

Les Refuges du Bivoac is back: three huge heated domes provide a unique dining experience

MtlRestoRap

MIKE COHEN

Are you looking for a unique dining experience? Bivouac, the main restaurant at the DoubleTree by Hilton at Complexe Desjardins, has returned for a second year with a spectacular winter garden on the terrasse.

Overlooking the Quartier des spectacles entertainment district and Place des Arts, this new feature has been pegged as *Les Refuges du Bivouac*. There are three huge, heated domes that can accommodate guests for lunch or dinner for a boreal dining experience, celebrating food of the north. A six-course tasting menu is being offered in the evening for groups of two to 10 people for either a 5:30pm or 8:30pm seating. A special themed program is also planned for every Tuesday.

This year, Bivouac has added a table d'hôte menu for business lunch reservations, in addition to a vegetarian menu for the day and evening service. The popular lovers' bubble is also back for couples to enjoy a wonderful evening at the table or sitting snugly on the sofa for dessert and digestif. It's the ideal occasion to enjoy winter with front-row seats to Place des Arts. Lunch will be available Monday to Friday until March 30, 2024.

What's new this year? Well, you can now come and enjoy an aperitif or digestif by the fire. A fireplace nook and Adirondack chairs were added to the space for guests to enjoy a cozy evening. Need to warm up?

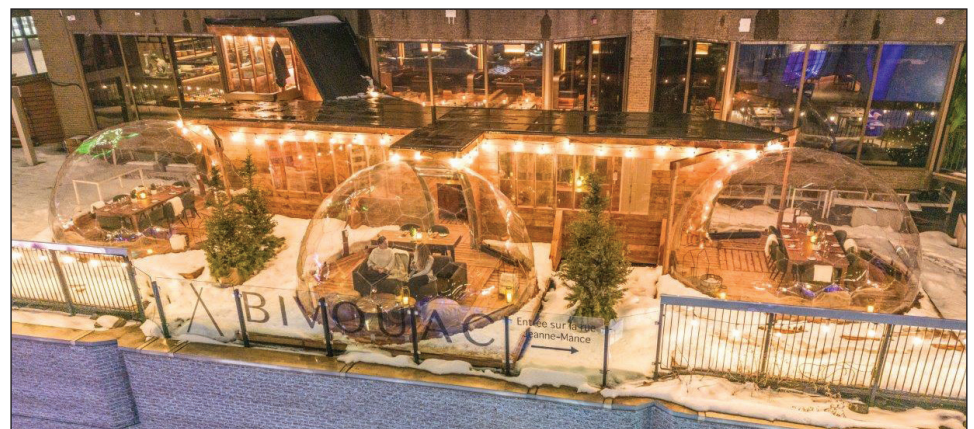


There is a bar serving hot chocolate and local teas set up in the winter garden and open to all Bivouac guests.

"With this project we wanted to highlight local Quebec gastronomy and offer Quebecers an extraordinary experience as our guests responded positively last year," said Director of Sales and Marketing Jennifer Chevalier.

Bivouac's culinary team is headed by Chef Xavier Dahan, who also leads the kitchen at the hotel. After studying hotel and restaurant management in Marseille, France, Xavier was eager to discover new cultures and landscapes by travelling abroad. Landing in London for five years, he eventually wanted to move outside of Europe, settling in Montreal. For more than 15 years, he's been driven by the constant search for new tastes, creations and the adrenaline of food services. As a nature lover, he enjoys working with local products, always adding his personal touch. For him, cooking is the best way to combine his two passions: eating and travel. It was nice to meet Xavier and his fellow chef Igor, who hails from Ukraine.

I got to try some interesting items, but what really stood out were the Bison cheeks. Perfectly braised, this was the first time my tastebuds ever experienced this dish. I liked it so much I asked for seconds. Hats off as well for the pan-fried wild mushrooms, with egg yolk, miso broth and boreal chimichurri; butternut squash



A look at the three heated domes, Les Refuges du Bivouac at Bivouac restaurant

cappuccino, with light cream, birch syrup and roasted hazelnuts; potato gnocchi with feta, salsify and roasted parsnips, Belle Marie brie cream and roasted hazelnuts; and the pecan pie, with sweet clover ice cream and chopped pecans. Your server will also do a wine pairing.

