

Review

Antica Pesa

Time Out reviews anonymously and pays for its meals

The prices may make you shout “mamma mia!” but then so will the food



Antica Pesa

Old-school stylish and passionately Italian though it may be, if you're planning a trip to Antica Pesa then don't expect an evening drenched in Dean Martin and blood-red ragu. The subtleties here will make your evening special, not novel.

To date best-known for its chains in Rome and Brooklyn, Antica Pesa's Doha iteration has already hit the ground running. The exterior is rustic, old-town-type Italian, but the inside offers a modern and chic vibe, with contemporary art hanging on the walls and trendy tunes to match.

It's quite dark, too – good for a romantic meal for two or a relaxed evening with friends rather than a rave, though the bar upstairs is extremely pleasant.

On our visit, the first thing that is immediately evident is that the

waiters are Italian. This means service is exemplary – no-one does charming, effusive, efficient and friendly as well as the Italians. And the chefs are Italian, too. Bravissimo.

Some dishes, such as the smoked mozzarella bresaola, are already being talked about in the city, so to begin with we opt for the less trumpeted calamari and the wagyu beef tartare.

The latter is accompanied by an egg, cooked on a low boil at 60

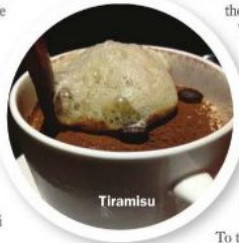
degrees, to be well and truly mashed together with the tartare. There is a

smoky flavour, which sits well with the subtle taste of the avocado mousse,

while the fried calamari is crisp and fresh and drizzled with bergamotto sauce (rather than your standard lemon squeeze) to give it an extra citrus punch.

So far so good.

To the point that as we gaze outside and wait for our next dish, we begin to think we could genuinely be in a



Tiramisu



Wagyu tartare



Scallops

little slice of Italy. No mean feat.

Our pasta dish of mushroom and pistachio fettuccine is next up. The staff kindly come with two plates, halving our order so we can both try it. At QR120 it's arguably on the steep side, but the sauce is so rich and delectable that each of our half-portions go a long way to satisfy us and justify the cost.

For the primi secondi we opt for the scallops. Four of them arrive with salmon roe on top and pea puree, to add extra textural dimensions to the dish. The scallops themselves are delicate but a little salty to taste and the roe pops playfully in the mouth. As a combination of flavour and texture the dish is nothing short of a delight.

Of course, no Italian meal would be complete without dessert, and Antica Pesa doesn't disappoint. The tiramisu melts away as we eat, with coffee beans adding crunch. The showstopper, though, comes in the form of the pane cioccolata – bread with chocolate sauce poured on top. We watch transfixed as the chef complements this with a raspberry mousse made table-side, made solid by dipping into liquid nitrogen and taking out with tongs, rather than hands! As a party piece it's perfect. Magic before our very eyes.

Paying is a little on the painful side, in part due to a total bill erring on the high side and partly due to some debit card connection problems. The latter, though, is quickly and smartly dealt with by our waiter, who offers up complimentary coffees and in the process showcases an initiative so rarely found in the city. It's a classy touch that leaves another nice taste in the mouth.

Antica Pesa is probably not somewhere you would go on a whim. It is ideal for an occasion and a guaranteed great meal and service, which can be hard to come by in Doha. Expect high prices – in fact, for Italian cuisine, it is among the priciest in the city – but expect to come away happy, too.

Open daily noon-2am. Marsa Malaz Kempinski, The Pearl (4035 5300).

The bill (for two)

1x wagyu tartare	QR120
1x calamari	QR100
1x porcini fettuccine	QR120
1x scallops	QR120
1x roast potatoes	QR50
1x tiramisu	QR60
1x pane & cioccolata	QR70
1x Aqua Panna	QR35
1x San Pellegrino	QR35

Total

QR710