



MAGNA CAFÉ

CREATIVE FARE AMID THE FAIRWAYS



The chance to dine in the open air, amid golfing greens, with crickets chirping away and the sun warming you to toasty tranquility is almost reason enough to visit Magna Café. On the other hand, the cuisine, a mixture of international/Mediterranean with decidedly Italian and Swedish touches, would undoubtedly draw the crowds in, even if the amazing scenery was absent. The winning combination of ambience and cuisine assures that despite being open for less than a year, Magna Café is attracting large numbers by night and an almost equally large number for lunch.

Its Head Chef, Latvian born Edmund Cicans, is surprisingly young. Aged 24 and looking 19, he makes it patent from the start that he is one determined, bright chef, obsessed with creativity and perfection. Edmund boasts over nine years experience, having worked in Riga, France and Germany, where "I was lucky enough to have good teachers, whose techniques I took in like a sponge." For Edmund, great cuisine is created by sharing ideas with other chefs as well as experimenting with new techniques, to create a dish that bears his unique touch. Magna Café is open for breakfast, and there are different menus for lunch and dinner, though guests can also order from the dinner menu at lunch time. There are over 60 dishes to choose from, as well as a wine list containing over 100 wines from France, Italy and Spain. Indeed, you cannot help noticing the

ample wine cellar located at the entrance of the restaurant, where you will find everything from an exclusive Finca Dofi Priorato to more affordable wines such as the dry yet deliciously fruity Mar de Frades Albariños from the Rias Baixas, which accompanied our meal to crisp, cool perfection.

If you tend to go straight for your main meal when you order, we recommend that you make an exception and try at least a couple of Edmund's starters. We sampled the exquisite grilled foie on mini toast, whose tenderness and rich flavour was married beautifully to a fine mango, sweet soy and sesame sauce. We were also tempted into ordering their Scandinavian delicatessen plate, a trio of three Swedish favourites: creamy, flavourful skagen on toast, melt-in-the-mouth, marinated salmon in a traditional sweet mustard and dill sauce, and fresh crayfish tails mixed with Mascarpone and served on papaya. It is difficult to say which of the two starters we enjoyed more; they were both of outstanding taste, texture and freshness.

Almost everything at Magna Café is market fresh or made in the kitchen, even the pasta, which Edmund whips up in his Italian pasta machine. We tried two of their biggest sellers, the frutti di mare spaghetti topped with spicy seafood ragout (a hearty, appetite-whetting dish filled with sizeable chunks of fresh tuna, mussels, calamari, large prawns, salmon and monkfish) and the home-made tagliatelle with tender, plump porcini mushrooms, shavings of parmesan cheese, tender prawns and garlic, doused in a light olive oil and white wine dressing. Once again the portions were sizeable, the porcini and prawns tender and fresh, and the pasta bearing the distinct, al dente texture of fresh pasta.

We also ordered one fish dish and one meat dish, selecting the seared tuna with fresh asparagus cooked in butter and a sweet soy and

sesame sauce (a must for anyone who enjoys the simplicity of grilled fish spiced up by some mouthwatering soy) and a beef salad composed of thin slices of grilled beef on a bed of rocket, with large shavings of Parmesan cheese and balsamic vinaigrette. The tender meat blended beautifully into the crunchy rocket with every bite and once again my dining companion and I found it difficult to choose a favourite between the two.

The desserts capped off the experience, proving that with Edmund's cooking, there is not one single, identifiable highlight. Each part of the meal was outstanding, from the first to the last mouthful. The pear poached in white wine topped with a hot white chocolate and Gorgonzola sauce was original indeed, tasting like a cheesecake but bearing the unmistakable texture of fruit doused in a crème that is both sweet and tangy. The chocolate cake with Grand Marnier flavoured whipped cream was crisp on the outside and extremely moist on the inside, the cake breaking through to a river of hot, flowing chocolate. Chocolate lovers will recognize the quality of the chocolate as soon as they indulge in the first bite; the dessert is made with 85 per cent chocolate.

The service at Magna Café is likewise worthy of mention. Expect to find professional yet humorous, friendly staff. This team buzzes, you see it as much in the chef as the waiters. These may be the key elements of a successful restaurant: talent, team work and, as chef Edmund says, "making the customer feel they have received something of value." Given that, without a doubt, they will come back. **CONTACT** ■

At Magna Marbella Golf, C/ Calderón de la Barca, s/n, Marbella, Tel: 952 929 578. Opening hours: Open every day for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Average price per person: €45 or €50 for a three course meal with wine.