

WAKING THE DEAD

Could **In Vino Veritas** breath new life into the Brighton bar scene? Barspy went underground to find out.



When a new joint such as In Vino Veritas opens within a spit of one's crib, it demands a peek. And when the dive's previous incarnation, Mojo, was known as Mojo the Morgue, on account of it being as empty as an estate agent's promise (and hence now defuncto), it demands a peek pretty damn quick. It might vamoose next week.

THE GREAT UNKNOWN

I corral three prominent citizens of this parish to join me on a recee and we high-tail it over before the bailiffs beat us to it. A cadaverous whiff still clings to the joint and, once within, my associates and I discover ourselves to be all on our ownsomes. The staff fall on our necks with happy cries and make as if they've not seen a living, breathing soul this side of Easter or at least since the last Red Cross parcel.

We make down the spiral to the basement bar which is all squashy sofas and candles. Here we address our respective thirsts and holler at the bar jockey (accoutred Twenties-style in baggy tweed pants, jaunty red suspenders and flat cap) to summon up some gargle.

My compadre and I order a Sazerac and Caipirinha respectively whilst our squeezes opt for a brace of Margaritas. The various different poisons are listed on the card in order of the date of creation, which is a neat touch.

The Sazerac is pronounced sound, whereas my Caip is too crunchy by half, the gringo behind the bar having used

granulated rather than caster sugar in its construction. Our popsies' Margaritas come with thin crusts of sugar clinging to the rims of the glasses rather than the expected (and requested) salt, and are given the thumbs-neither-up-nor-down. The requested glasses of Adam's Ale never arrive despite us putting the blast on the waiter not once, not twice, but thrice.

We put these gauche executions down to first week nerves, but can't explain (or excuse) the hullabaloo emitted by the hand-operated ice-grinder whose grrr-splutter-whirr-crunch you can hear a block away and which prohibits social intercourse more than somewhat.

It is steaming hot in here, too, and we are soon stripped down as far as local by-laws will permit.

THE DISH OF THE DAY

We order Bellinis all round (nice and peachy, though a tad too sweet) and choose a few tapas to toy with. This is our eureka moment. The heat of the room, the noise of the iceman and the indifference of the initial cocktails are all forgotten as we tuck in to some exquisite little throat-pleasers, brought by one of the prettiest girls ever to step into shoe leather. All score a unanimous 10 out of 10.

We then discover the wine list. There is enough here to sink a battle cruiser, with a couple of dozen champagnes, 50 or so white wines, 70 reds and a dozen sweetsies.

There are some real lemon popsicles here at prices to gladden the stoniest heart, and we order The Ned Sauvignon Blanc from Marlborough (£24) to loosen us up a little.

Dinner is served and my colleagues give their food a resounding vote of

appreciation, dining with delight on such tidbits as scallop and mango brochettes, duck breast with pomme Sarladaise and rib eye steak with pommes frites.

I, though, get all sore up about my rack of lamb, which arrives stone cold and raw in the middle, is sent back kitchenwards.

Once again, all is forgiven thanks to a bottle of an astonishing 2005 Savignyles-Beaune (£39) followed by glasses of Hildalgo PX (£5.25) with glorious poached pears in red wine.

And you know what? I'm off there again tonight. ♣

Décor: ★ ★ ★
Food: ★ ★ ★ ★
Atmosphere: ★ ★ ★
Drinks: ★ ★ ★ ★
Service: ★ ★ ★
VFM: ★ ★ ★ ★
Classy wine quotient: ★ ★ ★ ★



In Vino Veritas

103 North Road, Brighton, BN1 1YW
Tel: 01273 622522
www.in-vino-veritas.co.uk
Open Mon-Sat: 11am-2am & Sun:
11am-11pm