

# Paris Update

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## Restaurants - Contemporary

### Braisenville



Published on Wednesday, 09 January 2013 00:00  
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## Pitch-Perfect Creativity, Craft and Quality



*No false notes in Braisenville's original seasonal cuisine.*

The conceit at Braisenville, a Paris restaurant that has been open for over a year now, is that everything is cooked over coals. While this might not sound like a recommendation in itself, the level of creativity, craft and quality in this cheerful restaurant is so high that I can recommend it unreservedly

All the recent trends in Paris restaurants are on display here: a mix of high and normal tables and counter dining; a crisp, modern decor in bright colors (much like that of **Antoine de Montmartre**, but in this case with the addition of a large arty photo of a nude woman eating an apple); a menu offering gourmet tapas-style dishes, here called “*raciones*” and (also as at Antoine de Montmartre and **Auberge Flora**) served in larger than tapas-sized portions.

While my four British friends and I pondered the menu, which takes a bit of time to absorb (and changes regularly, by the way), we shared a plate of delicious, melt-in-the-mouth ham from acorn-fed Iberian pigs from Guijuelo, aged for 30 months.

The restaurant suggests that each person order three or four portions, plus dessert, but the five of us ordered about three each, plus shared desserts, and were quite satisfied. We made our choices with difficulty from the complex descriptions, but might just as well have closed our eyes and pointed, so good was each of the dishes we tasted.

I had ordered the two that the waiter had specially recommended – he was right on both counts. One was the *emulsion de rattes*



*du Touquet* (tiny, flavorful potatoes) with walnuts, *pleurotes* (oyster mushrooms), chanterelles and watercress. It may sound strange, but the comforting creamy/foamy emulsion with walnuts paired with the fragrant mushrooms and peppery watercress was a joy. The other was a ceviche of a fish called *maigre* (meagre), marinated in tiger’s milk (fish juice, lime juice, onion, chilies, salt and pepper) and served with sweet-potato chips. Sublime.

As the parade of dishes continued, we all dipped into each other’s plates, exclaiming excitedly over the various felicitous



cucumber and pomegranate (another strange-sounding combination that turned out to be brilliant); line-caught hake with coconut



chutney, corn emulsion and radish; pork tenderloin with parsnips, sage and wild sorrel;



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and duck magret with pickled shitake mushrooms, a wine-poached pear, salsify and miso. Beets don't excite many diners, but



Paul was in raptures over his colorful and original dish of different types of beets prepared in different ways, including a beet cake and a sorbet. Even the simple grilled seasonal vegetables (including surprisingly delicious grilled lettuce) were perfection with their char-grilled flavor.

A mysterious dessert called "sur le green" ("on the green") turned out to be a metaphorical golf green, with a sorbet-filled pink meringue



ball atop an expanse of avocado cream. The other dessert we shared combined chocolate, coconut and cardamom, another success.

Not one of these dishes hit a false note or, perhaps even more surprising, seemed just okay rather than excellent. The mixing and matching of the high-quality ingredients was pitch-perfect, and each was a joy to behold, as if a designer were in the kitchen supervising the layout and colors of the plates. And all this for only about €50, including wine (a nice 2011 Côte de Rhône from Domaine La Fourmente, reasonably priced at €24), per person.

As we have come to expect in this new genre of Paris restaurant, the youthful servers were friendly, professional and accommodating without being the least bit intrusive. Our waiter was obviously proud of the pains he had taken to learn the translations of obscure ingredients into English.

By the way, the restaurant's unusual name refers not only to cooking over coals (*braises*), but is also a pun on the term "*baise-en-ville*," meaning an overnight bag for a naughty night in town with one's lover.

**Braisenville:** 36, rue Condorcet, 75009 Paris. Métro: Anvers. Tel.: 09 50 91 21 74. Open for dinner Monday-Saturday. A la carte: €35-€40.

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