

FASHION FOOD

In celebration of all things fashionable this month, **Kirsty Tuxford** strapped on her heels and teetered off to find out where the beautiful people dine. Welcome to a world of gorgeous-looking grub and swanky surroundings



Fresh escabeche at Ziaboga Photo: Courtesy of Aires Comunicación

Ziaboga
“The Guernica salad sounds a bit stressful!” remarks my dining companion with a distressed look on her face as she looks up from the extensive menu. We erupt into fits of laughter. There’s nothing really stressful about our dining experience so far, everything is fresh and tasty and the staff are extremely attentive.

We are sitting in the stylish Ziaboga Basque-style restaurant, already enjoying the aperitif of *mejillones en escabeche caseros* and soaking up the relaxed atmosphere. The walls are adorned with paintings for sale and in the front of the restaurant is a cosy *pintxos* bar/sidrería.

We try a variety of starters, including a light and delicious *ensalada de bogavante*, *foie mi-cuit* Ziaboga with a sweet caramelised topping, *anchos artesanas del Cantábrico* served over fresh, juicy tomatoes, baby squid in a sweet, caramelised onion sauce and subtly flavoured *bonito en escabeche casero*. Everything is presented like a work of art, and the sauces add a modern twist to traditional Basque dishes.

I try *lenguado menier* for my main dish. It’s a fresh, perfectly cooked fish with a butter and lemon sauce and the fish is ever-so-slightly crisped on the outside. The richness of the sauce goes perfectly with the light flavour of the fish.

My partner goes for *presa de cerdo ibérico*, which comes with a sweet sauce, creamy potatoes and *padron* peppers. The presentation is excellent, the meat tender and again, the sauce adds an unusual and tasty touch.

With very little space left I opt for a refreshing dessert of *sorbete limón al cava* and my partner is tempted by *goxua*. This is a typical Basque dessert comprised of layer upon layer of creamy and custard-like substances: quite simply, heaven in a bowl. **Ziaboga**, c/General Moscardó, 39, tel: 91 553 12 94 (Metro: Santiago Bernabéu/Estrecho). Open: Mon-Sat, 11.30am-4.30pm and 8.30pm-12.30am. Average price per head in restaurant: 35; in bar: 15. Car parking service available. See www.restauranteziaboga.com for more information.

Loft39

Those who want to be seen as elegant and fashionable should go to Loft39. It’s all about design here, both in terms of the décor and the style and presentation of the food. Even if posh nosh isn’t your thing, it’s worth trying the internationally acclaimed *wagyu* beef. The beef comes from a breed of cow native to the village of Kobe in Asia. The cows live free range and are fed exclusively on natural products and beer, and, they also get regular massages. Not surprisingly, these chilled-out cows are said to end up as very healthy and tasty beef.



Loft39 is the epitome of style Photo: Courtesy of Acción y Comunicación

I try the *wok de fideos de arroz, verduritas, lardones de wagyu y soja aromatizada*, which is a tasty and filling dish with the celebrated *wagyu* living up to its reputation. My companion tries the *salteado de verduras con capuchino de ibérico*, which contains a healthy selection of carrots, asparagus, cauliflower and broccoli, with unusual ham-flavoured foam. We give 10 out of 10 for innovation — ham foam and mas-

saged, beer-drinking cow is new to us — but aside from the novelty factor of the dishes, there’s not much to write home about in the flavour department.

Next on the menu is *bacalao ligeramente ahumado, picada de trufa, con vichissoise de coco*. It’s excellently presented, perfectly cooked, topped with delicately chopped vegetables and drizzled with a sweet and tasty coco sauce. The innovative element here comes in the form of a bright pink, smoked, cracker-like crisp balanced on top of the fish. I pop it into my mouth and it literally vanishes in a puff. I don’t even get chance to crunch it! I sit looking stunned at the strange sensation, and conclude that there’s no way I’m going to get fat from this food.

My partner tucks into *carré de cordero relleno de verduras, con caramelo de sobrasada*, which arrives as two rolled-up cylinders of tender meat, stuffed with tasty vegetables. The sauce is sweet and the presentation is *muy fashion*, but my companion also concludes that she won’t get fat here either!

Dessert is *mojito de hierbabuena y melisa, guarnecido con frititas del bosque*. This is part jelly dessert with fresh fruits and part drink, and again, very innovative. We also try *nuestra versión de la Pantera Rosa* which is our favourite part of the meal so far: white chocolate cake, an orange sugar circle and delectable cream. It’s just a shame that it’s only two mouthfuls! Our conclusion? Very healthy and very fashionable. **Loft39**, c/Velázquez, 39, tel: 91 432 43 86 (Metro: Velázquez). Restaurant open: Mon-Sun, 1-4pm and 9pm-midnight. Bar-lounge open: Mon-Sun, 1pm-2am. Average price per head: 50. Car parking service available. See www.restauranteloft39.com for more information.

Bristol Bar

The Bristol Bar is seriously stylish, and must be the only bar I’ve ever been in that offers more than 50 gin-based drinks! We pass through the buzzing bar into the restaurant, which is fashionably decorated in striking red and black with an enormous chandelier hanging above.



The elegant Bristol Bar Photo: Courtesy of Acción y Comunicación

The aperitif arrives in the form of two *vol-au-vents* filled with blue cheese sauce and ham and topped with a walnut. There’s a fresh, homemade tartar sauce on the side, which is really tasty too.

We choose a “red, fruity and fun” wine, which is exactly as it says on the bottle, and ponder over the extensive English-influenced menu. I opt for fish pâté with a gin reduction and fruits of the forest sauce, and my partner chooses a smoked salmon parcel with prawns, spinach and cream cheese.

The plates arrive promptly and are huge! The presentation is excellent and each starter is so big that it would be feasible to share. However, the ingredients are so fresh, and the combination of flavours is so good, that we endeavour to eat everything. I stop writing notes because I know I’ll never forget how delicious my starter is, and because I’m already too full to move!

The main courses are equally as filling and tasty. I tuck into fresh pasta with spinach, mushrooms and sultanas and a creamy but light sauce, which is delicious. My partner devours a dish of duck with orange and orange sauce, served over a bed of fried potatoes. The duck is tender, the sauce is sweet and the potatoes are just the right texture.

We have to at least try and squeeze in dessert and I go for the chocolate brownie, which is perfectly gooey and smothered in a rich chocolate sauce. My companion has the Earl Grey panacotta, which is creamy and served with a tasty whisky sauce.

The meal is finished with a gin fizz and a Singapore sling. We can’t move, but we’re certainly satisfied. **Bristol Bar**, c/Almirante, 20, tel: 91 522 45 68 (Metro: Chueca). Open: Mon-Wed, 9am-midnight; Thurs-Fri, 9am-1am; Sat, 11am-1.30am. Brunch available Sat from 11.30am-2pm. Average price per head in restaurant: 30; bar menu del día without drinks, 11.90. See www.bristolbar.es for more information.

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