

Pasta con le Sarde at Ristorante Amato

Reading that one of Palermo's favorite dishes is *pasta con le sarde*, spaghetti with sardines and fennel, didn't exactly set my stomach on fire with unquenchable desire. But after seeing plate after plate being ordered at Ristorante Amato, near the Teatro Massimo, I figured there must be something to it. So I hopped on the bandwagon and ordered my first ever pasta/sardine/fennel dish. And it won't be my last.



Delicious. Somehow, the big grass-like clumps of fennel work perfectly with the sardines and thick spaghetti to create one of the best plates of pasta I've had in Palermo. And we picked a great place to try it out. Amato is a nondescript joint near the Teatro Massimo, which one of our readers pointed us to.

On first glance, the restaurant looks like nothing more than a bakery, and we thought "No way". But there are tables around the corner and, at around 1pm, the place fills up with business people looking for a cheap and filling lunch. There is a ton to choose from, but no menu; just the dishes scrawled almost illegibly on a whiteboard. We sat there for ten minutes with a dictionary and pen, much to the amusement of the waitress.

All our plates were excellent; after the pasta, I had *involtini*, which are fried steak rolls filled with ham and cheese. Jürgen had ricotta pasta and escalope, but ordering both *primera* and *segunda* plates was really unnecessary, and we left with bellies bursting.