

MAMMA MIA

Theo Randall at The Intercontinental London delivers upscale rustic Italian fare to rival Nonna's. Just don't tell the Italians...

What?

Theo Randall has had an illustrious career as one of the UK's favourite chefs, cooking the world's favourite cuisine. After 15 years as head chef at River Café, during which time the restaurant received its first Michelin star, he left to launch Theo Randall at the InterContinental. His commitment to delivering rustic produce-driven Italian food from the prestigious address of No.1 Park Lane has earned him loyal followers and rave reviews from critics and food-lovers alike. While a regular on UK television, and author of two successful recipe books, Theo remains true to his culinary roots and can be found in the kitchen during most services.

Where?

Situated at InterContinental London Park Lane, the restaurant calls one of the capital's most prestigious hotels home. Presenting modern luxury accommodation in the heart

of Mayfair and overlooking the Royal Parks, the hotel delivers elegant natural interiors and exemplary service, with a concierge team that brings insider London to life.

Why?

One of London's best Italian restaurants in one of its most sought-after locations, breezy hotel dining doesn't get much better than this. The daily changing menu is inspired by Theo's regular trips to Italy and dictated by the best seasonal ingredients available from the market each day, along with the finest Italian imports. Theo has personally overseen the extensive wine list that features 90% Italian varietals, including a cracking house white and a juicy Sangiovese red. The menu reads like a hymn to rustic Italian fare, set out into traditional sections – primi, pasta, etc – and brimming with classic dishes you'll want to devour. Seasonal additions and specials such as a truffle tasting menu



and the Festa in Famiglia” weekend lunch with its seasonal carvery and live pasta making station, plus 90 minutes of unlimited Prosecco, Negroni, or Aperol Spritz gives this restaurant a year-round destination edge.

A starter of smoked eel with beetroot and fresh horseradish is pretty as a picture, complimenting the spring-fresh interiors of the restaurant beautifully and singing with bright acidity and oily smokiness. It's light enough to get the party started while leaving room for a pasta course – obligatory in an Italian restaurant of this calibre. To that end, there's plenty to get excited about, from cappelletti di vitello - fresh pasta stuffed with slow cooked veal with pancetta, porcini mushrooms and parmesan – to pappardelle con ragù di manzo – fresh pasta with slow cooked beef in Chianti and San Marzano tomatoes. But who can blame me for being tempted by ravioli of Swiss chard, rocket, and Italian spinach, ricotta, butter, and sage? It's a classic for good reason and this is the most delicious incarnation I've ever had the pleasure of meeting. Plump pillows of yolk-yellow pasta hide a vibrant, fresh stuffing, swimming in melted butter and sage and liberally sprinkled in top-quality Parmesan. Bliss. If the meal finished here, I'd leave happy. A main of sea bream with potatoes, fennel, tomatoes, olives, parsley, and white wine is the sort of elegant but simple dish you wish you'd thought of knocking up for friends in the summer. It's got alfresco eating written all over it but tastes pretty good inside too, amped up by lashings of delicious extra-virgin olive oil.

In my experience, dessert people come in two tribes: those who prefer fruity puds and chocolate fiends. I straddle the two so decide to order both the soft chocolate cake *and* the Amalfi lemon tart because, why not? Each has its own beauty, with the soft chocolate cake more like a firm mousse, delivering the prerequisite cocoa hit in style alongside an indulgent cloud of whipped cream. The lemon tart is stunning. Blasts of Italian sunshine in every bite, a delicate crust showcases the stunning curd within, offset with a quenelle of mascarpone ice cream. While this might sound like a lot of food, the meal is perfectly balanced and I've even got room for an indulgent chocolate truffle served with an espresso to finish. With Italian food this good in London, there's really no point going to Italy.

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