



O'Galito

Saturday was set as a recipe for disaster. Mother Earth let loose all her wrath in a cascading thunder-rainstorm like never before. My husband, who accompanied me to the dinner, was more concerned about his team's Super 14 match against the Lions than spending time philosophising about food. As soon as we stepped into **O'Galito** in the Woodlands Boulevard, the whole situation, however, changed.



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Portuguese cuisine fit for a king



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O'Galito is an upmarket restaurant specialising in the preparation of exceptionally fine Portuguese dishes, complimented by world-class service. The restaurant, in the eastern suburbs of Pretoria, inherited its cuisine from the Portuguese forefathers and is reminiscent of the former Lourenço Marques in the old days where prawns, langoustines, crab, lobsters and oysters were prepared in boundless platters.

Although situated on the outskirts of a shopping mall, one does not get the impression that you are amidst the hustle and bustle of city life. The restaurant has outside and inside seating, and the outside wooden deck seating can be closed off from the main restaurant – a factor which came in handy when the rain started to pour down. I must compliment the O'Galito staff for their extremely prompt service when this happened, working like a team of finely oiled wheels.

Wine connoisseurs are adamant that one must drink white wine with seafood (which I planned to eat), but being a red wine fan, I decided to let my individuality show. Our extremely knowledgeable waiter, Lee Crawford, highlighted a few wines on the wine list, indicating some of his favourites. We decided on the well-known esteen red blend Alto Rouge 2006, as it was one of the less pricey wines.

What better than to sit back, relax and have a glass of red wine? An interesting item I picked up on the menu was the 10 and 20 year old KVV, Grappa and Henessey XO..not the normal items you would find on the average restaurant menu.

The ambiance in the restaurant was relaxed, yet classy and spunky. Portuguese music played in the background, but at a civilised volume which enabled good conversation (although my husband was keeping one eye on the score on the television in the one corner...).

O'Galito specialises in seafood, but its a *la carte* menu includes the traditional peri-peri chicken, fillet steak, duck, rabbit, and, among others, oxtail. The menu has enough variety but is not overwhelming in choice. Prices vary from average to reasonable priced. But the food is worth every cent.

Lee was excellent in advising us on which food to choose and he really had a thorough knowledge on the menu content and preparation methods. Being a woman, I could not decide between the delectable calamari and oysters. Once I decided on the oysters, I could not decide between the traditional and their special salmon oysters. Lee suggested he include two of the salmon oysters with six normal ones, just for me to taste how special they are and he was right – pure heaven! My husband chose 'smoked salmon served on a bed of lettuce and topped with capers, onion and cream cheese', a dish he thoroughly enjoyed. According to him, he would have even eaten the garnish if he did not know that he still



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had to indulge in the main meal. Despite the fact that the thunderstorm knocked the DSTV signal off, the rugby seemed to have slipped his mind.

For the main course, I decided to go with the Seafood Platter, which consisted of Prawns, langoustines, mussels, calamari and fresh fish. They offer their award-winning Lemon and Garlic sauce with this dish... and that was where the highlight of the evening was realised for me. The creamy sauce with a slight hint of tomato, garlic and lemon sauce was absolutely divine. Lee told us that some celebrities frequent the restaurant, just for that particular sauce. But Lee did not just stop there – he offered me a little bit of their ‘national sauce’, which is a mixture of beer and cream. The latter was quite pleasant on the palate, but could not come close to the former. (The sauce only had a hint of garlic and none of the flavours were overpowering), the platter was also not too much for a woman – just enough. My husband could not even stop talking about his fillet, which was – according to Lee – matured for a week. He says it was one of the best steaks he had ever had, with no lessings and a tantalising black pepper taste, which he loved. He commented specifically on the layout of the plate, saying “Except for the fact that the food looks tasty and is well-prepared, the garnish and vegetables are well-cooked and, in the case of the former, eatable and as well prepared as the rest of the dish. And it is not very often that I can say my steak was perfectly prepared!”

After sipping our last bit of wine, Lee offered us their special Kahlua cappuccino while we were waiting for our dessert to arrive. I immediately compared it to the taste of flavoured coffee that one got in South Africa about 10 years ago... those that tasted rather artificially, almost ‘plastic’. This one was, however, the real deal, with a tot of Kahlua. The alcohol was there, but not overpowering and it provided a divine chocolate-coffee taste to the cappuccino.

My husband is probably the world’s biggest crème brûlée fan and he was adamant that nobody could beat his previous (own) attempt, but again O’Galito surprised us. According to him this crème brûlée was not as overpowering vanilla-ish as the other and it was well-presented with a grape on top. I went for one of my favourites, Tiramisu. The plate was decorated exquisitely and the portion was just big enough...What I like of this Tiramisu was that it was not overpoweringly sweet as so many deserts are. It had a pleasant Mascarpone-cheesecake taste, with a hint of amaretto liquor and espresso. Can anyone think of a better way to round of an already perfect meal?

O’Galito provided one of the most divine meals and experiences of my life. So often nowadays you find that people and places are cutting corners and lacking service, not at O’Galito. The food is excellent and the service even better. It is the ideal venue for dinner, cocktails or a business lunch – there is enough style, but yet enough relaxation to make it a worthwhile experience. □