

O.NOIR: It Is Better in the Dark

After three years of stimulating Montrealers' senses and stomachs, O.NOIR is excited to bring its extraordinary culinary adventure to Toronto. Opened in June 2009, the Canada's first-ever "Dine in the Dark" restaurant now invites Torontonians to experience food, drink and conversation like never before - without their sight!



"It's a sensual dining experience like no other!" says O.NOIR owner and founder Moe Alameddine. "When you eat food in the dark, your remaining senses are heightened to savor the smell and taste of food. Even simple, everyday dishes like potatoes and yogurt take on a culinary flare." Diners select dishes from a set menu and also have the choice of picking a "surprise" option for one or all of their courses to truly put their taste buds to the test.

But O.NOIR housed on the lower level of a hotel does more than just fire the imagination and stimulate the senses. After a few hours in complete darkness (that's right, no flashlights, matches, cell phones, cigarette lighters or luminous watches), customers gain a better understanding of what it is like to be blind - just like the restaurant's entire wait staff.

Already the rage in Europe, Australia, L.A., New York and Montreal this socially conscious concept sprang from Jorge Spielmann, a blind pastor in Zurich who used to blindfold his dinner guests at his home so they could share his eating experience. In 1999, Spielmann opened Blindekuh (German for Blind Cow), a project aimed at teaching the sighted about the sightless world, and provide jobs for blind people.



"It's not the easiest of undertakings" explains Alameddine. In addition to the creativity behind the concept, Alameddine said was also drawn to the idea of creating jobs for people with vision loss, a population that experiences roughly a 70% unemployment rate.

Among the 30 employees at O.NOIR, Alameddine said 10 are blind. Individuals with vision loss act as servers, also referred to as "guides." They're tasked not just with bringing food and drink to diners but with leading them in and out of one of O.NOIR's three darkened dining rooms, capable of seating a total of 100 people.



"How lucky am I," Alameddine proudly states. "I get to do something I love and make a difference".

Good cause or not, O.NOIR offers everything you'd expect from a fine restaurant - great service, a delicious menu... plus, a culinary experience like no other!

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