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5 Toronto Restaurants Inspired by Mom

by DEEPI HARISH | MAY 03, 2024

Celebrate Mother's Day at a Toronto restaurant inspired by a real-life mom, MIL, mentor, or other female muse.

Restaurants inspired by real women often weave compelling stories into their concepts, whether they honour a matriarch, a fictional female character or innovative chefs crafting unique flavours.

Here are a handful of restaurants fueled by female inspiration. With their tastefully arranged spaces, attentive service and creative cuisine, they're perfect for honouring the important women in your life.

@restaurantlucie

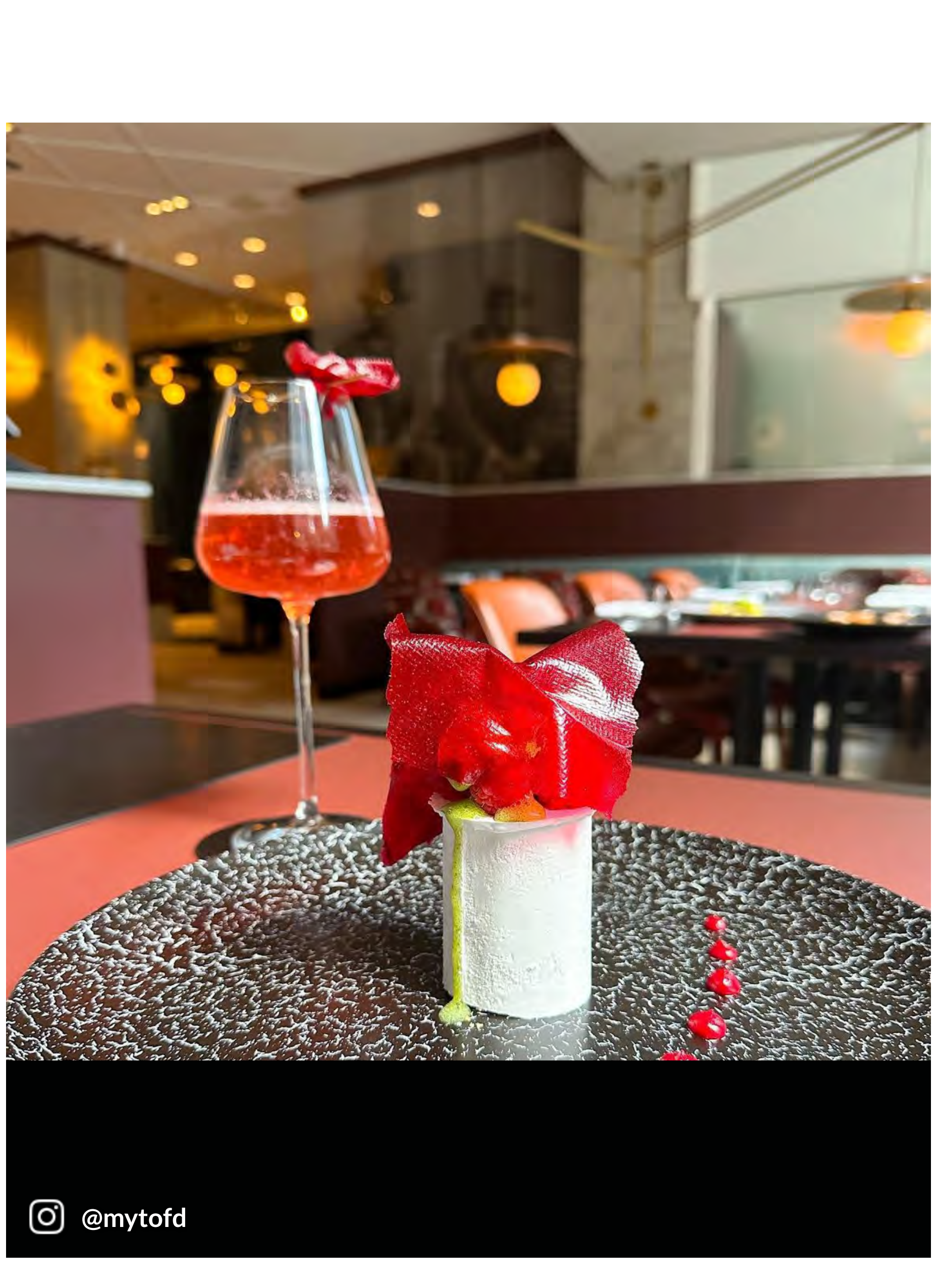
Lucie

There is something very special happening at **Lucie**, an upscale French restaurant in **Toronto's Financial District**. The owner's grandmother put so much passion into her cooking that Lucie, the restaurant, is an homage to her love for the kitchen and her one and only grandson.

> *"Lucie is named in memory of my grandmother, who played a very important role in my childhood growing up in the South of France," says owner Yannick Bigourdan.*

Before dinner, Yannick's grandmother enjoyed having a glass of champagne. At Lucie, they've adopted this tradition as all guests are greeted with a champagne cart to start. They're also given a selection of canapes, followed by an amuse-bouche which changes every six weeks or so.

The space feels royal, with its rich blue, brown and burgundy hues enhanced by gold accents. The heart of the restaurant is the seating around the marble bar, where you can view the open kitchen.

