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**Tel Aviv's new home away from home**

**HaMaoz Bar is designed as a fully operating apartment, down to the last detail.**

By EMILY HOCHBERG  
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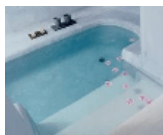


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HaMaoz bar 248.88. (photo credit: )



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It's a lazy Wednesday evening. You're sitting in bed, feet propped up on a table, scotch in hand. Across the apartment, a few friends are playing pool, some others are surfing the web in the office, and in the kitchen, a throng of young twenty-somethings are perched on stools, engaged in light conversation as sweet music drifts through the air.

But this isn't just a house party. In fact, you're not even home. Instead, the scene just described could very well be taking place at Tel Aviv's newest home away from home, HaMaoz, Rehov King George's trendiest new bar.

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Unlike other neighborhood bars, which boast more conventional sleek lounge atmospheres, HaMaoz features an entirely unique concept. The space is designed as a fully operating apartment down to the very last detail. From the magnets on the fridge, and the curlers and scrub brushes in the shower, to the window curtains, and kitchen cookie jars, this is not your traditional bar scene.

And that's exactly how managing partner Yossi Mautner wanted it. "It's not supposed to be a very intense, hardcore nightlife spot," he told *Metro*. "It's a neighborhood bar."

Upon arrival at HaMaoz, the guest is instantaneously presented with three nightlife venues. First, there is the massive outdoor patio for smokers, people watchers, and a breath of fresh air. Inside the main entry sits a traditional rounded bar, the kind of pick-up scene one comes to expect when going out on trendy King George, or Rehov Sheinkin. But continue along the corridor from the front bar and find yourself at home in HaMaoz's back room, a former apartment, recreated into a space resembling an apartment.

"The idea is that HaMaoz is built from 3 spaces, the outside, the main space, which is a light pickup bar, and this space, which is the most interesting space because it used to be an apartment. When we got here we saw an apartment and wanted to keep it that way," Mautner explained. "It's probably the only bar in Israel where the bartender is not closed off and it's an open space. The point is the guests can come and enter the same space as the bartender and hang out with him because it's an apartment. It's like a house party. It's not formal."

HaMaoz is a joint effort between Mautner and his business partners, who were also behind the Shachen and Zorik Café in North Tel Aviv.

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It's his first time as a managing partner after stints as a bar manager at both Shachen and Zorik. And a new full-time career. Mautner previously made a living as a part-time defamation and copyright lawyer. "I quit law. Not that practicing law is bad but practicing nightlife is better," he said.

It's also something he's proven himself successful at. HaMaoz has hosted to packed crowds just about every night since opening on October 29th. "We never do any PR. We don't believe in it. I believe in hard work. People know us around town, it's word of mouth and a concept of generating three things: design, service and music. I don't want to give my competitors the secret to my success in nightlife but the design is very, very important and the music is crucial."

The aforementioned design at HaMaoz is the work of Mautner's "brilliant" designer, Dalia Raveh. "Dalia also designed Shachen and Zorik and we wanted it to be kind of a hang out and just told her to go wild," Mautner said of Raveh who viewed the space as her "muse."

"I was in charge of accompanying her to all these places to buy everything on exhausting 15-hour days of just walking around town with a checkbook, visa card and cash, looking for anything that can work. It's a combination of perfectionism and very specific shopping," he said of the tiny details that accompany each room.

They're details that don't go unnoticed by new patrons. "The computer works, you can surf the Internet, and the fridge works, it's packed with beer and drinks and booze," he says while looking around his new space. Then his gaze stops on the translucent shower stall which sits adjacent to a twin bed adorned with a family of stuffed animals, and a sitting area straight from an Ikea-wannabe catalog.

"The shower works too. And, actually, it's a place where you can sit. There's a table and stools in it and if you want privacy, or are on a date, we can set it up so you can order drinks inside."

Or, you can use it for a more traditional approach. "On the second day we were open some guy got drunk and took a shower," Mautner recalls. "It was like a wet T-shirt contest. He got in and started showering and all the people came to watch and were yelling 'take it off,' and actually, after a while, he did."

But what would seem like grounds for expulsion at any other hip, chic, place is permissible here. "It was okay; we didn't kick him out," Mautner says nonchalantly. "The only thing that pissed me off was that he wore my bathrobe, an expensive robe that we had in there. But I let it go."

This laid-back vibe extends to the entire feeling of HaMaoz, which, literally means "the fort" in Hebrew but is interpreted here to mean "the place to be" in slang.

"It is supposed to be very cozy, very warm, a place where people can come over in the early evenings or late afternoons and have a small beer, sit with their pets, laptops, or read a magazine," Mautner said.

And, of course, you can drink. HaMaoz offers an abundant list of beer, liquor and signature cocktails. "In Venice they have this orange aperitif they drink in the afternoons and it's a mix of Campari, wine and soda, and comes with slice of orange inside. So we adapted that. And we also took common cocktails and added our twist; mango and lychee to the Bellini, to the mojitos we added melon, and pears to the apple martini. And we have another cocktail called New York cheesecake which really tastes like cheesecake."

As for food, diners can enjoy a taste of Bukhara, a region next to the country of Georgia. "We have a Bukhari cook, they make pastries, and one is like dim sum, and one is like a sambusac, with meat and vegetables inside."

Movies also play on a flat screen TV in the "living room." "I've got all the Marx brothers movies, Casablanca, cartoons, Pixar movies, stuff that people would watch at home. I think the black and white films are cool. It adds something to the environment," he said.



"I'm waiting for the time when it starts raining outside and we'll open the curtains and it will be a nice picture to see this apartment in rainy Tel Aviv and people sitting in here, warm, and drinking scotch or playing pool. If you want nature and fresh air, you got it. If you want a sexy atmosphere, you got it; and if you just want a cozy apartment, you also got it."

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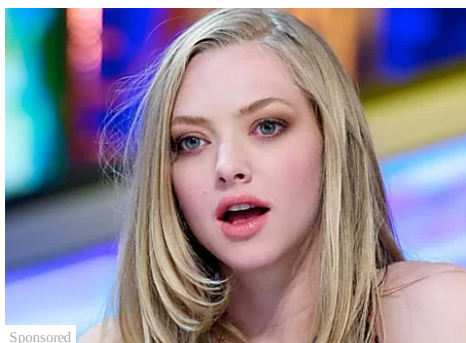
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