

The MICHELIN Guide

San Francisco

Bay Area & Wine Country

RESTAURANTS

2011

San Francisco ▲ Castro

Frances 

Californian 

C2

3870 17th St. (bet. 15th & Market Sts.)

Phone: 415-621-3870

Web: www.frances-sf.com

Prices: \$\$\$

Dinner Tue – Sun



After gathering a belt full of notches cooking at celebrated eateries like Aqua, Charles Nob Hill, and Fifth Floor, Chef Melissa Perello finally gets a place to herself with this much buzzed-about new Castro restaurant.

Named for Perello's Texan grandmother, Frances is small and cozy, with a decidedly unflashy, contemporary-rustic décor fitted out with loads of wood, creamy walls, and a tiny bar up front. The service is equally unpretentious, with meals being delivered with minimal fuss in perfect synchronicity. The lively crowd who piles in every night doesn't appear to be looking for long, windy explanations of the food anyways—Perello's talents are better seen, smelled, and tasted.

Kick things off with one of the chef's endlessly creative bouchées (little starters offering a handful of bites), which range from crispy pork trotters to chickpea fries; and then move on to fluffy, impossibly light pillows of ricotta gnocchi tossed with baby asparagus, plump fava beans, green garlic, crunchy croutons, and sautéed morel mushrooms; or perfectly seared Sonoma duck breast in an irresistible reduction, paired with a butter bean ragout with sautéed escarole, homemade sausage, and *croutes*.