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DELISH

EK Bistro

Ljubljana, Slovenia

Dekleva Gregoric Architects

Photography by Flavio Coddou



Making the most of what you're given might be the theme of this little bistro project in the riverside heart of charming Ljubljana. The 'baby palazzo' structure housing this semi-basement-level eatery is a modestly handsome example typical of the old town. A pedestrian alleyway runs up one side, and across the street in front is the river and a modern pedestrian bridge across it. There is a small pavement in front allowing for a few outdoor tables.

The brunch-focussed menu inspired the design, particularly in terms of the way the former reveals the ingredients of its offerings. So the architects decided to do the same, stripping the interior walls down to their rough brick masonry core, including shallow brick arches in the ceilings. Concealing plaster was out, rich orange bricks were in. Bare-bulb light fixtures suspended via long copper cords illuminate the four main zones of the plan, rising from tracks along the edges of the floors to make shadow patterns on the walls and then swing overhead and hang down to different heights from the arched ceilings.

The sequence of intimate rooms in the bistro feature simple wood board flooring, steel plate details, such as window surrounds or doorways, and modern custom tables in marble and steel tubing. There is a vaguely retro personality to the place, despite its many contemporary details, and this is the spice: the confrontation between old and new, or perhaps, oldish and newish. Nothing is either so historical as to be precious, or so modern as to be edgy. It adds up to a comforting casualness that states its style in a whisper. There are whimsical ceramic bowls and plates leaning out in groups on skinny steel brackets, filled with oranges or jars of oil. They appear to dance across the rustic brick-and-stone walls like tiny figurines. Nice.

Dekleva Gregoric Architects have fashioned a welcoming neighbourhood joint that regulars will adopt happily, and tourists will discover willingly. Using such a minimal palette of design elements hasn't hampered the effort one bit.

