

Review: The Surprise, Chelsea

2 MONTHS AGO *by* MITRA MSAAD



Elegantly nestled in the heart of Chelsea, The Surprise effortlessly defies the laws of culinary gravity, delivering an exquisite dining experience that ascends far beyond the typical pub fare. An historic destination, it's a place where tradition meets modernity in gastronomy, establishing itself as a unique, inviting space that brings you the best of Britain's culinary arts.

From the moment you cross the threshold, you are enveloped by an unmistakable air of refined charm and a delightful, welcoming ambiance. Traditional yet tastefully contemporary, The Surprise's decor is a visual feast that pairs perfectly with the gastronomic pleasures waiting for your palate expertly created by Head chef Ondrej Hula.



But as you sit down, in the cosy and warm interior or the vibrant patio, you're about to discover the true star of the show: the food. The Surprise has mastered the art of putting a modern twist on traditional British pub fare, creating an exceptional menu that is innovative, unpretentious, and undeniably delicious.

My dining chum and I both started with the gloriously summery tomato gazpacho – a refreshing symphony of flavours and freshness that set the stage for what was to come. The skilfully crafted dishes are not just nourishment, but a delightful dance of flavours and textures that speaks volumes of the passion poured into every dish.



The ever-popular, Cornish Cod was chosen by both of us next (hey, who wants food FOMO?) and was a delightfully flavoursome dish comprised of soft, flaky cod elegantly perched on a bed of sammphire and adorned with basil pesto. It was clearly a dish that confidently straddled the line between comfort food and gourmet delicacy.

Not to be outshone, I must note that the classic Fish and Chips is a revelation here. Encased in a light, crisp batter, the fish is beautifully moist, pairing immaculately with hand-cut chips that boast the perfect crunch to fluffy ratio.

Vegetarian options, such as the Harissa Baked Aubergine and the Heirloom Tomato and Bocconcini Salad, are a testament to the fact that The Surprise celebrates all eaters.

The menu evolves with the seasons, celebrating the pub's commitment to sourcing only the freshest, locally-sourced ingredients. Paired with an extensive wine list that can delight both the casual drinker and the wine connoisseur, the dining experience is nothing short of stellar.



The crowning glory, however, is the surprisingly fabulous dessert menu. From the sinfully rich Sticky Toffee Pudding, oozing with warm toffee sauce, to the traditionally joyful Eton Mess, the dessert menu is an adventure unto itself. It's an indulgent ending to a divine culinary journey, a final note that leaves you savoring the experience long after you've left the premises.



Head chef Ondrej Hula with an impressive freshly caught fish

Effortlessly unassuming, The Surprise transcends its moniker, delivering a truly sensational dining experience that goes beyond a surprise. It is an open secret, a culinary haven in the heart of Chelsea. Whether you are a local, a Londoner from across town, or a visitor to the city, The Surprise is a gastronomic destination that should not be missed.

In the often frenetic, fast-paced whirl of London's dining scene, The Surprise offers not just food, but an experience – a delicious, hearty, and convivial reminder of why we love food and the joy it brings to our tables.