

Hibiscus – flower by name, flavourful by nature

Friday, 06 May 2011

Dione Shun reviews Hibiscus restaurant.

Hibiscus – glorified with 2 Michelin stars, voted into San Pellegrino world's 50 best restaurants of 2011 and with an acclaimed chef trained by the likes of Alan Passard, Alain Ducasse and Jean Paul Lacombe, in the culinary world – this is definitely not the dainty flower the name elicits.

Originally located in Ludlow, owners Claude and Claire Bosi have now relocated to central London just off Regent Street. In an unassuming location, where passersby will have to take a second glance to notice the small capitalised font of its namesake, it doesn't scream out in terms of outer appeal but upon entering the establishment the beige wood panelling provides a classy palette on which to experience a culinary adventure.

As with other top restaurants of late, Hibiscus is offering a 3 course lunch menu special for £29.50 or £38 with a glass of wine, coffee and petit fours, providing a great value taster of head Chef Marcus McGuinness's handiwork. Other options available include A La Carte (not offered on Friday and Saturday evenings), tasting menu and vegetarian selections.

We arrive at 12pm on the dot and are met with wait staff eager and ready to attend to our every whim, the restaurant is rather empty at our arrival however customers slowly trickle in. We are presented with the Spring menu capturing seasonal influences including tender green asparagus, zesty lemons, exotic fruits and an array of fresh seafood.

I adored my entrée of the Sautéed Squid, Squid Salad, Black olive, Coffee and Tarragon – it was nicely charred with a consistency that could be consumed without ample force. The black olive provided a strong salty brine flavour to offset the relatively subdued flavours of the squid however my disappointment would be the minimal presence of coffee as I was intrigued at how this would be used to compliment the rest of the dish.

The main course of char-grilled Spatchcock Poussin, Chickpeas, Mint & Coriander, Fresh Date and Salted Bergamot Lemon brings the D to the word delectable. With such a sizeable portion of what I would have expected to be only half of what was on my plate, the spatchcock was sumptuous with moist, juicy and tender flesh, the skin was slightly crusted with a deep bronze patchy char and the chickpeas provided a nice textural contrast. The flavours and textures played a unison symphony and I lapped up each mouthful in what was Hibiscus's winning culinary composition.

As the final accompaniment, I ordered the Glazed Amalfi Lemon Curd Tart and Clove Ice-cream. Not being someone who normally chooses the tarter option, straying into unfamiliar territory is something I would recommend for all – either that or the imagery conjured by the word 'Amalfi' beckoned me. The thin buttery pastry crumbled perfectly with each forkful, the lemon curd itself was tart enough to enhance the lemon citrus notes of the curd yet not so far as to transform your tastebuds into a sour mess. Unfortunately, the beautiful quenelle of the ice-cream had more of a marshmallow cream consistency and the spiced clove flavours were somewhat dormant.

Overall Hibiscus is on par with other Michelin restaurants, the service is faultless, efficient and attentive. There is a relaxed air in the restaurant which provides a soothing ambience. With a menu enriched by an innovative twist to excite the palette – in line with glowing reviews by acclaimed food reviewers Jay Rayner and Terry Durack, I would definitely return in the future to explore Hibiscus's seasonal escapades.

Hibiscus

29 Maddox Street, London

W1S 2PA

020 7629 2999