

Pocket-sized perfection at Tierra Brindisa

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Small but perfectly formed: Soho tapas spot Tierra Brindisa is cosy without being at all cramped and the food can't be faulted

My pet bugbear with top new tapas spots like Barrafina is that you can't book. Who wants to be shivering on the pavement queuing in this weather? So the first big plus of this stylish Soho number is that it takes bookings in the front, while the chancers among us can perch on nonreserved stool tables at the back. The second plus is the cosy yet ingeniously non-cramped interior.

It's incredible what they've done with this pocket-sized place. I could almost hear Tom Jones crooning *Baby, It's Cold Outside* as we smugly - and snugly - peered out at hail bouncing off the cobbled street. The third plus is, of course, the food. Wow, this place is good. Olives are the litmus test of any tapas joint, and these were beauties - firm, succulent Gordals with orange and oregano (£3).

From then on we couldn't fault a dish. Prawns cooked with garlic and chilli (£7) were miraculously non-fluffy, with a sauce begging to be mopped up with bread; deep-fried Monte Enebro goat's cheese (£6.85) came dripping with a gorgeously zesty orange blossom honey, and the biggest hit was the meltingly tender pan-fried rare fillet steak with caramelised onion and torta de Barros cheese on toast (£12). The puddings were equally brilliant. A yummy, fudgy turrón mousse hid a treasure trove of raisins macerated in sherry (£5), and Rovira chocolate on toast with beautiful blood orange sorbet boasted a sophisticated savoury twist of olive oil and salt (£5.50). The bill came in at £87, which we reckoned was fairly good value for the outstanding quality.