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Maison Premier Has 20 \$1 Oysters, Nawlins Flair: Review

By Ryan Sutton - Nov 14 2012 12:01 AM FT









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When superstorm Sandy shut down so many New York restaurants, Maison Premiere in Brooklyn picked up the gauntlet by shucking oysters and shaking up a drink called the

The \$13 libation of defiance is a mix of rum, passion fruit and lemon juice, served over crushed ice and easily consumed in 60 seconds flat. It tastes and smells like anywhere but Gotham, which is fair enough, because this nearly two-year-old Williamsburg spot takes much of its inspiration from the vibrant cocktail culture and French-inflected cuisine of New Orleans.



Maison Premiere. Stafford-Hill oversees a plates. Photographer: Philip



An interior view of the front bar, with an Premiere. The best time to visit is during Lewis/Bloomberg



llop roe butter, maine sea urchin Nantucket Bay scallops and California crayfish. Photographer. Philip Lewis/Bloomberg



Maison Premiere. The silky texture of the crustacean and organ meat mimic each other perfectly. Photographer: Philip

Those folks know how to deal with a Category 1. So it's fitting that Maison Premiere kept its door open. And it's why this unofficial Gulf Coast ambassador is the first restaurant I'm choosing to review since the biggest storm in a generation ravaged our city.

Most of the seats are bar seats and lack lumbar support or cushioning. Mustaches abound. So do suspenders. And candles, which permit you to read the menu in studied darkness. Do they even need power here?

Killer Carbs

Maison Premiere smells of high-tide and horseradish. The reservations policy is walk-ins, except for large parties. No entrees, only small plates and shellfish towers. The most filling dish is the bread basket, and you have to pay for it.

A bow-tied waiter brings you the killer carbs: Salt-and- pepper brioche, focaccia, an olive roll and a baguette. A cloud of steam and yeast assaults your senses. Butter, perfectly tempered, is fortified with seaweed that tastes like expensive caviar. The basket's a steal for \$3.

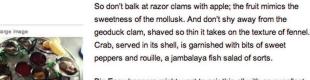
Time for oysters, which cost a buck each from 4-7 p.m., not a bad deal considering a dozen will easily run you \$36 elsewhere.

There are 33 varieties at Maison, most of them available every day, so here are a few quick tasting notes: They're cleanly shucked, with nary a popped belly or fragment of shell.

You can mix and match giant Belons (\$4.95), Blue Points (\$2.55), rare buttery Oyster Bays (\$2.55), cucumbery Tottens (\$2.55) and creamy Conway Cups (\$2.65).

How about bay scallops with lemongrass? Sure, Chef Jared Stafford-Hill has a knack for pairing raw fish with off-thebeaten-track flavors. His fine crudo recalls the early work of Esca's David Pasternack.

Apple Clams



variety of oysters on a bed of ice at 33 different types of oysters



Paddle fish caviar on a plate for crudo Stafford-Hill makes an excellent case for atop arctic char. Photographer: Philip



The Hurricane cocktail gets a head of egg foam. The drink offers an escape m Hurricane Sandy's woes Photographer: Philip Lewis/Bloomberg Big Easy boozers might want to pair this all with an excellent rum Sazerac, but the better call is a glass of bright, bubbly Delamotte Brut Champagne (\$18).

Move on to the warm plates. Fine leek and potato soup (\$16) is gilded with a few butter-poached oysters; the hot Vichyssoise becomes sublime with truffles, added sometimes generously,

There are oddly satisfying surf-and-turfs: octopus and pig's head terrine (\$16), sea scallops with foie gras mousse (\$17). Best of all are langoustines with sweetbreads (\$18), both heady elements sharing the same silky texture.

Turbot (\$18) flakes into whatever sauce this flatfish is paired with, in this case a fine gash of chanterelle veloute. Seafood risotto (\$17), in turn, is gumbo in fancy pants; the sticky rice is studded with bits of crawfish and sweet bay scallops. Stir in sea urchin for even greater depth of flavor.

Things might be getting loud by now. This is when you order your final alcoholic concoction, a baba au rum that tastes like a lot of the namesake spirit.

Rating: **1/2 (1/2 star dropped because of those chairs and the

The Bloomberg Questions

Price: Most dishes under \$20.

Sound Level: 70-80 decibels: boisterous.

Date Place: Cramped seats work in your favor here.

Special Feature: Open until 4 a.m.

Inside Tip: No need to try the tasting menu.

Back on My Own Dime: Frequently during happy hour.

Maison Premiere is at 298 Bedford Ave. Information: +1-347- 335-0446 or http://maisonpremiere.com.