

Not a Restaurant Review: Robert Costa

The entry was almost modest, with a Victorian white rendered arch framing the equally modest doorway up three steps from the footpath framed by a couple of pot plants. It's easy to walk past and not give it a second glance. We were ushered past the glass-fronted kitchen; the staff waved at us. All I could think of was a series of Victorian automatons in glass cases performing after you inserted a penny into the slot, only in this case, it was more like 400 pounds each. We waved back; it only seemed the proper thing to do. We never heard the music nor saw the dancing monkeys. Our march to our table was with regimented precision.

The table was laid out with four perfect wine glasses, four perfect water glasses, a floral centrepiece, and cutlery so positioned as to defy mathematical accuracy in layout, all on a brilliant white tablecloth, everything reminiscent of those battlefield models you see in those war movies. The atmosphere was fresh and clean. Everything was arranged in such a way that it seemed natural, like a garden. And yet, somehow, it all seemed a little out of place. Waiters hovered like anxious mothers watching firstborns take their first steps. Food arrived; each course described in meticulous detail worthy of a PhD thesis. Matching wines originating from the left side of the mountain are picked by right-handed pickers standing on their left leg while singing *La Marseillaise*. Lovely. And the waiters watched your every move, waiting for you to flinch so they could escort you to the bathroom as if you would steal the cutlery if they didn't. I want to order everything but stopping me is the realisation that I can't simply eat everything. The walnut cake is to die for; the chocolate nemesis that is to die for, or that pigeon that died so I could die for.

There's no explaining it as we are drawn to these places like moths to a flame or, inevitably, to that electric bug zapper. Were we so foolish as to spend so much money on lunch that could feed a small, impoverished nation? Probably.