



Naturally, Singapore's underground bars are located in the island's cosiest nooks. **DESIREE KOH** checks out some independent outposts where things are anything but the norm.

DRINK EASY



WILD OATS BAR ON THE HILL

Rattan chairs on the patio of a sprawling colonial bungalow (top) overlooking the arts district and a breeze picking its way across historic Emily Hill set the scene for a relaxing time with owner Willin Low's "mod Sin" cocktails. The lawyer-turned-self-taught-chef, who is known for his modern take on local cuisine, has his popular Wild Rocket restaurant nearby.

At the bar, try Wild Oats' rendition of the Singapore Sling, made with Cointreau, lime juice and angostura bitters. Food-wise, go for the trio of speciality hot dogs, feta cheese wontons and everyone's favourite, crispy parmesan-crust chicken wings.

Low says, "Wild Oats reminds me of my grandparents' house in nostalgic Katong, but one that comes with modern cocktails." wildrocket.com.sg

NEKTAR

This elegantly stylish bar (above) is located in a heritage bungalow around the corner from Orchard Road, at the tip of Scotts Road. Sweet concoctions inspired by history and popular culture, or even your dream drink, are alchemised from the finest liquors and ingredients from around the world, such as Sagatiba cachaca (Brazilian rum), a reserve batch of Woodford bourbon, Valrhona chocolate, freshly caramelised orange peel and home-brewed ginger extract.

Bar chef Raveen Misra is passionate about "updating and making old classics to how people like it these days". But he also recognises that "our tastes change as frequently as the times" - so "we've designed our menu to be a guideline as we believe in individual bespoke cocktail enjoyment unlike any other". nektar.com.sg

SPEAKEASY

Somewhere near Chinatown, a daily clandestine operation juices oranges, lemons and limes by hand, and concocts essences and syrups from scratch. Owner Joyce Odom wanted to recreate the spirit of underground salons that flourished during the Prohibition era - when illegally distilled spirits were very rough and needed juices, syrups and tonic water to smooth out the edges, hence leading to the invention of the cocktail.

At Speakeasy (right), the Roaring Twenties live on through Art Deco lighting fixtures and vintage accoutrements. Small plates showcasing modern American bites complement classic concoctions such as the Rockefeller and Greyhound.

A weekend brunch is served to help ease "even the most sinister hangover", Odom says. speakeasy.com.sg



BAR STORIES

Bar Stories (left), located on the second floor of an art-filled shophouse tucked away on rustic chic Haji Lane, is where you'll get to lounge on mid-century Scandinavian teak furniture while mixologists shake up drinks customised for your palate - based on the best produce that arrive fresh each day. You're not going to get classic drinks because processed ingredients such as syrup are not in the narrative, while ingredients like goose liver, tom yam paste and, yes, durian thicken the plot.

Case in point: The Quebec-Oie, a velvety combination of 16-year-old Lagavulin Single Malt Scotch, Cajun spice, honey, fresh lemon juice and goose fat. It was named after a male customer who inspired it.

"Not having a fixed menu is a creative problem," manager Sam Randy muses.

athousandtales.com

NIGHT & DAY

Clamber up to the second floor of a 1950s Art Deco building on Selegie Road and you'll end up at one of the island's most underground bars (above). Opened in 2007 to let artists, writers and designers hang out after shows at its fourth-floor gallery, this unassuming spot is where you'll rub shoulders with the likes of popular fashion designer Jo Soh and prolific creative director Chris Lee. Expect quirky performance art - think a Japanese scientist cooking 50 bowls of instant noodles - and jazz jams.

Graffiti overwhelms the walls - a "language that invites people to vandalise", according to co-owner Kelley Cheng, who wanted a place that feels like home. Well, with kitschy snacks such as braised peanuts and top shell clams, and great dry martinis, there's no place quite like it.

nightandday.sg