

A culinary revelation: Cardinal Restaurant opens in Edinburgh

Nestled in Eyre Place, Cardinal, the brainchild of culinary maestro Tomáš Gormley, is poised to take the Edinburgh dining scene by storm. His first solo venture since splitting with his former business partner, Sam Yorke, they were awarded a Michelin star in 2023 for Heron in Leith.

In 2023, the duo opened Skua in Stockbridge, Edinburgh, which Gormley now operates as a solo venture, after leaving Heron in 2023.

Gormley, was shortlisted for 'Chef to Watch' in 2023's Estrella Damm National Restaurant Awards; included in CODE's '30 Under 30' in hospitality for 2023/24; and was listed as number 28 in The List's Hot 100 in 2023.

Gormley's prowess in the kitchen is palpable from the moment

you step into this intimate, 24-cover fine dining establishment. Gormley likes dark spaces, and like his other restaurant, Skua, the walls are painted pitch black. Upon entering Cardinal, one is immediately struck by the allure of its dark ambience, reminiscent of a theatrical setting. The walls serve as a canvas for the modern artwork adorning them, courtesy of Art in Healthcare. However, be prepared to enlist the aid of a mobile phone torch to peruse the meticulously crafted menu, which offers a 13-course tasting extravaganza in the evenings and a more concise yet equally tantalising lunch menu on Fridays and Saturdays.

Priced at £110 with an additional £85 for expertly paired drinks, which feature a natural-led wine list that focuses on European producers that use biodynamic and regenerative practices curated by General Manager Ben Mansour, the dining experience at Cardinal is undeniably a splurge. Yet, every penny is justified by the culinary symphony that unfolds with each dish. From the emphasis on fermenting and pickling to the artistry of ingredients cooked over Cardinal's bespoke wood-fired barbecue, every aspect of the menu is a testament to Gormley's dedication to gastronomic excellence. You won't be disappointed.

What truly sets Cardinal apart is its unwavering commitment to accommodating dietary restrictions without compromising on flavour or presentation. As someone with seafood allergies, I was particularly impressed by Gormley's ability to curate a bespoke dining experience that rivalled that of my dining companion.

The journey through Cardinal's menu is a sensory delight, with each dish meticulously crafted to captivate both the palate and the imagination. From the ethereal "ethical fois gras", which is actually duck-liver pate to the succulent Iberico pork cheek served in oyster-shaped porcelain dishes, every bite is a revelation.

While there may have been one moment of envy as the meaty halibut in vin jaune sauce was presented to my dining companion, perhaps the only dish where I felt 'cheated' was my substituted sweet koji carrot, with white asparagus, celeriac and onion, which while delicious, I'm not sure it quite lived up to Jess' experience in terms of texture.

The culinary crescendo of the menu however reached its peak with the theatrical presentation of sirloin and black peppercorn emulsion, complete with a mesmerising pouring of rendered beef tallow, which Gormley theatrically pours over our dish to cut the sauce. We're both slightly alarmed as he reaches for what we thought initially he was pouring melted candle but it turns out to be melted beef tallow.

Dessert at Cardinal is a fitting finale to the symphony of flavours that precedes it. We enjoy granita, which you're encouraged to flavour and customise accordingly with a few drops from a selection of home-made oils, including Pine made from Douglas Fir; a seasonal, flowering current (F.C.); and a preserved lemon syrup, made from lemons which the pastry chef has brought back from her home in Italy, and which she tells us took up 15kg of her suitcase (that's what you call dedication to the core); indulgent quenelles of Neapolitan ice cream and a delicate Hibiscus and Rose jelly pastille, followed by a Lavender Caramel, Beremel shortbread with Irish Seagreens, and a tart Jammy Dodger sandwiched together with orange sea buckthorn. All thoroughly enjoyable.

Beyond the culinary delights, Cardinal is a testament to attention to detail, from the curated wine list to the handcrafted stoneware from Samuel Sparrow, the beautiful cherry wood bowls hand-carved by Daniel Wester, and even the multi-coloured tactile butter knives, which are pieces of art themselves that elevate the dining experience to new heights.

Cardinal is more than just a restaurant; it's an experience. Whether for a special date night – though forget muttering

sweet nothings, as the tables are too close together – or an unforgettable culinary journey, a visit to Cardinal is guaranteed to leave a lasting impression.

So, heed the call and embark on a gastronomic adventure unlike any other. Everyone should commit the Cardinal sin just once in their life.

Cardinal
14 Eyre Place
Edinburgh, EH3 5EP

www.cardinal.scot

Opening Hours:
Wednesday to Saturday, 6-8pm

From 5 April:
Wednesday and Thursday, 6-8pm
Friday and Saturday, 12-1.45pm / 6-8pm

























