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WHAT'S NEW

Counter Culture

Barbacco brings modern Italy to the Financial District. BY SARA DESERAN



Clockwise from top left: Sarah Burchard and executive chef Staffan Terje; Barbacco's housemade salumi; the FIDI lunch crowd.

220 CALIFORNIA ST.,
415-955-1919,
BARBACCOSF.COM

Located next door to its older sibling Perbacco, Barbacco might be the closest you'll get to a modern Italian restaurant in San Francisco.

Barring the exposed brick walls, there's nothing rustic about this establishment, which opened in January. The Eurocentric space, designed by Cass Calder Smith, is as slick as a new Vespa. Half of it is made up of a long, shiny black marble counter with black leather stools, where patrons can sit looking onto the open galley kitchen lined with glass jars of curing olives. Although it suits

the Financial District crowd, the food is more casual, less expense-account, than Perbacco's. Barbacco is a restaurant for small groups and twosomes that can cozy up at the bar. Executive chef and salumi master Staffan Terje's now-renowned housemade charcuterie is always great. Start there and then dip into anything from the list of bruschette topped with things such as tuna conserva and capers, or maybe some rotolo, rolled pasta filled with chard and ricotta. Although a lot of the menu is snacky, there are also dishes that can stand alone, such as porchetta and tripe stew. The worldly wine

program focuses on biodynamic and natural wines and offers pours ranging from tastes to full glasses.

The night that I was there, the feeling that I had been transported to Rome was cut short when two men in suits behind us were handed the menu. Showing off his vast wine knowledge to the other, one of them pointed to the list: "This bottle that I like is from Sicily," he said a little too loudly. "Have you ever heard of that place?"

The Italian fantasy resumed, however, when I dipped into the most delicious housemade gelato for dessert. x

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