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RESTAURANT A FLOATING DINNER ON THE SEINE

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OUR SELECTION: RESTAURANT OF THE WEEK



RIVER CAFÉ

For those of you who are frequent visitors to Paris and have been there, done that in terms of the city's restaurants, think again! Moored on a stretch of the Seine opposite the Ile Saint-Germain, just several hundred metres outside of Paris proper, is the River Café. In no way related to the eponymous restaurants in London and New York, the River Café in Paris is a floating affair catering to business and media types during the day and the well-heeled residents of the leafy local suburbs in the evening. While it is unquestionable agreeable to be so close to the water while dining, it

would be an exaggeration to say that the restaurant has one of the better spots on the river. Opposite is the shrub-covered bank of the island, while right next to the right-hand dining room is the unsightly concrete *Pont d'Issy les Moulineaux*. In the distance diners can spot some of the surrounding towers whose workforce provides much of the eatery's clientele. Over to the other side of the pontoon will be, by the start of summer, a 100-cover terrace.

Inside one arrives face to face with the bar, either side of which are almost identical dining rooms, the one to the left being used for the Friday night jazz evenings (51 euros gets you a three-course meal plus the concert). Both are upholstered with a smart striped carpet and delicate curtains while the tables, covered with crisp white cloths, have comfortable wicker armchairs pulled up to them. Wherever you are seated in the restaurant, you will be able to see the water and if you happen to be dining here in the winter try and get as close as possible to the roaring fire in the right-hand dining room. With a more mature clientele than many of the city centre restaurants, the atmosphere at the River Café is one of calm and sophistication, rather than frenzy and show-off. Same goes for the service - the well-presented waiting team is present but not intrusive, knowledgeable about the menu and happy to make suggestions.

Taking care of the food side of things is chef Mathieu Scherrer. His cuisine is at once refined, simple and toothsome. As well as the à la carte menu, which changes according to the seasons, he also offers month-long themed options. So for example, during our visit, the truffle was taking centre stage and featured in a number of his creations. Other themes include asparagus and white, where all the dishes featured solely ingredients of that colour. To begin, we enjoyed the creamy risotto with grated truffle which was surprisingly, and thankfully, light and had that perfect nutty texture so often missed. The scallop and dorade duo with its white wine sauce was quite excellent and had us wiping our plate with bread at the end. Although our first choice of apple tart with vanilla ice cream was unavailable, we did enjoy the rich, creamy passion fruit cheesecake. The *Mont-Blanc*-style macaron also comes highly recommended.

An excellent year-round venue, the River Café also organises summer barbeques and has a pianist several nights a week. It may not have the 'vibe' of more centrally located restaurants, nor the views of some of Paris' most famous dining institutions, but you cannot fault the food, service or ambiance. For a dining experience off the beaten track think the River Café. Also think to book ahead.

The closest station to the restaurant is Issy - Val de Seine on the RER C. The nearest tram stop has the same name.

SMOKING AREA: NO

QUALITY:

DETAILS: 146, QUAI STALINGRAD - 92130 ISSY-LES-MOULINEAUX

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