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Max's Beef for Money: Moscow Takes its Beef Seriously

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Hearty, earthy honest food and an elegant aesthetic create the feel of an epicurean dinner party — in a meat locker.

Max's Beef for Money takes a self-professed approach of "healthy snobbery" toward its food. Recently opened in the elegant district of Patriarch's Ponds, the restaurant deals in beef, wine and little else.

Master sommelier-turned-restaurateur Vladimir Basov is the brains behind the affair. There are two obvious indicators of this — the wine list, which is probably five times longer than the menu itself, and the wine glasses, which are so incredibly beautiful that snapping their fragile stems seems a real probability.

Eating at the restaurant feels rather like being invited to the dinner party of a wealthy, epicurean meat-lover — apart from the fact that you need to book and pay to come of course. Diners sit elbow-to-elbow at four long tables. The lighting is dimmed, the tables are

a decadent red and the restaurant has opted for an interesting alternative to wall art — an enormous glass curing chamber filled with beef spans one side of the dining room. This may explain the slightly cool temperature in the restaurant. You are, after all, essentially sitting in a highly stylized meat locker.

Max's Beef

Max's Angus beef comes from the restaurant's own organic farm in Vsevolozhsk. The kitchen shuts every Monday for the chef to cut the meat for the coming week. Start with the delicate beef tartare and move on to beef cheeks stewed in port (550 rubles), sweetbreads with a crab bisque (850 rubles) or, of course, steak. There are two types: the "alternative" steak, made from non-traditional cuts (300 rubles per 100 grams) and the "brand" steak, made from prime cuts (630 rubles per 100 grams).

Much of the wine on offer is rare or biodynamic and sports a price tag to match, although you can buy a good glass of Cote du Rhone for 450 rubles.

The food is served beautifully but simply, belying the kitchen's perfectionist aesthetic, with an accent on clear and vibrant flavors. The vegetables in the starter and the lightly dressed new potatoes served with the main taste like they might have been dug up the day before. The steak is hearty, earthy and perfectly prepared. It's pricey, but it's honest food that tastes like someone has really cared about it.

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