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# *The* GLOSSARY

ISSUE TEN  
AUTUMN 2019  
£5 WHERE SOLD

YOUR LONDON STYLE GUIDE

*THE ARTS  
& STYLE  
ISSUE*

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Emmanuel**  
The Hollywood star  
models the new  
beauty trends

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Frieze COMES TO TOWN & Zandra Rhode's *LONDON*



# Restaurant REVIEWS

## LIFE & SOUL

Restaurant writer *Hilary Armstrong* unearths the capital's fun, fabulous and flamboyant new openings

### Circolo Popolare

40-41 Rathbone Place, Fitzrovia, W1  
bigmammagroup.com

At any one time, a dozen people have their camera phones out. The photo opportunities come thick and fast. Virgin Mary in the foyer. Snap. 20,000 liquor bottles lining the walls. Snap. A tapestry *Mona Lisa*. Snap. Mermaid-tail cocktail glasses. Metre-long pizzas. XXL sundaes. Snap, snap, snap.

We're at Circolo Popolare in Fitzrovia, the second launch from Paris' Big Mamma Group whose London debut, Gloria in Shoreditch, was the hottest opening of the year – at least until Circolo came along. Where Gloria is all tasselled lamps, souvenir ceramics and terracotta planters borrowed from quaint Capri trattorie, Circolo sets the scene in Sicily – *al fresco* (sort of), with climbing roses, whitewashed stone booths, and a pair of oversized 'Moorish head' ceramic planters. It's la dolce vita with a dash of Dolce & Gabbana and a whisper of holiday romance.

At lunchtime, the 220-cover dining room is packed to the wisteria-hung rafters even before 1pm. At supper, the queue out of the door can stretch to 50 metres (though a new waiting list should put paid to that).



I'm not sure of the Italian for zeitgeist, but whatever it is, Circolo has captured it. The menu, built predominantly on pizza and pasta, is very affordable, for a start. Our classic margherita, characterised by an authentically blistered, puffed up *cornicione* and good-quality mozzarella di bufala, is, at £11, little more expensive than the equivalent at Pizza Express. 'Crab me by the Paccheri' (ahem), a house special, is a more extravagant option at £20, but is served under a cloche with typical Circolo theatre, and is a generous serving, packed with white crab meat and juicy mussels. There are limits to the kitchen's ability: lettuce cups with sea bass crudo, kiwi and dehydrated black olives ('A MUST' according to the menu's breathy copy) is slapdash.

Desserts are little more than a bit of fun. The high-rise 'Incomparable Lemon Pie', as seen at Gloria, is the best of the bunch. Our 'Meraviglioso', a 'mess' of sorts with whipped cream, nuts and meringue, is not actually that marvellous but let's not nitpick: it's fine. So too are churros, however parsimonious the sauce. I find myself in forgiving mode. Maybe it's the lambrusco. Surrounded by happy people, it's hard not to enjoy the party. One day, we may well look back on Circolo and wonder what all the fuss was about but, for now, it's *amore*.

**MEAL FOR TWO (WITH WINE):** £60  
**SIGNATURE DISHES:** 'The One and Only' carpaccio pizza; La Gran Carbonara served in a wheel of pecorino; Circolo 'OTT XXL' Sundae  
**WHAT TO DRINK:** Lambrusco



### SIREN

The Goring, 15 Beeston Place, Belgravia, SW1  
thegoring.com

The Goring, boring? Hardly! The venerable Belgravia hotel – it has a Royal Warrant, don't you know – has taken everybody by surprise with its maximalist new restaurant Siren, whose bold design incorporates comely mermaids, crystal lobsters, floral velvet and theatrical carved wooden thrones. Russell Sage Studio (The Fife Arms, Belmond Cadogan Hotel) has excelled itself. Even the waiters are costumed in bronze satin and midnight blue, pinned with intricate brooches purloined from an eccentric maiden aunt.

Siren is the family-run five-star's first new restaurant in over a century, so Jeremy Goring, great grandson of founder Otto R. Goring, has really gone for it, spending £4m on the conservatory extension with retractable roof, the bar, and a herb garden; not to mention the new kitchen, fit for the best seafood chef in the land, Nathan Outlaw, holder of two Michelin stars at his

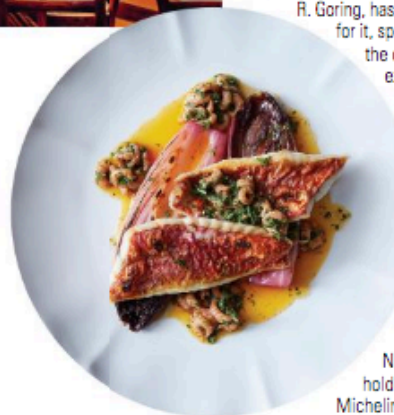
eponymous Cornwall restaurant.

