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DISCOVER EXPERIENCES THAT DEFY CONVENTION

STARK RAVING MAD

Morning Gloryville believes dawn raves are the only way to set you up for the day. *Ellie Ross* joins in the fun

Raving it up: Ellie partied her way into the day
PICTURE: JAMES CARNEGIE

It's 7am on a Wednesday. So why am I covered in glitter, wearing pink spandex and cutting some serious shapes to electro-pop on a stage in front of 800 people?

The vast warehouse-style room is a moving sea of colour. Everyone is jumping up and down to the music in neon capes, feather boas, flower garlands and fluoro tutus.

A guy sporting psychedelic sunglasses high-fives me while a woman with her face painted blows bubbles through a giant wand.

Behind me, the DJ is spinning tracks that make the crowd whoop, before an MC grabs the mic and bellows: 'Hands in the air, people! You look beautiful this morning!'

And the best bit about this? We're not on the go from the night before — everyone is stone-cold sober and apparently loving life.

I've woken up at the crack of dawn for today's four-hour dance party from 6.30am at Bethnal Green's Oval Space, run by Morning Gloryville.

The concept is simple: people have fun and a bit of a workout before their daily grind.

But it's not just about the dancing - the emphasis is also on healthy living and there are yoga sessions, massages and superfood smoothies on tap around the dance floor.

If you like to refuel mid-boogie, there's a mobile coffee bar that serves a mean almond croissant and is a great place to watch the dance floor action unfold.

Everyone from accountants to doctors, some dressed up and some in normal clothes, are rocking out before work. A couple of guys are even in suits.

It feels raving mad — but also completely brilliant.

Morning Gloryville ran its first early-morning rave in east London in May 2013 — and the 'conscious clubbing' craze quickly mushroomed.

You can now 'rave your way into the day' in 23 cities (and

counting) worldwide — from Liverpool and Leeds to Paris, Berlin, Sydney, New York and Bangalore.

Samantha Moyo, Morning Gloryville's founder, says setting up her company in 2011 was a personal journey that began after she quit her party lifestyle.

'I started looking for something away from the sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll scene, but there wasn't an option,' she says.

'So I set up these early morning dance parties and now people are doing it all over the world so there was clearly a demand for them.

'There's something about starting your day in a community and on a positive note that people connect with. You leave here radiating happiness to other people throughout your day.'

The early-morning raves attract some unlikely candidates, too. 'We have everyone from students to politicians,' Samantha says.

'Now corporate companies want us to run office raves instead of team-building exercises. It would be like a sober work Christmas party.'

Back on the dance floor, I'm working up a sweat to Paul Simon's You Can Call Me Al, then a Florence And The Machine remix.

I count at least three mothers with babies wearing ear defenders and spot a pregnant woman dancing on the stage.

'This is the only time I can come out

with all my friends and be on the same level as them,' she shouts over the music.

'Normally I'm the only one sober. I feel less vulnerable than I would in a club where people are drunk.'

I spend the rest of the morning dancing with fellow newbie Rahim, who woke up at 4am to get here from Essex, and Bekah, who took the day off work to come.

A lady who goes by the name of Fairy T gives me a sip of her apple and spinach smoothie.



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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Synaesthesia is more than just your average pop-up supper club. *Rachel Tarley* meets head chef Jozef Youssef



Masterpiece: Jozef puts the finishing touches to a dish
PICTURE: JAMES CARNEGIE

What if letters of the alphabet left a taste in your mouth, numbers had a texture and your favourite music was red, yellow or blue, depending on the sound?

This is the experience of synaesthetes, who make up three per cent of the population and whose senses interact with each other in a unique way that is hard for the rest of us to understand. Colours have flavours, flavours have textures and textures have sounds; it's a surreal concept and one man is on a mission to help us understand the phenomenon of synaesthesia a little better.

Jozef Youssef, founder and head chef at Kitchen Theory, has long been interested in bringing menus to life in inventive and innovative ways. He's worked at some of the country's most prestigious restaurants — Helene Darroze at the Connaught and The Fat Duck chief among them — but has undertaken a less conventional approach to food through his work with Kitchen Theory.

The team's latest project is Synaesthesia, a series of multi-sensory lunches and dinners giving people insight into the fascinating neurological condition. Playing with colours, smells, words and textures, Youssef aims to challenge people's perceptions and heighten their awareness of their own senses, all whilst filling their bellies with seven courses of genuinely delicious modernist food.

'We're not trying to trip people out,' he explains when we meet at the West London venue where Kitchen Theory is currently resident.

'We're not into sensory manipulation; that's not the idea. The idea is heightening people's appreciation of food using sensory tools.

'We want people to be more aware of the associations they have between colour and taste. If I ask, "What colour is sweet?" or, "What colour is sour?" people might have an idea, but we really want to explore that and make people think about it.

So just how is Kitchen Theory making people think about it? Youssef and his team employ a range of tools, starting the Synaesthesia experience with an amuse bouche comprising of four distinct colours whose flavours don't necessarily correspond to the colour diners are expecting them to.

Elsewhere on the journey, atomisers containing certain scents are sprayed around guests as they eat, to see if the aromas impact on the taste of the food. The 33-year-old chef is also considering experimenting with cutlery size and weight.

'The aim of our events is to encourage guests to walk out

with more questions than answers,' he explains.

'We explain to our diners at the outset that we're going to pose a lot of questions but there are no right or wrong answers. It's all about perception and our own personal associations.'

Kitchen Theory draws on plenty of bonafide scientific research, working closely with experts in the field of synaesthesia from Oxford University. In fact, inspiration for the events concept came about when

Youssef attended a talk on the subject by



'THE AIM OF OUR EVENTS IS TO ENCOURAGE GUESTS TO WALK OUT WITH MORE QUESTIONS THAN ANSWERS'

Dr Michael Banissy at Goldsmiths University.

But Youssef and his team harness the research and apply it to create a genuinely entertaining and informative meal; this isn't simply a science lesson. And it certainly isn't all smoke and mirrors.

'Everything we do has to make sense and draw people's attention back to the dish. Rather than us telling people what the research is, we want to see if they experienced that for themselves.

'Synaesthesia is something we felt allowed us to take people on this journey exploring their own senses but at the same time understanding a bit about what it's like to have synaesthesia and what the neurological phenomenon is all about.'

Food for thought indeed.

Dinner £65, lunch £32. To experience Synaesthesia for yourself, visit kitchen-theory.com