

IL VALENTINO 'CONTINENTAL' BAKERY

BY THE GRAND CANAL BASIN

By Stephanie Morris

I like to pride myself on still having the views and lifestyle of the average punter. Though I do enjoy delicacies, I am not caught up in the world of luxury or a hi-falutin lifestyle! I think basic. I think simple.

Actually, I quite like not to think much at all. I eat when I am hungry and I sleep when I am tired and work a little in between! I like to shop for meat in a butcher's, vegetables in a vegetable shop and bread in a bakery. Simple.

But this simple premise, once seen as basic, is no longer. These once-upon-a-time basics now seem to be viewed as a luxury and the prices are accordingly high.

The supermarket seems to dictate the availability of basics. A well-known brand monopolises the availability of 'fresh' breads in supermarkets throughout Ireland. These are all frozen and par baked. That's fresh? Not in my world. Frozen is not fresh.



the baker are becoming a thing of the past. These were once handed down from generation to generation with pride and continued service to the locality with learned tricks of the trade, uniqueness, friendliness and, most of all, respect to their customers. This was the way it was. Sadly, it is not the way it is.

How refreshing it was when I noticed the bakery across the bridge! Il Valentino is standing proud on the corner of Pearse Street and Charlotte Quay and so it should. Just as you go over the bridge on the right, there it stands, Il Valentino Continental Bakery—

genuine Continental bakery. It is not selling the odd Italian fayre, it is Italian all the way, and all goods are prepared from scratch using traditional baking techniques and baked on the premises.

A wide array of sandwiches are prepared at Il Valentino daily using their own freshly-baked artisan breads. Authentic Italian ingredients are used to make up a hearty sandwich namely speck (smoked ham) San Daniele cured ham, Scamorza smoked cheese, Milano salami, Tuscan pecorino cheese, real buffalo mozzarella and accompanied with generous portions of rocket and mixed

Breads such as olive focaccia, tomato focaccia, poppy seed baguettes and five seed bread are all baked fresh and can be bought individually for home. Or, for the healthier option or low carb clients, there is an array of high-protein salads, again with an Italian flair.

For the 'sweet toothers' Il Valentino have a superb selection of pastries prepared and baked by their Italian pastry chefs, again all on site. Real, 'fresh' croissants, plain or with fresh patisserie cream, brioches, Danish or a simple biscotti can be purchased with a genuine good coffee, will help cheer us up on a dull winter's or summer's morning!

It was a treat to meet Owen Doorly the hands-on owner at Il Valentino. Born and raised in Mount Merrion, he embarked on a career with Guinness's, marketing and educating the Italians on Irish Whiskeys, Bailey's Irish cream and other Irish tipples favoured in Europe, which he enjoyed very much. It was on a business trip to Japan where he met and fell in love with his Italian wife, Valentina.

Owen then became a resident of Italy and in time he began work-

company 'Bristol' and began marketing coffee to other European countries. After returning to Ireland, he missed the local Italian bakeries that baked fresh crusty breads daily. He set about his own market research and he now prides himself on educating the Irish in excellent Italian coffees namely 'Bristol' coffee and an excellent range of true Italian breads, both sweet and savoury.

There is a great feel to the shop itself. It is bright, breezy and modern and it is evident it is run with pride and passion which shines through the staff. You can sit inside or out with the tables next to the water's edge.

Very soon, Owen hopes to be serving wines and tapas and will be open that bit later. How wonderful it will be to be able to have a late evening coffee in Dublin while your companion can have a glass of vino. Imagine, outside, close to the water's edge at the Grand Canal Basin, on a sunny day with a superb Italian coffee, a crisp Pinot Grigio and a hearty Italian sandwich. With the water lapping noisily against the edge, you would swear you are in Florence, if you close your eyes!

www.ilvalentino.ie