



They say things change for a reason; perhaps this explains the longevity of La Terrazza.

While restaurants fall from grace across the city, the inconspicuous Italian on Sharrow Vale Road has been there as long as I can remember ? full to the brim on a weekend and with a steady trade throughout the week, the bright yet modest exterior is no reflection of what awaits inside.

The specials board caught the attention of my dining companion, who chose her main course in a flash ? the fresh whole sea bream. Being rather more measured in my response I prioritised starters and indulged in a archetypal Italian guilt-fest; two gooey rolls of mozzarella, deep-fried and served in a bowl of rich tomato sauce. Extravagant but light enough to finish without any difficulty.

A generous show of meat, salad and vegetables graced my fellow diner's plate, and her Antipasto Italiano was consumed with zeal ? I just had time to duck in and try the Parma ham which was excellent.

This aside, my main course really stole the biscotti. A hunk of fillet steak sat almost dwarfed by two king prawns of spectacular proportion, the meat complemented perfectly by the sweet shellfish both in texture and flavours ? served simply with a selection of vegetables, the Filetto Con Gamberoni is a splendid dish.

The aforementioned sea bream was also a triumph. Served whole and open, it was cooked with butter, lemon and olive oil and the delicate flavours effortlessly infused the moist flesh. Why we don't find this fish on menus more often is a mystery.

Two indulgent Italian desserts followed and stood up very well to the fantastic savoury courses, washed down with an espresso of course.

One classic formula has maintained La Terrazza's popularity ? a lively atmosphere and fine food both thanks to owner Mario's inspired finesse in the kitchen. If that's not reason enough to go back, I don't know what is.