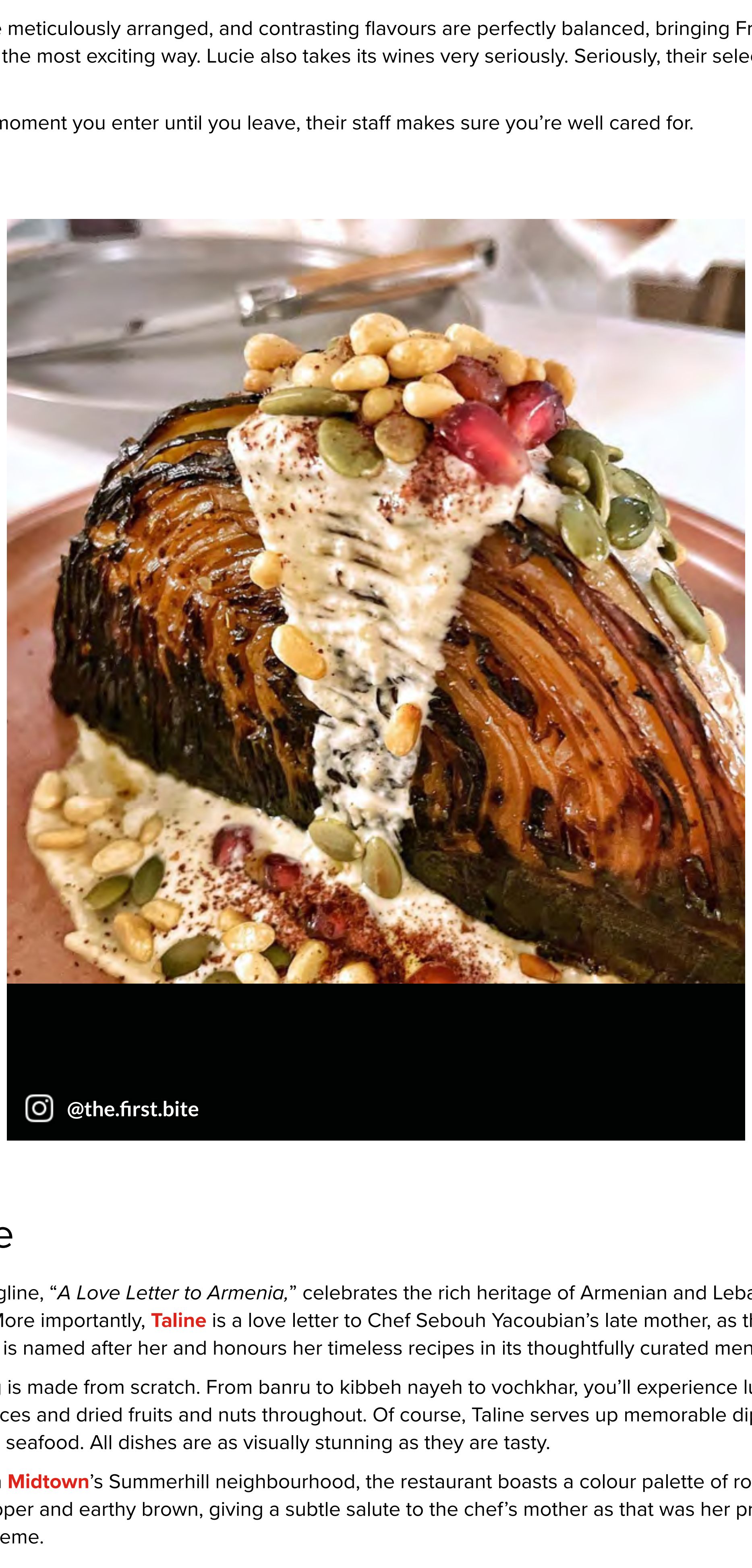


@mytofd

Chef Arnaud Bloquel's attention to detail and ability to transform high-quality and seasonal ingredients into stunning dishes push the boundaries of traditional French cuisine.

Dishes are meticulously arranged, and contrasting flavours are perfectly balanced, bringing