

## Title:

Eating (way too well) in Paris: Third stop at Le Gourmet

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## Summary:

Yet another interesting stop in our culinary adventures in Paris, the Le Gourmet restaurant offers great French cuisine for prices I hadn't seen in Paris in 15 years.

## Keywords:

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## Article Body:

Yet another interesting stop in our culinary adventures in Paris, the Le Gourmet restaurant offers great French cuisine for prices I hadn't seen in Paris in 15 years.

Lunch time, where to go?

This is the third installment of the series of articles which I set about to write a couple of weeks ago on eating out well in Paris. I love food, I love good cuisine, and I want fellow travelers to enjoy Paris to the hilt. That's enough reasons to guide them to those places I am certain they will enjoy.

Lunch time in Paris is restaurant time. People who work in the city do not carry their lunch bags with them. They rarely enjoy the benefit of a corporate catering service, but even if they do, such catering is hardly a feat for anyone's eyes and taste buds.

Small restaurants perform a vital service: they feed the locals rather satisfactorily, inexpensively, and in record time.

What applies to locals applies to travelers, and your next culinary stop happens in just such circumstances. After a long morning walk in the quaint streets on the slopes of the Montmartre hill, you feel nicely hungry. Your steps lead you to Place de Clichy, a busy crossroads between the 17th, the 9th and the 18th

districts (metro station: 'Place de Clichy').

Time for a gourmet experience!

Le Gourmet

You may be hungry, but you are no fool. You want to eat well, and spend your hard-earned cash on food worth this name.

In my considerate opinion none of the eateries positioned around Place de Clichy are worth the money they ask for. I find their cuisine either overpriced, or downright vulgar. I never had a satisfactory lunch at any of these places.

So where to go? Not far away.

When you are on Place de Clichy, turn yourself so as to face the downward slope, with the metro station in your back. Aim at Rue de Clichy, left of Rue d'Amsterdam. Walk down the street for about 200 yards, and turn left in Rue de Bruxelles. Walk another 200 yards. There you are on the right sidewalk.

Your next favorite food stop is located at No. 19 rue de Bruxelles.

Name: Le Gourmet.

Identifiable sign: its French bistro-style facade. And a crowd.

Entering the bistro

If you happen to walk in at around noon thirty, you may have to wait just a tad. The place is packed. I have been to this restaurant numerous times, and I still have to be there the day it is not packed at lunch time.

My advice: come at around 12:00 am, and grab a spot before everybody else does.

The place exudes old charm, with dark wood panels, old posters, menu slates marked with chalk on the walls, a traditional bar, a mosaic floor, bistro-style chairs and tables. It smells good, though cigarette smoke can become an issue at times when the facade door isn't left open.

The owner and chef bought the restaurant about 2 years ago from its first and long-time owners, an elderly couple who retired after having steered the ship for longer than any local can remember. The new owner liked the decor, and decided to preserve it as-is, except for the facade which was changed early in

2006.

In this very Parisian setting, patrons feel immediately welcomed and are quickly seated either by the boss or a smiling waitress. This is lunch time, and they know patrons are in a hurry. No unnecessary delay.

Seated, and menu in hands

The menu is in fact chalked on the slates that hang on the front and back walls. A remarkable feat for such small a restaurant, the menu changes every day.

Anyone who lived in Paris for some time knows that restaurant menus do not change beyond the 'plat du jour' - the main fare for the day. Even the 'plat du jour' does not change that much: from one week to another, the same courses tend to get back on the menu.

Not so at 'Le Gourmet': the menu changes everyday and no two weeks are alike. True diversity. Even if you were to eat there every day for 20 days, you could try 20 different courses.

Gourmet cuisine is a mission

The boss comes from the province of Touraine, in Western France. He likes to work on French traditional dishes, and his cuisine draws its main inspiration from the famous Burgundy and Lyons regions.

Among the 'terroir' dishes served at Le Gourmet, you can taste veal knuckle (souris de veau), prime cuts of veal (onglet de veau), roasted gilthead bream (daurade royale rôtie), stewed duck (pot-au-feu de canard), pike dumpling (quenelle de brochet). And the list goes on.

To get fresh products from his favorite suppliers, he wakes up at 3:30 am every day to go to the wholesale market (the Rungis market, situated south of Paris). He buys only what he needs for the day, loads up his truck, and heads back to his restaurant where he's spend the rest of the morning to cook for lunch.

The chef's motto is "fresh products, traditional preparation". He uses butter, not margarine. He doesn't buy frozen products, and no off-the-shelf sauces as he prepares his sauces himself. He is light-handed on spices which he thinks 'are all too often used to hide something'.

Appetizer, main course, dessert, wines

Le Gourmet's menu typically offers a choice of 4 appetizers (such as a warmed up goat cheese served on a loaf of country bread), 3 or 4 main courses (meat, fish, poultry), and 4 desserts.

The choice of desserts is also 'old-school': depending on the day, your selection may include chocolate whipped cream, baba au rhum (a spongy cake saturated with dealcoholized rum), biscuits with ganache (a mix of chocolate, cream and butter), orange cake, fondant cake, floating island (beaten egg whites floating on a French custard), red fruit pies, and so forth.

Light wines get the lion's share of the wine list. The chef's hometown is Valençay (in the heart of the Touraine region), and he purchases his bottles directly from local producers. The list comprises a variety of well-thought-of vines: Gamay, Cabernet, Valençay, Bourgueil, and Saumur-Champigny.

All this for how much?

Beyond the quality of the food you are served at Le Gourmet, the check is another pleasant surprise. For a meager €13 (about \$16), you have a full meal served in record time in a most pleasant atmosphere. For just a few more bucks, you have the wine to complete your experience.

To be honest, there are very few Parisian restaurants which will give you that much for such a low price. Le Gourmet wins my vote any time, any day. I recommend it to you wholeheartedly.

Where?

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Subway station: Place de Clichy

Lunch and dinner