

dining HOPE S. PHILBRICK

Voila, it's Trois

Say 'Oui' to tri-level chic to challenge all comers

THERE'S A NEW STAR CHEF IN TOWN. Jeremy Lieb joins Atlanta's dining scene as executive chef at Midtown's new Trois restaurant. He brings five-star experience and a national reputation.

Chef Lieb worked at Le Cirque Vegas; Restaurant Medici in the Ritz-Carlton Lake Las Vegas — where he racked up accolades like the AAA Five Diamond Award; Le Masionette, a Mobil Five-Star restaurant in Cincinnati; Restaurant Daniel in New York;

i FOOD FILE
TROIS

1180 Peachtree St.
404-815-3337
www.trois3.com

Food: ★★★★★
Service: ★★★★★
Comfort and Aesthetics: ★★★★★
Value: ★★★★★
Scene: ★★★★★

and La Cote D'Or, a Three-Star Michelin restaurant in Salieu, France.

To say that certain circles were salivating at the prospect of Trois' opening is a huge understatement. One local food editor whispered a bold prediction into my ear: "When Trois opens it will suck the life out of the Midtown dining scene."

Such high expectations have some basis. Trois is the newest entry in Bob Amick and Todd Rushing's Concentrics Restaurants group, joining piebar; ONE, midtown kitchen, and TWO, urban licks. ONE, TWO, Trois. Get it? You will, and how.

SURE ENOUGH, ON A RECENT FRIDAY evening, crowds fill all three levels of Trois. It's already a hotspot. Overlooking the future site of the Atlanta Symphony Center, the first-floor is a glitzy space with a glass bar and steel-and-light-dotted floors. The dining room is on the second floor, and private dining space is available on the third.

Reservations are easy to secure when calling several days in advance, but opening the door to an unattended host station and a row of wooden restroom doors is disconcerting.

Is this the back entrance? A man emerges from a stall muttering that the toilets are weird. (They're definitely worth a look. A sign reads, "flush using button

on the right," but that instruction makes sense only when sitting.)

The hostess arrives hoisting up her skirt waistband and apologizing for her absence. She confirms the reservation, hands two menus to someone who looks us over before directing us to follow.

It seems to be determined that we're capable of climbing the stairs to the dining room. An elevator is available, but we weren't asked if we'd prefer to use it.

The dining room faces an open kitchen. Three of its walls are glass, and it features white terrazzo floors. Based on the abundant business attire and the pricey menu, it seems safe to assume that many bills are routed to expense reports.

Two servers, one quite pleasant and one bland, attend our table. We're greeted with flutes of rosé Champagne — presented at no charge, a welcome surprise, as they don't know "who we are." Another "gift from the kitchen" is a rich, earthy ragout of duck and buckwheat served with fresh, greasy potato chips — an odd pairing.

THE MENU EVOKES A FRENCH BRASERIE and features both classic and modern options.

Artichoke Provencale (\$11) pairs garlicky bay scallops with roasted artichoke and tomato. The scrumptious dish is served in a portion generous enough to share, but you'll want your own.

Buckwheat Crepes (\$9) match savory tender duck with sweet chestnut honey.

The beef in the Beef Bourguignon (\$18) is so tender that it flakes with a fork. The elegant wine sauce smothering the meat,



The dining room and bar at Trois are just two of the separate, high-design spaces that distinguish the restaurant's three levels.

butter noodles, mushrooms and bacon splashes easily, so proceed with caution.

Monkfish (\$26), the server's recommendation as a bestseller, is stuffed with lobster, wrapped in Serrano ham and served atop polenta. The whole is enhanced by a drizzle of sweet reduction sauce across the plate. The combination is a revelation.

The Caramel Pot de Crème (\$7) with caramel foam is served with rock sea salt. The garnish seems an odd enhancement to the otherwise yummy treat. Salt "helps cut the sweetness," says pastry chef Jonathan St. Hilaire.

The Trois Cocktail (\$9) blends Tanqueray No. Ten gin with mint infused green tea, simple syrup, lemon juice, an egg white and a spritz of rosewater and lemon essence. Not overly sweet, it makes a better aperitif than a nightcap.

Anticipation can be a hurdle, since the route from high expectations to disappointment is short. But because Trois delivers, its future shines bright.