



a burly Aussie whose commitment to his calling is borne out by the knife-and-fork tattoo on his forearm. The attention to detail in Fabian's food is exemplary. A starter of scallops comes with a sliver of runner beans, on which are assembled roasted spring onion, a passion fruit reduction, an onion gel (the onions are cooked for 96 hours), basil cress and a dusting of dried scallop salt. Another dish of 'fake' ricotta gnocchi comes with baby chanterelles, tiny artichokes and foams of lavender, tomato and olive, and is evocative of summer in Provence. A pudding of grapefruit-infused cold rhubarb soup comes with a rhubarb trio: poached, as a curd, and as a salad, accentuated by caramelised cacao nibs, raspberry waffles and popcorn ice cream - though it's the addition of tarragon that elevates the dish to a new level.

The dining room is clean, light and airy - think whitewashed walls and brickwork arches, hurricane lamps, pharmacy cabinets displaying apothecary-style bottles full of Miguel's gin infusions, a jade-green corrugated metal bar... The effect is a little like a Farrow & Ball bodega. "We offer fine dining but in an easy-going atmosphere," says Miguel. "Service is casual, there are no VIPs, we treat customers like family."

that is familiar to UK diners but which Zurich has lacked.

The rarefied fare at Manesse is a world away from the traditional food of Zurich. At gymnasium-sized dining halls such as Zeughauskeller in the old city, hard-working waiters churn out plate after plate of Zürcher geschnetzeltes (chopped veal in a creamy mushroom sauce), cordon bleu (veal or pork escalopes, ham and Swiss cheese, crumbed and fried) and würst of all descriptions - with lashings of potato rösti.

The apotheosis of this style is to be found at the appropriately named Der Schwiizer, where Vitto Laubscher elevates this standard fare by scrupulous attention to detail and by careful sourcing

into his rösti is chilled overnight to remove as much moisture as possible. The result is satisfyingly buttery without being cloying. Cordon bleu is made using cheese and ham sourced from the beautiful Müstair Valley adjoining the Swiss National Park. Vitto's geschnetzeltes are decent-sized chunks of good-quality veal in a mushroom sauce made from white wine, demi-glace and cream.

Vitto sources his wines from vineyards just 20 miles away on the shores of the lake. He tells me that before opening Der Schwiizer he had "spent seven years in Russia, opening restaurants for rich guys". I can see how he may have wanted to return to Zurich to

range of conserves and, of course, Swiss meringues.

On the opposite side of the square is Conditorei Schober, a grand Mitteleuropa café that first opened its doors just 10 years later. The ornate silver cash register that takes pride of place on the marble counter cost the princely sum of 9,500 Swiss francs back in the 1870s. This extravagant purchase was made by the owner's son; apparently, his father was so outraged by such potentially ruinous foolhardiness that he refused to set foot in the establishment for almost a year. He needn't have worried. Today, the place is still going strong, selling magnificent cakes, from dainty St Honoré and raspberry eclairs to tartes au citron and an impressive chocolate cake that the waistcoated young waiter memorably described as "a

Over a plate of assorted cakes on Schober's cobbled terrace, like a shop-soiled Marcel Proust watching Swiss quotidian life glide by, I consider Zurich's boring reputation once again. Is it fair? Well, who cares? Anywhere is what you make of it and here, in the pretty cobbled squares of the old town, or in the gardens fringing the lakeside, there is beauty, grace and elegance to be had. No, there might not be the choice of restaurants that you get in London, but then there are few places that can boast that. What Zurich does have is the core of an emergent restaurant scene, in which young chefs are reinventing their unfashionable national cuisine by taking pride in its distinctiveness and redefining it in inventive ways for consumers with increasingly sophisticated

DRINK

Clouds Bar Prime Tower, Maagplatz 5; +41 44 404 30 00; clouds.ch.

Spectacular views of the city from this stylish cocktail bar on the 36th floor of Zurich West's Prime Tower.

Frau Gerolds Garten Geroldstrasse 23; fraugerold.ch. A magic grotto that is equal parts hip open-air bar and street food venue with the odd pop-up restaurant thrown in.

Hotel Rivington & Sons Prime Tower, Maagplatz 5; +41 43 366 90 82; www.hotelrivingtonandsons.ch. On the ground floor of the tower, this New York-style bar is an oasis of urban chic.

SHOP

Fine & More Napfasse 3; +41 44 262 32 27; fineandmore.ch. Check out this fantastic schnapps boutique, next door to Conditorei Schober, for astoundingly good fruit liqueurs. Great range of oils and vinegars, too.

H Schwartzbach Münsterstrasse 19; +41 44 261 13 15; schwartzbach.ch. Zurich institution selling dried fruit, coffee, preserves and sweets in the old town.

Anna Saarinen Neumarkt 3; +41 79 249 71 11; annasaarinen.ch. Beautiful homewares including mohair blankets and carpets hand-woven on the looms in the back room of the shop.

Sibler Münsterhof 16; +41 44 211 55 50; sibler.com. Very good cookware and design shop opposite the Fraumünster church.

Uhren Atelier Rindermarkt Rindermarkt 21; +41 44 262 60 90; uhrenatelier.ch. A treasure trove of second-hand Swiss watches.