

The Symbols

- ☼ Restaurant and its washrooms are wheelchair accessible
- ☼ Outdoor dining in season
- ☼ Kitchen open past midnight on weekends

COCKTAIL LOUNGES

NEW BLOKE AND 4TH

Toronto's a swishy new supper club proves there's still a place for deluxe drinking dens amid all the bohemian dives. The huge room is both warm—natural wood, plush velvet banquettes, exposed brick—and luxurious, with red velvet drapes to separate the elite (those willing to hand over \$240 for a bottle of Grey Goose) from the hoi polloi. A menu of elegant appetizers is served from 6:30 to 10 p.m., after which the tables disappear, the lights go down and the music goes up, with a rotating roster of DJs spinning hip hop, house and R&B. Closed Sunday, Monday and Wednesday. 401 King St. W. (at Spadina Ave.), 416-477-1490.

CENTURY ROOM

Right in the crush of clubland, this high-end lounge for the 25-and-over crowd is housed in a soaring, 108-year-old warehouse (formerly The Mocking-bird). Painstakingly coiffed Ryan Seacrest clones and sylphs in stilettos vie for elbow room at one of three marble-topped bars against a background of rock, pop, hip hop, R&B and house beats. Closed Sunday, Monday and Wednesday. Cover \$10–\$20. 580 King St. W. (at Portland St.), 416-203-2226. ☼ ☼

CHARLIE'S GALLERY

On a Thursday night at the long wooden bar, owner Gerry Katis mixes a green apple martini, head-bobs to house music and pours a round of free vodka shots for himself and the regulars at the bar. The lengthy martini list and mix of

drinks are just as flamboyant. The popular Passion Pontini is made with Absolut vodka, pomegranate juice, Alizé Sunset Passion and a splash of lime, and high rollers can get magnums of Cristal. Despite the gloss, Empire feels more like an upmarket after-work bar than a Saturday night It spot. Closed Sunday and Monday. 50 Cumberland St. (at Bay St.), 416-840-8440. ☼ ☼

FOUNDATION ROOM

The room seems like a cross between a Manhattan martini lounge and a Moroccan hookah bar; owner Jamil Kamal found all the furniture on a shopping spree in Marrakesh's medina. Completing the picture are a mirrored mosaic adorning one wall, a blue marble bar and cushy banquettes strewn with pillows. The jazz soundtrack is as nap-conducive as the decor. Closed Sunday to Thursday. 19 Church St. (at Front St. E.), 416-364-8368. ☼

NEW HUSH

The polished room, frothy cocktails and requisite thumping beats make Hush a fitting addition to the King and John area. Drinks include a tangy-sweet pineapple mojito and refreshing sangria. The real draws, though, are the wine list compiled by master sommelier Bruce Wallner and the menu of luxe snacks, including a fancified version of s'mores—you can roast marshmallows at the table and sandwich them with truffles and graham crackers. Closed Monday. 303 King St. W. (at John St.), 416-979-9799. ☼ ☼ ☼

180 PANORAMA

Fifty-one floors above the city, Panorama offers cocktails with a spectacular view—there are two wraparound patios for optimal *Sleepless in Seattle* romance. Discreet waiters deliver mixed drinks to a diverse crowd: high rollers in Hugo Boss, canoeing couples and tourists in shorts. On a clear day, it's said you can see 250 kilometres. Or you can just look down at Bay and Bloor and order another

drink. Cover \$5 on Friday and Saturday after 8 p.m. 55 Bloor St. W. (at Bay St.), 416-967-0000. ☼ ☼

PRAVDA VODKA BAR

This dark Russian-themed bar entices 30-something suits with comfy couches, unpretentious service and a DJ spinning loungey muzak. The place feels like a 1960s Moscow drinking house, with plenty of Stolichnaya and Soviet paraphernalia. The jewel-toned Perestroika is one of several vodka martinis on the menu, perfectly balancing vodka, cassis and white cranberry juice. Drink it with a trio of black sturgeon, whitefish and trout caviar and pretend you're Vladimir Lenin (his portrait is everywhere). Closed Sunday. 44 Wellington St. E. (at Yonge St.), 416-366-0303. ☼

REPOSADO

While other Ossington establishments duke it out for hipster supremacy, Reposado, a strip veteran at five years old, is content to forge its own path—one drenched in hard drinks, soft jazz and lots of tequila. Aside from cozy Casablanca appeal (this is a great first-date destination), Reposado carries the city's largest selection of premium tequila (over 100 bottles; flights are a great way to sample the merchandise). For those with more timid tequila tastes, a blood orange margarita (made with fresh juice, like all of the cocktails) is the closest thing to paradise this side of a Jimmy Buffett song. A short tapas menu offers snacks for soaking up the booze. 136 Ossington Ave. (at Argyle St.), 416-532-6474. ☼ ☼

NEW SPIRITHOUSE

The King West version of the old-time speakeasy is predictably over-the-top. An offshoot of the Toronto Institute of Bartending, the semi-subterranean lounge has a massive drinks list and an even bigger slate of spirits. The wait staff are keen scholars of fine libations, eager to expound on the virtues of the Ramos Gin Fizz, and the bartenders are no slouches either: the aforementioned Fizz is a deceptively