The catch of the day is brought to us on a silver platter: Dooncastle oysters (the oyster aficionado's oyster of choice), a good-sized John Dory, a pair of handsome Dover sole and a red sea bream. We begin with two dishes from opposite ends of the flavour spectrum. Cured monkfish, dressed with yoghurt and fronds of fennel, is dainty and delicate, while cuttlefish black pudding, with cuttlefish pieces where a regular blood sausage might have rice or oats, is as close as it gets to carnivorous at Siren.

To follow, dramatically butterflied red mullet, still with its tail, easily carries the big flavours of charred red chicory and fiery devilled shrimp butter. It's a daring, delicious dish. Even beautiful Dover sole, somewhat overwhelmed by clotted cream sauce, can't compete.

We stick to a glass apiece of Bollinger from a magnum – perfect – but will make a return visit before the nights draw in for a Garden Negroni overlooking the lawn, the loveliest secret garden in London.

**MEAL FOR TWO (WITH WINE):** £140  
**SIGNATURE DISHES:** Cornish crab risotto; turbot, herbed and battered, with warm tartare sauce; lobster grilled over fire with herbs and garlic  
**WHAT TO DRINK:** The Garden Negroni



### ISLA

The Standard London, 10 Argyle Street, King's Cross, WC1  
standardhotels.com/london

In the days when the Camden Town Hall Annexe was still a local government office and not yet the epicentre of cool it is today, its 1970s brutalist beauty went cruelly unnoticed. Since hip hotel group The Standard took it on for their European debut, it's become a new London icon, distinguished by the glossy red exterior lift that whizzes guests up to the roof.

The rooftop restaurant from Michelin-star chef Peter Sanchez-Iglesias will be this autumn's hot ticket, but until then we have the whole ground floor to explore, with not one but two projects by rising star Adam Rawson. Rawson's a 'YBF' (Young British Foodies) chef of the year whose CV is a happy mix of high and low: Claridge's, Viajante, Peruvian Pachamama and burger chain Lucky Chip. He brings this wealth of experience into play at both 'dive bar' Double Standard (don't miss the burger) and all-day restaurant and lounge, Isla. Isla's menu of 'coastal cuisine' promises contemporary sharing plates, building from plant-forward assemblies to hulking aged beef chops. Crab, heaps of it, with Canarian *papas arrugadas* and seaweed is terrific with my fino-based Breakfast Quebranta cocktail (it comes with a cute slice of marmalade melba toast), as are slivers of Galician ox-ham that have all the funky intensity one expects of an older beast. Rawson never

passes up a chance to add another unexpected textural or visual detail: even simple panzanella is a flavour bomb. Desserts are gentler: toasted amaranth custard tart with blueberry sorbet is blissful.

Rawson's high impact dishes suit the space, dressed in 1970s fashion in keeping with the architecture. Its sexy glam rock side – the shag-pile wall and red lacquer tables, particularly – coexists with its homely one. Bookcases, easy chairs and reading lamps encourage one to settle in for the day. I will be back, and often. Note to restaurant designers: more 70s vibes please.

**MEAL FOR TWO (WITH WINE):** £100  
**SIGNATURE DISHES:** Crab, papas arrugadas, seaweed; aged beef chop, green peppercorn sauce  
**WHAT TO DRINK:** The Isla of White with seaweed-infused vermouth





**C**an a restaurant be too beautiful? It's a question I ponder at Bob Bob Cité, Russian restaurateur Leonid Shutov's sumptuous £25m sequel to Soho's Bob Bob Ricard located high on the third level of the 'Cheesegrater' building. No expense has been spared in creating a glittering, glamorous 21st-century hall of mirrors, free of 'City restaurant' cliché. So mesmerised am I by its dizzying, discombobulating beauty (and the LED ticker-tape display that scrolls hypnotically round the room), I can barely concentrate on the menu.

What saves Bob Bob Cité from style over substance is the value it places on genuine hospitality. Those legendary 'presser pour champagne' buttons at every table are more than a gimmick; they're an ice-breaker, a cue to have some fun (and order some champagne: the choice of large format bottles, from magnums to 6L Methusalehs is seriously impressive).

The same goes for the irresistibly camp 'in-flight' theme that informs the matchy-matchy tableware, the waiters' navy jackets and the two-tone faux-leatherette leather banquettes. On a practical note, the two dining rooms – one red, one blue – are all-booth for privacy and there are three private dining 'suites' each with a reception room for drinks (apropos of which, the wine list is excellent with many smart French appellations available by the glass).

It's not obvious at first sight that Bob Bob Cité is a traditional French brasserie, albeit one in contemporary disguise. Chef Eric Chavot is one of the greats, having worked for Pierre Koffmann, Nico Ladenis and Marco Pierre White, before



## BOB BOB CITÉ

The Leadenhall Building, 122 Leadenhall Street, City of London, EC3  
[bobbobcite.com](http://bobbobcite.com)



winning two Michelin stars of his own at The Capital. My initial impulse is to feast on caviar, lobster and oysters like a latter-day tsarina. In fact, a first course of oysters 'gratinée' with black truffle hollandaise is an unappealingly briny misfire. I should know better: Chavot is the master of French bourgeois cooking, as evidenced by beefy, Comté-laden French onion soup (made to *la mère* Chavot's recipe apparently) and a glossy 'bob bob cité'-branded chicken pie infused with tarragon.

