

Thrír Frakkar

Thrír Frakkar is an old staple of the Reykjavík dining scene. Its inclusion in several guidebooks and its permanent menu offerings of whale meat ensure a steady stream of tourist patrons. Icelanders are also to be found here – usually when entertaining visitors seeking reasonably priced traditional Icelandic cuisine in a traditional Icelandic neighbourhood.

Such cuisine, with French overtones, is demonstrated in a modest menu which gives the impression that it has remained unchanged for years. There is one token vegetarian dish and a lamb option, but this is primarily an aquatic paradise. The impressive daily specials, with four or five different entrée options, compensates for the dearth in the regular selection. The laminated menu opens with a personal message extolling the virtues of the restaurant's fresh ingredients and the staff's personal desire to make all patrons feel welcome.

And they generally do a good job of that. I've eaten at Thrír Frakkar when the tiny cluster of rooms comprising the restaurant gets a little cramped and the patrons a little too noisy. But on this occasion, as on most, the exceedingly professional staff controlled the area like kindly dinner ladies in a school cafeteria.

Our starters of choice were one of the daily specials, a tightly whirled rosebud of deeply smoked pink trout, and an old standby for the health conscious, scallops with cream sauce and garlic bread. The cream sauce was deliciously, and unexpectedly, flavoured with a mild curry. There was a lot of it, though, and this had the effect of masking the natural freshness of the scallops (a generous hand with the admittedly delicious sauces is a fault of Thrír Frakkar). My dining companion said they were the best scallops she had tasted.

Main dishes were easily above average, if not incredible. My fleshy halibut was paired with another creamy lobster sauce (I accept all blame for the poor pairing of two heavy courses). One member of our group enjoyed a beautifully presented cod fillet with a light mustard sauce, while another tried three perfect squares of whale pepper steak, a little on the salty side, tasting just as I remember it – like fishy beef. The whale is clearly more a novelty than a gourmet item, but its popularity earns it a perennial place at Thrír Frakkar.

I was pleased to note that when the picky people at the next table asked for special salad starters with oil and vinegar on the side, and the cod and shrimp sauce without the shrimp, the waitress happily obliged all their whims.

Cream sauces aside, the next time I am entertaining those looking for a "typical" experience, I will return to this burnt orange building and its fishy beef.

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