

AN ITALIAN RENDEZVOUS

Anjali Shetty

Italian dishes have made their way into the hearts and stomachs of people for decades now. There are several restaurants that serve the cuisine in various avatars. While we love our pizzas and pastas, chefs from many restaurants are also trying to introduce us to many other Italian varieties that are equally tempting. From debunking myths to picking their favourites, chefs talk about the rather unknown part of Italian cuisine.

On what is new on offer, Massimo Verzini, chef, Sorriso, Marriott Suites Pune, says, "I introduced a lot of home-made pastas in different shapes and with different

sauces, which received a lot of appreciation from locals and expats."

Tushar Deshpande, chef, Arbour Kitchen, adds, "Currently, lots of chefs are creating fusion recipes and adding their own touch to

them. Such recipes, when done using the correct techniques, and with heart, can give amazing results. But the authenticity has to be maintained as well. People are enjoying Italian cuisine and are ready to experiment with the same. Not only are they eating and enjoying in many restaurants but also taking an effort to cook it."

Dario Dezio, chef Dario's, says, "Some people prefer healthier choices, especially the young ones, who are much more aware about health and nutrition."

CHEF'S FAVOURITES
Ingredients like Parmesan, garlic, basil, truffles — the list goes on. The fact that every ingredient has a great value of taste, fragrance and can be used in

different ways in a host of dishes, is what Deshpande enjoys the most. "The fact that chefs, these days, have access to a variety of ingredients, different types and shapes of pasta, as well as enhanced flavours to experiment with, it can help elevate one's level of creativity. Also, cooking becomes a fun event."

MAKING ITALIAN CUISINE TEMPTING
For Verzini, it is garlic, thyme

(Clockwise from top) Chianti, Darios Ravioli and Spaghetti with Parmesan

and rosemary. "Good marination with herbs oil and wine enhance the flavour of the dish." For Dezio, it is good extra virgin olive oil, Parmesan, sun-dried tomatoes and olives. Exotic ingredients such as truffles and bottarga (dried fish eggs) make an interesting set to play with. Italian cheese,

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which is available in so many varieties, enables a chef to use it in different and innovative ways, adds Deshpande.

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MYTHS ABOUT ITALIAN CUISINE

■ Many people consider Italian cuisine to be just pizzas and pastas. Verzini adds, "It has lots of vegetables, grains, different dairy products, a host of fish variants and meat products — which is cured, grilled, stewed or braised. So, for sure, it's not just pasta and pizza."

■ Italian cuisine is touted as the 'Queen of the Mediterranean' and is well known for health benefits. Dezio shares, "In Italy, many people eat pasta daily but they eat it al dente (pasta or rice that is cooked to be firm to the bite), and with a small quantity of sauce, extra virgin olive oil and protein-rich Parmesan. So, when eaten the right way, it is nutritious and forms a complete diet."

■ Deshpande adds that the biggest myth about Italian cooking or food is that it is junk food and considered unhealthy. This is not true at all. He says, "Italian food is healthy as well as has great nutritional value. The simple manner of cooking and use of fresh ingredients makes it a healthy choice of staple food."



Pasta and Risotto in Truffle oil

MUST-HAVE ITALIAN DISHES IN THE CITY

■ **What: Tagliolini Bombay**
Gustoso in Bandra is ideal for those seeking comfort food. The best dish on the menu to really satiate every craving is the Tagliolini Bombay, house-made Tagliolini tossed in Grana Padano cheese wheel, with brandy flambe; they also serve Formaggi Misti, a platter of fine Italian cheeses.
Where: Gustoso, Khar (W)

■ **What: Cheese and Quinoa Meatballs**
The gourmet superstore's first Italian restaurant, Sorrentina by Foodhall, has dishes like Cheese and Quinoa Meatballs, meatless quinoa and cheese meatballs in a spicy tomato sauce; Eggplant Timballo, mozzarella-stuffed eggplant in a spicy tomato sauce, with pine nuts.
Where: Sorrentina by Foodhall, Santacruz (W)

■ **What: Wild Mushrooms, Taleggio and Fresh Black Truffle Pizza**
No Italian must-have dishes

list is complete without pizza. Ceconni's wood fired pizzas are simple and flavourful. The intense flavour of truffles in this one make all the difference.
Where: Ceconni's, Santacruz (W)

