

## tablehopper™

### the regular

### it's about time we met

APRIL 17, 2007 | SAN FRANCISCO Eggs for breakfast, how do I love thee? Let me count the ways: fried and deglazed in balsamic (\$10), poached with grilled duck breast and shiitakes (\$12), whipped in a Champagne omelette with crème fraiche and Fontina (\$12)... Sigh. Swoon. Bwok.

Brunch at ~**FOREIGN CINEMA**~ is a gorgeous thing, especially with a dozen of the restaurant's Botticelli beauties (oysters on the half shell)-you can even get the rare Olympia here for \$2 each. While a flute of the Billecart-Salmon Brut Rosé will put you back a yuppie food stamp (\$20), one sip will tell you this ethereal combination is so worth it.

While you're sitting there savoring your spicy salad of a Bloody Mary (they make a mighty fine one here), you can either be seated outside in the fresh air in the enclosed courtyard (good for the hang over), or inside the spacious industrial chic dining room that always feels comfortable and sexy, like your favorite pair of tight jeans. The light is flattering, even if you're as sallow as a scientist and a touch green around the gills.

I am so grateful there are a few stylish brunch places like this that exist in the City, where you're not standing outside with your latte and a bunch of hungry ruffians-where else would I bring my film industry pack o' mos when they are up visiting from LA, or my stylee kitten-heeled Manhattanite fashionista pal? It's the kind of brunch that fits like a pair of Manolos for groups (hello, bridal showers) or a date (I heart daytime dates). And you can come on Saturday OR Sunday. And, holla, you can make reservations.

Start with the fruit-filled "Pop Tarts," and if I was giving up vegetarianism (this scenario is purely hypothetical, mind you) the slow-cooked brown sugar-smoked bacon would quite possibly be the first thing I would eat to welcome me back to meat.

Have you done brunch here? No? Well, I recommend you see what you can do about that.

So, back on dates: this place is one of my top ten romantic spots for dinner. The dim light is just right, the volume is nice, the fireplace is cozy. Purr. Walking through the long hallway off grungy Mission Street flickering with tea lights, it's like going down the rabbit hole into some urbane hideaway, and the Mad Hatter is greeting you with a French 75.

As most folks know, the outdoor courtyard hosts nightly films that play on the back wall starting at dusk, ranging from Fellini to *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (you can check the [schedule here](#)). I highly recommend starting at the back bar with a cocktail if you have time before your reservation.

The dinner menu is quintessential SF: Cal-Med seasonal and sustainable. Start with some warm olives (\$4) while you debate who is getting what. Vegetables are often a highlight here - on a recent visit, tender asparagus was served with a gribiche vinaigrette (was that tarragon I detected?), crumbled boiled egg and breadcrumbs (\$9), the essence of spring. Salads also sing, like mixed arugula with a well balanced rose petal vinaigrette, toasted pistachios, and crumbled ricotta salata (\$10.50)-each bite was tangy and just right. I found the venison pate de maison (\$9) a little too subtle-it definitely needed the Dijon and house-made pickles to perk it up.

Mains include a delightfully juicy pork chop (\$25) that is brined with lavender, adding a slight hint of fragrance. Hand down, this chop was just too stellar for words. Scrumptious. OINK! The Madras curry roast chicken (\$19) at the table next to me smelled heavenly, but we were munching on the *Frita* (\$23) instead, a pile of juicy fried fish, like snapper and cod and scallops, plus artichokes and fennel. I found the accompanying truffle mayo superfluous-all it needed was a little squeeze of the lemon it came with.

It's refreshing to look at a dessert menu and actually have a hard time deciding. On two, mind you. The crisp cannoli are always a hit (\$5.50)-I also like to order them after brunch with an espresso. The affogato (\$6) is also good for post-brunch, to help defibrillate you from your food coma. The gateau au chocolate (\$7.50) was served with coconut cream and amarena cherries, delivering on everything a chocolate dessert should be.

Since Foreign Cinema has been open since 1999, I imagine many folks have dined here at least once. It's easy to forget how dreamy it is since it feels so familiar. Yes, the menu falters in a few spots or sometimes service can be a little off, but the experience as a whole is usually so fab it makes you grateful for the vision of chef-owners Gayle Pirie and John Clark. And wait, did I tell you about the brunch? 