

Escape

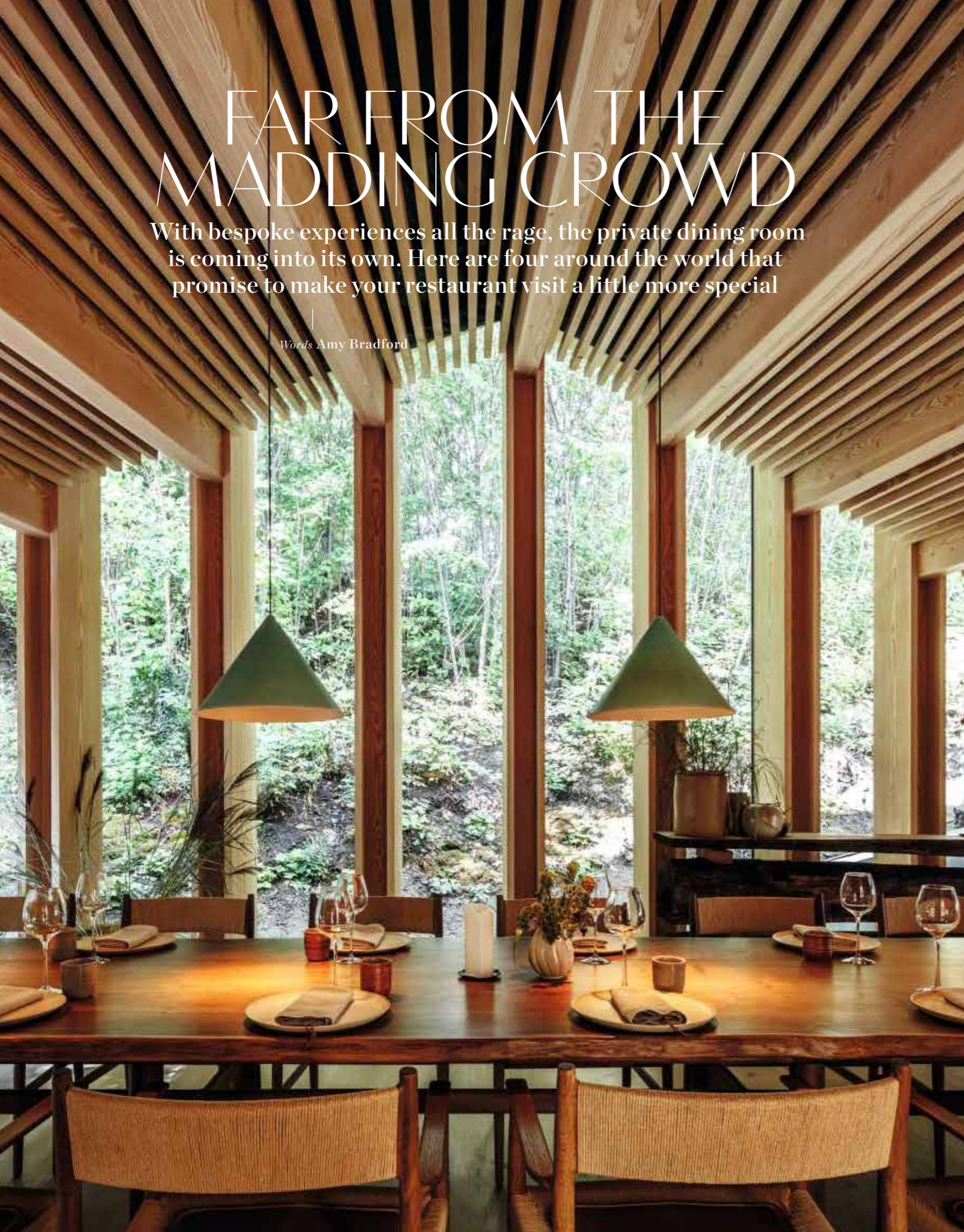


“IT’S A DREAMLIKE PLACE MADE UP OF PICTURESQUE TERRACES, WHERE YOU FIND YOURSELF WANDERING SLOWLY”

FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD

With bespoke experiences all the rage, the private dining room is coming into its own. Here are four around the world that promise to make your restaurant visit a little more special

Words Amy Bradford



ESCAPE/Gourmet

NOMA Copenhagen

LEFT A symphony of warm wood tones greets diners as they arrive at Copenhagen restaurant Noma's new HQ, unveiled last year. The styling comes courtesy of furniture designer David Thulstrup, while the building itself is by architect of the moment Bjarke Ingels of BIG. The space's all-natural look is emblematic of Noma founder René Redzepi's eco-savvy 'New Nordic' food philosophy, which broke boundaries when the venue launched in its original home in 2003.