France to Toronto in the most exciting way. Lucie also takes its wines very seriously. Seriously, their selection is bountiful.

From the moment you enter until you leave, their staff makes sure you're well cared for.



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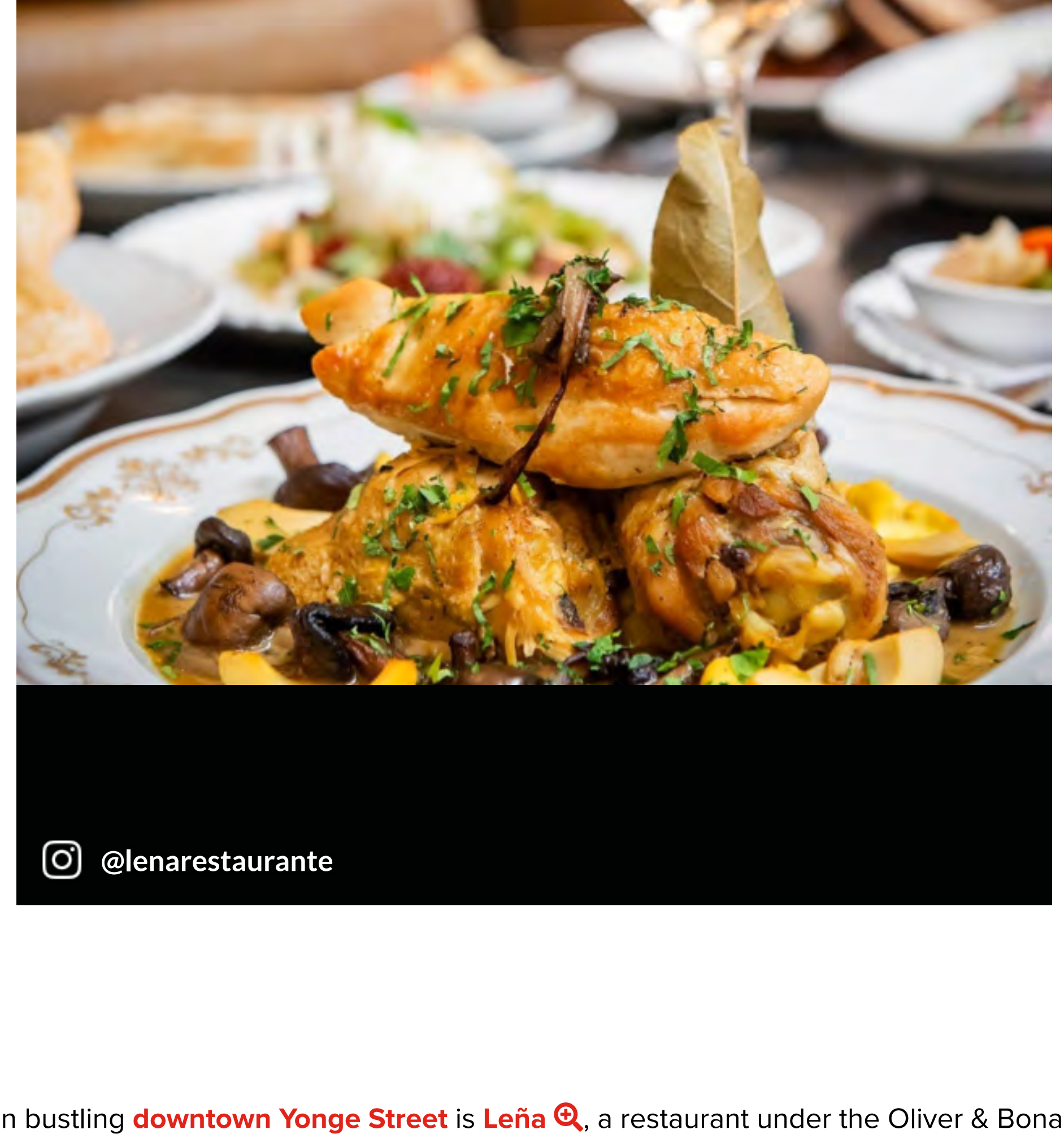
Taline

