

FOOD & DRINK

# Between the devil and the deep blue sea

Things didn't go swimmingly for *Joseph Connolly* at Sexy Fish, London W1 – even with Damien Hirst's mermaids looking on

**R**eeling out of the taxi, gagging and bilious from a car deodorant horribly redolent of a vintage Yardley bath cube, I tumbled into Sexy Fish, Richard Caring's new and blingy addition to Berkeley Square. This consummate restaurateur (Ivy, Scott's, J Sheekey, Le Caprice) has virtually colonised this corner of Mayfair: Sexy Fish lies plumb opposite Annabel's, and just around the corner from Mark's Club and Harry's Bar.

Now, look: you have to call a restaurant something – and I have lost count of the places I have been to with dumb and wacky names (one of the standouts being Trinity Cabbages & Condoms in Bicester) – but, still, one can only goggle at Caring alighting on this one. "How about... I don't know... Sexy Fish...?" And because nobody dared to collapse into delirious laughter, they ran with it.

So what is the vibe they are chasing? How sexy is a fish? Was some demented person fantasising over Nicola Sturgeon, do we think? Or Colin Salmon, the suave chief of staff in the Pierce Brosnan Bond films? No: here we have a game of two halves, son: the fish is on the menu; the sex... well, just witness the glitzy opening party. Rita Ora

formed the entertainment, and guests included Goldie Hawn, Lindsay Lohan and Kate Moss. None of whom is a notable gourmet (I have a few times witnessed Kate about to gorge on her favourite lunch of Veuve Clicquot and Marlboros). I can't think why Cara Delevingne wasn't present – probably fasting somewhere else entirely. All these slimline beauties... they're just too sexy for their fish.

The exterior is Fortnum green, with a hint of onyx – there is glowingly inviting lighting, and a doorman in a bowler. Inside, there is no hint of onyx – rather, an avalanche. Should you be considering ordering a chunk for a kitchen splashback, please don't bother because there isn't any left: every square inch of onyx on the planet has gone into Sexy Fish. In the subterranean lavatories, it is eerily backlit; also there are cutting-edge taps that the more adept, given time, might somehow induce to give water.

The décor is glamorous and expensive brasserie. Did I say expensive? Fifteen million quid has been sunk into this baby – a lot of that on the onyx, and even more on art. There is a huge and gormless blue wall-plaque of mermaids by Damien Hirst – with a little help, presumably, from his fleet of fabricators. Fine Art Deco lighting, coral-coloured buttery leather banquettes and a ceiling that is a



### THREE OF A KIND FISH

#### Salt Room, Brighton

Contemporary joint overlooking the derelict West Pier; great fruits de mer. 106 King's Road, Brighton BN1 2FU; saltroom-restaurant.co.uk

#### Butley Orford Oysterage, Suffolk

East Anglian institution comes with en-suite smokehouses. Market Hill, Orford, Suffolk IP12 2LH; pinneysoford.co.uk

#### Ceviche, London

Clean, citrusy tastes on a menu dominated by raw marinated fish. Branches in Soho and Shoreditch. cevicheuk.com

muted rip-off of Matisse's cut-outs. Also some huge silver floating fish by Frank Gehry, reminiscent of those bloated creations that used to be twisted from balloons at the entrance to Hamleys by school leavers, palpably wishing they were dead.

Chopsticks resting on a black and shiny concave pebble were our first indication that there is an Asian element to SF. Warm edamame arrived; we wolfed them hungrily while scanning the menu. Cold dishes, hot dishes, little things, a grill, big things.

The waitress told us that the "concept" is one of jointly grazing (sharing with Caring) – but the menu keeps it dark. And so begins the argy-bargy of exactly how much of what to order: all little things? Both hot and cold? Stick with fish? (Because there is a £110 wagyu beef fillet, if you are feeling insane: everything else is slyly pricey – £100 a head is easy, double that not very difficult.)

OUR RATING  
**6/10**

If you're after a bit of onyx for your bathroom splashback, don't bother: it's all here



Berkeley Square House, Berkeley Square, London W1J 6BR  
020 3764 2000; sexyfish.com  
£60 per head and upwards

Eventually my guest and I decided on lots of little things – Sexy Fish Roll (not, as things turned out, a party game), prawn tempura, yellowfin sashimi, wok-fried spicy noodles, octopus skewer, smoked eel – and one big thing: john dory with a béarnaise sauce.

Getting to this point left us frankly exhausted. "Have we ordered too much?" I asked – and the waitress said no (as they always do). And because the two of us were meant to share, of course everything came in threes and fives (as it always does: manners go into overdrive as the final morsel lurks).

The food came when they wanted it to come, so we asked for bread. No bread: they don't do bread. So with no tablecloth either, how do they justify the £2 cover charge? Well, they don't: in this glittering la-la-land of moneyed and honeyed London, you don't have to justify anything, matey.

The tempura prawns were large and perfect – best in show, along with the john dory. Sashimi was nice – but lacking in zing. Eel was nice. Octopus was nice. Noodles were noodles. And nice. And the Sexy Fish Roll, a beautiful mosaic (salmon and tuna largely) that must have taken nearly 11 years to assemble, took but a second to swallow and was... nice. All rather relentless, though: they don't offer much of anything green.

Puddings are defiantly Occidental: crumble, doughnuts, rice pudding... but no cheese. They don't do cheese – so what with that and the bread, if it's a ploughman's you're after, forget it.

So, an anomaly: the undeniably sexy "wow" of the place fails to be thrillingly carried through to the food. Cold fish I may be, but for me... no nightingale sang in Berkeley Square.

Joseph Connolly's *A-Z of Eating Out* (Thames & Hudson) is available from Telegraph Books.



