

BLUELIST¹ (blu,list) v.
to recommend a travel experience.

What's your recommendation? www.lonelyplanet.com/bluelist

EATING

top picks

- New Tayyab (p259)
- Nyonya (p267)
- Snazz.Sichuan (p263)
- Asadal (p243)
- Lucio (p253)
- Café Spice Namaste (p260)
- El Faro (p261)
- Anchor & Hope (p249)
- Roussillon (p254)
- Capital (p252)

London's victories in the culinary arena over the past dozen or so years have been nothing short of phenomenal. Some wags might suggest that there was only one way but up from cafs serving greasy breakfasts and chips deep-fried in rancid-smelling oil, but don't pay them any mind. London has caught up with and, in some respects, overtaken its European cousins.

So what exactly happened? At some point the purveyors of stodge were lined up against the wall, stripped of their aprons and replaced by a savvy new generation of young chefs including the likes of Gordon Ramsay, Gary Rhodes, Heston Blumenthal, Jamie Oliver and Tom Aikens. As trailblazing restaurants progressively raised the bar, the competition followed. Markets selling fresh, free-range, organic produce sprang up, staff were drilled into professional service and the designers were brought in to create some of the world's coolest and most aesthetically pleasing eating spaces. As a result, food in all its guises became the new sex, and everyone wanted a piece of the action. Another change is that since July 2007 there has been a total ban on smoking in all enclosed spaces in England including, of course, restaurants.

Eating out in London can be as diverse, stylish and satisfying as anywhere else on the planet, and it's by no means an exaggeration to call London a food destination. Designer eating is all the rage, with restaurant openings attracting as much glitz and glamour as fashion parades, and every week there seems to be a hot new place where half of London is trying to get a reservation.

That's not to say you can't still get greasy fries, overcooked vegetables and traditional British stodge (particularly in pubs, although this is changing too with the inevitable arrival of a gastropub to a High Street near you), but with chefs absorbing the influences of this most cosmopolitan of cultures, you're more likely to get the world on your plate.

Just don't count on value for money. We can't count the number of times we've dropped over £40 a head for refined Italian food or the ubiquitous Modern European that tasted like it had been microwaved (ding!), and wondered why we'd bothered. On the other hand we've had Pakistani food in Whitechapel, Turkish in Dalston and Malaysian in Notting Hill that has made our hearts sing, our tastebuds zing and our wallets only slightly lighter.

Eating out in London can be a real hit-or-miss affair. What we've done in this chapter is separate the wheat from the chaff. The restaurants and other eateries appearing below range from pretty good (convenient location, cheap price, unusual cuisine) to fantabulous (worth a big splurge or a lengthy journey). Hopefully this list will lead you in the right direction and you won't walk out wondering why *you* bothered. *Bon appétit!*

HISTORY & SPECIALITIES

English food will never win any awards on the world culinary stage, but when well prepared – be it a Sunday lunch of roast beef and Yorkshire pudding (light batter baked until fluffy and eaten with gravy) or a cornet of fish and chips eaten on the hoof – it can have its moments.

Pubs generally serve low-cost traditional dishes of varying quality such as pies – pork pies, Cornish pasties and steak and kidney pie. (Shepherd's pie, on the other hand, has no crust but is a baked dish of minced lamb and onions topped with mashed potatoes.) On a pub menu you'll also usually find bangers and mash (sausages served with mashed potatoes and gravy), sausage rolls and the ploughman's lunch (thick slices of bread served with Cheddar or Cheshire cheese, chutney and pickled

onions). The catalogue of calorific desserts includes bread and butter pudding, steamed pudding (a cake that contains beef suet, a key ingredient) served with treacle (molasses) or jam, and the frighteningly named spotted dick, a steamed suet pudding with currants and raisins that has now been rechristened 'spotted Richard' by the supermarket giant Tesco for reasons, it says, of propriety.

The most English of dishes, though, is fish and chips: cod, plaice or haddock dipped in batter, deep-fried and served with chips (French fries) doused in vinegar and sprinkled with salt. With the arrival of American-style fast-food joints, authentic 'chippies' are becoming rarer, but we still like the Rock & Sole Plaice (p241) in Covent Garden, the North Sea Fish Restaurant (p244) in Bloomsbury, Seashell of Lisson Grove (p247) and upmarket Geales (p267) in Notting Hill.

