



Old School NEW COOL

Laid-back luxe interiors, an inventive all-day menu and a cleverly reinvented space are the hallmarks of neighbourhood restaurant Hans' Bar & Grill, discovers Emma J Page

As any dyed-in-the-wool Londoner will tell you, forming a long-lasting relationship with the metropolis is a bit like investing in the stock market. On a good day, you can bank its treasures: the streets feel like your own and every corner offers up something new to note. Conversely, if you have ever tried to battle your way across Blackfriars Bridge at rush hour, dealing with an umbrella that has just blown inside out for the third time, you will know the feeling that your stock has plummeted to a significant low. That is the beauty of London. You fall out of love with it on the turn of a sixpence, then it offers a glimmer of something unexpected to reel you in again: an inventive restaurant pop-up under the arches at Borough Market, a regenerated loft space-cum-diner, a private dining room in a bank vault.

There may not seem much room at first glance for this kind of reinvention in historic Chelsea, but recently there has been some quiet rumblings of change behind its elegant Georgian and Victorian facades. The area's fortunes have veered from an anti-establishment vibe in the 'Swinging Sixties' to its latterly elegant yet buttoned-up reputation. However, echoes of a former creative spirit can be felt in a new generation of builds and renovations: Sloane Street's latest mixed-use development, George House, with its hidden courtyard garden is a case in point: gently contemporary but at ease with its surroundings. Behind it on Pavilion Road an informal blend of independents, including a butcher's, bakery, wine store and deli has revived a neighbourhood feel.

Once home to stables and workshops, there is a sense that this quiet mews has



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been returned to its past, only with a glossier edge. Halfway down the cobbled street, Hans' Bar & Grill is nestled next to a stationery store and opposite a greengrocer's. New-build eateries with an urban aesthetic share space with reworked mews houses, a reminder that the city's architectural and culinary landscapes are merging in inventive ways. As a Londoner who lives close by, these streets are familiar to me, but this relaxed feel represents a recent shift. It is exactly this kind of redefining of old favourites that can make the city's stock rise so unexpectedly.

As befitting of a restaurant that blends easy elegance with a local feel, it is not immediately obvious that it is discreetly attached to neighbourhood stalwart, 11 Cadogan Gardens, a townhouse hotel characterised by winding corridors, sweeping staircase and period features.

The restaurant takes that sense of heritage and adds a modern, loosened up twist – panelled walls are painted rich green, brickwork is exposed, botanical prints combine with leather banquettes, marble-topped tables are warmed by brass accents and aged parquet flooring, while a generous wine collection behind glass walls adds a note of glamour.

I arrive to find my dining companion already seated at the bar, Bellini in hand, browsing the sharing plates. Head Chef Adam England, formerly of Le Pont de la Tour, has devised an unfussy all-day menu that stands up just as well to easy grazing over aperitifs as it does to unhurried lunches or elegant suppers with friends.

Provenance is key here and much of the produce has been sourced locally, from the seasonal side dishes, such as cabbage and smoked bacon, to the grass-fed English





sirloin. A blend of modern European plates, from smoked aubergine flatbread to pea and mint arancini, and simple, honest dishes, including pork cutlet, allow ingredients to sing. Nothing is overly complicated; the result is all the better for it.

Dishes are made to complement one another. We started with a couple of plates shared informally: a smoked mackerel salad comprising apple and watercress with earthy fennel notes and a rustic, rough-textured ham hock and pheasant terrine. Undecided between two red wines, a Malbec Reserve and a Baron Carl St Emilion, we were served both to taste, choosing the latter, a velvety smooth option that paired well with our main course, a medium-rare veal cutlet and a Barnsley chop, both from the menu's standout grill section. Curly kale with toasted hazelnuts, sautéed new potatoes with rosemary and a simple green salad were ideal sides.

The wine list here is extensive with a good selection of biodynamic, organic options and wines by the glass, plus a focus on unusual bottles from around the world. There is also a concise list of classic cocktails using British spirits, including a twist on a Gin Sour.

Best of all, the restaurant combines a friendly, cool-luxe neighbourhood feel with a sense that anything goes – no matter the time of day. Locals and hotel guests can stop by for breakfast from 7am, whether a freshly pressed smoothie or a classic eggs benedict. And for a little escapism, the afternoon tea menu features traditional bakes alongside modern savouries such as salt beef, mustard and dill pickle bagels.

After supper, we spent time exploring the hotel. Built by Lord Chelsea in the late 19th century, it originally comprised four separate townhouses, later conjoined to create an endearingly meandering layout. Then, it was popular as a home from home for travelling Victorian aristocrats, politicians and bon viveurs. Now, it is infused with a laid-back, cosmopolitan spirit, echoed in its welcoming restaurant. As we leave, I notice a series of black and white photographs that point to the building's little-known stint as a private members' club in the 1960s. It seems this city still has several secrets to give up; I will not be trading in my shares any time soon.

Hans' Bar & Grill, 164 Pavilion Road, London SW1X 0AW, www.hansbarandgrill.com.