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# Fit for a King

by Liz Tray

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In the not too distant past, Kings Cross or St Pancras stations were hardly the places you'd want tourists to our capital city to see first. Thousands of visitors per day would arrive from all over the country to be greeted by a gritty industrial wasteland, which is putting it nicely. So once the Eurostar terminal's move to the area from Waterloo had been mooted, bringing with it European visitors, it was inevitable that regeneration of much of the locality would follow.

It's cheaper than Islington, edgier than Angel and not as tourist infested as Camden so Kings Cross was perfectly suited to having investor cash thrown at it. It already feels like much has changed yet the money keeps coming - for offices, flats, retail space, transport, arts and of course hospitality. That old cliché, the 'up and coming' area, is rife in London. You can't move for redevelopment signage in nearby east London, whether in reference to the ongoing projects in Dalston, the constant growth of Hackney or the plans afoot to get Stratford ready in time for the Olympics. It's clear that the Kings Cross strategy is to create a north London version of the South Bank.

For foodies, this particular part of N1 had never been a draw. The new era began when St Pancras Grand opened, following the Eurostar move in November 2007. The perfect combination of modern and old-fashioned, both in menu and interior, plus a unique oyster bar and the longest Champagne bar in the world, brought previously unseen glamour to the station. Dozens of glass fronted restaurants, cafes, food stores and clothing outlets were to follow at the mainline station.



Outside of the transport hubs, there's no shortage of post-work bars to patronise, from nearby Caledonian Road's Ruby Lounge and the Kitchin restaurant's in-house bar, Cellar N1, to arguably the jewel in N1's crown, Big Chill House. The latter, with its open roof terrace, 3 floors, DJs, superior bar snacks and classic cocktails, has become the top destination once the school, sorry work, bell rings.

It's with all this in mind that Kings Cross floated into my mind when choosing a location for the Ignite Xmas party. We're hard to please; the destination must not only have great food and ambience but interiors worth looking at. While the Regent Quarter's unique tapas restaurant Camino caught my eye, as did The Driver on Wharfedale Road, I decided that, given the wintry weather, a gastropub was the preferable option for a night out. As soon as I found The Fellow, on York Way, I knew it was the one. With its bustling atmosphere and hearty food it turned out to be the correct choice.

Despite there being only one vegetarian option (when is there more?) I had no complaints at all with my own selection: parsnip soup with chives and crème fraîche; butternut squash, hazelnut and caramelised red onion strudel with vine tomato sauce and a side of olive oil mash finished with apple tart with butterscotch sauce. Sounds mouth-watering? It was. Given that massive regeneration of the area is ongoing and dozens of acres will be filled in the coming years, that evening's excursion will not be the last Kings Cross discovery.

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