

Grilled cod with shellfish, salmoriglio sauce and fennel served at the Opera Restaurant

The Opera Restaurant in the Park Hyatt Hotel has a promotion offering Italian-style Alaskan black cod during February, and we were there last week to savor it.

The cuisine was southern Italian, and the restaurant welcomed us with the sight of homemade cheese, deserts, cakes, oranges, and olive sauce in glass jars and the hearty fragrances of Italian food.

The spacious restaurant has an artistic ambience. There is a balcony overlooking the Ho Chi Minh City Opera House, and, on another side, an open kitchen with a pizza oven.

On one wall is a huge Vietnamese traditional wooden painting running from end to end featuring flowers, trees and landscapes.

We ordered all three Alaskan black cod dishes on the menu, each costing VND690,000 (US$32.85).

Since the cod was fresh, light, and flaky, it combined well with the herbs, spices and sophisticated sauces.

The first dish also featured shrimp spinach cannelloni, baby vegetables, and a spicy prawn bisque served with Santa Cristina Rosato Antinori, a wine from Tuscany, Italy.

I could hardly believe the cod had been caught last summer and put in the freezer since it was tender and smooth, typical of fish living in cold waters.

The spinach cannelloni, made of shrimp and cheese and covered in soft, fresh, huge spinach spaghetti, created a nice balance with the grilled cod.

The spicy prawn bisque made it even more special.

Benjamin Attwater, a young chef at the Park Hyatt, told us the sauce is made from prawn shells and cooked with tomatoes, white wine and a dash of butter.

The second dish was grilled cod with other seafood, washed down with another Italian wine from Tuscany: Tenuta Sassoregale Sangiovese.

The cod again mixed well with the shellfish, salmoriglio sauce, fennel, orange and mixed green salad, especially the sauce, which, along with olive oil, lemon, garlic, white wine, and a bit of chili, was redolent of summer flavors.

Last but not least came baked black cod with olives, onions, capers, tomatoes and a pistachio crust. The dish look like a cod “cake” covered in pistachio with various layers inside. Chef Attwater said the dish was cooked in a similar way to lasagna.

By To Van Nga, Thanh Nien News (The story can be found in the February 10th issue of our print edition, Vietweek)