

## THE PALOMAR: A MEDITERRANEAN FEAST FOR THE SENSES

*Written for Priceless Cities by MasterCard, 2016*

Soho has more eateries per capita than anywhere else in London, yet finding something truly exciting can feel a bit like looking for a needle in a haystack. The Palomar on Rupert Street, though, is exactly what you need for the perfect pre-theater dinner date. This compact restaurant serving modern Jewish cuisine with a generous sprinkling of Mediterranean influences is in a league of its own.

At the Palomar the curtain has been removed, not just lifted, as kitchen and diners are brought together in an experience that is both emotionally and culinary thrilling. Perch on the barstools and you find yourselves viewers of a show no less impressive than any West End play as you watch the cooks create mouthwatering Mediterranean small plates right before your bewildered gazes.

Tiny, copper pots and pans, the size of your palm, hang on hooks overhead and beneath them lies a colorful array of carefully arranged ingredients, herbs and sauces. The junior cooks fuss and scurry around from one steaming pot to another. One column on the menu listing the names and nicknames of all the staff makes you chuckle and wonder which one of them all is called Mother Theresa and which one is Picasso.

While you ponder your choices, you are approached by the friendly chef who offers you a few options that are not yet on the menu. You know too well not to turn down a chef's recommendation. Take a sip from your drinks and spend the next few moments watching the cooks slice and dice fruit and veg with surgical precision, while the chef arranges your plates with artistic finesse.

You overhear one of the cooks ask the chef, "Where did you get inspiration for the shrimps?" "From my heart," the chef replies with a smile. And you know he's not joking as soon as you take your first bite from your grilled shrimps and crunchy courgettes. The smoky flavour with a hint of chilli blends perfectly with the tender courgette ribbons. You exchange glances with your date that need no words. Sometimes it's hard to articulate what your palate feels but it sure feels good.

You are already in a relaxed, mellow mood and feeling adventurous about your next order. Crispy fish balls or an octopus steak? Fresh, zesty *Fatoush* salad or a Rib Eye Steak? So many tempting choices. Try out the least obvious. The mushroom ragout with polenta, which blends three mushroom varieties, gives you a warm, comforting feeling that brings to mind the most savoury of childhood memories. You will never think of polenta as bland again.

As night falls, everything speeds up at the Palomar like a song gathering tempo. Seats fill up next to you, the staff carry away and bring plates at the speed of sound, while the cooks shout "Yes, Chef!" to every new order. Still you feel comfy, cocooned in your seats and immersed into a world of flavours and aromas.

Leave a little room for dessert. The *Malabi*, a rose-scented whipped cream and milk pudding sprinkled with crunchy *kataifi* and pistachios, might be the most exotic and the lightest dessert you will find this side of the river.

After that feast for all the senses, you have not only succeed in impressing your date, you have just had some of the best Mediterranean food in London.



# The Palomar: A Mediterranean Feast for the Senses

ROMANCE

#DATENIGHT

#DAYDATE

#FOODANDWINE



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4 May 2016

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At the Palomar, the curtain has been removed, not just lifted, as kitchen and diners are brought together in an experience that is both emotionally and culinary thrilling. Perch on a bar stool and you'll find yourself viewing a show no less impressive than any West End production as you watch the cooks create mouthwatering Mediterranean small plates right before your bewildered gaze.