

little italy

THERE'S A TRULY AUTHENTIC Italian restaurant right in the heart of Clayfield. It's just like being in Italy.

Five old uni mates were getting together for a birthday celebration: Bridge Belle, Landscape Lass, Blondie, Journo, and Yours Truly. We turned to BB, an adventurous frequent diner, for a recommendation. She had feasted at Conte Cavour Ristorante on Sandgate Rd on several occasions and, having recently returned from Italy, enthused it was genuine Italian fare.

Conte Cavour's owner Rocco Turina has been a chef for over 40 years; he and his wife Maria have been in the restaurant business for over 27 years. Mara says they are 'fresh Italian people arriving in Australia only one year ago'. They opened Conte Cavour in July.

Their menu reflects their northern Italian heritage. Mara says their food is more homemade and pretty much what a typical Italian mother puts on her table every day. She is quick to tell you there's no such thing as Italian food: "It's too simplistic to say that northern Italy uses butter and cream while southern Italy uses olive oil and pasta. Each city

or region has its own distinct cuisine."

Keen to try a variety of tastes, Blondie was the first to take the plunge deciding on the antipasti, a great way to appreciate Rocco's fare. LL, Journo and yours truly followed suit ordering the sliced rabbit with balsamic vinegar and rocket, fish fillets and zucchini marinated in white vinegar and herbs, small chicken bites marinated with fennel and nuts, and the insalata mista (a delightful summery salad). Each individual element of the antipasti was flavourful, well balanced and not at all oily – a common downfall of many antipasti dishes.

BB headed for the Primi Platti Lasagne Verdi Con Ragù D'Agnello (a green baked lasagna with lamb ragù) which she said was light and creamy with succulent bite-sized chunks of lamb.

Although satiated, BB said the dessert menu wouldn't disappoint. Featuring sweet-tooth staples, LL, BB and yours truly settled on a wedge of crème brûlée topped with crushed Amaretto biscuits and dusted with a fine layer of icing sugar. Journo couldn't resist the Panna Cotta Al Frutti Di Bosco (wild berries flavoured

with panna cotta cream) and was still raving about it as we left the restaurant.

Service was a delight. Mara was friendly, conscientious and attentive without hovering or rushing us along. The restaurant has a nice sense of subdued hubbub. The food here is a celebration of the simple, wholesome goodness of true Italian cookery. Salute!

Conte Cavour seats about 50 inside and the front courtyard around 20 diners. Conte Cavour's car park is located directly behind the restaurant and accessible via Junction Rd. Ph 3256 1901. 