

**LO SCALCO**

313 Church St. (212-343-2900)—Menu gimmicks don't much alter the eating. Whether dishes are organized by food group, animal habitat, or, as at Craft, method of preparation, eventually a plate of food comes, and you shovel it down. Still, gimmickry can concentrate the mind. At Lo Scalco, a new Italian place in Tribeca, eight categories of ingredient (artichoke, Dover sole, duck, etc.) are available in three courses: appetizer, pasta, and meat or fish. Frankly, everything looks promising on the page. To whittle it all down you might want to consider the Henry Ford approach: three people divvy up a category, so that one of you handles, say, the Dover-sole salad with string beans and walnuts, another the sole ravioli, and a third the roasted sole filet. There's also the Wade Boggs method: one person dines on sole, three courses of it, in all its guises. Or you can choose according to shape: create a "squiggly course," consisting of the sole salad (the sole strips as twisty as cheese sticks), the sole ravioli (each *raviolo* like an adolescent albino eel), and—a surprise from the tomato department—an arrangement of three different pastas with sauces made from yellow, green, and red tomatoes.

Once you've got the menu management down, you can sit back and savor Lo Scalco's manifest charms. First, the room, open and airy, with arching white beams and giant ceramic chandeliers—Kimberly Mafri, the architect, is married to the chef, Mauro Mafri (they are also the owners). Second, the sommelier, who strides the floor with a *taste-vin* (one of those fancy silver tasting bowls) hanging from her neck and dispenses dependable advice, melodious Italian label-readings, and declarations that stick with you for days: "With an amarone, it's all about power." And last, right there under your nose, the food. It is a pity that there is no twenty-four-course tasting menu (the max is six), because Mafri's variations on (and deviations from) the avowed ingredients can be astonishing. One wonders, turduckenishly, about the duck breast rolled with suckling pig. *Duckling brig?* When it arrives, under a white china dome, a clean jerk reveals a handsome specimen, a barnyard take on the jelly roll. (Open Thursdays and Fridays for lunch and Mondays through Saturdays for dinner. Entrées \$18-\$34; tasting menus \$48-\$64.)

—Nick Paumgarten

OR

NEW

Lorin

deur,

gram

Juan

Rose

Ma

the

mat

play

John

212

SIN

The

sary

the

for

Ch

mu

lier

Ma

SO

A r

"T

als

"P

"S

ca

on

E.

NI

Ar

ac

pe

fo

ei

g

St

9

C

T

s

le

F

t

r

l

s

a