

LODGING

THE LONDON EDITION HOTEL

TALIA WOOLDRIDGE



*United Kingdom*

WHERE ON EARTH

UK

# The London



THIS PHOTO The exterior of The London EDITION Hotel.

# EDITION Hotel

by TALIA WOOLDRIDGE

A LUSH FRAGRANCE of citrus, smoke, peppery chocolate, tobacco leaves and floral notes warms me as I move between bustling doormen, attentive staff and departing guests, who swirl through the high Baroque-ceiling lobby and adjoining bar of The London EDITION hotel. This modern, sophisticated seven-floor boutique hotel sits in West London's Fitzrovia neighbourhood, tucked steps away from hectic Oxford Street. The location, built on land purchased by Josius Berners in 1654, initially served as a house for King Edward VII's French lover. After falling into disrepair, it was repurposed in 1909 as the Berners Hotel, a luxury destination with a dazzling reputation for notable guests, including Carl Fabergé.»

MAKES 1 ½ CUPS

### Buttermilk Ranch Dressing

<b>Buttermilk</b> 1 cup	<b>Fennel Seed</b> 1 tsp	<b>Paprika</b> a pinch
<b>Shallots</b> chopped, 1 Tbs	<b>Ground Coriander</b> 1 tsp	<b>Mayonnaise</b> 1 cup
<b>Garlic</b> 1 small clove, chopped	<b>Freshly Ground Black Pepper</b> ½ tsp	<b>Pickle Brine</b> ½ cup
<b>Fine Salt</b> 1 ½ tsp		<b>Sour Cream</b> 1 cup

- PLACE** the buttermilk, shallots, garlic, fennel seed, coriander, pepper, salt and paprika in a blender and process until smooth.
- MIX** the mayonnaise with the pickle brine and when smooth, fold into the buttermilk mixture.
- LEAVE** to infuse overnight then pass through a sieve.
- WHISK** in the sour cream, whisking until you have a smooth dressing.



MAKES 1 CUP

### Lemon Vinaigrette

<b>Extra Virgin Olive Oil</b> ½ cup	<b>Kaffir Lime Leaves</b> 2	<b>Chardonnay Vinegar</b> 2 Tbs
<b>Vegetable Oil</b> ¼ cup	<b>Lemongrass</b> 1 stalk, bruised	<b>Salt</b> ½ tsp
<b>Fresh Lemon Thyme Leaves</b> 1 tsp	<b>Lemon Zest</b> of 1	<b>Sugar</b> ½ tsp
<b>Fresh Sage Leaves</b> 2	<b>White Wine Vinegar</b> 2 Tbs	<b>Water</b> ¼ cup
		<b>Freshly Ground Black Pepper</b> a pinch

- IN** a small saucepan warm the oils, thyme, sage, lime leaves, lemongrass and zest over gentle heat. When the first bubbles of a simmer appear, remove from the heat, cover and allow to cool to room temperature. Refrigerate for 24 hours to allow the flavours to develop.
- THE** following day, remove the infused oil from the fridge and allow it to return to room temperature, then pass it through a sieve and discard the solids.
- IN** a small saucepan, bring the water to the boil and dissolve the salt and sugar in it, then leave it to cool.
- USING** a hand blender or whisk, combine the oil, vinegars, sugar syrup and pepper to make a smooth dressing.

**FITZROVIA IS RUMOURED** to have been named by *Poetry London* editor Meary James “Tambi” after a pub crawl between Fitzroy Square and Soho — a haven for literati and artists in the 1920s. It offers superb walkability to Covent Garden, Regent’s Park and Soho’s array of cafes, bars and shops and the famous Tudor-designed Liberty London fabric store. Famed writers Virginia Woolfe and George Bernard Shaw resided at 29 Fitzroy Square, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge lived at 71 Berners Street. One minute away from Berners Street you can now enjoy award-winning coffee and treats at Kaffeine, a small coffee shop inspired by down-under.

Today The London EDITION’s celebrated and central Fitzrovia address is home to Berners Tavern, a five-star must for many important business meetings and gastronomes — I’m looking forward to Michelin-star Executive Chef Jason Atherton’s modern twist on Britain’s famous high tea. Inside the impressive dining room, I marvel at tall walls filled with framed paintings, a prominent bar and a balanced peppering of muted classic banquettes that deliver indulgent comfort. It’s a perfect blend of modern and period detail, tastefully nodding to Ian Schrager and Yabu Pushelberg’s timeless aesthetic. Every detail throughout Berners Tavern, and the hotel for that matter, is carefully thought out with an artistic theme woven into the décor; even the carefully selected beverage and food menus echo the historic reputation of the neighbourhood.

As I slide into the plush banquette, a glass of crisp Prosecco arrives on cue. Silver towers of beautifully crafted sandwiches displayed on white platters dot the table; they are almost too pretty to eat. The chefs have thoughtfully swapped salmon for a delicious haddock and herbed yogurt for the traditional cream cheese to appease my allergies. Every bite of each sandwich and dessert is mouth-watering, as are the handcrafted teas served from silver pots. Afterwards, I work off the delicious calories with a stroll through Hyde Park.

