

## THE STRATFORD BRASSERIE



Something rather exciting seems to be happening in Stratford. Slap bang in the heart of the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, The Stratford has appeared – a 42-storey tower which is home to The Stratford Brasserie, The Stratford Hotel & Lofts, which integrates short and long-term stays and later in the year, fine-dining restaurant, Allegra.

It's certainly an ambitious product. Although there never seems a shortage of high-rises going up in the area, The Stratford is more than just another tower block. It's the vision of Harry Handelsman, who, we're told is credited with making Clerkenwell cool, kick-starting the King's Cross rejuvenation by restoring the [St Pancras Renaissance Hotel](#) and, together with Andre Balazs, making Marylebone fashionable with the opening of Chiltern Firehouse.

Quite the claim! And whether he'll be able to do the same for Stratford is still yet to be seen, but as first impressions go, we weren't half impressed.



It's situated directly outside Stratford International station (with direct trains from Kings Cross taking a mere 6 minutes) and has a stylish little terrace, perfect for soaking up those after work rays with a little aperitif. It's not quite finished yet, we're told they'll be adding a pizza oven and an oyster shucking station – ideal for a quick informal bite.

We were dining at The Stratford Brasserie on the ground floor, which shares the space with a triple-height lobby and ten-metre high fireplace. Designed to be a 'social hub' for the whole building, they've got a good team under their belt, including Ben Harrington in the kitchen, formerly of Soho House Group and Gordon Ramsay at Claridge's with the space itself designed by Space Copenhagen (the team behind NOMA and 11 Howard in New York).



The menu centres around light sharing dishes using seasonal British ingredients and is open for early morning breakfast meetings through to dinner. We kicked off with the most delicious array of holiday-esque starters. Fingers of sourdough topped with a grilled strip of romero pepper, dotted with chunks of salty anchovy, finished with salsa verde and lashings of olive oil – perhaps our favourite dish of the whole night and at £4 was an absolute BARGAIN. A generous helping of taramasalata was finished with a puddle of green oil which accompanied our radishes and seaweed salt. You can't ever go wrong with burrata, it's true, but this one came with the lovely addition of broad beans, grilled leeks and mint, making it more substantial and perfect for sharing.



Moving onto mains, it's all quite crowd-pleasing. There's a grill section with straight-up steaks, pasta, burgers and salads, so you're bound to find something you like. Although my guest felt like there weren't enough interesting options for veggies – something we're confident they'll work on as they get up and running. We went for the most beautifully presented plate of red prawn linguine – a buttery dish, rather peculiarly accompanied with chunks of turnip tops. After wolfing down a tiramisu between two we were keen to see the rooms upstairs.





As we mentioned, The Stratford Hotel & Lofts is a combination of short and long-term hotel rooms which have all been designed in a unique and industrial way, interspersed with communal sky gardens, where we're told they'll be hosting yoga classes and the like. We'd certainly be keen to spend the night.

Aside from the brasserie, there's a mezzanine bar where we went for a nightcap. The name, which sounds like a bit of an afterthought, really doesn't do it justice. In truth, it's a pretty glamorous lounge with similar vibes to the Southbank's Dandelyan (and it comes as no surprise that the bar team is led by Enrico Gonzato - formerly Dandelyan, Claridges and Beneath Driver Lane). It's a super slick operation and a destination in itself. We were very into our 'Ro'bust'a Move cocktail - a blend of Bacardi, toasted coffee, Islay smoked pineapple skin and bitters. My guest had an expertly made vodka martini which arrived with all the theatrical delivery you'd expect from a bar of this calibre. There will often be DJ's playing and it's open until 2am (good to know if you're in the area!)

Of course, all eyes will be on Allegra when that opens in September (headed up by former Chiltern Firehouse Patrick Powell) but until then, it's def worth checking out.