

The Mouth

On Spanish time

Sal Gorda
Van Breestraat 107, 673 0877
Open 17.00-22.30 Sun-Thur, 17.00-23.00
Fri-Sat
Cash, PIN, VISA, MC

It's my own damn fault. I could have bought a plane ticket to Barcelona for €99. But I didn't. So here I sit watching a July thunderstorm hammer down on Van Breestraat. At least I have my (first) half litre of rosé and my partner-in-all-things-torrential to cheer me up. Eres Tu blaes from the sound system. Things aren't so bad.

And thanks to the many, many tiny plates at the Sal Gorda tapas bar, things are about to get a lot better. (The dear little square-ish carafes of house rosé don't hurt, either.)

Long a favourite in the not-so-edgy Amsterdam Zuid neighbourhood, Sal Gorda specialises in tapas—small Spanish appetisers designed to help you drink a lot of wine. If I had bought that €99 ticket to Spain, I would be spending the awkward hours leading up to my 11pm Spanish dinner standing in a tapas bar, open to the sunny street, quenching my thirst and curbing my appetite with the lovely wee dishes.

This being Amsterdam, I sit indoors, watch the rain, order ten little plates with Partner, and then scurry home to our warm duvet.

Sal Gorda's menu offers almost 40 tapas. You can order individually by the numbers, or you can be lazy and let the chef choose for you: nine plates (€18.00 per person) or 14 plates (€25.00 per person). We decide to put together our own culinary lottery with numbers 62, 71,



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honey, are sweet enough for dessert. Two Pimientos Rellenos (€5.50) taste freshly stuffed. I don't recognise the Spanish (or Dutch) description for Dátiles (*dadels*) con Bacon (€4.25). But as I bite into the salty/sweet skewer, I comprehend the word for dates in two more languages—and have a new favourite tapa. We round things out with an Ensalada Mixta (€4.75).

Ten tiny dishes and two not-so-tiny half litres of rosé later, the restaurant is almost empty. Just after 10pm on a Saturday night. True tapas scheduling. The rains have stopped. The streets feel almost like summer. And I don't feel so bad about not buying that €99 airplane ticket.

By Nanci Tangeman

75, 79, 81, 94, 101, 104, 105 and a bit of 110.

We start with a plate of olives (€3.50) because *aceitunas* is one of my favourite words to say in Spanish. Then the real food begins: Champignonnes al Ajillo (€4.00), a pile of fresh mushrooms in lots of garlicky oil; Calamares a la Romana (€6.00), lightly breaded and still hot from the fryer; and a dull Pollo Miel y Mostaza (€5.75), whose honey mustard sauce doesn't really blend well with the green and white Moorish arches and cracked plaster booths of Sal Gorda. To add to the colour clash, we order another half litre of rosé. The tiny upstairs dining room is a bit stuffy, with the large windows nailed shut and a small oscillating fan in the corner, but you could argue that it lends a sort of Spanish heat to the restaurant. As does our next dish, Chorizo Inferno (€4.00), both spice- and temperature-hot. Not the usual Dutch *worst*. This being the land of the Potato Eaters, the fiery Patatas Bravas (€4.00) steal the show. The Queso de Cabra (€4.50), squares of crostini topped with goat cheese and

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