Taline's tagline, "*A Love Letter to Armenia*," celebrates the rich heritage of Armenian and Lebanese cultures. More importantly, **Taline** is a love letter to Chef Sebouh Yacoubian's late mother, as the restaurant is named after her and honours her timeless recipes in its thoughtfully curated menu.

Everything is made from scratch. From banru to kibbeh nayeh to vochkhar, you'll experience lush herbs, vibrant spices and dried fruits and nuts throughout. Of course, Taline serves up memorable dips, grilled meats and seafood. All dishes are as visually stunning as they are tasty.

Situated in **Midtown**'s Summerhill neighbourhood, the restaurant boasts a colour palette of rose, olive green, copper and earthy brown, giving a subtle salute to the chef's mother as that was her preferred colour scheme.

> *"I really wanted to remain true to my mom's cooking, but I also want to elevate Armenian cuisine to the status that French cuisine has," says Chef Yacoubian, who's also trained in classical French cuisine.*



@lenarestaurante

Leña

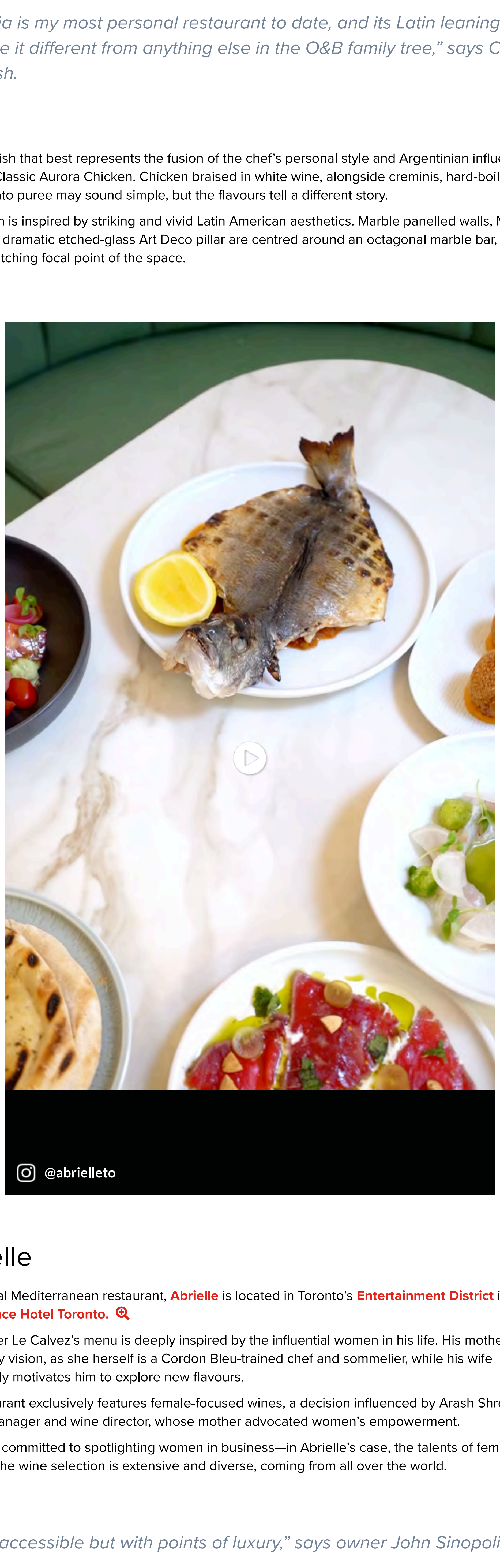
Located on bustling **downtown Yonge Street** is **Leña**, a restaurant under the Oliver & Bonacini (O&B) restaurant roster. The restaurant is named after Chef Anthony Walsh's Argentinian mother-in-law.

