

Fabulous Farfalla

Westlake Village's new trattoria offers an eclectic selection of Italian dishes

BY RITA MORAN

Restaurant critic

It's fun just to read the extensive menu at the new Trattoria Farfalla in Westlake Village. But it's even more fun to eat the food. The wide range of Italian specialties goes well beyond the usual, although fans of Farfalla's well-established restaurant in Los Feliz have been enjoying them for years.

The trattoria had been settled in at The Promenade for just a few weeks when we

visited in early December. It offered one of the finest first impressions we've had at a new restaurant, from the attractive exterior to the handsome interior, full of dark, burnished woods and black cocktail-height tables at the entry, with a bar to one side and a sheltered patio to the other. We were seated in a serene area at the back of the room, which suited us perfectly, along with our visitors from St. Louis, one of whom comes from a lively Italian family.

There was lots of discussion over the menu, because so many items were different from dishes we'd previously experienced. We finally narrowed down our choices and found them all so delicious that I have to assume that we weren't just lucky, but had come upon a menu where most of the dishes are likely to be good.

We shared and tasted a lot among our party, beginning with an appetizer and a salad. The tempting *salsiccia e cardi* (\$13.95) appetizer featured grilled polenta

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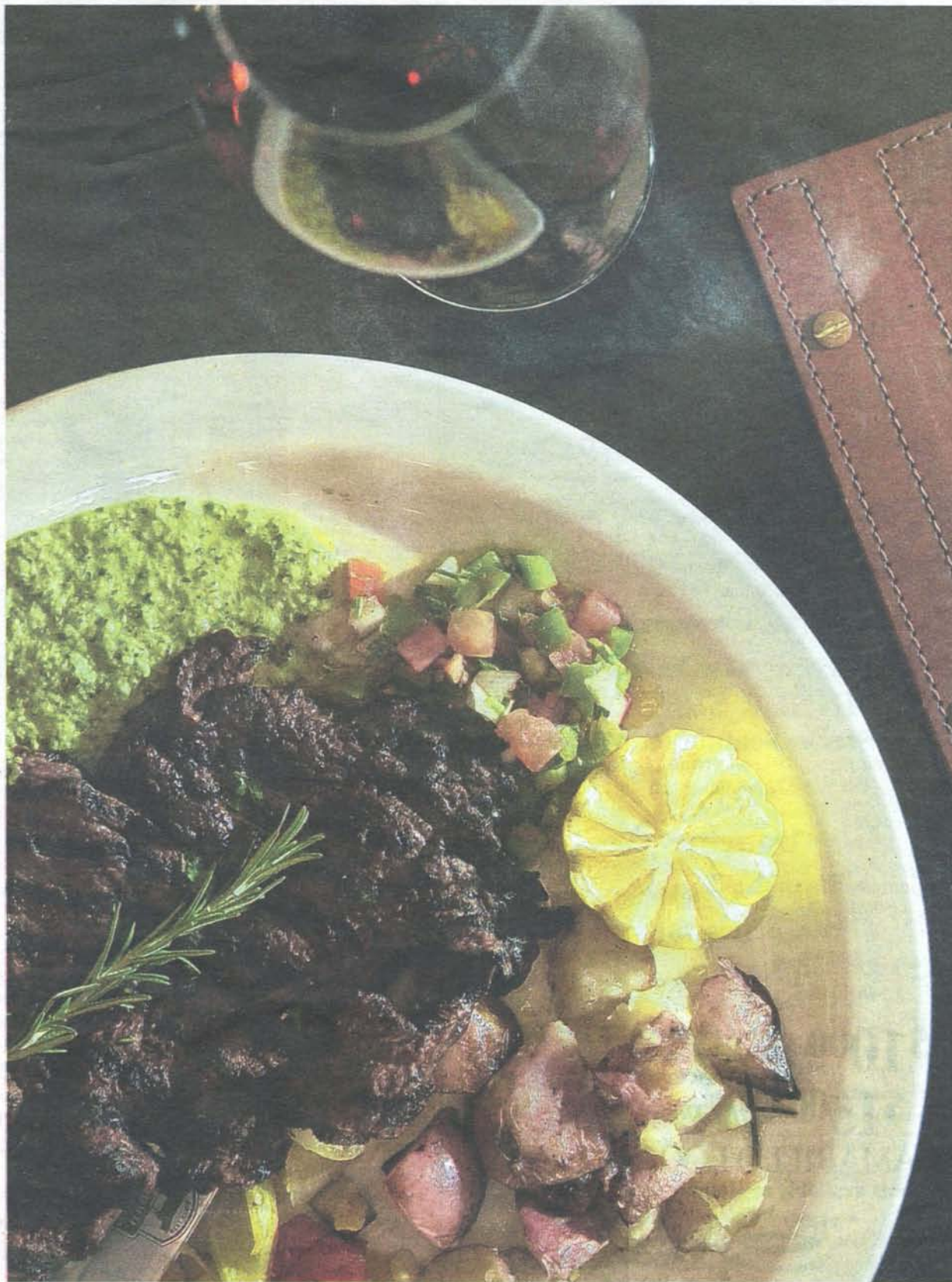
Trattoria Farfalla

Location: 160 Promenade Way, The Promenade, Westlake Village. 497-2355; <http://www.farfallawestlakevillage.com>.

