Il Ponte Authentic Italian Flavors

Posted on

Words Udeshi Amarasinghe. | Photographs Menaka Aravinda.

With a cool breeze flowing in, Il Ponte restaurant faces the blue waters of the swimming pool thus creating a soothing ambience. As evening approaches, the elegance of the interior and warmth of the twinkling lights enhance the atmosphere that is reminiscent of Italian romance.

The cuisine at Il Ponte is exquisite and authentically Italian with ingredients specially flown in to prepare the delicious dishes. The dinner menu includes an array of traditional Italian flavors that are encompassed in appetizers, soups, pastas, pizza, mains and desserts.

As Robert Mujagic, Executive Chef explained, “Italian food is diverse and the manner in which it is served can vary. A pasta in Italy is not a main course, it is a dish in-between. Pasta is a must. You have an appetizer, salad, pasta and then your main course. That is the Italian way. Risotto too can be enjoyed after the appetizer and before the main, or as a main.” The pastas and the breads are all freshly made. Thus, the flavors are distinct. While the essential ingredients including the flour and cheese are brought from Italy, the fresh produce, herbs, certain seafood as well as the types of meat are sourced from Sri Lanka.

The emphasis at Il Ponte is on flavor and freshness. Chef Shaakir Majeed says, “We also have Italian cold cuts, which are imported. We do Italian grills with rib-eye steak, chicken breast, sea bass and salmon as well.” Chef Shaakir started at Ceylon Hotels School and thereafter joined Hilton Colombo. As he progressed in his career within Hilton, he was fortunate to have received training under an Italian chef for three years. The staff have received first hand training in Italian cuisine.

There’s much to choose from the exquisite dinner menu, Chef Robert and Chef Shaakir elaborated on the signature dishes of Il Ponte. The Burrata Mozzarella, which is Burrata cheese (young mozzarella cheese stuffed with cream cheese) served with thin sliced Parma ham, sour marinated tomatoes, rocket salad and Sicilian pistachio olive oil is a favorite anti pasta/salad. The crabmeat bonbon pasta is only served at the Il Ponte, and is a bonbon shaped pasta stuffed with crab meat and tossed in shellfish bisque reduction. It is rich in flavor and texture. Chef Shaakir says, “Our homemade Tiramisu is the best in town.” The dessert is exquisite with Italian biscuits known as lady fingers soaked in espresso coffee and layers of mascarpone cheese. Another must try dessert is the Cannoli, crispy filled tube with ricotta cheese, chocolate chips and icing sugar. Other specialties include Seafood Risotto, a creamy risotto with prawns, clams, mussels, squid, white wine, onion, garlic and parsley; Squid Ink Tagliatelle, black inked tagliatelle pasta with tiger prawns cooked in spicy tomato sauce; and Baked Seabass Fillet, which is baked seabass with black olives, chunky Roma tomato, roasted potatoes and red onions.

There are more than ten varieties of pizza, freshly made in the oven and guests can select ingredients to create their own pizza. Prosciutto, a pizza with tomato sauce, mozzarella cheese, Parma ham, rocket leaves and olive oil, creates the most tantalizing Italian flavors. The focaccia bread is one of a kind; the bread is made with sun dried tomato and oregano inside. It’s shape resembles that of an oversized

mush- room. The wine cellar has a collection of more than 45 varieties of wine. The staff will recommend the most suitable wine that would pair with the meal selected by the guest. With its poolside location, it is also open for lunch. This menu is an array of fusion dishes with Italian pizzas and pastas.

Il Ponte is a beautiful space with AC and non-AC dining options. The air-conditioned space can accommodate up to 35 guests and the open sitting area can sit up to 54. The airconditioned space is available to host private functions for a minimum of 25 guests. It is an ideal venue for anniversary celebrations.

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(+94 11) 249 2492 eatdrinkcolombo@hilton.com hiltoncolombo1.com/ilponte Opening hours: 11am-11pm daily; pool bar: 8am-11pm daily