

Making Wine from Red Rocks

Jon Marcus



Food & Wine Pairing

I arrived at Joey Bistro a bit late for my lunch with Master Chef, Gino Di Fabio. I had forced myself to first go to the gym hoping to mitigate the caloric festival I was about to indulge in.

A lavish spread of fresh antipasto was laid out like a beautiful, sumptuous painting. The deep crimson of the beets; the vibrant yellow of the crooked neck squash; the soft creamy white of the buffalo mozzarella; the greens of the olives and zucchini; the vivid purple of the eggplant – all complemented by the earth-tones of mushrooms, fresh calamari, prosciutto and parmesano. It was a much a visual feast as a culinary one.

The heart of the meal

The argulla maccheroni alla chitarra was, by far, my favorite taste sensation in a long time.

Back in the kitchen, Chef Di Fabio pulled out a wooden box with what looked like guitar strings stretched across it - like a homemade zither. I didn't know if he was going to cook me a meal or play me a song.

The box was a pasta rolling machine that the chef used to cut the fresh spinach dough into egg noodles. As I watched Chef Di Fabio, I thought – I've gotta have that box. The pasta had an extraordinary texture – I just know it was that box.

The mouth-watering argulla maccheroni alla chitarra featured the freshly made spinach noodle covered by a heap of sumptuous wild mushrooms bathed in veal stock, and perched on a bed of baby arugula and tomatoes.

Believe me, it was amazing – and went spectacularly with the Lusso '05, a wine I'll drink again. I found myself going back to the dish over and over, until it was gone, despite the over-sized portion.

The second dish was a lamb shank, braised for hours in a spectacular vegetable sauce. No need for a knife, the meat was remarkably tender and juicy – and even more delightful when sampled with the Luxus 5 and the Echo Canyon Joe Beeler Cabernet I sneaked in. It was out of this world!

The wine

About the wine... when I first arrived, Chef Di Fabio handed me four bottles:

First, the Torreseela '04, from Venice – a Pinot Gris that is fresh and clean and worked well with the antipasto, but was too tart for the other dishes.

Next was Lusso '05, from Sicily, a combination of 75 percent Grillo and 25 percent Chardonnay, – this wine is a crisp, fruity blend, with just the right



amount of oak. This is, by far, my overall favorite. It went well with the antipasto and the chitarra, and also was the best buy at \$25 for the bottle.

The Lusso '04 Syrah, also a bargain at \$25 - has great blueberry fruit, with just the right spice for both the antipasto and the braised lamb shank.

The Luxus 5 '02 Meritage, from the same Italian producer as Lusso, was more than ready for the rich, succulent braised lamb. The complex fruit added layers of flavor to this simple-but-elegant dish that looked as if it belonged on the cover of *Bon Appetite*.

At this point, I had eaten enough food and sampled enough wine for dinner let alone lunch, but more was to come.

Dessert – ice cream with Nettare of Modena – no wine required. This concoction of turgid, ripe berries and ice cream in a almond crust left me whirling. Chef Di Fabio prepared the fruit in a flaming cognac and balsamic vinegar sauce. Let's just say, there weren't any leftovers.

It was a delicious experience at Joey Bistro with Chef Gino Di Fabio, who offers cooking classes every Tuesday at noon. Come learn his techniques and some of his secrets. For information, call 282-1777.

Marcus is the owner of Echo Canyon Vineyard and Winery in Page Springs.

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