■ **What: Burrata Salad**
Burrata may be the most understated cheese in Italian cuisine but is gaining popularity now. The Burrata Salad at Cin Cin is simple one that aims at highlights the star of the dish — burrata. Simple, fresh greens such as cherry tomatoes, arugula, black truffle shavings and tomato confit make it a must-have.
Where: CinCin, Bandra Kurla Complex, Bandra (E)

■ **What: Quattro Formaggi Pizza**
Not mentioning a dish from this iconic eatery will be considered a carnal sin. Their Quattro Formaggi — a delectable combination of mozzarella, cheddar, gorgonzola and fontina — will lull you into a cheese coma. For those cheese lovers out there, this one's a must.
Where: Pizza By The Bay, Churchgate

RESTAURANT REVIEW

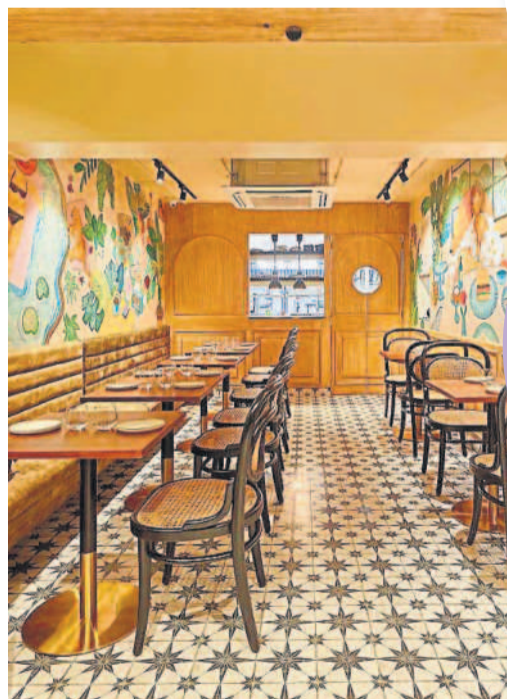
Barcelona to Bandra

Ruella Philips

We wouldn't call the restaurant a hole-in-the-wall place to evade the negative connotation that comes with it, but nevertheless, La Loca Maria — the new Spanish restaurant on Bandra's Turner Road — is, in fact, a quaint little place. Having said that, the size of the restaurant didn't stop it from being booked full for two straight weekdays.

But our complaints ended there, once we arrived at the humble eatery, we were quickly escorted towards our seats. We had informed the staff that we'd have a toddler with us, and they were more than courteous and friendly to attend to our needs. The place is done up in good taste, with a Spanish-cum-Portuguese villa ambience — soft lights, Hispanic art murals inspired by Frida Kahlo's artworks painted on the walls in bright yellow and plush comfy sofas. The place exuded warmth and comfort. We started off with some mocktails — Spicy Watermelon (₹200) and Pineapple Basil Fizz (₹250) for there weren't too many options to choose from. The watermelon drink was disappointing. It tasted bitter, the spiciness was amiss and it just wasn't what we expected. The latter, however, was a refreshing burst of citrus with the strong flavours of pineapple.

Next up, we ordered Sticky Pork Belly (₹550), Gambas Al Ajillo (₹550) and Charred



Octopus (₹500). The pork came in a sweet and tangy sauce, and was scored an average. The second, garlic prawns in a chilli sauce, was flavourful with garlic not overpowering the prawns. The octopus was a revelation! It tastes similar to calamari but meatier and this one came with a slight charred bitterness that went well with the paprika and mustard sauce.

For mains, after much deliberation, we went in for Lobster Ravioli (₹950) and Braised Buff (₹750). The ravioli — soft pillows of fresh pasta dough filled with lobster meat — came

swimming in a sauce of seafood bisque (a rich shellfish soup), which made all the difference to the dish. Braised Buff — succulent buffalo meat that literally fell off the bone as soon as we dug our forks into it. I'll admit we were quite full at this point — which says a lot since the portions were adequate — but we wanted to try something from their festive menu which is available only till the end of this month. So, we gave in to our cravings and ordered the Lamb Wellington (₹1600). The sumptuous meat came in a



(From the top) Lobster Ravioli, Tiramisu and Lamb Wellington
PHOTOS: CHRISTOPHER PHILIPS

crusty pastry baked to a perfect golden brown and was drizzled with brown gravy. The meat was cooked well, although we're pretty sure it could have been more succulent. And given the price of the dish, we'd have rather given it a miss.

