

IN SPOT PIMENTÓN

Review **Gordon Bowness**



Kyla Zanardi

If you can't wait for, or afford, a Mediterranean getaway, you have a sun-kissed option within reach: the wonderful Spanish and Mediterranean deli Pimentón on Mt Pleasant south of Eglinton. Though there's a narrow counter to eat at, this place is really about shopping and take-away: delectable tapas and lunches at the ready, essential ingredients for any Spanish kitchen and Pimentón's claim to fame, all types of paella cooked perfectly on demand (call ahead).

"I love paella because it's filled with flavours, layers and layers of flavour," says chef and owner José Arato. "It's a complex taste but not complex to make."

Made with Bomba rice — the key — homemade stock (chicken or fish, with a veggie option) and fresh seafood, Arato's paella makes the most of superior ingredients.

Lola Csullog opened Pimentón four years ago but Arato, a close friend, took over when she became ill; Csullog died a year ago of cancer. "I also love paella because of the person who taught me to make it," says Arato. "I think of Lola all the time when making it."

The ever-ebullient Arato is a charming presence behind the food counter. The Italian Venezuelan has built upon his friend's traditional approach to Spanish cuisine.

→ **TASTE THE SUN** Pimentón's paella is cooked to perfection.

Everything is top notch.

Turkey kofta, chicken tajine, poached salmon, butter beans baked in tomato, beet salad with rosemary or sherry vinegar, orzo pasta salad with feta and dill... all very simple but exquisite. (Simplicity also means many dishes are vegan — though Arato stresses that's not the point, as evidenced by the giant Serrano hams in the window.)

Then there are the cakes! The standout is the Santiago cake, made only with almond, egg and sugar; not too sweet with a divine texture.

Arato hosts numerous cooking classes including paella, olive oil tasting and wine pairing. He's cooking up a Spanish food festival for February and a food tour of Barcelona for March.

He's also at the Brick Works market every other Sunday, plus Saturdays in winter for skating. Yes, you have to have the paella, but try the "chorizo in blanket," locally sourced smoked sausage, not too salty or greasy, in puff pastry. Hot sausage on ice — now there's a Toronto tradition to get behind.

**PIMENTÓN 681 Mt Pleasant Rd.
(647) 343-4870. pimenton.ca.**