

**Praise be to the pumpkin!**  
Meera Sodha's Thanksgiving pie

# Feast

Issue No. 304 Saturday 18 November 2023

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Parsnip and pecorino stuffing

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Fancy pizza, titivated pappardelle and hyped-up tiramisu



**The  
Guardian**



# Grace Dent

'Fancy pizza, titivated pappardelle and hyped-up tiramisu'



PHOTOGRAPHS: KAREN ROBINSON/THE GUARDIAN



An Italian restaurant created by French people has arrived in a “new” part of central London, or at least a bit of it that now has a brand new name thanks to the recent bulldozing and reimagining of part of Soho. Ilona Rose House, anyone? The name hardly rolls off the tongue, does it, but it describes the many thousands of square feet of land more or less behind Greek Street that consists of work spaces, art installations and, more relevant to this column, a mews with alfresco dining. You enter via an archway on Greek Street, or via the equally new, spangly, hyper-modern Tottenham Court Road station, though right now you’ll be treading

through building sites, cooing at foxes cavorting in rubble and wondering: “Where the hell am I? None of this seems to be on the map.”

The developers have chucked just about everything they can at Ilona Rose House to prettify this mega-priced patch of grade-A real estate. Milk Beach and Kapara opened here last year, and now there’s Daroco, a 120-seater Parisian import that serves fancy pizza, titivated pappardelle and hyped-up tiramisu. Yes, it may be selling mainly just pizza and pasta, but Daroco does so in a wildly ostentatious and unforgettable manner that I’m going to call acid art deco with a renaissance edge. Velour

## Daroco

Ilona Rose House, Manette Street, London W1, [020-7348 4998](tel:02073484998). Open all week, lunch noon-3.30pm, dinner 5.30-11pm (10.30pm Sun). From about £50 a head, plus drinks and service



gilt banquettes perch under a mirrored, pleasure palace ceiling, and there are lots of plants, lots of brass, lots of staff in navy blue and an enormous disco pizza oven decorated with a whole flock of blue butterflies.

Minimalist is clearly a filthy word to the Daroco people. At Daroco, the website says, architect Oliver Delannoy “sets the stage by imagining a more than monumental identity”, an identity that has already been a great success in both the 2nd and 16th arrondissements of Paris due to the vision of owners Julien Ross, Alexandre Giesbert and Nico de Soto. The trio behind those ventures now find themselves in an area of London that’s only just awakening after a decade under dust covers.

It is mere moments from the Outernet, a space where tourists now linger in their thousands, lured by the Vegas-style wraparound screens that blare out music all day long. I’m sure all the gawping will make them fancy a bowl of spaghetti alla chitarra with *baccalà*, cured sardines with sweet-sour white onions and pine nuts, or chocolate mousse served French-style in a lovely, aerated, gelatinous lump and garnished with sea salt.



I can’t help but be enamoured of Daroco. It’s silly, yes, but it’s fun, to quote the title of my favourite episode of *The Good Life*. In this gig, I must eat pasta in a safely decorated, somewhat pale room at least 20 times a year, so it’s a real treat to have Daroco channel Michelangelo’s St Peter’s basilica while bringing me braised pheasant-filled ravioli in a butter and rosemary sauce (above).

After all the bluster, I expected very little from the food, but I’ll eat that cynicism immediately: this was a more than decent lunch. First, that big, blue and ridiculous pizza oven is churning out possibly the best pizzas in Soho. They are huge, sloppy, soft-based and floofy-edged, and made with good-quality produce at more or less the same price as the nearby Pizza Express. The “*parmigiana*” with tomato sauce, fried aubergine, stracciatella, grana padano and basil (left) is very good and serves two. The “*mortadelight*” is littered with fior di latte mozzarella and comes with mortadella, more stracciatella, a wondrous pistachio cream and crushed pistachios. Arancini are plump, crunchy-coated, stuffed with well-seasoned braised leeks, scamorza, hot peppers and pecorino,

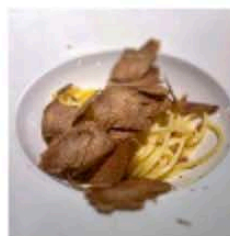
and pretty much as good as arancini get. An antipasti of *marango* beef, sliced thinly and served raw, is dressed with good-quality olive oil, sea salt, lemon and a side of *pane carasau*, or Sardinian crispbread.

Yes, this is a vast, daft restaurant in the heart of tourist land, but it’s also much better than it needs to be. I felt similarly about Milk Beach next door. Such restaurants are the only things saving this Soho facelift from being wholly awful.

As well as the mousse, we had tiramisu for pudding, a generous, unregimented stack of espresso-soaked savoiardi with mascarpone splodged dramatically in a bowl, with no sharp corners and almost like a trifle. A new mode of presentation, maybe, but still the same old comforting, spongy, boozy, creamy, dinner-party classic.

The staff are lovely and the menu isn’t that pricey, considering where it is. Leave your family staring at those 50m screens up the road and treat yourself to a Napoli pizza and a £6 glass of montepulciano. Central London is befuddling, but there is some wonky sanity at play here. *The next episode of Grace’s Comfort Eating podcast is released on Tuesday.*

#### Instafeed



Enoteca Turi’s tagliolini with truffle ... or is it the other way round?



London’s fanciest wild mushrooms at the very ‘hip’ Mountain  
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