



The very posh Hotel Vernet is steps from the Champs-Élysées but pleasantly away from its bustle, so its restaurant, named V, is an excellent respite from the rush of that main artery both at lunch or dinner.

The building dates to the Haussmann era, and V's most extraordinary feature is an exquisite stained glass art nouveau barrel ceiling designed by Gustave Eiffel that bathes the 35-seat dining room in soft Parisian light.

The décor, on the other hand, provides a decidedly modern contrast by way of a Matisse-like figured carpet and cushy, crayon-colored armchairs, all reflected in an arched wall mirror opposite an open kitchen.



Chef Richard Robe, born in Manchester, England, and raised in Normandy, offers both a remarkably well priced seven-course tasting menu at €95 and à la carte (service and tax included) that maintain their links to classical French cuisine while taking advantage of ingredients and ideas from contemporary cooking. Daintily composed plate presentations are impressive.

We started off with one of Robe's signature dishes—a fat Scottish langoustine just barely cooked through, with Spanish citrus, passion fruit-avocado puree and seaweed leaves. Crisp, rosy quail was cooked in fennel with a tomato confit and caramelized yellow tomatoes, dashed with an acidic orange vinaigrette, with which we enjoyed a Clarendelle Bordeaux 2017.



Pink-orange rouget was based on a recipe served at Paris's famed La Taillevent restaurant (where Robe once worked), here done with zucchini flowers, ratatouille of eggplant, sweet tomato and onion and a saffron-scented seafood soup and fennel crusted brûlée. He smokes rabbit on the bone barbecue-style then, in the classic manner, serves it with a patty made of rabbit *rilette*, and potato gnocchi with parslied *girolles* mushrooms (*above*).

V's desserts are as lavish as what precedes them, and Robe's work with chocolate is especially delectable, as in his little cannons filled with ganache and sided with chocolate gelato, while his sweet, ripe fruits of the season are topped with intensely flavorful fruit sorbet (*left*).

Robe is doing some dazzling work, and if some dishes are a bit too complicated for one plate, he is a chef to keep one's eye on as a true innovator.

*V is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner daily.*