

Osteria Torre a Cona: Tuscan cooking with a daring twist

The epitome of contemporary Tuscan cooking in 2021

It's a breezy day in the Florentine hills as we gather for our first press preview lunch since the pandemic rainbow of restrictions halted our culinary jaunts. Beaming across the cast-iron tables and chairs beneath established foliage around the eighteenth-century lemon house on the eponymous wine estate, **Osteria Torre a Cona** is the gastronomic destination on this momentous day.



The new approach to Tuscan cooking served at the restaurant, which opened in early May, is in a reliable quartet of hands. **Maria Probst and Cristian Santandrea**, chefs with a Michelin star in their kitchen cabinets from now-shuttered La Tenda Rossa, are tailoring the culinary identity to the estate's impeccable ethos of quiet elegance, contemporary living and blissful relaxation. An antipasto of **grilled sardines topped with sausage meat** and nicely balanced with a vinegar reduction over aromatic salad leaves (9 euro) enraptures the taste buds and challenges the mindset: *what exactly is contemporary Tuscan cooking in 2021?* I find myself asking. *Local ingredients and familiar flavours cooked as nourishing dishes* comes the answer in the form of **fennel seed pici pasta served with Cinta Senese pork sauce** (12 euro); the **green gnocchi with aglione and spring truffle** (12 euro) is already tempting me back for supper soon. There's a nod to international visitors with seemingly less demanding offerings like **chicken with lemon, herbed mash and truffle** (22 euro), while the **lamb and mutton cutlets with agretti (monk's beard) and artichokes** (25 euro) will elicit an air of mystery, or the odd frown, among foreigners who haven't watched Masterchef in the last five years.



Accompanying the cuisine are the estate's graceful wines; the vineyards wreath around the age-old walls of the property owned by the Rossi di Montelera family since 1935. As we sip the shimmering Chianti Colli Fiorentini Riserva "Badia a Corte", Niccolò Rossi di Montelera remarks that it's his favourite wine. "It's because of the Piedmontese style; my family's from Turin, after all." A stylish red with an enduring nose and courtly tannins, the Sangiovese grapes for the Riserva come from a single vineyard at an altitude that exceeds 300 metres. Dessert is served: a decadent revival of the Florentine zuccotto ice-cream cake with lashings of ricotta, dark chocolate drops and a swirl of soft fine dining meringue (8 euro). It's gorgeous and further enhanced by one of the most entrancing vin santos on the market: Torre a Cona Fonti e Lecceta Occhio di Pernice, a luscious dessert wine that remains uncloying and uncomplicated.



Feeling Orpheus creep in, the temptation to close my eyes and dream of Tuscany isn't eased by the fact that **20 relaxing and refined rooms** lie a short distance away. Recently renovated, antique furniture alternates with contemporary furnishings in a "home away from home" ambience. Instead I knock back an espresso, like a proper Tuscan, and return back down the hill to Florence, just 25 minutes away. *What a lunch!*



Osteria Torre a Cona

Via Torre a Cona 49, Rignano sull'Arno

Bookings required: 055 699000 / info@torreacona.com