

News & Opinion

Philly Restaurant Week: A Taste of Luxury at Le Bec-Fin



Le Bec-Fin, 1523 Walnut St., Philadelphia.

Photo by Samantha Berk

By Samantha Berk
Staff Writer

Few can afford to dine in five-star restaurants on a regular basis.

But Philadelphia Restaurant Week makes this luxury possible for many – including myself.

About 100 high-quality restaurants participated in the event, which was held Jan. 16-21 and Jan. 23-28. They offered lunch for \$20 and dinner for \$35. Typically, the dinner price at one of these fine restaurants can run more than \$150.

Restaurant Week allows ordinary people to experience the finest cuisine the region has to offer.

I chose to dine at Le Bec-Fin since I love French culture and especially French cuisine. I have traveled to France and always wanted to see if Philly's finest French restaurant captured the country's flavors accurately. There is no other restaurant that

optimizes five-star quality and sophistication.

Owner and Chef Georges Perrier had announced that his famed restaurant – now celebrating its 40th anniversary – would close in August. But recently, Perrier, 67, granted his business a reprieve and partnered with his chef, Nicholas Elmi, according to Philadelphia Inquirer food columnist Michael Klein. Come August, the restaurant will close, but only for renovations to the dining area and downstairs bar.

Le Bec-Fin hopes to expand its clientele by participating in fixed-price menu events such as Restaurant Week.

Dressed in my Sunday best, I arrived at Le Bec-Fin to see how the other half lives.

While I felt a little out of place (my group was probably the youngest out of anyone there), I was grateful to have the opportunity to dine at this Philadelphia landmark.

The menu offered a choice of three appetizers, four main courses and three desserts that would please a variety of people. The dining atmosphere was sophisticated, yet welcoming.

The first course arrived as my friends became apprehensive to eat escargot. Since I had them in France last year, I knew they were delicious. Le Bec-Fin did not let me down. The appetizer was drenched in a creamy buttery sauce. Those who can overcome the stigma of eating snails will find that they have a flavorful, mushroom-like texture.

After such a unique appetizer, I could not wait to try the main course: steak with a side of rutabaga, complete with a creamy champagne-infused sauce. Since I never had rutabaga

before, I was happy I was able to try something different and quite tasty.

Finally, it was time for dessert: the signature "Gateau Le Bec-Fin," which is a chocolate cake soaked in rum topped with vanilla ice cream.

Read the description of the dessert again if you don't yet comprehend how delicious it was.

Instead of rushing through each course, my friends and I savored each item and considered ourselves lucky to be enjoying such a delicious meal.

The portions may be small, but the quality of the food is superior to any other restaurant that I have patronized. The food is rich and much more filling than it looks. Living lavishly can be affordable, as long as people are

aware of fixed-price menus and events like Restaurant Week.

A little Internet research can open your eyes to affordability in the world of quality cuisine.

Another Restaurant Week in Philadelphia will occur later this year, and the Main Line is planning one to include about 40 restaurants. In different cities across America, different restaurants participate in similar events.

I am happy I dined at Le Bec-Fin, and I encourage everyone to eat like a celebrity at least once. A three-course dinner was well worth the \$35.

It was the meal of a lifetime; a perfect night – except for the disappointing fact that the waiter did not speak a word of French.

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