



Little Buddha Amsterdam blends best

By Helen Johnson

After the Buddha Bar concept proved successful the world 'round, it was time for Amsterdam to open its very own branch. Offering a complete night out, Little Buddha Amsterdam blends the best of the orient and the west.



Clockwise:
The wise one himself smiling down
Dim lights add to the atmosphere
Asian inspired cocktails are served at the bar

It has big brothers in capitals such as Paris, London, Dubai, Beirut, Cairo, Kiev, Sao Paolo, and Jakarta and twins in cities the likes of, Las Vegas and Sharm el Sheikh. On March 24th Amsterdam gave birth to its very own Little Buddha Sushi Bar & Lounge, providing the canal city with a new 'eatertainment' option perfectly blending Pacific Rim cuisine with live DJ grooves and top quality service.

Revamped square

It was the perfect time to introduce Little Buddha to Amsterdam', says Sergio Vyent, general manager of the brand new oriental hot spot. 'Amsterdam is working hard on reclaiming the original grandeur in some of the city's key locations. The Leidseplein has been one of those areas to be fully revamped. Next door to us is Jack's Casino. Our other neighbour, Pathe City Theater, will also open its fully renovated doors soon. Making this side of the square an entertainment option to be reckoned with.' More importantly, Vyent – a lounge bar and restaurant managerial veteran – knows Amsterdam was lacking a package entertainment concept like the Buddha Bar Group first introduced to the world from Paris back in 1996. And that concept consists of a perfect blend of Pacific Rim cuisine, accompanied by good lounge music, and served by attentive staff in beautiful, Asian inspired surroundings.

Monumental statue

And beautifully decorated this venue certainly is. The lounge bar on the ground floor, where lunch, sushi and finger food are served, is separated from the À la carte restaurant on the first floor by a feature staircase. It's decorated with both Asian style hand painted tiles on the steps and wooden Chinese checker pieces along the handrail, but neither loud nor understated. The slightly reclining seats around the low tables downstairs are covered with thick cushions, making a sushi night at the Little Buddha not nearly as uncomfortable as a traditional Japanese tatami mat would. And of course, in keeping with the signature Buddha Bar concept, all is overseen by a monumental golden statue of the smiling wise one himself.



it's about the best balance between food, music and ambience.



Fusion delight

Working their magic in the kitchen is a team led by chef Sander Looren de Jong (who made his name at top Amsterdam restaurant Van de Kaart). Together with sous chef John van Dalen and sushi chefs Kazou Ota and Den Chu (both experienced at the local sushi restaurant 'Soho') he will serve up the signature dishes the Buddha Bar is renowned for.

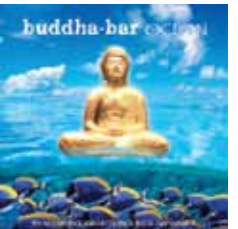
'Internationally the Little Buddha provide the same Pacific Rim and French fusion cuisine as their big brothers do, only with a slightly stronger Chinese influence', explains Vyent. 'Whilst we'll make sure the threshold isn't too high for people that aren't well acquainted with fusion food, we aim to surprise at the same time. There are a couple of special dishes on our À la carte menu that can certainly be called unexpected. Our tuna sashimi 'pizza' with fresh tomato slices for instance. Or our 'taco' with yellow tail and vinaigrette, to name another example. Because of the presentation you might expect to taste 'pizza' or 'taco', but prepare to be very pleasantly corrected!'

And the Little Buddha likes to twist the expectations some more. Vyent: 'In general, restaurants like to focus on the individual. They aim for every visitor to choose their own starter, main course and dessert. At ours, we like to stimulate the pleasure of sharing. Both our sushi bar and our restaurant guests can order a selection of all of our dishes to share, or choose a single signature dish that is made up in such a way it can easily be tasted by others. A family experience, if you like, for any kind of group.'

Buddha Bar balance

When there are no fusion treats left to go 'round, there's no reason to pack up and leave the Little Buddha. On weekdays the resident DJ Zed will spin his tunes 'til one in the morning, on weekends 'til two. 'And we also serve cocktails at the bar, so why go to a pub or café for an after dinner drink, if we offer live dance music with our drinks and bites? Zed beats a hi-fi set any time a day!' Should we now get worried that conversing is out of the question with those low lights and high volumes around? 'Not at all', claims general manager Sergio Vyent. 'The lights are turned down to make people forget their daily routines and troubles. The music is just loud enough to fade out the neighbouring table's murmur. The Buddha Bar concept has been tried, tested and praised globally. I believe in this complete, time out experience because it's all about the best possible balance between food, music and ambience.' Balance – that would make (Little) Buddha proud.

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Clockwise:
The interior also blends the orient and the west
The A la carte dining area [accent op de A. Peter!]
The carefully considered lighting plan
And he saw that it was good.

The popular Buddha Bar music is available on many compilation albums