

Seafood x Italian = Easy Sundays at Café Salsa

They say there are three things you should never discuss with anyone – your love life, your income, and your next move.

I don't know what Lance and Tanya Scopocasa's next move is, but after their last one – where they re-opened Café Salsa on West Beach – I really hope it includes something as delicious as the Gnocchi Salsiccia that was plated up at lunch.

Pork sausage, chili, capsicum, and cherry tomatoes, finished with a rich tomato sugo. It sounds like a simple mix of ingredients, yet its flavours were so perfectly balanced and the gnocchi, light and fluffy. Other than knowing no gnocchi I make will ever come close to this dish (or any pasta for that matter), it's hard to even describe the taste in words.

Lance and Tanya, who grew up eating at Café Salsa, partnered with their best friend Natalie Baker and took over ownership of the West Beach restaurant almost eight months ago. They were keen to bring back the retro vibes, and the loud, happy atmosphere that made the café famous in its heyday.

Just metres from the beach, its mismatched furniture, rustic bamboo-stemmed walls, and delicious Italian menu, are as refreshing as it is welcoming. Lance said that he wanted people to feel like “they were on holiday, a getaway, at a resort” and in a strange way, it almost felt like we'd stumbled upon one of the little beach shacks tucked away off the coast of Bali's Uluwatu where the food is so unpredictably good, one cocktail becomes three and the afternoon goes down as one of the best of your holiday.

Café Salsa's summer menu has been put together by their head chef Joe Cazzetta whose Italian heritage underpins the stunning flavour combinations and gives even the classic Lemon Pepper Calamari that zesty 'must-have-more' moment.

You know a meal is good when the table goes silent and attention from the conversation turns straight to your dish. Having been lucky enough to enjoy a selection of Café Salsa's menu at its relaunch on Sunday, I can attest that there was a lot of silence at our table.

The first mouthful of almost every dish was met with raised eyebrows and nods of divine contentment. I say 'contentment' purely because there isn't a word I can think of that combines the moment a delicious flavour hits your palate and you want to savour the taste, identify exactly what makes it so enticing, and mindlessly enjoy it, all at the same time – which is exactly what I found myself trying to do.

We enjoyed Pimm's cups and Aperol Spritz while listening to Adelaide entertainer Angela Tripodi play a few acoustic tunes as pizzas “decorated with a bit of the seaside” were passed around. The crispy base and fresh prawns and calamari were delicious.

Tapas plates followed with a selection of battered whitebait and vegetarian-style stuffed mushrooms with eggplant, chilli, garlic, and parsley, topped with Provolone cheese. They were easy to eat, perfect to share and the rich flavours gave the dishes' traditional beach vibe a chic spin.

After the Gnocchi Salsiccia, we tried the homemade Casarecce Granchio pasta with WA crab deglazed in white wine with cherry tomatoes in a rose sauce. I love pasta, and both dishes are among my favourite. Joe's signature dessert dish – warm banana donuts, dusted in cinnamon sugar and filled with smooth, silky chocolate – didn't disappoint.

Served with a side of ice cream, the donut's sweetness mellowed. Add the slightest touch of raspberry sauce and the dessert was the perfect end to the day. I'm not an Adelaide local so I have no idea what Café Salsa's heyday entailed, but if it is anything like the current moment, I can see exactly why it was a favourite.

You can find Café Salsa at 5 West Beach Road, West Beach, or online: Web: <http://www.cafesalsa.com.au/> Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/cafesalsa.au>