Located on the sixth floor of the hotel, Bivouac is the ultimate spot for drinks after work, drinks before or after a show, for dinner among friends or family, or for business meetings. And of course, if you are going to catch a show across the street this should be high on your list.

The restaurant is open on weekdays for lunch from 11:45 pm to 2 pm and for dinner each night starting at 5 pm. The address is 1255 Jeanne-Mance. For reservations call 514-841-2021 or log on to www.restaurantbivouac.com. There is free indoor parking at the Complexe Desjardins after 5 pm provided your bill is over \$130 before taxes.

Mike's Resto Notes: Bâton Rouge Grillhouse and Bar reopens at Complexe Desjardins

The Bâton Rouge Grillhouse and Bar at the Complexe Desjardins has reopened after being closed due to extensive renovations the past two and a half years with a fresh \$10 million redesign. For longtime General Manager Christine Fegitis, this meant acquiring an entirely new team of servers and kitchen staff and I'd say they did a fabulous job on that count. Our server, Angelique, has actually been with the chain for seven years. She originally worked at her hometown location in Gatineau. When she relocated to Montreal to study, Fegitis was fortunate to be able to hire her. Hats off for the terrific service!

This spacious dining room can seat a total of 278 guests. The curated sound system and music create an ambiance that exudes casual elegance, while the lighting offers guests a varying atmosphere throughout the day. The new design and layout were conceived

by Italo Di Pietro of Anonymus Concepts. This is actually the only corporately owned Bâton Rouge Grillhouse & Bar. All of the restaurants fall under the MTY Food Group banner.

I started off my meal with some piping hot creamy potato soup, topped with cheddar cheese, smoked bacon bits and scallions. As well, for an appetizer, I opted for lightly battered calamari, served with smoked jalapeño aioli dipping sauce. For the main course, I could not resist the rib steak, something that has slowly become a "go to" choice for me at Bâton Rouge locations of late.

The steaks here are Canada AAA hand-selected for superior quality and marbling, aged to tender perfection then seasoned with their own spice blend. I also just love the fries here so that was an automatic side for me along with the fresh vegetables that came with the dish. My friend had their signature Louisiana chicken salad - sliced chicken served with Thai peanut sauce on mixed greens with crispy noodles and pineapple-soy dressing.

This was actually a lunch stop for me so I asked Angelique to kindly package what I did not eat so that I could save it all for supper. I also wanted to save room for one of my favorite dessert, a decadent piece of black forest cake.

TRAN CANTINE: When it comes to a Vietnamese dining-out experience in Montreal look no further than the Tran Family. With a constant flow of diners taking out or grabbing, there are two Tran Cantine locations, one in St. Henri and another in Park Extension. Marilyn Tran started the Cantine with her husband, Alain, some six years ago. They also own a restaurant called Hang in Old Montreal. You could say that cooking and serving delicious food is a big part of Marilyn and her family's experiences. Read Glenn J. Nashen's story at www.MtlRestoRap.com

SIX DECADES LONG: Elio Pizzeria is a Montreal culinary treasure with over six decades of history,



Server Angelique at the refurbished Bâton Rouge Grillhouse and Bar at the Complexe Desjardins

capturing the essence of Italian cuisine with finesse. During his recent visit, Tony Medeiros of MtlRestoRap.com felt as if he had been transported to Italy. His family have been regular patrons of this fine establishment for years, and each visit has been thoroughly enjoyable. He recommends the Pizza Gambari and the **Spaghetti Pescatore**. It is located at 351 Rue de Bellechasse.

RETURN OF CHOCOLAT: Three months after the closure of the Juliette & Chocolat stores, the brand synonymous with gourmet food has reopening two franchises. One is at 1980 Sauvé Street West in Montreal. The other location is at the Jean Talon Market. Let's hope there will be more.

Follow Mike Cohen's restaurant adventures at www.MtlRestoRap.com. Mike can be reached at info@mike-cohen.ca



The Tran Cantine team