The next day, after a whirlwind lunch tour through London’s oldest Borough Market, followed by a quick dash through the Tate Modern, I hurry back to The London EDITION Hotel to enjoy a master class on mixology and learn the fascinating history of the eponymous drink at the flagship Punch Room, a quiet reserve hidden behind a heavy wooden door past the lobby. It is considered one of the top four hotel bars in the world by the professional organisation Tales of The Cocktail.

Inside the cozy, oak-panelled den, I’m handed the award-winning cocktail menu: “The Five: Volume III” created by The EDITION’s head bar manager, Davide Segat, and mixologists Davide Leanza and Edoardo Bracci. Leanza and Bracci proceed to spin delicious concoctions inspired by the five elements: earth, air, fire, water and ether, while divulging the origins of punch, a mixed drink of various ingredients born in India in the 1600s. Britain’s East India Company discovered that punch’s juicy, high vitamin C content was ideal to ward off scurvy among sailors. It made a literal splash at Lord Admiral Edward Russell’s week-long officer’s party in 1694, where he fashioned a massive punch bowl from a garden fountain. The bartenders canoed through the punch — 250 gallons of brandy, 125 gallons of Malaga wine, 1,400 pounds of sugar, 2,500 lemons, 20 gallons of lime juice and 5 pounds of nutmeg — in 15-minute shifts to avoid getting drunk off the fumes! The fête lasted until all the punch was drunk and silk canopies were positioned over the fountain to prevent rain from watering down the beloved drink. Dionysus would have been delighted!



NATHAN FONG

**THIS PHOTO** The dining room and bar combines classical elegance with modern flair.



TALIA WOOLDRIDGE

Cook &amp;

UK

**SERVES 2-4 AS A SHARED PLATE**

## Berners Tavern B.L.T. Salad

*YOU WILL HAVE MORE lemon vinaigrette and ranch dressing than you need for the salad, and both need to be started a day ahead. Store any extra in the fridge and use within a week.*

**Romaine Lettuce**  
¾, cut lengthwise

**Pine Nuts**  
2 tsp, toasted

**Lemon Vinaigrette**  
¾ cup

**Ranch Dressing**  
¾ cup

**Maldon Salt**  
to taste

**Thin Croutons**  
for garnish

**Bacon**  
2 rashers, crisped  
and coarsely  
crumbled

**Fresh Chives**  
finely chopped,  
for garnish

**Sun Dried  
Tomatoes in Oil** 4,  
drained and sliced

**Fresh Celery  
Leaves**  
for garnish

- 1 COAT** the lettuce with the lemon dressing and season with Maldon Salt.
- 2 COMPOSE** the salad with the rest of ingredients and drizzle with the ranch dressing.

Punch's popularity soared and the Royals made it the official drink of England. Over time the drink shifted to single servings, for ease and efficiency, and, as the ingredients changed, the modern-day cocktail was born. The storied punch cocktail, and its traditional serving bowl, are available at the London, Shanghai and Barcelona EDITION hotels, where you can order a small or large punch bowl for your table. The EDITION's signature Milk Punch is a favourite due to its difficult preparation. After sampling gorgeously served cocktails and tasty truffle and pecorino polenta bites, I attempt to make my own five-element drink with the flavours: sweet, strong, sour, spicy and weak — weak represented by steeped jasmine and herbal teas.

Next is dinner at Berners Tavern where I am “trolled” — British slang for drinking bubbly from the champagne trolley to start off the evening. Appetizers include toasted focaccia, an Isle of Wright heritage tomato salad and the delicious Berners Tavern B.L.T. salad. For mains, my dinner mates sample the sought-after Berners Tavern mac and cheese, roasted lemon sole with brown shrimp and crushed potato, and a grass-fed Scottish rib eye steak. I order the immaculate Hardwick lamb rump with broad beans, courgettes, Jersey Royal potatoes, maitake mushrooms, mint and salsa verde; it is scrumptious. For dessert, a heavenly peach trifle with Nyetimber (a British sparkling wine) jelly, cardamom yogurt and peach sorbet arrives beautifully prepared alongside two flawless ganache: chocolate and raspberry, and peanut and chocolate, along with toasted peanut mousse and salted caramel ice cream. I am pleased to discover a dairy-free gin and tonic flaming Alaska with cucumber, hibiscus and juniper that is dramatically torched by our astute server, who tells us of a private dining room for 14 above Berners Tavern with a stunning modern, long custom dark walnut table. It sounds marvellous.

As we graciously conclude the impeccable meal, I steal away for a nightcap in the bursting lobby bar. Over a refreshing EDITION punch, I bask in the hotel's history and my extraordinary 48-hours in London's fabulous Fitzrovia. **T&T**

**TALIA WOOLDRIDGE** is a Toronto-based freelance writer, fashion designer and music lover.



[www.editionhotels.com/london](http://www.editionhotels.com/london)