

No passport necessary

• By DEBBIE LAMPERT/
eLuna.com

Eatalia culinary emporium is a new concept that celebrates the flavors of Italy. Eatalia Israel was inspired by emporiums in at least a dozen cities throughout the world, including New York, London, Paris, and Munich. A team of food lovers has brought this concept to Israel.

The Israeli Eatalia is a beautifully designed two-story closed food emporium at the edge of the BSR building courtyard at Totzeret Ha'aretz Street in Petah Tikva. We were struck by the unique architecture and spiffy interior design. Eatalia surrounds you in good taste, both culinary and aesthetic.

This is the only kashrut-certified Eatalia emporium in the world. The entire market - all the foods and all the imported goods - is under the kashrut supervision of the Petah Tikva Rabbinat.

Food, food, and more food. Eatalia is two floors of Italian foods. On the entrance level, called The Piemonte for the region in Italy, find a coffee shop, a pizza stand, cheeses, and wine, to eat in or take home. Tables dividing the sections are laden with goods for sale, imported from Italy. There are olive oil, tomato sauces, pasta, pizza flour, and more, and, as a nod to the Totzeret Ha'aretz ("Product of Israel") Street address, some of our own Israeli wines.

Escalator up one floor to wine and dine at a group of Italian restaurants, some open now and others soon to open. For casual dining, there is the Joya D'Eatalia dairy restaurant, open from noon till the emporium closes at 11 p.m. The Pescara fish restaurant opens for evening dining from 6 p.m. And a fine dining meat restaurant will open soon.

Chef Cobi Bachar is the head chef and culinary director at Eatalia. All the foods and all the restaurants in the emporium are under his lead. As Eatalia is new, he is building the culinary concepts from the ground up. The chef is eminently qualified for this challenge, coming from Jerusalem's Mamilla Hotel, where he presided over all its restaurants.

JOYA IS a long-running, tried-and-true chain of classic dairy restaurants. Joya D'Eatalia is the first restaurant to open in Eatalia. Kashrut was not on the agenda of the original Joya branches, but in the last few years several, including this one, have opened with a kashrut certificate.

Joya offers a classic dairy Italian dining experience with all the dishes that you would expect on a dairy Italian menu. In the hands of Bachar, the dishes are all beautifully presented and have a unique and unexpected twist.

We started our meal with the Caesar salad, a green salad made of crispy light green lettuce leaves topped with croutons and sprinkled with



(Joya D'Eatalia)

cheese, accompanied by a hard-boiled egg (NIS 58). This classic Italian salad was dressed with anchovies, Worcestershire sauce, and other flavors finely blended, and was sprinkled with grated Parmesan cheese. The salad was served with focaccia, warm from the oven, and three dips.

What is an Italian dairy restaurant without an arancini starter? Three crunchy cheese-filled balls in a tomato sauce were lovely (NIS 48).

We then enjoyed two wonderful main courses from the fish and pasta menus. Chef Coby is famous for his linguini zucchini fondue. Thin slices of zucchini are folded into the delicious creamy fondue sauce that is gently blended into the linguini. A sprinkling of tangy crumbs tops this rich pasta dish, giving it another flavor dimension. The dish was overly generous, and though my companion and I shared it, we could not finish the bowl (NIS 72).

I judge a chef by the quality of the fish dishes. It is the fish that separates the men from the boys.

The sea bass fillet on a bed of risotto with mushrooms was excellently prepared, attractively presented, and delicious. We left the plate clean (NIS 134).

Chef Bachar knows his fish, and I look forward to visiting the Pescara specialty fish restaurant, which is now open in the evenings from 6 p.m.

Joya D'Eatalia has a sizable space for indoor dining and a patio overlooking the courtyard for outdoor dining. There is also a semi-enclosed area that would be ideal for small

parties and get-togethers.

The prices at Joya D'Eatalia are in line with other dairy restaurants, but for the same cost you will have a true chef's meal in a very elegant setting.

FOLLOWING OUR satisfying meal, we took a walk through Eatalia to enjoy the beautiful architecture and design. We were impressed with the lovely mosaic floors, the neatness and cleanliness. Wherever we turned, there were imported products from Italy.

Downstairs on the Piemonte floor, we visited the cheese counter, the wines, and the coffee shop with ever so enticing cakes. We didn't really need a dessert after that satisfying meal, but the cakes

were so attractive that we sat down for a cuppa and one wedge of yummy glazed cheesecake. These cakes are surely made in-house, as they are as gorgeous and unique as the rest of Eatalia.

For now, Eatalia offers a 15% discount from noon to 6 p.m. There is no shortage of spaces in the underground car park.

Eatalia
3 Totzeret Ha'aretz, Petah Tikva
Tel: (03) 698-9820

Open: Sunday-Thursday, 11 a.m.-11 p.m.; Friday, till half hour before Shabbat. Saturday, from after Shabbat till 11 p.m.

The author is the founder and CEO of eLuna.com, the premier English-language website for kosher restaurants in Israel.