

Review | Plum + Spilt Milk

by Grace Cain / 30th May 2018

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No Comments



Words: Grace Cain

When it comes to success stories, the recent regeneration of London's Kings Cross is up there. An influx of stylish shops, galleries, bars and restaurants, as well as a multitude of newly created green spaces, has made this corner of the city somewhere people want to travel *to*, rather than a space made for passing (quickly) through. However, for most people, Kings Cross still remains a transitory place – a brief stop on the way to somewhere else, rather than the destination itself.

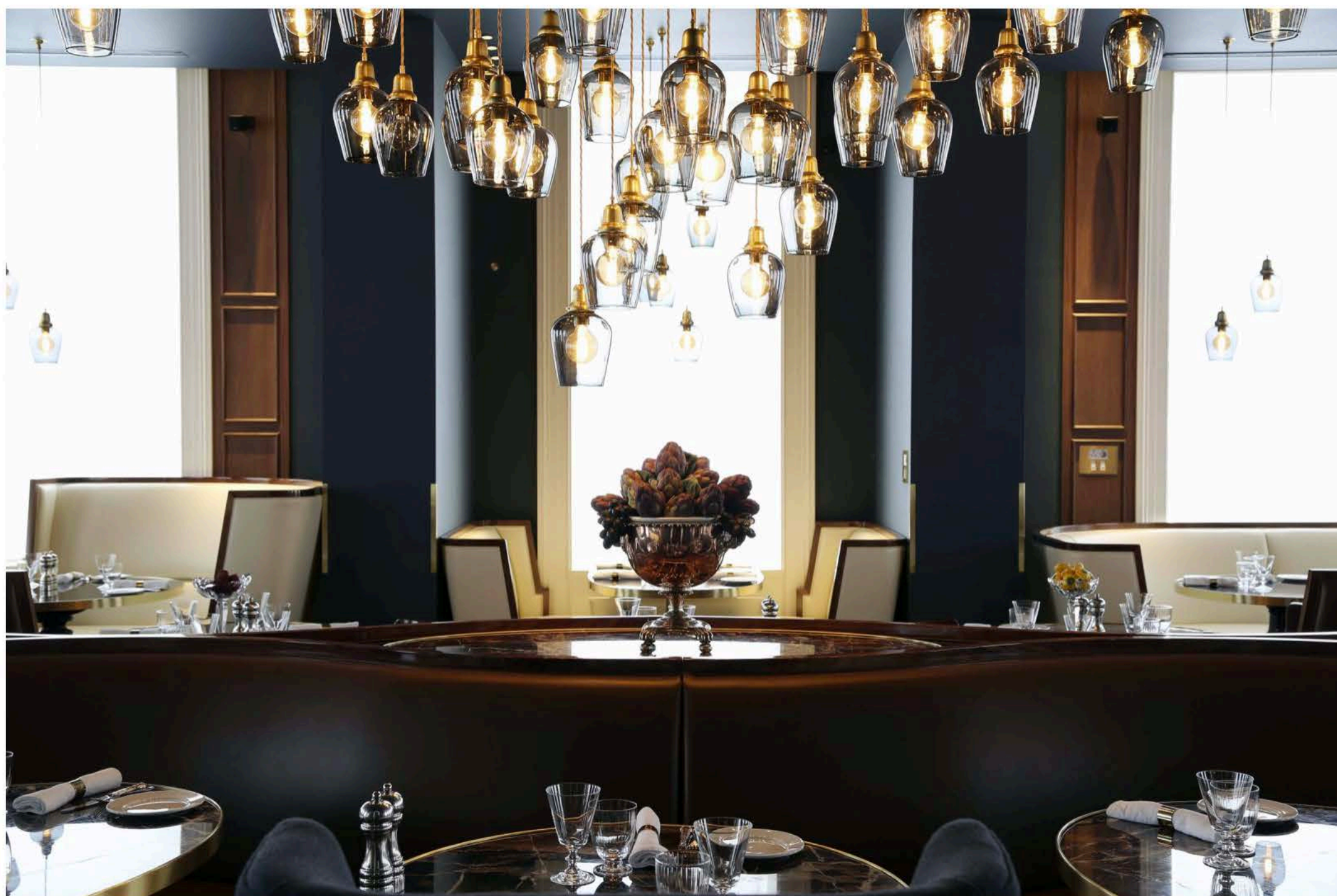
These are the two different breeds of customer that the Great Northern Hotel's modern British restaurant, Plum + Spilt Milk, has to cater for. Promising what they call 'simple classics, beautifully cooked', the Hotel's restaurant has just launched a new menu created by Chef Director Mark Sargeant and Executive Chef Mike Denman; and I am lucky enough to be trying it out with a friend on one otherwise gloomy Friday evening.

