

A sun salute to the secret yoga club

Socialising after a yoga session is tricky — going for a drink would undo all the benefits. A supper club offers the ideal solution, says Jasmine Gardner



Candlelight chill-out: Jasmine Gardner (main picture, left) tucks into supper with Gabrielle Hales and the Secret Yoga Club class (Picture: Daniel Hambury)

Usually I change out of my post-workout sportswear before supper, but not tonight. In a pair of yoga leggings and a sweater I fit in perfectly with the rest of the guests around the candlelit dinner table, as we pass around the vegetarian fare.

At the Secret Yoga Club, following up your vinyasa practice by sitting down for food with your fellow yogis is part of the schedule. Tonight, green salads and guacamole are on the menu — ensuring that no one will undo the virtues of their stretches by polluting their body with a cheeseburger post-practice.

This yoga supper club is a brand new idea from Gabrielle Hales, who teaches Jivamukti — the dynamic, flowing form of yoga favoured by Kate Moss.

Having noticed that after class her students would hang around wanting to chat with one another, she saw a gap in the market for a new social set-up for her lessons.

"People didn't want to go out and have a drink because they felt they had healthy yoga bodies after class, so I thought about what else I could do so that people could socialise," explains Hales. "I looked at other supper clubs and thought it would be amazing to bring all of that together with yoga."

So far every one of the Secret Yoga Club events has taken place at a different venue, each with an hour on the mat, practising yoga asanas by candlelight and in front of a fire, followed by dinner. Tonight we are at the old Dalston Boys Club, a hall scatted with quirky vintage paraphernalia. Our yoga practice is overseen by two headless mannequins in Victorian dresses, an assortment of creepy paintings and the resident black cat — all of which add to the offbeat mood of the event.

In our colder-than-average early spring weather, the flames from the fire brought welcome warmth to the room on this occasion. As the summer sets in, Hales plans to relocate to a rooftop to take advantage of the long evenings. And while this time Hales played both teacher and caterer, for the next event she is arranging for up-and-coming pastry chef Nina Parker to cook and for a singer, Luisa Gerstein, to provide live music during savasana — the final relaxation phase of the yoga class.

Hales is not the only one setting up yoga socials. At L!fe Shoreditch, the new yoga studio and café in the Old Truman Brewery on Brick Lane, the first Vinyasa & Vinyl session took place last Saturday. This is DJ yoga held every last Saturday of the month. A DJ plays music in the studio for the duration of the class and afterwards everyone heads down to the café for a cocktail together, which is included in the class price.

Hales has also taken up residency here, holding a trimmed-down version of her yoga supper club on a Saturday evening when she teaches yoga by candlelight in the hot studio.

Meanwhile, both L!fe and Indaba yoga studio in Marylebone hold one-off events where yoga classes are accompanied by live music. Indaba has recently hosted astanga vinyasa classes with live piano music and therapeutic acro-yoga (an acrobatics and yoga fusion) with sound supplied by a metal hang (or halo) drum player. At L!fe the next live music event will be an acro-yoga class with music from a hip-hop harpist on Thursday, May 16.

In your basic yoga flow class tonight, it might just feel as though there is something missing.

The Secret Yoga Club, £25 including food (secretyogaclub.co.uk). Yoga to live music is at lifeshoreditch.com and indabayoga.com