



Athenia Restaurant and Bar, Carrara

Chantay Logan | March 28th, 2012

WHEN asked about my job, my Dad derives endless pleasure in telling friends: "She's a rubbish* cook, but, I tell you mate, she's one heck* of an eater". (*I tidied this up a little for readers not accustomed to my Dad).

So, I was secretly smug when one member of the wonderfully warm team at Athenia warned my choices would require a big appetite.

I may have scoffed a little when told it would take me at least half an hour to polish off my entree choice.

I was naive, conditioned by a stream of shrunken-portioned modern Greek offerings.

Lesson one in the largesse of traditional Greek hospitality is the mezzedakia, a mixed starter that's \$18 each for a minimum of two people.

The food is bought out en masse, which looks great on the table, but makes it tricky to enjoy everything at the ideal temperature.

The grilled haloumi has cooled too much by the time we get to it, although a squeeze of lemon helps to perk it up a bit.

We attend to the dolmades and keftedes while they're still deliciously warm, and then snack on marinated kalamata olives.

The Greek salad is expertly dressed and has a balance of tomatoes, onions, cucumber, olives and a good fetta.

There's a big basket of pita bread to showcase four dips: a cooling tzatziki, addictively salty taramosalata, houmous and a garlicky number.

You can match your meal with classic Greek wines and spirits, from as little as \$6 for a glass of the quite sweet Kleoni Imiglykos white, or stay on familiar footing with labels such as Giesen.

A breather between courses is a chance to check out the surrounds, in Emerald Lakes' European enclave.

The timber table settings are divided between the restaurant and alfresco dining beside the lake, where a shimmering Gold Coast skyline is reflected.

Bright blue shutters are thrown back against white-washed walls, allowing diners a glimpse inside the modern kitchen.

Mains arrive on plates I probably couldn't fit in my dishwasher.

The moussaka (\$26) is home-style and just beautiful.

A creamy bechamel sauce infiltrates layers of savoury mince, eggplant, zucchini and potato.

Chicken souvlaki (\$28) consists of cubes of chicken, which have a smokey flavour from the char-grill, spiced with onion and capsicum on two skewers, plus rice, tabouli, lemon potatoes and a little bowl of houmous.

I admit defeat with the plate still half full, but only because I have designs on dessert.

With baklava this good, I'm sure it's excusable etiquette to lick the honey off your fingers.

Go to: 80/3030 The Boulevard, Emerald Lakes, Carrara

Book it: 5594 5656

Must do: The banquet to end all banquets, \$44.90 each for a minimum of two people

Sum up: Generous



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