

Take a step into Wonderland: A Review of The Roseleaf, Leith

Over recent years, Leith has become a bit of a culinary treasure trove for those looking to escape the hubbub of Edinburgh's city centre.

Quirky and refreshingly unpretentious eateries have been popping up left, right and centre – so much so that knowing where to start can be a battle in itself. I discovered this recently after moving to the area myself, and decided to turn to some locals for advice.

“If there's one place you must try,” they agreed. “It's The Roseleaf.”

A self-confessed foodie, I decided to head down to the Shore and see what all the fuss was about.



On first glance, the red sandstone exterior gives little away.

Stepping inside the Roseleaf, however, you begin to understand how Alice must have felt as she tumbled down the rabbit hole and found herself immersed in Wonderland.

The owners have taken the theme of Mad Hatter's tea party and run with it, and it's every bit as wonderful and bizarre as you could hope. Trinkets glisten from every alcove.

Mismatched, 'pre-loved' furniture garnish the bar. Vintage hats hang from hooks, suspended in mid-air as a typewriter sits proudly upon the window ledge. There's a fairytale-esque spirit about the place; strangely, it works. The eccentricity continues from the décor to the dining experience itself; even

the menus come disguised within vintage copies of the National Geographic!

With affectionately-named offerings such as Mac Attack (macaroni cheese) and Cheeky Swine (slow-braised pork cheek), you could be forgiven for wondering whether the bistro is guilty of falling down the style-over-substance route that so many businesses succumb to. Thankfully this is not the case with The Roseleaf; the quality of the food is exceptional.

It's fresh, inventive and colourful. Better still, there's something to suit everyone with a range of menus, from fabulous brunch options (served until 5pm) to cracking, seasonal dinners and a drinks menu which ranges from artisan coffees to malt whiskies and of course the renowned 'pot-tails' (that's cocktails served in a teapot, FYI...).

For those looking for something sweet, it's also worth sampling some of the dessert options, baked on premises – be warned though, the gravity-defying carrot cake will almost certainly leave you in a happy food trance, particularly when washed down with a home-made raspberry lemonade or red cappuccino!

It's clear even from the website that The Roseleaf's aim is to make its customers feel at home. "Some say we are a bar, cafe, gastro pub, restaurant or bistro...We'd like to think we are a wee bit of something for everyone." The staff are keen to carry this attitude forward, and there's a casual air to the bar which makes it very easy to like.

Whether you pop in for a coffee and cake or a three-course meal, you'll almost certainly end up staying longer than planned...only problem with that? So will everyone else! All the more reason to book ahead, I'd say...