



Dramz Whisky Bar and Lounge, Mehrauli, New Delhi

From the barrel

A rise of restaurants where the food raises a toast to the beverage and not the other way round

Magandeep Singh

THE WORLD over, restaurants boasting enviable wine and spirit lists, combined with fine dining, are climbing the popularity charts. We bring you some places worth checking out if you want a dining experience that includes fine food and even finer offerings from the cellar.

Dramz Whisky Bar and Lounge, Mehrauli, New Delhi

There are many firsts to this newly-inaugurated restaurant in Delhi that will resonate differently with each visitor. It could be their exhaustive collection of single malts, the unparalleled view of the Qutab, as if almost within your grasp, or their brunch-masterclass combos with beverage commentator Karina Aggarwal... either way, you will have a reason to visit, and return.

The place has been put together like a curated art facility, with carefully-appointed paraphernalia to convey the essence of the place. From the decor to the decanters and the glasses, nothing has been short-changed. The mood is classic colonial with a comfortable lounge-like feel to it. The floor above houses a restaurant with a very elegant and tastefully done up private dining room tucked away on one side. But the real USP is the large open terrace that is built to almost fall into the lap of one of Delhi's most recognised monuments. I attended a gin masterclass when the lady beverage maestro, Aggarwal, led a group through an array of a few rare gins. Sessions on Japanese single malts and wines, among others, are slated to follow soon. They assured me that nothing they do will be run-of-the-mill and the collections used each time for these masterclasses would be unprecedented. That right there would be my WOW factor.

And then just when you think you have seen it all, you are led down a staircase, which opens into a spacious wine cellar that is

specially set up to host evenings and dinners.

I haven't said anything about the food yet. On my maiden visit, I mostly tried the snacks, which were all really good, but since I haven't had a full-blown meal, I will save you the hyperbole. All in all, the place has all the right gears and cogs in the right places and should become a definitive destination for those who take their drinks seriously and like to take them in a very pristine setting.

Cask, Pimlico, London

If you like Beer—and I mean it so much that you would revere it with a capital 'B'—then next time you are in London, this is the place that you cannot afford to miss. Sure, you have been to beer bars, but not to one that has as many cask ales on offer as this one. I mean, it is called Cask for a reason, right? And then there is a bottle selection that is so vast and endless that it would put to shame entire nations that pride themselves on their beer culture. But the place isn't just a bar, it is a pub of the gastro kind—even their burgers are detailed and gourmet. So if you are in the mood for some good hearty grub to accompany your pint, the place has the makings for a few cosy evenings' worth.

Decibel, New York

The concept of a dive bar is rather native to the US (east coast more so), where people come out of work and grab a quick drink at the nearest watering hole before heading home. Partly to avoid the homebound rush and partly to vent office-related angst, these places work pretty fine, as mass-psychiatry centres for a fraction of a cost. Tucked away in a basement with a sign smaller than a thumbnail, Decibel is a dive bar that is truly special: it is a sake dive bar! The staff know their sakes and it is useful, for the bar has a collection spanning a good few pages, served up in pots of various sizes, cold or warm, as you'd prefer. It isn't entirely cheap, but that's by dive bar standards.

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Decibel, New York