



Le Roch Restaurant & Bar

Le Roch Hotel & Spa, Paris

Words: Harry McKinley

With an abundance of concepts grounded in French tradition but progressive in style and attitude, Paris is increasingly re-establishing itself as a centre for dynamic hotel F&B.

Le Roch is one new destination leading the charge, possessed of a striking interior, a clear gastronomic perspective and an insouciant atmosphere that readily lends itself to long lunches and social dinners.

Part of Design Hotels and located in Paris's smallest arrondissement (the 1st), Le Roch is part of a wider movement in the city that sees boutique properties blooming as vibrant neighbourhood destinations. Though each have their own merits and define themselves through their unique identities, there are undeniably threads of commonality: namely in the design-savvy, food-aware, well-travelled audience they seek to tap. Le Roch, of course, has a pair of aces in its well-known interior designer and celebrated chef.

Sarah Lavoine was responsible for the look and feel of the hotel, with a bar restaurant that manages to combine her signature Parisian chic with a subtly playful personality. It's grownup, certainly, but in the combination of colour, pattern and object – from the bulbous pendant lights to the theatrical foliage – there is an implicit invitation to uncross one's legs and relax.

"I wanted restaurant guests to feel as though they've been invited to a Parisian friend's home," Lavoine says. "We decided to use deep colours, such as navy blue – the Bleu Sarah that I created – and green for the seats, punctuated with lighter hues such as baby pink. The materials are rich and solid: glass, velvet, marble and wood. They convey an intimacy that we usually crave when we're far away. We also created a glass ceiling to invite natural daylight into the restaurant and brighten the space."

Often an air of ease belies the consideration needed to achieve it and, although Lavoine describes the public spaces of Le Roch as 'simple', it's a simplicity that grows in complexity the more it's studied. Like many boutique hotels that sit within classic, repurposed Parisian buildings, space is at a premium and the ground floor has to wear multiple hats: functioning as lobby, lounge, restaurant, bar and the main access point to the hotel's compact city-garden. This 'multifunctionality' can quickly go awry to the eye when not handled adroitly, but when it is, the experience is seamless.

"It's really subtle," says Lavoine on the transition from one vignette to the other. "We didn't want to work on creating opposing atmospheres because our idea was to be consistent all along. Colours stay in the same palette, with black as the main component. Guests can come and stay for a while,



Photography: Francis Amiand

sipping a coffee as they read a book in the library and then decide to have something to eat later without the impression they are going somewhere else.”

Although part of the same space – and with so much attention sapped (deservedly) by the restaurant proper – it’s easy to forget that the lounge is still a vital component in Le Roch’s F&B package. After all, what is a couch without a cappuccino or a side chair without a Sidecar?

“More than a lobby what we designed is a private library,” says Lavoine. “It features comfortable couches covered with velvet and a chimney with a live fire to cast its light on curated books and pieces of home decor. We wanted the guests to feel welcome, and at ease as soon as they enter the hotel.” Indeed, sitting as it does adjacent to the bar counter, the lobby lounge provides a popular spot for guests to linger, apart from the more formal seating accommodating diners.

Already a busy destination for the lunch horde and a fashionable venue for supper, the kitchen is where Le Roch’s second ace is played in the form of Chef Arnaud Faye. Already holding an impressive reputation thanks to his collection of Michelin stars – he currently serves as executive chef at Château de la Chèvre d’Or – at Le Roch he is responsible for creating the menus, which are then delivered by the hotel’s onsite chef, Rémy Bererd.

The menu centres on fresh, seasonal and local produce, and features light dishes that caress – as opposed to challenge – the palate. Starters like butternut squash velouté and scallop carpaccio pre-empt the likes of roasted bream or venison for main. Even desserts err on the side of delicate: think Granny Smith apples with caramelised muesli and maple syrup ice cream. In other words, enough for a satisfyingly sweet finish, but not the kind of close to a meal that requires popping the belt open a notch.

Everything is presented with beautifully Insta-friendly panache. Plates are modern, crisp and understated – a backdrop to the lead act. Cutlery from Hepp feels suitably substantial and shines gold, whilst Riedel glassware feels suitably insubstantial, light as air and paper-thin.

That the venue is now one of several hot tickets in town when it comes to hotel dining doesn’t seem to be splitting Le Roch’s audience. Sarah Lavoine’s boutique is located within jumping distance on the same street and one gets the impression that the typical Le Roch visitor stops by regularly: they are the epitome of the design-savvy, well-travelled audience mentioned previously, and that Le Roch’s siren call has drawn them in is evidence of its quality as well as its credibility.

IN A BITE Executive Chef: Arnaud Faye • Interior Design: Sarah Lavoine
Glassware: Riedel • Cutlery: Hepp

www.leroch-hotel.com