

Drinking Out: Review

Published: (01-11-2008)

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Tierra Brindisa, located in the gossipy media capital of Soho, is perhaps not the safest of places to discuss the indiscretions of wine trade figures. But then there's something about the buzzy, fast-paced atmosphere of the place.

that lubricates the vocal chords as well as the tastebuds.

The Important Wine Importer Chappie and I were engrossed in our conspiratorial chat, so we decided to order a glass of Manzanilla Pasada Pastrana, Hidalgo (£4.50/glass) and the excellent Alhambra Reserva 1925 beer (£4.25) in order to keep the speaking apparatus in good working order. The shortish sherry list, with only six biggish brands and one PX on offer, was a bit of a surprise given the tapas-led menu was just crying out for a flor hit. That said, our choices worked well with the exceptionally juicy orange and marjoram flavoured olives as well as almonds.

This is Brindisa's first foray into a more formal restaurant setting - it has an excellent existing reputation as a supplier of Spanish ingredients and owns one of London's original tapas bars at Borough Market. The restaurant version has an extended food and wine list and, hallelujah, takes bookings.

The atmosphere has an informal feel, with small tables laid out in canteen-styles rows. It was full of a blend of advertising types, ladies who do lunch and a slightly eccentric older clientele. The menu features tapa plates, offering good value at £4-£6 for Catalan spinach with pine nuts and raisins and carpaccio of cod with marjoram salad. More substantial plates such as pincho moruno (kebabs) of Iberico pork were £8.25 and steak was £12.

The wine list features only Spanish wines, with a similarly good-value range of Verdejo, Albariño, Godello, Garnacha, Tempranillo and other natives. There wasn't much of a sommelier service among the beautiful yet diffident eastern European staff, but then we didn't request help for our order of As Laxas Albariño 2006 (£24.50) - fragrant and fresh and ideal to ease the passage of the simple yet very good quality food.

Tapas invites endless picking, but we felt we achieved the right balance with five dishes of Gran Reserva loin, lentil stew with goats curd, deep fried Monte Enebro goat's cheese with orange blossom honey, battered hake and lamb cutlets. Although we did get told off by the waiter for ordering too much for the size of the table. However, they should simply have bigger tables, I felt, rather than claustrophobia-inducing dolls' furniture. All the dishes were very fresh, composed of impeccable ingredients.

The mood was buzzing and we left refreshed and uplifted, having used up our word count.