

FOOD AND DRINK WHAT'S ON

LA FERME



■ Meaty and flavoursome fish at La Ferme in Farringdon
Pictures: CONTRIBUTED



A fresh French feast for Spring in Farringdon

It's good to escape. A city such as London, while full of perks, can overwhelm the senses. People who have lived here for a long time understand the relief of finding an oasis of calm in the midst of the buzz.

I'm not talking about your local pub on the green or café next to the park. The rare find is a restaurant that can transport you, even from the edge of a busy street.

Such a place is La Ferme. A stone's throw from the foodie paradise of Exmouth Market, François Guerin and Jimmy-elie Maury opened La Ferme in 2015, having found success with their market stalls. Their seasonal produce sourced from French farmers sets them apart and has made them a firm favourite in the area.

Invited down to try their new spring menu, they both greet me when I arrive and François takes me

ZOE PASKETT finds a way to escape London to a farm in France without leaving the city

through the deli to my table in the main restaurant.

The interior space is fitting for its name – la ferme means the farm – with chickens and vegetables and ivy draped from the shelves. It is simple, rustic and, a second later when the music comes on, I truly start to believe I'm in France.

After the obligatory introductory glass of wine, the starters come. Le Petit Pois (£6.50) comes as a bed of buckwheat, onto which François pours a pea velouté. The combination of the soup, crunchy grains, verbena and wasabi is like nothing I've experienced before.

But the masterpiece is L'Asperge – an artwork of spring asparagus and rhubarb on top of asparagus

and cumin mousse, sprinkled with pistachios (£8.50). Just as beautiful to look at as it is to eat, it's a mixture of sweet and sharp that left the bowl entirely scraped clean.

The mains: Le Canard (£25), roasted duck breast served with espelette pepper, chard, shallots, a jus and the brightest green chard sauce I've ever seen; Le Maigre (£19), meagre fish, artichoke heart, anchovy, beef heart tomato and cherry tomatoes cooked in olive oil and rosemary.

The duck breast is tender and pink and topped with a rice

cracker, an unusual but welcome addition to a delicious dish. But the fish wins for me – meaty and flavoursome, similar to bass, next to wonderfully sweet tomatoes.

There was a bit of a wait between the mains and dessert, but it let me sink into the atmosphere of the place. I can imagine that is enhanced by the weekly Gypsy jazz nights every Monday.

There's a tasty crème brûlée to finish off the meal (£7), by which point I'm a little reluctant to return to London. There's a friendly feel to La Ferme, and it's not just François – I'd be happy to sit at my table by the window with a book and dream of the French countryside.

La Ferme, 102-104 Farringdon Road, EC1R 3EA. laferme london.com

FINDING NEVERLAND

Remember the iconic Hook food fight scene? If you've always wondered what Neverland's imaginary food tastes like, you may be about to find out. The Queen of Hoxton's Summer Rooftop presents Bangarang, the place to be for those who feel a bit like Peter Pan: forever young and hungry at heart - however not exclusively.

In this land where dreams are born and time is never planned, all the lost children in London will indulge in a fantasy customised Neverland BBQ Menu to enjoy on a table alongside their fellow shipmates. Don't worry, the food here is more imaginative than imaginary.

Sink your teeth into their Peter Pan Prawns, served with chilli, garlic, lemon and parsley butter, or Never Never Land Ribs, marmalade glazed



baby back pork ribs. Love all animals (even the fearsome crocodile) and prefer a veggie option? Bangarang Burger is a veggie burger handmade with crispy lentil, fontina cheese and cannellini beans. The Queen of Hoxton will

provide all the over 18 lost children with a fancy cocktail menu. Put down that bottle of rum and sip on a Mermaid on the Beach, made with coconut rum, peach liquor, vodka, orange liquor, orange and cranberry juice. Or surrender to the spell of the Green-Eyed Fairy, containing melon, elderflower, lemon juice, creole bitters and Absinthe and garnished with its own fairy.

There's a few workshops to teach you how to make your own mermaid crown (June 3) or Neverland terrarium (May 20).

At the end of summer, The Queen of Hoxton will host a special party to say goodbye to those usual two weeks of warm weather with a food fight party. No food waste, it's just neon paint.

queenofhoxton.com
Stefania Sarrubba



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