Jordnær, Copenhagen, Denmark, Europe

A gentle giant of Scandinavian gastronomy

Humble haute cuisine: In a world where showboating often passes for substance, Jordnær – whose name translates into English as 'down to earth' – is a restaurant flying the flag for warmth, sincerity and a lack of pretence. But make no mistake: behind the unassuming dining room, hidden above the lobby of the Gentofte Hotel, lies a kitchen operating at the very highest level, led by co-owner Eric Vildgaard – a Noma alumnus whose cooking pairs impeccable technique with a profound respect for Nordic ingredients.

Forgetting someone? Of course, Jordnær wouldn't be Jordnær without Vildgaard's wife and business partner, Tina. The heart of the restaurant, she's the consummate host, overseeing operations with quiet confidence and charisma. Under her watchful – but never intrusive – eye, guests' needs are deftly anticipated, dishes are explained and conversations struck up with natural ease, making the experience feel more like dinner at a cherished friend's house than a buttoned-up fine-dining affair.

The luxury of less: From Norwegian langoustines to king crab and caviar, seafood is the undisputed star of Jordnær's multi-course tasting menu. And though the pantry's produce may be Nordic, the cuisine, as a rule, isn't – at least, not in the New Nordic sense. A seamless blend of French technique and Japanese precision and flavour (think dashi, ponzu and wasabi), each course is crafted with the utmost elegance and intuitive restraint; every ingredient earns its place, and every garnish has a purpose.

A glimpse of the menu: Much like Northern Europe's icy seas, Jordnær's tasting menu is subject to constant ebb and flow, so no two visits are the same. However, to whet your appetite, previous dishes have included raw scallops with gooseberry and rose, bluefin tuna with myoga ginger and caviar, and

lobster with yuzu and sansho pepper – alongside sweet creations such as fraise des bois (forest strawberry) with rhubarb and geranium, and sheep's cream with melon and lavender.