

by *Eat Drink Staff*

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An Abundance of Appealing Options

As one of the world's most beloved and varied cuisines, Italian food can be found in virtually every corner of the globe. But too often it's just a pale imitation of the real thing: a few pasta dishes with prepared sauces poured over them and passed off as Italian cuisine.

Fortunately, residents in Kuala Lumpur don't have to suffer such indignities when they crave authentic Italian food as there are a number of great restaurants here helmed by actual Italians, serving actual Italian cuisine. One such place is **Vineria.IT** in Bangsar Shopping Centre, run by Chef *Massimiliano "Max" Ranauro*, who hails from the *Piemonte* region of Italy and has wowed residents of KL with his former ventures, *Neroteco*, *Nerovivo*, and *Bar Italia*. The ambiance at **Vineria.IT**, which is on the ground floor at the back of BSC, is inviting and comfortable (especially the expansive outdoor area), but really, it's the food that steals the show here.

You'll be forgiven if you have to spend some serious time with the menu, because there is an abundance of appealing options. Salads, antipasti, entrées, sharing platters, main dishes, pastas, and an assortment of thin-crust pizzas from their wood-fired oven make **Vineria.IT** a potentially dizzying place to go when you're hungry. All of it sounded so good! We settled on the *Gran Antipasto Vineria* as our starter – an excellent choice featuring a tasting platter of Italian favourites such as fried meatballs, various cold cuts, cheeses, pickles and spreads, calamari, prawns, and rocket salad. A word here about the meats: though **Vineria.IT** is pork-free, they do a superb job of using other meats and fats effectively to approximate the flavour and texture of pork surprisingly well. Try it, you'll be astonished. With a couple of glasses of house *Sangiovese* from the bar, the antipasto platter was a fantastic way to start.

We also sampled one of the many delicious pizzas from the menu – I know they're delicious because I've been to **Vineria.IT** on my own many times and have never been disappointed by the food. A crisp crust courtesy of a blistering hot wood-fired oven, topped and served in a traditional Italian manner, ensures you'll enjoy every bite. We sampled the *Tricolore* pizza with four cheeses, along with the usual mozzarella, complemented by spinach and cherry tomatoes. But I can also recommend the *Salciccia and Funghi*, a sausage-and-mushroom masterpiece, and the *Prosciutto and Formaggio* offering, one of my favourites. Meat lovers mustn't miss trying the *Alla Ciccia* pizza!

Pastas are beyond reproach here, needless to say. One standout dish is a lovely whole wheat pasta with French beans, smoked *Scamorza* cheese, and duck sausage. It was absolutely delicious... not too oily, savoury, full of flavour, and possessing just a hint of spiciness. You cannot go wrong with the pasta dishes here. The only challenge is choosing one!

Great for happy hour, Sunday brunch, the weekly specials every night of the week, or a leisurely dinner with a selection from the great wine list, **Vineria.IT** is a classy venue serving deliciously authentic Italian cuisine that will keep you returning again and again for more.





Vineria.IT, Italian Hospitality

Words by **Han Sen Hau**

Photos by **The Yum List (Monica Tindall)**

My obsession with *The Golden Girls* is no secret to my colleagues. That timeless classic in television history featuring four women in their golden years... There's *Dorothy*, the brains of the quartet, *Rose*, the naïve Minnesotan farm girl, *Blanche*, the nymphomaniac, and *Sophia*, *Dorothy's* "little Sicilian monkey" of a mother, whose culinary conjurations are so delicious, the others eat with total euphoric abandon. The renown of Italian cooking had been so established then, the writers of the show agreed that a big part of *Sophia* had to revolve around Italian food. But what is it about Italian food that makes it so appealing and endearing to an international audience?

