

ASKR in Leith – where culinary excellence meets cosy charm

A Culinary Gem in Leith: Discovering ASKR

Leith, with its burgeoning food scene, has long been a go-to for discerning diners, but few places encapsulate the essence of fine dining like ASKR. Tucked away on Constitution Street but equally accessible on the tram line, this intimate 26-seat restaurant offers a dining experience that is both sophisticated and welcoming. Helmed by the talented Chef Dan Ashmore, ASKR stands out not only for its coal-fired cooking but also for its commitment to using local produce and inventive techniques that transform simple ingredients into culinary masterpieces.

Meet the Chef: Dan Ashmore's Journey

Dan Ashmore's culinary journey is nothing short of impressive. Beginning his career at just 15, Dan has honed his skills in some of the UK's most prestigious kitchens. From his early days at the Michelin-starred Fischers at Baslow Hall to his time at the acclaimed The Square in London, and later at Edinburgh's Number One and The Pompadour by Galvin, Dan's experience is extensive. His leadership at these establishments earned him accolades, including 3 AA Rosettes and a Michelin Plate. After a stint as Executive Chef for Scotland at Gordon Ramsay Restaurants, Dan returned to Edinburgh, joining the Dean Banks Group, where he continues to

push culinary boundaries at ASKR.

A Cosy and Stylish Escape

Walking into ASKR, you're immediately struck by its charm. The compact space is tastefully decorated with an impressive artwork in the bar area. Despite arriving at ASKR drenched from a sudden downpour, the warmth of the welcome from Rich, the front-of-house manager, quickly brightened my spirits. Rich, who previously ran the much-loved Field before the pandemic, brings a wealth of experience and a personal touch that makes you feel instantly at home.

ASKR's philosophy revolves around sustainability and zero waste, evident in their creative use of fermentation. The bar is adorned with Kilner jars filled with house-made concoctions like rose syrups and strawberry top syrups, which are used in both cocktails and dishes. It's this attention to detail and commitment to reducing waste that sets ASKR apart.



The Menu: A Journey Through Flavour

ASKR's menu is thoughtfully divided into four sections: bar snacks and sharing plates, traditional starters, mains, and desserts. We began our evening with a couple of cocktails that perfectly showcased the restaurant's ingenuity. The *Sunshine on Leith* is a refreshing take on a negroni, infused with Limoncello, while the *Discarded Pineapple* sour uses pineapple trimmings to create a tangy, waste-not-want-not drink. These were accompanied by flatbreads cooked over coals, served with a smoky aubergine baba ganoush that was so delicious, we found

ourselves wishing for more bread to soak up every last bit.



The oysters were a revelation—one poached in its own juices over coals and served with a vibrant English wasabi butter, while the other was served natural with a zesty lime and jalapeño granita. The presentation alone was enough to impress, and judging by my dining companion's reaction, the taste matched the aesthetics.



For starters, I opted for the *Beetroot with Katy Rodgers Crème Fraîche*. This dish is a work of art, with beetroot cooked overnight over coals, then dehydrated to intensify its flavours, served with ribbons of beetroot, blackened apple purée, and crème fraîche. A dramatic pour of Granny Smith consommé over the dish added a touch of theatre, making it as visually stunning as it was delicious. My companion chose the Beef Tartare with Soy Egg—a dish that balances textures and flavours beautifully, proving that raw beef can be both delicate and rich.



Mains and Desserts: A Symphony of Flavours

The main courses continued the theme of excellence. I selected the *Guinea Fowl with Plum Sauce*, which was perfectly cooked and served with barbecued spring cabbage and broccoli purée. My companion's *Day-Boat Caught Fish*—a robust cod paired with Parmesan gnocchi, Shetland mussels, globe artichoke, olives, and beurre blanc—was equally satisfying. Each dish was served on crockery that was as much a work of art as the food itself.

Desserts were a fitting finale. I had the *Tonka Crème Brûlée*

with a quenelle of cinnamon ice cream—an indulgent yet balanced dessert that wasn't too sweet. My companion's *Chocolate Crèmeux* with almond praline and orange was a decadent treat that perfectly rounded off the meal.

Instead of selecting one bottle of wine, we trusted Rich to pair each dish with individual wines from Liberty Wines, who ASKR works with exclusively to supply their wines. His selections were impeccable, each wine complementing the flavours of the food beautifully.



The Verdict: A Must-Visit Destination

Located just a few steps from The Shore tram stop, ASKR specialises in coal-fired cooking, delivering a menu that showcases the finest local meat, seafood, and produce. The restaurant recently expanded its offerings with a new à la carte menu, alongside its celebrated tasting menu, giving diners more flexibility and choice.

ASKR offers one of the best value-tasting menus in town, with a six-course midweek menu available Tuesday to Thursday for just £45. Quote “tasting45” when booking to take advantage of this offer. It's open five days a week, serving both lunch and dinner. If oysters are your thing, you can even drop into ASKR and indulge in a handful of oysters sitting at the bar while you enjoy any of their delectable wines, served by the glass or bottle.

With its cosy atmosphere, innovative menu, and dedication to

sustainability, new menu options, ASKR is more than just a restaurant—it's a destination. If you're looking to explore Leith, the culinary neighbourhood of Edinburgh and a chance to experience some of Edinburgh's best food, ASKR should be at the top of your dining list this autumn.

<https://www.askr.co.uk/>