

Jill Weinlein

5 Dining Hot Spots in Downtown Los Angeles

3. Church and State - French Fare Chef Tony Esnault

Located near the outskirts of downtown Los Angeles in the Arts District, Church and State is inside the old National Biscuit Company's loading dock. Built in 1925, this gorgeous space once had trains pull up in the back with raw goods to make Nabisco products.

Owner Yassmin Sarmadi of Church and State hired the talented and handsome Tony Esnault away from Patina downtown. She also has Esnault helping her to create a new restaurant, Spring, scheduled to open before 2015. The menu will feature lighter-style French Mediterranean cuisine.



Source: By Jill Weinlein

Esnault serves rustic, country-style French fare at the lively Church and State. Near the kitchen are white ceramic vases stuffed with fresh French baguettes. Every table receives bread and usually a plate of fresh out-of-the-oven baked cheese puffs were served.

Looking over the menu, we enjoy ordering the beautiful puff pastry escargot with garlic butter. It looks like a luscious soufflé in a classic egg cup. For an entree, one of us always orders Esnault's Coq au Vin. It's braised for three days in red wine, herbs, salt and pepper. Served with a robust burgundy sauce with pearl onions, carrots and mushrooms. The meat is so tender, it just falls off the bone.

On the menu it states that all of the products used in the dishes come from organic farms and have been without antibiotics or hormones.

Esnault makes colorful tarts for appetizers that are actually flat breads. Of course he makes a savory onion soup and an array of salads.

The beet salad has deep magenta roasted beets and sunshine yellow soft beets. To add texture and a crunch, Esnault includes some candy cane raw beets to the salad with baby lettuce, hazelnuts, goat cheese and a leek vinaigrette.

Be sure to order a glass of 2012 Moulinde Gassac Guilhem Rose to accompany your meal. It has a pleasant pink hue and intense red fruit nose.

Meat dishes offered on the menu are a clean cut of venison saddle that is not too marbled or a 100 percent grass-fed flap steak with frites and a béarnaise sauce. A duck breast with confit leg adorned with orange is another option. He also creates some delicious fish entrees too.

The dessert tray arrive on a plank of wood with several delights to choose. All are made in house. They are small in size, yet big in flavor. The chocolate tart is dense, rich and satisfying with a salted caramel drizzle.

\$\$-\$\$\$ Open for lunch Monday through Thursday starting at 11:30 a.m. Open for dinner on Monday through Friday at 6 p.m. Dinner on Saturday and Sunday begins at 5:30 p.m. 1850 Industrial St. (213)405-1434.