



MUZSA, BUDAPEST'S FINEST

| BY TRACY ELLEN BEARD
PHOTOS COURTESY OF CASBA BARBAY

Múza, Budapest's first art nouveau upscale craft cocktail bar, resides in the Four Seasons Hotel Gresham Palace in the heart of the city. Múza's resplendent and elegant atmosphere speaks to Budapest's Golden Age and blends the hotel's luxurious past with the desires of today's chic clientele. This new space includes a private concierge library and meeting room, an exclusive tasting room, and generous bar areas. Múza is a stylish and modern space where guests can savor decadent, Instagram-worthy cocktail creations, a tasty mix of Asian and Hungarian cuisines, and an exciting blend of live entertainment from local artists.

WHO IS ON THE SCENE?

Head Bartender Ádám Rédlí and Executive Chef Árpád Györfly collaborate to provide astonishing cocktails with spectacular Japanese dishes cre-

ated with locally sourced ingredients. Desserts made by pastry chef Attila Menyhárt are equally as impressive. The nighttime bar scene at Múza is tough to beat. However, the signature Herend Afternoon Tea experience accompanied by live music is similarly worth a visit. The tea is a weekly extravaganza; locals and visitors rave about the experience.

THE HISTORY

Múza is the Hungarian word for muse, and the bar's concept is a modern take on art nouveau interior motifs that reflect and honor the rich heritage of the Gresham Palace, which is known as one of the most beautiful art nouveau buildings in the world.

THE SPACE

The bar area seats 130 guests. The center stage, typically found in traditional Budapest hotel bars in the 1910s, creates a theatrical ambiance for members of the local community and international travelers to come together for entertainment, food, drink, and inspiration.

The state-of-the-art crystal glasses, the fine art House of Staunton chess set in the library room, the bespoke and hand-painted Herend porcelain collection, the largest selection of Tokaji aszú collection in the world, the refined palinka menu, the uniform collection that local fashion designer, Elysian, designed, and the diverse entertainment program, all provide an authentic representation of the best Budapest has to offer.

THE COCKTAILS

Múzsá's cocktail menu combines past, present, and future by offering 15 signature cocktails that blend local history, creative storytelling, and exotic culinary flavors into a fascinating experience. The menu follows the story of Múzsá from her past origins through the Golden Age—between 1890 and 1914, when Budapest experienced its most significant growth in architecture, becoming one of the most well-known cities for Art Nouveau landmarks in the world and when it became a hub for artists and great minds of Europe—and the future.

The cocktail menu features five signature cocktails in each category that tell the story of their time: past, present, or future. The classics represent past cocktails, present cocktails follow the current trends, and future cocktails are represented in fresh, creative, unique, sustainable ways using technology-driven techniques and locally sourced ingredients.

THE CUISINE

Executive Chef Árpád Györfly creates modern and innovative Japanese/Hungarian small plates and tapas-style bites using locally sourced ingredients presented on hand-painted Herend Porcelain sets. The desserts crafted by Pastry Chef Attila Menyhárt feature exotic Japanese ingredients that are delicious yet unexpected and unavailable elsewhere in Budapest.

HEREND AFTERNOON TEA

The Gresham Palace opened in 1906 and was the most prestigious place in Budapest. Today, Múzsá offers guests a unique selection of pastries and tea cakes served in the famous Herend Porcelain hand-painted sets, The Royal Garden, while enjoying live piano, cymbal, or harp music. Tea is served between 3 pm and 6 pm every Saturday and Sunday.

OUR VISITS TO MÚZSA

This year, my husband Steve and I visited Budapest in the late spring. We sampled a few intriguing cocktails one evening. Steve enjoyed the Dragon's Blood. It was a nutty, flavorful drink made with Macallan 12 Y Double cask scotch whisky, Múzsá's macadamia malt & maple, cherry heering, and Verjus. It was delicious, and the bar notes said, "It is a love spell written in dragon's blood that tells a tale of desire. The color of vitality, heat, love, and passion says it all without breathing a word."

I sampled Ivory, a silky mellow beverage made with lemon cachaca, lychee, sour meringue, chestnut and chocolate pepper horchata. The bar notes read, "A most rare and beautiful flower blooms only in the pure ivory light of the full moon. Her scent is intoxicating; to encounter her is a religious experience. This cocktail was luscious and fruity without being too sweet. I enjoyed a second cocktail, the Violet, a crisp floral drink made with Four Pillars shiraz gin, acai, lemon, Aronia, and cassie.

verbena mousse. This drink was tasty and elegant. Bar notes stated, "The last color on the visible spectrum. Beyond violet, human eyes cannot see. Perhaps in the coming age, our inventions will reveal colors we never imagined, and we will see the world as never before."

On a different day, we attended the Herend Afternoon Tea, where we dined on Traditional Scones with Devonshire clotted cream, strawberry jam, and classic lemon curd, Smoked Duck Ham buns with pickled carrot and elderflower, and Vanilla Rooibos tea.

The food, drinks, and atmosphere at Múzsá are spectacular, and the Four Seasons Gresham Palace Budapest offers glorious modern accommodations while simultaneously stepping back in time to the Golden Age. ❖

