

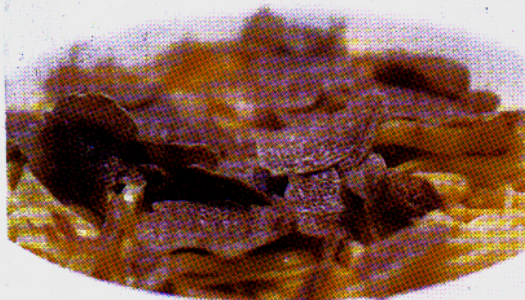
Truffle *d*elights

RONDA LOCATELLI AT THE ATLANTIS IS SERVING
A SUMPTUOUS WHITE TRUFFLES PROMOTION
TILL THE END OF THE MONTH. IT'S A LITTLE PIECE OF
GASTRONOMIC HEAVEN

BY BRIAN SALTER



AFFRETTATEVI! NON tardare! Anyone with a penchant for fine dining and a bulging wallet to match, should make their way immediately to the Ronda Locatelli, in the Atlantis on The Palm. The occasion? Until the **end of this month only**, the classy trattoria-style Italian eatery has laid on a special menu in which each and every dish is accompanied by *Tartufo Bianco* — the *Tuber Magnum Pico* — or "White Truffle".



What we liked: Service and selection of fine food

What we didn't like: The excellent food getting overshadowed by white truffles

Cost of food for two: Dh750

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The white truffle has a powerful, complex, faintly garlicky aroma and an intense flavour. There are hundreds of species of truffles, but the rare white truffles from the Umbria region in northern Italy are held in very high regard — so much so that a record price was set three years ago by Macau casino owner Stanley Ho when he paid US\$330,000 (Dh1.2m) for a specimen weighing 1.5 kg. Prices of around Dh50,000 per kg are commonplace in the truffle auctions held in the region.

Celebrity Chef Giorgio Locatelli set up the restaurant when the Atlantis opened two years ago. A visit

to this subterranean world, with its impressive wood-burning oven that forms the restaurant centre-piece, will leave you in no doubt as to how this Italian icon earned his Michelin star in 1995 when he opened his London restaurant, Zafferano, to great critical acclaim.

His career has taken him from Italy to Switzerland, England and France before he returned to the UK where his second book, *Made In Italy Food & Stories*, won the Glenfiddich Best Food Book award in 2007.

Take a look at the "ordinary" menu and you will see a celebration of regional Italian cuisine with a reputation built on using the very best ingredients. No one, it seems, leaves the Ronda Locatelli disappointed. But the White Truffle Menu takes this standing to a whole new level.

Try starting with the *Carpaccio Di Manzo Rucola, Grana, Tartufo Bianco* — beef carpaccio under a bed of rocket salad topped with rich parmesan. You watch as your waiter brings the nobbly pale cream fungus under a glass dome to your table and goes through the well-rehearsed rigmarole of putting on gloves, before lifting out the precious tuber and then gently brushing it over a mandoline to leave wafts of the truffle decorating the top of your entrée. The entire performance is worth the wait. Never has beef carpaccio tasted this good!



And very soon you will surely be tempted to try one or more of the main dishes from the menu, all infused with white truffles, available in selected starter or main portions.

How could you pass by the homemade *Tagliolini al Tartufo Bianco* — tagliolini made with rich white truffle butter? Perhaps a *Risotto al Tartufo Bianco* — parmesan risotto served with shavings of white truffle — is more to your liking? Or a simply delectable *Straccio Ripieno All' Occhio di Bue, Patate Tartufo Bianco* — a homemade egg yolk parcel made of potato and served with shavings of white truffle — will leave you gasping for more?

Try the veal cutlet with potato puree, topped with white truffle; or the equally mouthwatering lamb, both cooked to perfection as the meat appears simply to melt on your tongue. Surely a slice of heaven, fit for serving to an angel. How can food be this good?

And finally a variation on Italy's famous Zabaglione sweet — topped (naturally) with white truffle as the ultimate in Italian desserts. Even without the truffle, this would surely have been one of the best Zabagliones I have ever eaten in my life.

Our chef, Claudio Bergamo comes to our table to ask if we have enjoyed our meal. Although he comes from Milan — further north than the truffle region of Umbria — it is clear he is just as passionate about truffles as his chef patron Locatelli.

He leaves us with a word of advice: try the amaretti biscuits with your coffee. And how right he is. Beautifully soft morsels that just melt in the mouth as the perfect rounding off to a sumptuous meal.

"Unforgettable" is one of those epithets that have lost their meaning due to over-use; but in this case it is the perfect word to describe a culinary experience that leaves the gourmet wanting for nothing.

The Ronda Locatelli can be found on the lower ground floor of the Atlantis Hotel. A meal for two chosen from the special White Truffle Menu will set you back around Dh750.

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