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Architecture Over Dinner at Villa Godi Malinverni in Vicenza, Italy

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by Richard Frisbie



Andrea Palladio is the Italian Architect responsible for the classic look of the buildings in Venice and Vicenza, and from there all over the world. Sixteen villas expressing his elegant classical design are gathered in the Vicenza region where they are designated a UNESCO [World Heritage](#) site. His buildings are well known in Europe and in North America, where perhaps the most



famous example of the "Palladio Style" can be seen in Thomas Jefferson's home, Monticello.

The Palladio Villas were built for a leisured and moneyed class. They were considered the epitome of style and design for rural (often Summer) residences. Those used year-round were elaborately painted with murals on the interior walls and ceilings by the top painters of the day such as Gianbattista Tiepolo.

Andrea Palladio designed the perfectly proportioned Villa Godi Malinverni now housing the [restaurant](#) Torchio Antico. The original kitchen there is singled out as a fine example of Palladio's setting of service rooms. The brick-floored, barrel-ceilinged room was the site of our dinner. The walls were hung with antique copper utensils and tools. There was a huge stone sink against one wall, with a fireplace and an ancient wood stove on two others. The tables were set in the center of the herringbone pattern brick floor. The setting was exquisite!



We began the evening with a sparkling Italian wine apéritif accompanied by hors d'oeuvres. I'm so tempted to say champagne, but it was a dry and crisp very local

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Lessini Durello (DOC) dei Vescovi, too far from the chalk soils of France to be called Champagne, but very reminiscent of its fine taste.

Walking through the extensive formal gardens enjoying the hometown bubbly was the perfect exercise for building an appetite. I'm so glad I did! The gardens were as elegant as the Villa - formal, with ancient marble statues and a water element. It was a lovely evening.



Sometimes dinner is more than a meal. In the Villa Godi Malinverni we were eating the freshest of local ingredients, elegantly served in an historic setting. This was an event! When we were seated in the old kitchen, a Gastaldia 2005 Breganze Bianco was served to go with the pasta dish. The still white wine from the sun-drenched neighboring hills was refreshing and light, but I preferred the sparkling wine we had earlier and switched back. It served equally well for the entire meal.



The chef made delicate little raviolis stuffed with spinach and farm cheese. They were served with finely chopped tomatoes, chives and zucchini, sautéed with small cubes of swordfish in an herbed wine & olive oil sauce. It was an aromatic and flavorful combination that made me wish the portions were not as petite as the raviolis - subtle and superb! There was a second pasta course (I guess the first was the fish course) of ground veal, in a creamy almost bolognese sauce, with mushrooms. It had a common, "Girl Scout Stew" look to it, but the homemade pasta in that rich sauce was phenomenal, and could

have been a dinner in its own right!

As a meat course we had veal tenderloin, grass-fed, tender and served rare. It was accompanied by roasted potato wedges and a sautéed vegetable medley of celery, red peppers, zucchini and carrot sticks. The veal was coated in roasted sesame seeds and topped with a pineapple-ginger sauce. Again, a simple looking dish that was more than the sum of its humble parts, and very tasty. The fruity sauce really made it pop.



The very pretty dessert finale was not pedestrian at all, and rather unusual looking. The white mousse was strongly cantaloupe flavored, served on a whole wheat pancake, and not really complimented by a mint sauce. Still - it looked great, and the mint didn't hurt it that much. But, you have to remember that I'm not really a dessert guy. Others loved it.

The whole dinner event was to promote "Palladio by Night", uniting the c1542 Villa Godi Malinverni with 3 other Palladio designed Villas in the neighborhood in an illuminated series of evening open houses. They will include local



wines, [food](#), even musicians, in a dramatically lighted interior and exterior tour of his classic designs. Each villa creates an atmosphere-rich candlelight tour for this series.



The Molino Stucky Hilton (rooms from \$200) is in a beautifully restored 100 year old brick flour mill occupying its own [island](#) across the Canale della Giudecca from Venice. With 380 rooms, many retaining the architectural details of the original mill, and a rooftop bar with views over the bay and the skyline of Venice, it is a convenient, high profile place to stay. Their Aromi Restaurante serves American fare and Veneto specialties both inside and on the expansive waterfront landing. The Molino Stucky Hilton also provides a free shuttle boat to St. Mark's Square every half hour. It is a 25 minute boat ride from Venice's Marco Polo Airport.

Hotel Palladio in the heart of Vicenza is a very stylish conversion of an ancient building into a chic [boutique hotel](#). Original 15th century architectural details remain, juxtaposed with extremely modern touches and all the conveniences one expects in a very good hotel. It is within walking distance of all Vicenza's major attractions. Offering free wireless broadband internet access, the 23 rooms start at 130 euros.

The Vicenza region is to Venice what the State of New York is to the City of New York, the second home and [vacation](#) area that produces all the goods and services that keep the city running. From ski resorts in the Italian Alps to world class Palladio architecture, from excellent vineyards in the midlands to organic farms on the lowlands, this region is a tourist destination in its own right.

<http://www.molinostuckyhilton.com/>

Molino Stucky Hilton
<http://www.hotel-palladio.it/>

Hotel Palladio
<http://www.vicenzae.org/>

The Vicenza Region
<http://www.palladio2008.info/>

Andrea Palladio, the Italian Architect responsible for the classic look of the buildings in [Venice](#) and Vicenza (and from there all over the world) is celebrated for almost 400 years of enduring architectural design.

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