

Bottega Louie: 700 South Grand Los Angeles, CA 90017 (213) 802-1470 bottegalouie.com

Finally had a chance to have a sit down meal at the new in spot in downtown Los Angeles, Bottega Louie.

It's a big space, housed in the entire first floor area, formerly a bank, of the 1908 Brockman building at 7th and Olive. The building is having some financial troubles with the bankruptcy of the owners, but the restaurant is going strong and starting to have a real impact on the downtown food scene. A recent weekday lunch visit found it packed, and this is a big room.

I started with the serrano ham, served alone on a plate. The flavor was deep and rich and perfect. I enjoyed the ham itself, no dressing, sauce or sides. Sometimes the swine just calls out to you from the menu. Next up was the meatballs in marinara sauce. Truly magnificent with solid, meaty meatballs, probably made from steak or some other high end meat. They were cooked to perfection, tender inside with a slight crust on the exterior. Just the right amount of spice, noticeable but not overpowering. The sauce also was spiced right, with great sweet tomato taste. I must say these are the best meatballs I can remember. I couldn't get them out of my head and returned to pick up take out the next evening.

The sausage pizza was perfect as well, thick crust, that same wonderful marinara sauce and tender, tangy chunks of duck and fennel sausage. Cheese was thick, but not overwhelming. There was not enough sausage, but what was there was extraordinary.

To top everything off for desert, I treated myself to chocolate and vanilla gelato, which again was perfect. Texture was great, flavors were strong and rich, another hit.

Service was attentive but lagged at times. This is a big, loud room, marble floor and walls with no sound deadening. Tables are close together and ambient noise is high. A weekday lunch found many downtown suit types, financial and real estate execs, along with fashion industry owners and shakers. Not too many young hipsters.

Prices are reasonable, but add up. We paid \$80 for 2, with 3-4 courses, soft drinks and we each had a half pour of wine.