

Drink: Review

Vesper Bar



MARIE O'BRIEN

Vesper: cocktails 007 would approve of

★★★★★

Classical education

You know you're in the hands of a good bartender when, instead of offering you a menu, he simply asks, 'What do you feel like?' Eager to share her new favourite drink with me, my friend requests a Hunk Martini. Although the bartender has never heard of it he listens intently as ingredients are listed: vanilla vodka, pineapple juice and fresh lime. It smells and tastes like creamy lemon curd – a delicious, near perfect rendition.

I opt for one of Vesper's signature drinks, a Mint Julep (€10) served, as is traditional, in a frost-laden silver cup of crushed ice, with a steel strainer so only the syrupy rum – sweetened with sugar and fragrant with fresh mint – flows through.

Opened early this year, Vesper has a cocktail list, elegantly presented in a baroque frame,

that promises to change every couple of months, via a rotating selection of old-fashioned classics (Mai Tai, pisco sour) and modern interpretations. From among the latter, we sample the Orange Vink, an uplifting tropical tippie with vodka, vanilla, cloudy apple juice and fresh hand-squeezed passion fruit pulp, the tartness of which balances the sweet candied-apple flavours.

Our pick of the night, however, comes from the blackboard specials: Spring Punch, with rum, Prosecco, egg white and fresh raspberry syrup made with fruit from the market. It is strawberries and cream in a glass, basically: fruity fresh and slightly ef-

ferrescent with a creamy, frothy head from the egg.

Wine and beer take a back seat to the hard stuff here but, like everything at this intimate bar, both are sourced from small-scale, carefully selected producers. There is only one wine label, Château Barbeiranne, which is available by the glass or bottle in white, red and rosé. It is also sold in a clever 375ml bottle (€11), for those times when you don't quite need a full bottle, but a glass simply won't do.

The room is classy and minimal with dark blinds, blonde wooden tables, leather bar stools and, of course, a large selection of premium liquors lining the walls. But the longer you sit and the more your eyes wander, the more you notice the small things that

give this place its charm – a tattered James Bond novel on the top shelf, a retro Schweppes soda stream and a portable shaker set housed in a little leather suitcase.

On weekends, traditional high tea is given an intoxicating makeover, with sweets and savouries accompanied by teapots full of cocktails and served in special martini glasses fashioned out of antique cups (€20 per person); a very quaint way to quaff.

Because each cocktail is crafted with care and attention, the wait to be served can be longer than average – but for cocktails this good, it's worth the wait.

Vesper Bar Vinckenstraat 57 (846 4458/vesperbar.nl). Open Tue-Thur 17.00-01.00; Fri 16.00-03.00; Sat, Sun 14.00-03.00. Cocktails €8.50 (unless otherwise stated) Credit MC, V. Leisha Jones

It's the small things that give this place its charm

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