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FOR PEOPLE WHO LOVE TO *read*, LOVE TO *eat*, AND LOVE TO *travel*

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to

Summer

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THE DYLAN AMSTERDAM

by ELYSE GLICKMAN

WHENEVER A NEW HOTEL OPENS IN AMSTERDAM, travellers notice. Even at major chain hotels, wit, whimsy, and self-aware design built into the structure — whether modern or historic — announces that you are in The Netherlands. The decor at The Dylan Amsterdam, curated with the modern traveller in mind, references 500 years' worth of history and a nod to the many artists who left an indelible imprint on culture worldwide — from Rembrandt to Van Gogh and contemporary artists like painter Janine van Oene and photographer Viviane Sassen.

The Dylan stands on the grounds once occupied by The Duytsche Academie theatre, framed by a stone facade created by Dutch architect Jacob van Campen in 1638. It was a hub of culture and society for a century, drawing in performers and patrons that included Antonio Vivaldi, the Prince of Orange, the Russian Tsar, the Elector of Brandenburg, and Rembrandt van Rijn, who found himself inspired by the dramatic stage lighting and costumes. Jacob van Campen's facade is now artfully integrated into the hotel's entrance and access to its restaurants, Bar Brasserie OCCO and Restaurant Vinkeles.

Inside, windows frame the storied skyline and interior courtyards. The 41-room and suite property stands out among other five-star accommodations, striking a sweet spot between modern luxury travel and Amsterdam's history. Established in 2009 as The Dylan Amsterdam, it maintains an exclusivity while successfully avoiding becoming too stuffy, even with all the luxurious trappings. Refined jewel tones like topaz, blue and amber, artwork and antiques are offset with warm woods.

The hotel is also a perfect personification of the Nine Streets, one of the city's most lifestyle-driven neighbourhoods, thanks in part to its many brasseries, bistros, fancy food shops and global cuisine eateries. Within this eclectic setting, The Dylan Amsterdam's two acclaimed restaurants regularly set standards that attract visitors and residents, referencing traditional Dutch cuisine and international cultures, including former colonies and territories in Asia and Latin America.

The aesthetics set the mood for a stay that is at once comforting, luxurious and approachable, reminiscent of a well-to-do aunt or uncle's apartment. Upon my arrival on a clear and crisp morning two weeks before Christmas, I was served a hot non-alcoholic cider drink and a gingerbread-cake hybrid while final preparations were made in my room. More treats awaited in my room — a chocolate ganache cake and a small box of wine gummies wrapped in a box with an image of the hotel. A decadent just-baked chocolate cookie greeted me with turn-down service after a busy day in town. »



PHOTOS FROM LEFT Fine dining at The Dylan Amsterdam; The original gate.

“We try to make everything as personal as possible, especially when food is involved,” says General Manager Sam Hilken on the role that edible amenities play in The Dylan Amsterdam’s guest experience. “There is always something surprising, whether it’s a choice of tea and small snack when guests check in at reception, in the rooms, and at our restaurants. You will see this with the amenities in the room, as well as the personal service that adds to the Dylan experience. What we do should be recognizable, welcoming, and informal yet make the guest feel well-cared for even down to the nicely pressed napkins.”

Restaurant Vinkes, a Michelin star attraction since November 2009 and recipient of a second star in 2023, remains one of the hottest fine dining tickets in town. The kitchen focuses on delicate French cuisine that is not only a refined mixture between classic and contemporary techniques but also a showcase for locally sourced ingredients. Tucked into the space of an eighteenth-century bakery, it honours the building’s past through the decorative use of wooden ovens once used for baking bread for the Old & Poor People’s office which stood on the grounds once occupied by the theatre. Through top Dutch interior designers, the restaurant offers a genteel and sumptuous setting with a view of the hotel’s courtyard.

