

The decadent Black Pearl at Siren includes a half ounce of Royal Shassetra encased in gilded foie gras.



OVA *the* TOP

Caviar is making a comeback as chefs at the city's imperial-level restaurants showcase the rich roe in stunning presentations that won't ever go out of style.

By Nevin Martell // Photography by Greg Powers

SIREN

The Black Pearl is a scene-stealer. A foie gras torchon gilded with edible gold and pressed into the shape of a tin hides a bellyful of Shassetra caviar. There's an attractive contrast between the smoothness of the foie and the black beads, which pop pleasantly when pressed against the roof of the mouth. "The liver flavor enhances the caviar and vice versa," says executive chef John Critchley. "People are always amazed by the way they play together." Also in the game are all the traditional accompaniments—finely diced hardboiled egg whites and yolks, red onion, chives—along with a trio of bouncy, biscuit-shaped blini: white chocolate, Yukon gold potato and buckwheat. \$75, 1515 Rhode Island Ave. NW, 202.521.7171, sirenbyrv.com

KINSHIP

Chef-owner Eric Ziebold takes a high-low approach to his caviar service. A half-ounce of Sasanian Royal osetra caviar arrives with Yukon Gold potato chips—cooked to order in clarified butter—and whipped creme fraiche accented with chives. "It's all about the temperature contrast, so you notice the flavor of the caviar," he says, "which is clean, nutty and buttery." In keeping with the high-low motif, the presentation arrives on a teardrop-shaped white porcelain plate designed by chef Thomas Keller that rests on a rustic wooden plank salvaged during the restaurant's construction. \$80, 1015 Seventh St. NW, 202.737.7700, kinshipdc.com

FIOLA MARE

"It's no secret—I love caviar," says chef Fabio Trabocchi. He lets guests indulge in a range of four options, from Calvisius Royal Siberian to Kaviari Golden Oscietra. Rather than serve them with the traditional blini, they instead arrive with steamed pizza dough with a bouncy texture similar to Chinese bao buns. Whipped ricotta boosted with lemon zest and traditional Italian herbs stands in for the usual creme fraiche. The luxe service includes a shell-shaped plate with a logoed mother-of-pearl spoon, a neutral material that ensures the caviar's delicate flavor remains pure. \$110-\$200, 3050 K St. NW, 202.628.0065, fiolamaredc.com