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THERE'S A NEW ITALIAN ON THE BLOCK, AND IT'S DOING ALL THE RIGHT THINGS.
BY SUNITA SHAHDADPURI

ANOTHER hotel 'coffee shop' has been transformed into a chic, destination-dining outlet: first 10 at Claymore in the Pan Pacific Orchard and now Basilico in the Regent Hotel. Situated in what used to be the old Capers, Basilico (named after that aromatic herb that lends itself so well to Italian cuisine) was designed by renowned Japanese architect Yasuhiro Koichi.

And what a change Koichi has made. Warm lighting and rich wood create a classy atmosphere, with two private rooms as well as a theatre kitchen – perfect for private cooking demonstrations and parties. As you enter, the first thing you notice is the striking centrepiece crystal chandelier and the circular open space dining concept which houses the three open kitchens – antipasto, the hot kitchen and pasticceria (desserts).

Three Italians – Executive Chef, Claudio Rossi, Restaurant Chef, Angelo Ciccone, and Pizza Chef, Carmine Esposito – helm Basilico. The trio, together with their collective experience, strive to bring you the best of northern and southern Italian cooking.

We tried the dégustation menu, which proved to be excellent. Try not to fill up with the warm bread that magically appears, tempting though it is – especially as it is served with a selection of tasty salsa, mascarpone cheese and pesto dips. We started with some thin crust Pizza Prosciutto; great Parma ham with a touch of smokiness, sweet, juicy cherry tomatoes and arugula. So good, I defy you to stop after just one slice.

This was followed by *Cacciucco di Pesce*, fresh seafood in a lobster and tomato stew. It was rich in flavour yet did not overwhelm, with generous servings of scallops and prawns.

Risotto alla Pugliese was next, with lobster, tiger prawns, scallops and asparagus. It was nicely al dente, with just the right amount of creaminess. It featured very decent amounts of fresh seafood and was topped with a playful spray of basil foam.





We happily got through all this and hadn't even come to our main course yet. This is the thing with a dégustation menu; we're not talking just *primo* and *secondi*, but '*thirdi*' and '*fourthi*' as well. Still, with food like this, we sure weren't complaining.

For mains, the choices include *Branzino al Limone e Capperi*, seared fillet of sea bass with a lemon and capers emulsion, and *Tagliata con Rucola e Parmigiano*, grilled Wagyu beef sirloin with arugula salad and balsamic sauce. On the chef's recommendation, we chose *Agnello Toscana*, rack of lamb flavoured with confit garlic, sun-dried tomatoes and olives, which we thoroughly enjoyed.

We were bursting at the seams by now, but of course there was still dolci to come. *Semifreddo al Torroncino*; almond ice parfait with stewed sour cherries, and *Coppa Affogato*; vanilla, coffee and hazelnut gelato with a shot of espresso, nuts and whipped cream. Believe me, it tastes as good as it sounds.

The menu is well thought out and offers ample choice. You can also choose to have the antipasto or dessert buffet, or both. Keep Basilico in mind the next time you feel like some authentic Italian in elegant surroundings. Whether you dine indoors or al fresco by the pool, you're in for a treat. *Buon appetito!* ■

BASILICO RESTAURANT

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249715 • Contact details +65 6725 3232 • DAILY LUNCH 12.00pm to 2.30pm

• DINNER 6.30pm to 10.00pm • SUNDAY BRUNCH 12.00pm to 3.00pm