



## A Well Polished Halo

Several years ago, as a boy reporter, when I didn't know my Reblochon from my Leiden, I was warned by my proprietor of the dangers of dining in wholly unhallowed hotel restaurants where 'divil a saint' would be. Nowadays, with slightly less verdure, I've often had cause to heed the wisdom of his sagely observations; but also rejoiced in eking out exceptions to his rule, of which there are, I'm pleased to say, a blessed handful.

The more notable exceptions in Dublin's south city require no comment here, and have, by and large, earned their sainthood. A recent pleasure however, was a visit to The Morrison Hotel on Dublin's north quays, where *Halo* is a rare beacon of culinary light, re-asserting itself amidst the gloom of mid-town mediocrity. A perceptible effort is being made here to push standards in a heavenly direction, due in main to the arrival last November of Executive Head Chef Richie Wilson via Thornton's and the Westin, coupled with an excellent and unfussy staff out front, headed up by former Rhodes W1 manager Eric Handts.

For me one of the great attractions in The Morrison is its collection of paintings and sculpture, and in this dining room you are greeted by a wonderful dramatic piece by artist Patrick O'Reilly entitled 'Flight'. The new restaurant design features an eclectic theme with antique tables, and an array of velvet dining chairs in vibrant colours. And vibrant is a word appropriate to the atmosphere of Halo, although the proximity of the bar in part when busy can perhaps make it too much so for some.

In a list of seven starters averaging €11, honey and pistachio glazed teal, parsnip purée and sloe gin sauce was sold out, but admirably replaced by widgeon, which, accompanied by a Kir Royale, got us off to a flying start so to speak, following the Chef's *amuse* of tomato and avocado purée crouton. Surprisingly 'The Chosen One' did not go for the foie gras and confit chicken terrine, but opted instead for marinated goats cheese, caramelised figs, Bayonne ham, with port reduction, and a damn fine collation it proved to be too. Richie Wilson serves a fusion of European cuisine using high quality Irish produce, and a happy marriage this union has turned out to be. Although a fish lover, I had never before tried pike, not fancying the cut of its jib as it were; a nasty looking piece of work, redolent of a Dickensian tax inspector. However in the loving hands of Mr Wilson and Co., it proved to be an absolute delight, pan-fried with purple potato puree and truffle sauce. From eight main course choices on this *a la carte* menu averaging €25, her ladyship chose roast breast of partridge, open wild mushroom ravioli, confit of leg Boudin and truffle sauce, which sent my pretty little pigeon fluttering into paroxysms of delight.

The menu provides one vegetarian option in both starter

and main courses, and the kitchen will be happy to accommodate you if you have any special dietary requirements. Happily having nonesuch, I joyfully debilitated myself further with a berry fan of blackcurrant jelly, blackberry compote and clove brûlée cream, whilst the deep-fried plum pudding with orange and clove frozen yogurt set my little dumpling purring like a gormandizing grimalkin. The wine list is fairly well spread and has a generous amount of very affordable wines in the €25 to €45 bracket. Having enjoyed the efficacy of the Kir, we decided to stay afloat with the blessed bubbles of a Conti D'Arco Prosecco Brut throughout, a snip at just €35, and raised our glasses to this shining Halo's newfound ring of confidence. Hallelujah!

**Halo**, The Morrison Hotel, Ormond Quay, Dublin.1,  
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