



## THE CHEVAL BLANC BY ALEXANDRA KOHUT-COLE

Nestled high above the River Rhine is The Three Kings hotel, a lovely property that dates back to 1681 and which, accordingly, boasts a veritable Who's Who for its guest list. It appears that almost everyone of note has stayed here — from Queen Elizabeth II and Napoleon Bonaparte to Jean-Paul Sartre, Marc Chagall and Bob Dylan.

But famous names and faces aside, it is also home to the Cheval Blanc, a modern European restaurant helmed by German chef Peter Knogl and named after the celebrated Château Cheval Blanc vineyard. After the hotel's extensive renovations, it re-opened to much anticipation in March 2006, along with the restaurant. And, in just seven months, under Chef Knogl's expert leadership, the restaurant was awarded a much coveted Michelin star.

Two years on, we are happy to report that Cheval Blanc is still serving up ambrosial meals that command your full attention, never mind the very scenic surroundings. Knogl aims to 'pamper [his] guests with food full of colour and shape, flavour and sunshine', and this just about described the food on our plates. Take our starter of duck foie gras gâteau entree (CHF 52) — tender poached duck liver studded with spicy green peppercorns and accompanied by tangy rhubarb. It was a delicious medley of sweet, sour and savoury flavours daintily layered.

The crispy monkfish (CHF 57) paired with zesty ginger-infused curry sauce was equally delicious. The marinated monkfish was served within a golden crispy coating, rather like a lightly fried spring roll, with just the right crunch paired against the meaty firmness of the fish. We caught a mouthwatering waft of our

mains before they arrived at our table — a saddle of Sisteron lamb (CHF 59) crusted with Provencal herbs, filled with Mediterranean flavours and served with a delicate potato gratin. Indeed, you could almost taste the sunshine in the lamb, which was roasted to a perfect pink.

We completed our meal with the requisite sweet — Champagne parfait with raspberries and mint foam (CHF 27), a perfect juxtaposition of flavour and colour. For those who cannot quite make up their minds or want a taste of everything, choose the six-course degustation menu (CHF 165), which changes every two weeks. The three-course set lunch menu (CHF 78), meanwhile, offers good value and makes for a perfect excuse to spend the rest of the day in a languid state of satisfaction.

On warm summer evenings, park yourself on a table on the terrace and cast your gaze over the River Rhine below in all its extraordinary life. The hotel is situated at Schiffaende, at the crossing of the Mittlerebrücke (meaning 'the middle bridge'). As we watched on, sipping on hot coffee after our satisfying meal, bold swimmers jumped into the river and were gleefully carried along by the fast-moving current. A river taxi glided effortlessly to and fro from Gross to Klein Basel below, against the majestic backdrop of medieval houses. As the sun went down, the scene was lit up and transformed by stylish Baselites sipping cocktails in riverside bars.

Exquisite food and the romance of the Rhine — who could ask for more? **a**

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