



SAPORI RISTORANTE FOR AUTHENTIC ITALIAN

02.09.11

Review by Sheryll Alexander

Seeking a new favorite spot to enjoy authentic Italian? **Sapori Ristorante** in Newport Beach may have modern Euro décor, but the food is pure old world Italy. And that's a very good thing.

Located on Bayside Drive near Balboa Island, Sapori has been a bright spot in OC's dining scene for 22 years. Chef and proprietor Salvatori "Sal" Maniaci, along with his top notch service staff, is an affable host and aims to please the palate as well as the spirit.

Sal soothes the soul within this casual, yet sophisticated space with white tablecloths, French café chairs, lush greenery and charming garden patio with roaring white stone fireplace.

If you are unsure what to order, ask for longtime server Paolo and he will hook you up to a memorable feast that includes cocktails, wines, cold antipasti, hot appetizers, delicious housemade pastas and decadent desserts.

We started with a refreshing bellini, which is made with super fresh peach juice and a good Italian champagne. Next, Paolo brought an off-the-menu antipasti platter full of flavor such as fresh Mozzarella cheese, cantaloupe draped with thinly-sliced prosciutto, olives, salamis, sliced tomatoes and fresh basil leaves.

Next, Paolo showcases the restaurant's tender and flavorful pastas such as the farfalle al salmon (bow tie pasta with fresh salmon in a tomato cream sauce) and lobster ravioli. Paolo can also suggest off-the-menu items like cheese tortellini in a cream sauce with walnuts and sage.

Secondi entrées are also enticing. We enjoyed the cut-with-your-fork suprema di pollo piaccta (chicken breast sautéed with lemon, white wine, capers and mushrooms) and the scaloppini Gorgonzola (veal sautéed in Marsala wine with Gorgonzola cheese and mushrooms).

What about wines? Let Sal or Paolo pick a bottle for you from their list of to-die-for Italian wines. We were enamored with a 2007 Beltrame Pinot Grigio and a 2008 Chianti Don Guido La Collina.

On Feb. 23, Sapori is holding a Marchesi Antinori wine dinner. The five-course dinner starts at 6:30 p.m. and costs \$75 per person. Some of the dishes include lobster bisque, a butter lettuce salad, wild porcini mushroom risotto, beef medallions with foie gras and amaretto cheesecake. Wine are paired with each dish by Marchesi Antinori's Lorenzo Montoya.

Sapori Ristorante, 1080 Bayside Dr., Newport Beach, 949.644.4220. www.saporinb.com.

Sheryll Alexander is a lifestyles writer based in Costa Mesa, California.