

Savouring Giorgio Nava's new Italian Experience at 95 at Parks

 By Leigh Andrews

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A lucky selection of Cape Town's foodie set smiled and soaked up some winter's sunshine in the leafy green-themed conservatory at 95 at Parks in Constantia, before being served flutes of deliciously dry Prosecco and snack bowls of steamy squid and calamari, with salty, fresh zucchini tempura for the poor souls among us who can't eat anything from the sea (note my sad, solo hand going up here).

Chef Giorgio Nava, known for north Italian restaurant perfection in the Cape CBD, has been in SA for 19 years now yet is still strongly Italian-accented in the most endearing way. I know this because Nava did the rounds, shaking hands and explaining the Italian Experience menu for the afternoon, which will be switched up every three weeks. Formerly the Constantia branch of Nava's Carne, 95 at Parks offers all the Italian success of his 95 Keerom offering in the CBD and is most definitely another restauranting win, from the less-meat more-pasta menu to the tasteful background sounds to the warm, intimate country house interior with an inviting foresty palette.

Pre-starters, we switched our Prosecco flutes to the soft Steenberg Semillon 2016 – one of my favourites – while sampling the fresh baked breads.



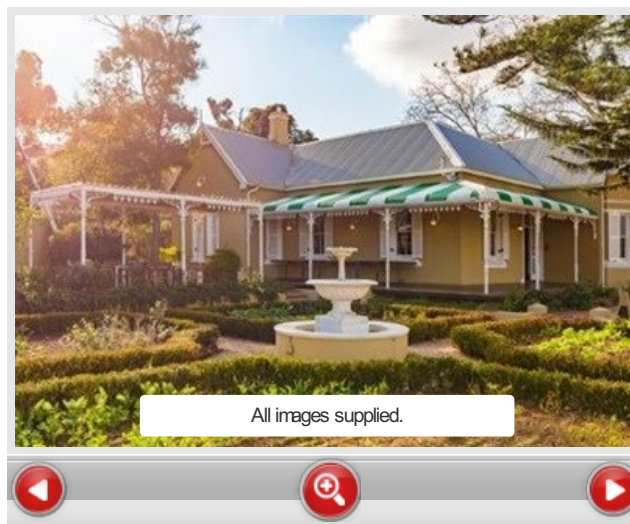
Chef Giorgio Nava on camera. All images supplied.



Summery flights of fancy at Catharina's

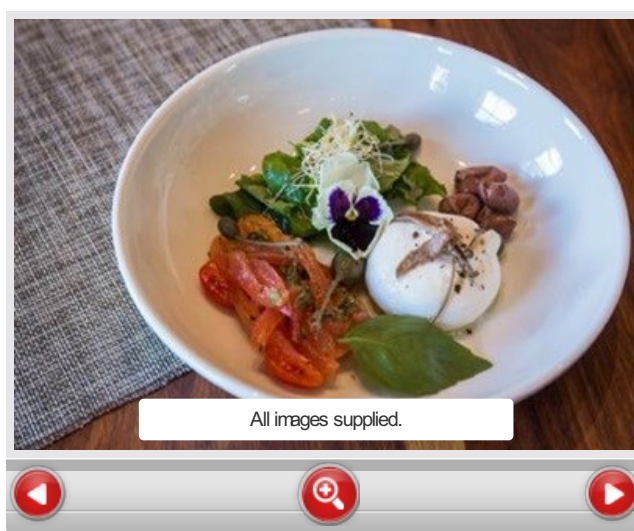
Leigh Andrews 11 Jan 2017

We then hauled out our smartphones to snap pics of the first course: Deconstructed-yet-still-substantial *l' Insalata Caprese*, comprising burrata mozzarella (just the thing for those nostalgic over Nava's now-just-a-memory Mozzarella Bar on Kloof Street) and a salad of tomatoes, anchovies (missing from mine, thankfully), as well as capers, olives and fresh basil, with those breads proving perfect for mopping up the very last bits of insalata, especially when dressed with the extra virgin olive oil – Nava's favourite 'sauce' and balsamic vinegar in easy reach on the table.



The second course on the day was also Instagram-worthy *il Polpo alla Griglia*, or grilled octopus on mash – the fish eaters raved about the octopus, while my replacement *orecchiette* with veal came in a perfectly beany broth that filled each small pasta 'ear'.

For thirds, we had a choice of raviolis – *i ravioli Di Agnello al Burro e Salvia*, ravioli filled with slow-baked Karoo lamb shoulder (all the more authentic as Nava owns his own farm in Nieu-Bethesda, stocked with Dorper lamb, game, and cattle with both Italian Romagnola and SA Nguni and Afrikaner heritage, topped with sage butter and Parmesan cheese, or *i ravioli di Zucca* – a comforting butternut-and-ricotta blend ravioli, also topped with sage butter and Parmesan. The rich ruby Steenberg 2015 Nebbiolo was ideal with these meaty meals, served on beautiful marbled plates with the real-deal shredded (not powdered) Parmesan, obviously.



By the time the fourth course came around you'd expect us to be groaning and reluctant to sample, but as it was *i gnocchi al ragu di Manzo*, potato gnocchi with beef ragu and we were eating smaller portions *assaggio* style, we sat back, eyes gleaming with expectation. As a gnocchi-lover, this is the course I was most excited for and boy, does Nava's version deliver! Soft, hot pillows of deliciousness that melted into the gravy and had most wishing for bigger portions.

The fifth course was yet another choice, luckily again an easy one for me as the first option was *la zuppa di Cozze alla marinara*, yes steamed mussels in tomato, white wine and fresh herbs, with most of the afternoon's guests opting for *l'Osso Bucco a la Milanese*, like me– tender veal shanks slow-cooked in a similar tomato, carrot, celery, onion and herbs soup just as the original Italian recipes from 600 years ago dictate.

“ @SteenbergWines Nebbiolo and marrow- magical lunch followed by vanilla ice-cream and then a cappuccino.

#95atParks pic.twitter.com/7ZBJFKd1pJ— Tshepang Molisana (@TshepiMolisana) August 4, 2017 ”

Lucky for our straining waistbands, last up was simply dubbed *il gelato* – the authentic real deal of fresh, homemade vanilla ice cream with berries. Others have raved about Nava's chocolate fondant but I was more than thrilled with our dessert bowls as there's absolutely nothing boring about this creamy vanilla, especially when sampled with chilled spoons of soft, tart raspberries, gooseberries to make your mouth squirm and slightly sweet strawberries with a mint leaf adding a splash of greenery. A strong cappuccino rounded off the meal with pure Italian perfection.

Mille grazie, Giorgio!

**Leigh Andrews was a guest of 95 at Parks. The six-course Italian Experience tasting menu at 95 at Parks is R330 per person, with an a la carte menu option. 95 at Parks is situated at 114 Constantia Main Road and is open for lunch and dinner from Tuesdays to Saturdays, and Sunday lunch, with secure parking on the premises. Call +2721 761 0247 or email parks@95keerom.com to make your booking.*

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh_Andrews.

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