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20.06.2006

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Dining at Bella Italia...

By Anna Vivienne

Authentic Italian food made by authentic Italian Chef's...

The newest Italian restaurant in town is the Bella Italia on Gaya Street, where the Jes-selton Hotel is. You cannot miss it as it is the oldest hotel in town and the Bella Italia is where the old 'Wishbone' restaurant used to be.

An Italian General Manager is at the helm now, so the

menu consists of Italian fare (but of course!).

Salvatore Marcello, 36, from Milan, assisted by executive chef Michele Danieli, also an Italian, have come up with a menu that offers a wide array of Italian food.

Perhaps the most popular Italian dish among locals is the pizza. Every time someone says "Italian restaurant" we think "pizza and pasta".

The Bella Italia seems to anticipate this and as they have come up with an impressive array of pizzas, including the popular Margherita and Neapolitana. Margherita consists of tomato sauce, mozzarella and fresh basil, while Neapolitana consist of tomato sauce, mozzarella, anchovies and capers.

These two are famous because of their background. It seems that Umberto I (1844-1900), King of Italy, and his wife, Queen Margherita di Savoia (1851-1926), in Naples on holiday, called to their palace the most popular of the pizzaioli (pizza chef), Raffaele Esposito, to taste his spe-

cialties. He prepared three kinds of pizzas: one with pork fat, cheese, and basil; one with garlic, oil, and tomatoes; and another with mozzarella, basil, and tomatoes (in the colours of the Italian flag). The queen loved the last type of pizza and sent a 'thank you' note to the chef.

The Neapolitana is named for pizza with tomatoes by the people of Naples. It seems they usually had only flour, olive oil, lard, cheese, and herbs with which to feed their families. But after they 'discovered' tomatoes

and how they tasted in their bread, all of Italy proclaimed the Neapolitan pies to be the best.

The Bella Italia also serves Prosciutto e Funghi (tomato sauce, mozzarella, turkey ham and mushrooms), Quattro Stragioni (tomato sauce, mozzarella, black olives, artichokes, turkey ham and mushrooms), Pugliese (tomato sauce, mozzarella, onions and tuna), Hawaiiiana (tomato sauce, mozzarella, turkey ham, onion and pineapple) and Ai Frutti di Mare (tomato sauce, mozzarella and mixed seafood, garlic and chilli) and many more.

Actually Bella does not only have pizzas, they have an array of entrées that are mouth-watering to say the least. For starters they have the Filetto di Manzo: grilled tenderloin steaks served with mixed

peppercorn sauce. The Bistecca di Pinoli comes next: grilled sirloin steak served with pine kernel, onion, paprika and beef juice.

As for the Costolette di Agnello, it's a must-try: pan-fried lamb chops served with rosemary and garlic sauce, a personal favourite. There are also fish and crustaceans.

The pasta dishes are just sumptuous too. Diners should really try the Lasagna di Carne, oven baked layered pasta sheet baked with Bolognese and béchamel sauce. No less sumptuous is the Spaghetti Bolognese, pasta served with minced beef and tomato sauce.

The pasta dishes are actually too many to review but rest assured they are all excellent.

Then dessert comes, the best part of any meal. They offer tiramisu, ladies' finger biscuit soaked in espresso, topped with creamy mascarpone cheese and cocoa, Tartufo di Michele; vanilla and chocolate ice cream coated with hazelnut and cocoa powder, Fantasia di Maria; chocolate gooey pudding, Panna Cotta; vanilla flavoured ice cream dome topped with oriental caramel

sauce and baked almonds. Last but not least Craspella ala'arnacio, baked crepe served with vanilla ice cream and orange glaze.

Italian restaurants are not new to Kota Kinabalu, but Bella Italia boasts an authentic Italian chef, which speaks volumes of their desire to be bona fide in their menu presentation.

So the next time your tourists speak of Italian pizza and how they wish for an Italian meal while they are in this corner of the world, bring them to Bella Italia. They will be quite at home as Salvatore usually comes in personally to greet his guests.