I hope to find some answers at **Vineria.IT** in Bangsar Shopping Centre, that snazzy looking Italian restaurant bedecked with art deco portraits (I see de **Lempicka's** "*Young Lady with Gloves*" hanging on its walls... bonus points!), and whose edgy contemporary setting is contrasted with the easy-going Caribbean music wafting in the air, blending beautifully with the whiff of hearty Italian fares exiting the kitchen. The only thing in here thicker than the tropical air is the Italian accent of my convivial host, **Chef Max**, whose eagerness to regale his guests with delectable stories from il bel paese reminded me of *Sophia*, who always began her anecdotes with "Picture it! Sicily! 1923!"

It is **Chef Max's** feigned hospitality that I find absolutely entrancing, so much so that it didn't feel as if I am simply another customer at a restaurant, but a guest at a dinner party where I'm fortunate enough to savour traditional recipes that have been passed down for generations and subsequently improved by my host's ingenuity with ingredients. **Chef Max** provides a sense of comfort and an enthusiasm for his dishes (it's as if each and every one of them has a story attached to it!) absent in many other establishments, and it is precisely this zeal for great food and his warm, personal reception that defines Italian culinary culture for me.

I begin with the **Breakfast Set 3** (RM29), which seems pretty basic with scrambled eggs tossed with French beans, fresh tomatoes and spring onions, but it's the duck sausage that takes me by surprise. **Chef Max** gloats a little at my inability to trace the meat's flavour, for it lacks the distinctive aroma I usually find in duck meat. The sausage is far more fragrant and tender than what I'd normally expect from waterfowl. On top of that, chef reveals it is prepared with foie gras, which ostensibly improves the profile of the sausage. The meal also comes accompanied with two slices of toast served with ham and *Fontina*.

What Italian feast would be complete without pizza emerging from the fiery chamber of a wood-fired oven? I have the incredibly decadent and visually attractive **Schiacciata Allo Stracchino** (RM39), which features goat salami that comes with a most amazing tang, almost citrusy even, rocket, mushrooms, and Stracchino, a voluptuous cheese that derives its name from "tired" cows herded up and down the Alps. Well the extra cardio by our bovine friends definitely paid off as the cheese is absolutely divine, oozing and spreading lusciously on the tongue.



Breakfast Set 3



Schiacciata Allo Stracchino



Spaghetti Rustic

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Having coated my tongue with so much cheese, the *Insalata Portofino* (RM26) is a nice intermission with its array of sea catch prawns, smoked ocean trout, asparagus spears, julienned carrots, and assorted lettuce leaves, all dressed in a light vinaigrette. The salad here is twice the size of a regular portion due to the review, which is good news for me as I find the smoked trout lovely. The prawns are a little overseasoned for my liking, despite being a wonderful complement to the salad, but it's fresh and has a nice firmness at each bite.

The next item is a new entry in the comprehensive menu: the *Spaghetti Rustic* (RM29). It is by far, I daresay, one of the best spaghettis I've ever had. The meal begins with its arrival, marked by its conspicuous and stomach-growl-inducing smell, followed by the colourful assemblage of smoked scamorza chunks, French beans, and dried red chillies tossed in spaghetti prepared perfectly al dente. The combination is incredibly simple, yet effective, and the addition of dried chillies gives the dish a localised piquancy, which I greatly welcome. This is definitely a dish I'll be returning to.

Vineria.IT also stocks a pretty extensive wine list for an independent restaurant, and I decide to explore two different wines from disparate regions just for variety. The first is a 2012 *Konrad Dry Riesling* (RM36 per glass) that presents itself with a lovely bouquet. The palate is supple and smooth, and is a little sweeter than expected, tickling the olfactory with the faint fragrance of apple blossoms. The *Riesling* appeals to me with the elegance of a prima ballerina, setting itself apart from the more vivacious bailaora, a 2006 *Azienda Vitivinicola La Collina dei Re Chardonnay* (RM36 per glass). The *chardonnay* is bolder, fruitier, and has a more pervasive bouquet than the *Riesling*. It's also a little creamier, velvety, and slides gloriously down the throat, a great option with heavier fares.

