

the Bulletin

Eating out

True colours

Do you still have a local fishmonger's? Every year there are fewer and fewer of them in Brussels, as often as not converted into yet another hair-dresser. Happily, there remains the fish market downtown on the Place Sainte-Catherine. And the quarter also remains awash with fish restaurants.

The interiors of the neighbourhood's many establishments tend to be either folkloric or resolutely modern.

Aux Deux Couleurs, right on the square, with its pastel walls and light-hearted artwork, is neither. It reflects the sunny personality of its owner, Khaled, a restaurateur who's been around and of whom Aux Deux Couleurs is the latest creation. There is an excellent fixed-price *menu du marché* at a reasonable €29 that offers some interesting combinations, mostly seafood. However, if you're resolutely carnivorous you can order for your main dish a pepper-encrusted tournedos with *frites*. And for a starter there's Parma ham with a melon-rich salad.



Khaled's Aux Deux Couleurs in Place Sainte-Catherine is quietly creative

But seafood is the real business. Scampi came with shreds of leek in a crisp and wafer-thin cornet made of Tunisian *pâte-à brique*, similar to filo pastry, and served with a mildly spicy sauce made from red peppers. And there's a pleasantly astringent *carpaccio* of tuna marinated in lime juice and served with a confection of white truffles.

While nowadays sea bass is mostly farmed, Khaled claims his is line caught. His roasted fillets were certainly tasty dressed with a fruity basil-flavoured olive oil and sprinkled with slivers of parmesan. They were served with strips of courgette, red pepper and tomato, too *al dente* to be called a *ratatouille*. Similarly cooked sea bream (*dorade*) was served with a tomato puree flavoured with cumin, and saffron rice. This pleasant dish could have been improved with a few seconds less cooking and a little more cumin.

To end the meal there's a cheese board or a choice of desserts that includes a hot, cinnamon-flavoured apple tart served with ice cream.

The wines are less good value than the food, though they are carefully selected. In a previous incarnation Khaled was wine waiter at Bruneau. I enjoyed an excellent Chinon, served appropriately chilled, a good accompaniment to an unaggressively creative and delicious meal. A similarly unextravagant choice will bring your bill up to a little over €40 a head. **John Hellon**
Aux Deux Couleurs, 3 Place Sainte-Catherine, Brussels (centre), tel 02.502.35.73. Closed Sunday and Saturday lunchtime.