

## VIV Says: Blog



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# Rouge Tomato Tries to Cure the Fine-Dining 'Food Hangover'

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What happens when you mix healthy, locally sourced food with culinary inspiration and fine dining? At New York City restaurant **Rouge Tomato**, executive chef Jeremy Bearman collaborates with culinary nutritionist Kristy Lambrou, R.D., to create dishes meant to embody the perfect balance between extraordinary cuisine and optimal nutrition. "We want to break the stigma that gastronomically pleasing food and healthy food can't be the same thing," says Bearman.

The duo are also trying to nix the "food hangover" associated with a gourmet meal — the unpleasant lethargic feeling you get after overeating, particularly after consuming foods high in fat, salt and refined carbohydrates. The effect is the result of blood rushing away from your brain and toward your stomach and intestines to digest a heavy meal, and it's often accompanied by a stomachache that can last well into the next day. "The goal at Rouge Tomato is to have people leave the table energized, with a feeling of well-being rather than a food hangover," says Lambrou, who has attended both nutrition and culinary school.

To serve that purpose, all food at Rouge Tomato is prepared with both taste and health in mind. The menu evolves over each season, with a heavy emphasis on fresh produce, and an array of vegetarian and meat-, egg- and fish-based dishes.

The tasting menu features dishes such as local tomato gazpacho; Montauk calamari with tomatillo, lychee, haricot vert, Thai basil and cucumber; almond-crusted Atlantic hake with summer beans, Meyer lemon and tomato confit; and squab with Greenmarket plum, foie gras, horseradish potato and Japanese eggplant. (I was a bit surprised to see the foie gras, which was recently banned in California, but the emphasis at Rouge Tomato is on a fine-dining experience.) Nutritional information and calorie counts are available for all dishes on request; the tasting menu has less than 1,000 calories. While that's high for an average meal, keep in mind that the average tasting menu is **estimated** to contain about 2,242 calories.



Rouge Tomato adheres to SPE guidelines and uses local, seasonal ingredients, such as this spring dish of rabbit with root vegetables.

Working side by side in the kitchen, Bearman dreams up the recipes with pastry chef James Distefano and Lambrou “validates” them, weighing the ingredients and calculating their nutritional composition to achieve a healthy, synergistic mix of nutrients. Most meals are prepared without cream and butter, and offer three servings of fruits and vegetables in every three-course lunch and four-course dinner.

The Rouge Tomato team follows the principles of **SPE (Sanitas Per Escam or Health Through Food)**, a program originally designed to enhance the nutritional quality of meals without compromising taste. Since its founding in 2001, however, SPE has come to mean much more — a holistic approach that focuses not just on health, but also on the sourcing, preparing and enhancing of food. SPE was developed by chefs and dietitians and is overseen by world-renowned nutrition experts from Harvard University and Tufts University, among others. In addition, SPE is committed to supporting local farms, fisheries and producers who employ sustainable practices.

Five restaurants now carry the **SPE-certified label**, and 15 other restaurants around the country are in the process of having all or parts of their menus validated so they, too, can be certified.

When was the last time you experienced a food hangover?

**Photo credit:** Courtesy Rouge Tomato