



LAST NIGHT the new menu

September 17, 2014

by Nick Green | @_NicholasGee

It was nice, so close to TIFF, to get the real star treatment. That's what **TOCA** is all about; quality, class, and good taste. Toronto style. The folks at the Ritz Carlton restaurant served up all that and more at an exclusive tasting of their latest menu.

Nestled on the second floor of one of downtown Toronto's swankiest hotels, TOCA offers a dark, spacious dining room, complete with cheese cave, chef's table and private dining room. When it opened in 2011, TOCA was all about Canadiana (TOCA being a play on TOronto, CANada), however in the last couple years some chef changes have pointed the restaurant in a more Italian direction, with a commitment to Canadian ingredients. The most recent change has come from a visit from two-star Michelin chef Oliver Glowig. After a super successful pop-up experiment, Glowig is leaving a lasting impression on the restaurant via a new, classically-Italian-inspired menu. Sous chef Jitin Gaba served me and my guest each dish, complemented by a wine pairing.

Highlights of this six course selection included a light scampi served on burrata cream-stuffed artichoke (\$24), paired with a Verdicchio di Matelica. The flavours were subtle, and worked well with the wine, making it a pretty sexy-smooth way to start.



Scampi and artichoke.

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Perhaps the highlight of the whole night was the ravioli caprese (\$24). The delectable pastas were perfectly stuffed with dense, house made caciotta, making for a firm, yet light bite of awesomeness. These bad boys are topped with a simple sauce made from a combination of Italian and Ontario tomatoes, shallots, olive oil, and fresh basil. It all seems so simple, yet tastes seriously good. It's no wonder Gaba tells me they sell over 1,000 raviolis per week. This dish was paired predictably with a Chianti, which worked well.



Ravioli caprese.

Other great dishes included the braised beef cheek with fried leeks and mashed potato (\$34), and the pasta mista (\$28), a rustic, devil-may-care mix of pasta noodles, potato and lobster. The evening was completed with a cocoa nib and almond sponge cake with watermelon water and elderflower foam, as well as a cheese board comprised of lancaster, pecorino, and aged gorgonzola, paired with a white Port.

All in all, the tasting was consistently delicious, thoughtful, and well presented, traits that represent the restaurant as a whole. The menu will be changing regularly to suit the seasons, so keep checking the website to see what's new. But don't worry. Gaba promises the ravioli wont be leaving any time soon.

TOCA, Ritz Carlton Hotel
181 Wellington St. W., ritzcarlton.com, [@RitzCarlton](https://twitter.com/RitzCarlton)

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