

# Clint Eats



BY CLINT HAMBLIN

## Raw Meat, How Do I Love Thee?

Cooking with mom was always fun. As a kid, I loved working in the kitchen making mom's meatballs. I got to use my hands to mix the raw meat with minced onions, garlic, chopped parsley, lots of seasonings and raw eggs. Every now and then, a little would end up in my mouth. Mom would yell, "Clinton, don't eat that - it's raw!"

"So what?" I thought. "It's delicious!"

Years later, I discovered that mom's magnificent meatball mix tasted a lot like steak tartare, a very popular dish found in most upscale bistros throughout the United States.

Brasserie Jo, located at 120 Huntington Avenue in the Back Bay, features many outstanding dishes typically associated with bistro cuisine. Their onion soup is, as they say, "to die for."

The menu also includes a delicious version of steak tartare by executive chef Nicholas Calias. Start with fresh top round, Dijon mustard, capers, horseradish, Worcester sauce, shallots, onions and several fragrant herbs all freshly ground daily, and served on country toast with a side of crunchy frites.

For traditional steak tartare aficionados, a raw egg yolk and a good recording of "La Vie En Rose" is mandatory. Be sure to

request the egg when ordering. "La Vie En Rose" is optional.

My hand still aches from the welcoming Herculean handshake extended to me by Orazio, one of my favorite Boston waiters at Ristorante Fiore located at 250 Hanover Street in the North End. I came to sample the beef carpaccio, a dish that enjoys a prominent position on many menus throughout Boston.

The very talented Riccardo Passini, executive chef for Fiore, has put together an outstanding menu of uniquely prepared dishes, and the carpaccio di manzo or beef carpaccio appetizer is no exception. Thinly sliced beef tenderloin is served raw with fennel salad, lemon zest and drizzled with truffle aioli. The beef is buttery and practically melts in your mouth.

You can't help but close your eyes as you savor the taste. Forget sharing. Take a vegetarian to dinner. That way the carpaccio di manzo is all yours.

Passini insisted we try a plate of pasta del giorno or homemade chitarrine pasta tossed with lobster meat, clams and shimeji mushrooms. The chitarrine, named for guitar strings, was sublime. Whenever I dine at Ristorante Fiore, I thoroughly enjoy everything - the food, the atmosphere and



Fiore's carpaccio



Brasserie Jo's steak tartare

especially the superior service by a very caring and cordial staff.

Beef tataki is another one of those Japanese dishes that has found its way on to non-Asian menus throughout the United States. Not everyone prepares it as well as Samurai Restaurant located at 827 Boylston Street in the Back Bay.

Chef Sang Ng offers wagyu beef tataki with ponzu sauce. A roll of very tender wagyu beef is very quickly grilled, searing just the edge of the meat and leaving the inside completely raw. Sliced thin, the beef is layered on a dish and dressed with Japanese ponzu sauce, or ponzu shoyu, a sauce typically made with citrus juice, soy sauce, vinegar, mirin, dashi stock or kat-

suobushi (bonito flakes) or kombu (kelp). Micro greens are evenly spread over the beef, and a beautiful purple flower finishes the plating. The presentation is stunning and entirely edible. Don't be afraid to eat the flower. It has a crunchy lettuce taste that goes well with the beef.

While you're visiting Samurai, go for the toro tartare, delicious raw toro tuna (a fattier cut of the tuna) served with Miso paste, cucumbers and black tobiko or caviar. Another flower finishes off this really beautiful dish. Owner Kun Kim should be very proud of his Samurai Restaurant. The food is magnificent, fresh and gorgeous to look at. If you love Japanese food, this is the place you should visit.

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