From the middle of the 19th century until just after WWII the staple lunch for many Londoners was a pie filled with spiced eel (then abundant in the Thames) and served with mashed potatoes and liquor, a parsley sauce. Nowadays the pies are usually meat-filled and the eel served smoked or jellied as a side dish. The best places to try this are the pie 'n' mash shops listed in the boxed text, p260.

VEGETARIANS & VEGANS

London has been one of the best places for vegetarians to dine out since the 1970s. That's mostly due to its many Indian restaurants, which always cater for people who don't eat meat for religious reasons, though several health scares over British beef may have pushed some into the meatless camp. For dedicated vegetarian eateries, try Blah Blah Blah (p269), Blue Légume (p266), Eat & Two Veg (p248), Food for Thought (p243), Gate (p269), Manna (p262), Mildred's (p240), Place Below (p249), Rasa (p266), Red Veg (p240) and Woodlands (p264).

PRACTICALITIES

Opening Hours

In contrast to people in Continental European cities, Londoners tend to eat their evening meal early, generally between 7pm and 9.30pm. Most places serve lunch between noon and 2.30pm or 3pm and dinner from 6pm or 7pm to 10pm; many midrange restaurants stay open throughout the day. Hours can change from one neighbourhood to the next – for example, many restaurants in Soho close on Sunday, and those in the City close for the whole weekend; we've noted which venues stray from the standard.

How Much?

Eating out in London is outlandishly expensive compared with the USA, most of the rest of Europe and Australia. And if you don't earn

PRICE GUIDE

The symbols below indicate the cost per main course at the restaurant in question.

| | |
|-----|---------------|
| £££ | more than £20 |
| ££ | £10-20 |
| £ | less than £10 |

sterling, chances are that you'll rarely get what you consider value for money. Go to a top restaurant, order three courses à la carte and wash it down with a decent European red, and two of you will be lucky to get much change out of £200. Then again, you can have an excellent meal for half that at the same place if you arrive at times when you can opt for a set meal. If you choose carefully it is possible to have a meal that you both remember fondly for £40 per person. In this guide the range of prices for main courses is included after the establishment's address.

Booking Tables

Making reservations has become just about compulsory for all central restaurants in London from Thursday to Saturday, and for the hippest places at any time. A good internet booking service is www.toptable.co.uk, which is reliable and often offers substantial discounts. Many of the top-end restaurants run the annoying system of multiple sittings, where you have the option of an early or late slot, for example 7pm to 9pm or 9pm to 11pm. It's always best to go for the latter and not be rushed.

Tipping

Most restaurants now automatically tack a 'recommended' or 'discretionary' 12.5% service charge onto the bill and this should be clearly advertised (you don't have to pay it if you feel service wasn't good enough). If they *still* leave space for a tip on the credit-card slip, just ignore it.

Self-Catering

Along with Londoners' new-found passion for dining out comes a greater appreciation for food in general, and if you're keen to self-cater you'll find lots of great food and farmers' markets (see the boxed text, p242), Continental delis, and ethnic and organic stores sprinkled all over town. You can find mini versions of the big supermarkets all across the city for basic shopping requirements.

THE WEST END

With neighbourhoods as diverse as Soho, Mayfair, Bloomsbury and Marylebone, the West End is a difficult area to encapsulate, but it's true: many of the city's most eclectic, fashionable and, quite simply, best restaurants are

top picks

TABLES WITH A VIEW

- Blue Print Café (p250)
- Oxo Tower Restaurant & Brasserie (p249)
- Portrait (p240)
- Skylon (p249)
- Ubon (p261)

dotted around this area. As with most things in London, it pays to be in the know: while there's a huge concentration of mediocre places to eat along the main tourist drags, the best eating experiences are frequently tucked away on backstreets and not at all obvious. You'll find everything here, from Hungarian to Korean and from *haute cuisine* to vegetarian cafés. Chinatown, as you might guess, is a great spot for inexpensive Chinese and other Asian food.

SOHO & CHINATOWN

CRITERION GRILL Map p68 French EE-EEF

☎ 7930 0488; www.whitestarline.org.uk; 224 Piccadilly W1; mains £15.50-28.50; † Piccadilly Circus This beautiful Marco Pierre White restaurant is all chandeliers, mirrors, marble and sparkling mosaics – one breathless wag has compared it to the inside of a Fabergé egg – but its most spectacular feature is the classic French food, which ranges from the delicate tian of Devon crab to roast suckling pig mussel. The daily lunch specials (usually British favourites such as shepherd's pie and fish and chips) are a snip at £12.50.

