

DRINKING & DINING

BY CAMILLA APCAR



Credit: Paul Griffiths Photography

A Bolt from the Blue

Following a six-month refurbishment, the Blue Bar at The Berkeley has reopened. Its new, broader menu – from potent highballs to champagne cocktails – is full of classics with a twist and unusual new creations. Coral bitters, lemon grass and aloe vera are all put to use by its mixologists, but for something truly refreshing try the watermelon Lady Bird with vodka, bergamot and rhubarb, or the Toffee & Bubbles – Ruinart Blanc de Blancs, caramel and vanilla (served with hazelnuts and sweet icing around the glass). Choose a seat at the bar for maximum entertainment, a lounge sofa in the darkened main space for a twilight tête-à-tête, or a table behind the giant slats that lend an almost nautical atmosphere to the bar's new glass-fronted extension.

The Blue Bar, The Berkeley, Wilton Place, SW1X, the-berkeley.co.uk



Osteria 60

Another wonderful slice of Italy has found its way to London. Inspired by 1950s trattorias and with a terrace facing Kensington Gardens, Osteria 60 has been designed by Milanese architects Spagnolo+Rebosio and is headed by chef Ivan Simeoli, who serves up Italian cuisine with a contemporary edge.

To wit, antipasti such as calamari in the unexpected form of poached tagliatelle-like strips that have been marinated with Amalfi lemons, which arrives atop a bowl of tomato pappas and mozzarella. Or warm minestrone with basil crackers: heavy on the pea, courgette, purple potatoes and heritage tomatoes, and served in its own miniature carafe.

Osteria 60 balances its menu with a choice of six for each course, and a mainstay of meat and seafood. Of the pasta and risotto, the 36-hour slow cooked Neapolitan ragu certainly puts in the time, while a plate of fresh maltagliati has equally fresh and flavoursome lobster both within the dish itself and as a thin layer of meat laid over the pasta.

Yet opting straight for secondi is all too easy. There's Welsh lamb chops and Sicilian aubergine caponata, and a house special parmigiana – but it's the Welsh wagyu beef with tropea onion and sour carrots that truly stands out. Sourced from Rhug Estate in Corwen, not far from Snowdonia National Park, it is aged for 28 days, then roasted to achieve perfect texture.

The restaurant was completed within the Baglioni hotel earlier this year (although is



independently operated). Inside, striking black and white flooring surrounds the bar and until the end of August works by Indian artist Khandekar will be on display. A new set of pieces by an Italian artist will be brought in for its official opening in September.

Dessert is an affair just as artistic as Osteria 60's interior design. Over a thin chocolate base, the Chocolate Mondrian's rectangles of dark, milk and caramel create a playful and artistic tribute to the geometric and abstract master "all finished up with a Tuscan olive oil explosion", says the chef.

The true test of any Italian restaurant is perhaps its tiramisu. It is one of Simeoli's signatures and at this restaurant comes deconstructed, with not a ramekin to be found.

"I use all the ingredients of a classic tiramisu but adding an extra crunch that in my opinion is missing on the classic version," he reveals. A carefully constructed arrangement of chocolate and coffee cylinders, mascarpone and a layer of sugar crisp (that excellent "extra crunch") arrives on a plate – all that is missing is the alcohol-soaked foundation. But Simeoli's interpretation is so flavoursome, and unusual, that I admit I didn't even notice.

60 Hyde Park Gate, SW7, osteria60.com



Dine with Dogs

Man's (and woman's) best friend has just become an even closer companion – you can now dine with your dog over lunch at Daphne's in Kensington. In celebration, British accessories designer Lulu Guinness has created a special hand-painted ceramic dog bowl (£60). Sold exclusively through the restaurant and online, the bowl matches the restaurant's interior, and features a playful silhouette of Guinness' own pooch – who, by coincidence, is also named Daphne. As for the canine menu, dogs on their very best behaviour may be in for biscotti treats.

Bethan Rees

Daphne's, 112 Draycott Avenue, SW3, daphnes-restaurant.co.uk



REVIEW

Cocotte

Over the past decade the simplest of dishes have been turned into over-worked, elaborate affairs at many restaurants. Spaghetti bolognese becomes Chianti and balsamic-glazed pasta. Eton Mess arrives neater than neat.

At Cocotte, which opened on Westbourne Grove in February, simplicity truly is key. While not quite the definition of casual dining, families would be right at home here for a back-to-basics meal of French-influenced rotisserie chicken.

There are salads and soups too, which run the gamut from quinoa and bulgur with peas and dried grapes to a broad and green bean, basil and broccoli option that is greener than Mr. McGregor's garden. But chicken is king at Cocotte. Each fowl is marinated for 24 hours, slow cooked for another three at 93 degrees and then finished on a spit.

The only choices to be made are which size (full, half, quarter) and which sauce. There's BBQ, green, a spicy variant, and the offer of truffle mayonnaise – the only pretension this restaurant holds.

In flavours as fanciful as green tea, mango and strawberry cheesecake, rice-based mochi patties are a dessert not to be missed. Good thing takeaway and home delivery are available too.

95 Westbourne Grove, W2, mycocotte.uk



Let Them Eat Cake

Founded by local resident Laura Timson, Laura's London launched earlier this year, bringing Londoners chic and alluringly packaged-to-perfection treats. From salted caramel and chocolate layer cake to banana and walnut miniature loaf cakes, each is made with the finest organic ingredients. The *Evening Standard's* new baking columnist, Timson is a rising star to watch. *Bethan Rees* lauraslondon.com



Vodka in Cognac

The home of Grey Goose is opening its doors to guests for two weekends in August, offering visitors an insight into what goes on behind the scenes, with maître de chai François Thibault. Its manor home, Le Logis, is situated in the heart of the French Cognac region – a beautifully restored 17th-century country house comprising 14 bedrooms, a swimming pool and a cocktail bar. The weekend experience will include a relaxed poolside barbecue, a tour of Le Logis' on-site bakery (Grey Goose is made from Picardie winter wheat), and a masterclass led by a mixologist who will show guests how to create martini cocktails to suit their palate. Vodka lovers, unite. *Bethan Rees*

4-6 August and 25-27 August, £1,300, brownandhudson.com