

# La Pentola gets inventive at Opus Hotel

## Owners of La Quercia bring rustic Italian tastes downtown

BY TIM PAWSEY, VANCOUVER COURIER    OCTOBER 19, 2012



La Pentola's vegetable-packed minestrone and crusty bread is the perfect antidote to a cold and rainy day.

**Photograph by:** Tim Pawsey, for Vancouver Courier

One of Yaletown's favourite go-to spots has received yet another makeover and early signs are this one's here to stay. Just unveiled in the sleek, contemporary and always upbeat Opus Hotel, La Pentola della Quercia (350 Davie St., 604-642-0557) has all the early makings of a serious hit.

That comes as no surprise, considering the newcomer is a co-production between Opus Vancouver and Adam Pegg and Lucais Syme, the folks behind Kitsilano's award-winning La Quercia, which took top honours in last year's Van Mag Awards (for which we judge).

After shuttering Elixir Bistro, the Opus folks made the most of the pop-up craze (most recently with Cento Notti) before deciding to bring La Quercia's remarkable flavours downtown-hopefully for good.

First tastes at last week's lunch have us hankering for more of La Pentola's minestrone, a bowl of steaming goodness that arrives packed with seasonal vegetables that will have you forgetting whatever weather might be washing by outside. From there it was on to gnocchi al funghi, which uses polenta to bring a remarkably textured, less heavy dish, which we can't wait to go back for. Not to mention the crusty house bread and peppery olive oil.

There's lots to like on this antipasti/pri-mi/secondi lunch menu, where nothing is over \$23 and most much less, with good by-the-glass wines such as citrusy Terradoro Falanghina. It all adds up to the kind of inventive fare we'd anticipated. In addition, the plates and setting are detail-driven, and the friendly service attentive but unfawning, with no shortage of elegant little touches.

The makeover includes acres of off-white defining an understated minimalist elegance to match the mood and the food. Even on the wettest of days it adds up to a bright lunch spot. We're keen to see how it plays out at night, when the horseshoe bar, no doubt, will be hopping, and an equally inventive and well-priced dinner menu invites.

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Swirling rumours regarding the future of the Salt Building (85 West First Ave.) have been laid to rest, with the announcement that CRAFT Brew Market, Restaurant + Bar, described as "a premium casual restaurant concept out of Calgary, with a passion for fresh local food and fresh local beer," will open in the historic space by next summer. With Tap & Barrel a cap's toss away, this means the former Olympic Village has all the makings of becoming B.C. craft brew central, with around 150 taps per square kilometre. Interested hopheads can check out the plans at an Oct. 27 open house, noon to 4 p.m.

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In the "hello/goodbye" department, we're sad to bid "adieu" to West Broadway's cozy and tasty Mistral French Bistro. Über seafood guru Robert Clark has traded in his long-running executive sustainable toque with Kambolis Group and C Restaurant for a new seafood concept of his own on a different scale, to be revealed shortly.

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There is still time to grab tickets for Farms to Forks (Oct. 21), a worthy, taste-filled "harvest kitchen party" fundraiser in support of Growing Chefs, which among many things inspires children with the notion they can grow their own healthy food, even in the city. Lending a helping hand are a score of the city's top chefs, with hosts CBC's Margaret Gallagher and the Courier's own Fred Lee. It all takes place at the Pacific Institute for the Culinary Arts (PICA). Tickets are \$149 from [admin@growingchefs.ca](mailto:admin@growingchefs.ca) or 778-885-1308. [info@hiredbelly.com](mailto:info@hiredbelly.com) [rebelmouse.com/hiredBelly/](http://rebelmouse.com/hiredBelly/)

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