

## Golden Monkey

Michael Harden  
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**Golden Monkey will knock the stuffing out of your drinker's ennui from the moment the lengthy drinks list falls open.**

**Address**

389 Lonsdale Street, (enter from Hardware Lane), Melbourne

**Phone**

9602 2055

**Style**

Cocktail/Wine Bar

**Hours**

Open Mon-Fri 5pm-1.30am; Sat-Sun 7pm-1.30am

**Price**

None

For the seasoned barfly, perusing a bar's drinks list can prompt the onset of drinker's ennui. With rapidly glazing eyes skimming over the usual wine and spirit suspects, there begins a slight niggling angst that perhaps, finally, the bottom of the still has been reached and there is nothing new to try. It's no wonder you drink.

Fortunately for the jaded, Melbourne is a city that not only loves a drink, but loves a drink constructed from obscure, bizarre and cult ingredients. Not content to be the Australian city that guzzles more fancy foreign wine than any other, we are now scouring the crevices of the globe seeking to do the same with the harder stuff.

Golden Monkey is a bar that will knock the stuffing out of your drinker's ennui from the moment the lengthy drinks list falls open to a page listing 16 different tequilas, categorised (Blanco, Reposado, Anejo) and ranging in price from \$7.50 to \$24 (Porfidio Anejo "cactus" single barrel). The same trick is repeated for rum, single malt whiskey, vodka, sake and so on. And that is before you get to the artfully constructed cocktails or the lists of liqueurs and digestives.

Impressive drinks list aside, there are plenty of other reasons to be cheerful about Golden Monkey. Down a long flight of steps from Hardware Lane, the bar is a dimly lit cavern filled with Chinese wooden screens, large red hanging shades and rice-paper lanterns, candles burning on low tables, dark wood furniture and leather couches, and waitresses moving about in the moody gloom dressed in cheongsam. There is a 1960s Hong Kong glamour to the place, with nooks and crannies, shadows and darkened corners, at once sophisticated and potentially decadent.

Golden Monkey has its own kitchen at the top of the stairs, supplying an excellent list of mainly



Photo: *Eddie Jim*

Chinese and Japanese-inspired bar snacks that include yum cha faves such as siu mai (\$7), chicken yakitori (\$8), seaweed salad (\$5) and that traditional Chinese dish, shoestring fries (\$5).

But there is no point venturing down all those stairs if you don't try at least one of Golden Monkey's very fine cocktails (all \$16). There are skilled versions and variations on the classics (the gin martini is good but make sure you emphasise dry if you like it that way), but "The Monkey's Favourites" page is where you'll find stunners such as Ladyboy, a pretty drink with bite that floods fresh chilli, coconut and kaffir lime with vodka, adds fresh lime and a dash of Licor 43 and garnishes it with a disc of chilli floating on a small green leaf.

With its great service, delicious flavours and elegant room, Golden Monkey could spark up even the most burnt-out barfly.

Jeers: Using the much-abused Spanish word "tapas" to describe the Asian-inspired bar snacks.

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