

## The Mouth

By Nanci Tangeman

### Is it in the water?

#### Restaurant Contrast

Ferdinand Bolstraat 176-178, 471 5544

Open Mon-Thur 12.00-00.00, Fri-Sat

12.00-02.00, Sun 12.00-00.00

Cash, PIN, major credit cards

I might as well give up now. Here I sit—actually, I'm lounging—in the sunshine. A few minutes ago I was en route to Albert Cuypmarkt, shopping list in hand, with the best intentions of GETTING THINGS DONE! Now I find myself flung against pillows, perusing a menu and enjoying the breeze.

Idyllic, yes. But something's not quite right. I can feel it. I slowly look up from my menu.

An orange pumpkin a few chairs down rubs her belly and sips her coffee. A gleaming white weather balloon trundles between the tables.

I feel like something out of *The Sixth Sense*, except: I SEE PREGNANT PEOPLE.

Half the patrons of Restaurant Contrast, not to mention the passers-by, seem to be expectant—waiting for something other than their lunches. I wonder if there's 'something in the water'.

Luckily, I'm not here for a drink. I'm here for the food.

Restaurant Contrast was born a few months ago, complete with a menu of Dutch-French dishes and a strong list of wines. Contrast is a place where a couple of bottles could drink away your entire afternoon. Shade, cushions, sunshine...

But I'm not here to succumb—I've still got that long list of errands. And, anyway, I don't like to linger in places where the result seems to be swollen bellies... But the menu alone at Con-



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trast could have that effect.

I order the sandwich of almond brioche and duck pâté, with a compote of red onions and raisins (€7.50). My partner-in-all-things-reproductive orders the salad with smoked Charlois entrecôte and house-made Parmesan sticks (€12.50). In deference to the moms-to-be around us, we pass on wine, but if we'd partaken, Contrast would have helped us along by listing the wine pairings for each dish—for example, a Saint Véran, 2004 Château de Fuissé (€6.50) for my sandwich.

With a menu like this, we could be in Paris, not De Pijp. Then I notice the wine pairing with *bitterballen* is a glass of Brand beer...

A generous slab of rustic duck pâté anchors my double-decker sandwich. The mound of red onion compote is sweet, with raisins as bloated as the women around me.

Partner's salad is lighter. The entrecôte is rare, seasoned and carpaccio-esque. Several crisp parmesan sticks round out the fresh lettuce

mix. Not a hint of pickle or peanut butter. The maternity mystery continues.

Contrast serves dinner nightly. In addition to their à la carte menu, they have daily two- and three-course specials (lunch: €24/€27.50; dinner: €37.50/€40.50) guaranteed to round out your belly faster than IVF treatment.

After dinner, Contrast transforms into a wine bar, open until the wee hours. Looking at the list of close to 100 bottles—with more than 20 available by the glass—I suddenly have a little insight. Maybe Contrast is, indeed, doing its part to bring a lot of pregnancies to the neighbourhood. But it's probably not the water. —