

A la Carte by Alexander Lobrano

Chef Hugues Gournay at Le Sàotico



PARIS

Le Sàotico

A note from Anne Surcouf recently let me know that she and her husband, chef Hugues Gournay, had opened a new restaurant, **Le Sàotico**, in the rue de Richelieu. Ten years ago, I was a regular at their terrific little Latin Quarter restaurant Le Reminet—then they sold it, and disappeared. So it was with real anticipation that I headed to their new place for lunch—for the moment, in this strictly business district, they're open from 8 am–7 pm, and say they might open for dinner one

or two nights a week starting sometime this fall. Given the Portuguese-sounding name, I wondered if I'd find some sort of fusion cooking, but no, as Surcouf explained, *sàotico* is a type of gray shrimp found in the waters off the Cotentin peninsula in Normandy, their home turf. The menu turned out to be a terrific tour de force of the first-rate *cuisine du marché* that made Le Reminet such a favorite. Settling in at a table in the handsome two-story space, we were delighted by our starters, a *gâteau* of sautéed eggplant,

heirloom tomatoes and feta and a mix of seasonal vegetables with mozzarella. Not only delicious but impeccably prepared, both dishes displayed Gournay's insistence on using only first-rate French produce and his considerable prowess as a chef. Our main courses were outstanding as well—a large tender squid stuffed with diced vegetables and served with rice pilaf, and wild *lieu jaune* (yellow pollack) with lime and a garnish of baby vegetables that included leeks, celery root, carrots and shitake mushrooms. For dessert, we shared a superb homemade *feuillante* filled with raspberries and lemon cream. Conclusion: Gournay is one of the best under-the-radar chefs in Paris today, and I can't wait until it's open for dinner. 96 rue Richelieu, 2nd, 01.42.96.03.20. €35

PARIS

Two Great Bistros

Though the relentless gentrification of Saint Germain des Prés means that fewer and fewer real Parisians can afford to live in the storied *quartier*, it remains understandably popular with visitors. But when it comes to food, the long-trendy

neighborhood seems besotted with pasta and sushi, and finding good, affordable French food is a tough call. That's why I love **Comme à Savonnières**, a terrific little bistrot tucked just off the rue Princesse, locally known for its concentration of bars and pubs. While many restaurants in the area are either tourist traps or noisy hangouts for the young and bibulous in search of alimentary ballast, this warm, friendly place is popular with locals of all ages and serves a fine menu of traditional French dishes and lighter contemporary ones. Dining here not long ago with visiting friends, we enjoyed glasses of an excellent dry Vouvray, served with radishes and thickly sliced sausage, and then tucked into coddled eggs with Roquefort and "la terrine de mon père," an excellent country pâté. Next, chestnut-puree-filled ravioli, a first-rate *blanquette de veau*, and nicely cooked monkfish with baby vegetables, all made from top-quality ingredients and generously served. Service is prompt and charming, and the restaurant's owner Valentin Roulière is from the Loire Valley, which explains the terrific Loire wines on the list. All told, an

Bavaoise au café sur croustillant au cacao, coffee mousse with crispy cocoa pastry, at Le Sàotico



Sàotico © Christophe Fedou