

Food&Drink

Joseph Connolly struggles with dessert on a visit to see Curtain Call at the Roundhouse

It's not just Ron who might need an artist's chisel around here

Ron Arad is a Chalk Farm based and much respected designer – the creator of quite a few classics. You know the Bookworm? Of course you do – that lushly curvaceous strip of bendy metal that you attach to your wall in any manner of sinuous variation, any one of which should pretty much guarantee that your collection of books will warp, be annoyingly inaccessible, or else fall off. And the Rover chair – I really like that one. This is an early and iconic piece – the leather seats from an old Rover car bolted on to arches of scaffolding pole to form both arms and legs: if you haven't seen it, it's a lot better than it sounds. I remember when I had a bookshop in Flask Walk, and Linda Bennett had just opened her very first L.K.Bennett shop in Hampstead High Street. She was very enthusiastic about design and architecture (Vanbrugh was her favourite) and at one point she rather bizarrely placed in her window for sale, among the handbags and shoes, a pair of Rover chairs: she had loved them in the past, but now was much more into both Chippendale and Eames. The Rovers were really cheap: I didn't buy them, and I rather wish I had.

And here now is Ron Arad with Curtain Call, a much vaunted installation, or ex-

hibit, or performance piece... or something, anyway, at the Roundhouse. A 360 degree curtain – eighteen metres across, eight metres tall – made up of fifty kilometres worth of translucent silicon tubing suspended from a circular steel rig and weighing seven tons. Crumbs. The idea is that various artists project upon the resultant encompassing screen both sound and motion artwork, and the paying punter can walk in and out of it at any point at will. And it's a nice sensation walking into the circle – the tactile tubing is like thick albino licorice. Once inside you find a motley of people lying about on the concrete floor because there's nowhere to sit, and bombarded by whatever set piece is showing at the time. My wife and I

wandered in when David Shrigley's enormous cartoon of a naked man in black boots was eternally plodding around – the bang of his footsteps was that of an echoing gun, and every so often he'd stop and sigh: all very Milliganesque, in that the initial idea was both amusing and melancholy, and then it just went on for ever. After that came Matt Collishaw's jungle with waterfalls and rotting flowers that climaxed with a thunderous rainstorm that frightened the bloody life out of me. The dizzying effect of spin and ultra-noise was most thoroughly disturbing – as, with art these days is mandatory.

So how about the art of food, then? We went to Made In Camden, a newish café, bar and restaurant on site, emerging from which at that very moment was ... Ron Arad! Wahoo! In his famous dustman's hat – not to say gorblimey trousers! The restaurant, as is normal now with all new arty gaffs, is made to look like a converted garage, but not very converted: industrial tungsten light-bulbs suspended from a dark louvered ceiling, damned uncomfortable schoolroom chairs, though still an easy and welcoming atmosphere, this down to the wall of vintage Roundhouse posters, red glass pendants over the bar, and amicable staff. We



■ Joseph at the Roundhouse café, bar and restaurant – Made In Camden

settled into a table in front of a curtain window which afforded us an unparalleled view of a Sainsbury's and Evans Cycles both boarded up with plywood having last week been the focus of attention from a league of serious-minded political protesters, at least two of whom are locally rumoured to be able to spell their own name.

Star of the show

The wine here is from Bibendum around the corner, and we enjoyed a glass of Primrose Hill: an English sparkler by Chapel Down. Small plates seem to be the way to go, with fourteen on offer as opposed to just five more regular dishes. One of the waitresses suggested five little plates between us, which turned out to be right. So we had braised ox cheek, crisp fried chicken, grilled tiger prawns, sticky pork belly and green beans. Each plate came beautifully presented, and the ox cheek, with polenta and apple and sour cherry sauce, was the star of the show: utterly tender and melting. The pork was really too fatty, but all right if you like your pork to be really too fatty. I enjoyed the chicken – it was quite

Kentucky-ish (I mean this in a good way) and the accompanying carrot and miso puree was very good indeed. As was the pale but nicely nutty and garlicky Romesco sauce that came with the first-rate prawns and crunchy broccoli – though not as crunchy as the very fresh beans and bean sprouts. These, according to the menu, were accompanied by 'pickled watermelon rind': well full kudos for pressing into use what everyone else just chucks in the bin, but I couldn't find any – but then I hardly knew what I was looking for.

Puddings, alas, were a let down. My wife's mango crème brulee was pretty good, but the accompanying hunk of pistachio cake was pistachio only in colour, and as dry as cloth. I had a strawberry and Thai basil parfait with white chocolate mille-feuilles. This was served on a flat slab of granite, so it was one hell of a race to get the parfait down me before the whole thing melted all over the table. The mille-feuilles were not just thick, but as hard as the granite they squatted upon. I asked the waitress for a fork to aid the spoon: witnessing my

struggle, she offered me a knife as well: I would happily have settled for a sculptor's mallet and chisel. The white chocolate anyway tasted more of yoghurt, and I abandoned it in the end.

