

Can dinner theater have good food, be tasteful? Yes, in Lucca, Italy (+ video)

DINNER THEATER | AUGUST 9, 2012 | BY: TAMAR FLEISHMAN |

5 photos

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Let's face it: many times [dinner theater](http://www.examiner.com/topic/dinner-theater) (<http://www.examiner.com/topic/dinner-theater>) is neither good at the dinner nor the theater. The audience frequently seems to be a haven for those who can't get themselves to a show. But can the concept ever work? Yes, At Lucca, Italy's [Ristorante Puccini](http://www.ristorantepuccini.it/eng/menu.html) (<http://www.ristorantepuccini.it/eng/menu.html>). I was happy to be hosted to experience it!

Lucca is the hometown for the beloved opera composer, Giacomo [Puccini](http://www.examiner.com/topic/puccini/articles) (<http://www.examiner.com/topic/puccini/articles>).

The eponymous restaurant right in the city's ancient Medieval walls has outdoor seating for their musical shows, with music by Puccini (and sometimes, by Paganini, which I'm sure is awesome).

Because it's not in some stuffy banquet hall and filled with tacky buffet stations, the crowd is younger and livelier. This is actually a place people would want to go on a date.

View slideshow: GOOD dinner theater: Ristorante Puccini in Lucca, Italy

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The performer that they have to portray Puccini really does capture that debonair that lured so women people to him. Of course, he smoked and drank wine, just as Puccini did all over town.



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GOOD dinner theater: Lucca, Italy's Ristorante Puccini
Photo credit: Tamar Alexia Fleishman, Esq.



Video: [Ristorante Puccini](http://www.examiner.com/video/ristorante-puccini)
(<http://www.examiner.com/video/ristorante-puccini>)

Be prepared for a leisurely, drawn-out dinner, Italian style. The local wines add to the festiveness.

Here are some things I got to try:

A starter of fried bread pieces.

Fagottino di spinaci e taleggio con salsa di noce moscata: Crepes with spinach and taleggio cheese served with nutmeg sauce. Bechamel and Mornay sauces are always enhanced by the subtly sweet spice of nutmeg.

Cestino croccante di verdure di stagione con fiocco di rigatino toscano: crisp seasonal vegetables with bacon, a staple of Tuscany. The bacon added richness and smokiness to the fresh, local bounty.

Tagliata di manzo alle erbe di collina con fagioli scoppiati al forno: sliced beef with baked/split beans. Tuscany is known by insiders, including chefs, for its beef. The beef was perfectly cooked to medium rare, with the baked beans being slow cooked in olive oil. They were rich with the olive oil but still retained a nice, crisp texture. It's an elegant way of preparing what starts out as a humble legume.

Buccellato toscano con crema e cacao: "Buccellato lucchese" traditional doughnut shape cake from Lucca. The cake had a rich zabaglione sauce.



Tamar Fleishman, Baltimore Restaurant Examiner

Tamar has developed and published recipes, been a restaurant critic, taken classes at Le Cordon Bleu and BBQ U, and judged the Roadkill Festival -- eating groundhogs and, unbelievably, moose.

