

Beer and fine dining on the menu this month

It's no exaggeration to say that I've a wonderful father.

The lovely Lawrie could never do enough for his only darling child. Even at my grand old age a quick call to daddy can guarantee a taxi ride, shelf up putting or a reliable shoulder to cry on. I've often wondered how and when I could possibly repay him. Well that day recently came with an invitation to Stewart Brewing, aka: Heaven in Loanhead.

Whilst obviously situated in an industrial estate, the largest craft brewery in Edinburgh has a beautiful set up. With a rather pretty outside seating area, a cool bar and pizza eatery and shop where you can buy beer and a funky t-shirt at the same time, it's a great place to visit. We begin with a welcome beer. We were there to try three new offerings, Beinn Brewing, inspired by Scotland's scenic landscape, that will be stocked in Lidl at the bargain price from £1.59 a can. Dad opts for the Beinn Hazy (New England IPA) and not to my surprise, requests one of the cans on display rather than chilled, as he wants to 'taste it'. Old school, but he has a point. I opt for the straight from the fridge Citrus Belter, conditioned with orange zest delivering a delightful, refreshing hint of fruitiness.



And then we're onto the grand tour. I've been shown around wine caves and whisky bonds where silent magic is undoubtedly happening but seeing the action of a brewery is infinitely more exciting. Stewart Brewing have adorned their huge beer tanks (probably not the technical term) with some fabulous artwork. The hiss of the gas and industrial pipes are something of a turn-on, even for an almost beer virgin like me. Stewart Brewing have an eye-catching graphic colourful branding and it was quite something to see the blank cans piled high on pallets waiting to be adorned with their groovy labels.

Back to the hospitality area and the pizzas are wafting their deliciousness from the wood fired oven. Head Brewer Craig Scotland takes us through a tasting and his enthusiasm and knowledge of his craft is absolutely infectious. The beer is cracking and the pizzas divine! They even served a marshmallow and condensed milk dessert pizza. Genius, and perfect with Tropical Trossachs, a pale ale with sweet pineapple and ripe mango.

Should you buy Stewart's new Beinn Brewing Lidl beers? Absolutely. Ought you to head for an evening of beer and pizza in Loanhead? Book it now. It's the perfect spot for a night out with pals or a work jolly. You can even book a session to make your very own beer. I've some handyman jobs needing done round the house and it could very well be the tradesman/dad's reward.

stewartbrewing.co.uk



Aurora

Back in the day the Edinburgh restaurant scene was defined by three things: Location times three. Happily Kirsty and Phil's philosophy no longer applies and it's heartening to see the usually reserved folks of the Burgh not only accepting hidden gems but rejoicing in the eliteness of finding them. Aurora is such a place. Situated on the unlikely Great Junction Street this cosy and charming small restaurant is causing quite a stir.

Rightly so. At a recent dinner I was invited to try their six-course tasting menu with matching wines. In my experience 'twas often the case that tasting menus were all very lovely but the atmosphere deadly dull. You definitely can't say that about Aurora. They were playing Luther Vandross at one point, an element of the evening I'd return for alone. Chef Patron Kamil Witek has put together a menu of astonishing accomplishment and imagination.



