

There's so much more to Marine than ice cream

SO THERE I was, strolling down Jermyn Street quite in the manner of Burlington Bertie, as I frequently do – though not this time salivating over Hilditch & Key's exquisite shirts and ties, nor even Bates' fine tiffers. No, for some odd reason, this warm and sunny afternoon my mind was on ice cream. Now, apart from the warm and sunny bit – why should this be? I have, it's true, always been rather fond of the stuff since, oh – way way back, when it largely came down to a Wall's Neapolitan Family Brick, or else a Lyons Mandi choc ice in the Odeon. A whirling Mr Whippy 99 at Hampstead funfair or on Brighton beach, yes okay – but in Jermyn Street ...? And then I had it: Fortnum's Fountain, but of course. This – before they improved the place into the ground – used to be very Valhalla, for simple vanilla. As well as more gorgeous things such as a Knickerbocker Glory, brought to you in a footed and faceted frosted vase by an ancient aproned nipply who had, but 90 summers past, been born on the floor in the farthest corner hard by the Gaggia machine (though by now well past her prime, both rouged and powdered, and sadly a martyr to her bunions). Many are the coupes of pastel delight that I have enjoyed here, while eyeing Adam Faith at his habitual corner banquet. He had more or less made the Fountain his place of business – and there he presided, stirring but never noticeably drinking his cappuccino, deigning to hear out a motley of entrepreneurial supplicants while totting up his business millions, and no doubt simultaneously humming to himself his erstwhile smash hit record, Poor Me.

So I glanced over in the direction of the Fountain, and who should be standing outside? No, not Adam Faith – he has a white since shuffled off this mortal coil (Poor Him). No, it was in fact David Hockney, dapper in his very singular manner: red knitted tie, white cotton butcher's boy cap,

He might have gone to settle a craving for a cone, but **Joseph Connolly** finds plenty of other dishes to delight at the Chalk Farm Italian, including traditional meat-filled ravioli in a rich Neapolitan sauce



grey flannels and perky plimsolls. Circular glasses, cheeky grin. And thick untipped foreign fag, which he sucked deep down into him – the reason, of course for his being on the pavement. I've chatted to him briefly a couple of times in the past, so I said to him "Mr Hockney, hallo. I know you curse the government ruling on indoor smoking, but at least it's a warm and sunny day. You certainly won't remember me but we have chatted briefly a couple of times in the past." And he said "What ...?" – because he's deaf, you see. I couldn't be bothered to repeat any of all that twaddle

and so I shouted a bit, mimed a bit, then we both shook hands and – with relief, I suspect, on both sides – called it a day.

Still couldn't shuffle it off, though – not my mortal coil, but the yen for ice cream. Found myself talking about it. "Fortnum's is okay," one bored chum of mine concurred, "but not a patch on Marine Ices". And there was the Eureka moment: of course! Marine Ices in Chalk Farm – I'll go there, hotfoot. Yes indeed – sun-kissed, elegant and glamorous downtown Chalk Farm – so called because once there was a farm there, owned

FACTFILE

- ❑ **MARINE ICES**
8 Haverstock Hill, NW3
Tel: 020-7482 9003
- ❑ Open Tuesday to Friday noon-3pm, 6pm-11pm. Sat noon-11pm. Sun noon-10pm
- ❑ Food: ★★★★★★☆☆
- ❑ Service: ★★★★★★☆☆
- ❑ The Feeling: ★★★★★★☆☆
- ❑ Cost: Extremely good value. Two-course lunch for two, with wine – about £40.

by a man name of Chalk. Just as Swiss Cottage was the site of a cottage inhabited by a family who were Swiss. And Kentish Town is so named because once it used to be a town in Kent, but Kent decided that it was just too horrible and didn't at all fit in with the Garden of England thing, and so one moonless night they upped and dumped the whole caboodle into the bin end of Camden Town. Which few know.

So my wife and I trotted into Marine Ices – and the first thing you see is this fabulous great glass-fronted counter filled with (count 'em) 21 ice creams, 11 sorbets, bombes, coppes, cassata ... oh dear Lord. So I ate the lot. No I didn't – we were lunching first. My wife said "let's sit in the window" and at once I saw the wisdom in this: it was the one table in full and debilitating sun and afforded fine and panoramic vistas of the rump of the Roundhouse, metal barriers, endless buses, a grey convoy of sullen slouching teenagers and the pavement gaily alive with the coloured flutter of discarded flyers – all this within a miasma of near-inhalable grime. So that's where we sat.

The menu is just what you want in an Italian restaurant – every sort of pasta and pizza

you have heard of, along with more chickeny things, vealy things and antipasti than you could hungrily shake a stick at. So I ate the lot. No I didn't – I have to watch my figure (easily done – it's increasingly visible). We shared a very generous plate of Milano salami, Parma ham, a more generic prosciutto, roast peppers, mushrooms and home made bread (which came in the form of toasted triangles, oddly). The meats and peppers (especially the red) were excellent, the mushrooms okay – never quite right when they're cold, somehow – and the mozzarella rather tasteless spherulets of albino Silly Putty. My wife had ordered spaghetti alla vongole, and I just had to have the ravioli. You almost never see it on a menu, these days – and when you do it's always filled with spinach and ricotta or something: but here was the real meaty deal, in a rich and smooth Neapolitan sauce. A huge oval plate of all these dinky and nuggety little ravioli, like so many creamy cushions, nicked from a dolly's sofa – and really well stuffed (as soon would I be). The spaghetti (a very welcome mountain of it) was liberally strewn with clams in the open shell as well as other clammy little bits of it in a fine and olive-oily piscine sauce: this was hugely enjoyed, along with a bottle of Peroni lager – while I had a good glass of Nero d'Avola Puglia. Perfect, isn't it? The pairing of Italian food and wine? Almost as magical as bacon and eggs.

