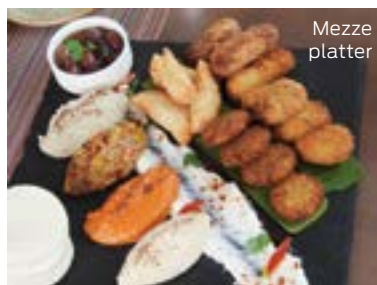




MEDITERRANEAN MUSINGS

A strong emphasis on high-quality ingredients makes for an engaging meal experience at Bengaluru's newly opened Caprese restaurant. **By Bindu Gopal Rao**

THE LATEST ADDITION TO Bengaluru's burgeoning restaurant scene is a very welcome one and this comes in the form of the recent launch of Caprese at Shangri-La Hotel. Located on the 18th floor of the property the 94 cover restaurant offers stunning views of the garden city. The restaurant has a warm vibe courtesy its decor done up in strong wood finishes, wooden sculptures and hanging metal lanterns all in shades of brown, cream and beige. The restaurant walls have framed photographs and terracotta topiary pots that add to the greenery of the treetops below. There is



Mezze platter



Caprese seafood salad

also an outdoor seating space that works beautifully in the evenings to experience great food with Bengaluru's salubrious climate. A private dining area that can seat six is also a great way to enjoy for intimate family meals. With a setting a perfect as this we were naturally looking forward to the meal and it certainly exceeded our expectations.

Presided over by Antonio Tardi, the hotel's executive chef, Caprese's skilled culinary team delivers Spanish tapas, Middle Eastern Mezze platters and Italian dishes. With an emphasis on engagement, the team has developed



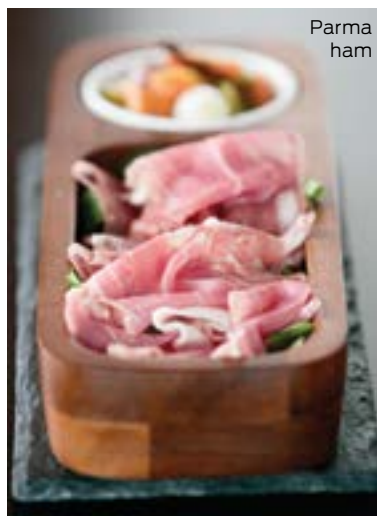
The bread platter served with a variety of dips

dishes supported by the open Tapas counter, such as Iberico and Serrano Hams carved at the table or classic Italian Tiramisu prepared in front of guests. A strong emphasis on high-quality ingredients, either hand-picked locally or imported, makes the meal experience as interactive and engaging as possible. On offer are a range of Spanish tapas, Italian a la carte and Middle-Eastern Mezze platters. The restaurant also has some exciting food concepts, including 'In the Hands of the Chef' that allows diners to book a night with the chef who will meticulously tailor a meal to tastes and serve his creations at the table. The other interesting concept is that of 'Food to Fork' that is meticulously designed for vegetarian lovers and which uses hotel-grown ingredients. At the open central bar, guests can enjoy an extensive wine-by-the-glass list and very well-priced cellared and table wine listings and pairings. Additionally, a large selection of non-alcoholic beverages and cocktails, particularly Mediterranean-inspired cocktails, are available.

On the chef's suggestion we started our meal with the signature Vegetarian Mezze Platter that is served with a variety of dips including Hummus, Mutabal, Babaganoush and Labneh with garlic Muhammara, all served cold. The platter includes Falafel, Kibbeh, Cheese Fatayer, Kibbeh potato all served hot. Each of



Charutire Platter



Parma ham

the items served had a distinct taste and flavour that whets the appetite for more. Non vegetarians can try the same platter with the Lamb Fatayer. I also strongly recommend you try the signature Caprese salad, an interesting mix of creamy Burrata cheese, Roma tomato,

basil, garlic and extra virgin olive oil. We were explained that the cheese is actually sourced locally and is actually made in Bengaluru. Non vegetarians must sample the delectable Mediterranean seafood soup made with pan fried scallops, roasted garlic bread and homemade basil pesto.

For the main course a must try is the Spaghetti with Lamb Ragout that is flavoured with black cardamom and bay leaf as well as Parmigiano and chilli and has a spicy flavour. Another good option is the Italian style chili prawn that is made with soft polenta and red capsicum sauce. This is also spicy so if you prefer something less hot try the Chicken ballotina a signature preparation where the chicken is filled with chestnut, pancetta and rosemary and gives you a nice Italian feel. Vegetarians will not be disappointed either as the restaurant offers several options and I would recommend you try the Penne pasta alla norma made with organic cherry tomato, sautéed eggplant and fresh basil that is light and creamy in texture and is easy on the palate. Also try the signature Eggplant parmigiana made with organic eggplant, parmesan cheese and san marzano tomato sauce which has a slightly smokey flavour that adds zing to the dish.

While an array of options is available to satiate your sweet tooth, I strongly recommend that you opt for the Tiramisu. A cause for celebration, Tiramisu quite literally means "pick me up" and arguable one of Italy's most popular desserts gets an interesting twist at Caprese as it is assembled on your table. The bottom layer has combing lady finger biscuits over which freshly brewed espresso is poured. This is then lined with a mix of mascarpone cheese, eggs, sugar, Marsala wine and rum and cocoa powder is drizzled on the top. The delicate flavour of layers of mascarpone and Italian custard contrast with the robust taste of espresso and the sharpness of cocoa powder, which makes this dessert an absolute must have while you are here. For me however, the Tiramisu was certainly the best way to end this perfect meal.