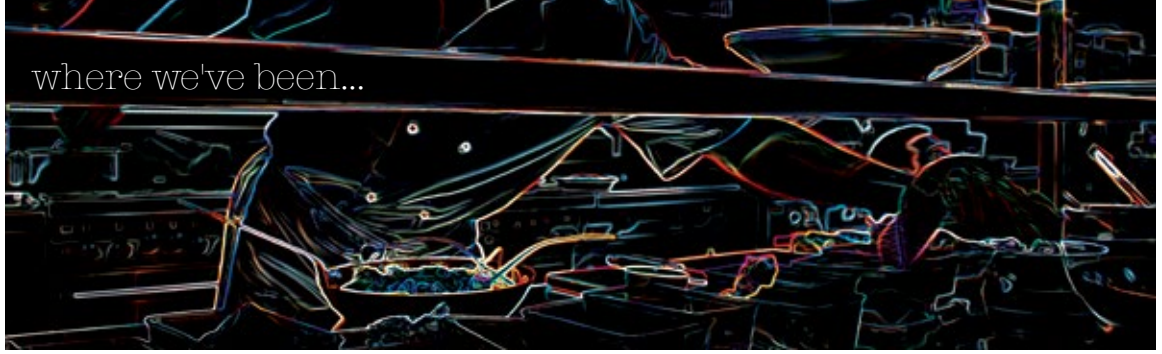


where we've been...



## **AMANO RISTORANTE** Emerald Hills

Friday lunch with two of my kids at the high quality Amano Ristorante. Brooke and Chad were excited. Amano is one of Brooke's favourite local restaurants and she shared her excitement at the invitation. "Oh wonderful."

We are greeted by Alyssa and Elias - the recently married young couple that own and operate the excellent Italian restaurant. Amano is a casually elegant space flooded with natural light. After a quick catch up with Elias across the open kitchen, I join my kids at our table.

Alyssa is running the floor of the restaurant and at some stage I introduced her to Chad and Brooke. Of course, she is already well aware of Brooke, a regular customer. It's mostly takeaway though, hence Brooke's excitement at long lunching at Amano.

We move to ordering and there are delicious decisions to make. After consultation with our waitress, we decided to share a Burrata for starters. "Yes it's big enough to share," she assured us. It was - perfectly so. I also selected a glass of Cockfighters Ghost Sangiovese.

I went for a dish from the specials list attached to the front of the menu. Flame Tail Snapper fillet, 'Acqua Pazza': mussel; fregola Sarda tostata, basil, bottarga. Wow! This was one of the best Italian inspired dishes I have experienced in a long time.

A superb Snapper fillet is poached in lightly herbed broth with Fregola added. Also known as succu or Sardinian couscous, Fregola is

made from coarsely ground semolina and water. It's larger than couscous and more tasty. Fresh mussels decorate one side of the bowl and add immensely to the meal. I cannot overstate how good this dish was.

Brooke and Chad both opted for pasta. Chad chose Tagliatelle Blue Swimmer Crab with a rich creamy sauce. Brooke went for Casarecce Pork Ragù. Both loved their dishes. Chad was drinking Peronis, pregnant Brooke was on the Diet Cokes.

Good news/bad news. Amano will have their new Spring menu out soon. That's exciting but it means that some of these dishes might not be included.

We first said no to dessert, but then Brooke and I looked at each other and predictably resigned to, "oh we'll just have a look at the menu please." The waitress smiled knowingly and returned with a menu.

The word "tiny" convinced us that we could fit in a cannoli each. I also spied Affogato on the dessert list. Wow - that escalated. "With liqueur?" Our waitress enquired. "Ummm... no." The 'ummm' considered the two glasses of wine I had already enjoyed.

That night I met up with my brother and his wife in Wollongong. I told them where I had been for lunch. "Amano is the best Italian in Macarthur," Greg said directly. It's definitely in the top few. Our Friday lunch was superb. Great food with lovely ambience and service. The company was definitely the best in Macarthur.