

Broadway Bars for a Newport New Year

Shhh ... I'm about to let you in on a secret, but you mustn't tell the New Yorkers: Newport has its own Broadway street, where musicals are not the name of the game, food and drinks are. And if you're looking to get away from the crowds, the tourists and the \$18 cocktails, this is the perfect escape. This year, why not make your New Year's resolution to stray off of Thames, go where the locals go and try to blend? Or, go where the locals go, take a large group of Greeks with you, and forget about blending? That's what I did, but the choice is yours.



We began at the stroke of happy hour on a Friday evening at Salvation Café, which boasts THE coolest space. Tiled bar tables, checkered floors, ceiling decorations, hanging lights, paintings. There was a hidden window nook with flowered pillows where our party of five was seated. Some of us were hungry (ahem), and some of us had eaten lunch at 3pm, so we ordered modest mezes with our drinks.

The cocktail list had something for everyone, so we ran the gamut: a Salvation Margarita (with a grapefruit and elderflower touch), Salvation Sangria (red wine, peach brandy and touch of ginger), Island Palmer (sweet tea vodka and lemonade), the Fruity Cougar (Tito's vodka, raspberry and pomegranate), and a cranberry juice (for those who are expecting babies in January).

I ordered the Island Palmer without closely examining the ingredients, which included not only Deep Eddy Sweet Tea Vodka, but also Fisher's Island Vodka and Single Malt Infused lemonade. I was buzzed after the first sip! The margarita had a nice tartness to it (said Panos: "Not everyone might like the grapefruit, but I find it enjoyable."), the cougar was indeed fruity and the sangria was perfect by everyone's standards except Odysseus (yes, that is his real name), who found it sweet. Then, appetizers.

We ordered flatbread, and I single-handedly ate half of it (butternut squash, pine nuts, and goat cheese: the trifecta of all that is good in this world); hummus (the pita bread received high praise from everyone, and given the judges, that's a ten); and Red Thai Curry mussels, which came in the magic hat of shellfish: We kept taking mussels out, yet the pot never ran dry. It was something of a miracle.

Two more friends arrived, and it was time to head out. We crossed the street and stepped inside The Fifth Element.



The venue claims to be “Where bar meets grill,” and that’s how it felt. To the left was a fine dining area, and to the right was an exciting bar scene: high-tops, an extended bar bedecked in Christmas lights and its own interior waterfall (!), a view of the kitchen where the oven’s flames swallowed whole pizzas, and a cluster of well-dressed patrons who seemed to be enjoying a holiday party. A happy buzz was in the air.

We ordered drinks while a large bar table was cleared for us, and I was overwhelmed with choices. There were two pages of cocktails, a wine list and an extensive beer selection that hung from the ceiling. Espresso Martinis, Classic Cosmos, Newport Storms, a Pink Grapefruit Fizz and a Botanical Garden (Botanical Gin, lemongrass, a dash of rose water) were among our selections. The Cosmo was very smooth—not too sweet, and according to Yelena, the Grapefruit Fizz “tasted like vacation.” I was hoping for a little more rose water in my Botanical Garden (that’s not a euphemism), but overall I was satisfied.

Half of the group ordered meals, and as the “writer,” I petitioned to taste everything. From the classic Margherita pizza to the Brie-stuffed baked apple, the food was phenomenal — and that wasn’t just the strong drinks talking. I asked our waitress about the restaurant’s name (as a fan of the movie by the same name, I required much self-control not to quote it) and she said the brick walls represented earth, the waterfall behind the bar represented water, the flaming oven produced the fire, and she mentioned the “B.S. that floats in the air” as one of the elements, but I’m not sure if it was wind or the secret fifth element.



Next up was Caleb and Broad, a couple doors down from Salvation Café. We found a round corner booth to accommodate us, while a crowd hung around the bar to watch the basketball game. From where we sat, it was very mellow. I admired the wall art, some local and some well-known artists, and was intrigued by the giant painting above us: a yellow and red panda that Panos told me was a symbol against racism. This pub was the perfect last stop: bar snacks and tall boy IPAs. Only one of us attempted a cocktail at this point (the “Zombie,” reminiscent of a piña colada on the rocks), and soon the night closed in on us. It had been over four hours since our journey began, and even though other bars were calling to us, it was time to migrate home.

There is much to enjoy off-the-beaten-path in Newport. Whether you spend New Year’s Eve with old friends or new, thinking about the past or looking to the future, I hope you find many reasons to clink glasses and say, Yiamas! Cheers!

Salvation Café: 140 Broadway
The Fifth Element: 111 Broadway
Caleb and Broad: 162 Broadway
Also nearby
Malt: 150 Broadway
Parlor: 200 Broadway