

NEW AND NOTED

A Smart Revamp

Mimolette (55 Fairways Dr., 6467-7748) might not be the easiest restaurant to get to, but thanks to a newly revamped menu, making the trip has never been more worthwhile. One notable new standout is a Kurobuta five-spiced pork rack with Vitelot (an ancient type of blue potato) chips with mimolette cheese, haricot and balsamic reduction (\$40). Another dish—and the one that got us the most excited on the new menu—was the foie gras ravioli (\$18 appetizer, \$28 main). These perfect pasta pockets were set afloat in a dreamy cloud of parmiggiano foam and drizzled with irresistible white truffle cream sauce. Even if we had to walk here from Changi, the memory of the earthy, salty, delight on our tongues would be enough to sustain us during the return journey. Dessert has gotten a new look too with homemade pineapple sorbet topped with coconut espuma and fresh strawberries served in a martini glass and fittingly called Pina Colada (\$14). Of course, not all change is good as executive Chef Louie Moong wisely demonstrated by leaving his Macaroni and Cheese (\$20) in place—with gruyere, mozzarella and emmanthal cheeses, he elevates this common dish to high art. In fact, no matter what you eat, you might want to order one of these just to take home.



RESTAURANT REVIEWS

Fiesta Brasilia ★★★★☆

Brazilian. #B1-15/16 United Square, 101 Thompson Rd., 6250-0108.

Carniwhores delight! You have another Sodom where you can indulge in an orgy of spit-roasted meat with no one to tell you when to stop or to judge how many pounds of flesh



you are putting away (or adding to your waistline). Although you can order off the menu here, why would you when for \$38 you can enjoy a true *churrascaria* experience, where one long metal skewer of meat after another is presented at your table. Want the grilled lamb? Have your waiter carve away. Prefer the chicken and bacon? Then wave him away and let the next meat maestro slide a succulent and salty chunk of roasted goodness onto your never-empty plate. In between every serving, the staff replaces the skewers in the oven. The result is that you can always choose to have that wonderfully-brown-roasted cut of meat often referred to as the "end piece." Or, once that's carved away, you can go for a more rare inner slice. Despite all the parading about and in-and-out-of-the-ovens treatment, the meat magically stayed hot, moist and delicious. In addition to the choices mentioned, you can also pick from chicken and pork sausages, pork ribs, flank steak, beef rump, chicken hearts, flank steak, baby beef, ham and—just to try to be a little healthy—grilled pineapple. Actually, speaking of being healthy, we suppose we have to mention that there's a full salad bar here offering a variety of salsas, soup, roasted root veggies, *feijoadas* (black bean stew), rice, cold salads and more. Oh, and because you're sure to be hungry after all this indulgence, there's also a pasta bar serving up penne or spaghetti with a host of different sauces. Add in the also-included ice cream bar and completely delicious (and mysterious) cheese puffs served tableside like bread, and there's no way you can leave hungry. The service was first rate even if the atmosphere felt a bit cafeteria-like (but there is a really cool, huge photo mural showing the giant Jesus in Rio) with some kind of blaring Brazilian rock concert (we think) dominating on the TVs and the speakers. If that's too much noise for you, a more quiet experience can be had in the alfresco setting next to a soothing water feature. This ain't fine dining, but for those who are serious about their meat, it doesn't really get much better. Open Mon-Thu 3-11pm; Fri-Sun 11:30am-3pm, 6-11pm. Alfresco. Parking at United Sq. AE, MC, \$\$-\$\$.

RESTAURANT REVIEWS

Bistro Du Vin ★★★★ NEW

French. #02-12 Shaw Centre, 1 Scotts Rd., 6733-7763.

