

The Florentine, Chicago



Upstairs in the Marriot Hotel on West Adams Street in the Chicago Loop you will find the [Florentine](#). If you are ever in the area I can't stress this too strongly: you must head up those stairs to the Florentine because failure to do so would be to miss out on what must be one of the finest Italian restaurants in Chicago.

Having travelled quite a bit in Italy I can say that true, authentic Italian restaurants are always defined by the same three things. The finest and freshest ingredients, quality wine and the most indulgent of desserts. If this is the holy trinity of a fine Italian then the Florentine excels in all three. To this list we can add quite fantastic service and a wonderfully luxurious atmosphere. At the Florentine you really have a dining experience that stretches beyond the food and the wine and touches on something special.

The first on our trinity of essentials for an Italian meal is the freshness and fullness of ingredients. The bread selection arrives promptly once we are settled and includes a wonderfully layered foccacia.



We continue to challenge the freshness with not one but two fish starters. The first to arrive is a stunning calamari dish. Our Chef displaying his skills by serving one half fried and crispy and the other half moulded around a delightfully light mousse.

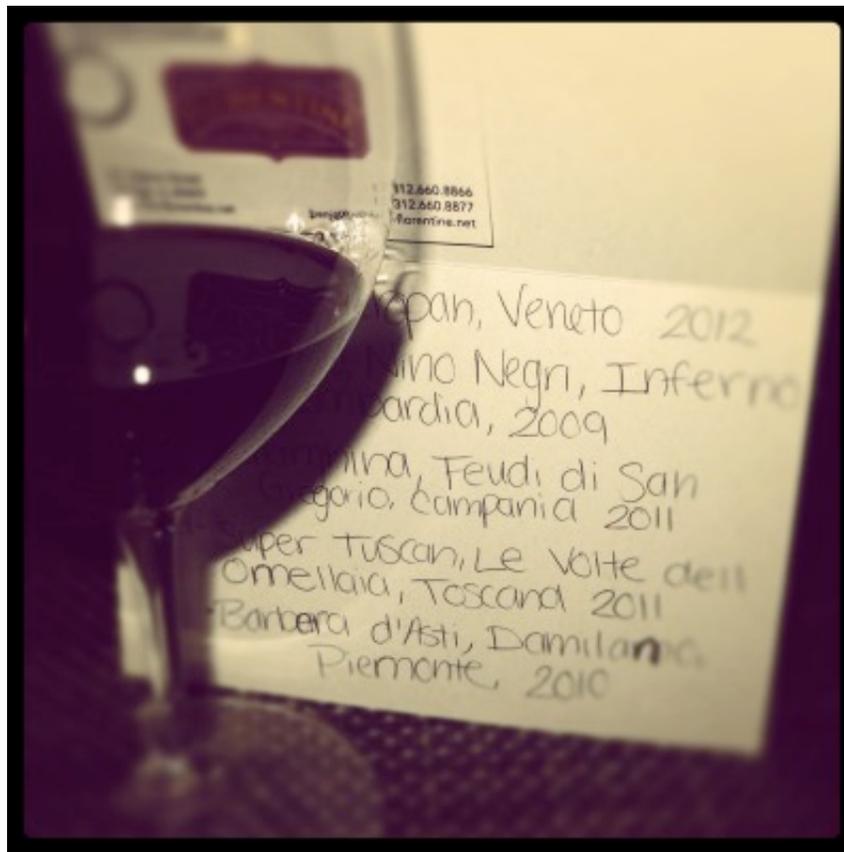


Before we finish feasting our eyes on that there arrives a scallop and king prawn risotto. If you add anything to a

dish containing scallops it better be an equal partner. With prawns almost as juicy as the scallops we had the perfect partners in crime. And the crime? Not ordering a fish starter at Florentine. Or two if you can get away with it.



Next in the fulcrum of a fine Italian restaurant is the wine. I'd love to say we waited until we had tried the food before we tested the wine but we weren't as structured as the review. With several dishes to try we were offered paired wines by our sommelier Benjamin. We ensured that we stuck to low to mid priced wine to get a real feel of the quality of the wine list. Every wine was perfect but we had the sense that the list contained many wines that would enhance the food. You will have a feel for the choice on offer if you look closely at our photos.



On to the main meals and by now we were becoming accustomed to the portion sizes in Chicago: they are on the large size especially for European dinners. Steaks this size and duck breasts this fulsome are rarely seen in Italian restaurants in Europe. Meat tends to be one of four or five courses of course. In some Italian restaurants, especially in the south of the country, you need to make room for your individual dessert and the one massive communal tiramisu. But in Chicago understandably a massive bit of meat will be the centre stage of an Italian meal.



Knowing that we would have to make room for dessert we missed out on ordering any extra sides. Rocket was perfectly sufficient for the steak and a small accompaniment of our friend the Brussels Sprout supported the duck. As you can see both these mains were more than capable of supporting themselves.



Despite my eyes bulging to take in the size of the duck I finished it down to every last sprout and succulent slice.

However very un-Italian like I had no room for a proper dessert. I had an Affogato. No real Italian would class this as a dessert! My fellow dinner left room for dessert – the Editor always does, she must be Italian at heart – opting for gloriously rich Semifreddo.



It would be a miss not to mention the value of the meal and the wine at the Florentine. We'd been told earlier in the week that it was impossible to get a good dessert in the Loop for less than 10 bucks. Nonsense. Not only is the Florentine a wonderful environment for a business brunch, client meal or a laid back dining experience it is exceptionally good value.

Practically Perfect PA received complimentary dinner at [The Florentine](#). Our opinions are entirely our own.