

The iconic Ristorante Da Vinci epitomizes a Montreal fine dining experience

MtlRestoRap

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Ristorante Da Vinci on Bishop Street downtown is one of Montreal's most popular fine dining experiences. While the food and service is impeccable, the same goes for the fascinating backstory.

It all started back in 1960 when the restaurant opened on Ste. Catherine Street, right by the iconic Montreal Forum and owned by the Mazzaferro family of Da Vinci Foods. It was a favorite of Canadiens hockey players and celebrities who performed at the hockey shrine. When it became clear that the Forum was going to shut down and a new arena built in the heart of downtown, the Mazzaferros made the move to a beautiful three-story Greystone on Bishop Street in 1991. It was a head start to be close enough to the eventual Bell Centre and worked like a charm.

In 2008 the Mazzaferros sold the restaurant to an American businessman. That coincided with the arrival of Vincenzo Amodeo, the present day director of operations and co-owner. He was working in the fast food sector at the time and had a true passion for Italian cuisine. A friend was the chef at Da Vinci and he needed a hand. Amodeo answered the call and he got a crash course on how to manage the kitchen of a topline dining establishment. When the American owner was going to shut the place down, Amodeo and two partners bought the place and eventually transitioned it to fine dining with of course, a specialization in Italian food.

Amodeo's two partners sold their shares to him in 2022. He then approached longtime customer and prominent businessman Barry Lorenzetti to become part of the team. Lavi Mainuddin, the veteran general manager, also joined the ownership group.

Da Vinci, which offers valet parking for a fee, can seat 80 people at the main level, 45 upstairs and another 40 in a lower floor private lounge equipped with two flat-screen TVs, a state-of-the-art sound system and surrounded by LEDs that change colour. During the summer months the doors to the lounge can be opened to its private terrasse, complete with sofa-style seating and an awning that protects you rain or shine.



Partners Lavi Mainuddin (left) and Vincenzo Amodeo, with celebrity guest Patrick Roy

We went for dinner on a busy Saturday night. The service was impeccable. Raymond was our server, but so many other staff came and forth to our table. It was first class all the way. Some bruschetta and warm bread got us started. We ordered drinks, an Aperol Spritz and a glass of chardonnay. The former is a refreshing Italian cocktail with Aperol, Prosecco, and sparkling water.

For appetizers, we shared 12 delicious oysters, a burrata salad and salmon tartare. The burrata featured a delicate pouch of mozzarella encasing a luscious, milky center of stracciatella and cream. As we cut into it, the soft interior oozes out, rich and silky. The flavor was fresh and buttery with a hint of tang, pairing beautifully with ripe tomatoes, a drizzle of olive oil, and a sprinkle of flaky sea salt. The salmon tartare was vibrant and refreshing, showcasing impeccably fresh, finely diced raw salmon that practically melted on our tongues.

When it came time for the main course we shared again, the seafood risotto and the rack of lamb. The seafood risotto was nothing short of exquisite—a symphony of flavors and textures that danced across the palate. Each bite offered a perfect harmony of creamy Arborio rice, rich with the briny essence of the sea. The risotto had that ideal al dente bite, soaked in a silky, seafood-infused broth that tasted like it had been simmering for hours, coaxing every nuance from shell and bone. As for the lamb chops, they were grilled a perfect medium rare, soft as butter and pre-cut for easy serving. They came with garlic mashed potatoes.

We concluded with some dessert, three decadent cannolis.



The elegant dining room



The delicious lamb chops are a Da Vinci specialty

Foodies are guaranteed nothing short of a feast for both the eyes and palate. The restaurant boasts a long and impressive wine list, with selections hand-picked by Amodeo, from the four corners of Italy and beyond that will please even the most refined connoisseur. Combined with an elegant interior design and unrivalled service, Da Vinci sets the perfect atmosphere for the most memorable dining experience. There is a nice selection of pasta dishes, fresh fish, steaks, veal chops, osco buco and lobster.

Ristorante Da Vinci is located at 1180 Bishop Street. Opening hours are Tuesday to Friday, 5pm to 10pm; Fridays, 5pm to 10:30pm; and Saturday, 5pm to 11pm. Log on to <https://davinci.ca/> or call 514-874-2001 or e-mail inquiry@davinci.ca

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Mike's Resto Notes: Duc de Lorraine, Canons! on South Shore and Souvlaki Grec Plus

The iconic **Duc de Lorraine**, located on Côte des Neiges Road just off Queen Mary, continues to shine. Our family recently had a sensational brunch there. Open since 1952, Victoria Sørensen has been at the helm for the past 16 years. I got to meet chef Elie Azzi, whose team prepares 24 kinds of pastries a day. There are 52 seats inside and two fabulous terrasses. We went for a few order so



Chef Elie Azzi at Duc de Lorraine

the Benedictine version of a bagel, cream cheese, fresh Nova Scotia lobster and truffle oil, preceding that with a salmon tartare appetizer. For dessert we went for the ever so popular fraiser, vanilla sponge cake, vanilla mousseline cream, fresh strawberries and a thin layer of almond paste and the croissant chocolat, also known as a "crookie." That is a croissant combined with a chocolate chip cookie. Duc de Lorraine is open seven days

a week for breakfast, brunch, lunch and supper, from 6:30am to 10:30pm. Of course so many people come for a decadent take-out order. They also cater and make splendid cakes of all sizes. You can call them at (514) 731-4128 or log on to www.ducdelorraine.ca

A Gourmet Wine Bar: In late April, **Canons!**, a gourmet wine bar, opened its second location in the heart of the vibrant Quartier Dix30 in South Shore Brossard. Here, guests can discover a 100 percent local market-inspired cuisine with bold, generous flavors, paired with a carefully curated wine selection that will take you on a journey around the world. On the menu are delicious wines and tasty and unpretentious gastronomy, all in a warm and laid-back atmosphere. Owner and sommelier Pascal Paradis opened the first location in Beloeil. He brought in Chef Jérôme Trouvé from France last year to train with him and open in Brossard. Let me recommend the Italian Burrata salad, a tasty white fish from Chicoutimi called bar noire and Chef Jérôme's Special, a delicious gourmet version of macaroni and cheese and more. Canons! is open Monday,

11:30am to 3pm, Tuesday to Friday, 11:30am to 10:30pm, Saturday 10 am to 10:30 pm and Sunday, 10 am to 3 pm. Log on to <https://restaurant-canons.com/en/> or call 450-500-2025

Souvlaki Grec Plus opened in St. Henri two years ago. Chef Manolis and his wife Maria run the operation. Besides the standard Greek dishes like souvlaki, pitas, gyros and brochettes you can also order steak, lamb chops (mine were delicious), pizza, pasta, poutine and chicken wings. They deliver in their immediate area and are open seven days a week. This is a Bring-Your-Own-Wine establishment. Log on to www.souvlakigrecplus.com or call 514-931-1111. The address is 4370 Rue Notre Dame Ouest.



Our friendly server at Grec Souvlaki Plus