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HOTEL FOOD & DRINK



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Clarion Hotel Draken

GOTHENBURG

Strawberry opens its 13th hotel in Gothenburg, with theatrical interiors by Stylt and Olsson Lyckefors Arkitektur honouring the building's cinematic heritage.

Words: Heleri Rande
Photography: © Erik Nissen Johansen

Rising above Gothenburg's historic cultural quarter, Clarion Hotel Draken is a bastion of theatre and entertainment. With 474 rooms, three restaurants and bars, a screening room, spa and library, the property feels more like a house of experiences than a hotel.

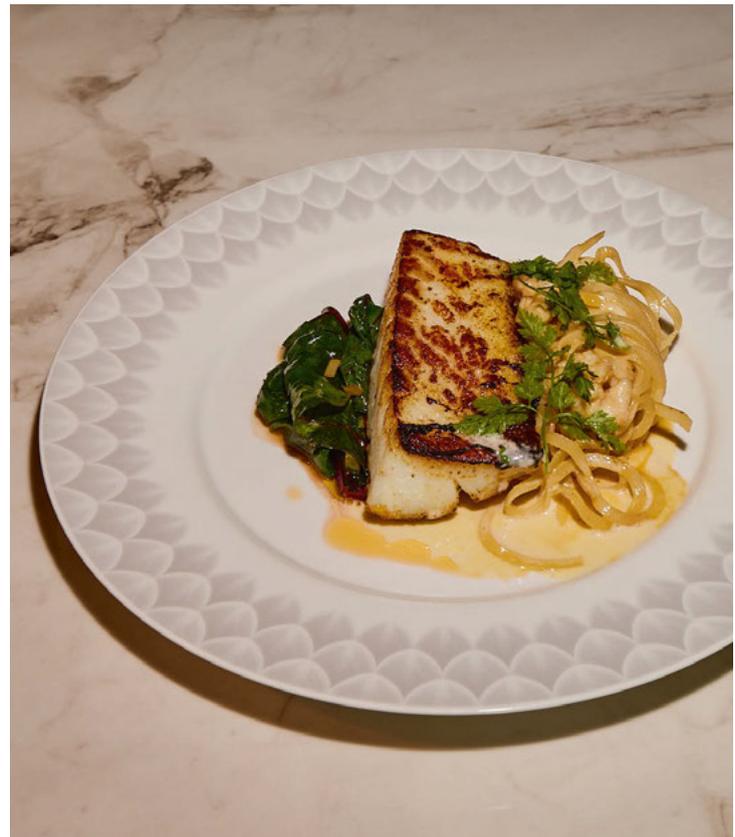
Taking its name from the historic cinema that has been welcoming visitors since 1956, Draken – meaning dragon in Swedish – combines old and new, bringing together the vibrancy and allure of the film industry with the everyday traveller. As hotel group Strawberry's flagship, the project pays tribute to the Gothenburg Film Festival and the city's status as the cinematic capital of the Nordic region.

On entry, the hotel's relaxed set-up of sofas and armchairs, surrounded by bookshelves and quirky coffee tables, and the beats coming from the DJ booth feel as if you have wandered into an elaborate house party. Film directors rubbing shoulders with locals, businessmen in suits and weekend tourists is exactly the vibe that the creators were envisioning.

"We had to find a strategy that people would embrace, taking in the location, the restaurants and bars, the pricing and the concept development," explains Erik Nissen Johansen, founder of design agency Stylt, whose signature aesthetic shines through in the public areas, particularly when it comes to the F&B spaces.

The 70-cover ground-floor bistro and patisserie Heurlins is named after Carl Martin Heurlin, founder of the workers' movement. The eatery has two identities – salty and sweet – to create all-day relevance, from morning pastries and cakes to mid-afternoon fika (Swedish coffee break) and late-night bites with live music. The 'salty' bistro concept serves Swedish West Coast classics such as seafood chowder, fish and chips and crab rolls, but also ventures further afield with more worldly dishes such as tacos and steak frites. The creative food menu is accompanied by an extensive selection of local IPAs, fruity sours and classic pilsners.

On the sweet side, a patisserie helmed by Patrik Fredriksson features a mouthwatering





display that includes the more traditional cinnamon and cardamon buns, Swedish princess cake and Napoleon pastry, as well as the chef's own interpretation of classic French *éclairs*.

Further nods to the building's storied past come in the form of breakfast and events dining area *Vågen*, named after the legendary nightclub that used to exist in the space. Heading up the stairs and through the cosy library, guests can wander further towards the main hotel entrance to the Living Room. Serving the expansive lobby area, the beverage programme showcases signature cocktails such as Blueberry (gin, lemon, fermented blueberries and cava) and classics such as Hanky Panky and New York Sour. A concise menu of burgers, cold cuts, cheeses and salads is also on offer.

The jewel in the hotel's crown is undoubtedly *Brasserie Draken*, designed by Olsson Lyckefors Arkitektur. Spread across the 33rd and 34th floors, the restaurant and rooftop bar offer impressive views over the city. "The culinary concept is classic French but with modern influences. It



is still quite rustic though, we want to keep it simple yet elegant,” explains Sous Chef Charlie Hertzman. A selection of dishes are served tableside, paying homage to classic culinary presentation whilst injecting some theatre into the experience. The steak tartare for example, arrives with its own tray of condiments that are smartly dressed around the precisely cut premium beef. Other plates delivered with such grace are the flambéed tournedos – small thick round cuts from the fillet of beef served with Provençal potatoes and green beans, and canard à la presse for two with an envious list of accompaniments. “No one does the duck like this in Gothenburg, it is really nice to bring back some of the old techniques,” reveals Hertzman.

Just as impressive as the food theatre is a giant dragon sculpture hovering overhead, conceived by Stylt in collaboration with Megalodon Creations. Made from copper tubes and dressed in mesh fabric over LED lights, the fantastical creature stretches 24 meters in length as it curves to greet entering guests.

“We found a true craftsman as a collaborator, Emilio Sheikhan of Megalodon Creations who makes full-scale dinosaurs for museums,” says Nissen Johansen. “He understood the brief and worked with us to bring this beauty to life.” The dragon had to be made in sections to fit into the elevator and then assembled in the restaurant.

Careful attention to detail also comes in the form of bespoke tableware crafted by Andreas Hagersjö, Senior Art Director and Partner at Stylt. “The dragon scales, elegantly tracing the contours of the cups and plates sourced from Bauscher make a recurrent appearance throughout the guest experience,” explains Hagersjö. “Upon closer inspection, the scales compose the monogram ‘BD’ derived from the distinctive Brasserie Draken logo.”

The dragon comes alive when the restaurant is open and can be seen flying overhead from 100m below. “Everything stems from the synergy of the name – the location, the concept, the identity,” concludes Nissen Johansen. “Let’s meet under the dragon.”



IN A BITE

Owner: Balder Fastigheter

Operator: Strawberry

Developer:

Nordic Property Management

Architecture: Erséus Arkitekter

Interior Design: Stylt,

Olsson Lyckefors Arkitektur

Head Chef: Peter Wallin

Sous Chef: Charlie Hertzman

F&B Manager: Sofie Ringstål

Head Bartender: Arber Bamci

Head Sommelier: Anderas Hiller

Restaurant Manager:

Jeanette Medin

www.strawberry.se