LA LOCA MARIA

Where: Pali Hill, Bandra (W)
Call: 9324404335
What's on the menu: Spanish, Italian
Alcohol: No
Smoking: Yes
At a glance
Décor: Modern chic
Food quality: Very good
Reservation: Highly recommended
Service: Prompt, attentive
Price for two: ₹5,000
Rating: ★★★★★

Ending on a sweet note, we went in for two out of their three dessert offerings. Tiramisu (₹400) was a deconstructed version of the Italian favourite with a surprising layer of meringue that added a crispy texture to the creamy delight. We also had Sweet & Sour (₹400), which enlightened us to the perfect marriage of lime and bitter chocolate. The combination of dark chocolate, salted caramel and lime ice cream was a burst of sharp flavours — acidic, intense, salty and sweet. La Loca Maria ticked most of the boxes that make for a hit recipe, their staff is extremely prompt and courteous. You won't have to look up twice to get their attention. They even offered to tend to my toddler for a brief period so we could have our dessert. We would definitely recommend this place for a relaxing, sumptuous and hearty meal, given you don't mind splurging a bit!

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(HT Café reviews anonymously and pays for its meals)



A participant donates her hair on stage with Milind Soman

DONATE FOR A CAUSE

Hair for Hope India was started in June 19, 2013, by Premi Mathew to create awareness about hair donation. They collect donated hair and convert it into wigs, and give it free of cost to chemo patients. It gives the patients the confidence to face society and more courage to fight the dreaded disease. Thousands of women, kids and men have donated their hair. Hundreds of wigs have been donated to give a new lease of life to chemo patients who cannot afford a wig with natural hair.

REGISTER NOW! www.pinkathon.in/mumbai

Intermittent fasting increases longevity in patients undergoing cardiac catheterisation



The study found that patients who practice intermittent fasting are less likely to be diagnosed with heart failure
PHOTO: ISTOCK

While intermittent fasting may sound like another dieting craze, the practice of routinely not eating and drinking for short periods of time has shown again to lead to potentially better health outcomes. In a new study by researchers at the Intermountain Healthcare Heart Institute in Salt Lake City, USA, researchers have found that cardiac catheterisation patients who practised regular intermittent fasting lived longer than patients who don't. In addition, the study found that patients who practice intermittent fasting are less likely to be diagnosed with heart failure. "It's another example of how we're finding that regularly fasting can lead to better health outcomes and longer lives," said Benjamin Horne, PhD, principal investigator of the study and director of cardiovascular and genetic epidemiology at the institute.

In the study, researchers asked 2,001 Intermountain patients undergoing cardiac catheterisation from 2013 to 2015 a series of lifestyle questions, including whether or not they practised routine intermittent fasting. Researchers then followed up with those patients 4.5 years later and found that routine fasters had greater survival rate than those who did not. Because people who fast routinely also are known to engage in other healthy behaviours, the study also evaluated other parameters including demographics, socioeconomic factors, cardiac risk factors, comorbid diagnoses, medications and treatments, and other lifestyle behaviours such as smoking and alcohol consumption. Correcting statistically for these factors, long-term routine fasting remained a strong predictor of better survival and lower risk of heart failure, according to researchers. While the study does not show that fasting is the causal effect for better survival, these real-world outcomes in a large population do suggest that fasting may be having an effect and urge continued study of the behaviour.

Tirumala



FABRICS | KURTIS | SUITS | LACES | WESTERN WEAR | NEWBORN BRIDAL WEAR | KIDS WEAR | BAGS | SHOES
Tirumala Shopping Centre, Near D.N. Nagar Metro Stn., Andheri (W).
FABRICS | KURTIS | SUITS | SAREES | LACES | GOWNS | BRIDAL WEAR | MENS WEAR
S.V.Road, Kora Kendra, Borivali (W).