

MODERN LUXURY

RIVERA

SAN DIEGO

FALL FASHION ISSUE

SHOWSTOPPING
STYLE AND
OTHERWORLDLY
OUTERWEAR

DRESSED
TO IMPRESS
S.D.'S WOMEN
OF STYLE

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OOH LA LA JOLLA

WILLIAM BRADLEY'S NEW BISTRO, BIJOU, BRINGS PARISIAN GLAMOUR TO THE VILLAGE.

By Amy Finley | Photography by Andrea Bricco



GILDED AGE
Clockwise from left: Bijou's
rococo dining room; steak
tartare and oeufs mayonnaise
are paired with bubbly;
perfectly executed steak frites
give the restaurant bistro cred.



In the years that I lived and cooked in Paris, I developed a theory about bistros that owed more to the wisdom of Coco Chanel than to that of great chefs like Escoffier, Larousse or Carême.

The ever elegant doyenne of French fashion famously implored disciples of her effortless chic to conclude their dressing routine with a parting glance in the mirror. Then, to remove one accessory.

Transcribe this directive into the world of cuisine and you get the Parisian bistro, where perfection is gained through subtraction. If the setting is sumptuous and the food sublime, then the service must be surly. Comparably, courtesy and manners ring truest when the dining room is just a tad bit shabby. It also holds that rustic, plebeian dishes go best with a glass of sparkling Champagne.

In a nutshell, less—but just a little less—is more.

That's not exactly the philosophy at Bijou.

Yet it's hardly surprising, considering the backstory: "Papa Doug" Manchester—the San Diego real estate magnate turned media tycoon—launched the village space in 2013, first housing within its draped and gilded interior an outpost of Amaya, the "casual" counterpart to gastro-temple Addison at the Grand Del Mar. Given its opulence, Amaya La Jolla served down home Southern fare like grits and fried chicken, and never gained traction among the locals. For nearly a year it sat there on Prospect—fancy and largely empty.

The French, happily, never met a fancy space they couldn't love, so rebranding the locale as Bijou French Bistro was a bit of inspired genius, allowing the grandeur to stay in the picture. In fact, with Édith Piaf warbling away on the sound system, its rosy-hued overabundance mostly works. CONTINUED...

Bijou French Bistro

1205 Prospect St., La Jolla
858.750.3695

Wine bar, Mon.-Sun., 4-10PM;
dinner, Mon.-Sun., 5:30-10PM;
lounge, Sun.-Wed., 5:30-
10:30PM, Thu.-Sat., 5:30-11:30PM



...CONTINUED reminding diners (and critics, like me) that if the French admire Chanel's simplicity, they also have a legitimate thing for Versailles-level rococo. (In that case then, though, Bijou might trade the Tuscan lighting for something with more Belle Epoque splendor. After all, the pesky devil is in the details.)

The transformation of the restaurant's echoing marble entryway into a meet-me-for-a-bottle-of-rosé wine bar was equally smart. The French doors opening onto Prospect offers opportunities for people-watching, that favorite Parisian pastime, not to mention a thoughtful wine list of French and domestic boutique selections mined from The Grand Del Mar's elaborate cellar (the largest in San Diego county).

Bijou owes its substantial culinary cred to William Bradley. If you've ever been blessed to dine under the care of Addison's white knight, you'll appreciate the meticulous care put into Bijou's menu, executed by Bradley's longtime Addison sous and loyal lieutenant, Shaun Gethin. It reads like a Francophile's dream. There's an *oh, mon dieu!* iteration of *pâté de campagne*, and the Dijon-punched *oeufs mayonnaise* are the restaurant's sleeper hit. Steak tartare is having a moment around S.D., but Bijou's version, served with delicate *pommes gaufrettes*, is head-and-shoulders above the crowd. For mains, there are French standards like *lobster américaine* and *coq au vin*, with seasonal tweaks promised (I'm already weak-kneed at the thought of a Bradley *cassoulet* come wintertime).

Prepping Bijou, Bradley and Gethin did their homework, studying vintage Paris bistro menus to concoct one for the restaurant that's, yes, predictable, but in a way that conforms to the French tradition of classical veneration. After all, show me a St.-Germaine bistro that can't execute a superlative *steak frites*, and I'll show you an effrontery eschewed by Parisians as a tourist trap.

I will say that, perhaps in the name of research or the chefs' innate quest for perfection (neither Bradley or Gethin ever has a hair out of place), the kitchen reflects Addison's haute cuisine more than the cooking of a true bistro. I love a good, strong reduction as much as the next classically trained cook, but after the ultrarich stock (on the French onion soup) and *demi-glace* (on the veal *paillard*), I almost couldn't appreciate the fine *fromage* or the selection of pitch-perfect desserts, which includes hit after masterful hit.

Which leads me back to Coco. Bijou's bistro chic stops just short of effortless. I can almost hear mademoiselle Chanel shouting, "Take it off, baby!"

GRAND ENTRANCE

From top left: Chefs William Bradley and Shaun Gethin; Bijou boasts a new wine bar; a sea salt caramel pot de creme and chocolate macarons are a sweet finish.