

Karaoke and Russian Classics at Arkhiv 13

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Arkhiv 13 / Facebook

Much of Arkhiv 13's appeal comes from its venue—a charming 19th century mansion tucked away in a courtyard off Myasnitskaya Ulitsa. Ascend the grand staircase and pass a number of glittering hostesses before taking your seat in the spacious central dining room. On the cards: perennial Russian classics that won't look outdated on your Instagram account.

Brand chef Vladimir Mochalin is the brains behind the kitchen. Inspired by the building, its heritage and the people who have passed through its doors, his dishes are a patchwork of different influences and epochs, with a firm nod to traditional Russian cuisine. Start with the Olivier salad, prepared according to a 19th-century recipe. Quails eggs, shrimp, black caviar and beautiful presentation bring it up to modern-day dining standards (550 rubles).

The grilled vegetable salad with aubergines and brinza (280 rubles) is less exciting, but a good option if you're not quite brave enough to start with the stroganina—a speciality hailing from

Russia's Far North which consists of thinly sliced frozen raw fish.

Anyone at all familiar with Russian cuisine will feel at home with the mains, which include the perennial beefsteak, accompanied by a fried egg and served on a bed of red cabbage (680 rubles). A clear highlight is the duck breast with pumpkin mash and button mushrooms (680 rubles). Portions are small, but fairly priced.

With its magnificent five-meter-high ceilings, ornate stucco and beautiful pillars, you'd have thought Arkhiv 13 wouldn't need much further embellishment. It's a shame then that designers have opted for a dramatically oversized contemporary chandelier which takes up much of the ceiling in the central dining room.

A congenial, if at times slightly raucous atmosphere dominates the main dining room. This certainly puts a stop to too many reveries about Russia's grand silver age—at our sitting the DJ decks came out as midnight drew closer, and a young reveler took to the stage to sing a heavily-accented rendition of Uptown Funk. You won't dine like Pushkin here, but you'll probably have a fun night anyway.

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