Ingels' design is a cluster of seven farmstead-style structures that reflects its waterfront locale, overlooking the bohemian commune or "freetown" of Christiania. As well as greenhouses and an urban farm, one of these barn-like buildings houses the main restaurant and, off to one side, a private dining space with a soaring pitched roof. Clad entirely in Douglas fir sourced by Danish wood flooring specialist Dinesen, it's dominated by a huge oak table designed by Thulstrup and made by heritage cabinetmaker Brdr. Krüger. Part of the space is taken up with floor-to-ceiling windows, overlooking a small woodland. All in all, it's a pretty spectacular place to spend an evening.

After the revelation of Noma's innovative dishes – its "seafood season" runs from January to spring, to be succeeded by "vegetable season" in summer and "forest season" in autumn – diners can gather in the convivial fireside lounge, framed by hand-made brick walls. Like the rest of the place, it's intended to feel like home, but better. *Noma.dk*

PHOTOS: RASMUS HJORTSHOU

SCOTT'S London

ABOVE Something of a gastronomic legend, Scott's claims to be London's second oldest restaurant, having started life as an oyster eaterie in 1851. It's been in its current location, on Mount Street in Mayfair, since 1968, and is now firmly established as one of the British capital's most glamorous restaurants. Relunched in 2006 with an injection of Art Deco style by interior designer Martin Brudnizki, the venue already boasted one private dining room, a subaquatic fantasy bedecked with exotic fish and plants.

Now, though, it's gone one better with the unveiling of the Platinum Arowana Room, a bijoux space for six to eight diners tucked behind the main ground-floor space. It's named after one of the world's rarest fish, an Asian species with gold or white scales that can fetch several hundred thousand dollars on the market for exotic pets. You'll soon see why this creature was singled out: Scott's has splashed no less than £6 million on its new dining chamber, the walls of which display original artworks by Renoir, Chagall and Miró and whose floor is inlaid with luminous green agate.

Custom-made mirror-panelled walls and Lalique sconces bring an air of old-world allure that complements the French Impressionist paintings, while hand-gilded, Louis-style chairs glimmer in the soft light. For those fortunate enough to be able to dine here – price is on application – the menu features rare delicacies, such as golden pearl caviar and lobster soufflé with black truffle. *Scotts-restaurant.com*



CRACCO Milan

ABOVE For old-world grandeur, it's difficult to beat the private dining room known as the Sala Giuseppe Mengoni at Milan's Cracco restaurant, opened by Michelin-starred chef Carlo Cracco last year. Signor Mengoni was the architect who designed the historic Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II shopping arcade, one of whose buildings the restaurant now occupies. The arcade itself has recently been restored by Milan design duo Studio Peregalli – aka Laura Sartori Rimini and Roberto Peregalli – and Cracco also enlisted them to decorate his restaurant's interior.

Rimini and Peregalli are former protégés of the late, great Italian architect and decorator Lorenzo Mongiardino, famed for his combination of patrician elegance and theatrical flourishes. There's something of the Mongiardino mystique about Cracco, too: everything looks antique, but is, in fact, a contemporary artisanal creation, right down to the midcentury-inspired porcelain produced with heritage tableware maker Richard Ginori.

Tucked away on the fourth floor, the private dining room is an ethereal space furnished with silver antiqued mirrors, chairs upholstered in ochre and rust velvet, ornate plasterwork and a 1920s-style Levanto marble bar. Food is a mix of the traditional (saffron-spiced risotto alla Milanese) and the surprising (caviar spaghetti), with the promise of a post-prandial sojourn in the green Art Deco-inspired fumoir. Like the elegant boutiques it overlooks, Cracco is a glimpse of an older, more refined world. *Ristorantecracco.it*

BAR PALLADIO Jaipur

RIGHT Bar Palladio is a dreamlike place made up of intimate nooks and picturesque terraces, where you find yourself wandering slowly from spot to spot and soaking up the atmosphere. It's a real cultural mix: set within the Hotel Narain Niwas Palace, built as a private mansion in 1928, it fuses Mughal style with European cuisine and a smattering of French antiques. The Swiss-Italian owner, Barbara Miolini, had a long career working at the Hotel Villa Cipriani in Venice before she arrived in India. She was inspired by Venice's iconic Caffé Florian when creating Bar Palladio, which is part gentlemen's club, part jet-set retreat.

A serendipitous encounter with Dutch fashion designer Marie-Anne Oudejans, who was living part-time in Jaipur, helped bring Miolini's vision to life. Oudejans hadn't done an interior design before, but her colourful style turned out to be an ideal match for the palace's majestic interiors.

A breathtaking sapphire blue shade is the restaurant's signature motif, used to maximum effect in one of its two private dining rooms, which seats eight and serves as a tribute to Jaipur's tradition of block-printed patterns. Combined with clean white and cool marble floors, it has a fresh feel that's in tune with the restaurant's Mediterranean food. A second, slightly larger private space features a carved stone bar, low-level antique ottomans and a small, covered balcony. Embellished with ornate fretwork screens and pops of turquoise and orange, it's as vibrant as the feathers of the peacocks that roam the gardens beyond. *Bar-palladio.com*



PHOTOS: HENRY WILSON