The chef was drawn to his mother-in-law's ability to create explosive and complex dishes. Expect lots of delicate seafood plates and bold, hearty grilled meats. Make sure to ask the server about their seasonally inspired seafood special.

> *"Leña is my most personal restaurant to date, and its Latin leanings make it different from anything else in the O&B family tree," says Chef Walsh.*

The one dish that best represents the fusion of the chef's personal style and Argentinian influence is the Leña Classic Aurora Chicken. Chicken braised in white wine, alongside creminis, hard-boiled eggs, and a potato puree may sound simple, but the flavours tell a different story.

The design is inspired by striking and vivid Latin American aesthetics. Marble panelled walls, Mexican tiles and a dramatic etched-glass Art Deco pillar are centred around an octagonal marble bar, which is the eye-catching focal point of the space.



@abrielleto

Abrielle

The coastal Mediterranean restaurant, **Abrielle** is located in Toronto's **Entertainment District** inside the **Sutton Place Hotel Toronto.**

Chef Olivier Le Calvez's menu is deeply inspired by the influential women in his life. His mother shaped his culinary vision, as she herself is a Cordon Bleu-trained chef and sommelier, while his wife consistently motivates him to explore new flavours.

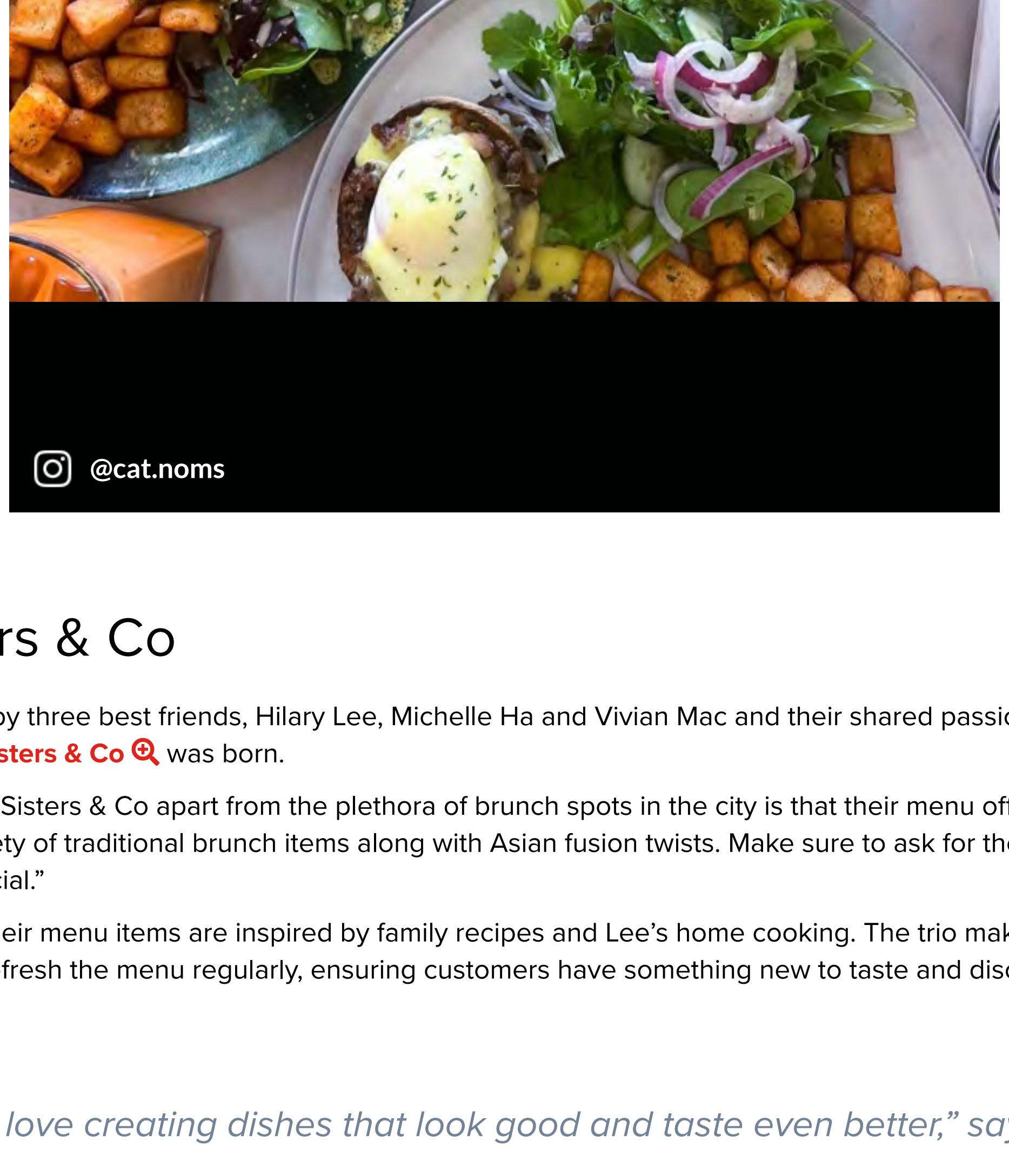
The restaurant exclusively features female-focused wines, a decision influenced by Arash Shroff, the general manager and wine director, whose mother advocated women's empowerment.

Shroff has committed to spotlighting women in business—in Abrielle's case, the talents of female vintners. The wine selection is extensive and diverse, coming from all over the world.

> *"It's accessible but with points of luxury," says owner John Sinopoli.*

