



## CAPITAL RESTAURANTS

by HELEN LUCY BURKE, CAITRIONA MC BRIDE, NEIL BRENNAN & RAY MCCARTHY

### PEARL BRASSERIE ★★★★★

*Guilbaud adjacent*

IN THE SHADOW of Monsieur Guilbaud, fellow Frenchie Pearl has a lot to live up to. Thankfully, it does. Toddle downstairs to the elegant basement dining room and expect a warm greeting from host Kirsten Batt, who co-owns the restaurant with chef Sebastien Masi. Perch at the bar and order a Bramble (€11) from the short cocktail list. Make sure to book a booth for maximum privacy. Kudos to Kirsten and Sebastien for their competently trained waiting staff. The sommelier has done a fine job with the wine list, on which there's a good choice of oft-neglected half-bottles and wines by the glass. To start, I had the fresh crab meat tomato gazpacho (€14), which was just on the sweet side of fiery, with a smack of chilli. For mains, it was seared king scallops with slow-cooked pork belly (€27); three juicy jewel scallops in perfect matrimony with pork belly that cut like butter. If you do nothing else, order the chocolate fondant (€9.50). Cooked to a molten perfection, the butter gives it a saucy, salty edge. One of the most seductive desserts in town. (CMB) 20 Merrion Street Upper, Dublin 2. 661 3572, [pearl-brasserie.com](http://pearl-brasserie.com)

coffees. The bill came to €90, including a €12 tip. A little expensive for lunch, but for a special occasion it's worth it. A great meal in pleasant surroundings. (RMC) *Harry Street, Dublin 2. 646 3353, [doylecollection.com](http://doylecollection.com)*

### CAFÉ NOVO ★★★

*A novel lunch*

MY WIFE recently celebrated a birthday and her sisters very kindly gave her a voucher for the Westbury. She took me to lunch in Café Novo, a lively spot just inside the main door of the hotel. Our waiter, Paul, was friendly and efficient; the table settings were quirky but effectively designed. We started with the roast vine tomato and basil soup (€7), served with bruschetta. We both felt that the soup was a bit salty, possibly due to the type of stock used. I chose the catch of the day (€14.50) for my main, which was fried salmon served with polenta chips and a crispy mixed-leaf salad. For my wife it was the Novo Burger and chips with salad leaves (€15.50). Both dishes were gorgeous. We had a glass of wine each (€7); a Chilean white for me and an Argentinian Malbec for my wife. Excellent! For our desserts Paul recommended a selection of ice creams (€6.50) for herself and I had a lemon tartlet (€7). We finished off with two