

## Restaurant of the week: La Golosa



# Heavens above! It's sinful gluttony

Joseph Connolly tries to live up to the Italian title of a Heath St restaurant while trying not to offend the local Catholic priest by uttering blasphemous profanities

**M**y guest for a Hampstead Village lunch this week is Tony Brophy – a finance director for various housing associations, and long-time resident of Frognal. And being a resident of Frognal, his Catholic parish church is the beautiful St Mary's, in Holly Place. I mention all this because Tony has just reminded me that when I reviewed the nearby Holly Bush pub, Monsignor Rowland, the parish priest, had been so grossly offended by my language that he was moved to write in protest to the Ham & High. As I recall, I had written the word Jesus. Or was it Christ ...? Possibly both. Well apart from supposing that the Monsignor must spend an awful lot of his time being grossly offended, I forgot all about it. But now that Tony has reminded of my transgression, I'm going to mind my P's and Q's in this review – it's going to be pure as the driven snow, I can tell you that: no blasphemy, no taking the Lord's name in vain ... am I allowed to say Lord? Not sure. Anyway – no off-colour language, nothing of that sort. Clean as a whistle.

Our destination was La Golosa – the latest in a very long line of reincarnations for that curious wedge-shaped restaurant at the summit of Heath Street. Cripes, it's quite a slog up that street on a sunny day, gosh it is: I was ruddy well ruddy by the time I got there.



“La Golosa has two meanings; one is glutton, the other a person with freaky sexual practices. Judging by the portions, it's the former

The last time I visited it was a very over-ambitious quasi-upmarket Italian called Quest: nauseating combinations – smoked salmon mousse and strawberries linger on in my fevered memory. And was it before or after that it was something Portuguese ...? Can't remember. Anyway, it's now La Golosa – a cheap and cheerful Italian joint with the sort of garish menu that is displayed in the windows of eateries all over Europe, the combination of familiar dishes and bargain prices a sure-fire magnet to the English. Quite appealing, really – and also appealing is the name of the place: La Golosa. Do you know what it means? Well actually, in

Italian it has two meanings. One is greedyguts. Pig. Glutton. The other meaning is a person given to indulging in freaky sexual practices. Crumbs. Going by the enormous portions, we may safely assume they are plumping for the former connotation, nothing freakily sexual being immediately apparent. And if there had been, I would ignore it – it's not that sort of review, remember? Gee whillikers.

And talking of gluttony – did you know that competitive eating is alive and well? Unlike most of the erstwhile competitors. There is a 48-year-old Korean American lady called Sonya who is absolutely tiny, but – by golly – the grub she can get through. Eight-and-a-half pounds of baked beans – heavens to Betsy, how many cans is that? – in two minutes 47 seconds. 46 mince pies in 10 minutes. And – cleaving to the festive theme – one Patrick Bortoletti has scarfed an entire seven pound turkey in eight minutes flat. No leftovers to deal with round at Patrick's house, then. Feeling hungry ...? No, me neither – but let's show willing. The décor here is fresh and very economical: lime green paint, cream upholstery and a job lot of pictures spanning abstracts and apples by way of rather demented bicycles. The radio is on, which might tempt someone such as myself to swear quite loudly – but not in this review, matey: oh no, not me. Tony was taking a bit of time to get into the swing of the thing because his seat afforded him a tip-top view of his dentist opposite, which he was finding quite depressing.

Eleven starters, three soups, 10 pastas, three risottos, five

meat, three fish ... or a Full English Breakfast for £5.50. Tony was kicking off with deep fried calamari, and I was having arancini di riso – breaded balls of rice containing minced meat, cheese and peas. These are usually quite little things which you can toss with abandon into your expectant mouth and then scream out loud as your palate frazzles under the searing heat. These were the size of cricket balls: Sonya would have had no trouble, but I managed just more than half of one of them. Not creamy: rather heavy, actually – but nicely crunchy. The squid was better than average – decent flavour, and not too tediously chewy. There are just three red wines on offer – but don't trouble to order the Chianti, because they haven't got any. So the house montepulciano – very pluggable, and a bargain £12.90. Jiminy.

Tony had been living in Highgate for 15 years when he met his future wife who had a flat in Frognal where 20 years later they still happily reside. What does he love about Hampstead living ...? “Oh – so much. The village atmosphere, the people, the views. The Heath, of course – we go to a lot of Kenwood concerts. Waitrose. Jeroboams – marvellous wine shop in Heath Street. It's a shame there are no absolutely first class restaurants – but we do go to The Wells and Villa Bianca”. As should we all: they are certainly the best we've got. He had ordered scallopa Milanese ... and received three. Large ones. All of which he ate (what a golosa). The accompanying spaghetti was rather dry, though. My pollo alla funghi e crema was tender and huge, the mushrooms

## FACTFILE

- La Golosa, 108 Heath Street NW3. Tel 7435 0000 (cool number, no ...?)
- Open for lunch and dinner daily.
- FOOD ★★★★★☆☆
- SERVICE ★★★★★☆☆
- THE FEELING ★★★★★☆☆
- COST All very reasonable. You may not want more than one course, unless you are a golosa, but two of you will be fine with £60 or so, with wine.
- Joseph Connolly's new novel *STYLE* is published by Quercus in hardback and ebook. All previous restaurant reviews may be viewed on the website [www.josephconnolly.co.uk](http://www.josephconnolly.co.uk)

rather bitter, the cream sauce just slightly separated: good roast potatoes, soggy broccoli. And then Tony requested a zabaglione – not on the menu. The waiter – who had been charming throughout – said he'd see what he could do ... and the equally charming chef was happy to oblige. This warm and gorgeous egg and Marsala combo Tony pronounced “perfect”. Well lawks-a-mercy. I had okay ice cream – and we were given a selection of their home-made chocolates: endearingly misshapen, and not at all bad. And here endeth the lesson. Quite a pious review, I think you'll agree. I didn't even say gorbliney. And so quite whom I shall be grossly offending this week is anyone's guess: it could even be you. Strewth.