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Moscow Restaurants: A Feast Fit for a Tsar at TsDL

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The Central House of Writers

The Central House of Writers, known by its Russian name "Tsentralny Dom Literatorov" (TsDL), has witnessed a whole lot of history. It's therefore only fitting that the Art Nouveau mansion's revamped restaurant offers an elegant nod to the past.

Located on Povarskaya Ulitsa — considered to be one of the most aristocratic streets in the city before the 1917 revolution — TsDL was built at the end of the 19th century by the famous architect Pyotr Boytsov. After several reincarnations, including as a masonic lodge and a poor house, in 1932 the venue became the administrative building for the union of writers.

There was an attempt to modernize the interior by the trendy architecture firm Wowhaus a couple of years ago, but the ambiguous results saw a return to TsDL's original stark neo-Gothic beauty.

When you enter you'll see why that's a good thing. The airy main room is two storeys high and features intricately carved wooden balusters, stained glass windows and a wooden staircase built without a single nail. Your attention is immediately drawn to a staggering chandelier — a gift from Stalin to the writer Maxim Gorky — which used to hang at one of the city's metro stations.

The restaurant's menu has been inspired by the opulently Slavic surroundings. TsDL's new chef is Sergei Lobachyov, a man of impressive culinary lineage — his grandfather is Alexander Filin, the head of Russia's National Guild of Chefs. Start with pirozhki (small traditional Russian pies). If you're feeling brave, the one with beef brains is particularly good. The guinea fowl pate served inside a glazed apple is excellent (550 rubles), as is botvinya, a cold beetroot-based soup with vegetables and cured salmon (600 rubles). For your main try the grilled rock fish with zucchini (950 rubles) or beef cheeks with hot rice pudding and pine cone jam (800 rubles). The rice pudding is served onto your plate by the waitstaff via a high-tech siphon. Smaller portions can be ordered as part of a tasting menu (1500 rubles).

If you still have space for dessert after all that, go for the black bread ice cream (150 rubles). Pair your meal with traditional Russian kvas — a bread-based fermented drink (100 rubles) — or berry mors (150 rubles).

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