Hours: Open daily from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. for lunch, 4 p.m. to midnight for dinner.

Impressions: Handsome layout with dark woods, large bar and enclosed outside patio; cheery, efficient service; outstanding Italian specialties, many off the beaten track.

What's hot: Polenta with Italian sausage and swiss chard garlic sauce; beef Farfalla con pesto di campagna (skirt steak with salsa verde); Branzino Santo Giovanni al forno con limone (Italian striped bass); tagliolini con gamberetti e carciofi (thin pasta with shrimp and artichoke sauce).



KAREN QUINCY LOBERG / STAR STAFF
The beef Farfalla con pesto di campagna at Trattoria Farfalla features grilled, thin-cut skirt steak served with salsa verde, roasted potatoes and vegetables. The dish is one of the many intriguingly eclectic offerings on the Westlake Village restaurant's extensive menu.



KAREN QUINCY LOBERG / STAR STAFF

Santino Coccia, executive chef and co-owner of Trattoria Farfalla, prepares chicken marsala at the new Westlake Village restaurant. The Italian eatery is located in The Promenade shopping center.

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topped with slices of Italian sausage, Swiss chard and garlic sauce. The combination was striking, with the mild polenta balancing the perfectly spiced, juicy sausage, the chard and the sauce.

My Italian friend, not given to extravagant proclamations, declared it was the best Italian sausage she'd ever tasted. Her recommendation to anyone dining there: Seek out the sausage, which a quick glance at the menu revealed can be found on the *rugola funghi e salsiccia pizza*, in addition to our appetizer.

The *mista salad* (\$6.95) also drew raves for its tender mix of spring lettuce, roasted bell pepper and eggplant strips, all brought together with a delicate balsamic vinaigrette.

My Italian friend and I agreed that her entree, *beef Farfalla con pesto di campagna*, was the best of the bunch. The grilled, thin-cut skirt steak was oh-so-tender and full of flavor. Arranged on the plate with it were a lively pesto sauce that reminded me of *chimichurri* in its compatibility with the steak. The sauce was a mix of something like a chunky vegetable relish with buttered

2 FOR DINNER

starters > *polenta, salsiccia e cardi* (grilled polenta with Italian sausage and Swiss chard garlic sauce, \$13.95) + *mista salad* (\$6.95)

entrees > *tagliolini con gamberetti e carciofi* (thin pasta with shrimp and artichoke sauce, \$18.95) + *beef Farfalla con pesto di campagna* (grilled skirt steak with salsa verde, \$18.95) + *branzino Santo Giovanni* (Italian striped bass, \$25.95) + *cioppino* (\$29.95)

dessert > apple tart and pear-chocolate tart (\$7.75 each)

tab for two > \$24-\$60

bread crumbs.

Roasted potatoes and vegetables were available with the steak, or pasta with *marinara sauce*. My friend took the pasta, which turned out to be tender bow-tie pasta ("farfalla" means "butterfly") dressed with a light *marinara sauce*.

The *branzino* (Italian striped bass) entree (\$25.95) was baked in a wood-burning oven with fresh lemon and aromatic herbs, then plated with roasted potatoes and vegetables. It also was appealing, as was the *cioppino*

(\$29.95), with its mix of mussels, clams, calamari, scallops, shrimp, octopus and other fresh fish in tomato broth.

From a dessert tray we chose an apple tart and *pera al chocolate* (pear-chocolate tart). The simple apple tart was good, but the pear and chocolate combination was sweeter than we like. Looking at the menu later, we found other items we might have preferred, including *tiramisu*, *truffle/tiramisu gelato* and *semifreddo*.

Farfalla has a reasonable selection of wines by the glass, including many Italian varieties, and a considerably larger list of wines by the bottle. House wines are \$6 during lunch and \$8 at dinner. The corkage fee is \$20.

Some of the intriguing items on the menu include a *mozzarella bar*, featuring fresh mozzarella paired with a variety of fresh vegetables and several versions of the cheese; *salumi e formaggi*, premium cheese and cured meat appetizer combinations; *risotti*; and an assortment of chicken and veal dishes.

— Rita Moran visits restaurants unannounced and pays for her food. If you know of a new, unusual or just plain good restaurant, please contact her at ritamoran@earthlink.net.