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REPORT

10 BEST
TOM YUM SOUPS

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SCENES OF A
FIVE-STAR
HOTEL KITCHEN

TRAVEL

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Lookbook



The 'Butcher Booth', with its white, sanitised tiles, represents a butcher's kitchen turned into a dining room.



An old-fashioned, wood-panelled corridor, located after the entrance, is thematically dissonant from the modern, eclectic interior within.



Tom Dixon's tartan armchairs add a classic touch.

the Stockholm Waterfront—an office and congress centre located next to the station—it tasked design and communications agency, Stylt, to create a fun concept that would attract those who pass by.

The brief was indeed a challenge. "We have to make people visit a restaurant situated in an area in Stockholm that's not known for its evening life," says Pär Svensson, the project manager of Griffins' Steakhouse's design. "We decided that the steakhouse should not feel too exclusive, and it should have a homey atmosphere." As for the fun factor, Svensson used a fictional theme. "We created an imaginary couple, the Griffins, and asked ourselves what the place would look like if they had moved into it." The man in the quirky couple, he adds, is best described as a mad scientist; a caricature of *The Invisible Man*, while the woman is an independent and intelligent character, like Josephine Baker, an American-French dancer and wartime spy.

Little is revealed of this imaginative concept at the restaurant's entrance. A corridor with dark-stained >

Playing with reality

The Griffins' Steakhouse in Stockholm blurs the line between fact and fiction by letting imaginary characters shape its design. By Lin Weiwen

PHOTOS ERIK NISSEN JOHANSEN

Like a hive, Stockholm Central Station, Sweden's largest railway station, receives and releases thousands of people through its gates every hour. The human traffic around the edifice is always in a constant flux; people move about purposefully, and few linger around. When Stureplansgruppen, a Swedish events and restaurant group, decided to open the 400 sq m Griffins' Steakhouse in a ground floor unit of

wooden panels, designed to make guests feel like they are entering an eatery at “the beginning of last century”, lures you into “a false preconception” of the ensuing interior.

As you proceed, rich colours and irregular shapes overwhelm the senses. A 9m long bar, clad in zinc and wood, exudes an industrial chic vibe. “We imagined that, on one of the Griffins’ travels, they found an ornamented wooden panel they liked, and mounted it onto the front of the bar,” quips Svensson. Look carefully and you’d spot traces of hammered henna-like patterns on the zinc surface, too.

On the ceiling, a zinc box runs parallel above the length of the bar, enclosing a one-kilometre long semi-transparent fabric, which is twisted and mounted on curtain rails and lit by LED lights. The overhead décor looks a little otherworldly with its gill-like textures and luminous glow, and the low ceiling only accentuates its presence.

Svensson downplayed the low height of the premises—about 2.6m—by installing “islands”, which serve as “separate spatial solutions” within the existing space. The ‘Butcher Booths’, for example, exemplify this idea: these dining cubicles, which seat up to eight guests each, are



A zinc box enclosing a semi-transparent fabric above the bar is one of the restaurant’s focal points.

Organised chaos: the wild jumble of colours and textures encourages the observer to form his own story behind the décor.



Meticulously handmade Victorian lampshades serve as a talking point for the guests.



“If the interior stirs their imagination and they ask why it looks like it does, then we have achieved our goal.”

lined in white tiles that allude to the sanitised environment of a butchery. Attached to the cubicle’s exterior are oversized metal hooks, which, instead of hanging meat, now hold your jackets. “We imagine these booths to be the kitchen of the Griffins,” reveals Svensson.

The eccentricity continues with the structures of metal water pipes that appear to segment the restaurant and resemble “laboratory pipes used by scientists”. Sheets of semi-transparent glass held between them accentuate the contrast of textures between the two materials. Tall, plush tartan armchairs by Tom Dixon let you unwind lazily with pre-dinner cocktails, while semi-circle brown leather booths by Elmo Leather offer a loungey, comfy option to enjoy chefs Karl Ljung’s and Christian Hellberg’s meaty fare, such as beef tenderloin or roast reindeer fawn.

There is an incongruity in the overall look of Griffins’ Steakhouse, an irreverent, bohemian spirit. But Svensson isn’t concerned about the randomness in the design elements. “The last thing the Griffins would have liked is a design that is consistent,” he remarks. “That would have been contradictory to their eclectic lifestyle.

“We don’t think it’s important that guests understand the story behind the design. If the interior stirs their imagination and they ask why it looks like it does, then we have achieved our goal.” e



Metal pipes run throughout the restaurant, lending the interior an illusion of a laboratory experiment in progress.