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THE RESTAURANT

Cache Cache

A SURREPTITIOUS SPEAKEASY OPENS
UNDERNEATH COVENT GARDEN

Words: Anna Solomon



‘Cache-cache’ is the French name for hide and seek, and sure enough, this restaurant-bar is a challenge to find. The game starts in Covent Garden; Cache Cache is hidden underneath the piazza behind an unmarked door. The bouncer leads you through a nondescript room and through another door to reveal a space covered with reflective tiles: you have arrived.

Once inside, you’re transported to an F. Scott Fitzgerald novel. Cache Cache’s aesthetic is bare-brick walls and copper pipework mixed with leather armchairs and blood-red drapes. A DJ pumps out hypnotic playlists (accompanied by a bongo player) and a heady aroma hangs heavy – it’s been curated exclusively by French perfumery *Fragrance Du Bois*.

By the way, there are no pictures of Cache Cache’s interior on the restaurant’s website, nor on its private Instagram page, so this description is all you’re going to get unless you check it out for yourself – a savvy marketing ploy. Oh, and reservations can only be made through WhatsApp.

If Russian-born general manager Ali Barchman is about, he’ll likely show you to your table, or at least engage you at some point in the evening. He’s a bit of a Mayfair legend, mainly for his eccentric fashion sense: the de facto compere

sometimes, inexplicably, appears to guests wearing an African mask.

The menu, steered by Enrico Lozza using skills he learned as head chef at *Busaba Eathai*, is short and sweet and slightly eye-watering. It bursts with Asian flavours – soy, sesame, ginger, chili and ponzu – with a sprinkling of truffle and caviar to match the price point. You’ll also find Latin twists, such as the black angus carpaccio with jalapeno.

Diners choose from small plates (such as crispy wagyu beef gyoza, crispy tuna tartare, and passionfruit oysters), fish (Chilean sea bass or Octopus tentacles), and meat (ribeye or pork belly anticucho, which is a Peruvian skewer dish).

These are paired with intoxicating cocktails like the *Princess Cache*, which consists of Highlands gin infused with butterfly tea, *Velvet Falernum* liqueur, pineapple juice and lemon juice; or the *Coca Leaf Negroni*: Roku gin, Campari, *Cocchi Americano* and coca leaf liqueur.

From the bongo player to the masked host, Cache Cache is a dreamlike experience. This might be London’s most secretive speakeasy, but some things are too good to keep to yourself. ■

5 The Piazza, WC2E, cachecacheclub.com