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A bird's-eye view of Lavington

I'm not at all familiar with Portuguese cuisine so, before going, I Googled it. I was informed that the influence of Portugal's former colonial possessions is very notable, especially in the wide variety of spices used: chilli peppers and black pepper, as well as cinnamon, vanilla and saffron. Olive oil is one of the bases of Portuguese cuisine, both for cooking and for flavouring. Garlic is widely used, as are herbs such as coriander and parsley.

True, it was obvious from the menu that such spices are liberally used. But the menu is actually very cosmopolitan. There is even Tempura, the Japanese dish of seafood or vegetables that have been battered and deep fried. But the menu claims it was introduced to the Japanese by Portuguese Jesuits some centuries back.

Unabashed, I went for what I fancied — what the menu called Fish and Chips, which I took to be unequivocally English. But instead of fish coated in batter it was drenched in olive oil. I should have known better. Anyway, it was tasty — and interestingly different.

But we found the Adega a very noisy place. Though it was after eight o'clock there were lots of children romping in the adjacent play area. But even their excited voices were topped by the comedian Churchill, showing on two television sets. Clearly, this is a better place for families than for couples or friends wanting a less frenetic setting.

On Monday, I took along two colleagues for lunch at the other end of the Curve's top floor — at the Mambo Italia. The decor is distinctively mediterranean: sophisticatedly simple with subdued colours and tasteful displays of wines and vegetables.

ALL DAY BREAKFAST

There is an amazing variety of pizzas on offer, including an "All Day Breakfast" of mozzarella, mature cheddar, crispy bacon, eggs and salad onions.

One of my colleagues couldn't resist the intriguingly named "Mafioso", with tomato sauce, mozzarella, hot and spicy minced beef, red onions, green peppers and jalapeno chilli peppers.

But there are plenty of other dishes on the menu. My other colleague chose a healthy but mammoth salad. I had ravioli with tomato sauce.

We enjoyed our food with glasses of red Pinotage house wine. Because we still had an afternoon's work to do, we resisted the Nutella Pizza, with a thin base "spread with delicious Nutella and topped with flaked almonds". We finished off and revived ourselves with cups of fresh and aromatic coffee.

The sun was shining, so we sat out on the terrace. Joseph, our waiter, was attentive, informative and discretely amusing.

The view over the lawns and trees of Jaffreys and beyond was soothing. It would have been pleasant to have lingered over a second glass of wine. But there were things waiting to be done back at the office.

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