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25° Est

Moonstruck Dining



The rooftop terrace overlooking the Bassin de la Villette and the Ledoux building.

July 25 , 2007

It wasn't about the food, which was fine. The magical evening my companion and I spent at 25° Est (25 Degrees East) had (apart from our sparkling conversation) as much to do with the nearby water of the Bassin de la Villette, the warm night, the dying daylight, the rising and setting moon, the neoclassical lines of the Ledoux customs house nestling in the shadow of the overhead Métro line, and the presence of a hundred or so contented young 20- and 30-somethings having a fine time among friends and babies, served by a hard-working crew of perky, attentive and agreeably non-deferential waiting staff.

25° Est (the name comes from the angle the restaurant makes with the Canal de l'Ourcq) has only been open for a month, but is clearly a great hit. The bustle on the evening we were there brought back (possibly defective) memories of the restaurant scenes in Jacques Tati's *Playtime*. I was also put in mind of half-remembered scenes of epic family seaside meals in Italian movies from the Sixties and Seventies. The atmosphere was terrific.

The food, as I said, was fine, and is certainly good value for money, as is the short wine list. A generic Delas Côtes du Rhône for 18 euros is a bargain in anybody's book.

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My companion began with a chicken-liver terrine dotted with gray-green picholine olives and served with two types of chutney, which perfectly complemented its deep flavors, while I had the trendy cappuccino of watercress topped with incredibly fluffy, foamy scrambled eggs and a few slices of smoked duck breast. Yum. But why no spoon?

From among the main courses we chose the slow-cooked lamb hock (*souris d'agneau*) in a deep brown honey sauce and the beef skirt (*hampe roulée*), with shallots and a selection of fresh, competently cooked seasonal vegetables similar to those served with the lamb. The lamb was melting, as it should be, and the *hampe* was well-textured and characteristically flavored, which is what you want from one of the less-prized cuts. I realize I'm sounding a bit dismissive here, but don't get me wrong, this is very creditable food, and, even more to its credit, as unpretentious and friendly as the staff serving it.

My companion's *financier au fruits rouges* might not have had the finesse of the one we sampled a couple of weeks back at [Le Cristal de Sel](#), but it was well-made and full of flavor, enhanced by the accompanying pistachio sauce. All my pear trifle with caramelized cream made with salted butter lacked to make it really memorable was a good shot of something alcoholic to jazz up the pears and soften the layer of biscuit in the base of the glass. The waitress took my remark to this effect in very good part and the chef may well take note.

The glasses of Chablis we drank with the desserts (no dessert wines in the list) were fine, too, and on the house, our waitress told us: a nice gesture, greatly appreciated – like the second glass of complimentary grappa in a good Italian place.

On the roof of 25° Est, owner Mabrouk Mezouane has installed a terrace with its own small bar, which will, I imagine, draw crowds on a fine day. There are also plans to bring in young musicians for pre-dinner concerts. I sincerely hope this early success continues. It should act as a counterweight to the less than satisfactory food offerings at the nearby Marin Karmitz cinema complex.

Update, July 26, 2007: I went back to 25° Est with six people a week after my first visit. Although there were fewer people eating, it was total bedlam. Several of my friends preferred to have just a main course and dessert, but when (after waiting for 45 minutes with dirty main course plates still on our table), we asked for dessert, we were told that the kitchen had

closed! I was very annoyed with the staff. One of the waiters said that the kitchen had been in a mess all evening and couldn't produce the food properly.

Another friend tried to eat there on Sunday evening but was told they weren't serving food, although they claim to be open for Sunday dinner.

Let's hope the owners can get their act together soon and take advantage of the restaurant's great location.

Editor's note, 27 July 2007: After reading the above article, a representative of 25° Est contacted [Paris Update](#) to say that the restaurant was indeed having problems with kitchen staff and was working hard to remedy them. Until further notice, dinner will not be served on Sunday evenings. A new menu is being planned for the fall.

[Richard Hesse](#)

25° Est: 10, place de la Bataille de Stalingrad, 75019 Paris. Métro: Jaurès or Stalingrad. Tel: 01 42 09 66 74. Nearest Vélib' station: outside Jaurès and Stalingrad Métro stations. A la carte: about €25. Open Monday-Saturday for lunch and dinner, Sunday for drinks only.

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