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Everything about Mima is inviting

Judith Hausman For The Journal News

Everything about Mima is inviting. It has a cozy and sophisticated atmosphere, with its black and white tile floors, brick walls, rough-hewn wood table and banquettes. Its rustic-but-modern Italian menu allows for choice and variety, but is also at once simple and accomplished.

Frankly I wanted to eat everything there, and that's always a good sign.

John Leggio, who owns the restaurant with his cousin, Robert, calls Mima their "little sister restaurant," because Robert also owns Zuppa in Yonkers. John says the restaurant has "simple Italian comfort food, rustic but not too rustic, a comfortable neighborhood eatery."

We began with salads: a flavorful Caesar with good Parmesan and a delicate organic lettuce mix with apples, walnuts and goat cheese. The name Mima refers to an Italian term of endearment for grandmothers, who, I'm sure, would have wanted us to eat our greens. Both salads showed great attention to detail. I predict the polenta with wild mushrooms, the brodetto of clams and mussels and the fritto misto would also have been great choices.

A special feature worth sampling at Mima as well is the list of cured meats and cheeses. You assemble a choice of one, three or five yourself from a range of Italian regional specialties. This kind of nibbling makes a good match for sipping a leisurely cocktail or two ... along with a quartino, mezzo or bottle from Mima's well-priced, all-Italian wine list.

At lunch, there are crostini and panini (and a cheeseburger, too, by the way). I tried mayo-free tuna spread on crusty, toasted bread and supported by a small salad. Chef Daniel Van Etten's signature short ribs with chestnut-ricotta gnocchi were extremely tender and served with little soft baby carrots.

But that house-made pasta! Penne is served with smooth, giant butter beans, meaty pancetta, broccoli rabe and oven-roasted tomatoes for tang. Trece carbonara is rich with onions, smoked bacon, plenty of black pepper and a fresh egg that cooks with the heat of the hot pasta into a silky, binding sauce.

Desserts tempt, too. An orange panna cotta was rich and light at the same time.

Leggio says Mima is already seeing repeat customers since its Jan. 17 opening. That's the magic of Mima: What you eat is exactly what you want, and yet you also want to come back and try more.

Additional Facts

Mima

63 Main St., Irvington. 914-591-1300 mimarestaurant.com

Cuisine Italian

Price Entrées \$20-\$30; pasta less.

Hours Lunch and dinner Tuesday-Sunday. Closed Monday.

In brief A new Italian menu and wine list in a comfortable bistro space. The cured meats, great house-made pasta, meat and fish with Southern Italian flavors mean "just right" casual dining.

What we liked Short ribs, trece carbonara, orange panna cotta, penne with butter beans, broccoli rabe and pancetta.