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BITES

Restaurant Review: La Enoteca in Rotterdam

By JOEL WEICKGENANT

Lou Borrani, the owner of [La Enoteca](#), is bullish on his city's foodie scene. "[Rotterdam](#) is the culinary capital of Holland at the moment," Mr. Borrani claims, and he's doing everything he can at his restaurant to bolster the boast.

Mr. Borrani, a sommelier by training, said he felt compelled to open the restaurant after he noticed a Rotterdam trend: "It was always the food in the first place and never the wine."

There's no question where the emphasis lies at La Enoteca: the sommeliers (three, including Mr. Borrani, in the 60-seat restaurant) refer to the bulk of the menu — 22 pages in total — as a "wine library"; the food offerings fill one lonely page at the back.

That extensive wine list features offerings grouped by country and type, and the servers will gladly share their knowledge about every last bottle. Before ordering our meal, my wife and I learned from Jaco Gouwen, our waiter and one of the sommeliers, about the differences between the Austrian and Portuguese wine markets. (We settled on a bottle of 2006 Vila Santa, from the Portuguese region of Alentejo.) The interaction had put us at ease; Enoteca's space has that effect. The décor manages to be both sleek and homey, with exposed brick on one wall amplified by mirrors on the other, hardwood floor and tables and, of course, plenty of wine racks.

And though the focus on wine is also evident on the menu, by the end of the meal, the food had won us over. The chef Giuseppe Migliaccio, originally from Bologna, adjusts sauces to pair the meats and fish properly with the chosen bottle.

“It’s a joint venture with people at the table,” Mr. Borrani said. “We, the sommeliers, will discuss the menu with the guest, and the chef goes in harmony with the sommeliers.”

Heaping portions of tiger shrimp and chanterelle mushrooms danced in the tang of a red-wine-spiked vegetable vinaigrette. The second course — tournedos of organic beef from the renowned local butcher De Groene Weg, oven-baked to tender perfection and doused in a sauce of its own juices and, again, red wine — left little room for the pineapple tarte Tatin we shared for dessert.

Luckily, a touch of wine remained in our bottle.

La Enoteca, Eendrachtsweg 23, Rotterdam; (31-10) 2131-775; laenoteca.nl. An average meal for two with a bottle of wine is 125 euros, or about \$166 at \$1.33 to the euro. Open noon to 2:30 p.m., Tuesday to Friday; and 6 to 10 p.m., Tuesday to Saturday.