



# Bistro 190, London

There are restaurants and hotels you would walk straight past and never notice. Nothing on the outside reveals, or even hints, at what may lie behind the doors, unless someone tells you about it. You might have caught a glimpse on TV, for example a few weeks ago the BBC interviewed Lulu from Bistro 190. It's that sort of place, and judging by the 'showbiz' atmosphere and decor, you might guess that many others, including celebrities, from the film, television, media and fashion world have also recognised the attraction of this rather special restaurant tucked behind the discreet doors of the Gore Hotel in London's Queensway, and best of all, it's not even expensive. Their three course 'Theatre Menu' is well under £25.

As you walk in to the Gore, there is a small reception, and on the left the Bar 190 which seems much more like a traditional gentleman's club, lots of leather armchairs and wood panelling, and the sort of service

that makes these places so unique. In 1968 this was the setting for the iconic Rolling Stones' 'Beggars Banquet'. Be sure to try one of their Mojito's a traditional Cuban drink.

After your pre-dinner drinks, you walk back past reception into the restaurant. You can't fail to notice the décor. One food critic observed that it's "the favourable mingling of the quirky with the chic that helps Bistro One Ninety stand apart from the crowd", we couldn't have put it better ourselves. Just looking at the photos on the wall, and there are hundreds of them, will keep you amused as you wait for dinner to be served.

If you go for the Theatre Menu, it's very competitively

priced at £21.50 for two courses, or £23.50 for three. The à la carte menu is equally reasonably priced, with starters ranging from £5.95 to £7.50 and offers dishes with their own very distinctive approach. Steak tartar with duck egg, lime juice and coriander; fresh mussels steamed in cider and lemon juice, and served with crispy seaweed. If you have a more traditional palate, try the smooth chicken liver pate served with homemade crispy bread and their 'house' tomato chutney.

I have always viewed fish in any London restaurant as never being as fresh as we have here in Portugal, let's face it, London is not that near to the sea. I have to admit to being wrong. The crispy red sea bream, served with fresh

samphire and sauce choron was as good as any fish I have tasted, a simply superb flavour. The same crispy skin sea bass was also on the à la carte menu, this time served on a bed of vegetable julienne with tossed lobster butter and dill. We tried both, and neither disappointed in any way. Other main course choices were a 28 day aged ribeye steak with triple cooked chips, cumin rubbed rack of British lamb, or even their own fish cakes served with peppery rocket salad and lemon aioli sauce. The menu is not vast (a good sign) offering about ten choices of main course, so you know everything is going to be freshly cooked and served.

Desserts, if not part of the theatre menu, are all priced at

£5.95, and just as imaginative as the main courses, with a couple of the more standard offerings like Crème Brûlée or a cheese board. For the more adventurous, try a blue cheese tart with Port and vanilla reduction and pear chutney, or perhaps peppered strawberry cheese cake on a white chocolate and biscuit base.

There is an excellent choice of wines, and the waiters recommendations can be relied upon.

Whilst there, ask at reception if you can see one or two of the hotel rooms. Prepare to be utterly amazed, the Gore Hotel is a place full of delightful surprises.

Bistro One Ninety, The Gore Hotel, 190 Great Queen Street, London. Tel: 0044 20 7584 6601 P.L.



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