Our experience at Bistro Du Vin, the Les Amis Group's latest venture was—how do you say in French?—*comme ci, comme ça* (a very fancy way of saying so-so). On the *comme ci* side



is the place itself. Like all good bistros, the menu is written on a blackboard, the chairs are small and made of wood, the tables are small and made of marble and the floor is tiled. The staff consisted of locals who did a great job explaining—and pronouncing—all the French dishes (OK, so you don't get that wonderful French accent, but you also don't get the snobbery for which Parisians are so famous). Like the place itself, the food was presented and prepared beautifully but—and here comes the *comme ça* side of things—was not always all that tasty. The pan fried red mullet with aubergine caviar starter (\$19) was crispy on the outside, tender and moist on the inside, but the flavor was nearly invisible. My dining companion

was practically salivating for warm goat cheese salad (a traditional bistro dish not easily found on our island outpost, \$18) but her palate was let down by a chèvre that, while creamy and well-textured, lacked its signature tanginess. The Kurobuta pork chop (\$39), while on the thin side, was correctly cooked yet covered in an alleged mustard sauce that tasted like something you might find in a frozen dinner. For dessert, the chocolate fondant was rich, thick and potently pleasing but the small lump of vanilla ice-cream next to it couldn't keep pace—we had to ask for another scoop, and we were taking really small bites! There were two dishes that offered a bit of redemption. One was a woodsy mushroom fricassee with morels and poached egg (\$19) that was faultless. The other was so-tender-it-nearly-dissolved braised beef served in delicious wintery gravy (\$32). It was the kind of dish you could imagine having with a flagon of wine in a French tavern on a cold night. Which is perhaps the best quality of this place—it is so completely not Singapore that a visit here could be worth it just to be transported to Europe. Just be sure to pack reasonable expectations. Open daily: noon-2pm, 6.30-10pm. at Shaw Centre. AE, MC, V. **\$\$\$\$**

RESTAURANT REVIEWS

Capricci ★★★★☆

Italian. 27 Tanjong Pagar Road, 6221 6761.

The signs were good at a recent lunch visit to Capricci. Foremost among these: The room had several tables of patrons who were conversing with restaurateurs Massimo Aquaro



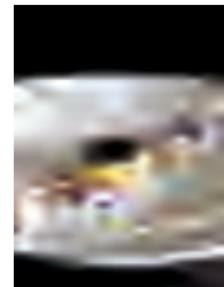
and Pietro Aprigliano in Italian. Always good when the right ethnic types flock to a new ethnic restaurant. Our greeting was professional and efficient and we were shown to our seats in a cozy and elegant room full of swish mauve and brown fabrics. The huge variety of set lunch menu items for just \$28 seemed almost too good to be true, and the focaccia that arrived on the table was super-fresh and topped with veggies and other goodies. Yet as my dining companion and I walked away from the restaurant, we couldn't help but feel that Aquaro and Aprigliano (try saying that five times fast!) were holding back. For example, one of the starters from the set—a mix of

walnuts, pears and pecorino cheese in honey & red berry dressing—was fresh and generous, but ultimately forgettable, without any significant zing. The ala carte starter, recommended by our host, was wonderful, however—a deconstructed eggplant parmesan (\$18) that featured a thick disc of the purple veggie fried to a wonderful creamy consistency that got only better when dredged through the perfectly acidic tomato sauce and pesto drizzle. The mains both were perfectly prepared yet again, didn't really move our mouths. The gnocchi di barbabietola al mascarpone e pesto di rughetta (\$18) had light-as-cloud potato and beetroot pasta dumplings dressed in a thick and creamy gorgonzola and rocket pesto sauce. Yet, no matter how hard our tastebuds searched, they couldn't find a hint of rocket flavor, nor the sharp edge of gorgonzola (interesting because the Italian description mentions mascarpone, while the translation says gorgonzola—the first seems more likely). We weren't expecting complexity from the set menu's pappardelle alla Bolognese, but definitely wanted a rich, deep meaty flavor which—while it must be said that the pasta was perfectly cooked—was sadly absent. Desserts were solid—especially the bread-like pumpkin vanilla custard (\$10). Overall, there was nothing wrong with Capricci, but our hope is that the two experienced paisanos running the kitchen will be able to make everything more than right—if they release the reigns a little and let a little more flavor and personality shine through the super-fresh food. Mon-Sat 11:30am-3pm; 6:30-11pm. Free valet service. AE,MC,V. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$\$

Jaan par André ★★★★☆

French Nouvelle. 70/F, Equinox Complex, Swissôtel The Stamford, 2 Stamford Rd., 6837-3322.