BAR SHU Map p68 Chinese E-EEF

☎ 7287 8822; www.bar-shu.co.uk; 28 Frith St W1; mains £7.90-28; † Leicester Sq The story goes that a visiting businessman from Chengdu, capital of Sichuan Province in China, found London's Chinese food offerings so inauthentic that he decided to open up his own restaurant with five chefs from home. Well, it's authentic all right, with dishes redolent of smoked chillies and the all-important Sichuan peppercorn. We love the spicy *gung bao* chicken with peanuts, the *dan dan* noodles and the *mapo doufu* (bean curd braised with minced pork and chilli).

RED FORT Map p68 Indian EE-EEF

☎ 7437 2525; www.redfort.co.uk; 77 Dean St W1; mains £14.50-22; † closed lunch Sat & Sun; † Tottenham Court Rd The Red Fort has always been a trailblazer; as far back as the 1980s it was one of the very few places in London offering genuine Indian cuisine. It still retains its edge with glamorous décor and such dishes as *nizami kaliya* (kingfish in a spicy sauce with curry leaves) and *mahi tikka* (smoked dorade with fresh mint, garlic and green chilli).

LA TROUVAILLE Map p68 French EE-EEF

☎ 7287 8488; www.latrouvaille.co.uk; 12a Newburgh St W1; 2-/3-course set lunch £15/18.50, dinner £27.50/33; † closed Sun; † Oxford Circus Just what its name suggests it is, the 'Find' is perfect for a romantic dinner. Here you'll find a gorgeous, warm space perfect for candlelit canoodling and an excellent menu of rich traditional French cuisine – quail and foie gras terrine, guinea fowl hotpot – on a quiet backstreet.

KETTTERS Map p68 Italian E-EE

☎ 7734 6112; www.kettters.com; 29 Romilly St W1; mains £9.30-19.90; † Leicester Sq This Soho institution founded in 1867 has three dining rooms serving all manner of Modern European food but most people come here for the fabulous pizzas (£9.15 to £12.15), enjoyed with a glass of champagne and in a wonderful atmosphere of gently fading grandeur and a piano tinkling softly in the background.

VEERASWAMY Map p68 Indian E-EE

☎ 7734 1401; www.veeraswamy.com; 1st fl, 99 Regent St (enter from Swallow St) W1; mains £9.50-19; † Piccadilly Circus Having opened in 1926, this upmarket curry house can lay claim to being the oldest Indian restaurant in Britain. It's now owned by the same people who run *Masala Zone* (p265) and the standards are as high as ever, with the kitchen producing such crowd-pleasers as slow-cooked Hyderabad lamb biryani and Kerala-style sea bass.

ARBUTUS Map p68 Modern European EE

☎ 7734 4545; www.arbutusrestaurant.co.uk; 63-64 Frith St W1; mains £13.95-18.95; † Tottenham Court Rd No-one seems to have a bad thing to say about this Michelin-starred brainchild of

Anthony Demetre. Is it the inventive dishes (squid and mackerel 'burger', slow-cooked lamb, sweetbreads and artichokes) or the non-Soho affordable prices (£17.50 for a three-course lunch)? One thing is for certain: it is not the take-no-risks décor.

GAY HUSSAR Map p68 Hungarian E-EE

☎ 7437 0973; www.gayhussar.co.uk; 2 Greek St W1; mains £9.50-16.50; † closed Sun; † Tottenham Court Rd This is the Soho of the 1950s, when dining was still done in the grand style in wood-panelled rooms with brocade and sepia prints on the walls. And it serves portions only the Hungarians do: try the roast duck leg with all the trimmings (£16.50) or the 'Gypsy quick dish' of pork medallions, onions and green peppers (£14.25). A two-/three-course lunch is £16.50/18.50.

ANDREW EDMUNDS Map p68 Modern European E-EE

☎ 7437 5708; 46 Lexington St W1; mains £9.60-16; † Piccadilly This cosy little place is exactly the sort of restaurant you wish you could find everywhere in Soho. Two floors of wood-panelled bohemia with a mouth-watering

menu of French (confit of duck) and European (penne with goat's cheese) country cooking – it's a real find and reservations are essential.

