



Isola Pizza Bar – Authentic from the Vine

August 9, 2012

Inspired by and named after his Italian grandmother, owner and chef Massimo Tenino has launched Little Italy's newest addition, *Isola Pizza Bar*. We had the recent opportunity to experience the authentic offerings and very much enjoyed the friendly service and scrumptious fare. *Va bene, partiamo!*



Traditionally, Italian food is characterized by its simplicity with a focus on combining quality ingredients. At Isola, tradition remains steadfast with the motto *dalla vite* (meaning "from the vine") at the center of the kitchen's focus. While other Napolena pizza restaurants import everything, ingredients at Isola are sourced locally whenever possible and imported only when necessary to assure the freshest and most genuine flavors.



White marble countertops are complemented by surrounding dark wood, as well as walls of oak logs to be used to fuel the brick oven. The abundant selection of wines are dominantly perched above the main dining area. The space is simple, elegant, and modern, yet warmed by the partially open kitchen and brick

oven centerpiece (the *only* cooking apparatus). A quaint front patio overlooks Little Italy's thriving India Street and a chic back area is encased with greenery.

To begin, our gracious and informative waiter urged us to taste his favorite antipasti, the *polipo* (\$12), a salad of charred octopus, soft and creamy fingerling potatoes, crunchy celery, salty kalamatas, a squeeze of tangy lemon, and a simple but flavorful salsa verde, comprised of parsley and oil. The flavors of the dish came together pleasantly. Though I am not generally partial to the ever-popular octopus tentacles that have taken over SoCal menus, and while I am of the belief that the salad would have been just as successful sans the protein, the octopus was, in fact, tender, tasty, and probably one of the better renditions we've experienced.



Polipo

Next we indulged in the creamy, yet firm, burrata mozzarella with fresh tomatoes, Genova basil pesto and a generous drizzling of deliciously fragrant extra virgin olive oil (\$10) - a clean, refreshing, simple, no fuss Italian dish. The burrata is delivered warm once a week from the Italian husband and wife duo of [Gioia Cheese](#), based out of L.A.



Prosciutto di Parma e melone

For me, no Italian meal is complete without prosciutto di Parma, and Isola's prosciutto di Parma e melone (\$12) did not disappoint. The cuts of prosciutto were hand sliced with such extreme precision, making the translucent meat melt in your mouth delicious.

Heaping piles of lean and salty prosciutto coupled with the sweetness of the Tuscan melon made for a triumphant mixture of flavors. We cleaned the plate.

And finally, what we've all been waiting for - the wood fired pizza made in the brick oven imported from Naples! We opted for the quintessential margherita pizza (\$12) made with imported Italian flour, Gioia's mozzarella cheese, and a sauce of tomato, basil, garlic-infused EVOO, and seasoned simply with salt and pepper. The crust was perfectly thin (not too thin) and adequately crisp (not too crisp) with nicely charred edges. While the simplistic ingredients culminated in what was surely a fulfilling pizza, my mouth was begging for a flavor elevator (perhaps a touch more of salt or Parmesan would have sufficed?) but hot pepper flakes did the trick, adding that perfect kick. Pair this or any pizza with the vino nobile di Montepulciano, 2007 (\$12) and float off to Italy.



Gelato!!

Isola offers assorted house-made gelato, and lucky for us, the house was making pistachio, crema, and peanut butter infused with chocolate, served together with a crispy yet soft and delicate ferratelle (waffle pizzelle) (\$8). The pistachio, generally a favorite of my cohort, though rich and creamy, fell short of the richness he remembers from his favorite gelateria in Parma, Italia, a gelato he will always measure all others against. As he put it, "this version failed to wrap around my taste buds like the cozy gelato-blankets of memory." On the other hand, the peanut butter gelato, infused with chocolate and decorated with melt-y chips of chocolate was my personal favorite. The crema was a vanilla gelato, light and creamy, but overwhelmed by the flavor of the extract. Together, the dessert would please a wide array of particular palettes, and was a beautiful end to a delicious meal.

Be sure to stop in Isola and check out Little Italy's newest addition. Featuring traditional and modern Italian dishes and classical Neapolitan pizza at reasonable prices (especially during happy hour – see below), Isola is certainly worthy of a visit. For more information, visit Isola's website, Facebook page, or [Twitter account](#).

ISOLA PIZZA BAR

1526 India St, Little Italy

(619) 255-4230

isolapizzabar.com

Tue-Thu 11 am - 10 pm

Fri-Sat 11 am - 11 pm

Sun 11 am - 9 pm

(closed Mon)

Happy Hour, daily 3 - 6 pm

\$4 microbrews, \$5 Italian wines, \$5 small plates, \$5 margherita pizza