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Tuesday, July 22, 2014, by Bill Addison

Coppa Enoteca



Beef heart pastrami crostini

There was no shortage of meat during lunch at **Coppa**, the Italian-themed wine bar and small plates haunt in Boston's leafy South End. A steel-gray pig sign above the door swung in the breeze. On the table, in the flesh, was the namesake dish—pink and white kerchiefs arranged in a circle around a plate, as veined as radicchio leaves but silky in only the way that properly aged, salt-cured pork shoulder can be. Alongside stood a plate of toast piled with shaved beef heart pastrami, brawny in flavor yet feathery in texture. A slick of harissa under the toast held its own with a jolt of peppery acidity.

Chefs **Ken Oringer** and **Jamie Bissonnette** opened Coppa in 2009 as a little sister to Oringer's Spanish tapas bombshell, Toro; the duo have lately been giving their attention to Toro's **Manhattan spinoff** that opened last year. Coppa has its own ardent devotees, and when eating the most carnivorous dishes I understood why. Bone marrow made a sly substitute for cheese on white pizza, its fatty gush surprisingly soothing among cured beef heart and horseradish shavings that resembled grated parmesan. And there was a lilting rendition of cacio e pepe, ricotta gnocchi with perocino and pepper but with the addition of nasturtium butter that gave the dish an herbaceous lift.



Gnocchi with nasturtium

But a few dishes fell flat. One antipasto combined stracciatella with apricots, toast, greens, and a generous trail of caviar into a summery tableau. The ingredients had nothing in common, though, and didn't socialize well as flavors. Metallic-tasting blobs of uni tasted one day past their prime in an otherwise satisfying dish of twisty gemelli tossed among clams, bits of pancetta, and lovage. And I love charred food as much as the next obsessive grazer, but a head of cauliflower looked like it had needed a fire extinguisher. Maybe Oringer and Bissonnette's middle child could use a little extra TLC just now?