

Apr 26

Big in Japan Bar [Montreal]

Taste (/?category=Taste)

An unmarked dark grey metal door near the corner of Saint Laurent and Rachel is the only sign of this unique cocktail bar on the Plateau. Push through the graffiti'd door and you're walking down a long narrow hallway draped in heavy gray curtains towards a flickering candlelit space.

There's a unique labyrinth layout to the room that allows the servers to easily move between each seating area. The plexiglass walls guide guests to their spot at the bar or a table, adding to the feeling of intimacy while still keeping the space open.



Big in Japan Bar is the Soyuz capsule of chill cocktail bars. It's perfect for catching up with a few friends. Or a date. Or a solo nightcap. Or an intimate party if you can book the back area. You get the idea.

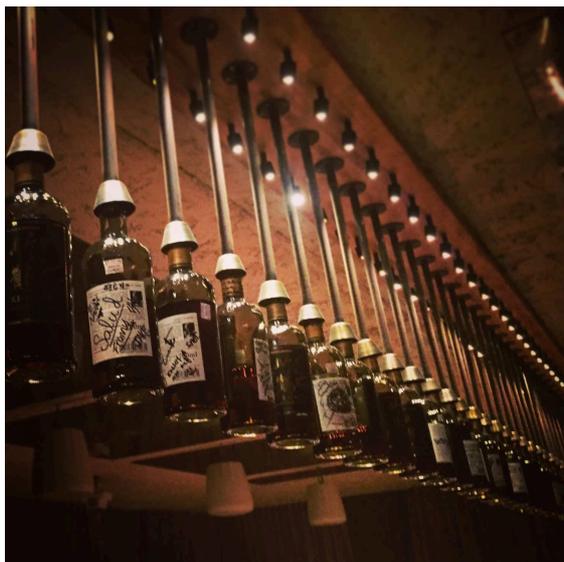
Designed by Bruno Braën of Cabinet Braun Braën, the space alone is worth the visit. CBB is known for their gorgeous restaurant and bar designs focused on the guest experience and fluidity throughout the space. And Braën is a restaurateur himself. In partnership with Catherine Belanger, they opened Montreal's first wine bar Pullman in 2004 and their latest project - the much-anticipated Moleskin - is set to open in mid-May 2016. In a Montreal Gazette article (<http://montrealgazette.com/life/urban-expressions/cool-bars>), he comments on the Big in Japan Bar design...

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I used the idea of how surfaces are used as reflection; I curtained all the walls and added no decoration so that the people in the bar would be the focus of all the reflection, and the bottles. They are part of the decor.



Okay, enough gushing about the room... let's get back to the liquor. Premium exclusive Japanese whisky - signed by their owners - hang from the ceiling down the centre of the room. For \$200+, you too can have a private bottle of single malt Yamazaki that awaits you whenever you stop by.



With a nod to the Japanese motif, the cocktail program offers a mix of classics and originals. The Tokyo Mule is made with sake and a delicious ginger house-made syrup that lets more of the flavour stand out without being too sweet. Another sake offering is the Pomme Cannelle, which is made with calvados, honey, and lime.



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Tokyo Mule / Smokey Negroni / Pasa Doble at Big in Japan Bar

The Smokey Negroni - bitterly perfect with that Campari paired with mescal and sweet vermouth - was highly drinkable. The Pasa Doble was hands-down my favourite drink of the evening. Gin, Chartreuse, thyme, and a Thai chilli syrup shaken together for a spicy, sweet, and savoury kaboom of joy on your tongue. Seriously.

It's craft cocktail at its finest; intimate environment, fresh ingredients, and friendly staff. I suggest going early in the week when it's less busy and sitting in the back bar area for a front-row view of the bartenders.

A couple of notes:

- No flash photos or phone calls allowed (hallelujah).
- The bar is several blocks away from the Big in Japan restaurant. If you're taking a cab to the bar, make sure you give the intersection (Saint Laurent and Rachel) as most drivers will assume you mean the restaurant.
- The gray unmarked door to enter the bar is on the South East corner, between the Patati Patata restaurant and the jewelry store.

To read and see more, here's the Big in Japan Bar review on Yelp (<https://www.yelp.ca/biz/big-in-japan-montr%C3%A9al-4>) and the latest from Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/biginjapanbar/>).

Montreal ([/?tag=Montreal](#)), whiskey ([/?tag=whiskey](#))

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