YAUATCHA Map p68 Dim Sum E-EE

☎ 7494 8888; 15 Broadwick St W1; mains £3.80-15.90; † Oxford Circus This most glamorous of dim sum restaurants housed in the award-winning Ingeni building is divided into two parts. The upstairs tearoom offers an exquisite blue-bathed oasis of calm from the chaos of Berkeley St Market as well as some of the most arrestingly beautiful cakes we've ever seen. The downstairs dining room has a smarter, more atmospheric feel with constellations of 'star' lights and an original offering of the three main categories of dim sum (steamed, fried and *cheung fun* – long, flat rice-flour rolls stuffed with meat, seafood or vegetables) all day.

NEW WORLD Map p68 Chinese E

☎ 7734 0677; 1 Gerrard Pl W1; mains £6.50-9.90; † Leicester Sq Chinatown doesn't have much to recommend itself in the way of food these days but if you hanker after dim sum, the

SOHO CAFÉS

Soho presents the nearest thing London has to a sophisticated café culture to match that of its Continental neighbours. The area has been synonymous with sipping and schmoozing since Victorian times but its heyday came with the mod hangouts of the '60s.

Bar Italia (Map p68; ☎ 7437 4520; 22 Frith St W1; sandwiches £4.50-6.50; † 24hr; † Leicester Sq or Tottenham Court Rd) Pop into this Soho favourite at any time of day or night and you'll see slumming celebrities lapping up reviving juices and chunky sandwiches amid retro '50s décor.

Maison Bertaux (Map p68; ☎ 7437 6007; 28 Greek St W1; cakes £3-3.50; † 8.30am-10.30pm Mon-Sat, to 8pm Sun; † Tottenham Court Rd) Bertaux has exquisite confections, unhurried service, a French bohemian vibe and 130 years of history on this spot. Seating is limited to a half-dozen tables.

Monmouth Coffee Company (Map pp72-3; ☎ 7836 5272, 7379 3516; www.monmouthcoffee.co.uk; 27 Monmouth St WC2; cakes from £2.50; † 8am-6.30pm Mon-Sat; † Tottenham Court Rd or Leicester Sq) Essentially a shop selling beans from just about every coffee-growing country in the world, Monmouth has a few wooden alcoves at the back where you can squeeze in and savour blends from around the world.

Pâtisserie Valerie (Map p68; ☎ 7437 3466; www.patisserie-valerie.co.uk; 44 Old Compton St W1; sandwiches £4.75-6.95, cakes from £2; † 7.30am-8pm Mon & Tue, 7.30am-11pm Wed-Sat, 9.30am-8pm Sun; † Tottenham Court Rd or Leicester Sq) This sweet institution was established in 1926 and is growing fast: at last count there were 10 outlets in London. All have delicious, delicate pastries, stylish sandwiches and filled croissants.

Star Café (Map p68; ☎ 7437 8778; www.thestarcafe.co.uk; 22 Great Chapel St W1; mains £6.25-8.50; † 7am-4pm Mon-Fri; † Tottenham Court Rd) So Soho, this wonderfully atmospheric café has vintage advertising and Continental décor that makes it feel like not much has changed since it opened in 1933. It's best known for its breakfast, particularly the curiously named Tim Mellor Special of smoked salmon and scrambled eggs.

three-storey New World can oblige. All the old favourites – from *ha gau* (prawn dumpling) to *pai gwat* (steamed pork spare rib) – are available from steaming carts wheeled around the dining room daily 11am to 6pm.

BARRAFINA *Map p68* Spanish E
7813 8016; www.barrafina.co.uk; 54 Frith St W1; tapas £4.20-9.50; \dagger Tottenham Court Rd
This tiny tapas bar has caught Soho by the tastebuds and doesn't look like letting go for quite a while. Along with *gambas al ajillo* (prawns in garlic), there are more unusual things such as tuna tartare and grilled quails with aioli. If you can't get enough, try one of the large platters of cold Spanish meats (£9.50 to £12.50).

