



Written by Andre Jackson

AL BOCCON DI'VINO

Andre Jackson asked Good Things' Guest Editor Alfred Prasad to direct him to one of the chef's favourite restaurants - then booked a table accordingly

Despite its evident beauty, Richmond is a touch on the mundane side when it comes to dining. Full of Italian chains and typical high street fare, it isn't one of London's standout areas for foodies. Enter Al Boccon di'Vino, ('divine mouthful'), a unique Venetian-style restaurant run by chef-proprietor Riccardo Grigolo, offering no menu, no fixed price and the promise of a damn good meal.

The venue

Intimate, interesting and extremely authentic, Al Boccon di'Vino is about as close as you'll get to a real Venetian restaurant in London. The walls are laced in dark wood shelves, each harbouring a glorious selection of fine wines from all over Italy. It has a real family feel, as though you've been invited over for dinner at your Italia aunt and uncles in Venice. With only enough room to seat 30 covers, the relatively close proximity of the tables is more than made up for by the inclusive, family atmosphere created by Grigolo and his staff.

The food and drink

Two words - come hungry. I counted nine separate courses, and it's all of the highest quality. Food appears throughout the night, which began at 7pm and ended at 10.30pm, and each course is served to the whole restaurant at the same time. We began with four antipasti dishes (aubergine with mozzarella and parmesan mousse was lovely) followed by three pasta dishes (mixtures of both meat and fish with various fresh pasta), a main course of incredibly well-cooked lamb (brought out in its entirety to rapturous applause from the diners) with roast potatoes and ended with strawberries and panna cotta. This was followed by homemade lemoncello and coffee, while wine (white or red) was served at intervals throughout the night.

The service

Wonderfully vibrant and fun. You'll get no silver service here. Grigolo does an incredible job at making everyone feel comfortable, appreciated and looked after from start to finish. A true Italian host if ever there was one.

The Good Things Verdict

The most unique of dining experiences offering everything you could possibly ask for. Good food, great service, a buzzing atmosphere and plenty of booze. Go for a special occasion and await the shock when you leave and remember that you're still (just about) in London.

Average price for the entire dining experience and a bottle of wine - £120

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