

"A culinary gem at Lake Como"

A prolonged cool and wet spell defined our stay at Lake Como and somewhat reduced our planned range of activities. We were therefore very grateful to find that the restaurant co-located with our albergo lived up to its advanced billings. It was comforting that we could simply walk downstairs into a superb dining and service environment. Now, mind you, we had just been to the #3 restaurant in the world the previous week (in Modena), so our standards were set pretty high.

Chef Tiziano Valentini and his staff were functioning at a Michelin star level, in our opinion, without the posh surroundings. We had 3 dinners that were inventive and superbly prepared, and the wine pairings suggested by Ty (focusing on northern Italy) were amazing. We had extensive conversations with him about his approach to cooking, his menu choices, and his philosophy in general, and we applaud his fusion of the best "local" approaches with techniques of world cuisine. Picture, for example, a delicious ragout of local Como fish surrounded by a thin pasta wrapper—a kind of Como sushi, if you will. Local orientation has become something of a worldwide cliché, but Ty is taking the concepts well beyond the norm. Add to the food the personal attention of the chef, the very attentive servers, and the general ambience of family-like informality, and you have a quite unique dining experience. One of the best we've had in many trips to Europe. If only it had been warmer and drier so that we could have dined on the terrace right on the lakeshore...

- Visited April 2013

"We LOVED it!"

How much did we love it? So much that we dined there three nights in a row, eager to see each night what wonderful cuisine was in store for us. We have dined in fine places in many countries and throughout our own USA, and La Cucina is among the best. We loved that after a long day of playing hard, we could sit down and all our choices were made for us as the fine chef cooks a set menu for each night of the week. Absolutely everything he made was delicious, but there were some real standouts: the Smoked Trout Cheese Cake was inspired and reminded me of a really great cheese soufflé in texture and mouth-watering goodness; the Whitefish and Basil Lasagnetta had us oohing and ahing between bites, and the Herb Wrapped Char was a perfect mix of crunchy and tender; the Pistachios Wild Boar Terrine was so different and soooooo good; the Asparagus Pesto Pasta was divine; and though I'm a white meat kind of girl, the Spinach and Pine Nuts Quail was moist and tender and amazingly flavorful; and the Lamb Meatballs and Mint Yoghurt were excellent. He throws in some BONUS treats, like extra wine before and after the meal (by the way, he has an extensive wine list) and some extra food treats that are real delicacies. His plating is really beautiful, with plate colors and shapes complimenting each course. His two young waiters are friendly and professional (one is his son), and the dining room is comfortable and cozy and romantic. The price is 50 euros per person for the complete meal, but one could order just a few of the courses if they wanted. We ordered the Menu Gourmet (completo) each night and received a 25 percent discount since we were staying at the hotel, but even without a discount the meals are worth every euro. When Ty cooks for you, you're getting a much better dinner than you'll get in a big fancy hotel that charges an arm and a leg. That brings me to Ty - what can I say? Ty pops in and out of his kitchen often to explain the courses to you, which we found utterly charming. We adore beautiful Lake Como, and Ty made our four nights here even more special. In years to come when we speak of Lake Como, I'm sure Ty's meals will fit into the conversation.

- Visited May 2013

"Very unusual, amazingly surprising and photogenic to boot!"

We selected this ristorante from a travel book, entered slightly before they were ready to serve and got the "low-down" on the non-democratic dining establishment. The pre-selected menu is set for each day of the week and you can select as many or few courses, but only the courses on the day's bill of fare.

Our before dinner glass of wine, part of the experience was an excellent wine, sadly we didn't write down the name. and lovely appetizers as well. Dinner was in a cozy, warm dining room that we had all to ourselves - we eat a lot earlier than the locals. The boar ribs were not my favorite but my husband enjoyed them tremendously and I really loved the chestnut pasta. A wonderful bottle of wine along with dinner made the evening nice and we were glad to be walking back to our hotel after the huge dinner - and we didn't even order all of the courses.

We would go back just to try a different night's menu and also to try and go later for a more lively crowd than just the two of us

- Visited October 2012