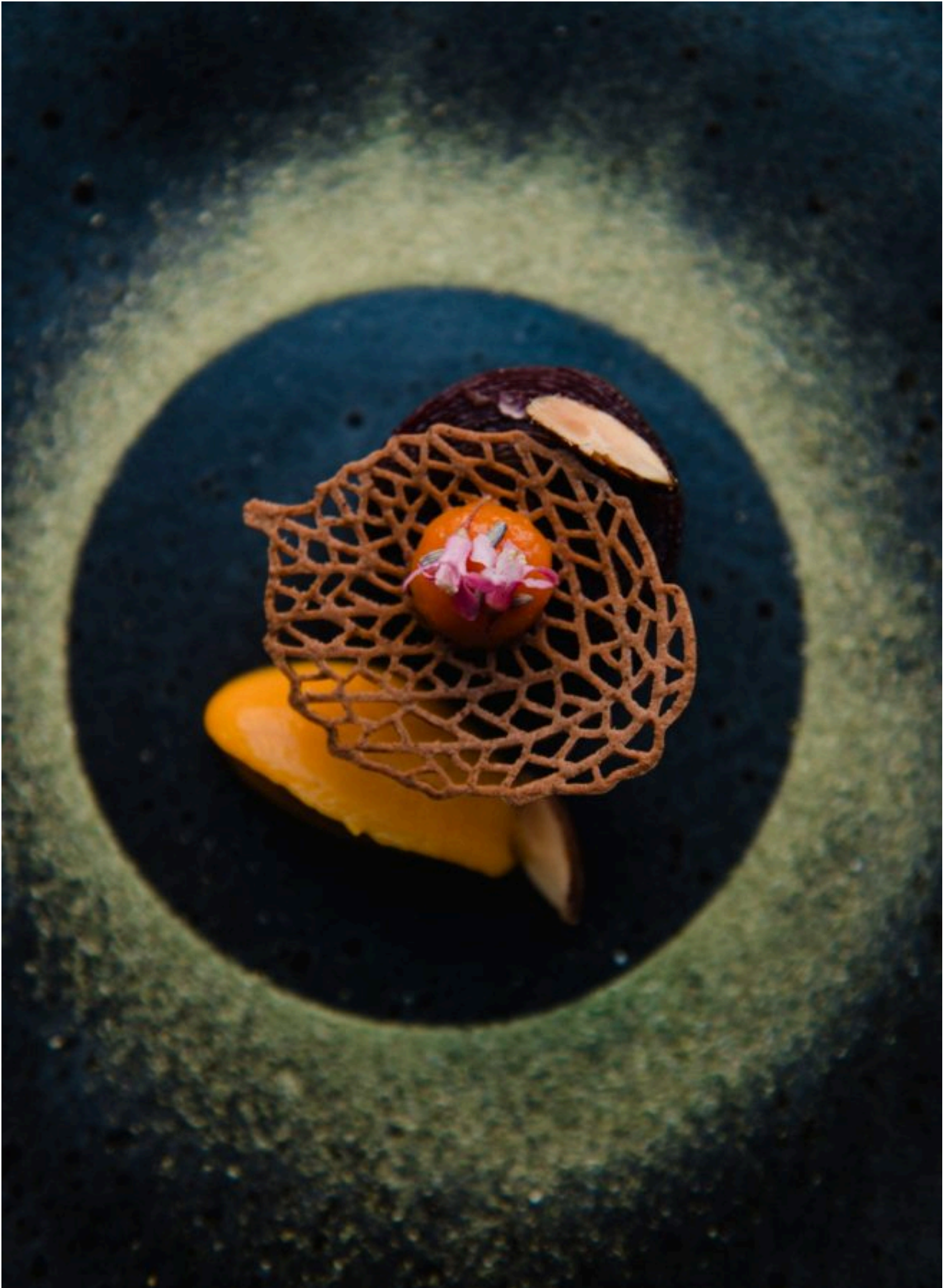
Chef Patron Kamil Witek
Natch, there's a plant-based option but both menus are interchangeable. Cesar our sommelier presents some of the most complex, but delicious, wines I've tasted including some natural and orange wines. The dishes are small but satisfying, each clearly involving much thought and experimentation. Whilst the presentation is exquisite the service comes with a relaxed air of cheerfulness. How refreshing. My favourite dishes were Ox Tail, XO Sauce, Daikon, Asparagus and Aged Carnaroli Rice, Saffron, Liquorice.

Sadly I've not much improved from my lack of concentration in

the classroom. The delightful server was clearly instructing us to eat the Amuse Bouche in one. Yours truly managed to squirt quail egg yolk over not only myself but at least one other dining companion. It's just as well fine dining has become more relaxed and evening clothes machine washable.

Edinburgh folks love a discovery and Aurora is definitely the restaurant I've heard the most about through my discerning dining chums so book now and be one of the first to know.

auroraedinburgh.co.uk



beetroot / carrot / almonds / vegetable ash / lavender from
the Spring tasting menu
187 Great Junction Street

0131 554 5537

Innis and Gunn recently hosted a Beer Hall at The Biscuit Factory and a good time was had by all. "I'll have a pint, but will probably only drink half of it." I requested my brewery chum. "You downed that like a true Leith Docker," he replied some twenty minutes later. The beer was flowing and the band were great. They even did live band karaoke, the first candidate belting out Man, I feel Like a Woman by Shania Twain. Thinking I might make karaoke cool, I pondered having a pop at Close To Me by The Cure but fortunately for everyone concerned my taxi arrived promptly.