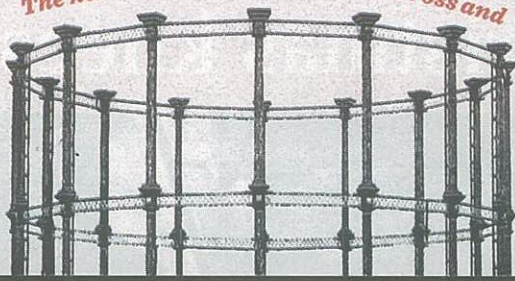




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OF A
RADICAL
BOOKSHOP

The new cultural guide to King's Cross and



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GHETTS
My top
5 venues



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issue two **november 2014**

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SECRET FOODIE SPOTS IN KING'S CROSS

IN LAST MONTH'S launch issue of Gasholder, we featured some of the hottest new restaurants in the area, from Caravan and Grain Store on Granary Square to hip new openings like T.E.D.

But did you know that King's Cross has long harboured a host of low-key dining destinations worth hunting down, too?

This month we take a look at fifteen of

these secret spots, including many that have been in business for years, from a modern British diner to a cheap-as-chips Thai and a unique Japanese vegan. You'll be surprised at what there is to discover.

First up, which former stables, hidden away on a cobbled mews, has been a restaurant for nearly five decades?

turn to page. 4

*Festive
decadence*

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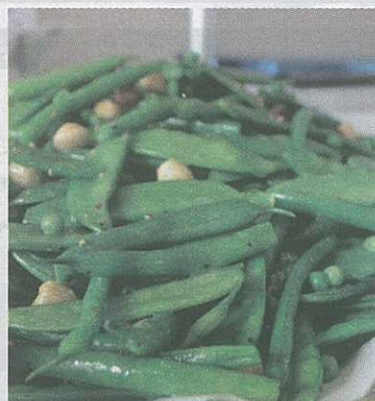
FOOD



King's Cross: 15 Foodie Hideaways

Although the neighbourhood is fast-changing, many of these little places have been doing their thing for aeons...

words: Tom Kihl & Stephen Emms



SMITHY'S

WHILE LONDON'S newer restaurant openings fall over themselves to create an authentic, yet ultimately contrived, sense of ambience, Smithy's is – effortlessly – the real deal. Back in the 60s, when the backstreets of King's Cross were synonymous with the hurried trysts of streetwalkers and their tricks, these former stable buildings became an unlikely destination, offering hundreds of wines and a large rotisserie to those curious enough to venture off the Gray's Inn Road. And despite a chequered history, which saw later owners rip out original features and focus on wild S&M parties in its dungeon-like interior, these days Smithy's remains as the grandfather of the area's blossoming array of secret foodie hotspots.

Originally built for blacksmiths to tend to the shire horses that used to pull London's omnibus fleet, the building retains impressive features, including hanging gas heaters, steel girders and brickwork ramps, (presumably a means to walk horses to the upper floors), and looks beguiling when lit by the flicker of candles after dusk.

We paid it a lunchtime visit, where the cobbled pavements and cosy booths were equally otherworldly, and shared three plates.

A mackerel and brown shrimp terrine was livened up by a Jacqueline sauce, a spectacular slow-cooked carrot reduction. More surprising still was a warm goat's cheese tart with courgette, red marmalade and pesto, which delivered a complex range of sweet, herby and earthy flavours, unusual in a dish that sounded so run-of-the-mill. Finally, seared scallops on a dreamy celeriac puree was beefed up with hunks of pancetta, a masculine take on an often more delicate pairing.

In fact, the only low point of the experience was being charged for a bottle of wine that was £8 more expensive than the modest Verdejo (which should have been £19.50) we'd actually enjoyed, and not spotting it until long after we had left.

But with an accomplished kitchen, and a tempting looking selection of craft beers at the bar too, Smithy's retains plenty of charm for returns visits. *Mains from £12.50-£19. 15-17 Leeke St, WC1X*

06 ST CHAD'S PLACE

ANOTHER STUNNING old industrial workshop building, transformed into a fabulous dining space, 06 St Chad's has been tucked away down an atmospheric alleyway for over a decade. Feted by those in the know, the single, vaulted room lets natural light flood in, while diners, seated on stark Scandinavian furniture, choose from a limited selection of daily specials. The former Thameslink interchange directly beneath is celebrated with a life-size train mural across the wall.

The food? Not quite up there with recent Granary Square openings, but pleasing nonetheless. With no starters on the menu, a serving of salmon and sour cream pierogi was a generous main, strewn on a bed of spinach with slow-roast tomatoes. A flavoursome roast duck breast was slightly over-cooked, its flesh no longer pink as it rested on top of dauphinoise potatoes and a sticky-sweet plum sauce.

A surprise highlight proved to be a house side salad, its mixed leaves heaving with roasted peppers, moreish croutons and goat's cheese. A glass of quaffable La Vidabaubanaise rose was £6.80.

As we lingered, a steady stream of well-dressed locals passed through the takeaway area, picking up £5 boxes of salad and hot food or ciabatta rolls. Excellent coffee too, with perfect acidity to accompany a muscular slab of cheesecake. *Mains around £12. 6 St Chad's Place, WC1X*

FOODILIC

A BRAND NEW VENTURE from Little Bay restaurateur Peter Ilic, who's plotting to launch 30 of these healthy little 'grab and go' cafes over the next five years. You'll find a beautiful spread of salads, colourful boxes bursting with goodies such as seared yellowfin tuna and ciabattas, including the salt beef and fried egg New York Sunrise. The house speciality, however, is the feuilleté, freshly rolled filo parcels with savoury or sweet fillings. Try the unusual crab and ginger. *From £3.75 a box. 260 Pentonville Road N1*

PAOLINA

THIS LONGSTANDING Thai café – it was one of the few good options before the redevelopment of KX – boasts a retro interior straight out of a fashion shoot: wooden panelling, chequered floor, and a cute lower-level dining room. A cheery chef is kept busy in a tiny open central kitchen whipping up tasty tom yums, pad thai and stir-fried squid with chilli. Routinely chocka, it's also a BYO, always worth remembering in central London. *Dishes £4.50-8.95. 181 King's Cross Road WC1X 9BZ*