

## Bar Eats: Ladylike Bites from Beauty & Essex

Posted by [Nancy Huang](#), January 27, 2011 at 2:00 PM



[Photographs: Nancy Huang]

At **Beauty & Essex**, the younger and sexier sister to Lower East Side bar Stanton Social, dressed-up cocktails require equally fashionable bar bites. Owner and chef Chris Santos reprises his global small plates cuisine here, whimsically intermingling world influences—Asian, European, Latin American, New American—into delicate nibbles perfect for a ladies' night out or a special date night.

Santos enjoys riffing on the *xiao long bao*, a soup dumpling common to Shanghaiese cuisine. At Stanton Social, the dumpling is made with French Onion Soup; here it is the **Thai Lobster Bisque Dumplings** (\$14), which come in a set of six.



The soup is enveloped in a thick wrapper, then fried to a crisp golden brown. A hint of coconut and lime in the dipping sauce tempers the creaminess of the bisque, which bursts forth from the dumpling at first bite. Ladylike or not, eating the dumpling whole is highly recommended.



Crostini from a section of the menu called "Jewels on Toast" include **Whipped Ricotta** (\$10) with grilled pears, honey, basil and chile. At its price, it needs more of the star ingredient—the ricotta—but the grilled pear serves as a sweet refresher. For those who need decadence, **Roasted Bone Marrow** (\$14) with rioja-braised shallot marmalade would be the better choice.



**Oven Braised Chicken Meatballs** (\$18) with sheep's milk ricotta, wild mushroom and truffle is a last-minute suggestion by the server, who notes its popularity. The tender, well-seasoned meatballs are complemented by a fluffy mound of ricotta (that should have been on the crostinil) and an earthy mushroom and truffle oil sauce. The dish is accompanied by a side of **Crispy Hominy** (\$8) with charred corn, lime, cilantro, chile and cotija cheese—essentially a fork-and-spoon version of the classic Mexican grilled corn dish.

A quick scan of Beauty & Essex makes it immediately clear that ambiance is included in the price of the cocktails and food. Designed by AvroKO, the three-story interior can only be described as opulent kitsch. At its storefront, an antique pawn shop full of vintage wares disguises the entrance to the bar, accessible through an unmarked door. Inside, pearled chandeliers and ornate lamps grace the bar and dining area, and the ladies' room hosts a bar with complimentary rosé. Drink your fill of the free bubbly, because you're certainly paying for everything else.

**Beauty & Essex**  
146 Essex St., New York NY 10002 ([map](#))  
212-614-0146  
[www.beautyandessex.com](http://www.beautyandessex.com)