**Bitegeist**  
What's cooking – or not – in the world of food & drink

### Going up

#### Sea change

Forget fish and chips on the beach: Polpo, the acclaimed London restaurant group, is opening a new location in Brighton, just a few steps from the famous Pavilion. Pop in for an Aperol spritz and rustic Venetian-inspired small plates, known as *cicchetti*. The signature spicy pork and fennel meatballs are a must-try. Opens November 16; polpo.co.uk

#### Mexican madness

To celebrate the colourful Latino festival Day of the Dead, Mexican restaurant chain Wahaca is hosting a 12-hour fiesta at London's Tobacco Dock. Superstar Mexican chef Enrique Olvera is flying over to cook, and there will be live music, talks and tequila cocktails aplenty. Don't forget your sombrero. November 7; £29; wahaca.co.uk

#### Spice up your life

The latest treat endangering our waistlines is the East India Company's new range of intensely spiced chocolate bars. Try the milk bar with fragrant pink peppercorns, or the 68 per cent dark chocolate infused with tropical tea, with notes of rosehip, orange peel and hibiscus. £5 per bar; eicfinefoods.com



#### Happy birthday, Marguerite

Here's a sweet idea. Marguerite Patten, the esteemed cookery writer who died earlier this year, would have turned 100 on November 4. To celebrate, the Guild of Food Writers is asking the public to cook a meal based on her recipes, and share pictures on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or Pinterest using the hashtag #Marguerite100. Visit [gfw.co.uk](http://gfw.co.uk) for recipes.

### Going down

#### Gin and bear it

Alarming news of the week: juniper, the aromatic plant integral to making gin, is now in a "critical state" in Scotland due to a fungal disease, according to the conservation charity Plantlife. Thankfully, most British gin is made using imported juniper... but we still might stockpile some Gordon's, just in case.



#### Feeling crabby

A Korean supermarket in London has outraged customers by selling live crabs wrapped in plastic. Korea Foods in New Malden apparently breaks no laws by shrink-wrapping the crustaceans, but it must be rather a shock to glimpse the critters staring forlornly at you from the chiller cabinet.



## Are You Paying Too Much For HEALTH INSURANCE?

■ We are able, in most cases, to transfer you to a more suitable policy whilst still providing cover for conditions that you may already have had treatment for

■ We can also negotiate, on your behalf, with your current insurer. This may lead to lower premiums without the need to change insurers

■ You pay nothing for the Medischeme service. We receive a standard fee from whichever insurer you choose

■ Our service can include an annual review to ensure competitiveness of your cover

■ No need to wait until the renewal of your current policy. We can look at a more suitable option mid-term

■ There is no upper age limit to review a scheme

We represent all the major health insurance providers including **BUPA, AXA-PPP, VITALITY HEALTH** and **AVIVA**

Freephone  
**0800 085 2677**  
[www.medischeme.co.uk](http://www.medischeme.co.uk)



We also specialise in international and expatriate plans

To: Medischeme – FREEPOST RTGX-GKKK-TXLG, 7 Castle Street, Tonbridge, TN9 1BH

Name	Age
Address	
Telephone No	
Email	
Current Insurer (if any)	

Medischeme Health Ltd is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

## HANDMADE CHURCHILL LEATHER SLIPPERS

ONLY **£30** HALF PRICE (WAS £60)



We are delighted to offer Telegraph readers an opportunity to purchase any of our handmade Churchill leather slippers and outdoor mules for £30, just half the original price of £60.

The perfect accompaniment to a dressing gown and a day lazing around the house, this range of stylish slippers and moccasins comes in five classic designs, and has been handcrafted using the finest nappa leathers. All styles include a 30-day no quibble worn or unworn guarantee.

The timeless and sophisticated Grecian is lined in pure soft wool for outstanding comfort. The Albert boasts a full leather lining, sturdy leather sole and a fully cushioned leather sock. Our mule is half-leather lined and is a gentlemen's classic, offering unrivalled leather luxury. Our popular outdoor mule is perfect for wearing indoors or outside and features soft, comfortable nappa leather uppers with a rugged hard-wearing man-made sole. The luxurious suede moccasin features a soft man-made fleece lining and a hard-wearing sole that is equally at home worn inside or outside. Available in sizes: 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14.

**Samuel Windsor**

tailored quality ~ outstanding prices

**0871 911 7044** \* QUOTE 55724

\*Calls cost 10 pence per minute from a standard BT landline. Calls from other networks and mobiles may vary.

[www.samuelwindsorshoes.co.uk/55724](http://www.samuelwindsorshoes.co.uk/55724)

Post to: Samuel Windsor (55724), PO Box 87, Brecon, LD3 3BE

ITEM DESCRIPTION	CODE/COLOUR	SIZE	QTY	TOTAL
P&P				£5.95
Total				

PLEASE DO NOT SEND CASH. Offer subject to availability. Please allow up to 7 working days for delivery. If you are not completely satisfied with your purchase then return the item to us within 30 days, worn or unworn, and we will refund you, no questions asked. Any unsuitable item can be returned using our returns service – details supplied with every order. Please note a signature is required upon delivery.

\*Our 'real' pricing refers to the original selling prices offered on our website [www.samuelwindsorshoes.co.uk](http://www.samuelwindsorshoes.co.uk), and in our retail store between 20th July to 20th October 2015 (items sold at real prices represent the lower proportion of sales).

55724

I enclose a cheque for £..... made payable to SAMUEL WINDSOR OFFER (55724) Please write your name and address on the back of your cheque. Alternatively, please debit my Visa/MasterCard/Switch/Maestro card:

Mr/Mrs/Ms: Initials: Surname:

Address:

Postcode: Tel No:

Card No:

Switch Issue No: Valid from date:

Expiry date: Security Code\*: \*Last 3 digits on back of card