

CASUAL DINING SARAH MUSGRAVE

A recipe for success

Charming ristorante
serves great pasta

Da Enrico

★★★

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264 St. Zotique E.

(near Henri Julien St.)

Phone: (514) 388-0719

Open: Tuesday 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.;
Wednesday 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.;
Thursday, Friday 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.;
Saturday 5:30 p.m. to 11 p.m.;
closed Sunday and Monday.

Licensed: BYOB.

Credit cards: Not yet.

Wheelchair access: No.

Price range: appetizers \$4 to \$7.50,
main courses \$6.95 to \$13.95.

Sarah Musgrave is The Gazette's new casual restaurant reviewer. Her column appears Saturdays in Weekender.

The philosophy behind Da Enrico can be summed up in three words: tried, tested and true. Modeled on a typical trattoria that you might find in New York's Little Italy, this charming ristorante exudes such authenticity that you'd think it had been around for ages, but it only opened a couple of months ago.

Past the framed grip-and-grin photos on the walls, and groups of men gabbing at the rear tables, lies the open kitchen where you can watch the gregarious chef-owner at work. The food he prepares is simply satisfying, the service is unhurried, and the whole experience is affordable: pastas are fairly priced at \$9.50 (tax included) for a big bowl – plus, there's a bring-your-own-wine policy.

Right away, Da Enrico distinguishes itself by foregoing the holy trinity of oil, balsamic and bread, offering instead a compli-

mentary serving of chickpeas, sundried tomatoes, marinated eggplant and breadsticks. Nibble while perusing appetizers, antipasti, insalate or zuppe.

The stracciatelli shines with real chicken broth, striated with egg and topped with Parmesan. The mista de stagione – assorted greens, tomatoes and mushrooms – is sprinkled in a light balsamic dressing (comparatively pricey at \$5.95).

The list of pasta dishes takes up a full two pages and has drawings to help identify various types. They range from the straight-up conchiglie agli e olio (shells with garlic and oil) to classics like spaghetti carbonara to oven-baked dishes like lasagna of the day, and manicotti stuffed with meat. Served in a large white bowl, the ravioli Romanoff is a plentiful portion of al dente pasta pockets firmly filled with cheese, coated in a silky sauce of shallots, garlic, mushrooms, ham, vodka and cream that does a soft-shoe over your tongue.

The pasta trio features penne with fresh tomato sauce, tortellini in a light cream sauce and a thick fettuccine Alfredo. Control freaks should note that the different sauces do meld together on the plate, but it's OK to let go.

The waiter, a character in his own right, will also tell you about the daily specials. They might include a heaping helping of chicken parmigiana or a combo platter that remains straightforward, while showcasing elements like Italian sausage, veal in a white wine sauce and a serving of pasta. To finish in Italian style – meaning you'll roll out of the restaurant rubbing your belly – end with tiramisu or almond cake, along with an espresso, of course.

Sarah Musgrave is the author of *Resto à Go-Go: 180 Cheap and Fun Places to Eat and Drink in Montreal*, to be published by ECW Press this spring.

FINE DINING Ratings

No stars	passable
Fair	★
Good	★★
Very good	★★★
Excellent	★★★★