

Juliet's December Food Diary

I was delighted to be a guest of the Consolato Generale d'Italia and the Italian Chamber of Commerce to celebrate World Week of Italian Cuisine at the fabulous Divino Enoteca.

Doing the honours in the kitchen was the Michelin starred and charmingly named Leandro Luppi.

Let me tell you how these events go. You're treated to an amazing meal but often slightly spoiled by the chef and sommelier announcing each treat at some length. However, the Italians, despite taking their food and produce incredibly seriously, know how to make eating fun, no matter how high brow the menu.

My favourite dish was Carbonara Do Lego or My Carbonara is Different. The dish, featuring Monograno Felicetti pasta was sublime, with the pancetta remaining crispy and an unctuous emulsification of egg sauce. The star of the show was the pasta. Made at 1000 metres above sea level in the heart of the Dolomites, the pasta gets its unique characteristics from the spring water at a source of 2000 metres and is then dried in the crisp, pure mountain air. It certainly went to my head, yet I managed to savour the D.O.C.G. Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore, another triumph from the hills. Whilst your hum drum Prosecco might take 100 hours a hectare to produce, this nectar requires six times that amount of work as the grapes are grown on difficult terrain. It's all worth it though and I'm seriously considering adopting a high altitude diet.



Leandro Luppi Photo Credit – Tiziano Cristofoli

The Macdonald Holyrood Hotel sure know how to throw a party. To launch their new Surf and Turf restaurant they treated us to a buffet extraordinaire and warm presentations from some of their suppliers, demonstrating the provenance of the produce and also the technical challenges of bringing it to the table. This is certainly my favourite kind of cooking: wonderful produce, kept simple and cooked perfectly. It was a generously hosted party and the atmosphere was electric thanks to @saxsingh who I think I've seen performing at least three events this year. He is the sax player of your dreams so if you're having a shindig, book him.

The Macdonald Holyrood Hotel do some lovely Spa packages and, with lunch or dinner at Surf and Turf, would make an excellent Christmas gift.



Photos by // www.fb.com/grantanderson.me www.grantanderson.me
Insta/@grantandersondotme

I was also privileged to enjoy a relaxing evening sipping The Balvenie's Stories range of 12, 14 and 26 year old single malt

whiskies range. This guided tasting was led by apprentice malt maker Kelsey McKechnie and brand ambassador Alwynne Gwilt. Yes that's correct: a whisky event with not a patronising old duffer in sight.



Photos by // www.fb.com/grantanderson.me www.grantanderson.me
Insta/@grantandersondotme

A particularly interesting malt was Kelsey's own inspiration, The Sweet Toast of American Oak where imported Virgin Oak Barrels from Kentucky create a fruitier, sweeter Balvenie with notes of candied fruit, coconut and vanilla. Perfect for enjoying by the Christmas tree.



Kelsey McKechnie Photo Grant Anderson

If you're looking for something special to grace your Christmas table please visit Matt Jackson at his new venture

Spry Wines on Haddington Place. Matt's an expert in organic wine and his new venture is sure to be a success, particularly as you can buy any wine and enjoy it in his elegant bar for a flat £10 corkage. They also have a selection of wines by the glass and some lovely small plates to enjoy from their kitchen. Wishing Matt and all the hard-working restaurants, bars and suppliers of Edinburgh all the best for Christmas and happy and successful prospects for 2020.