"It looks like a Dr. Seuss village of vegetables!" That was how our dining companion reacted to the first of the seven courses featured in our "Menu Decouverte" at Chef de Cuisine André Chiang's elegant restaurant perched on the 70th floor. And what an apt description it was. The course was called "forgotten vegetables" and featured miniature museum-quality displays of glistening greens, raw reds and wondrous puffy white foam buttons—we were definitely not in Kansas anymore. The tastes were equally Seuss-like, delivering beet when our mouths were expecting tomato, and surprising touches with big garden flavors from even the tiniest tufts, cubes and pyramids. The flash-grilled tuna belly arrived dusted with aromatic charcoal powder and sat atop a pinky-sized potato stuffed with an aubergine mash. In typical fashion, Chiang (who famously plates everything himself) also added a few tiny toro jelly cubes to the plate. Although it sounds like a mouthful, our first, erm, mouthful (in which we combined all the elements) was wonderful—a blissful blend of land and sea. Probably the biggest wow of the night (aside from the pop rocks—we'll explain later) was the "pre-sale" lamb. This refers to lamb that has been fed on salty marsh grasses near Mont St.-Michel in northern France. The slice served was tender, succulent and delicately meaty. Of course there were twists, and one came in the form of a wild rice carbonara—puffed rice sprinkled over a creamy, bacon-infused ricotta. Along with the liquefied sweet peas on the plate, it was a novel take on the classic peas, bacon and cheese pasta dish. But you're not paying attention any more are you? You're thinking about the pop rocks. OK, but first the pre-dessert: A thin flute of grapefruit sorbet topped with campari foam—the perfect splash of puckery citrus to get the mouth ready for dessert which, by the way, was an improbably dense disc of chocolate ganache topped by a dollop of milk sorbet (oh, what cream can become!). OK, and now for the pop rocks. They were orange-flavored and arrived embedded in a wafer of dark chocolate along with three other petit fours including a frozen white chocolate lollipop with an earl-grey-infused strawberry center. It was a fittingly fun end to a meal infused with art, whimsy and clear mastery of textures, portions and flavors. The fab food even upstaged the stunning skyline view. Service was spot on, too. Open Mon-Sat noon-2:30pm, 7-11pm; Sun 7-11pm. ↗ recommended. ↗ at Raffles City Shopping Centre. AE,DC,MC,V. \$\$\$\$\$



RESTAURANT REVIEWS

Krish ★★★★☆ NEW

Asian Fusion. 9 Rochester Park, 6779 4644.

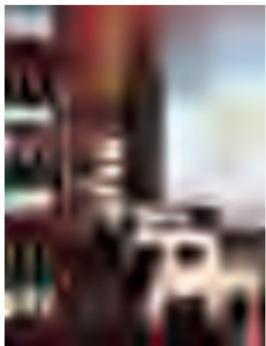


It's been said that you can tell a lot about the meal you're going to be served at a restaurant by the quality of the bread basket that arrives before the main courses. So when our waiter placed a basket of thin, crispy, buttery, salty squares in front of us at Krish, the latest restaurant to set up home in one of Rochester Park's iconic black and white houses, we knew we were in for a treat. Through mumbly, crumb-filled mouths we asked what sort of bread magic this was and our warm and helpful waiter explained that it was the chef's take on chapatti—the Indian flatbread. And it certainly was a sign of things to come. Just as the chapatti was an update of the traditional, so was the ravioli (\$12) which came next. Filled not with a timid mozzarella cheese, but with a spiced carrot mash, the thin-skinned pockets of pleasure were set afloat in a pool of ginger brown butter and adorned with crunchy pomegranate seeds. It was at once tart and creamy with a pleasant heat glowing underneath thanks to the ginger. The tempura brie (\$16) was a similar carnival of contrasts: Crispy coating giving way to a soft inside; a fresh and crispy salad counterbalancing the decadence of the full-fat French cheese; a light breeze of curry blowing through the whole affair. For the main course, the moist snapper (\$20) continued to delight, enrobed as it was not with the usual breadcrumbs or even more trendy panko, but with crushed papadums—a touch that added just the right amount of global intrigue to a typically mild fish. The only misstep in an otherwise fine culinary journey was the mushroom pongal (\$26) which our waiter said was like "an Indian version of risotto." While the truffle and mushroom flavor was spot on, the rice itself lacked character and seemed more like a bland, inexpensive version than something sourced from a market from a far-away land; for this we've had to pull back one star. Dessert ended everything on a high note, though, with Valrhona chocolate Frangelico chunks and a mint yogurt sorbet (\$12) set adrift on a plate splashed with a swathe of pink peppercorn sauce. It was, again, a dazzling contrast in textures and flavors, which seems to be the hallmark of American chef Matthew Baker's style here. The setting at Krish delights as much as the food. In fact, it's advisable to arrive early and enjoy a drink on the upper-level outdoor deck next to the glass-cube that is the bar. The Tweaks (\$16) with Prosecco, strawberries and ginger is particularly refreshing—especially while enjoying one of the swings. You can also eat on the deck, but you might not want to miss the chandeliers made from old bottles indoors in the country estate-style dining room. Either way, make sure you try those chapatti crisps! Open daily 6-11pm. Free valet parking with \$100 purchase. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$\$

