The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Plenty of Cheekiness and Artichokes Galore

By The Moscow Times

October 27, 2011



This year's month-long Moscow Gastronomic Festival has kicked off, and if there is a trend in the special tasting menus offered by participating restaurants, it would have to be artichokes.

Harvested in the spring and the fall, this meaty vegetable is season-appropriate. Beefbar Junior serves artichokes in the form of a light mousse alongside Peking duck. At Nobu, they come in a salad topped with truffle oil. And, at Syr, they form a prototypically autumnal palette with celery and sunchokes.

If you're not thrilled by the thought of flowers for dinner (artichokes are, after all, buds — or didn't you know?), there is the intriguing marinated scallops with coconut "caviar," avocado mousse, and vodka "diamonds" at the wine-themed Grand Cru in Patriarch's Ponds.
A selection with earthier tones can be had down the block at Uilliam's, including pelmeni with boar and chestnuts, and beef cheeks with polenta and gorgonzola.

If you want something figuratively but not literally cheeky, you may want to head across town to the Radisson Royal Hotel and take the elevator up 30 floors to Buono, where they offer a dish called "Lobster Seeks Bride." Whether that means only women can partake of the shellfish the restaurant does not say.

All menus include at least three dishes, including an appetizer and a dessert, and many of them come with at least one alcoholic beverage, ranging from the unoriginal Hennessy VSOP to an entire series of wine pairings. The festival sets a price ceiling for the menus at 3,000 rubles, and many of the restaurants take their menus to the limit, so to speak.

One new feature of the festival is a real-time rating system: Diners can go to the festival's website to rate their meal on a scale of one to five stars, and everyone can see which menus have left diners thrilled, satisfied or indifferent.

Leading the pack at the moment is Chaika, with its two tasting menus called "Moscow Kitsch" and "Ne Nasha Rasha," demonstrating that cheekiness is in fact highly favored among Moscow restaurant-goers. At the bottom of the polls is the Baltschug restaurant in the eponymous hotel, perhaps because they decided to make Kamchatka crab into a jelly for their appetizer. Not far ahead of Baltschug is Vogue Cafe, which inexplicably turned potatoes into a sauce for one of its dishes.

All the menus (only in Russian, unfortunately) of the 49 participating restaurants can be found on the festival's website. The event runs until Nov. 10.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2011/10/27/plenty-of-cheekiness-and-artichokes-galore-a35184