

Casual inner-city elegance

cafe

with Alison Cotes

PANE E VINO

Cnr Albert and Charlotte streets, Brisbane. (07) 3220 0044.

Open: 7.30am-late seven days (main kitchen open from 11.30am-10pm, and until 11.30pm on Friday and Saturday). Fully licensed, some non-smoking areas, air-conditioned. City parking stations. Visited early morning, late evening.

Ambience: A loaf of bread, a jug of wine — substitute some glossy mags and a couple of pavement umbrellas for the book of verses and the bough, and Omar Khayyam's vision just about comes true, even if the desert would be a quieter rendezvous than this busy stretch of Albert St. It doesn't seem to faze the twenty-somethings who flock here at all times of the day, indulging in the simple excellence of a menu as stripped-back as the modern furnishings.

Menu: Bread and wine aplenty — the wines from a small but superior list available by the glass and the bottle, with prices around \$5-\$6 for a generous glass of good red. Annie's Lane shiraz, for example, is \$5.50 a glass or \$21.90 a bottle, and there's always a wine of the week. The bread comes as garlic or herb (\$3.50 and very buttery), an excellent olive bread for \$4.50 and delicious tomato, basil and garlic bruschetta for \$6.50.

After that, there are substantial salads and then some welcome additions to the standard tagliatelle and ravioli, with at least two kinds of excellent risotto and genuine homemade gnocchi, ranging from \$11 to \$15. Main courses (\$14-\$18) include scaloppine al funghi with wild and cultivated mushrooms; eye fillet served simply with olive oil and balsamic vinegar; chicken breast layered with bocconcini and eggplant; and prawns or mussels. Most of the cabinet cakes, we were assured, have never seen the inside of a cake factory, and certainly the tiramisu was moist and alcoholic



PANE e Vino . . . good bread and wine and much more besides.

enough to prove its back-kitchen provenance. Breakfast (7.30am-11.30am) is standard Australian, ranging from the house special of sausage, bacon, eggs, tomatoes and mushrooms with juice and coffee for \$7.50 to hot, thick toast for \$1.50.

Food ordered: Breakfast under the pavement umbrellas was stunning, the house special (\$7.50) substantial enough to take us through to late afternoon. Late at night, we've eaten gamberi all'aglio peperoncino (\$17.90), big fat prawns seared in

garlic and chilli, topping a large serving of fettuccine tossed with pesto, hot enough to be exciting but not intimidating; and at least a dozen fresh mussels steamed in a garlic and fresh tomato sauce, served with heaps of crusty Italian bread (\$13.90). We have also become addicted to the risotto vegetariano (\$11.90), the rice cooked to creamy perfection in a tomato salsa with olives, mushrooms, onions and other Mediterranean vegetables. This is a perfect dish for a cool night, as is the

gnocchi tonnati, potato pasta tossed with tuna, olives and capers, topped with a fresh tomato sauce (\$12.90).

Comment: Pane e Vino achieves an almost perfect marriage of authentic Italian cuisine with the casual elegance that is beginning to characterise the best Brisbane bistros and cafe-bars. Prices are hardly rock bottom but the generous servings guarantee value for money, and it's currently our favourite place in the inner city for a late meal after a 6pm movie.