

Easy as one, two, three

1two3 Mediterranean

ADDRESS: Shop 11, Phoenician Tower East, Surf Parade, Broadbeach

PHONE: 5538 4123

OPEN: Breakfast, lunch and dinner seven days

DINNER PRICE: Taster \$4.90 to \$11.90, E\$8.90 to \$21.90, M\$12.90 to \$29.90, D\$3.90 to \$9.30 (mini), \$9.90 to \$10.90 (regular size)

MIXED MEDITERRANEAN PLATTERS: For one \$35.90, for two \$69.90 and for three \$89.90

LIQUOR STATUS: Licensed

PARKING: Street

OTHER: Accepts major credit cards



Service is a feature of Andrew McElhone's restaurants. Add food that is good and you can enjoy a pleasant night out – Patricia Mossop

ASIDE from being quite audacious, Andrew McElhone's third investment in Broadbeach restaurants is likely to prove one of his most astute.

Having added the former Sopranos to his already successful Sage and Yellowfin, pretty much across the road, he has restyled it, rebadged it as a Mediterranean restaurant and added a bold touch.

As the name implies, 1two3 offers almost every item on the menu, including drinks, in three sizes: a taster, an entree or a main.

It is a move that offers the dining public a choice, an ability to test taste a dish before ordering a huge plate of whatever – a sampler if you like.

It is, Andrew believes, an innovation for restaurants on the Gold Coast and perhaps in Australia.

It is along the lines of a degustation menu but different in that diners can try one or as many tasters as they like.

And they are larger tastes than usual.

"I'm trying to give people what they want," says Andrew.

"Entree, main, dessert – dining hasn't really changed in 100 years.

"I felt it was time to try something different."

It is something that keeps Belgian chef Francois Walgaeve on his toes in the kitchen but he is happy with the variety he is called on to produce.

It is referred to as 'no rules' dining, diners able to order as they like with even breakfast available on a 'your choice' basis.

THE STYLE

The name says it all.

Accepting there are quite a number of Italian restaurants in the area, Andrew decided to go for a modest

variation – Mediterranean allowing a slightly broader scope.

Even so, there are sufficient Italian dishes available to maintain the reputation of Broadbeach as largely catering to lovers of the cuisine.

Splashes of flavour from North Africa, Spain, Greece and the Middle East show up in the dishes which include several, such as Wagyu, aged rump and thick, beer-battered fries, which cater to virtually any palate.

THE AMBIENCE

Adding another section to the restaurant will take its current L-shape to a U-shape when the lease is finalised.

For the moment, however, the room is an 'L' with seating running around the front to the short side and a clear plastic covered alfresco section on the pavement.

At the far end of the



• Pictures: Kerri Shaw

Crumbed goat's cheese salad is on the menu

long section is a blue-lit bar and behind it the kitchen, in which a view of the action is limited to a few tables.

The entrance is past bi-fold doors that open up the entire front section, there are mirrors along one wall and a carpet runner over a tiled floor to prevent wait staff emerging hurriedly from the kitchen and slipping.

Colourful paintings adorn one wall, tables are white and uncovered and chairs are black and comfortable with stiletto metal legs, a blue candle on each table and small, dangling down lights.

THE SERVICE

Ushered inside, menus are produced as you're being seated and water appears instantly.

The black-clad wait staff are excellent, genuinely friendly, concerned and helpful.

General manager Paul Bernal maintains a watchful eye over all three properties – as

does Andrew – and night manager Jamien Sheen has his finger on the pulse here. There is nothing pretentious about the wait staff, just a thoughtfulness that adds an extra dimension to always pleasant service.

THE FOOD

The menu is clear and explanatory, the choice of three portion sizes for virtually every dish – there are one or two understandable exceptions – affording all diners the freedom to explore.

At this stage the taster size is quite large and the opportunity to try a variety of dishes can be taken up by even those with giant-sized appetites.

Bruschetta makes for a good start and with confit cherry tomatoes, garlic, onion, cumin and coriander assaults the senses in the nicest possible way – the tomatoes still warm.

Starter items can be ordered to be delivered all at once or on an as-you-go

basis – the latter spinning out the dining experience and ensuring hot dishes are enjoyed hot.

Many of the wines are available in three sizes, some in four, from a 75ml taster to a 150ml glass, a 375ml half bottle or a regular 750ml bottle.

Fortunately, the Corte Giara, a 2007 pinot grigio from Italy, is available only by the bottle and goes well with all of the dishes.

If it isn't yet too cool to enjoy a salad there are several excellent examples here including the crumbed goat's cheese with peppery rocket, semi-dried tomatoes, caramelised onion and balsamic caramel.

Also superb is the rocket, pear, blue cheese and walnut salad with a walnut dressing.

Rocket features heavily in many of the dishes, as does semi-dried tomato, and both arrive as an accompaniment to the Moroccan-spiced fish

cakes with coriander dressing – the fish cakes plump and spicy.

Pan-fried, herbed-squid salad is served with mesclun, baby spinach and lettuce with coriander, semi-dried and roasted Roma tomatoes and a coriander dressing.

Among the pasta, risotto and paella dishes, the crab risotto with asparagus is as good as it sounds – the dish is served with dill and lemon juice and a garlic and white-wine cream base, full crab flavour with texture supplied by the crisp asparagus pieces.

Tasting plates of the above are quite enough for two but desserts, including mini-sized lemon-meringue pie and caramel tart are well worth adding to the table.

THE VERDICT

The options not only offer variety but are tasty and make for affordable dining, something many are bound to find appealing.



Jamien Sheen, head chef Francois Walgaeve and general manager Paul Bernal