

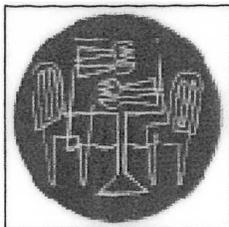
Price \$3.00

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# NEW YORKER

## TABLES FOR TWO



At Di L , 248 Fifth Ave., at Carroll St., Brooklyn (718-783-4565)—The risotto at this casually elegant Venetian trattoria comes with an unnecessary apology: "It will take some time," says the proprietor, Emiliano Coppa. "Shortcuts are taken these days, I know, but there's really no other way but to stir." And that's what the chef—his wife, Anna Klinger—does. Adding little more to the rice beyond a few shards of lemon zest, broth, and wine, she faithfully spends the twenty minutes of constant labor required to bring the dish to life. ("Stirring relaxes me," she says.) Served on the restaurant's mismatched flea-market china, her version embodies the sublime simplicity at the heart of the region's cuisine.

Meanwhile, Coppa leads diners through the storefront space to long rustic wooden tables, above which an exquisite Murano chandelier, transported from his grandmother's home in Venice, is suspended from a patched tin ceiling. In addition to the exemplary risotto, guests can dine on humble salt cod, which is first simmered for hours in milk, then whipped with more of the same and extra-virgin olive oil into a sweet, fresh-tasting pur e; a nutty whole-wheat spaghetti tossed with *bol-targa*—this is a dish that shows how much Italians can do with something as plain as a piece of dried tuna roe; or ravioli filled with beets tamed to a creamy rose hue, and sprinkled with poppy seeds. Calf liver alla Veneziana is also excellent, its mineral nature offset by triangles of charred polenta and caramelized onions. The wines (notable among them a Ruch  from Piemonte) come mostly from the local vintners Coppa knew when he was head of a cooking school in Italy, and they're served as plainly as everything else here, in tumblers.

The charm of this neighborly spot makes the local crowd—a mix that on a recent night included young couples on dates, an older foursome debating politics, a single man sharing spoonfuls of *latte bruciato* (burnt milk) with a baby at the next table—want to linger, and the contentment grows with an after-dinner cup of perfect *caff * or a *vino dolce* from Sardinia, which captures, in a glass, all the wildness of that place. (Open daily, except Tuesdays, for dinner. Entr es \$9-\$17.)

