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28-50 Covent Garden – a Restaurant Reinvented.



At one point London had three restaurants trading as 28-50, all part of a group owned by the Texture group of restaurants and run by Agnar Sverrisson from Iceland. And, at one point fairly recently, the venue that is now a new 28-50 wine bar and kitchen was a Mexican restaurant, Cantina Laredo. It's symptomatic of the ever-changing London food scene that only one of the original 28-50 restaurants is still open, reinvented by the current owners and joined by the new kid on the block. So what now? I went along to find out what had changed.



The Covent Garden restaurant, right next door to Dishoom (currently closed for refurbishment), is by St Martin's Courtyard. Massive glass windows front the building, inside there are comfy chairs in muted pastel shades, plenty of light wood panelling and contemporary light fittings to give the space a luxurious and airy feel.



The lighting was subdued, dimmed for the evening. Cozy couples nestled in the corners and a large central table was set up for a big group. The restaurant is divided into relatively intimate spaces and I could easily imagine coming here with a group of friends or on a date night.



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There's a pre-theatre menu with 2 courses for £17.50 and three for £21.00, available until 6.30 pm and then again after 9.30 pm until the restaurant closes. 28-50 Covent Garden also has a light bites selection of sharing platters and nibbles. And, there's the à la carte menu which offers a range of classic bistro dishes, steaks and seafood.



After a very welcome glass of fizz, we started by sharing the dramatic and delicious seafood platter, which at £32.50 for two is something of a steal in this part of London. Mussels, Colchester Rocks, crevette prawns, clams and crab on a bed of ice served with lemon, shallot vinegar and mayo. It was a generous serving and I particularly enjoyed the oysters and crevette.



For mains, Stone Bass for me with crushed new potatoes with herbs, mussels and shellfish bisque. The crisp-skinned and perfectly cooked bass sat on top of a bed of baby crushed potatoes laced with a saffron-infused fragrant bisque. Roasted Chanteney carrots and tender stem broccoli with garlic butter were perfect sides to share and both beautifully cooked.



It was paired for me with a large glass of French Bourgogne chardonnay which was served in a carafe, something I particularly appreciated as not only does it help allow the wine to breathe, but it also ensures I don't drink it too fast!

My companion ordered the 10 oz fillet steak, the kind of dish I could so easily have picked for myself if I wasn't on a bit of a healthy eating kick. It arrived on a board with a substantial salad garnish and bearnaise. I seem to remember triple cooked chips were in there too, though I don't have a photo!



Cooked to order, she was impressed with the flavour and texture of the Snowdonian Welsh black X beef and insisted I tried for myself (which I did – and have added to my wish list for next time).



Rather than a dessert, she picked the cheese board, which came with a lovely selection of cheeses, though with limited options in terms of cheese crackers.



Meanwhile, my sweet tooth got the better of me and I picked the financier almond gateau with roasted fig and yoghurt icecream. The gateau was a little dry, but the ice cream was delicious and refreshing and I enjoyed the crumbly crunch

We were brought dessert wine without asking – and very delicious it was too – the sommelier's own favourite from Villa Erbice in the Veneto region of Italy. A sweet wine, it is produced drying the grapes using a traditional natural method before crushing and fermenting at low temperature. The end result is a sweet red wine which has delicious fruity, cherry notes.



This is somewhere I am sure I will come back to. The food is excellent without being exceptional, the service is flawless without being obsequious and the wine list is comprehensive yet accessible. 28-50 Covent Garden is well placed to provide a reliable and comfortable place to meet friends and spend the evening or to grab a bite to eat before or after a show or shopping. It's somewhere for everyone – or at least for everyone who looks for quality and style.

28-50 Covent Garden

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