



REVIEW: ZUAYA

Kensington's hidden gem transporting diners to vibrant Latin America

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Nestled in a quiet, unassuming side street just a stone's throw from the ever-stylish Kensington High Street and renowned Kensington Palace, family-run Zuaya serves up Latin American flare in an exciting mix of Brazilian, Peruvian and Mexican tapas. Delivering a perfectly balanced dose of decadence and fiery zing, this hidden gem boasts far more than a delectable fusion menu that further draws inspiration from Japanese and Mediterranean kitchens. Its chic and inviting interiors see visitors immediately leave London at the door and instead enter a world marked by hip-moving rhythms (there's a resident DJ on-hand select nights of the week) and rainforest resembling landscapes – with foliage hanging from the very ceiling and plants adorning almost all the walls. Better yet, behind its statement green marble-top bar, the expert mixologists show off their extensive talents, ensuring that – just as in the South American nations where the merriment surrounding Carnival has seeped into daily life – there's always a punchy cocktail within reach at any time.

Comprised of snacks, ceviche, tiraditos and tartars, salads, tacos and robata grills, the exceptionally varied menu at Zuaya enables diners to curate their ideal lunches, dinners or drink-accompanying small eats according to their own appetites and preferences. The restaurant promotes a shared table dining experience, whereby small plates are placed at the centre for all to tuck into. Fresh, vibrant and slightly sweet, the raspberry gazpacho with feta and pistachio offers the ideal introduction to a menu that champions fusion without the confusion. Further starters worth tasting include the mouthwateringly tender Wagyu beef short rib bao, the juicy beef empanada with red pepper sauce, and the daily croqueta – which, as the name suggests, changes regularly to offer something new especially for returning diners.

With an entire section dedicated to fresh catches from the sea, Zuaya offers ample options for fish and seafood enthusiasts. Whether featuring staple ingredients that have been pan-fried, grilled or left in their purest form (raw), these dishes provide more substantial sustenance and range from visually vibrant creations such as the sea bass ceviche with wild berries to familiar favourites like garlic prawns with chilli and lime, and more experimental delights including the grilled octopus with baked sweet potato. Of course, meat lovers are well catered for here. From grilled Iberian pork with butternut squash to Argentinian sirloin steak with classic chimichurri, and wild rice, shitake mushroom and confit duck. There's also a special steak menu available between Monday and Friday from 12pm to 5pm, with meals accompanied by a glass of house white, red or rose and moreish traditional Brazilian cheese bread for around £30 per person – perfect for business lunches or as an affordable treat while out and about exploring the city of London.



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Seriously not to be missed is the dessert offering, which quite frankly threatens to steal the entire show. On hot and humid summer days, homemade ice cream proves the ideal choice, but for those looking to experience something they're sure to be thinking about for days to come, the passion fruit crème brûlée or the coconut flan with dulce de leche are the options to debate between (order both, you won't regret it!). The former offers a twist on a classic, bursting with the sweet yet tart taste of passion fruit alongside silky smooth and rich custard, while the latter sees *quindim* (an ever-popular Brazilian coconut flan) served up with a beautifully golden caramel-like spread and fresh milk ice cream. For those looking to snap up totally Instagram-worthy shots, this final course is sure to be a winner.

Enjoyed while sitting along the glamorous upstairs bar or outside on the pretty terrace, Zuaya's Happy Hour runs from 5pm to 7pm every Monday to Thursday. The offer works a little differently from the traditional scheme, with the restaurant offering customers a cocktail free of charge whenever they order two tapas dishes. The drinks menu itself features a range of classic and signature cocktails, alongside beer, cider and bubbly. A Zuaya-take on the Peruvian classic Pisco Sour, the London to Lima cocktail not only speaks to the eatery's mission to transport diners away from the British capital but further provides a refreshing tippie you'll more than likely end up ordering more of. It comprises pisco, falernum, lime, agave syrup and egg white. The after-dinner Black Forest cocktail is another huge hit, delivering a sweet, fruity flavour that is not overbearing and makes use of tequila, wild berries, apple, lychee, grenadine and lime.

For those looking to take their work drinks, special occasions or weekend outings to the next level, Zuaya additionally offers a unique tasting experience based on a mezcal that is exclusive to the restaurant, making it the only place in the UK to sample a glass or two of the one-of-a-kind drink. The restaurant's Añejo Huichol utilises the premium tequila-producing company Kah's oldest mezcal reserves which see hand-selected 100% blue agave aged for a number of years in American oak barrels. Speaking of elevated events, Zuaya can be partially or wholly hired out for all manner of private social or work occasions, ranging from intimate dinners to luxurious parties, team get-togethers, product launches and client lunches. Whether large or small, the restaurant's exceptionally attentive team work tirelessly to ensure all ideas are realised according to individual specifications and needs. Zuaya additionally boasts its own catering service for those who would prefer to have the delightful canapes, tantalising buffets and incredibly mixed drinks brought to their choice of venue.

For a journey across Latin America through delicious dishes elevated using cooking practices from around the world, alongside beautifully presented



drinks mixed to perfection using alcohol types renowned across the region, Zuaya in Kensington is the ultimate must-visit. With London's streets often buzzing with bodies and covered in clouds, this vibrant eatery provides the perfect respite, where the sounds, sights, smells and tastes of South American countries are a tempting constant.

