

earth man *by the sea*



Words by József Bonello

It's amazing what a slightly different route off the beaten track can reveal. Next time you reach Marsaxlokk with the church to your right, do yourself a rewarding favour and instead of heading straight on, make a sharp left. Welcome to my favourite part of the charming fishing village that is Marsaxlokk. You are now a mere hundred metres or so away from the heart of the action, yet this part feels a touch more authentic and quieter, surely closer to what it was meant to be like by those who populated it ages ago. You should now be able to see a very eye-catching restaurant sign reading 'Terrone' perched over an extension of a centenarian villa with an equally attractive interior look-and-feel as well as a nice outdoor deck. It is styled to offer a welcoming warmth in colder days and to feel refreshingly cool in these hot days. Adrian Hili's experience and sensibility in the way he prepares his food belie his young age. His main focus is that of sourcing fresh, top notch produce and let it inspire him to choose the right way to bring out the best of it.

After having worked in Australia, Southern Italy and The River Café in London, he relishes the fact that being in Marsaxlokk gives him direct access to some of the tastiest veggies he has ever come across. You can't get any fresher fish than live ones, and that's what comes through his doors as his fishermen deliver their wares. Once Adrian knows that he can get his hands on such ingredients, all he humbly does is prepare them with the utmost respect they deserve. And the rave reviews he gets from patrons are testimony to the fact that his formula, simple as it may be, clearly works. That's why his menu changes daily. The basic elements are always there, but the day's catch determines the day's specialities. On the meat front, not only is the pork local, but he has also sourced some excellent Maltese beef whilst his rabbit comes from Gozo as does his occasional lamb. One of the tricks up his sleeve is the clever use of the intensity offered by fresh herbs he weekly sources from a neighbour. This is where his experience in Salerno comes handy, bringing out the most colourful flavours of Mediterranean ingredients.

Open seven days a week, Adrian doesn't have much time for socialising but that doesn't stop him from offering dishes such as generous antipasti which can be enjoyed by a group of friends lounging in a relaxed ambiance.

His desserts are also seasonal and prepared in his kitchen. He describes his menu as peasant food, hence the name, whose characteristics would be essentially wholesome, fresh, tasty and genuine. A final word goes towards Terrone's meticulously selected wine list, deftly put together by Adrian's father, Albert, a true lover of fine wine. It largely features labels from Malta and Southern Italy as well as a few Sardinian ones. Not one to go for commercial brands, Albert chooses wines he has full confidence in, including lesser known local bottles and very interesting indigenous varieties from the nearer regions of Italy. Watch out for his wine tasting sessions soon to be held at Terrone by keeping an eye on their website www.terrone.com.mt as well as their facebook page.