

EATING OUT

Restaurant Reviews

Mielcke & Hurtigkarl

Frederiksberg Runddel 1 2000 Frederiksberg,
Copenhagen, Denmark

Telephone: +45 38 34 84 36

www.mhch.com

The world has many mysteries, including the Bermuda Triangle, who Jack the Ripper was and whether the Loch Ness Monster exists, but to me the greatest mystery now is why Mielcke & Hurtigkarl does not have more recognition from the food establishment, as I have eaten in many celebrated restaurants and few have even come close to the meal my wife and I had here. Copenhagen does have many celebrated and award winning restaurants, and Mielcke & Hurtigkarl is right up with them with respect to food, service and all round ambience.

We had a little time before our reservation, and so decided to walk from The Andersen, our hotel next to Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen, as I always think you get a better feel for a city if you walk around it rather than be in taxis or public transport.

The restaurant is located on the edge of Royal Park in Frederiksberg, which is mistakenly thought of as a neighbourhood of Copenhagen, but is in fact an independent municipality with its own mayor and council and is fiercely independent. Frederiksberg is a well-to-do area and our walk took us up a wonderfully wide tree lined avenue right to the gates of the Royal Park, and Mielcke & Hurtigkarl's restaurant nestles to the left of its imposing gates.

A restaurant needs to stimulate all of your senses, not just your taste buds, and before we even started on the food we knew we were in for a treat as the location is stunning, and the reception warm and welcoming.

To start our culinary adventure we sat outside on their terrace sipping a glass of champagne whilst looking out over the wonderful royal gardens (it is advisable to come early and take a look around these), watching a pair of peacocks strutting around the gardens whilst enjoying our first few courses. Our first course was Langoustine accompanied perfectly with the delicate sweet and sour contrasts of papaya and kalamansi, closely followed by some cold cuts of wild and tame goose and duck. Then just before we entered the main restaurant we were served probably one of the best dishes I have ever tasted. We were presented with what initially looked like a perfectly white poached egg in a delicate pickled tomato juice, but on closer inspection the white was a delicate cream flavoured with pecorino cheese which when broken into revealed a frozen tomato



salad. The texture of the cream against the ice of the tomatoes with the sharpness of the juice was truly a work of genius and so creative. After this course we were led into the main restaurant, a magnificent 18th century pavilion which reminded me of rooms within a French Chateau with tall ceilings and walls minimalistically decorated. Tables are well spaced to allow diners privacy and are laid out around a solitary tree in the centre of the room, and this light and airy room is lit by a stunning raindrop crystal light display which scatters every bit of light thrown at them.

Our journey then continued with delicate and fresh oysters with pea and watercress and then a delightful dish of sliced squid and noodles flavoured with seaweed, cucumber and shiso. This oriental delight was followed by witch flounder with chicken skin and Kombu, where the delicate flounder and crispy chicken skin floated in a creamy butter and thyme sauce, a true explosion of textures. Mielcke & Hurtigkarl's signature is bringing flavour from their surroundings, namely the Royal Gardens and their plants into their cooking, and the artichoke in a rich anchovy sauce was insanely fresh and felt like it had been picked just a few seconds before it was cooked.

A seabuckthorn course, also from the garden, was followed closely by slices of slightly pink pigeon in a wonderful truffle and rhubarb sauce that ended the savoury part of our meal, leaving us with the desserts, and the first offering was stunning.

The smell of the passionfruit could be detected before the dish was put on our table and was accompanied by coconut and chilli which shouldn't work, but just does. Two more

wonderful desserts followed, each continuing the 'bringing the garden inside' theme, and it was with a mixture of relief (even I was almost full by now) and also disappointment (that you are coming to the end of a true experience) that we came to the final dessert - a meringue and coffee ice cream lollipop.

To accompany our culinary journey, Mielcke & Hurtigkarl have a wine list of the same quality as the food, but we selected the wine flight which allowed us to sample a number of wonderful wines and unlike many was very generous, and our glasses were never empty for long. Every wine was expertly introduced by the very knowledgeable sommelier, and if we didn't like one of the proposed wines he was superb at finding alternatives.

As I said a restaurant isn't just about the food, it is the overall feeling it evokes in its diners, and the service just added to a wonderful experience, as it is slick but warm, with the waiters spending just enough time with you to make you feel special without intruding on your meal.

There are a range of tasting menus ranging from DKK 800 for the 'Daily Experience', DKK 950 for 'The Experience' or DKK 1,100 for 'The Metamorphosis' and the wine pairing differ depending on your number of courses.

I truly cannot find words to fully do this restaurant justice as it is just so good. Indeed, it is almost worth flying to Copenhagen just to experience food and service of this quality as there is no hype here, just inspired and creative cooking in a stunning location.

Here the food does the talking, and boy does it do that.

The Happenstance Restaurant and Bar

10 Paternoster Square,
London, EC4M 7DX
Telephone: 020 7618 9520

London never fails to amaze me, as it seems to reinvent itself all the time. During the week London is full of workers busily going about their business, co-mingling with the thousands of tourists, but the time I love London the most is when those commuters have left the city, leaving the same tourists and those who live in the city, and then London's vibe is very different, namely more relaxed!

