

# Review: Sunday Supper at Balsan

We try the new family-style supper at Gold Coast restaurant Balsan

By Lisa Arnett

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**Rating: !!! (out of four): Off to a good start**

With its opulent white marble floors, dapper door staff and designer handbag-toting clientele, the 10-month-old Elysian Hotel is quite the posh place, and the same goes for the three eateries inside: Ria, Balsan and Bernard's Bar. That's why it was such a pleasant surprise to find such value in the new [Sunday Supper at Balsan](#), the more casual (but still plenty refined) of the hotel's two restaurants.

Just launched last month, the meal draws its inspiration from the European tradition of friends and family rehashing the week's events over a Sunday night dinner, one of chef Jason McLeod's favorite memories during time spent in London. At just \$29, we thought this multi-course meal sounded like a good excuse to make the most of our last night of the weekend.

**We were wrong to assume ...** that this family-style meal is only for groups. True, the long tables that run along the center of Balsan's dining rooms are perfect for passing dishes among a half-dozen diners. But the kitchen will portion out each course for any sized group, including one or two people.

Be sure to bring your ... appetite. This is one hearty meal. We were filled to the max by two first courses, two entrees, two sides and dessert. If you sit at a table for two, you'll start wondering where you're going to put all those plates.

**You can bet on ...** plenty of comforting flavors. A side dish of carrots and potatoes with port and raisins hit just the right notes on a chilly night, while a big bowl of bucatini tossed with short ribs was satisfyingly rich. Plump and juicy mussels served with béarnaise-dressed fries transported us to Europe, while a dessert of doughnut-like apple fritters dipped in caramel provided a simply sweet ending.

**We were charmed by ...** the adorable little menu cards, which detail the evening's dishes on one side and offer a few hand-picked cocktail, wine and beer suggestions on the other. At the end of the weekend, we felt relieved to not have to wade through a lengthy wine list, and the suggestions were affordable too (\$7-\$8 a glass, \$28-\$32 a bottle).

**Don't overlook ...** the featured cocktail of the night. On our visit, we sipped the Local (\$10), a simple mix of rum, lime juice and sage that jived nicely with menu items, like the sage leaf-topped gnudi (gooey ricotta dumplings with brown butter).

**Our only gripe ...** is that inflated prices on basic beverages, such as \$8 total for our friend's two sodas, chipped away at the overall value of the meal.

**Make note that ...** the Elysian is a no-tipping property, meaning an 18 percent service charge is already added to your bill (likewise, the valet guys will turn away your tip).

**The bottom line:** If you've got a group of adventurous eaters, you'll feel plenty pampered here without blowing your whole paycheck.