

# The Washington Times

## Pera Brasserie, a carnivore's delight in New York

Tuesday, October 26, 2010 - Donne's Travel World by Andrea Poe

New York, N.Y. (October 26, 2010) -- New York finally has itself the modern Mediterranean restaurant it had been missing. Pera is infused with the hip vibe that the cutting-edge restaurants in Istanbul now embody.

Named one of Zagat's Top 5 new restaurants, the kitchen under the guidance of two executive chefs is turning out some of the city's most innovative cuisine. Sezai Celikbas, who hails from Adana, Turkey (an town known for its kabobs), gained a reputation for his meat preparations at one of Turkey's leading restaurant, Kosebasi. Jason Avery did stints at top New York kitchens, like Park Avenue Café and Regent Wall Street. Together they oversee a team, largely made up of Turks, who know their way around a brazier.

Pera is a carnivore's dream. Meat is marinated and lightly spiced before being skewered and grilled on a ten-foot long open flame. After the fat is removed, the meat is hand-chopped with a pala, a curved knife indigenous to Turkey.

I ordered the spiced chicken brochette, but one of the menu items most in demand is the lamb tenderloin, which is tender enough to melt in your mouth. An open kitchen lets you see the meats grilling on the open flame and the irresistibly fresh bread baking before you.

Appetizers are given the same attention that the mains are. And, in fact, they are so numerous you could easily build a meal out of a sampling of the myriad offerings. My friend and I ordered the meze sampler, which I recommend as a great introduction to the cuisine. The platter came overflowing with grape leaves stuffed with spiced rice, a creamy roasted whipped eggplant dip and homemade hummus, served warm.

Dessert was two triangles of baklava, presented like amber jewels. Sweet, flakey and satisfying, this is what baklava was meant to be.

The wine list at Pera is vast and deep. And best of all, there is nice selection of Mediterranean wines from many nations, like Turkey, Greece, Israel and Lebanon, all priced reasonably (most under \$50 a bottle).

Unlike many restaurants in New York, Pera doesn't shy away from design. The space is warm and inviting, and, yes, even pretty, thanks to designer Melissa Brown's attention to color. Stepping into the dining room you immediately feel the warm of the Mediterranean culture with sienna and amber tones that are punctuated with bursts of cranberry.

Tables are custom-made. One focal point is a dramatic communal table carved from exotic enterolobium, a tropical tree that stands 100 feet tall. The bar, made of zebrawood, is so visually arresting that if you were in a gallery, you would believe it was a sculpture. Other earthy details, like the use of onyx, ceramic tile and alabaster help ground the large space.

During the week, this is a place where deals are sealed and business plans hatched. But come the weekends, this is a neighborhood favorite, where residents gather for leisurely family dinners.

Pera Brasserie  
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(between 41st and 42nd Streets)  
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