered by this titanic dessert.

Another thing that conquered us was our warm reception at Carpaccio and the consistent attention of the waiters – no mean feat considering there was a large birthday party going on out the back. Few Norton Street eateries offer this level of service. Grazie, grazie! Prego. Ciao. Ciao.

Carpaccio

39-45 Norton St, Leichhardt

Tel: (02) 9550 9365

Mon-Fri noon-4pm, 5.30pm-10.30pm

Sat-Sun 11.30am-11pm