

A classy - and boozy - brunch at Vino Veritas

I should have expected nothing less than napkins folded into roses from a restaurant whose name sounds like an Ivy League university's motto: **Vino Veritas**, Latin for "in wine, truth" — which, I would argue, is the unofficial motto for all great institutions of learning. But I had somehow missed this restaurant when it debuted on the corner of Broadway and Harkness, just a stone's throw away from **Nick's on Broadway**, and I realized I haven't brunched on the West Side in far too long. With the help of my trusty *Motif* assistant (ie, publisher Mike Ryan), we arrived at high noon on a chilly-but-sunny Saturday.

String lights outline the full-length windows — a twinkling, inviting touch — and underneath the black awning is the entrance. Upon entering through the large lavender door, I was struck by purple. Purple, the color of royalty. Purple, the color of creativity and pride. Purple, the color of ripe grapes at harvest. At Vino Veritas, you'll find all shades of purple, from the violet rose-shaped napkins to the placemats in stripes of eggplant and periwinkle to the lilac-colored font on their menus. Even the throw pillows on the periphery window seats (not for seating, just for pillows) have purple accents. I loved it — it wasn't excessive or kitschy, but it did make me feel more dignified.



The space is the perfect size for an intimate gathering, but not so small it's stifling. The traditional bar is straight to the back, and the Bloody Mary Bar is just in front of it. Had Mike and I understood this was a Bloody Mary Bar from the beginning, it might have altered our beverage selection (shrimp, bacon and squares of grilled cheese sandwiches are available as garnish!), but we took a different, less traditional route for breakfast imbibing.

With three cocktail menus to choose from — Martini, Specialty and Breakfast — we didn't even consider the restaurant's namesake of wine. (Sorry, not sorry?) Mike ordered their *other* namesake drink, the Veritas Martini, with Ketel One, Chambord, pineapple and prosecco. It tasted like a mimosa-meets-martini, and it was delightfully refreshing. I opted for something fit for a Friday evening, the Advoczar (I dare you to say that five times ... not even fast, just five times), with Woodford Reserve, Crave Chili Chocolate Liqueur, walnut bitters and Drunken Cherry. This tasted like a boozy version of a Yoo-hoo with a hint of cherry. It proved to be a great pairing for the dark chocolate hot cakes that jumped out at us from the menu.



Both Mike and I were sold on the hot cakes, especially since we saw they came with bourbon maple syrup. Although the menu isn't huge, it has something for everyone, and multiple somethings for people like us with childlike sweet teeth. (*Do we add Portuguese sweetbread French toast or beignets to our chocolate chip pancakes?* We chose the latter because of the promise of crême-anglaise and fresh berries — thus making it a health food.) On the savory side, we saw a range of selections, from tofu

scramble to Angus burger, with all forms of eggs in between. And as a special that day, they were offering a breakfast flatbread, with scrambled eggs, arugula, bacon, mozzarella and hot peppers. It was a no-brainer; we chose the special.

I expected a typical flatbread, one that I could easily eat by myself but would share with Mike to feel better about my life choices. This, however, was like no flatbread I've ever seen. It was served on a wooden board that nearly spanned the length of the table. The dough was thick, like focaccia or Roman-style crust, the hot peppers adding the perfect amount of heat, and it was the first time *ever* I couldn't finish my half — and not for lack of trying. This is a flatbread worth sharing ... with several people.



We ended on a sweet note, with our dessert-like breakfast plates, the dark chocolate hot cakes and the beignets, and we couldn't finish those either. Folks, history was being made that day. These pancakes (three) were topped with a snowy layer of powdered sugar, and they stood tall and proud. Like the flatbread, these were thick. The beignets, after being fully submerged in the crème-au-lait (a heavenly sauce) and topped with a slice of strawberry were the perfect ending to my post-January diet resolve.

The best part of this brunch experience was that we didn't have to wait an hour to be seated. I've now added another notch on the Broadway belt of great brunches, and I'm looking forward to seeing this purple palace when the sun goes down. Latin may be a dead language, but Vino Veritas is fully alive and well.

Vino Veritas, 486 Broadway, PVD @vinoveritasri