

Gemelli Review

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The biggest thing lacking in the restaurant industry is intimacy between the restaurateur and the patron. There is often a sense that one should arrive, eat, pay the bill and leave. It is as if there is a wall built between those serving the food and those receiving it. This division is completely broken down at the Italian restaurant, **Gemelli** in Bryanston.

Don't expect to see pizza on their menu. Though the restaurant's heart lies in homely, hearty Italian cuisine, co-owner and head chef, Paulo Santo has made a point of experimenting with different influences and cultures in the kitchen. A perfect example of that would be Paulo's Asian Duck Salad which consists of smoked duck, chilli condiment, baby spinach, pickled fennel, pineapple Salsa, soy fluid, radish and candied Macadamia nuts. This dish should be paired with a Creation Pinot Noir 2014. A recommendation I whole-heartily applaud.



The interior of the restaurant does not resemble the average Italian food joint but is decorated to look and feel like a New York styled high rise loft apartment. The wall behind the bar is painted by the Los Angeles street artists *Cyrclé*. One can see on the surface that there is a lot of passion and dedication put into Gemelli. This is thanks to the partnership between owners, Paulo and Alex. The décor and feel-good vibe of the restaurant is a direct reflection of the food. This can be seen in Gemelli's Whiskey Prawn entrée which is made up of prawns set in a jelly of single malt placed on top of smoked Franschoek trout, lemon crème fraiche, an oatcake crumb and avocado mousse, all topped with artichoke & lemon and citrus oil. The Whiskey Prawn should be enjoyed with a Creation Sauvignon Blanc 2016.



To Paulo there is no such thing as a new recipe – it's all been done before. But what excites him the most is that there is always a new way to look at old recipes. To him it is all about relationships, be it between the ingredients in his dishes or between him and his staff or between him and his patrons. Gemelli's maxim has always been *La Famiglia Prima* which is Italian for family first. Paulo has made a point to treat his employees as equals and has made sure that they all have an open relationship with one another. This is something that comes forth when dealing with any of the staff members. Their smiles and courtesy is genuine and this makes for an even more pleasant culinary experience. The importance of building and maintaining relationships to Paulo does not end at Gemelli but spreads to his produce and drink suppliers. Paulo grew up in a household where they planted and harvested their own fruit and vegetables which, in turn, grants him the ability to demand only the best ingredients. This again reflects in



In conclusion, Gemelli is so much more than a handful of walls, a couple of seats and a kitchen. It is an experience where the owners of the establishment make a point of making you feel at home. A lot of places claim to have passion for food but few deliver as well as Gemelli does.

By Shawn Greyling