

The Paths Of La Bohème

Located in the heart of the Art Nouveau district, La Bohème is a fine dining restaurant infused with the spirit of creativity and intellectual freedom—the very cornerstones of art and music.



In his 1851 novel *Scènes de la vie de bohème*, Henri Murger wrote “La Bohème is a stage in artistic life. Today, as of old, every man who enters on an artistic career, without any other means of livelihood than his art itself, will be forced to walk in the paths of La Bohème.” In Murger’s stories, the paths of La Bohème

weave through the Latin Quarter of Paris, filled with dreamers, philosophers, artists, poets, and musicians—people who lived a life of romance, style, and pure pleasure. His stories later inspired the Italian composer Giacomo Puccini to write *La bohème*, one of the greatest operatic works of all time.

Today, the paths of La Bohème are still very

much alive, and you don't have to be a starving artist in order to find them. Sometimes, these paths surface in the most unexpected of place, like at a fine restaurant in Riga's posh Quiet Center neighborhood, filled with embassies, museums, and elegant Art Nouveau buildings. At first glance, La Boheme feels like a typical high-end gourmet restaurant—elegant mahogany tables, sparkling glasses and silverware, and waiters dressed in black holding aloft heavy plates in white-gloved hands. But on closer inspection, a guest will find tiny details that betray another side to the restaurant: a synthesizer in the corner, a bookshelf containing 19th century Romantic novels, stylish black-and-white prints on the walls, menus adorned with musical notes, and the sounds of French *chansons* quietly piped into the room. It is here that the ambience of 1840s Paris lets its enduring presence be felt. Because La Boheme is more than just a restaurant; it is a celebration of the finer things in life, an ode to passion, romance, and intellectual freedom—the very foundations of the artistic life that Murger described in his epoch-defining novel, and which

veal-stock sauce, which gathers together all the flavors and raises them to a divine level of culinary inspiration.

The same trend extends throughout the gourmet menu: the beef carpaccio with capers is drizzled with a Perigord-truffle sauce; the French onion soup is bedecked by a cap of Raclette cheese; and the pork fillet is adorned with a crust of caraway seeds, accompanied by barley and pumpkins. The classic staples of haute cuisine are embellished with a local accent and placed under the spell of artistic genius. In this way they are reinvented anew—just like the original bohemians, sons of nobility who shed their stodgy upbringings and romped like free spirits through the Rive Gauche and Montmartre in the mid-nineteenth century.

La Boheme proves its dedication to the spirit of music and the arts by working together with the Latvian National Opera. The restaurant offers pre-opera drinks and appetizers for opera lovers, as well as post-opera dessert for those just returning from a performance at the opera house. Guests who present opera tickets for that day receive a 20% discount on all meals—a

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were later set to music by Puccini. This atmosphere pervades the restaurant's interior, divided into a brasserie on the left and a formal dining room on the right. But it is especially present in the restaurant's menu. Like the original bohemians of the nineteenth century, the dishes possess a reverence and respect for tradition, though with a creative spin and a flash of artistic flair. An appetizer of tender coquilles Saint-Jacques—that classic mollusk and a staple in French cuisine—is given a local accent: a mash of green peas, shaped like an avocado. But artistic inspiration comes in the form of a foamy carrot sabayon, which garnishes the dish like a grace note played by the violin section of an orchestra. Likewise, a slow-cooked lamb rump steak is divided into five mouthwatering pieces, placed amongst a semi circle of beluga lentils. But the chefs have enhanced the dish with a sumptuous



gracious nod to those patrons of the arts who are supporting the work of local musicians and dancers (and the truest modern-day bohemians). On Friday evenings, the restaurant hosts live jazz or piano music after 8 p.m. Patrons have been known to rise from their tables, raise their glasses of wine, and join the band for an impromptu rendition of songs by Charles Aznavour. After all, the restaurant was inspired by the music and the arts, and what better place than here to abandon yourself to the spirit of freedom and inspiration than at La Boheme.

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Hours: Mon.–Fri., 12-22; Sat., 18-23; closed Sundays.
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 More information at www.laboHEME.lv