


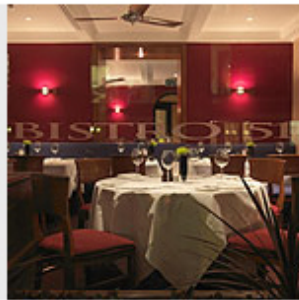
Bistro 51

Our rating  User rating 

Crowne Plaza Hotel,
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BOOK
A TABLE

The ViewLondon Review



Review by [Nicola Jane Swinney](#) 10/06/2010

Buckingham Gate is frightfully smart. But then what would you expect, a stone's throw from the eponymous palace?

The Venue

Bistro 51 is part of the formidable Taj Suites and Residences, which include Quilon and three townhouses, offering luxury "home from home" accommodation. The restaurant itself has been refurbished for 2010, with lots of wine-red wall paint and soft blue furnishings. The overall effect is sumptuous, if a little stuffy.

The Atmosphere

This impression is not helped by the fact that diners seem few and far between and those that do venture in – among them a couple of lone businessmen – seem to be staying at other hotels in the area. As Bistro 51 is spread over a large area, it cannot help but feel a little soulless. A warning, too, if you need the ladies' room – leave a trail of breadcrumbs! Facilities are in the adjoining hotel and it's miles...

The Food

Head chef Brian Henry is commendably keen on sourcing local produce and this is reflected in the menu. So you will find both spinach and potato and French onion soups (both £5.50), as well as a Caesar with crunchy leaves and chicken (£8.95). A terrine of smoked ham and, unusually, rabbit is surprisingly light, although it's a generous portion (£8), and the chef has allowed the [flavours](#) to speak for themselves. But undoubtedly the best starter is a compote of spinach and leek with a poached duck egg and bacon and cream sauce (£8). Bacon and eggs for a starter? When it's this good, why not? The vegetables are sweet and melting, the egg poached to perfection and the sauce brings it all together.

The menu offers eight main courses, as well as six options from the grill section - three kinds of beef, [fillet](#), rib-eye and feather blade, veal chop, lamb and venison - with your choice of sauces and potatoes. The venison (£23.50) is Scottish and is cooked beautifully, seared on the outside and pink in the middle, soft and full of flavour. The red wine and rosemary sauce is served separately, but is a good complement. Curried leeks that accompany the confit of duck (£17.50) are sweet and pack a subtle heat, but they threaten to overwhelm the duck. The meat itself is delectable, succulent and tender, with dark, crispy skin that you know you shouldn't eat, but you will... The dauphinoise potatoes it is served with are nicely seasoned but could have done with a little more cooking. The puddings feel a little like going through the motions - well-presented but not stunning. A panna cotta with berries (£6.50) is a touch bouncy and the advertised coconut in the bread and butter pudding (£6.50) barely discernible.

The Drink

The winelist is cleverly divided into, for whites: light, delicate, elegant; herbaceous, [aromatic](#), fragrant; and rich, powerful, full-flavoured. Red suggestions range from rich, powerful and full-bodied to light, soft and easy drinking. A simple concept, but one from which other restaurants could learn. From the middle bracket of the whites, an Outback Chase Semillon Chardonnay is a good buy at £22.50. Prices range from £19.50 to £65 a bottle, whilst the Champagne that tops the list costs £155.

The Last Word

Bistro 51's chef obviously knows what he is doing and the serving staff are helpful and attentive. Perhaps it is simply the transient nature of the clientele that makes it feel somewhat impersonal.