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THE RESTAURANT

Tattu London

THE NEW, EXPERIENCE-LED RESTAURANT ELEVATING CHINESE FUSION FOOD TO AN ART FORM

Words: Anna Solomon

Food and theatre. Yes or no? The debate continues to divide critics. Should food speak for itself? Are cloches of dry ice just smokescreens (see what I did there?) to distract from mediocre dishes? Should we simply consign ourselves to eating our meat and vegetables and ruminating upon the quality of the broiling, baking and braising? Forgive me, but, *yawnnn*. Of course, there will always be a place for white tablecloths but, seriously, what's life without a little fun?

If Tattu, the high-end Chinese restaurant newly-opened on Denmark Street, is one thing, it's fun, which seems to rub some people up the wrong way. One particular food critic, with typically food-critic hauteur, dubbed it 'somewhere the Kardashians would enjoy'. Well, Mrs-I'm-above-having-candyfloss-in-my-cocktail, maybe the Kardashians would enjoy Tattu because it's a rollicking good time. And would that, by which I mean having fun in a restaurant, be the worst thing in the world?

Tattu is housed on the sixth floor of the Outernet building, a new music venue, office space and hotel, which perhaps acts as a sign of what is to come for the historically shabby area that surrounds Tottenham Court Road station. To access Tattu you take a lift, which opens into a bar area.

To the sound of 'lounge house' beats (I didn't identify the genre, the much-cooler-than-me maître d', Yiannis, did) and looking over a part of town that's increasingly *Blade Runner*-esque, we sampled some cocktails. The Peep Show Royale (champagne, mango and passion fruit) tasted like a melted fruit sorbet; the Maohatten (Sazerac Rye, Vermouth and oolong) was poured, consommé-like, from a glass teapot. Lots of people seemed to be ordering the Skull Candy, which comes in a smoking cranium-shaped glass, and gave me the first inkling of Tattu's flair for the dramatic.

The concept of Tattu, as Yiannis explained, is that each area of the restaurant is protected by a traditional Chinese animal – koi, phoenix, tiger and dragon – with corresponding décor. Overhead, there's a huge cherry-blossom installation (great Instagram fodder); elsewhere, pagoda-style beams,

blue-and-white porcelain, and Chinese hanging lamps all contrast with lots of shiny marble.

The food, like the décor, is very fusion, taking the best of China and Japan and throwing in European notes like coriander and aioli. It comes out when it's ready, but we follow a loose chronology of dim sum, small plates and large plates.

Dim sum: we went for the wagyu ribeye dumpling and the Iberico pulled pork wor tip. The former is beetroot red, reminiscent of a red velvet cupcake, which actually signals chilli heat; the latter plumpy packages of flavour garnished with coleslaw, chilli oil and five-spice black vinegar.

Next we tried sugary-salty crispy squid – exceptionally aromatic and beautifully presented, too, topped with green chilli, pomegranate and mint. The black cod croquettes, meanwhile, cracked under the teeth, as croquettes should, to release delicate seaside flavours.

The char siu honey-glazed monkfish was delicious; medallions of fish drizzled with a caramel orange sauce. The wok-fired 'angry bird' – a plate of bright-red chicken, flavoured with roasted chilli peppers, cashews and sesame honey soy – is also a must. The richness of the food was tempered by a mineral-tasting Bodega Colomé from Torrontés, Argentina, paired by Tattu's masterly in-house sommelier.

By this point, you'll be stuffed. But take my advice and find room for dessert. It's delightful, especially the miniature cherry blossom tree of candy floss and filigree chocolate, which 'grows' out of a chocolate soil and is served on dry ice that billows onto the table in mesmerising wreaths. We were also brought a fishbowl of panna cotta under a layer of aquamarine jelly on which swam moulded milk chocolate koi – an absolute work of art.

To call Tattu Kardashian-grade, which implies superficiality, is click-bait and unsubstantiated. There's serious substance behind the style, plus, the whole thing is a rip-roaring experience. Give me edible flowers and chocolate fish any day of the week. The more gels and foams and smoke the better!

The Now Building Rooftop, Outernet, WC2H 0LA, tattu.co.uk

