

food ^{bn}

RESTAURANT // RECIPES // TABLETALK // WINE



Chow bella

A well-dressed Italian impresses **Tony Harper** with its smart service, food and fit-out

I'm not sure how Vine has managed to fly below my dining radar for so long because it's been doing its thing for a few years now and it's smart; really smart. The owners seem to have a fairly unassuming approach to things and from what I've been told, there's an attitude of garnering custom by positive word of mouth rather than bashing its own proverbial drum.

It's tucked away near the Moray Street corner of Merthyr Road in New Farm, a little off the beaten track and nicely removed from the hubbub of Brunswick Street. You'd be excused for thinking that it's little more than a smartly appointed cafe – until you step inside. It is as neat as a pin and smartly decked out in semi-formal restaurant attire; linen cloths, decent stemware and polished cutlery.

The theme is Italian and it is reasonably traditional in terms of content, but executed and presented with finesse and balance. The pasta, which makes up a small section of the menu, is made on the premises and it is seriously good. Then there's a nice mix of seafood, poultry, meats and game treated simply and skilfully.

The expected bruschetta (\$12.50) and antipasto plate (\$24) lead into an array of more considered entrees. Carpaccio of wagyu with horseradish cream (\$20.50) and seared scallops and sand crab with homemade rag pasta (\$23) were both terrific, the carpaccio unexpectedly so. Simple in concept but with all the bits – horseradish cream, herb salad, wee discs of potato and wafer-thin wagyu – working perfectly to make a delicious dish.

Then the mains were just as good; duck with roasted pears and walnut vinaigrette (\$34) and fish of the day (\$34), which was a fillet of salmon on a bed of corn and pumpkin mash with an almost bouillabaisse-like broth with prawns, mussels and succulent scallops.

We opted for a fairly decadent tiramisu (\$12.50), but there was quite a good range of interesting cheeses for those with the stomach capacity and the desire for a savoury finish.

Vine has a list of mostly Australian and New Zealand labels, with a well-chosen range of Italian wines tying it neatly to the theme. More than 30 wines are available by the glass and the prices are generous, particularly for the better bottles.

Service was exceptional; unobtrusive, observant and unflinching despite the restaurant becoming busier as the night progressed.

I couldn't find a wrinkle in Vine's performance. It seems that a fair amount of care and thought have gone into all facets of the restaurant and the result is a smooth and fairly opulent dining experience with a band of loyal supporters.



VINE RESTAURANT BAR

158 Moray St, New Farm. Ph: 3358 6658.

Chef: Carlos Ortega. Owners: Mark Rotolone & Mimma Diana. Lunch & dinner, Tue-Sun; breakfast, Sat-Sun.

Licensed. Major cards & eftpos.

Wheelchair access. On-street parking.

FOOD // 8 WINE // 7.5

SERVICE // 7.5 AMBIENCE // 8

RATINGS 10: perfect; 9: excellent; 8: very good; 7: good; 6: passable; 5: disappointing; 1-4: woeful

Photographs // Justine Walpole

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