

NATURE OF THE EAST

At The Stratford Hotel's new Mezzanine bar, an inventive approach to food waste and some serious bartending credentials make for one of East London's most ambitious new openings, writes **Mike Gibson**



Photography by Sam A Harris

VIVI MARGARITA

A fun take on the classic margarita, this is made with a blend of tequilas, mezcal and Muyu Chinotto, an amaro made by iconic bartending team Monica Berg, Alex Kratena and Simone Caporale. Waste citrus fruits are used for the citrus element, while the rim is a house-made tajin-style seasoning made of salt, sugar and a blend of dehydrated waste fruit and vegetables for a deliciously savoury flavour.

INGREDIENTS

- 50ml house blend of agave spirits and Muyu Chinotto
- 30ml lacto-fermented citrus and honey
- Homemade tajin-style seasoning


Shake over ice and serve in a rocks glass with tajin rim, and a large ice cube.

THERE ARE A few bar openings that make you sit up and pay attention. Erik Lorincz's first solo venture after leaving the Savoy's American Bar, Kwānt, for example; or Adam Handling's bar Iron Stag in Hoxton, which has a drinks programme co-created by expert bartending duo Matt Whiley and Richard Woods.

If it doesn't seem so at first, the Mezzanine bar at the brand-new and ultra-ambitious Stratford Hotel should do just that. With industry luminaries Elias Yiallouris and Enrico Gonzato at the helm, this is an East London bar that comes by way of decades of Mayfair hotel bar pedigree.

There are new-school attitudes on display here, though. For a start, there's an attitude to waste that matches those bars who put sustainability front and centre: at the Mezzanine, there are almost no fresh garnishes, and a programme of house-made ingredients taken from the bar and the hotel's daily operations all but eliminates waste, while offering its bar team innovative ingredients to use in drinks.

Like its champagne bitters – redistilled from leftover champagne and infused with chardonnay or pinot noir grapes (which are then themselves reused) via a rotovap, to flavour its delicious martini (of which the vodka variant is creamier and richer than most I've tried before). Or the vibrant Jazzy 7, made with Banks 7 blended rum and yellow chartreuse, with a malty, cereal quality from dehydrated pistachio garnish and freshness from a syrup made from leftover apple and the stems of mint leaves.

Drinks here are tasty, and not overtly gimmicky, either. They're made with an East London ethos, but served with Mayfair panache. And there's enough evidence here to suggest that one of the capital's most ambitious new hotels has a bar programme to match – no mean feat, if you ask me. **f**
20 International Way, E20 1FD  Stratford





RO'BUST'A MOVE

This simple-looking drink hides a diversity of ingredients and flavours that pack a serious punch. It's built with coffee-infused rum, one of Danish producer Empirical Spirits' creations, as well as another house-made syrup – this time from toasted waste pineapple skins.

INGREDIENTS

- 35ml Bacardi Ocho infused with toasted waste coffee grounds
- 10ml Empirical Charlene McGee
- 25ml smoked pineapple syrup
- 20ml egg white
- 15ml lemon juice
- Lemon leaf essence

Shake all ingredients over ice and strain into a poco grande glass. Spray with lemon leaf essence and garnish with coffee beans.

BOULE- VARDIER

Taking a similar formula to the negroni, but replacing the gin with whiskey, the boulevardier is rich, smooth, aromatic and slightly sweet.

INGREDIENTS

- 40ml Saffron Whiskey blend
- 20ml Turmeric Ambrato
- 20ml Vanilla Bitter Campari
- Red spruce, to garnish

Stir over ice and strain into a poco grande glass.

