

As seen in

# The Suburban

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## RESTAURANT REVIEW

### Ristorante Da Enrico: the heart of Little Italy

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The Suburban

A few months ago, a colleague appeared in my office doorway grinning from ear to ear, eager to tell me all about her dining experience at Ristorante Da Enrico in Little Italy. The name sounded familiar and she confirmed this was the same restaurant, owned by the Padulo family, that I enjoyed in the 1980s.

As my colleague described the authentic Italian ambience, the homemade recipes and the warmth of the family, she became increasingly animated. Envious, I suggested that we would go back together as soon as possible.

Ristorante Da Enrico, owned by Henry and Riccardo Padulo, first opened during the 1960s on Crémazie Blvd. It moved to its present location on St. Zotique Blvd. in 2003 — into the very same building where Henry's newly immigrated parents opened the family grocery store in the early 1930s.

On a warm, sunny evening in mid June, we arrived at Da Enrico and I was thrilled to see the garage door-style front window was open, with couples enjoying the bottles of wine they brought with them.

We were immediately greeted by Henry and his wife Olga, who introduced us to their son Riccardo, the chef, and their daughter Lydia who had dropped in for dinner.

Riccardo, a Vatican-trained culinary chef is the sole chef at Da Enrico and the self-proclaimed perfectionist says he uses only the freshest ingredients for his menu, which



includes a variety of homemade sauces and pastas.

We started with the garden-fresh salad drizzled with an olive oil and balsamic vinaigrette, accompanied by warm Italian bread that was so soft it melted in our mouths.

Next came the Pizza Margherita — a thin, crispy crust topped with the perfect combination of fresh tomatoes, homemade pesto and cheese. It was so tasty that this pesto lover really did not want to share the pizza with anyone.

As the 50-seat restaurant became busier, both Henry and Riccardo could be seen greeting and seating guests, while saying the odd

hello to neighbours and friends who stopped by the open window.

Our server, Lise, was very attentive and brought out three different pasta dishes for us to sample. All pasta dishes are brought to the table in the skillet and then served into bowls.

We first enjoyed a cheese and spinach-stuffed Ravioli Alfredo, made with real cooking cream instead of the more common whipping cream. We then continued with Rigatoni Cardinali in a rosée sauce and the Penne Neapolitan in a fresh tomato sauce.

The freshness of the ingredients really awakened our taste buds. My colleague and I laughed, knowing we had eaten more than

we should, yet we didn't feel that heavy après pasta feeling. Riccardo explained that since he doesn't add cornstarch to his pasta, it has a lighter taste and feel. His homemade sauces, by the way, are also available for take out.

Other dishes we will surely try on subsequent visits include the homemade Gnocchi Gorgonzola in a cream, parmesan and gorgonzola cheese sauce or chicken parmigiana served with side pasta (\$10.95).

The portions at Da Enrico are both reasonably sized and reasonably priced. Appetizers range from homemade meatballs (\$6.95) to antipasti (\$9.95). The table d'hôte menu ranges from \$21.95 to \$26.95, pasta dishes are \$12 and the pizzas \$14 — all tax included.

An authentic Italian meal is not complete without tartufo, Italian ice cream, (\$4) or tiramisu cake (\$4.95). As we savoured our desserts, we took in the restaurant's quaint, old-style décor which includes a collection of family and community memorabilia. Family photos hang on the wall alongside pictures of celebrities and politicians who have dined with the Padulos through the years.

Before we left, we promised a return visit to enjoy dinner al fresco on the terrace. Italy is not so far away after all.

**Ristorante Da Enrico is located at 264 St. Zotique E., just west of St. Denis. For reservations call 514-388-0719 and visit [www.daenrico.com](http://www.daenrico.com) for more information.**