

## In Good Taste ... Teatro: 'Twixt Theatres on Tremont

by Martha L. Ballard

As the theatre district and, in deed, the whole Tremont Street area east of the Common continues its relentless ascent from seedy to chic, a growing list of shops and places to socialize are opening their doors to the congregating throngs. Teatro (meaning "theatre" in Italian), opened in January of this year, and is perfectly placed in the area, between the

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shiny new Loews movie theatre complex and the stages of the Emerson, Wang, Shubert, and Wilbur theatres in the blocks to the south.

Celeste Cooper, who has designed the interiors of a number of notable Boston restaurants, has done another stunning job with this long, thin space. Entrancing period details, such as the silver-foiled deco designs in the curved ceiling, have been restored and atmospherically highlighted with pale blue indirect lighting. She added sleek modern touches such as the frosted, translucent white formed chairs and tabletops of black granite. The arched window into the open kitchen gives a focus to the end of the room, drawing your eye through the space.

The tone is casual but upscale, flowing with energy and the animated din of urban diners. The crowd is diverse, a mixture of financial district office types, people in for pre- or post-theatre dining, and a scattering of international students, perhaps from Emerson, which is located nearby.

Jamie Mammano is the chef/owner, and he has used many of the techniques that have made his other Boston destination, Mistral, such a success. Here, the menu changes frequently, the rustic Italian elements used in simple, high-quality presentations.

We started with a steaming bowl of ribollita, a hearty white bean soup served steaming in a large, low-slung bowl with chunks of car-

rots and celery, pancetta adding a smoky undertone. The antipasto plate, featured for two but available in a smaller size for one, was a charming medley of textures and flavors. Slivers of roasted red pepper were tartly marinated, with fresh bocconcinis adding a mild mozzarella foil. There was a sampling of salmon tartar with crème fraîche, a mussel with a red pepper relish, a surprisingly sweet caponata, and the smoothness of a white bean puree. A scattering of olives punctuated the presentation. It was great fun exploring the platter and discussing the various creations.

Other appetizers ranged from a simple lemon-dressed arugula salad to white cheese pizza with hot peppers to a heaping rectangular plate of crisply fried calamari, served with lemon aioli.

The main courses followed in the same simple, straightforward theme. A pork shank was slow cooked, served with a mash of sweet potatoes. Swordfish, in a large, thinly sliced sheaf, was grilled, served with roasted asparagus and a drizzle of lemon caper butter. Parsnip tortelli, tender and moist, appeared in a large, freeform shape, served with chunks of salty roasted duck in a light brown sauce, with coarse-cut root vegetables adding further texture and interest.

Salmon was served with broccoli rabe and baby potatoes, verging on a tricolore theme. "Minute" steak was also substantial, grilled and heaped with thinly cut potato fries (or papas fritti, if you will), served with a small container of ketchup.

Desserts were uncomplicated as well, with your choice of a variety of gelatos and sorbets, the Teatro rum cake being

the only traditional dessert offered that evening. It was a dense, molded form, topped with light whipped cream and slices of almond.

Italian wines were featured, with a sprinkling of options from California. They were well selected, and more than two dozen were quite moderately priced, in the \$20-\$40 range. Interestingly, the selections available by the glass were also available by the carafe, an intermediate option not often seen in our downtown restaurants.

Teatro, while quite stylish and certainly upscale, was conceptualized as a more casual alternative to the temples of dining that have proliferated in recent years. It's a great place to meet friends after work (or after theatre!), to have a quick nosh under the playful spiral chandeliers in the bar, and to enjoy the eclectic crowd scene.

In these times, restaurants are the most favored arts venues for many of us, the ideal participatory combination of the visual and performing arts. Teatro is well placed, well named, and worth a stop on en route to the theatre.

### Teatro

177 Tremont Street  
Boston

617-778-6841  
Reservations for

5 or more  
Open from

5:00pm  
Monday—Saturday

From 4pm on Sunday  
Accessible  
Parking available at local lots  
[www.Teatroboston.com](http://www.Teatroboston.com)