Bar Brasserie OCCO, an after-work favourite for local professionals, according to Hilken, is a cosmopolitan eatery with witty, theatre programme-inspired menus highlighting handcrafted cocktails and creative takes on brasserie fare. Executive Chef Jurgen van der Zalm seeks out collaborations with regional suppliers, growers and artisans who take genuine pride in their products. Highlights of OCCO’s menu include steak tartare and a Caesar salad. However, ramen noodles are the favourite of OCCO’s regular customers.

Chef van der Zalm only uses ingredients of premium quality for the seasonal Chef’s Signature Menu. In early December, the first course was an elevated celeriac soup with pheasant leg confit and the main a refined take on *Hazenpeper* (rabbit stew) atop tagliatelle, accompanied with roasted brussels sprouts with bacon and gingerbread bits. Pineapple upside-down cake with dulce de leche and hits of rosemary and Szechuan pepper rounded out the meal. At daybreak, the OCCO dining room takes on a country inn feel with a large spread of freshly baked breads and pastries, small yogurt parfaits, classic meat and potato sides, and made-to-order egg dishes.



PHOTOS FROM TOP The Dylan Amsterdam entrance on Keizersgracht; Restaurant Vinkes; Loft suite.





THE DYLAN AMSTERDAM

"The High Wine in Bar Brasserie OCCO is our own interpretation of the high tea," said Hilkens about the hotel's signature happy hour hybrid, a tasting of four wines with matching amuse-bouche bites presented inside a beautiful box with The Dylan Amsterdam logo. "I think it's a hit because of F&B Manager Natasja Noorlander and her team enjoy a reputation for perfectly matching wines and food," Hilkens added.

Under the direction of Dutch interior design firm Studio Linse the lounge adjoining OCCO is a space with a distinctive personality blending influences of Hollywood Regency and Belle Epoque, expressed through velvet sofas, leather appointments, round marble tabletops, fireplace (particularly in winter), patches of exposed bricks and bold ceilings with black beams. The half-round bar serves as a focal point, tastefully lit by a copper chandelier.

"We have a very good eye for detail and a constant pulse on the quality that our guests expect," affirms Hilkens. "What makes us stand out is management, design collaborators, and kitchens that have kept the heritage of the hotel intact, while subtly adding modern touches guests can see and feel."

ELYSE GLICKMAN is a freelance writer and regular contributor to **TASTE&TRAVEL** based in Los Angeles.



MAKES 28 CROQUETTES

Dutch Shrimp Croquettes

SHRIMP CROQUETTES are a popular appetizer in The Netherlands. This recipe is from Bar Brasserie OCCO at The Dylan Amsterdam.

Filling

Butter 60 g

Madras Curry Powder 1 tsp

All-Purpose Flour 80 g

Chicken Stock 200 ml

Leaf Gelatin 1 sheet, soaked

Shrimp¹ 300 g, shelled & patted dry

Tabasco 6 drops

Salt & White Pepper to taste

Garlic Powder to taste

Breading

All-Purpose Flour as needed

Breadcrumbs 150 g

Eggs 3, whisked

- 1 MELT** the butter in a pan on a low heat and add the curry powder.
- 2 ADD** the flour while stirring continuously to make a roux.
- 3 ADD** the stock and bring to a boil while stirring to make a smooth mixture.
- 4 SQUEEZE** excess water from the gelatin sheet and stir well into the mixture.
- 5 ADD** the shrimp to the mixture.
- 6 STIR** in the salt, pepper, garlic, and Tabasco. Cool the mixture in the fridge.
- 7 WHEN** cooled down, divide into portions of 25 grams and shape into croquettes.
- 8 BREAD** the croquettes by dipping in flour, then egg, then the breadcrumbs.
- 9 HEAT** the vegetable oil to 170°C/338°F and deep fry the croquettes until golden, about 4 minutes.

¹ The croquettes are traditionally made using small grey shrimp caught in the North Sea. If using larger shrimp, cut them into smaller pieces.



The Dylan Amsterdam
www.dylanamsterdam.com