

RESTAURANTS

27 courses, very little edible: Review of Michelin-starred restaurant goes viral

Would you want to eat foam served in a plaster cast of the chef's mouth?

 TAP TO UNMUTE

Michelin-starred restaurant reacts to brutal review

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By Randee Dawn

A Michelin star is one of the most desired of all seals of approval in the restaurant industry. Earning one usually indicates a restaurant of the highest quality, indicating to diners that they're about to take a culinary journey that will tantalize the senses and fill the belly.

But that might not always be the case.

Meet Bros', which is Lecce, Italy's sole Michelin-starred restaurant. Everywhereist travel writer Geraldine DeRuiter was drawn to visiting the restaurant, having heard rave reviews and good

things about one of the youngest chefs to receive a star, Isabella Potì, as she told TODAY Food in an email. The restaurant is also led by chef Floriano Pellegrino.

"I'm pretty used to experimental cuisine, and I've been to a few Michelin-starred restaurants," she said. "So I was anticipating something a little unusual and fun. I was not expecting a 4-hour hunger induced fever dream."

And yet, that's what she and seven of her friends got. As DeRuiter explained in a review of the restaurant that she published on her site Everywhereist on Wednesday (note: there's some vulgar language), those hours spent consuming 27 courses, "made me feel like I was a character in a Dickensian novel. Because – I cannot impart this enough – there was nothing even close to an actual meal served."

Here are some photos I took of the experience to add to the story 😊
pic.twitter.com/SqPZHrHpB9

– Elle-Rose Moogan (@ellerosetweets) December 8, 2021

With lines like that, it's no surprise that the review has now gone viral.

Officially, Bros' website offers eight and 13-course meals; DeRuiter says their party counted 27 items sent out during their visit. Her review captures the surreal nature of the experience, and perfectly skewers the pretentiousness that oozes from the eatery's performative dining service – kind of like the citrus foam that oozes from a plaster cast of the chef's mouth in one course.

All of the 27 offerings writes DeRuiter in her review, were tiny, strange, overly fussy portions, and nearly all were served cold. "Amassing two-dozen of them together amounted to a meal the same way amassing two-dozen toddlers together amounts to one middle-aged adult," she wrote.

Among the itty-bitty "courses" were edible paper slivers, shots of vinegar, a tablespoon of crab, fried cheese balls with rancid ricotta, a partial scoop of green olive ice cream ("I thought it was going to be pistachio") and, of course, the plaster cast with foam, which looks like the mouth of a person suffering from rabies.

pic.twitter.com/Efil5SKfFB

– Elle-Rose Moogan (@ellerosetweets) December 8, 2021

DeRuiter notes that things started to go south almost immediately, when she and her party were led into a "cement cell of a room" with music by Drake "pumping through invisible speakers." The room was "unspeakably hot" and they seemed to be the only customers.

"It's as though someone had read about food and restaurants, but had never experienced either, and this was their attempt to recreate it," she wrote.

Further, Bros' steered from the usual path in these other ways:

- No menu, just a QR code linking to a video featuring a chef talking about many things, but not food
- Servers that do not explain what is happening
- Guests who try to stand and take a break are "scolded" to return to the table
- Food allergies are responded to by not serving the allergic, some of the time
- When you're served reconstituted orange slices with an actual orange, the actual orange is only meant for decoration

Dessert, which came after the party hadn't realized they'd already been served the main course, featured a marshmallow-flavored, cuttlefish-shaped object, and "frozen air" that melted before it could be consumed. After which they were told to leave the restaurant. But were they free? They were not: They were led to the "Bros laboratory" where a TV played extreme sports and a chef gave them "comically tiny slivers of fake cheese."

It's true. It was awful.

I did up drinking an entire bottle of wine though so I was mercifully drunk 😊

Here's the very blurry Polaroid of us in front of the restaurant which weirdly looks like something out of a vampire movie.. pic.twitter.com/CEWUUBzLM9

– Lisa Paasche (@LisaDMyers) December 9, 2021

How much did all of this cost? Between about \$150 and \$225 per person. But there was one nice thing: As the party left, they were handed Bros' balloons and a Polaroid of them was taken (and later posted on social media by one of the attendees).

So was it a prank? Or does Bros' believe its own hype? Said DeRuiter, "They're either comedic geniuses or sadists, and hey that's fine if that's what your audience is expecting, but we sort of wanted to eat dinner."

When asked for comment, a Bros' rep responded with the following extremely on-brand "Declaration by Chef Floriano Pellegrino," which we are reprinting in its entirety, as they asked:

— Page 1/3 of the "Declaration by Chef Floriano Pellegrino." Courtesy Pellegrino Brothers

— Page 2/3 of the "Declaration by Chef Floriano Pellegrino." Courtesy Pellegrino Brothers

— Page 3/3 of the "Declaration by Chef Floriano Pellegrino." Courtesy Pellegrino Brothers

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Randee Dawn (she/her) is a veteran entertainment journalist and author based in Brooklyn. In addition to writing for outlets including TODAY.com, Variety and The Los Angeles Times, she's the co-author of "The Law & Order: SVU Unofficial Companion" and co-editor of "Across the Universe: Tales of Alternative Beatles." When not interviewing the stars or dabbling in speculative fiction, she nurses her sourdough starter and dreams of the day she can travel again.

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