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Brassaii

Ah, King West. Your restaurants are tiny, and your bathrooms are always in the basement, exposing the smelly scars within the finest places. For those of you wondering what happened to *Brassaii*, just West of Spadina on King, they've been closed for a little bit now, buffing out whatever scars they had. Now, they have new management, new head chef *Bruce Woods* from *Centro*, and an extravagant new interior that's almost doubled in space.

Opened for almost six years, old *Brassaii* was really only known to its regulars. Being tucked, almost hidden away from busting King, it takes a second to find, especially since there has been a bunch of construction guys in the way. But, the construction guys have done their job well. Designed by the *Designers Agency*, (yes, the agency that used to have that HGTV show *Designer Guys*), they explain the interior as if it's a seamless performance. Every nook and cranny of this new place has been hummed and hawed over, and executed well. Their goal was to make the place completely versatile, and utilize every inch to its full potential, as opposed to old *Brassaii*, which was more like a classy cafeteria with one long bar going all across the one room.

The building in the past used to be a garment factory of some kind, so they gutted all the drywall and played around with the original warehouse feel of the building. Upon entering, the first things visible are the high brick archways just behind the hostess desk. The front entrance used to be a loading dock, so after the walls were first peeled back, and uncovered an old elevator that they didn't even know was there. It's not allowed to be used, but they've put a piece of glass over it and some funky lights in it, making it one of their primary décor items. After that, the whole interior is like a modernized piece of the Distillery District.

Just beyond that is the Café-by-day, Lounge-by-night part, done up with cooler neutral tones, hardwood floor, and large semi-circular booths. This part was designed in tandem with their new brunch menu with a sort of noon-afternoon coffee kind of feel to it. At night, they pull out the middle tables, giving it an evening lounge feel, with the bar in the middle being the centre of attention. This bar also does a full 180, leading eaters into the dining room area. The dining room is the closest thing to old *Brassaii* that was kept, being that it's very large and open with tables close together, except that it's way to fancy to be described as a cafeteria. Tables so black and sleek, you could use them as mirrors and brand new woven chairs... it's obvious that they need a little wear and tear in them before they'll fit in with the rustic environment.

Often, this is where the tour ends, but no. Next is the Library, where they're planning to host events of all shapes and sizes. Enter through the extremely large wooden doors that they had flown in from Egypt (necessary? Apparently), customers can book the space out, or *Brassaii* will house the entertainment. Full plasma TV's, a projection screen, authentic fireplace, and full bar, it's doubtful that much reading will be going on here...unless there's a proposal copy being handed out for a conference (in which case, the bar is beyond necessary). It also has its own special entrance, so if you're planning on going to a VIP event, you don't need to walk past any other minions to get in.

Even still, new *Brassaii* doesn't stop there. There's the little wine cellar/study area just beyond that. The wine cellar is very dimly lit, with a glass wall covering stacks of wine bottles, giving it a very 'cigar and brandy' atmosphere about it. Just through the doors in between the wall of wine bottles is the study, where they're planning on putting a bookcase. This room really does have a study feel to it, with a plasma screen TV available for conference meetings, etc.

So finally, after you decide if you want to lounge in the café, dining room, library, wine cellar, or study, the toughest decision comes: which drink you feel like. Award winning Mixologist and new Bar Manager, Jordan Bushell, with the help of the staff, has put together quite the extravagant cocktail list. The 'Not Your Average Joe' drink is like a cucumber-flavored Tom Collins, while the Autumn Shrub is the most tart and potent apple cider-like drink you'll ever have (strongest, too). But, ones like the Autumn Shrub will likely be gone soon, as the list will be changed up according to season. Other drinks include lemon juice with egg whites, homemade grenadine, apricot brandy, and other strange things you've never heard of putting together in drinks. The average glass is about \$12-\$17, but they're meant to be nursed so you don't rack up a huge bill... fingers crossed, that is.

Changed up menu, crazy unique cocktail list, and rooms tailored perfectly for events, *Brassaii's* had more work done than *Goldie Hawn*. But, like *Hawn*, it likely won't be frequented regularly. If you can afford to make this your regular brunch, happy hour, or dinner spot then congratulations, you're part of Toronto's much loved

upper-middle class (loved really only by you, and business owners... and their marketers). For the rest of Toronto, the poor hipsters, pub divers, and all other people who choose to lack sophistication, they'll go to *Brassaii*, say, once...maybe twice, for a rich friends birthday party.

Location: 461 King St W, Toronto, ON, Canada

Phone: 416-598-4730

Area: King West

Cuisine: Eclectic

Cost: \$\$\$\$ (Expensive)

Hours: Breakfast: Mon. to Fri.: 7:30am - 11:00am; Lunch: Mon. to Fri. 11:30-3pm, Dinner: Mon. to Fri. 5:30pm-Close, Sat. 5pm-Close, Brunch: Sat. to Sun 10am-2:30pm

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