In spite of our foreign escapades, my family is surprisingly timid when it comes to food we can't pronounce, though I suppose that tradition ends with me having the *Costolette Di Vitello Al Formaggio Caprino E Crema Di Melanzane* (RM72). The dish comprises of four grilled lamb rib chops marinated in thyme and vinegar, topped with aubergines, goat cheese, and comes with a potato *Parmigiano* cake that positively melts in the mouth. The pairing of the chops with the goat cheese is titillatingly gratifying, and none of my teeth cracked from chewing sinewy tendons as the meat is completely free of them. Of course, as with great chops, the best part comes at the end when I French kiss the ribs... *Molto bene!*

Dessert arrives daintily in the form of a *Tartelette Mascarpone* (RM26) crowned with *Frutti Di Bosco* and served with *Baci Di Dama*, or "Lady's kisses" (miniature hazelnut cookies with a dollop of dark chocolate sandwiched between them). The tart is the perfect finishing touch to my meal, and the single mint leaf resting atop the medley of fresh berries brings out the flavour from the rest of the ingredients. I imagine the *Baci Di Dama* would go great with coffee, but is equally pleasant on its own.

After dessert, **Chef Max** presents a rather tame, yet incredibly fragrant drink for me to sample: *Sage, Lemon and Honey Tea* (RM16). The tea is redolent of an English garden, mainly because of the addition of the sage which perfumes the tea marvellously, and doesn't irritate the esophagus with a lingering dry aftertaste.



Tartelette Mascarpone



Baci Di Dama



I conclude with two herbal bitters, the *Amaro Montenegro* (RM26) and *Negroni* (RM32). A little of the *Amaro Montenegro* goes a long way, and its bitter-sweet profile is a satisfying juxtaposition that dances on the tongue. The *Negroni*, available during Happy Hour (Monday to Friday; 5:00PM – 7:30PM; one caraffe of alcohol at the price of one glass), has an incredibly strong aftertaste that bombards the palate. I have to admit that I'm a neophyte when it comes to standard Italian intoxicants, glistening, displayed along shelves above counters in Italian taverns since the nineteenth century, so I wasn't expecting the *Negroni* until I was at least thirty when my palate (I hope) is more developed. This isn't a strong stuff; it's the strong stuff. As I work through all the gin, vermouth and *Campari*, I find myself enjoying the drink at each subsequent sip, and have to stop myself from ordering another.



Lamb Ribs

Vineria.IT is a dangerous place to be, especially on an empty stomach since everything seems so tantalisingly delicious. Well, once you get past the elaborate Italian names of the dishes that is; incidentally, don't let that discourage your sense of adventure in exploring something different off the menu. The great thing about the place is that the recipes are a little unfamiliar, which I find enticing as I never really know what pleasures arrive on the plate. If ever you're in the mood for Italian when driving around Bangsar, **Vineria.IT** is the place to be.

REASONS TO VISIT: *Schiacciata Allo Stracchino*; *Spaghetti Rustic* (I cannot stress enough how good this is); the *Sage, Lemon and Honey Tea*; the option to have your pizzas and pastas in classic or whole-wheat; the inventiveness that go into the creation of the dishes (small innovations with choice of ingredients that improves the experience).

Malaysian Flavours

FEBRUARY 5, 2015 by SUMMERKID_SUMMERGIRL

PHOTOGRAPHY: Summerkid

WRITE UP: Summergirl



We are not a frequent visitor to Bangsar Shopping Centre (BSC), one of the malls in Bangsar KL that houses most trendy, stylish restaurants & bars. Despite so, if you asked us 'what to eat' in Bangsar Shopping Centre, then *Kuriya Japanese Restaurant*, *Monte's Restaurant Wine & Bar*, *Twenty.One Tables + Terrace*, *Ippudo Bangsar* and *La Bodega* are some of our recommendations.

