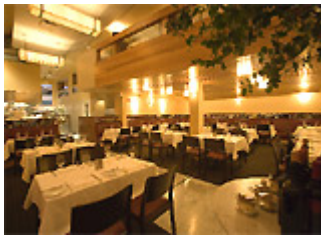


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The Guide to the Good Life

Perbacco

230 California St. (Battery St.)
San Francisco, CA 94111
415-955-0663



Owner Umberto Gibin's razor-sharp tie and impeccable suit match the precision of this two-tiered restaurant's expansive charm and style. The unique, warm-yet-luxe setting soars with exposed brick, deep red-padded booths, comfortable, offset dining areas and an exhibition kitchen.

Carrera marble glistens from the floor (even in the elevator) and throughout the front-of-house bar area, while details such as a restored, antique meat slicer atop the bar and a rough-hewn chef's table lends notes of authenticity and rusticity. Simple, regional Piedmontese and Ligurian flavors are invoked so well here by chef Staffan Terje that a native might shed tears of hope. Try all of the house-cured salumi at once and revel in the joys of rich salame al barolo, fatty and fennel-infused lonza, and the memorable ramekin of smooth, shredded ciccioli (pork pâté). House-made pastas here soar with their gravy-like sugos---the pappardelle with braised short-rib ragù and roasted chanterelles makes a person wonder how other places get it wrong. A pork shoulder al latte (in milk) served with salty polenta and Savoy cabbage smells and tastes like somebody's nonna came, cooked and left. A separate bar menu and a short but well-chosen list of Italian wines and cocktails cull a lively after-work crowd, many of whom leave teetering a bit on their expensive high heels. Flavorful expense-account lunches are also sure to please.