



JUDICIAL *Palate*

By Susan E. Poppiti, Esquire

Spring Fling in NYC

What better way to break out of winter hibernation than with a visit to the city that never sleeps? Vincent and I feasted on the below itinerary during an early March weekend of below freezing temperatures. My hope, should you adopt this agenda, is that your weekend is a spring fling in both spirit and temperature. Bon Appétit and Bon Voyage!

9:00 p.m. Friday: Dinner at Aldea

This Flatiron featuring Spanish and Portuguese fare is a standout among the 2017 Michelin Guide's one stars. Chef George Mendes offers a four course prix fixe for \$79 — reasonable for NYC standards — highlighting ingredients of the Iberian Peninsula such as salt cod. The sleek interior boasts an open kitchen filled with beautiful copper and clay pots.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

First Course: Mackerel En Escabeche

Second Course: Grilled octopus topped with a chouriço (chorizo) vinaigrette

Main Course: House cured salt cod with smoked Bouchot mussels and more chouriço

Dessert: Tio Anibal's Rice Pudding with the spicy Portuguese liqueur Licor Beirao.

All dishes were flavorful and elegantly presented — An excellent choice for seafood lovers.

11:30 a.m. Saturday: Brunch at The Lambs Club

Chef Geoffrey Zakarian's swanky black, white, and red dining room on 44th near Broadway is ideal for a pre-theatre brunch. The art deco "Club" houses a massive fireplace and photos of Old Hollywood stars; it also treats diners to live music during Saturday and Sunday brunch. While we were enjoying our divine egg dishes, a Bossa nova combo created a truly NYC vibe.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Starter: Nantucket Bay Scallop Ceviche (winter delicacy)

Main Course: Eggs en cocotte with San Marzano tomatoes and Spanish capers or Huevos Rancheros with tomatillo sauce and Queso fresco

Side: Applewood-smoked bacon

9:00 p.m. Saturday: Dinner at Casa Lever

This Milanese style restaurant is a short walk from 54 Below and an even shorter stroll from Rockefeller Center (for a more familiar landmark). The extensive menu offers Milanese favorites such as vitello tonnato (sliced slow-roasted veal with tuna-caper sauce) and veal cutlet with wild arugula. What makes this a nice post concert stop is the diner's ability to make it as light or hearty as desired. One could order a few appetizers, such as tuna tartare and fried calamari, a pasta or meat dish... or all of the above! Also, the sesame and poppy breadsticks as well as the olive focaccia are excellent.

2:00 p.m. Sunday: Lunch at La Sirène

The food find of the weekend! I found this modern French bistro by examining a map of Soho restaurants, and I could not be more pleased with my research. At La Sirène, chef/owner Didier Pawlicki has created a welcoming and intimate environment spotlighting Southern French cuisine. The service was superb and the prices very reasonable.

We perused the abundant menu options while enjoying a Kir Royale and a Pastis at a bright table by the window. First, we shared the Escargots à la Bourguignonne, a half dozen escargots in shells with a butter, garlic, and pesto sauce perfect for soaking up with the crusty French bread. Then, we enjoyed the homemade Pâté de Campagne with cornichons and pickled onions. The kitchen topped the green salad aside the pâté with an edible orchid — a lovely touch.

To warm me on the wintry day, I chose the Kassulet Toulousain — Chef Pawlicki's recipe of white beans, duck confit, slab bacon, and pork sausage. By popular demand, the bistro serves this traditional winter casserole year round! Vincent chose the most decadent of dishes, the Tournedos Rossini. For ultimate creaminess, La Sirène's version tops the filet mignon with foie gras that is not seared. The Port red wine truffle sauce finishes off this epicurean delight. For dessert, I recommend the tarte tatin, the upside down caramelized apple tart — flambéed and à la mode. The Rhône red by the glass was a perfect pairing with our plats principaux. Bravo, Chef Pawlicki, for one of our most pleasant dining experiences ever in NYC. 🍴

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