Lucas ★★★★ NEW

Continental. Klapson's, The Boutique Hotel, 15 Hoe Chiang Road, Tower Fifteen, 6521-9030

We're not quite sure who Lucas is, but we're betting that he has something of a split-personality disorder. Why do we say this? Because on a recent visit things were more



uneven than Jim Carrey in *Me, Myself and Irene*. The first thing that hits you in this smallish mod space (part of the crazy-cool Klapson's hotel) is the hip décor complete with a lighting fixture that seems to be comprised of silver molars. The tables though, were draped in burgundy tablecloths that would be more at home at a 50th anniversary party than in a chic eatery. Sadly, they were also stained. While it was clear that the staff was trying really, really hard to be attentive and professional, everything felt a bit forced and bumbling. We were given yummy complimentary Christmas cocktails when we sat down—a classy touch. Yet the bar

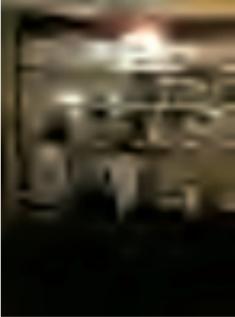
blender for drinks was so loud that we had to stop speaking whilst it was whirring. Upon getting our cocktails, we asked to enjoy them awhile before ordering, but we practically had to karate chop the eager waiter several times. This would all have been OK if the food worked but, it too, was also hit-and-miss. The cream of mushroom soup (\$10) was full of divinely rich shroomy flavor, but it was served a bit cool and in such a small portion that it seemed like the chef forgot to put the second scoop in the bowl. The crabmeat Caesar salad (\$18) on the other hand, was plentiful with a perfectly made dressing. For the mains, my dining companion exclaimed that the Dijon and pistachio crusted lamb chop (\$40) was possibly the best she'd had in Singapore. Yet, not only was the blackened tuna not blackened, the cooking was uneven. The texture was tough even though it was still raw in the middle. Things smoothed out a bit at dessert with a wonderful mouse that balanced dark chocolate's tendency toward bitter with luscious creamy overtones. Overall this is a restaurant that's trying really hard—and maybe that's the problem. Perhaps Lucas should just lighten up a little—take off the burgundy tablecloths, let its staff relax and serve more casual food. If the space was converted to a bistro-bar, it would indeed be a very cool place in which to hang—and no one would even notice the blaring blender. Open daily 7am-11pm. ↑. ↗ at adjoining carpark. AE,DC,MC,V. \$\$\$\$\$

RESTAURANT REVIEWS

Osvaldo ★★★★☆ NEW

Italian. Maxwell Chambers, 32 Maxwell Rd., #01-03, 6224-0978.

