

108 Marylebone Lane

It is interesting when a restaurant is simply known by its address; it's a sort of statement of confidence. And it is easy enough to find on Marylebone Lane, being part of the Marylebone Hotel on the corner of Bulstrode Street. But you would never know that it is part of a hotel, it has its own identity, and that is very much small and stylish with its own entrance directly off Marylebone Lane. The whole area is developing its own style and atmosphere, and is becoming known as 'Marylebone Village'. An interesting branding exercise to create somewhere within a great city that has a small and intimate community feel. It works, and in the evening, is crowded with people clearly enjoying the area and all it has to offer.

Step through the door and you are in an almost club-like lounge and bar with comfortable seating and a good level of lighting. The lounge offers a modern yet traditionally comfortable atmosphere with deep red hanging lampshades subtly illuminating the room. A focal point is the oversized

Chesterfield couch in burnt orange velvet. Leather chairs surround round marble-topped tables, and a stainless-steel bar runs along the length of the lounge. If you haven't reserved a table, you will almost certainly be sitting at the bar counter, but that is comfortable and a good place for pre-dinner drinks.

The restaurant area is on your

right. We were quickly shown to our table and provided with menus. It is not an extensive menu offering nine starters, four dishes 'From the Sea', five 'From the Land', and two 'From the Field'. One of the first things you notice is that 108 makes quite a point of the fact they support local suppliers from the area, people like Ginger Pig Butchers, Biggles sausages, La Fromagerie and even a local florist, Jane Packer. It really underlines the whole concept of the 'Marylebone Village' where small suppliers know and support each other.

Where dishes do not come from the 'village', they are clearly identified by locality, such as a starter of Honey Mustard Glazed Suffolk pork belly, and main dishes such as West Cornwall



The dining area of 108 Marylebone Lane.

Lemon Sole Goujons, Grilled Fillet of Shetland Isle Salmon or Braised Cornish Lamb Shank. It gives a very distinctive feel of top quality, carefully selected prime ingredients. It was good to see that there were vegetarian dishes available, and they were imaginative, such as a starter of Baked Tartlet of La Fromage Stilton and Leek. You don't need to be a vegetarian to find that a mouth watering tempting dish. They even offered Biggles Vegetarian

Sausages, though as a dedicated sausage fan, the Biggles Venison Sausages were too tempting to miss. Biggles sausages were established in Marylebone as London's first all-sausage emporium in 1989.

To end the meal, I was torn between the Warm Rococo Chocolate Brownie with rum caramelised banana or the Iced Orange Parfait with cranberry compote. I was tempted to try both, but settled for the Brownie, superb!

Given the selection of very high quality ingredients Executive Chef, Norman Farquharson has everything to create superb dishes, and that is just what he does, and at an accessible price. A three course meal, without wine, is in the range of £30 - £40 each, which by London stand-

ards is not unreasonable. They even offer an English wine, Denbies Whitedowns Cuvee, a Seyval Blanc made in Surrey by the Champagne method. They also have organic wines, as well as other wines sourced from small independent producers, and some of the better known international wines.

108 is a restaurant with a very individual style offering excellent quality, creative dishes, each with a distinctive touch, and extensive use of local ingredients. Match that with good service and it's a must to put on your list of restaurants not to miss next time you are in London.

Contact: tel. 00 44 (0) 20 7969 3900 or visit their website: www.108marylebonelane.com. A reservation is recommended.

P.L.

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The bar area.



Lobster and rocket salad with fresh lemon.

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