



Taste of Italy Al Forno Caffe

Tucked inside a modest shopping plaza, Costa Mesa's new Al Forno Caffe aims high. The dual-concept Italian spot serves freshly baked sweet and savory pastries with lighter fare by day, and more serious trattoria dishes by night. Dinner choices include a signature pasta al forno with rigatoni, pulled pork, and Parmesan cheese; seared scallops with lentil stew; and a lemon-rosemary panna cotta. At lunch, consider a kale salad topped with a fried egg, **ABOVE**, a caprese panini, or sopressata pizza. A five-seat bar offers single-origin Stumptown Coffee pour-overs and cold-brewed iced coffee on draft, and loose-leaf teas such as Moroccan mint and white-coconut creme. Wine offerings include 60 Italian labels. Co-owner Ali Kihanmahd worked 15 years in New York City Italian restaurants, then owned and managed Apropos Cafe in Brooklyn. 1525 Mesa Verde Drive E., 657-232-0100, alfornocaffe.com