



Afternoon delights at DB Bistro Moderne

Just when you thought you'd have to give in to February's budget blues, some restaurateurs have opened their hearts so that you don't have to open your wallet. Well, not so much, anyway.

BY VANCOUVER COURIER JANUARY 30, 2009



Just when you thought you'd have to give in to February's budget blues, some restaurateurs have opened their hearts so that you don't have to open your wallet. Well, not so much, anyway.

Lunch is the savvy diner's secret weapon. Afraid of Dine Out crowds? A lunchtime escape could be your best bet. While there are few better ways to gauge the measure of a room than to pop by for affordable noon time sustenance, the last place we expected to land a deal was at edgy new DB Bistro Moderne. Here you can score a taste of Daniel Boulud's superb French fare for less than the cost of a downtown dinner entrée.

Expectations were high, as three of us settled into one of DB's comfy red leather booths. We weren't let down, and in moments found ourselves at the centre of choreographed French service--almost but not quite over the top. The parade of attendants with detail-driven place setting and wine service seemed

entirely appropriate. And the substance didn't disappoint.

It wasn't long before we were wowed by butternut squash soup; a hearty, rustic, fat-wrapped slice of duck paté with garnishes of onion compote and grainy mustard; a duo of Berkshire pork and braised coq au vin with spaetzle in its own miniature Dutch oven. All delivered with service that some rooms would have a challenge mounting any time, let alone on a quiet weekday lunch.

Overall, the room exudes confidence from the moment you cross the threshold. It reflects the personality of the chef who has reached out to the local culinary community since first arriving here a year ago. The damage, before wine, tax and tip? Two courses for just \$26. Not a bad deal for one of the hottest rooms in town. (2551 West Broadway, 604-739-7115).

- - -

Speaking of choreographed service, our trusty foodie spies tell us that things are also hopping down the street at Mistral (2582 West Broadway, 604-733-0046), where Minna and Jean-Yves Benoit have risen to the challenge of keeping up with their high profile new neighbour. The Dine Out dinner deal here is \$28 and includes an excellent steak au poivre, while lunch for \$20 is another score.

- - -

If Sundays seem a tad drab, consider a trip downtown to Uva Wine Bar, where as of this weekend they'll pour you a \$5 glass of Prosecco by way of saying thanks for making the trip. Or several glasses, if you wish. Kick back and sip back along with a good small plates menu from 5 p.m. to midnight. At the Moda Hotel, 900 Seymour St., 604-632-9560.

- - -

If you're a Riesling lover, you won't want to miss The Love of Riesling at Fuel, where sommelier Tom Doughty and chef Robert Belsham revel in Riesling-friendly plates Feb. 21 to 23.

There's no limit to Riesling's versatility. In fact, says Doughty, "You can even pair a half decent Riesling with a Big Mac and life is good!"

We recently test drove the menu, and can assure you that Belcham's menu is about as far from a Big Mac as you can imagine.

Top tastes range from a pairing of Qualicum Bay scallops with treviso (similar to endive) compressed with blood orange, and Meyer lemon with hazelnut, paired with Selbach Oster Halbtrocken Mosel 2006; and slow roasted wild chum salmon with beetroot pearls and mild horseradish cream, with Ayler Krupp Bischofliches Spätlese Mosel 2006. Five course, \$69, plus \$50 for some superb wines to match. Call 604-288-7905 to book.

BELLY'S BUDGET BEST

- Anakena Single Vineyard Viognier '08

The sequel to last year's best buy is perfumed and floral with bold acidity and more mineral notes. If anything, it's a slightly leaner style with stonefruit and citrus notes. Great value at BCLS \$16.95.

© (c) CanWest MediaWorks Publications Inc.