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expect  
nsferry



"If you love tapas, Baroja on Jeffrey Street is as good as travelling to Spain. The dishes are brilliant, and the restaurant is one of the most friendly, stylish places." **Michael Taylor, 26, IT, Moulton**

# Bijou is a fine diner

# little gem of a in the making

**Restalrig has a welcome addition to neighbourhood**

JOANNA VALLELY

**IT'S a cold winter night and you're walking home shivering and wondering what you're going to have for dinner.**

You would head into town and get a bite to eat but you might grab a few glasses of wine with your meal, so can't take the car and don't relish a freezing wait for a bus.

If only there was a nice restaurant in your neighbourhood that was open in the evenings.

Restalrig has plenty of corner shops, pubs and bookies to break up the residential feel.

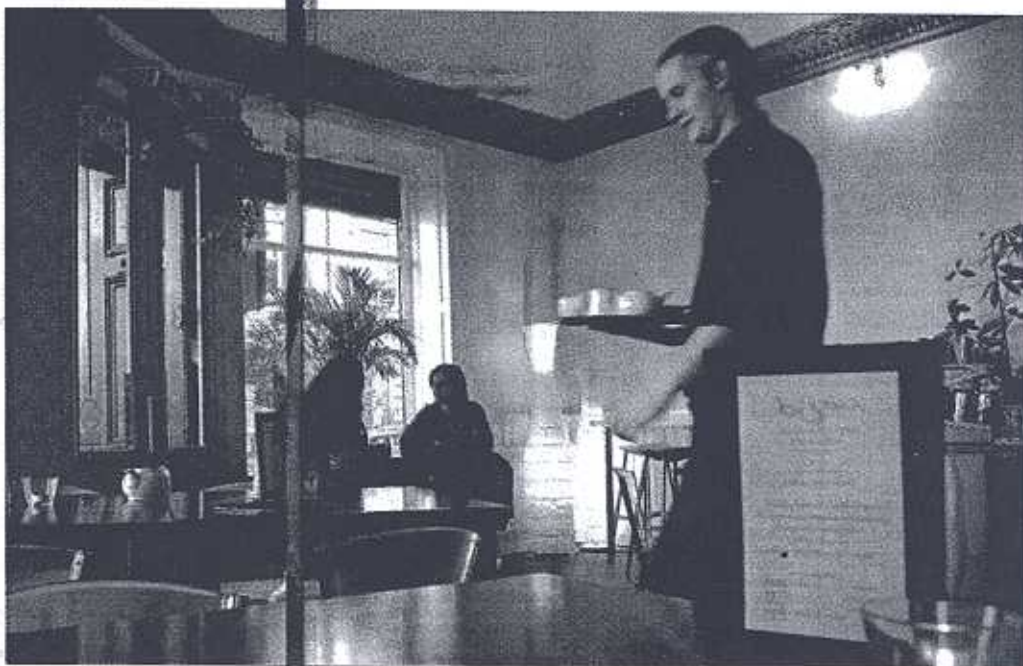
But, like many areas, it is not inundated with restaurants in which to enjoy a romantic sit-down meal after 6pm.

Since shortly before Christmas, however, the candlelit windows of Bijou on the corner of Restalrig Road and Leith Links have offered an inviting sight to people working up an appetite on their way home.

In keeping with its French name, Bijou looks rather Gallic with its dim lighting and cosy ambience.

Bijou means jewel or gem, but I suspect it also means tiny, as this restaurant only has space for four tables, catering for around 20 diners.

It looked cosy but a bit plain from outside and any apprehensions I might have had about it being a greasy spoon in disguise were heightened when I saw the chippy-style metallic counter with tubs of sauce packets on



**STAR IN THE MAKING:** The

small and friendly Bijou at Restalrig has the right ingredients to become a big hit with diners

top. Bijou hasn't got its drinks licence yet either, but fortunately there are plenty of places nearby where you can buy a bottle of wine.

Soon I was feeling more relaxed and admiring aspects of the decor like the corniced ceiling, the pretty chairs and the hanging plants above the door.

The menu divides everything into three portion sizes, bijou, medium or main course-sized.

When I asked for advice I was told bijou is very small, the main courses are mainsized while the medium-sized are more for the female appetite.

I ordered the wild mushroom and parmesan crostini with rocket salad in a size in keeping with my gender.

A plate emerged with two pieces of wholesome baguette, toasted with hot mushrooms and shavings of parmesan and a tangle of rocket.

It was delicious, but confirmed a terrible truth - I have the appetite of a man.

If I hadn't known I was going to have pudding to follow, I would have been disappointed by this as a main course.

It was elegantly served and fabulously tasty but just wasn't satisfying by itself. However for a lay-dee wishing to indulge in a calorific dessert afterwards, it did cut the guilt factor.

My partner opted for mains-sized chargrilled ribeye steak, grain-mustard mash, roasted parsnips and jus.

This was beautifully presented and the portion looked adequate. If he had to pick a fault it was only that his healthy parsnips were not the potato wedges they

cunningly imitated. I was impressed by the simplicity of the dishes. Flowery menu descriptions were banished and the evident emphasis was on flavour.

Padding kept up the high standards. My apple tart and home-made cinnamon ice cream could have been traditional and boring.

Instead it was a light, flaky, open-top, individual, round apple tart surrounded by dabs of raspberry coulis and a small scoop of ice cream, which looked and tasted heavenly.

**MY guy went for the chocolate brownie with vanilla ice cream, again home-made.**

The brownie was cut into tiny triangles and moist, rich and tasty, steering well clear of the frequent brownie crime of being too dry and heavy.

We had really good coffees with our desserts too, and when we asked for a glass of water, got a bottle which kept us going for the whole meal.

Bijou is evidently a fine diner in the making. We went on a Thursday evening and it

was full to the rafters. Now, a room the size of Bijou may argue this is not that hard to achieve.

But not every restaurant can draw people in on cold winter nights, especially in the early days while still building a reputation.

We were served by the owner Liza Robinson, who formerly worked as restaurant manager at Blue Bar & Cafe the Traverse Theatre and lives in Restalrig herself.

She explained that the lack of music was because they hadn't yet got their music licence, and politely said she would take on board my Edie Piaf requests when the time came.

Bijou's walls are still a little bare and service was a little slow because Liza was on her own, but in a few months time, when it gets its music licence and if it keeps up that high standard of food, Bijou will really live up to its name.

**Bijou, 2 Restalrig Road Leith Links, 0151-538 0664**

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## THE BILL

Wild mushroom and parmesan crostini, rocket salad **£6.50**  
Chargrilled rib-eye steak, grain mustard mash, roasted parsnips, jus **£11.95**  
Chocolate brownie, vanilla ice cream **£3.50**  
Apple tart, cinnamon ice cream **£3.50**

Glass of Coke **£1**  
Café latte **£1.50**  
Macchiato **£0.80**  
Credit card charge **50p**  
**TOTAL: £29.25**

Quality **★★★★**  
Menu choice **★★★**  
Surroundings **★★★**  
Service **★★★★**  
Value **★★★★**