Then we slipped back upstairs for a bit more culture: you can do this. The sign at the door says it's an all-day ticket, and you 'pay what you can – suggested £5'. So, this being England, everyone pays £5 exactly, and hangs about all day. This time we hit the tedium of Christian Marclay's Pianorama: two veiny hands striking an eternal keyboard hard and discordantly ... and then there was something else, unnervingly loud and disconcerting. There were children in there who were alternately stunned and practically hysterical. They must have been numbed with boredom – I know I was. So as I said, it's a nice sensation walking into the circle ... but not nearly so nice as walking out again.

■ Ron Arad's Curtain Call is showing until 29th August. All previous restaurant reviews may be viewed on the website www.josephconnolly.co.uk.

FACT FILE

- **MADE IN CAMDEN**
- The Roundhouse, Chalk Farm Road, NW1. Tel: 020-7424 8495
- Open daily from 9.30am. Lunch noon-2.30pm, Dinner 6pm-10.30pm. Saturday to Sunday Brunch 10.30am-2.30pm
- Food: ★★★★★☆☆
- Service: ★★★★★☆☆ (but leisurely)
- The Feeling: ★★★★★☆☆
- Cost: Soup, one small plate and bread £10. Otherwise, about £65 for two with a drink.

Wine with Liz Sagues



Far from fluffy, hints of black pepper, herbs and dryness show that rosé can be serious

Convention inevitably labels rosés as summer wines and, certainly, little is more pleasant than sipping something soft and pretty on a warm August evening. But the wines in this column are a whole lot more serious than that and ones which I'd happily drink at any time of year.

These days, the range of shades is astounding, from pinks so deep that they are almost indistinguishable from lighter-style red wines to the others which hardly shade the glass. I've got a splendid giant poster which charts Les Couleurs du Vin – 86 in all. But I don't think the row of 16 rosés featured on it is anywhere near comprehensive.

But, among those 16, there

are some delightful tags, which could add colour in themselves to any writer's prose – aurora borealis, old rose, rose of Cairo, geranium, Richelieu, Indian summer, to quote just a selection.

Enough of such frippery, on to the bottles. First, I've been having a happy time with pineau d'aunis. This is one of the rarest of grape varieties now, even in its Loire Valley homeland, though wines made from it were exported to the UK as early as the 13th century. The number of examples avail-

able here can be counted on the fingers of one hand – though in France earlier this year I collected a selection in a remarkably well-furnished supermarket.

But the one easiest to buy here, Délice des Rois (£8, Laithwaites), remains my favourite. It's a very, very pale pink but with a good deal more flavour than that might indicate – lots of almost savoury crispness with the grape's characteristic twist of black pepper. So while you can enjoy it as a

grown-up aperitif, it's a great food wine – just match the menu to its lightness.

Very nearly as pale, and also with a mouth-watering crispness, is Albia from top Chianti producer Barone Ricasoli, founded in 1141 and with a sound claim to be the oldest winery in Italy. This, though, is an entirely modern wine, from its smart packaging to the delicate herbal edge to its clean floral/fruit character (£11, Vintage Marque). We're back with more familiar grapes – sangiovese and merlot – but handled with extreme delicacy. I found it an excellent match with a selection of mostly vegetarian tapas-style dishes.

To call Guigal Cotes-du-Rhône rosé robust is an ex-

aggeration, though in this company it edges in that direction. A warmer, deeper colour (the bottle I had was 2009 rather than the 2010 of the others – generally, but not always, pinks are best drunk young), it has more immediate fruitiness, hinting at strawberries and raspberries. This gives it roundness but without stickiness so it's a great aperitif (£8.50-£11.45, Wine Direct).

Tempting

Both Majestic and Waitrose made much of rosés at their summer press tastings. At the former, the lineup of examples from Provence is very tempting indeed, especially Commanderie de Peyrassol (£9) and Chateau Sainte Marguerite

Grande Reserve (£10). For great value, go back to the Loire for La Grille pinot noir (£6). Note: these prices are for a minimum of two bottles.

At Waitrose, my favourites include the dry and elegant Provence-style Laurent Miguel Vendanges Noces cinsault-syrah (£8.30) and the appealingly zesty Cotes de Provence Mirabeau (£9), plus a decently restrained and enjoyable new world pink, Torres Las Mulas cabernet sauvignon (£9) from Chile, which has a creamy ripeness matched with freshness and tempts you to pour another glass.

■ www.laithwaites.co.uk, www.winedirect.co.uk, www.vintagemarque.com.

