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# where now Paris

The month's top entertainment, fashion finds and attractions

»RESTAURANTS

## FUN FARE

BY ALEXANDER LOBRANO



### Le Mini-Palais

Three-star chef Eric Fréchon of the Hotel Bristol has brilliantly rebooted the Parisian brasserie for the 21st century at this stunning new restaurant with a witty artist's atelier-inspired design by designers Patrick Gilles & Dorothée Bossier at the Grand Palais, the beautiful glass-and-steel domed 1900 vintage building just off the Champs-Elysées that's one of Paris's premier art exhibition venues. Open daily and serving non-stop from noon to midnight, it's not only ideal for a post art-gallery-visit meal, but a very useful address for anyone wanting a meal in Paris outside of standard serving hours. An oak parquet floor warms up this vast space with huge windows, a ceiling of cast-iron beams overhead and French doors leading to a long gallery outside. The menu that Fréchon designed is impeccably executed by young chef Stéphane d'Aboville, who was formerly Fréchon's second at the Bristol, and includes starters such as a clafoutis of porcini mushrooms, squid with pil-pil sauce, and a shrimp and onion tempura with tandoori spices, follow with the rock-lobster club sandwich, a delicious "hamburger" of chopped duck breast topped with a thick slab of grilled foie gras and truffle juice or a juicy medallion of Spanish pluma pork belly served with a garnish of red onions and potato confetti. The dessert not to miss is the baba au rhum with vanilla bean flecked whipped cream for two. Note that this restaurant is also a great spot for tea or an afternoon snack.

**Avenue Winston Churchill (8th), 01 42 56 42 42.**

### Mystery Cuisine

Molecular cooking may bring to mind alarming images of test tubes and peculiar chemicals, but Mystery Cuisine, a new vest-pocket restaurant across the street from the Palais Royal in the heart of the city shows just how much fun avant-garde food can be when it's prepared by a talented chef with his feet on the ground. Quite unlike any other restaurant in Paris, you come to this low-lit dining room, where the tables are partially partitioned with full-length red curtains, to be amused and entertained as much as you do for a meal. Working with his Vietnamese wife Thu-Ha, chef Edouard Desrousseaux de Vandières serves three different and very original tasting menus that are diversely composed of dishes that are contemporary French, Vietnamese and molecular. Highlights of the four-course menu, served on a square of black slate that the chef heats with a blow torch, include a delicate Vietnamese-style veal-stuffed ravioli topped with foie gras and flamed in armagnac, a gratin dauphinois spiked with wasabi, a poached egg yolk topped with seaweed pearls, and a small bowl of pho, the Vietnamese noodle soup. Two other menus are also available, including a three-course 39-euro menu that's ideal for post theatre dining and includes a starter of foie gras and a tasting portion of lobster soup, a choice of three "hamburgers", veal with foie gras and black truffles, duck with asparagus points, and crayfish with lamb's lettuce, and dessert. A variety of excellent wines are served by the glass, and a meal here is a decidedly offbeat and intimate performance-art experience.

**37bis rue Montpensier (1st), 01 40 20 03 02.**





**Clockwise from top: Le Mini Palais; Eric Fréchon and Stéphane d'Aboville; A "mystery" dish at Mystery Cuisine.**

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» DINING

# Just Jamin

BY PATRICIA VALICENTI

Jamin remains a revered name, straight out of the aristocracy of Parisian restaurants. Founded some five decades ago by Jean Jamin, who hailed from Bordeaux, it was here that chefs like Gérard Besson (Meillieur Ouvrier de France at the age of 28) and Dominique Bouchet (three stars when at the Tour d'Argent, two when at the Crillon) prepared a classic repertoire for patrons that included French politicians, Jean Gabin and local residents in this spot just footsteps away from the Place d'Iéna. It is also the establishment where Joël Robuchon earned his third Michelin star back in 1984.

Today, under the helm of Alain Pras accompanied by David Tomasini, Jamin is enjoying something akin to a renaissance. Great emphasis is placed on a warm welcome, attentive service and the products used in elaborating the traditional cuisine, explains Pras who trained at Pierre Troisgros and was an associate of Guy Savoy. In the kitchen, one finds 27-year-old chef David Legrand, also a trained pastry chef and whose cuisine is one of finesse and consistency. The food is quite simply excellent. The produce and products are seasonal and top of the line.

Sample the perfectly roasted free-range chicken in a thyme flavoured jus (a light gravy of meat juices), served with mashed potatoes, or the duck breast simply seared to the requested medium rare and given a dreamy Asian touch with a hint of coriander and a honey-ginger sauce. The crispy prawns in sesame vinaigrette, a house specialty, are among the delicious starters and the perfect Paris-Brest pastry is artfully served with a side of custard for dessert.

**32 rue de Longchamp (16th),**
**01 45 53 00 07.**
**www.restaurant-jamin.com**

**Clockwise from top: Interior of Jamin; Mille-feuilles of crayfish; Chef David Legrand**



