

where we've been...



THE ITALIAN FOOD PROJECT Camden

My kids have been brought up regularly dining in restaurants. They love food, family and good times. My youngest son Chad has his birthday in March. He chose The Italian Food Project from a long list of options I presented to him. I think mostly because he hadn't dined there before, but it was a good choice as far as I was concerned. It was left to Chad and his girlfriend Courtney to organise.

There was a turning point in the 'organisation' of the Sunday lunch when someone asked if the restaurant was booked... Sunday lunch became Sunday dinner. We all arrived around 6pm, an early start, but it was Sunday night. There was a long table ready for our group, maybe 20 people. After taking our places our waitress offered breads and it was readily accepted. Garlic pizza and bruschetta were presented and devoured.

Menus were handed around and ordering chatter ensued. As you would imagine, I am often called on for advice. Unfortunately, I hadn't experienced this new menu, so I wasn't much help. "Just pick something that sounds nice and I can pretty much guarantee it will be good," was the best I could offer. I have faith in kitchens of this calibre. We ordered a couple of bottles of sangiovese and lots of glasses.

I decided to try the famed Porchetta. Pure bred, free range Berkshires supplied by Saulsbury Berkshires farm located in Camden. They are deboned and slowroasted in the outdoor, wood fire oven in the courtyard of the

restaurant. It's a dish that is close to a signature dish for The Italian Food Project. Slow cooked pork with big slabs of crackling and baked potatoes. It's accompanied by a rocket and pear salad, but there is no room on the plate to fit it. I enjoyed the salad separately from my meal.

Fried Tallegio, Potato Gnocchi Crispy Pancetta, Honey and Fried Crumbed Beef, Pork Ragu Mozzarella Arancini Balls were highlights of the smaller dishes that filled our table.

The Buffalo Mozzarella, Prosciutto and Rocket Pizza was also a hit. Capricciosa and Patate Pizzas were also devoured with enthusiasm.

After ordering way too much food for dinner, and being a birthday after all, cake was next. An awful rendition of the most sung song in the world ensued. Courtney is a dessert expert. Making them I mean. Gooley, rich decadent desserts, and tonight was no different. Our Chocolate Mousse Cake was outstanding, but even the smallest piece was enough.

Neither of the owners was on duty that night and I would like to make special mention of The Italian Food Project's staff, particularly Liz, who was our host. Nothing was any trouble. Her good nature and professional demeanour added to our evening. The Italian Food Project comes highly recommended for a family celebration. The Italians know how to celebrate family.