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Pâté & Co: Paris in the Shade of the Kremlin

A new brasserie south of the river is bringing rustic French cuisine to Russia

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Pate & Co. serves snacks and soups in a relaxed environment. **PATE & CO / FACEBOOK**

When you google Pâté & Co. cafe, the first thing you note is the location. Situated right across the street from the opulent Baltschug Kempinski hotel, with the Kremlin and St. Basil's Cathedral looming beautifully in the horizon, one might think that this place is mainly tailored to high-profile guests of the hotel. So it was a pleasant surprise to discover that the interior of the cafe provides for a more relaxing and jovial atmosphere.

French cuisine underwent a rebirth in Moscow from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s, with the arrival of chefs such as David Desseaux, Patrice Tereygeol and Jerome Coustillas. Legend even has it that chefs brought foie gras and truffles to Russia in suitcases.

Restaurateur Dmitry Zotov (known for Haggis Pub & Kitchen and Zotman Pizza Pie) is now challenging these clichés by offering a more stripped-back approach to French cuisine.

Pâté & Co. cafe offers a tasteful interior, with a chic take on French design. Downstairs is adorned with black and white tiles and an open kitchen, with green plush seating by the windows. The upstairs interior is somewhat puzzling – wallpaper with tropical ornamentation and hanging wooden lamps with plastic plants.

The staff were both polite and helpful, sometimes excessively so. When explaining that their signature dish, the chicken liver pate with red orange, was unavailable, they went on to describe how fantastic the dish is and how unfortunate it was that it wouldn't be possible to experience it this evening. In traditional Russian fatalistic gloom, true happiness is always out of reach.

As the name suggests, the local specialty is pâté and terrine — essentially similar to pâté, but made with more coarsely chopped ingredients. Five varieties are offered, at 460 rubles ($8) each: chicken liver with red orange, salmon and smoked sockeye, wild duck terrine, artichokes with truffle oil and sausage and ham pâté. These are served with just two slices of bread. This was disappointing — after all, in Russia it's never pâté with bread, but bread with pâté.

Apart from the signature dish, there's consolation to be found in the soup menu. The onion soup (360 rubles) was rich enough, but the accompanying toasted baguette with faux camembert was sadly burned to a crisp. The Marseille fish soup (460 rubles) with seafood and capers were somehow reminiscent of fish solyanka a la Russe.

To some befuddlement, I was informed that, despite the marketing, the restaurant had no wine menu. This left a selection of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beer to choose from.

The main courses represent both French and Belgian culinary traditions. Try the duck breast with dates and topinambour (890 rubles), mussels in white wine and cream (860 rubles) or beef fillet with potato gratin and romaine lettuce (1,190 rubles). According to staff, the mussels and all other seafood are delivered everyday on ice. The beef fillet was tender, but the gratin turned out to be way more pleasing.

The selection of desserts wasn't exactly French – honey cake, panna cotta with red orange, passion fruit tart, Napoleon cake and a selection of eclairs (290 rubles each).

Ultimately, despite its luxurious location, Pâté & Co. offers quite an average experience.

Undoubtedly, its pleasant and well-designed interior make it a nice place to eat and relax in a prime tourist location – but would you go back for seconds? See it for yourself.

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