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THE RESTAURANT GUIDE 2016

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Hibiscus

LONDON W1

PLAN 2 J1

Modern French 

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dir: Nearest station: Oxford Circus, Marble Arch

Top-class modern French cooking from a master of his art

Claude Bosi has French culinary traditions running through his DNA. After a childhood spent at his parents' restaurant in Lyon (France's food 'capital') he spent time with super-chef Alain Ducasse, then crossed over la Manche to do his bit in transforming Ludlow into a foodie hotspot at the original Hibiscus. Its Mayfair incarnation is a discreet, rather dignified space, revamped in 2013 to give the place a more contemporary face, with muted tones and modern artworks, pale oak floors, tables dressed up in brilliant white cloths, and a magnificent floral display in the centre of the room. Always one to plough his own furrow, Bosi's menu format is slightly quirky: there's no carte as such, just a shopping list of prime seasonal ingredients. You pick what you like the sound of, and then choose how many courses (three, six or eight) you (and your bank manager) feel up to, and the kitchen does the rest. If that sounds too radical, the three-course lunchtime menu (with half a bottle of wine, coffee and petits fours thrown in) is terrific value for food of this level and suits those who have offices to get back to or shops to hit. The style is modern French, the dishes full of thrilling avant-garderie and speculative, sometimes slightly worrying combinations, but you are in the very safe hands of a chef at the peak of his powers and unlikely to encounter anything that is less than stunningly successful. Expect to be served artfully constructed dishes that are swooningly pretty but never lack punch. A summer's lunch starts with tartare of Scottish langoustines with sauce vierge – but this is Claude Bosi's take on that classic sauce, the orthodox tomatoes replaced with strawberries – controversial, you may think, but it works. Some stunning ideas come in small parcels, as when delicate ravioli are filled with spring onion and lime, then doused with a heavenly king prawn consommé at the table. Mains bring together combinations that meld together as a whole while maintaining the integrity of each individual element – an immaculately handled piece of John

Dory, for example, topped with earthy girolles and succulent diced Morteau sausage, all helped along by Lancashire mead sauce and a contrasting salted lime gel. Or try top-class crispy-skinned duck breast with subtle barbecue and cumin notes beside confit kumquats, burnt tomato purée, carrots and a mint and coriander-spiked jus. The meal ends with dazzling desserts: a 'tart' of razor-thin chocolate leaves layered with a powerful chocolate mousse is served with basil ice cream and star anise brittle, and a dome of olive oil and kaffir lime parfait is encased in white chocolate and partnered with ripe mango. Matching wine to such adventurous flavours is a bit tricky, so let the pros guide you – or consider splashing out on wine flights.

Chef Claude Bosi **Owner** Claude Bosi **Seats** 48, Pr/dining room 18 **Times** 12-2.30/6.30-10.30, Closed 24-26 Dec, 1 Jan, 1 wk Etr, Sun-Mon **Prices** Fixed L 3 course £35-£40, Fixed D 3 course £90, Tasting menu £100-£120 **Wines** 345 bottles over £30, 4 bottles under £30, 20 by glass **Parking** On street **Notes** Tasting menu D only 3/6/8 course, Children welcome