

Cultural Daily

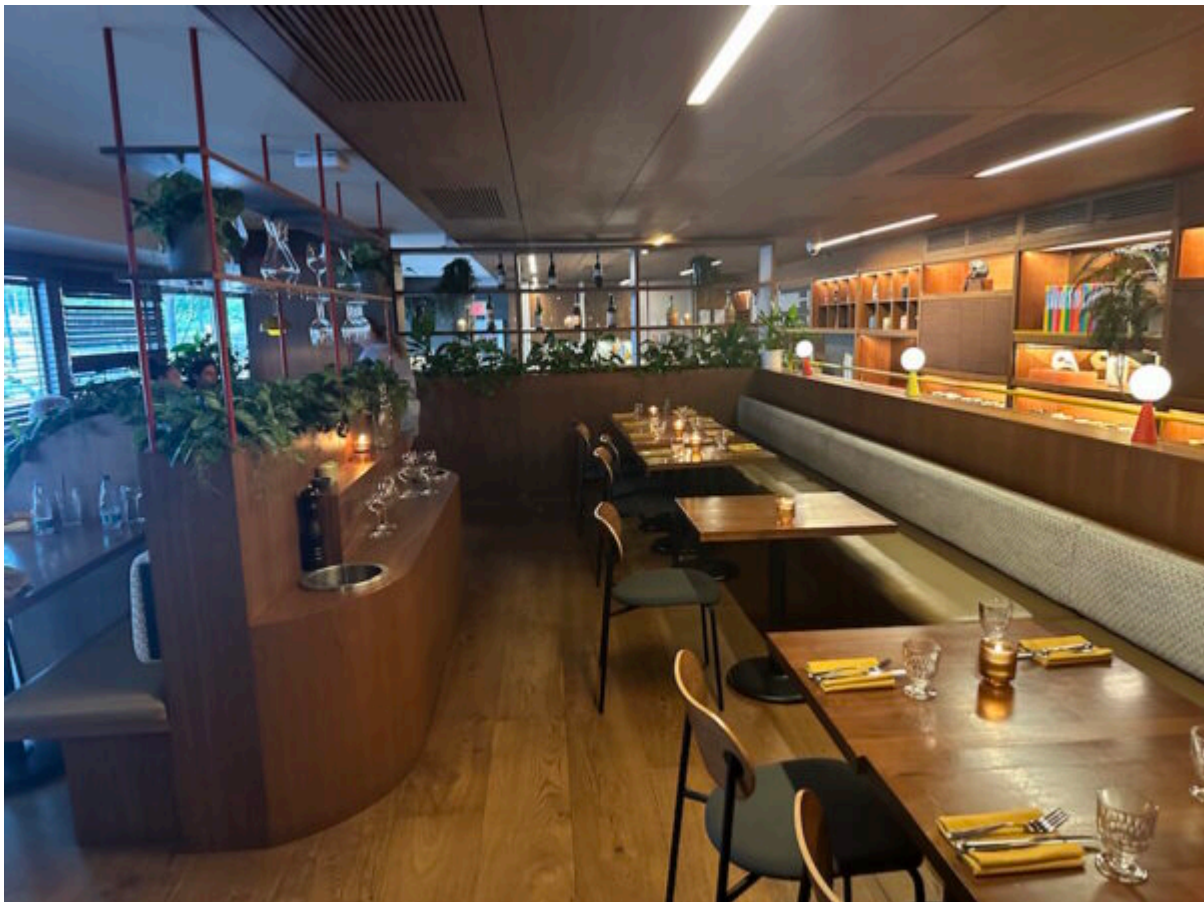
Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Vancouver Eats: The Venetian Bacaro

R. Daniel Foster · Sunday, August 25th, 2024

Venice in Vancouver? That's the over-arching theme of [Bacaro](#) which features modern Italian food influenced by the *bacaro*. Similar to Spain's tapas bars, the *bacaro* serves up arrays of small plates that change seasonally, and sometimes hourly, depending on market availability.

Vancouver's Bacaro is found on Fairmont Pacific Rim hotel's ground floor. It opened in 2020, not an auspicious year for launching a restaurant, but the eatery survived. Now it thrives.



Bacaro / Photo: R. Daniel Foster

[Executive Chef Chantly Yen](#) joined in late 2023. His impressive background includes service as personal chef to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. Another star turn: his opening of Vancouver's Nightshade (MICHELIN Bib Gourmand award for two consecutive years in 2022 and 2023). Located in Yaletown, Nightshade serves vegan/vegetarian fare.

Bacaro's menu

Cicchetti, or small snacks, begin at \$6 and include *crostini*, topped with ricotta and pancetta, duck liver, or tuna crudo. There's also freshly baked focaccia with pomodoro tomato and anchovy.

A nice bonus: a complimentary *cicchetti* for the purchase of a drink.



The aroma of the spot prawn *tagliolini* was evident the moment the plate descended / Photo: R. Daniel Foster

Lunch offerings range from \$24 to \$36. Dinner: \$37 to \$62. It's worth noting the strong U.S. dollar. Anything you buy in Canada is about one-third off, a great reason to visit, although Vancouver has plenty of reasons to visit.

Chef Yen prepared a tasting menu for us, personally introducing the dishes. Inspired by travels across Italy's Veneto region, the food included avant-garde concepts found in Michelin-star establishments.

First up: A *Cicchetti* flight. I first tasted the *pan e lardo*, a charcoal-grilled slice of sourdough with aged lardo, honey, and rosemary. It looked less interesting. *I'll get this out of the way*, I thought. I

doubted it was as good as the porcini cream puff or the Treviso radicchio (scrambled eggs, *ikura*, and basil). I was wrong.

The *pan e lardo* was a crispy crusty delight with flavors that just kept going. So much for optics. The cream puff was good, and the dollop of scrambled eggs was ordinary.

Squid ink adds a noir touch

Next up: heirloom tomato, whipped sheep milk ricotta, sumac, and shallot dressing with ramp oil. The tomato's acid perfectly cut the flavors. It was served with focaccia that was curiously black (it's infused with squid ink). Toasted fennel seeds and confit garlic completed the dish. And of course, clarified butter.



A cicchetti flight / Photo: R. Daniel Foster

The menu marched on. A favorite: the albacore tuna with charred tomato and orange relish. Crispy kale introduced a bitter element that gratefully did not overpower. Calabrian chili oil gave it a nice little slap to the taste buds.

The scent of the spot prawn *tagliolini* wafted to my nose as soon as it was set down. It was served with saffron, tomato butter, basil, and chili threads. The basil was flash-fried, the perfect touch for

this delicious dish.

The grilled lobster was similarly fragrant. Served with *risotto all'onda*, the textures were notable. We also loved the roasted lamb with a raisin *mostarda*, a northern Italian condiment made from candied fruit and mustard-flavored syrup. The combo, while seemingly at odds, was tasty.

Desert: Italian milk punch with a stone fruit compote, caramelized honey tuile, and olive oil. It was light and intriguing. The perfect topper.



Executive Chef Chantly Yen / PHoto: R. Daniel Foster

Bacaro is a recent undertaking of the BC-based hospitality group, Kitchen Table Restaurants, which opened its first restaurant, Pourhouse, in 2009. It's the only non-Italian member of the group's dozen restaurants.

Bacaro: 1029 W Cordova St. Vancouver, BC. 604.687.9887 / @bacarovanouver

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