

FIRENZE

It was dusk as we approached Firenze, Jesmond's new restaurant offering 'premier Italian dining'. Early autumn meant a chill in the air but as we pulled up outside, welcoming lights and what seemed to be an already bustling atmosphere immediately took our minds off the pending change of season.

Tucked away in its own courtyard, Firenze is perhaps destined to be one of Jesmond's most popular eateries. Fine weather allows for alfresco dining. Not tonight however, and we head inside to be greeted by co-owner James and are shown to a table overlooking the private courtyard on one side but with a good view of the restaurant's proceedings too. To one side, there is a snug – perfect for smaller parties – which can seat up to forty diners, and it was already full with a birthday party underway.

Firenze's co-owners Gavin and James have a long experience within the restaurant trade and are well aware of the need to provide quality in every aspect of the dining experience. The comprehensive menu aims to 'showcase the very best in Italian cuisine' and with freshly baked focaccia bread and home made gnocchi to hand rolled cannoli and traditional polenta biscuits their aim is to 'share their passion for the food and culinary traditions of Italy.'

We are quickly brought menus and offered a drink. There were daily specials too and despite what I would say is a really good, rounded menu I plumped for the king prawns frito, lightly battered in a mild chilli batter with a lemon and basil dipping sauce, £5.25, an Evening Special, and totally delicious whilst my partner chose, rather unusually for him, the anti-pasto misto from the main menu, £7.95 – equally as successful with a very generous selection of beautifully flavoured and presented cured meats.

The main courses followed efficiently. Traditional lasagne, £6.95 with a good mixed salad and a rib steak, £15.95 with roast vine tomatoes, roast Portobello mushrooms and watercress aoli - oh yes and hand cut chips. The lasagne was good if not exciting, the steak perfectly cooked and chunky chips just right. With a good bottle of red to accompany the meal that should technically have been sufficient but when faced with sticky toffee pudding on a menu I feel it a personal challenge to not just order it but finish it too! The classic sticky toffee pudding with creme fraiche, £4.25 did not disappoint on my sticky toffee pudding scale and I did manage to finish it – with a little bit of help from a friend!



All in all we had a really enjoyable evening. Good atmosphere, busy but not too noisy, buzzing without it being intrusive on our dinner a deux.

Firenze have a series of special offers, including a lunchtime Express Menu, excellent value at £7.25 for two courses. The Sunday Lunch Menu at £12.95 for two courses, £16.95 for three is also very appealing and one we shall be trying en famille pretty soon.

Firenze
The Courtyard (Holly Avenue West),
7 Osborne Road, Jesmond 0191 281 2136
www.firenzewcastle.co.uk

