



## Worship at the Grill

Jamie Oliver's parents choose the Barbecoa for the view and their famous son's food. It even charms a hardened pescatarian.

Words SHARON FEINSTEIN

'ISN'T IT A BIT MEATY FOR YOU?' was the universal cry when I said I was going to Jamie Oliver's Barbecoa, an American-style charcoal grill – with me being a longtime pescatarian.

'But fish on a smoky open flame? What could be more heavenly?' was my thinking. And I was quite right.

'The thing that makes Barbecoa special,' Oliver says during our exclusive interview, 'is that it's all about fire and the most incredible ways of getting great flavours. Many of our Fifteen graduates work there so it's like an extension of the family – and the fact my family eats there extends that notion even more.'

Shown to our seats on this night – a huge red leather banquette facing St Paul's – we're excited by the exuberance of the place. On top of that, there's a cinematic spectacle of London life on the other side of the cathedral-like glass walls. Who else gets to stare at St Paul's grandeur in such comfort? We watch

the red buses pass through pools of lamp light on the city's shiny wet streets while drinking a superb Chenin Blanc.

The food is pretty good too. The calamari is juicy, lightly crisped, with a hint of chilli and a mysterious sauce in a bold brush stroke across a board. 'What a great start,' I say to my actress companion, who is keen to remain incognito. (Will anyone look up from their plate long enough to spot her?)

My halibut arrives – 'the king of fish', as my favourite fishmonger calls it. It's huge, golden and delicious. At the risk of sounding like I'm on Oliver's payroll, I have to say the sides are perfect too: spinach, shredded Brussels sprouts, carrots and pumpkin. The actress's lamb is beautifully tender. We're as close to heaven as we could be, so near the cathedral. To end, a trio of home-made ice creams and sorbet.

Oliver has the last word: 'It is certainly fulfilling all my expectations, absolutely,' he says. 'It's unique in London. My top three things about Barbecoa are the meat, the view and the whisky collection.'

Soon it is midnight and we've not left. Suddenly I think of something Churchill said: 'Enough is as good as a feast.' We leave Barbecoa very ready to return. We'd not tackled the whisky, and we'd never tire of the view. □

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*Barbecoa, One New Change, London EC4M 9AG; [barbecoa.com](http://barbecoa.com). Price for two guests with wine: about £150*