Restaurants and bars at the weekend then need to cater for a different clientele from the usual city workers, and The Happenstance in Paternoster Square achieves this effortlessly whilst offering a great place for client meetings and drinks during the week. It is perfectly located in the shadows of the imposing and historic St Paul's Cathedral and is perfectly located to cater for all of London's residents whether they are permanent or temporary.

My wife and I visited The Happenstance on a Saturday for brunch, and our first decision was where to sit. We were very tempted to sit on the large alfresco terrace with a view of St Paul's, but as England was moving painfully towards autumn we plumped for the inside. Even though indoors, the inside is still light and airy and the décor is a mixture of 1970 G Plan glam chairs and copper tables contrasting with the modern building. The Happenstance also has a number of comfortable booths where the weekend crowd can while away a lazy Saturday with friends enjoying a glass of something cold or a cup of something hot!

The Saturday brunch menu is smaller than

the weekday menu, but is still plentiful, and even though I am picky I had many things I wanted to eat. Although I love breakfast, I passed on the Full English (£9.50) with black pudding, baked beans and field mushrooms accompanying bacon, sausage and eggs (any style you wanted) and even the breakfast pastries (£2.50) as I am a sucker for a pain au raisin, and instead went for some Crispy Squid (£6.50) from the starter section and my wife chose the Scotch Egg (£5.95). The batter on the squid was light and was accompanied by a lovely sharp lemon mayonnaise, but my wife's Scotch egg trumped this. The crispy shell and chorizo sausage layer encased a centre egg

which was slightly runny and the spicy chorizo and paprika mayonnaise gave just enough heat to offset the richness of the soft egg.

For the mains there is a large selection of burgers including a Cheeseburger (£8.95), a Buttermilk Chicken Burger (£9.25) or a luxurious Wagyu Burger (£13.95) accompanied by blue cheese and tomato chutney, but our selections were the Fish Pie (£10.50) and the Beer Battered Haddock and Chips (£11.95). The fish pie had a cheddar potato crust and was made up of a variety of fish, but for me the sauce needed much more flavouring to do justice to the pie's ingredients. The haddock was well cooked and the batter was again light and crispy, and the chips were what I call 'chip shop chips' i.e. substantial and plentiful. As an addition we also had some onion rings (£3.25) with a lovely light batter allowing the slightly chewy onion flavour to burst through.

To accompany any meal The Happenstance has an extensive wine and drink list, including a fabulous South African Chenin Blanc at £17.95 and a full bodied rich Merlot at £18.25, which is very reasonable in the heart of London.

I would save some room for dessert as they are well worth it, and The Knickerbocker Glory on the menu for £7.95 was almost as good as the one used to have when I was an 8 year old boy at an authentic Italian ice cream parlour, and I never dreamt of finding anything that came close. Our other choice was the Chocolate Brownie (£5.95) which was light but moreishly fudgy, all bathed in a thick chocolate sauce - absolutely perfect.

This restaurant is a cut above the usual soulless London offerings, as it has a charm and warmth which welcomes diners, and I loved the saying it had on its wall which said 'Do more things that make you forget to check your phone' - and I can't argue with that.

*...Perfectly located
in the shadows of
the imposing and
historic St Paul's
Cathedral and is
perfectly located
to cater for all of
London's residents
whether they are
permanent or
temporary.*



The Coal Shed

8 Boyce's Street, Brighton, BN1 1AN

Telephone: 01273 322998

The Coal Shed is tucked away down a little side alley just off one of the main street's in Brighton, and is a cosy, elegant, relaxed restaurant serving quality, locally sourced food, in a great atmosphere.

My guest and I dined at The Coal Shed on a wet summer's day, and as soon as we entered the restaurant the buzz of the other diners was immediately obvious, with students celebrating their graduation with their families, business professionals who looked like they were having a great time entertaining clients, and there were also a few holiday makers enjoying their lunch time treat away from the rain and wind!

*... is a cosy, elegant,
relaxed restaurant*

We were welcomed by a charming waiter, who sat us in the window table, and who brought us a lovely cold glass of sauvignon blanc and a refreshing gin and tonic, which we enjoyed whilst we perused the menu.

I chose the Asian Pork Belly that was on the specials of the day menu, and was absolutely delicious, so much so, I have suggested they put this on the à la carte menu as I would choose this dish again and again, as the meat was tender with crispy crackling and the Asian spices were perfect. My guest chose a couple of Oysters, which she looked very happy with!

The Coal Shed is known for cooking great steaks over burning charcoal, the best way to cook meat and fish in my opinion, so my guest chose a Fillet Steak, with Chips and Onion Rings, whilst I chose the Black Angus Steak Burger with a side of Macaroni Cheese. Both meals looked rather large when they arrived, but twenty minutes later every morsel had disappeared from our plates, and every mouthful was thoroughly enjoyed! There is a large selection of Steaks to choose from, as well as Lobster, Monkfish, Lamb, Turbot and Vegetarian options.