Just recently, we tried out another restaurant in BSC, **Vineria.IT** Italian Restaurant at ground floor. **Vineria.IT** is the expert in Italian food, with strong culinary experience to churn out delicious, amazing Italian delicacies to WOW your palate. The wide selections of wine that stocked up at the cabinet also take the limelight in the restaurant.

Do not leave **Vineria.IT** without sampling their antipasto & starters, ranging from premium choices like 18month aged Cecina beef Prosciutto & rock melon to Italian goat salami with spicy Southern eggplant paste, Taleggio cheese, olives & pickles; black Angus carpaccio with oil, lemon, champignons; smoked Ocean Trout, artichokes, sundried tomatoes and smoked Mozzarella, etc..

Ravioli, a type of pasta that we always call as Western-style wanton. Meaty filling sealed with two thin pasta dough, cooked to al-dente and dressed in cream-base sauce made from butter, white Truffle paste, asparagus and aged Parmigiano. Moderate richness that won't make you feel cloying even you indulge the whole portion on your own till the end.

This tomato-base, white wine infused pasta falls on heavier flavours, coating tangy, garlicky and sauce in mild spiciness into every strand of linguine. Portion is huge, brimming with lots of prawns, mussels, squid and fish chunks. Our top pick and must-order in **Vineria.IT**.

Vineria.IT serves bigger than palm-size fish steak, firm in texture. Grilled in aromatic salt and olive oil to result in aglio-olio like dressing. Served with special condiment "creolo" with a composition of tomatoes, red onions, artichoke and rocket salad.

Recommend to order for sharing, as the free range duck sausages can be filling. Smoky and savoury with plenty of chews, accompanied with faint hint of fragrance from rosemary and garlic that pan fried together. Served with onion jam, fried potatoes, and saute spinach.



malaysian Foodie

January 27, 2015 by Strawberry Gal



Vineria.IT which is located in BSC brings you with the great choices of western dining. With over 18 years of culinary experience in Italian Food and 13 years of international culinary and hospitality exposure from New York to Asia passing the experience of many place, this is how the beautiful restaurant with long stories is opened.

The restaurant brings you with the snazzy looking Italian restaurant bedecked with art deco portraits and edgy contemporary setting with the easy going Caribbean music wafting in the air. The restaurant brings us a romantic moments and great food.

We started with the *Antipasto Piemontese* (RM 56.00) where the smoked Ocean Trout is served with the artichokes, sundried tomatoes and mozzarella. The antipasto comes healthy with the appetizing and delicious Ocean Trout.

If you are looking for some pasta, **Vineria.IT** serves a good choice of pasta- *Linguine Al Fruiti Di Mare* (RM 82). Complete with the huge portions of mixed seafood in it, the pasta is well sautéed in white wine, garlic and olive oil sauce. I love how the pasta is served, and we are completely falling in love with the al-dente pasta with loads of seafood in it (scallops, shrimps, mussels and more)

Trancio Di Pesce Del Giorno All-Olio & Rosmarino (RM 62.00) is where their fresh available fish steak, grilled in aromatic salt and olive oil and it is served with their special condiment "creato" with the composition of tomatoes, red onions, artichoke, and rocket salad with it. The fish remains moist and flaky texture of the meat itself. It is freshly done and every mouthful is divinely good.

Sal Sicce D' Anatra in Padella (RM 65.00) is where the free range duck sausages, tasty frank in hot pan with the rosemary and served with onion jams, fried potatoes and spinach sautéed. I love how the way the duck sausage is served with the moist texture and without much distinct of duck smell in it,.



Antipasto Piemontese



Linguine Al Fruiti Di Mare

Sal Sicce D' Anatra in Padella



Trancio Di Pesce Del Giorno All-Olio & Rosmarino

Overall Vineria.IT served good choices of Italian delights with premium ingredients. It is a good place to hold parties too as they have ample seating.