Inside Mercato di Vetro, Open Yesterday in WeHo

Tuesday, October 4, 2011, by Kat Odell

From Lobby to Foxtail to Mi-6 and now on to **Mercato di Vetro** all within about six years or so. Fourth time is a charm? **sbe** has re-envisioned 9077 Santa Monica Boulevard time and time again, but in the past the space located next to the Troubadour has consistently served as a clubby venue (although Foxtail did have a restaurant component during Antonia Lofaso's pre-*Top Chef* days). Which brings us to **yesterday's public debut** of Mercato di Vetro, the Italian restaurant, bar, and retail shop slated to sell Mercato's signature line of larder goods and other imported Italian products.

sbe corporate chef **Danny Elmaleh** oversees Mercato's menu which is simply divided into "Antipasti Bar," "Salads," "Wood Oven," "Meat," "Fish," "Raw," and "Pasta." Remember, three separate kitchens produce the aforementioned, antipasti from one, cocktails from another, and larger substantial plates from the last.

Antipasti bar selects include pickled veggies, cured meats, Italian

cheeses, crostini, fried olives and the like; oysters, hamachi crudo, and beef carpaccio are available as well; or perhaps a spinach, strawberry, and balsamic salad is in need. There's a kale and pecorino pizza, and another with sausage and egg; or load up on carbs via cacio e pepe or carbonara pasta. Made in-house, of course.

As for proteins, simple preparations involve lamb with a potato gratin, rosemary honey and mint pesto; beef and veal meatballs; and branzino with curried cauliflower, yogurt and cilantro. All of these smaller plates are priced under $20 with many costing in the low teens.

It appears as though sbe is exploring a new realm of chic yet approachable dining. With the inception of Cleo, which follows a similar model serving Mediterranean fare, Mercato di Vetro is poised to attract a similar mix of LA scenesters looking for the next hot topic, but also those around town hunting down a better bite. Make a resy here.