

EAT HERE



"AN ORNATE DEN OF VERY FRENCH EXCESS"

A HISTORIC PARISIAN RESTAURANT HAS BEEN GIVEN A FACELIFT. JESSICA PRUPAS SEES IF THE OLD GUARD IS BEST

LAPÉROUSE
PARIS
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PARIS ISN'T BOUND by tradition. They're replacing *caves à vin* with natural wine bars, mopeds with electric scooters for hire. Any visitor seeking that *Ratatouille*-style romance may be disappointed by the city's ceaseless lurch forward. Unless they eat at Lapérouse.

Perched on the bank of the Seine, this is Paris's second-oldest restaurant, opened a mere 253 >

ORNATE PLATES

Previous page: Pan-fried foie gras and tuna sashimi. Right: Private dining in a salon. Below: Millefeuille with caramel sauce

years ago. It recently underwent an extensive restoration to make it... Well, even more itself: it's a preposterously ornate den of very French excess.

On our visit, we're greeted by a dapper waiter who gives us a tour of the salons – private rooms lining a long hallway where, for €50 a head (plus dinner), you can dine with your closest confidantes. These regal, low-lit quarters are where Balzac debated literary theory, Serge Gainsbourg first clapped eyes on Jane Birkin and Kate Moss presumably didn't eat.

Tonight, though, it's all happening in the dining room. We're at our table, the pink brocade tablecloth perfectly setting off the silverware. My date barely needs to strain her finger to lift a Champagne flute.

"It's so light," she gasps. I'm similarly breathless at the gilded walls – I can almost see my gaping mouth in the golden sheen. The cool of Gainsbourg I have not.

But of the meal that follows, I'm certain Serge would approve: roasted artichoke comes in a warm, foamy bubblebath; a buttery lobster tail takes a come-



TASTING NOTES

THE ONE FOR

Frencher-than-French cuisine with a side of living history.

EAT THIS

A downright naughty millefeuille doused in thick caramel – a heavenly meal-closer.

DRINK THIS

An amuse-bouche of pink bubbly perfectly cleanses the palate.

hither pose over a bed of puréed potato. Dessert is an impossibly flaky millefeuille, likely hand-laid by a million Parisian fairies.

After dinner, we waddle to the Pont Neuf to watch boats glide over the streetlight-dappled Seine. From here, you can see the Eiffel Tower peeking out behind medieval façades, their mirror image shimmering in the water. It's the Paris of dreams, of postcards... of Lapérouse.

laperouse.com



PHOTOS JEAN-PIERRE SALLE



HISTORY COOKS
THREE MORE
18TH-CENTURY
ETERIES

SOBRINO DE BOTÍN
FLY TO MADRID

Opened in 1725, this supremely Spanish restaurant was officially dubbed the world's oldest by Guinness itself.

Take a cue from Hemingway and order the suckling pig (he loved it so much, he immortalised it in two books).

RULES
FLY TO LONDON

Thomas Rule established this posho dining room in 1798, and it's been grilling up rarefied game dishes for black-tie types ever since.

TAVARES
FLY TO LISBON

A night at Lisbon's oldest restaurant feels like dining inside a bar of gold: the gilded walls and endless chandeliers are a suitable setting for the equally dignified food.