Chef Osvaldo Forlino has been freed! Formerly the chef at the much-lauded, and very formal, Forlino Restaurant at One Fullerton, Osvaldo is now at liberty to cook the type of food—in



exactly the setting—he loves. His new venture is open, airy, casual and, because it is furnished with antiques from his private collection, has a European bistro feel to it. It's the perfect setting for the food that comes out of the visible-to-the-dining room kitchen. Nothing is overly-wrought; instead, all dishes are simple and well-prepared with super-fresh ingredients. Case in point, the Salumi platter (\$21), which features a variety of cured meats that are ultra-tender, thinly-sliced and full of mouthwatering seasonings. The polenta with cheese fondue and chiodini mushrooms (\$19) was wonderfully creamy even if it needed a bit of salt and pepper to up the flavor quotient. Other starters include

bruschetta (\$12), San Daniele ham with melon (\$20), and a rocket salad with shaved parmesan (\$13) which could have done with a bit more cheese to go with the yummy leaves. Any bumps during the starters were completely ironed out come main course time. A porcini mushroom and sausage risotto (\$24) had a deep, woodsy flavor enhanced by the shaved-on-the-spot parmesan cheese. Unlike other risottos, this version was prepared al dente, so the grains of Arborio rice retained a bit of texture and nuttiness. The foresty flavors continued with a delicious tagliatelle with wild boar (\$23) featuring tender meat and perfectly-cooked noodles. A dish of pansotti (Italian for “pot bellied”) containing super-light pasta formed into triangles around a spinach and ricotta filling tasted as though the spinach had been picked seconds earlier. The desserts were also delish and quite creative including yummy vanilla ice cream served like a pile of spaghetti (\$14). But beyond the appealing food here, what really makes a visit to Osvaldo something you'll want to repeat is the professional staff and relaxed setting through which Osvaldo himself flitters (along with his sister the hostess and wife who occasionally emerges from the kitchen), beaming diners with his wide smile. A nod must also be given to the friendly and professional wait staff who had the good sense to let us chat our heads off for about an hour with a bottle of wine without rushing us to make a menu choice. Chef Osvaldo clearly feels at home in his new space and—while enjoying his completely-satisfying home-style food, pouring yourself water from the ceramic-corked bottle or olive oil from the mini tin can on the table—you will too. Open Mon-Sat 11:30am-2:30pm, 6:30-10:30pm.  Park at car park between Maxwell Chambers and Red Dot Design. AE,DC,MC,V. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

RESTAURANT REVIEWS

Oenotheque by Wine Universe ★★★★ NEW

Continental. #01-111 Millenia Walk, 9 Raffles Blvd., 6338-0717.

We know something about you. We know that, on a recent Saturday night, around 9pm you weren't eating at one of the best new restaurants in town—Oenotheque, a joint



venture between Magdalene Tang of Mag's Wine Kitchen, and Swiss wine distributor Wine Universe (yes, we said Swiss). We know this about you because we were there and you weren't. (Unless, of course, you were the couple sitting in the corner. If so, apologies.) We're really not sure why no one was there, but maybe the magician in the kitchen waved his spatula and made the other diners vanish. Sound outlandish? Not if you saw the way he turned a tomato consommé into a jellied cone in which tiny, crunchy capsicums were suspended—or the way the whole affair was surrounded by tiny beads made from green olives (\$12). Then there was the sashimi of ocean trout—a work of wonder itself

without considering the arugula "milk" and super-thin beetroot-flourless-pasta-like-strips that adorned the outer edge of the bowl (\$16). So the kitchen wizard (who's named Paul Longworth by the way, and has previously been a sous chef at the 1-Michelin star Club Gascon in London) knows how to invent, prepare and present his conjurings with art and flair. But what about the taste? Abracadabra. The two starters just described were texture-rich and filled with clean oceanic and vegetal flavors. For mains, the seared Hokkaido scallops served atop salty, swoon-inducing pork belly and adorned with cauliflower puree and shallot jus (\$38) were perfectly tender. The flavors in this dish each took their turn at center stage and then receded into an ensemble deserving of the applause coming from our taste buds. The two lamb chops (\$45) were fresh, tender and perfectly enlivened by their surroundings of leeks, mustard sauce and red onions (to be honest though, for the price, one more chop would have been perfect, which is why we took off half a star). With warm, professional service; an airy, modern indoor/outdoor setting; and an actual wine library (that's what Oenotheque means) from where you can take a discounted bottle home after dinner; the magic act is truly complete. See you there next Saturday? Open daily 11:30am-2:30pm, 6:30pm-midnight. at Millenia Walk. AE,MC,V. \$\$\$