Huddled beneath an umbrella, we scuttle out of Kings Cross underground station and through a light film of rain to find the entrance of the Hotel, which is perched on the edge of the station itself.

Compared to the seemingly endless rush of people flowing through the piazza and crossing in and out of the train station, entering the quiet Great Northern Hotel is like a sigh of relief. Indeed, walking into the hotel feels more like entering a friend-of-a-friend's grand townhouse than a typical hotel lobby. A narrow entranceway opens out onto a light and airy hallway; music and laughter come from the bar on the ground floor, but our destination is one flight up a wrought iron staircase which curves between art-lined walls.

Plum + Spilt Milk commands an entire corner of the first floor of the Hotel. The decor, all dark walls and exposed filament light bulbs, is decidedly contemporary, but everywhere there are nods to the building's heritage; indeed, the name 'Plum + Spilt Milk' is itself a homage to the livery trains that, in times gone by, ran in and out of the station, and were so called for their maroon and cream colouring.

From a table beside the window, we enjoy a welcoming aperitif – a Negroni for me, a Rob Roy for my friend. In the warm glow of those hand-blown glass lights, the lightly buzzing Friday night ambience seems to comfortably envelop every sort of diner; from prosecco-drinking friends and after-work drinks, to couples and families out to celebrate with a nice meal. There's a certain smugness that comes with sitting by the window on such a grey, drizzly evening; it feels like we've been elevated far away from the angry traffic jams and the crowds of umbrellas jostling on the crowded pavements below.



Our waitress is an expert on the new menu, and is more than happy to help us with our culinary decisions. To start, I opt for the burrata served with a broad bean purée, pickled red onion, chilli, pine nuts and raw rapeseed oil. According to our waitress, British burrata is a little less creamy than its Italian equivalent, but for me it hits just the right note. My friend selects the crispy duck leg with plum sauce, seared breast, peas, heritage radish and turnip slaw, happily declaring the duck to be 'good...possibly the best I've ever had.'

For the main course, I choose the pan-fried potato gnocchi, which is accompanied by broad beans, rainbow chard, chilli and Berkswell cheese. Filling without being too heavy, it is full of rich flavours and contrasting textures. My companion happily polishes off the beef steak, which is served with hand-cut beef dripping chips that I would definitely be stealing, had my vegetarian morals not jumped in to stop me.

The waitress, infinitely more knowledgeable than either of us in the art of wine/food pairings, helped us to select the best accompaniment to our dinner. For me, the crisp and refreshing Albariño Rias Baixas; for my friend, the Rioja Reserva, a light, drinkable red.

My chief piece of advice for anyone visiting Plum + Spilt Milk would be to leave room for dessert, because it truly is a treat of the highest proportions. As something of a peanut butter enthusiast, there is only one real contender for me; the iced peanut parfait and chocolate ganache, served with salted caramel sauce. Striking the perfect balance between sweet and salty, I'm not exaggerating when I say that all future desserts will now be a disappointment. My friend opts for the steamed lemon sponge pudding, which is served with a golden syrup custard and finished with candied lemon zest.

Striking the elusive balance between laid-back and luxurious, Plum + Spilt Milk is a jewel in the crown of Kings Cross. The weary traveller looking for a comfortable spot to break up their journey will find nowhere more welcoming (or more stylish). However, for the Londoner and their friends, there's no need to use travel as an excuse to visit; Plum + Spilt Milk is a destination all of its own.

[*plumandspiltmilk.com*](http://plumandspiltmilk.com)