



NOW Paris

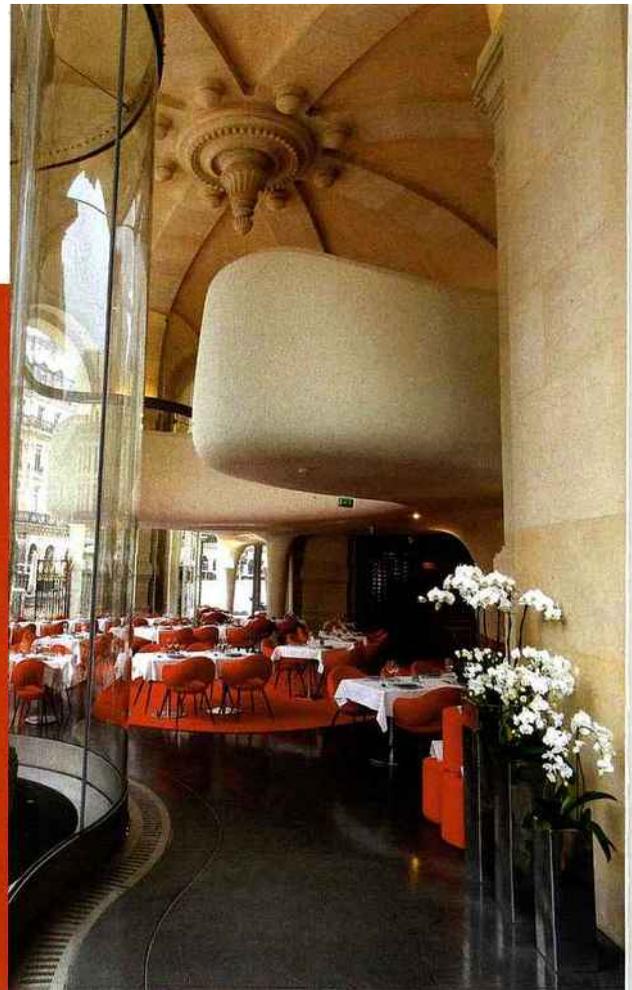
» DINING

BY ALEXANDER LOBRANO

L'Opéra Restaurant

Ever since the Opéra Garnier, the beautiful jewel box building in the heart of Paris that defines the grandeur of what an opera house should be, opened in 1875, there've been plans afoot to add a restaurant to these elegant limestone premises. They sputtered out for financial reasons several times, but now the Opera finally has a restaurant. L'Opéra Restaurant opened in June in the back of the building with a boldly modern décor by French architect Odile Decq. Deciding to design in contrast to the 19th century opulence of the Garnier, Decq created an oyster-coloured mezzanine and kitted the room out with undulating glass windows and cherry-red chairs. Striking and off-beat as the décor may be, chef Christophe Aribert of the two-star Les Terrasses in Uriage near Grenoble does a two-speed menu that harmonizes tradition and modernity. Start with marinated salmon with mustard-and-vinegar sorbet or sautéed foie gras with strawberries, vinegar and honey from the hives on the roof of the building, and then try main courses like a succulent smoked trout filet with lentils or poached roasted guinea hen with Swiss chard, potato bouillon and hazelnuts. The dessert not to miss, bien sûr, is L'Opéra, one of the most famous French pastries, here presented in both a traditional version - layers of almond sponge cake soaked in coffee syrup, layered with ganache and coffee butter-cream, and covered with chocolate icing, and an edgy modern one made with yellow Chartreuse, milk, walnuts, chocolate and massala bread.

L'Opéra Restaurant, Place Jacques Rouché (9th), 01 42 68 86 80



LASSERRE

Almost everyone who comes to Paris dreams of having at least one enchanted evening or dinner in a seriously elegant restaurant with gracious Old World service and exquisite food. A perfect choice for such a special night out on the town is Lasserre - an urbane and intimate dining room just off the Champs Elysees. Arriving at this townhouse table, you're cordially ushered into a small lift that takes you to the first floor dining room which is a beautiful space with ivory walls, white orchids in the planters that line the balustrade surrounding the sunken main dining room, a piano player and a ceiling that mechanically parts several times an evening (weather permitting) to allow a quick glimpse of the stars and a breath of fresh air. After running the kitchen at Restaurant Alain Ducasse at the Hotel Plaza Athenee for several years, talented chef Christophe Moret took over here at the beginning of the year and his menu is a brilliant compendium of Lasserre classics and more

contemporary French dishes that display his culinary wit. Dishes include perfectly poached langoustines and baby vegetables dressed in a fine citrus spiked vinaigrette and a sublime macaroni stuffed with foie gras and black truffles and topped with a fine mantle of melted Parmesan - a classic Lasserre meal. Lasserre also has one of the best pastry chefs working in Paris today, the talented Claire Heitzler, who previously worked at the Ritz. Don't miss her vacherin verveine, cœur coulant à la framboise (lemon verbena, meringue cake filled with a fresh raspberry coulis).

17 ave Franklin Roosevelt (8th), 01 43 59 02 13. Reservations also possible on www.restaurant-lasserre.com

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