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## The Surprise

Posted by Natasha Taghavi on September 27, 2021



### The Blurb

Proudly perched on the corner of Christchurch Terrace, in the heart of Chelsea's residential streets, The Surprise is something of a jewel in the crown of this impressive area. Originally established in 1853, the pub was relaunched last May under the new (and independent) ownership of hotelier and restaurateur, Jack Greenall – owner of the Pheasant Inn, Berkshire. The pub takes its name from HMS Surprise, a French Napoleonic warship originally dubbed Unite which was captured by the British and later renamed The Surprise.

### The Style

Perhaps unsurprisingly – amongst its very pleasing aesthetic – the pub pays homage to its naval heritage with locally sourced artworks and ornaments, while the fittings and fixtures have taken a focus on sustainability; using upcycled timber for shelving as well as tables. Ornate antique pendants hang over the bar, and hessian is used for curtains in the windows. There's a relaxed feel, an inviting one, but nevertheless, its décor is well thought out and satisfying to take in.



## The Food & Drink

We arrived one sunny London lunchtime after a short walk from Sloane Square station, ready to eat, drink and – thankfully – be pleasantly surprised. We started off with the mushroom croquettes (£6.50) and Colchester rock oysters with shallot vinegar (£3.50 each). At 30 weeks pregnant, I was sadly unable to try the oysters, but it was a resounding yes from my husband. Instead, I tucked into the very popular croquettes washed down with possibly the best Virgin Mary I've ever had! Croquettes aren't usually my starter of choice, but these really were a bit special. Crisp and not at all soggy on the outside, hot and beautifully seasoned on the inside – I could see why they came highly recommended.

The mains order was an easy one for me – wild boar sausage and mash (£18). I don't eat sausages very often, so when I do it's usually when dining out. Wild boar in any form is a favourite of mine, too, so it was a no brainer. The sausages did not disappoint; rich and tasty with a slight fennel flavour to them, while the mash was smooth and creamy – the perfect accompaniment to the hearty meat. It was a very cosy pub menu winner, which (dare I say it) had me looking forward to Autumn. My husband opted for the burger (£14) which can be a tricky one to master, it can really say a lot about an establishment in my experience. Luckily, The Surprise house burger was oozing with flavoursome meat, cooked perfectly and served up with truffle chips; what's not to like?

We were more than full up at this point, but it would have been rude not to sample something sweet now wouldn't it, so we went for another British classic: sticky toffee pudding (£6). Served with a generous scoop of scrumptious salted caramel ice cream, the sticky toffee pudding was luscious. Warm and rich, but not sickly (as they can often be), it hit the spot for my sweet craving just so.

## In a Nutshell

The Surprise is the local I wish I had. There's a homely feel with some luxurious touches, and yet its antique furniture and upcycled features give it an authentic British pub feel at the same time. The staff were extremely attentive, seeing to my toddler's every need and generally making us feel welcome. The drinks options were vast, and the food exceeded my expectations. Whether popping in for a drink, a meal or even private dining in the pub's exquisite dining room, this is a public house and then some.

## The Details

The Surprise, 6 Christchurch Terrace, Chelsea, London SW3 4AJ; 0203 837 4600; [info@thesurprise-chelsea.co.uk](mailto:info@thesurprise-chelsea.co.uk)