

AFTER HOURS

The Copenhagen concoction

*It's not the happiest place in the world
without a reason. SUPRIYA SEHGAL
hops between the hippest watering holes
of the city to see what makes it tick*



THERE is an enduring *joie de vivre* in Copenhagen — after all it is the capital of one of the happiest nations of the world. The summer months of the city are especially relaxed. Nyhaven converts into what one might presume as one of the longest roadside bars in the world, with people sitting along the edge of the 17th century waterfront, dangling their legs below, beer in hand, bobbing boats moored along the canal. Sunbathers armed with sun tanning creams come out in large numbers to take as much Vitamin D as the extended daylight allows. Parks, public squares, the waterfront, swimming pools and markets are teeming with people. There is a decided air of revelry. Come evening and restaurants start getting packed. Whether it's a bite of the classic herring-topped (or salmon, chicken, eggs, pork, beef) smørrebrød (Danish open sandwich) or fine dining with an evening of jazz at The Standard, locals hold on to the long summer days with alacrity. For those who have the

stamina, the night only peaks after midnight. That's when the more boisterous young folks elevate Copenhagen to a prominent party destination with a cool hipster vibe and music from all around the world.

To get a sense of where all the action is, think of Copenhagen in the shape of a hand, its main areas radiating from the city centre called København. Amager, Vesterbro, Frederiksberg, Nørrebro and Østerbro are different zones of the city, split by myriad lakes, canals and waterways. Of these, keep your eyes largely on Vesterbro to see where the late night denizens are congregating. And that's pretty easy, as chances are that you have been directed to the hip meatpacking district (Kødbyen), a neighbouring area to Vesterbro assigned to the coolest eating joints and pubs to resurrect, what used to be a bustling slaughterhouse in the 19th century. Styled after the meatpacking districts of Manhattan, this is Copenhagen's trendiest place to be seen. You can start as late as 1 am on weekends to explore some of the most energetic picks of the area.



MESTEREN & LÆRLINGEN

TRANSlated to “Master and the apprentice”, this cosy, unfussy bar is aimed at dropping any high-strung social standards and gulping down a quick shot of Fisk (fishermen’s friend), a self-styled concoction of tequila with salmiakk mints. Ask a veteran butcher or a regular college-goer at the bar and he’ll facetiously tell you that it is the only way to cleanse your mouth of refined dinner flavours and get ready for a night of reckless debauchery.

If you don’t have the palate for shots, opt for the house specialty, rum and ginger. The old pub atmosphere lingers strong here with very limited seating and a shrunken dance floor. No wonder, most people spill on to the streets amping up the distinct ‘after hours’ ambience of the meatpacking district. If you’re looking at the clock on top of the bar, don’t doubt yourself at just the first drink. It’s not drunk o’clock yet — only the numbers go from 12 to 1 in the reverse order.

JOLENE

THE idea of exploring almost all the bars of the area have to be ditched as the

criss-crossing streets of Kødbyen have something in every corner. One of the most “in-the-know drinking holes” started by two Icelandic women, Dora and Jolene, will suck you into the flourishing pub scene of the city.

Its neon pink sign on the otherwise frayed walls is hardly representative of the kitsch vibe that hangs inside. Sweaty, loud, rowdy and altogether phenomenal — that is Jolene for you. Classic disco meets boogie and then some more with not a stray chance of you making your way from the bar with your drink getting knocked over. When in Jolene, you know you’ve hit the right place for a long night. Don’t let anyone make you believe that this is a mellow cocktail bar.



MIKKELLER

THIS is where old, professional brewing converges with the ingenious experiments of the modern age. Twenty taps and 20 different flavours. But the bar has not a tinge of the rowdiness that a beer-drinking place can soon acquire on a late night. Instead the background music is only drowned in with people immersed in conversations with elbows propped on the elegant wooden tables — testimony to a place that people love to catch up at. Mikeller uses the best and the most innovative ingredients in town. What might come out of the lab could well be Vietnamese Kopi Luwak coffee, chipotle chili or something with lychee fruits.

How to pub crawl?

Follow this sequence not for the ideal flow direction but for the level of escalating inebriation, music genres and timings. The first four lie in a radius of 300 metres.

Mesteren & Lærlingen: Midnight

Mikkeller Bar: 1 am

Bakken Kbh: 2 am

Jolene: 3 am

Woodstock: 4 am

BAKKEN KBH

A showcase of live music, DJs spinning dance numbers and an erstwhile labyrinth of slaughtering halls, Bakken Kbh should be reserved for a late night Thursday. This is when the weekly club THRST comes alive and the DJ hypes the crowd with familiar hits. As the music soothes its way out of the speakers, the dance moves. This is one dancing venue that has made quite an impression on the city's youngsters. Ask any clubbing regular and chances are that they will point you in the direction of the red neon sign of Bakken. This is certainly not the place to kick off the evening, but the one you will be entering last and staying on until dawn. Bakken organises many events and the Sunday morning parties starting at 9 am tend to get marked on the calendar at the soonest.

WOODSTOCK CAFÉ

IN the hallowed land of Christiania is where bumping into burly Icelanders is most likely to be punctuated by running into pop stars. The alternative community's Pusher Street, (though



wracked with illegal herb sellers) is also one of the places that will likely be open after everything else has shut down. Cheap beer, laid back 60s vibe and a melting point of different social strata and cultures is what makes Woodstock Café one of the most distinct places — a veritable rite of passage to have crossed when one claims to know the “hours” scene of Copenhagen. The name points to the 60s spirit which inspired this community to take shape in 1971. The beer served in Christiania's Woodstock is organic so you can tell yourself you are ending the day with something healthy.