



Taste

REVISIT

The New Yorker

Manhattan transfer Le Bilboquet finally settles into Dallas.

BY EVE HILL-AGNUS



NO BONES ABOUT IT:

Duck confit à l'orange is a seasonal variation on the classic French dish.

LE BILBOQUET IS OUR OUTPOST OF THE MANHATTAN BISTRO THAT STARTED ITS LIFE AS a darling of the Upper East Side, with rattan chairs, a zinc bar, and patrons there to people-watch as much as to dine on ring-mold stacked tartares and steak au poivre with mesclun and a thatch of shoestring fries. I've tended to be turned off by its souped-up French cuisine and lack of fundamentals. But a recent visit showed the place at its best.

There was piquant Roquefort, soft as cream, in boats of endive; green beans accented with garlic; and an earthy wild mushroom soup that needed only a livening with black pepper. Entrées, too, made a good show of classics, as in Dover sole meunière with a tart lemon sauce flecked with fresh herbs and skillfully finished with butter. A special of duck breast à l'orange—rosy meat, a light orange flavor—was marvelous. Sauces retained their life. And ingredients seemed to respond to a kitchen that brought out their best natures. Profiteroles delivered the hot-cool luxe of house choux pastry dripping with molten chocolate. I'm relieved, somehow, to know that if I skirt the crab and avocado tower and the Cajun chicken, Le Bilboquet can deliver the best French food I've had in quite some time, and that it isn't merely a place for air-kissing. **D**

LE BILBOQUET

HNQX

4514 Travis St., No. 124

469-730-2937

Full bar \$\$-\$\$\$

FRENCH

REVISIT

Casa Rubia

WEST DALLAS

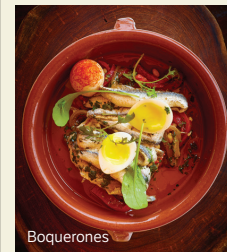
3011 Gulden Ln., Ste. 116

469-513-6349

Full bar \$-\$\$

MODERN SPANISH

In chef Omar Flores' Iberian world, the smoky, bold flavors of paprika and cumin make swirling assertions, carried on luxurious slicks of olive oil and brown butter. Slip on your worldliest demeanor and let the experience wash over you. An Ibérico ham, dramatically spot-lit, dominates the kitchen pass. Order slices shaved from the famed Andalusian beast fed on acorns. Or, on a night of largesse, lardo Ibérico, just the silky fat, wrapped around piquillo peppers and painted with pimentón-spiked paprika honey. The strata of a Spanish tortilla—roasted potato, butternut squash, caramelized onion—may be over-seasoned and topped with a busy landscape of fried sage, sage aioli, and spiced pepitas. But most plates, conceived tapas-style, deliver works of understated intricacy. And the kitchen's skill with seafood is such that I find bliss in silky boquerones (white anchovies) luxuriating in garlicky, herbed olive oil with pine nuts; char-grilled octopus, tender as butter; and mussels escabeche bearing the notes of Valencia orange, with smoked trout roe as pearly attendants. Dessert, a bullion-shaped chocolate pâté topped with sea salt flakes, might be imposing. No matter. The sherry list is long, the evening young, the mood golden as sun-bathed Andalusia. —E.H.A.



Boquerones

Photography by Kevin Marple