

Food & Drink

What are the most delicious foods, refreshing drinks, coolest cafés and intriguing restaurants in Brussels now? Here are some that recently caught the eye of our food and drink expert **Hughes Belin**

Restaurant *The Nine*

Have you ever eaten at a feminist restaurant?

When Georgia Brooks arrived in Brussels from London in 2015, she was in her late twenties and immediately noticed something was missing. There were no women's clubs – places where women with the same interests, be they professional or cultural, could enjoy being part of the same community.

She decided to set up the first women's club in the capital of Europe. Inspired by the nine muses of Greek mythology, the club aimed to further gender equality through seminars, lectures, exhibitions and events.

Brooks and her husband bought the *Barbanera*, an Italian restaurant in the heart of the European Quarter, in late 2019, and spent most of the pandemic lockdowns refurbishing the building and organising her new business, which she called *The Nine*.

Today, *The Nine* offers its members a cosy coworking space and a vibrant networking environment, including a restaurant and a bar, both now open to the public on weekdays. Members, who pay €715-€990/year, enjoy a 10% discount on the menu and lunch deals can be delivered directly to their table.

The Nine's menu is dedicated to goddesses from around the world, and the kitchen sources its food from female-led suppliers as much as possible. Guests can choose between two starters, four mains and two desserts (two-course menu at €39 and three-course menu at €47) for a divine business lunch that foregoes sophistication but excels in flavour and creativity.

The (obviously female) chef Maria Akram knows her stuff: our grilled swordfish was cooked to perfection, and deliciously juicy. The *Chicomcoatl's* chocolate mousse, named after the Aztec goddess of sustenance, is inspired by the English chef Heston Blumenthal and is a must-try. The wine list is small but can satisfy any connoisseur, including the *Moscato Giallo* produced by Elisa Dilavanzo from Maeli in Veneto, Italy.

The dining experience takes place in a cosy indoor salon (30 seats) with a view of the bar where they serve amazing cocktails. When the weather's nice, try the garden terrace.

The Nine is feminine: obvious to women, and forever undefinable for men!

The Nine 69, Rue Archimède 1000 Brussels.
Open 12am-2.30pm and 5-10pm.

