

A taste of the world

In 2021, celebrated French chef Cyril Lignac opened the first international iteration of his Bar des Prés in Mayfair. And boy, are we grateful

WORDS: LUCY FRITH



Anyone who knows their food will likely agree that London belongs to a cluster of world cities leading the way in modern gastronomy. But perhaps city folk have grown so accustomed to the flurry of high-class cuisine on our doorstep, we could be accused of taking it for granted. High time, then, that we take a moment to be grateful for world-class chefs who chose our capital as home for their restaurants – bringing even more innovation, flavour combinations, gourmet techniques and epicurean pizzazz conveniently within zone one.

One such chef is the formidable Cyril Lignac – the French household name and master chef behind Saint-Germain stalwart Bar des Prés – who opened the London iteration on Albemarle Street in May 2021. ‘I have always adored London,’ he tells *Brummell*. ‘Its culture, its energy and lifestyle

seemed so fitting for my first international restaurant here.’ Lucky us. Bar des Prés brings a taste of its Parisian counterpart to the heart of Mayfair, with a unique menu that Lignac says ‘invites guests to travel through cuisines, marrying French know-how and Japanese exoticism in a lively, cosmopolitan atmosphere’.

Much like the Paris Bar des Prés, the London restaurant, which is set over two floors, oozes Parisian glamour and charm, including a dining room that features the same plush, peacock-embroidered upholstery, alongside neutral tones, soft discreet lighting and central dining bar, made from Giallo Reale marble – a sleek focal point for diners spending an evening here.

An immersive subterranean lounge bar is nestled below the restaurant with an air of Parisian seduction. Choose from comfortable

lounge chairs or the red velvet bar stools for your spot to rest and enjoy one of the restaurant’s inventive cocktails, all served in bespoke glassware. Inspired by the original Parisian menu, but with a lively London twist, diners can expect such delights as the Albemarle spritz, using Ciroc vodka, Suze, yuzu sake, elderflower, lavender and champagne. Cheers.

If that hasn’t whetted your appetite, then wait until you see Lignac’s menu. Showcasing seasonal ingredients, refined meat dishes – such as the satay fillet steak – are certain to make your mouth water, while elegant seafood dishes such as tuna tartare, caviar and sushi plates – including salmon with avocado, jalapeño and sriracha – will leave you spoiled for choice. ‘My favourite dish is my crunchy galette with crab, madras curry and avocado,’ says Lignac. ‘It’s a very simple yet creative dish. The galette brings a delicate crunchy note, while the avocado coats the crab with its roundness, subtly enhanced by a madras curry mayonnaise.’

Behind the menu is a wealth of knowledge, collected by Lignac from around the world. He says one of his biggest inspirations is having had the chance to travel, meet new people and discover new ingredients and cooking techniques. ‘My experience in Morocco, for example, gave me the desire to work more with spices, and time in Japan made me better understand fermentation and seasoning with mirin.’

‘Of course, my cuisine is rooted in the French terroir,’ he continues. ‘But to travel, and constantly feed on the influences of other culinary cultures, is a wonderful source of inspiration.’ Even more flattering, then, that he chose London for Bar des Prés. Lucky us, indeed. ●

Read more from Cyril Lignac online at brummellmagazine.co.uk. Bar des Prés, 16 Albemarle Street, Mayfair W1S 4HW; bardespres.com

Above the luxurious dining room at Bar des Prés exudes Parisian elegance. Below the restaurant’s chef owner Cyril Lignac

