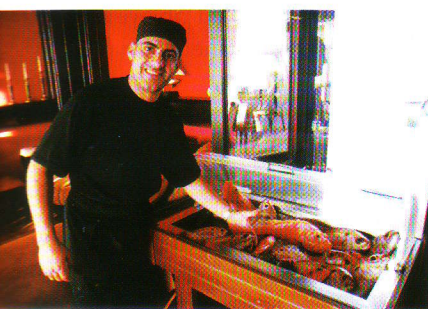




Tarragon

The latest fine dining restaurant on the gastronomic block

The French consider Tarragon to be one of the finest herbs, which makes this newly opened eatery on the water's edge of St Paul's Bay aptly named. Because, with its luxurious décor, attentive staff and inventive and delectable food, after making the Wild Thyme restaurant a must



on every foodies list, chef celeb Marvin Gauci has 'gone it alone' and opened an establishment which will soon be considered one of the finest on the island.

You immediately notice that time, passion and dedication have been heavily invested in this venture; with its expensive dark wood solid furniture, deep red walls and antique nautical decorations, it is a homely, yet classy venue for any season.

There is a comfy sofa to sink into while having an aperitif – with the sound of soothing music set at just the right decibel to not hear other's conversations yet not deafeningly loud like a bar – and then take a table (with sparkling clean tablecloths, cutlery and heavenly comfy whicker chairs) with an outstanding view of St Paul's Island while the adorable waitress Nadine explains the specials and helps you choose your wine. Marvin's sister Graziella and the rest of the team runs a tight ship and will make sure your every whim is catered for during your meal.

For starters Marvin insisted on preparing a selection for my guest and I so that we could savour several dishes. These included a succulent tuna carrpacio drizzled with just the right amount of oil; moist gnocchi with a divine melt-in-your-mouth speck and cheese filling; a tortellini bursting with crab/lobster/prawn meat and lathered in an oyster cream sauce; and an original and tasty salmon and rucola pancake washed down perfectly with a chilled bottle of 35 South wine.

For mains we both chose the barracuda and its cloud-fluffy fresh flesh was cooked to fishy perfection, proving it was caught that day... it was accompanied by blanched seasonal veggies and crispy wedges. The fish and seafood display is impressive and is brought to your table for



inspection, like all top class restaurants should. In fact, like the vegetarian options, there is a separate fish menu – again the height of lavish professionalism.

Carnivores are not left out however and have a never-ending choice, including the mouthwatering options of tenderloin beef fillet with truffle and mushroom sauce; duck breast glazed with honey and lemon; roasted pork fillet flamed in apple brandy with mixed peppers; lamb filets with rosemary current jelly; chicken breast stuffed with duck breast encrusted with pistachios; and the unusual Indonesian-style chicken tossed in peanut sweet chili with coconut cream and garlic.

Marvin had served us a refreshing lemon and lime sorbet between courses to refresh our palate, and although he was more than busy slaving away in the kitchen, he would always pop out onto the floor flashing his infectious personality to enquire if people had liked their meal – this personal touch is key to his success, although he gives equal treatment to loyal regulars and passing tourists.

Usually my will power allows me to skip dessert, but after hearing Marvin's choice my resolve deserted me... I indulged in the most divine bannoffee cake with rich sweet sticky toffee and biscuit base, whole bananas and lightly whipped cream. My partner had the profiteroles and was delighted to discover the filling was an unusual fig ice cream. There were many more options including a zucchini cake, the selection highlighting Marvin's gastronomic innovativeness.

For such a young chef Marvin's food is mature... he has many years of experience after spending his childhood helping his *nannu* at his bakery and then being solely dedicated to a career in catering from the age of 13 when he started work at a hotel. He then went on to work in Dublin (where his childhood sweetheart wife, and mother of their two young children originally hails from) before returning and conquering our television screens... he's even appeared on Rai TV.

All-in-all Tarragon comes highly recommended for a light or lingering lunch or dinner for two or groups either small or large. The highly inventive menu using the freshest and most delectable seasonal ingredients will give you a gastronomic experience which won't disappoint even the strictest foodie. Although just opened (on lucky 07.07.07) it's already full every night... even the Bishops of both islands have been to bless it, so why don't you try it out this weekend?

PRICE* Lm10 (€23.29) • **OPEN FOR** dinner • **CUISINE** modern Mediterranean and seafood • **SEATING** indoor and outdoor • **VIEWS** of the St Paul's Islands • **PARKING** nearby • **SMOKING** cigar balcony and terrace • **CLOSED** Tuesdays • **OPENING HOURS** 6pm till late • **SPECIAL NEEDS** entrance ramp and bathroom facilities.

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*average per person not including drinks