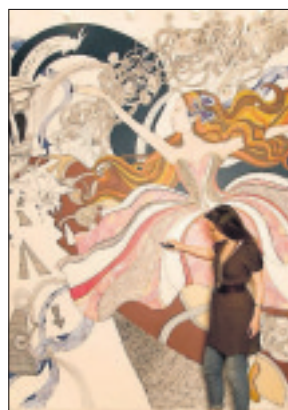
Two people at a nearby table saw the vongole dish and promptly ordered it – which led me to look around at the punters and the place. It wasn't very full, on a Wednesday lunchtime, but it is rather large. Large, yes, and an ugly sort of space, really – white walls, green dado and wooden chairs – and noisy, but nonetheless somehow welcoming

and comforting. Something to do with dedication, quality, tradition and just sheer practice, I guess – it has been in the Mansi family from the beginning, and next year is its 80th. Noble portraits of ancestors look down from the walls benignly, rubbing well-tailored shoulders with framed encomia from all the famous patrons: Jude Law, Paul Weller, Anthony Caro, Terry Jones and, um ... Dale Winton (among many others). Three waitresses very happily presented a cake and sang Happy Birthday to a young lad being treated by his family. He couldn't decide whether to be delighted or mortified, and so, turning purple, settled for both.

We'd eaten far too much very good food, which is generally splendid – but still there's always room for pudding, no? So hold everything, for now the great moment is come! Ice cream! Yes indeed! Mmm – and guess what ...? I blew it. I did. Instead of being modest and wise like my wife, who ordered a single scoop of pistachio (absolutely superb) I had to go and see Knickerbocker Glory on the menu, didn't I? And no, I wasn't quite mad enough to order that – and nor something called 'Vesuvius' because I know a bit about the way of volcanos, and I had a clean shirt on ... but I did succumb to Peach Melba. Which had a cloying baby-sweet coral sauce and it obliterated the I am sure quite perfect mound of vanilla. Oh well. My fault. Trouble is ... I've still got this yen for ice cream, see? So back to Fortnum's Fountain, I suppose – the start of the whole damn thing.

❑ *While eating your ice cream, you might want to read a novel called Summer Things by Joseph Connolly (Faber and Faber, £7.99). All previous restaurant reviews may be viewed on the website www.josephconnolly.co.uk.*

Win a meal for two and goody bag as Zizzi reopens in Highgate



New look ... artist Lizzie Mary Cullen at Zizzi in Highgate.
Picture by Trystan Francis

ZIZZI Highgate is opening its doors to the public with a new look on Saturday September 18. Diners will be able to enjoy their favourite Italian dishes in a unique new interior which draws on three main themes from the local area: the famous Hampstead Heath, a young family-orientated community and Karl Marx, who is buried at Highgate cemetery.

The Highgate makeover is part of a wider national campaign which will see every new and existing Zizzi restaurant receive artwork from fresh, young talent who have taken inspiration from local themes.

On the opening night, diners will be able to enjoy their usual Zizzi favourites while experiencing award-winning London artist Lizzie Mary



Cullen at work. Lizzie will be creating a large-scale illustration, which reflects the surrounding area, across the bar. The drawing will become a totally unique feature of the restaurant. Another new feature is a large fabric sculpture which represents the beautiful, leafy countryside that the Heath is renowned for.

The entrance is lined with painted Silver Birch trees. Colourful upholstered stools and giant coloured pencils give the interior a playful twist. Finally a "Quote Wall" is featured using famous Karl Marx quotes. Helen Jones, managing

director at Zizzi, said: "People want to be able to go to a local restaurant and feel that it is just that. All too often, restaurants become indistinguishable with no sense of locality or character. Zizzi wants to provide communities like Highgate with a restaurant that reflects the area – a place that feels personal to them."

To celebrate the reopening, all diners will receive a complimentary starter and a glass of Prosecco on arrival, plus a very warm welcome from the Zizzi team. The first 25 people to book a table will receive a goody bag worth over £25 which includes Italian olive oil, delicious Zizzi olives and a bottle of wine.

Bookings can be made at www.zizzi.co.uk or on 020-8347

0090. The address is 1 Hampstead Lane and the opening night begins at 6pm.

❑ Zizzi has joined forces with the Ham&High to offer a delicious three-course meal for two, including an authentic Italian goody bag worth up to £25.

For your chance to win, answer the following question: **What date is Zizzi revealing the new look of its Highgate restaurant?**

Send your answer, along with your name, address and daytime telephone number, to Chance2Win@hamhigh.co.uk before September 30.

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HOME TIP OF THE WEEK

❑ In your home, make sure that your fusebox is labelled up properly. In times of either emergency or when an electrician is around to do a repair, it will be much easier to isolate the circuit that needs working on, rather than turning everything off.

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