A brasserie rises and falls on the quality of its side orders: Chavot's 'chunky fries', heritage tomato salad and truffled pomme purée pass with flying colours. To finish, understated baba au rhum and *le flotante* prove there is no need to gild the lily. Bob Bob Cité is shiny enough already.

**MEAL FOR TWO (WITH WINE):** £100  
**SIGNATURE DISHES:** French onion soup; *Le 'pie' de poulet*; baba au rhum  
**WHAT TO DRINK:** 25 vintages of Château d'Yquem; 50 of Armagnac



## Brasserie of Light

Selfridges, 400 Oxford Street, Westminster, W1  
[brasserie-of-light.co.uk](http://brasserie-of-light.co.uk)

**A**monumental crystal-studded Pegasus soars high above the heads of mortals at Selfridges' Brasserie of Light. Beneath the awe-inspiring sculpture – Damien Hirst's largest scale artwork in Britain – diners with canary-yellow shopping bags tucked beneath their tables sip 'Wild G&Ts' and eat king crab and vegan rice-paper rolls. What happened to the days when a visit to a department store 'cafeteria' meant a scone, a plate of sandwiches, and a milkshake if you'd been good?

Selfridges, in partnership with Richard Caring's Caprice Holdings and designer Martin Brudnizki, have consigned those dark days to retail history. Here on the first floor of the 'Best Department Store in the World', refurbished to the tune of £300m, all is light. Bright light streams in through triple-height windows and bounces off mirrored tables, etched glass and shimmering gold-dusted desserts. Even the doorman's jacket sparkles in the night.

For all the eye-popping excess, the food and drink at Brasserie of Light is secretly rather sensible. Sure, there are some showpieces geared towards

the 'Gram – the 'Pegasus afternoon tea' in its billowing cloud of dry ice, for example – but the wider focus is on the contemporary luxury one expects of Caprice Holdings. That might mean truffled scrambled eggs or buckwheat and quinoa granola with coconut 'yoghurt' at a breakfast meeting; it might mean a light lunch of saffron risotto or tuna carpaccio while one decides 'yes' or 'no' to those Gucci trainers; or it might be a decadent evening of cocktails in a room positively fizzing with energy. Burrata salad with smoked tomatoes and aubergine, and crisp fried chicken dumplings with a little truffle are two dishes worth returning for at any hour.

Note that the Brasserie of Light can be accessed via a separate entrance on Duke Street, thus allowing it to open outside Selfridges' opening hours.

**MEAL FOR TWO (WITH WINE):** £100  
**SIGNATURE DISHES:** Avocado and sesame fried chicken with coriander; lobster spaghetti; Pegasus pie  
**WHAT TO DRINK:** The Queen of Time, a champagne cocktail named after the sculpture above Selfridges' entrance



## ALLEGRA

Manhattan Loft Gardens,  
20 International Way, Stratford, E20  
[allegra-restaurant.com](http://allegra-restaurant.com)

**I**f anyone is going to persuade London's beautiful people to leave Mayfair and jump in a cab to the far-flung, once-fictional postcode of E20 – you might know it as *EastEnders* Walford – it's Harry Handelsman, the visionary developer behind Chiltern Firehouse. Handelsman's latest project is Manhattan Loft Gardens, an ambitious 42-storey tower that looms over East London's Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and houses the new Stratford Hotel and its seventh-floor restaurant Allegra.

Allegra would be a destination restaurant wherever it were located. It boasts design by Space Copenhagen (Noma, 11 Howard), a walk-in wine room and a star chef in Irishman Patrick Powell, formerly of Chiltern Firehouse. We got a pre-launch preview of Allegra and were roundly impressed. One taste of his French onion soup and it's clear that Powell is a chef who cooks food to be enjoyed, not merely admired. Powell's spent the last year honing dishes for both the restaurant and terrace (where he'll be cooking over fire), establishing in-house bakery, butchery and charcuterie programmes, and building relationships with suppliers such as Full Circle Farms in West Sussex.

His menus carry a strong sense of the seasons; 'vegetables from the farm' with fresh cheese and truffle is a dish that will never be the same twice. But if there's a single dish that will persuade wavering west Londoners to venture over, then it will surely be the glossy smoked eel pie with parsley sauce, a nostalgic nod to East End culinary tradition. E20 ain't what it used to be.

**MEAL FOR TWO (WITH WINE):** £150  
**SIGNATURE DISHES:** Whole roasted chicken stuffed with wild garlic sausage served over two courses

**WHAT TO DRINK:** A twist on the Sbagliato, with plum-infused fino

