

Restaurants

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Pisacco, Dry, Ristorante Berton, Magna Pars, Al Pont de Ferr, Milan



By Nicholas Lander

'This conservative city will host Expo Milano in 2015. New buildings and restaurants are springing up everywhere'



The combination of pizza and cocktails has proved a big success at Dry

A message came recently from an Italian friend of mine, a proud Florentine who for years has spent his working weeks in Milan. "Do let me know when you are next here," he wrote. "At last, there are several really exciting restaurant openings."

Milan, a highly conservative city (my friend still refers to it as "Italy's office"), is due to host the World Expo in 2015. Buildings are springing up everywhere, with new restaurants in their wake. The country's economy, as Camilla Baresani Varini, my counterpart at the Corriere della Sera, pointed out, may have restricted Italians' interest in such things as fashion and design – but good food and wine are still within their means.



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In Porta Nuova, the new (but unfinished) financial centre only a brief walk from the main train station, Ristorante Berton has just opened. Andrea Berton is a distinguished chef whose food I always admired when he was cooking in partnership with Trussardi, the fashion house, close to La Scala. Over the past couple of years Berton has branched out in two quite different directions.

On via Solferino, a short walk from Ristorante Berton, he has opened three casual restaurants cheek by jowl:

Pisacco, where the menu includes inexpensive interpretations of Italian food; Zaza Ramen, next door, for noodles; and, on the other side of the street, Dry.

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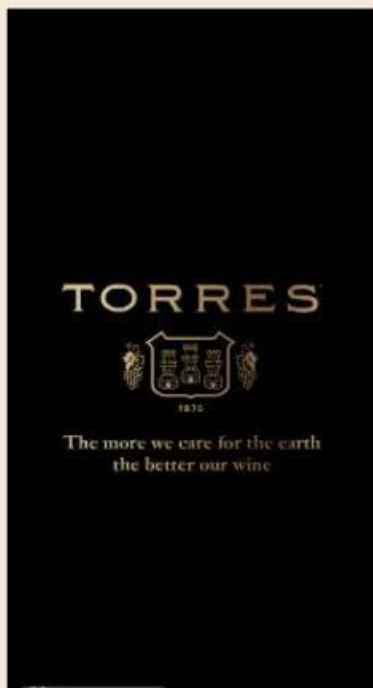
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This last venue has proved a spectacular success by focusing on a combination of excellent pizzas and exciting cocktails. The front serves as a bar with trays of focaccia topped with creamy mozzarella, vitello tonnato and prosciutto, while pizzas are served at the back from an open kitchen where the chefs work their dough furiously to meet demand.

For the past year Berton has been concentrating, with his business partner Davide Fregonese, on the design of the new 44-seater restaurant that now bears his name. Ultra-modern in design, it has not one but two "chef's tables" – the first, for two people, is opposite the kitchen, while another, for four, is inside the restaurant but with a clear view of the chefs beyond.

Berton describes his latest menu as being even more modern but there are still strong nods to tradition, particularly in the fish dishes: small shrimps with a shot of fish stock and soft shell crabs with anchovy, both inspired by Venice, and an excellent combination of octopus with creamy potato. A reworking of veal Milanese, enhanced by a slow-cooked lemon, was first-class.

Tortona, to the south of the city, is home to industrial units that have recently been converted into offices and showrooms for fashion giants such as Armani and Ferragamo. The Martone family, who create fragrances for big brands, have converted a former perfume factory into a hotel, the Magna Pars, offering wonderful natural light. White is the only colour on show.

Around the courtyard downstairs is Da Noi, a restaurant overseen by Piemontese chef Fulvio Siccardi; he has brought many bottles amassed in his previous restaurants, so there is plenty here for any lover of mature Barolo and Barbaresco.

Finally, the highly atmospheric canal paths of the Navigli district are now home to Uruguay-born chef Matias Perdomo, in the historic osteria Al Pont De Ferr. Perdomo combines exuberance with great technical skill, and his dish of a mosaic of tuna, foie gras and macadamia nuts set in a specially commissioned mosaic dish is both mouthwatering and eye-catching.

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More columns at www.ft.com/lander

Pisacco

via Solferino 48, +39 02 9176 5472

www.pisacco.it

Dry

via Solferino 33, +39 02 6379 3414

www.drymilano.it

Ristorante Berton

Viale della Liberazione 13, +39 02 6707 5801

www.ristoranteberton.com

Magna Pars

via Forcella 6, +39 02 833 8371

www.magnapars-suitesmilano.it

Al Pont De Ferr

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