

J Interiors / A rustic-mod Italian restaurant in Old Montreal

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Photo by Dominic Gouin

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Cabinet Braun-Braën converts a 30-year-old furniture showroom into an eclectic Italian eatery in Montreal's Old Port district.

When Jeff Stinco, the half-Italian lead guitarist of the band Simple [Plan](#), decided to open [Mangiafoco](#), a restaurant in Old Montreal dedicated to mozzarella and pizza, it seemed natural to enlist the help of local design firm [Cabinet Braun-Braën](#). Founded in 1995 by Bruno Braën, the studio is behind a handful of funky resto-lounge interior transformations within the city, such as [Big In Japan](#) and [Pullman Wine Bar](#), the latter of which Braën is part-owner.

Stinco and Braën's maintained elements left by the building's former tenants (the Cab Deco furniture showroom) including the exposed brick walls, cast-iron columns and natural wood beam ceilings. They also purchased an assortment of chairs and stools brought directly from the furniture showroom.

Folded steel - a signature style of Braën - form benches that are affixed to one side of the brick wall. A steel column made from a single sheet of metal twists upwards like a spiral staircase and doubles as shelving for wine and liquor bottles near the central bar.

In keeping with the Italian theme, and to brighten the narrow space, Braën planted basil near the back of the restaurant and clad the indoor garden containers in diamond-printed tile - a two-tone geometric pattern that takes its cues from the ornate ceramic surfaces found in Italy's courtyards, arcades and cathedrals.

For lighting, Braën installed rows of heat lamps normally used for warming food, creating a comfy vibe and amber glow. To prevent overheating, half of the lights are switched off, and others have been swapped out with vibrant purple bulbs.

Every Italian establishment worth its sea salt has an espresso bar and [Mangiafoco's](#) is proudly displayed beside the entrance on a base made of exposed brick, Iroko wood and tile. It offers an ideal spot for a post-dinner pick-me-up.

Mangiafoco is located at 105 rue St-Paul Ouest, Montreal.

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