For desserts we were offered Elderflower Pannacotta, Poached Peaches, Chocolate Delice and Calvados Parfait, but we chose Honeycomb and Rum and Raisin Ice Cream, that we paired with a deliciously sweet dessert wine.

As well as the à la carte menu, the restaurant also offer special lunch menus as well as pre-theatre menus from Monday – Thursdays from 12pm-4pm and 6pm – 7pm and this costs £15 and always includes a steak option. On Sundays they offer a 35 Day Dry-Aged Roast Sirloin of Black Aberdeen Angus Beef on the bone for £38 for two.

There is also a private dining room – The Chef's Dining Room – that seats 14 people and is a great option for special occasions and exclusive hire of the whole restaurant is also an option.



Albert's Table

49C Southend, Croydon CR0 1BF

Telephone: 020 8680 2010

It seems that Croydon is currently enjoying a regeneration, and due to its great train connections (16 minutes to central London), along with the plans for a new Westfield shopping centre, it is becoming a desirable location for many families and young professionals. In the light of this, there are some interesting and exciting restaurants popping up in the area.

We had been recommended Albert's Table, which is approaching its 10 year anniversary having opened in 2008, and is well known locally for its reputation for good food. There is a mainline train station in South Croydon, and the restaurant quarter is only a 5-6 minute walk from here (depending on your footwear!). Otherwise, it is a 10 minute taxi ride from East Croydon (this is also easily walkable within half an hour) making it an easily accessible spot.

Albert's Table is listed in the Michelin and Hardens Food Guides, and offers a real alternative to travelling to Central London for a memorable meal out. It is owned and run by Joby Wells who spent most of his career working at a senior level in some of London's most prestigious Michelin starred restaurants. In 2008, he turned his expertise into Albert's Table.

The restaurant itself is split into two sections, making it feel suitably intimate for a romantic meal, whilst having sufficient space to cope with much larger groups. On the evening we visited it was pleasantly busy on both sides. The muted lighting, crisp white table cloths and comfortably-chic interiors all hinted at a fine dining experience ahead, and we were not disappointed.

Offering innovative British cooking, the menu at Albert's Table changes regularly, whilst offering a few staples, which are always on the menu and represent firm favourites such as beef and chicken breast. The options are £28 for 2 courses or £35 for 3 courses. There is also a Vegetarian and Vegan menu with starters priced at £6, main courses £12 and desserts for £7. A vast variety of fresh local produce from Surrey, Sussex and Kent are used and, according to the website, much of the food is picked the day it is served.

There are a good range of starters, including Grilled Lyme Bay Scallops with lightly curried cauliflower (£5 supplement), Ox Tongue with horseradish and pickled vegetables, and Little Rabbit Pie with bacon, rosemary, and spiced carrot puree, but I opted for the Shortcrust Tart of Dorset Crab, rouille dressing and fine leaves. My wife opted for the Onion Bhaji, with lightly curried cauliflower, pomegranate and mint, from the Vegetarian menu. The homemade bread served prior to this was absolutely delicious, coming fresh from the oven, and was a dangerous threat to the rest of the meal, in that we could quite easily have gone in for a second and third piece, which would have left little room for what was to follow! However, we



were glad that we had resisted temptation, and both devoured every morsel of our starters.

With too many sumptuous dishes to choose from for the main course, I struggled to make a selection, as usual. However, after guidance from our waitress, I opted for the Grilled Rump of Dry Aged Hereford Beef, with girolle mushrooms, onion gravy and triple cooked chips (£5 supplement). The beef was pink and tender, and complimented well by the rich, sweet onion gravy. My partner enjoyed the Pan-fried Sea Bass, with gnocchi potato, shrimps, fennel, chilli, bisque sauce & fresh coriander. This, she found to be full of texture and not overpowered by the accompanying flavours of fennel and chilli. I took the empty plate beside me to be evidence of how much she had enjoyed the dish.

The wine list offers an excellent choice, with many of the wines available by the glass or bottle (starting at £22 a bottle, and a very reasonably priced selection overall). We should also give mention to Albert's Prosecco with fresh, seasonal fruit mixed in the kitchen – this seemed popular with other diners during our visit.

After a short respite, we were ready for dessert. On consultation, once again with the waitress, she recommended the Chocolate Tart with vanilla ice cream, and honeycomb. My arm was twisted, which as you likely know is easily done when chocolate is involved. Wow! This tart was superb, and complemented perfectly by the delicious honeycomb. It wasn't too rich or heavy, as I often find with chocolate tarts, and made the perfect conclusion to my meal. My wife chose the Blackberry Soufflé with walnut ice-cream, fresh blackberries and blackberry sauce. The soufflé was perfectly light and sweet, contrasting with the plump, tangy blackberries. We'll have to return to give the Victoria Plum Sponge Cake a go!

For people living in and around the suburbs of South London, or further into the South-East, Albert's Table is the perfect destination for a memorable evening out, or indeed afternoon out, as they also offer a very reasonable Set Lunch Menu, available for two



or three courses. We recommend a visit to this trendy quarter of South Croydon to sample what Albert's Table has to offer, and whilst this restaurant is one of the nicest fine dining options in the area, there are also a good many others to sample.