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REVIEW

EATING OUT



Gallery Restaurant
Hótel Holt, Bergstaðastæti 37, 101 Reykjavík
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Old School Discretion

Gallery Restaurant, Hótel Holt

To misquote a famous frog, sometimes it's easy being green. The exclusive Gallery Restaurant at posh Hótel Holt, features green on its French-influenced menu on many occasions. Fresh herbs, from chives to flat leaf parsley to coriander, are plentiful, various, and creatively presented here, enhancing the flavour of every dish.

They were nestled at the top of a rosette of generously sliced smoked salmon in the starter. They made an appearance in the outstanding fish of the day, a melt-in-the-mouth wedge of plaice in a lobster foam sauce. Coriander enhanced the delicate and sometimes flat flavours of the arctic char. And the perfectly cooked beef would not have been the same without a dash of herbal

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support. Gallery's reputation for outstanding cuisine remained intact after this evening.

To enhance the experience was the wine. Ours was a buttery Italian chardonnay, chosen from the dizzying 32-page wine list by the sommelier to go with both the majority fish eaters of our table and the sole beef eater.

Our choices were dictated by the four-course set menus (a gourmet menu for 7,800 kr and the fish selections for 6,900. Excellent value lunch menus are available daily for 2,900 for three courses). Disappointingly, the options were for fish

only or meat only rather than a combination of the two. However, the à la carte menu did have a broader selection.

Green may have featured prominently in the food but it was happily absent in the décor. Gallery is a stately enclave from provincial Reykjavík, all maroons and wood and plush thick carpets, a screen covering the windows to give the illusion of darkness during the bright summer. The walls are crammed with priceless paintings by Iceland's most renowned artists, including Jóhannes Kjarval. Landscapes of the fields where the beef we ate grew up featured.

The service matches the old school surroundings. It was wonderfully discreet and professional, with the notable exception of the staff snuffing out our candle and removing the table's flower garnish even though our dessert had not yet been served. (Our slight tardiness was due to the rather long wait between amuse bouche and starter earlier in the evening.) If I were to quibble, I wish the waiter had revealed more of the secrets of the buttery chive speckled sauce that went with the fabulous plaice of the day, rather than simply leaving the guessing to our imaginations.

Gallery Restaurant has won many awards and is considered one of Reykjavík's top establishments. In a city which sees new top-tier restaurants open every year, it is precariously close to resting on its decades-old laurels. But an evening here is still one to savour.

Kermit, and I suspect anyone who dines here, would certainly agree.

- Eliza Reid