

## RESTAURANT

# Tastes of Piedmont

with **Lizzie Loel**

**C**ONTE Camillo Denso Di Cavour was born in Turin, Piedmont, in 1810, before Italy was a single country. He was thus a statesman of the Kingdom of Sardinia and, if his portrait is anything to go by, a very stately one at that.

His proud compatriots, Mara and Rocco Turino, who named their first restaurant in Italy after the count, are now in Australia running a small restaurant in Clayfield with the same name. It is the essence of Italian hospitality.

The unassuming strip shopping centre has become something of a mecca for Italio-philes who beat a path to the restaurant, as well as the family-run café next door. Traditional gelato, sweets and biscuits are produced on site and the rich aroma of coffee fills the air.

Conte Cavour restaurant has three sections — a small courtyard with rustic iron furniture and red tablecloths, an inside space in front of the bar, and the main dining room, down a short flight of stairs, with lace curtains and pink fanned napkins sitting on the tables.

The food is rustic with an emphasis on flavour, texture and very simple presentation.

A selection of cold entrees was

perfect for lunch on a warm day, accompanied by a variety of balsamic-dressed leaves.

Also doused in balsamic vinegar was thinly sliced rolled rabbit that sat on a bed of rocket. A mild stuffing added flavour and body to the otherwise light

dish, but the finely sliced veal tongue was much more punchy under a healthy dollop of tangy green sauce, accompanied by some vinegared capsicum strips.

Fish had been battered, then chilled, and was served in small pieces with preserved zucchinis which were delicious on their own. Small morsels of chicken were done in much the same way, with a slightly sweeter dressing.

There's a section of hot starters priced from \$6-\$8 that are extremely good value. Choices are restricted at lunch, but at night traditional Piedmont leek pudding with rosemary butter sauce should be given consideration. Mussels au gratin and scallops with a julienne of carrots and zucchini with a lemon sauce also sound interesting.

I tired the crespelle, a crepe filled with slivers of ham and melting fontina cheese, an earthy cheese with the consistency of molten lava when heated. Combined in a fine bechamel, with

hints of nutmeg, it was all rolled up and baked in a hot oven until the edges were crisp and the centre was bubbling like a cauldron. It took a while for the burn to subside on my tongue but that's what you get for being zealous about food!

My friend took the safe option — lasagne. This was made with shredded lamb and sheets of spinach pasta. Creamy and gently spiced, it was comfort food par excellence.

After the wounding of my mouth, I was eyeing off the gelatis next door for dessert. However, we decided to order the chilled chocolate pudding with macaroon biscuits and caramel crumbled over the top.

We left the restaurant feeling great — a light, but deliciously homely meal on board, great coffees and lovely service.

Conte Cavour is the sort of place at which people become regulars, as much attached to the warmth of the place and its owners as the food.



ROCCO and Mara Turina, *below*, serve food with a focus on flavour and simple presentation, *above*. Pictures: Suzanna Clarke