

DA NELLO

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It's been a much-loved part of Guernsey's restaurant scene for 36 years and chef Tim Vidamour has been honing his skills there for 35. No wonder **Damian Wrigley** chose da Nello as the perfect venue for a romantic reunion...

Da Nello head chef and co-owner Tim Vidamour. (Picture by Steve Sarre, 5488822)

Only in Guernsey

CELEBRATING 35 YEARS...



IT'S A big year for head chef and co-owner Tim Vidamour – he's celebrating his 35th anniversary at da Nello. He started there in 1979, as an extra job after he'd finished work at the OGH, and quickly made his way up the ranks.

'I grew up in the restaurant with Nello and the family,' he explained. When he was 19 the position of head chef suddenly became available, and it was his.

Fast forward 33 years and, as Nello was ready for pastures new, Tim and fellow da Nello stalwarts Manuel Teixeira and Rivelino Rodrigues took over the business.

'I've been lucky, I've been at the forefront with the Italians,' Tim said. He loves what he does.

'I still enjoy coming in through the front door – although I don't do as much cooking at home,' he laughed.

'I grew up in the restaurant with Nello and the family'

Head chef and co-owner Tim Vidamour

WEEKENDS are sacred – a time for turning off your phone, leaving work behind, kicking back and enjoying the company of your loved ones.

And I'd been away for two on the trot: one to hoof my way round Le Mans under the guise of work and the other at an air show, under the guise that I'm cool.

So I hadn't seen m'Gibson for a while. A text here, a hurried conversation there, but overall we'd spent as much quality time together as Obama and Putin.

Where do you go to reacquaint? You need somewhere personal, secluded, where you aren't rubbing shoulders – somewhere, in short, that's special.

Glance at today's pictures and you'll see that's exactly where I took the blonde beauty – da Nello.

HEATWAVE TIP: this place is as cool as George Clooney sipping Martini on the

Riviera. It was warm outside, so I wore shorts and a rather fetching shirt to take diners' attention off my chicken legs. No need. The ancient granite walls create the perfect ambience and temperature. Drinks at the bar, not straight to the table – this is a place for a proper night out. A little aperitif so you can relax, regale each other with stories (she wasn't interested in the tale of the Airbus A380 pulling turns like a fighter jet) and peruse the menu at a leisurely pace, so that it is part of the conversation but not the main bulk of it. 'This menu, like you, is unspeakably fantastic,' said Gibson, who knows what she's talking about.

There's a huge amount to choose from. Close your eyes, point at the menu and I guarantee you'll end up with something good.

We're taken to a booth with soft, supple seating and low-level, romantic lighting by happy, efficient staff who present your

food and leave you to it.

The lights here dip, the deeper into evening you go, further relaxing you, the shackles of the day left long behind. Penne vodka for me, food of the gods. Tomato sauce, Parma ham, peas, garlic, white wine and vodka – a holy alliance of flavours, deeply rich on the palate, screaming out for a glass of pinot noir. Avocado granchio could have been displayed in the Louvre, so fantastic-looking was it. Local hand-picked crab, apple, avocado and grapes in a delicious dressing, it was a symphony of flavour that, should it ever get the chance to play at the proms, would need two conductors to keep it under control.

Bruschetta – always a winner. Ours was topped with deeply-flavoured wild mushrooms, pan-fried in olive oil with garlic and glazed with balsamic vinegar. And staying on the mushroom theme, champignons Rochelle features fat fungi



Preparing the restaurant's signature lobster linguine, left, and the finished dish with its 'tsunami of flavour', right.

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YOUR LOCAL GUIDE TO EATING OUT IN GUERNSEY



'As any Italian will tell you, eating out is all about enjoyment, about being social, bonding, reminiscing, laughing, creating memories'



The 10oz entrecote steak came with onions and a balsamic sauce that 'cut through the rich meat flavour like a blowtorch through butter', and hand-cut chips 'so good it's worth ordering this just for them'. (5476325)



The lemon cheesecake with Guernsey ice cream made for a delicious dessert. (5476319)

topped with local crab and garlic butter, gratinated with Parmesan.
For mains, I went with chef Tim Vidamour's signature dish of lobster linguine, because he's been there for 35 years and that's a long time to hone something to perfection. Rich, creamy sauce enveloped the pasta, a tsunami of flavour neatly napping substantial chunks of the sweetest shellfish.
A 10oz entrecote steak came with onions and a balsamic sauce that cut through the rich meat flavour like a blowtorch through butter, plus hand-cut chips so good it's worth ordering this just for them.
A mushroom risotto was as perfectly judged as you'd expect - the Italian alliance of wild fungi and Parmesan shining through - and a dry-fried fillet of bass was topped with a punchy salsa of olive oil, garlic, red onions, tomato and red peppers.
Another speciality is grigliata di

pesce, a seafood feast for two in which lobster, brill, bass, tiger prawns and scallops are chargrilled with olive oil. Next time...
For dessert we went for lemon cheesecake with Guernsey ice cream and, because it's summer and nothing better exists, strawberries and cream.
This is richly-flavoured, delicious, perfect food.
As any Italian will tell you, eating out is all about enjoyment, about being social, bonding, reminiscing, laughing, creating memories. And when you haven't spent quality time with your girlfriend in two weeks, it doesn't get any better than bringing her here.
They even gave her a flower on the way out, which was great, because I hadn't bothered to bring back a present.

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Da Nello stalwart and co-owner Manuel Teixeira. (Picture by Peter Frankland, 5488811)

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