

Bernard Cabaret Gourmand offers a unique dining experience, Antonio Park's new venture and more...

MtlRestoRap

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For this month's column I thought I'd share my experiences recently at four dining establishments.

To say that Montreal's newest dinner-and-a-show experience is "unique" remains a true understatement. Bernard Cabaret Gourmand, located at 936 Ste-Catherine St E. near Amherst, is being touted as the city's newest "immersive burlesque dining experience." For owner Jean-François Rondeau it is a dream come true. The 31-year-old is a seasoned restaurateur, owning other establishments on the island and having been trained and managed restaurants in the South of France.

Nestled in a chic 2,000-square-foot repurposed historic bank space, this dining gem promises to serve up gourmet delights with a side of extravagant entertainment like you've never seen before. With seating for 50 lucky guests, plus a semi-private nook for up to 10 of your closest pals (or that one person you really need to impress), Bernard Cabaret Gourmand is set to be your go to for everything from casual nights out to those "I-can't-believe-this-is-my-life" special occasions. It's elegant, it's sexy, and most importantly - it's got the vibe. This place offers an innovative take on the dinner-and-a-show experience with immersive grandiose productions involving dance, burlesque and circus acts on top of a full lineup of live jazz evenings, Drag brunches and other performance-based experiences.

"The concept behind Bernard is one that I've been dreaming of ever since I started in the restaurant business," Rondeau said. "It's a fusion of two of my passions: food and dance."

There are 15 performers on a given night and they sure do give you a fabulous show between courses, from burlesque and dance routines to acrobatics on a trapeze, juggling and even pole dancing. I can state



(l-r) Chef S'Arto Chartier-Otis, Maitre D Yuri, Executive Chef Olivier Vigneault and Antonio Park

unequivocally that I'd happily relive this precise experience from start to finish every week if I could. My dinner started off with some tortilla chips and a glass of champagne. For the main course I chose grilled chicken breast (salmon fillet with crispy skin and spinach and mushroom dumplings vegan style were the other options). The chicken was tasty and juicy. It came with a side of vegetables, including Bok choy, carrots, mushrooms and cauliflower.

As for pricing and reservations, it looks like this. For dinner and show (*Folies d'un Soir*) it is \$295/person (including the show, food, and drinks). The current promo of 50 percent off comes at \$170 for a limited time. If you join their mailing list, you will receive a 40 percent discount. Tickets: [folesdunsoir.eventbrite.ca](https://www.folesdunsoir.eventbrite.ca). You can find out more at <https://www.bernardmontreal.com/>

Phillips Bar: Alex Besnard has gained notice as one of the most established and respected experts on restaurant development in Montreal. Back in 2021 he co-founded A5 Hospitality (<https://www.a5hospitality.com/en/about/>) in 2001 alongside partner Patrick Hétu.

Check out the new Phillips Bar, located on Frère-André Street (just a small extension of Blvd. Robert Bourassa) downtown. It is a new companion to Japoba next door and brought to you by the team from A5 Hospitality. Offering a casual chic ambiance and a Japanese menu featuring maki and hand rolls, prepared before the guests' eyes, chefs Antonio Park, Olivier Vigneault and S'Arto Chartier-Otis have combined their expertise and talent to create a menu inspired by the traditions of Japanese tableware.

It includes dishes that they themselves love to eat, such as melt-in-the-mouth baby back ribs, marinated and grilled chicken thighs, tartars, chicken skin and salmon chips & dips, not to mention a wide selection of maki and hand rolls. The hot dishes are served as



Manager Majd Issa at the Jean Talon Skybird location

Teishoku, consisting of a variety of refined and carefully matched preparations. On the ground floor, there are 80 seats and a bar with 22 seats. The lower floor is reserved for private rooms, designed to accommodate groups and private events (10 to 24 people seated and up to 50 people for a cocktail dinner). My dining partner and I had a delicious meal, starting off with some drinks and getting things started with two superb tartars - beef and blue fin tuna.

Next came a couple of handrolls, the sake aburi and the abi. The sake aburi features charmed salmon sweet soy, sesame seeds and mizuna; the ebi contains Nordic shrimp, spicy mayo, myoga and menegi. Turning to the maki, we opted for the Hamachi and the red tuna kamikaze. The Hamachi has yellowtail, jalapeño, wasabi tobiko, green onion and tempura while the kamikaze includes bluefin tuna, spicy mayo, green onion and gold flakes. Finally, we sampled from the hot menu. The Gindara is a perfectly prepared piece of black cod, marinated in miso, pickled ginger blossom and garlic snow pea leave. It literally melts in your mouth. The Kinpaku is a seared AAA Angus striploin, with black cucumber pickled with cherry blossom, sesame salsify, black garlic jus, garlic chips and fresh wasabi. Info: www.phillipsbar.ca

SKYBIRD: We always appreciate getting to try out new restaurant concepts. Skybird Fresh Asian Grill opened its first location in January at 248 Jean Talon West, where Park Extension connects with Villieray. Now they have added a second spot on Pierrefonds Boulevard. The brainchild of Rio Infantino, the founder of the Copper Branch franchises, the format is quite simple with the main choices being customizable grain salad Sky Bowls and Banh Mi sandwiches. The former allows you to build your own sky bowls with fresh ingredients, vibrant garnishes, oven-grilled proteins, and warm signature sauces, with literally hundreds of flavorful combinations available. As for the latter, it is crispy on the outside, soft on the inside, packed with fresh ingredients and garnishes, oven-grilled proteins, and warm signature sauces all in a fresh French baguette, for the perfect bite every time! Over the next seven to eight years Infantino hopes to have 1,000 Skybirds across Canada and the United States. I checked out the Jean Talon location with friends Glenn and Mitchell. Log on to SkybirdGrill.com.

ANOTHER ARAHOVA: Arahova's 13th location has opened in Montreal's Latin Quarter on St. Denis Street, at the corner of Ontario. There is a lot of foot traffic in this area so they did not even require any advance publicity. Info: www.arahova-souvlaki.ca



A sampling of some of the cuisine at Bernard Cabaret Gourmand.



Live entertainment continues throughout the dining experience

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