Abrielle is named after a fictional character who spends her summers along the coast, hence why seafood dishes dominate the menu. They've recently launched a blind-tasting menu on Mondays where guests can enjoy five courses that change weekly to keep things fresh and new.

The restaurant's ambiance offers three distinct atmospheres. However, Mediterranean charm is the common theme throughout all of the spaces. You'll find a blend of florals, soft colours and art that celebrate femininity and strength all around.



@cat.noms

Sisters & Co

Founded by three best friends, Hilary Lee, Michelle Ha and Vivian Mac and their shared passion for brunch, **Sisters & Co** was born.

What sets Sisters & Co apart from the plethora of brunch spots in the city is that their menu offers a good variety of traditional brunch items along with Asian fusion twists. Make sure to ask for the "sweet tooth special."

Many of their menu items are inspired by family recipes and Lee's home cooking. The trio makes an effort to refresh the menu regularly, ensuring customers have something new to taste and discover.

> *"We love creating dishes that look good and taste even better," says Ha.*

The design of their downtown location, a stone's throw from **Little Portugal**, is minimal—pale pink, foggy gray and white, with a deep jungle green for contrast—keeping the focus where it belongs: on the food.

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About the author

DEEPI HARISH

Deepi Harish is a storyteller who has been published in Bon Appétit, The Huffington Post, Food Network Canada and many more. She's a **Toronto-based writer** who covers food, tech, travel and Toronto-themed stories. Deepi spends her free time exploring restaurants, experimenting with fresh kitchen gadgets and testing out baking recipes. She claims she makes the "world's best banana bread" without a fancy mixer, just an everyday fork.

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