

SPANISH DISPOSITION

No windmills to conquer here at Spanish restaurant Don Quijote but check your diets at the door

DEEP IN THE RECESSES OF BUKIT TIMAH LIES THE NONDESCRIBT SPANISH RESTAURANT, DON QUIJOTE. There's nothing exemplary in the decoration or ambience but the proof is in the pudding, or, in this case, the paella. In a nutshell, they put all other Spanish eateries in Singapore to shame.

Like the famed character Don Quijote (say Don Kee-hor-tay) in the traditional tale of El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha, the recipes served up at this homely diner is steeped in tradition.

The uninitiated need not be intimidated. The menu is in English and the wait staff is also on hand to render assistance. We're foodies obsessed with Spain, and knew Spanish food like the back of our hands. As tradition dictates, we started with a hearty helping of tapas.

The calamari was the first to arrive, served with a side of their in-house sauce. By any standards - be they bar food, Spanish tapas or fried fritters - the calamares fritos (as they're known in Spain) were outstanding. The light, tasty batter on the calamari is so fresh we could taste the sea. This could sit very well even with the pickiest of eaters.

The gambas al ajillo, or prawns in garlic came next. In Spain, prawns in garlic would be served with the prawns swimming in olive oil and you'd need more bread to soak up the deliciously evil liquid with bits of burnt cloves. The prawns are hardly drowning in Don Quijote's incarnation but they are still delectable.

Another of our favourites is Spanish Baby Squid, once again, cooked in garlic and

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seafood - which is what we're having today.

If, like us, you came to digest as much of the Spanish cuisine as you can stomach in one sitting, we recommend you go slow and get the small paella to share with three to four people. However, if you're there just for the paella (we don't blame you), make sure you get the biggest size.

The Paella Valenciana, which we ordered, had generous helpings of mussels, scallops, prawns, chicken and squid. Having sampled all the Spanish eateries in Singapore, we daresay this is as close to Spain as you can get without an air ticket.

Don't miss the oxtail soup. It is braised with chickpeas, tomatoes, potatoes and other ingredients that were on the tip of our tongues but failed to identify, the oxtail soup was slight and almost had a distinctive sweetness to the taste - the kind you get off quality meats.

Just when we think nothing could top what we've had, our Fideuà Negra arrived. The Fideuà is the noodle version of the paella and ours was drenched in squid ink. It may not be something you should order on a first date but the squid ink sauce, with the mish-mash of seafood, was incredible. While it may not be like

the Fideuà, which has been cooked in a Spanish mama's kitchen, this one is still a winner of our hearts. It is a myriad of flavours that explode in our mouths; oozing with freshness.

Despite our protests, the dessert was rolled out. Pastel de Chocolate Calient is a warm chocolate cake that's made with Spanish chocolate and served with a dollop of vanilla ice cream. This chocolate cake is the cherry on our cake - it's moist and the sweet chocolate that bled from the centre of the cake is nothing short of sweet decadence.

Don Quijote may not be brimming with leggy Spanish brunettes shaking their ample culos (butts) to salsa beats, but it is as authentic as they come. Spaniards, and foodies looking for true Spanish cuisine, will soon be beating down a path to this little Spanish secret.

Don Quijote is at 17 Lorong Kilat, #01-09. Call 6465 1811 or email info@don-quiote-restaurant.com for reservations. Check www.don-quiote-restaurants.com for more details and opening hours.

