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AUGUST 2023

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THE ETHICAL ISSUE

ON THE WATCH

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The cosy upstairs dining room at The Barley Mow has the feel of a private members' club



REVIEW

The Barley Mow

Cubitt House has given this landmark Mayfair pub a beautiful new look, and the food offering is not to be missed

Words by **Liz Skone-James**

The British weather has thrown a spanner in the works – rooftop drinks are off; a more rain friendly pub dinner is on the cards. But this is The Barley Mow in Mayfair – no ordinary boozer. The pub was bought last year by the Cubitt House Group, who are known for injecting new life and a food-forward ethos into their portfolio of London pubs, notably The Princess Royal in Notting Hill and The Coach Makers Arms in Marylebone. Menus at all nine of the group's London venues are overseen by chef director Ben Tish, whose stellar track record most recently includes Norma and The Game Bird at The Stafford London. We've had good experiences at other Cubitt House venues, and heard great things about The Barley Mow, so expectations are high.

We begin the evening downstairs in the lively bar, which despite its smart new look, still feels very much like a pub, albeit a very handsome one.

There are etched windows looking out on the comings and goings of Duke Street, a marble topped dark wood bar and comfortable leather bar stools with upholstered backs that, along with the excellent drinks selection, make us consider settling in for the evening. We don't want to miss our booking upstairs though, so finish our drinks and head on up.

This, too, has been exquisitely renovated. In the style of a private members' club, it features deep blue wall panelling, rich velvet seating, striking art deco style chandeliers and crisp white linen tablecloths. It is a small space, which lends it an exclusive feel, and it is already buzzing, even though we are here early. The sun, having decided to come out, streams through the windows up here, giving the room a wonderful glow – we do not regret altering our roof terrace plans despite the change in weather conditions.



Tucked away at a cosy corner table, we are well placed to spy on neighbouring plates of food, and everything looks excellent. Here, Tish has created a menu that features British classics served with Mayfair flair, with everything from Scotch eggs and pie and mash to native oysters and Dover sole with Champagne sauce.

Though I've been a proud Londoner for over 20 years, I'm first and foremost a Devon girl, and as such can never resist crab, so I'm gratified to find it on the menu. Gorgeously fresh as it is, the spiced brown crab salad with radish, fennel and apple does not disappoint, though it feels a little righteous alongside my date's decadent truffled croque monsieur, which is as wickedly delicious as it sounds. My half a (very large) free range chicken comes dripping in tangy wild garlic butter and served with earthy morels. It is delicious, but it is the sides that truly shine: anchovy gratin dauphinoise (yes, really), Colston Bassett cauliflower cheese and the dreamiest creamed spinach. We spend a moment or two contemplating the Neal's Yard cheeses, which, like sweeties at the supermarket tills, are temptingly displayed for all to see. Deciding against them takes serious restraint; we opt instead to share some brown butter Madeleines. They are served warm and are light as a feather; dipped decadently in crème fraîche they are the perfect way to round off the meal. It has been a memorable evening: this hidden gem combines genuine hospitality with excellent food and drink, and we will be back.

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