MILDRED'S *Map p68* Vegetarian E
% 7494 1634; www.mildreds.co.uk; 45 Lexington St W1; mains £6.95-8.25; \dagger closed Sun; \dagger Oxford Circus
Central London's most inventive veggie restaurant, Mildred's heaves at lunchtime so don't be shy about sharing a table in the skylit dining room. Expect the likes of roasted fennel and chickpea terrine and Puy lentil casserole as well as more standard (and hugely portioned) salads and stir-fries. Drinks include juices, coffees, beers and organic wines.

C&R CAFÉ *Map p68* Malaysian, Indonesian E
% 7434 1128; 4-5 Rupert Court W1; mains £5-7.50; \dagger Leicester Sq
When we're in the mood for a bit of Asian, we know of no better place than this hole-in-the-wall serving fairly authentic Singapore noodles, *laksa* (soup noodles with seafood) and *gado-gado* (salad with peanut sauce). For those who answer to a higher authority, it's halal. There's a larger *Westbourne Grove branch* (*Map p175*; % 7221 7979; 52 Westbourne Grove W2; \dagger Bayswater).

LEON *Map p68* Modern European E
% 7437 5280; www.leonrestaurants.co.uk; 35 Great Marlborough St W1; mains £2.80-5.50; \dagger 8am-10.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-10.30pm Sat, 10.30am-6.30pm Sun; \dagger Oxford Circus
A definite stand-out among Soho's budget eateries, Leon is delightful – cheap, friendly and perfectly located. Serving such delicious treats as chicken with herb oil and lemon, Moroccan meatballs and sweet potato

falafel, Leon puts labels on everything so you know just what you're getting. What's more, it's licensed. There are five other outlets including a *Spitalfields branch* (% 7247 4369; 3 Crispin Pl E1; \dagger Liverpool St).

Also recommended:

Amato (*Map p68*; % 7734 573373; www.amato.co.uk; 14 Old Compton St W1; mains £3.95-8.50; \dagger 8am-10pm Mon-Sat, to 8pm Sun; \dagger Piccadilly Circus) Long-term Italian fixture: does pastas and salads along with legendary cakes and pastries.

Red Veg (*Map p68*; % 7437 3109; www.redveg.com; 95 Dean St W1; mains £2.95-4.35; \dagger noon-9.30pm Mon-Sat, to 6.30pm Sun; \dagger Tottenham Court Rd) Delicious vegetarian vegan fast food (burgers, falafels, wraps).

Kulu Kulu (*Map p68*; % 7734 7316; 76 Brewer St W1; sushi £1.50-3.60; \dagger Piccadilly Circus) This simple, bustling place just off Piccadilly Circus has the best inexpensive conveyor-belt sushi in London.

COVENT GARDEN & LEICESTER SQUARE

J SHEEKEY *Map pp72-3* Fish EE-EEE
% 7240 2565; www.j-sheekey.co.uk; 28-32 St Martin's Ct WC2; mains £11.75-37.50; \dagger Leicester Sq
A jewel of the local scene, this incredibly smart restaurant whose pedigree stretches back to 1896 has four elegant, discreet and spacious wood-panelled rooms in which to savour the riches of the sea, cooked simply and exquisitely. The fish pie (£11.75) is justifiably legendary though the Cornish fish stew is just as good. Three-course weekday lunch is £24.75.

CHRISTOPHER'S *Map pp72-3* American EE-EEE
% 7240 4222; www.christophersgrill.com; 18 Wellington St WC2; mains £14-32; \dagger Covent Garden
This sleek American bar and grill is housed in a vast Georgian mansion just off the Strand. Its interior is suitably grand, with a busy downstairs bar and a stylish upstairs dining room, where classic but clever dishes such as blackened salmon with jambalaya risotto are served up next to a wonderful array of gargantuan USDA steaks and surf-and-turf combinations. Brunch (11.30am to 3.30pm) at the weekend pulls in the crowds.

PORTRAIT *Map pp72-3* British EE-EEE
% 7312 2490; www.npg.org.uk/live/portrest.asp; 3rd fl, St Martin's Pl WC2; mains £13.95-28.95;

\dagger restaurant 11.30am-3pm Sat-Wed, 11.30am-3pm & 5.30-8.30pm Thu & Fri, lounge & bar 10am-5pm Sat-Wed, 10am-10pm (last orders food 8.30pm) Thu & Fri; \dagger Charing Cross
This stunningly located restaurant above the excellent National Portrait Gallery – with views over Trafalgar Sq and Westminster! – and just past the Tudors is a place for a decent meal after the gallery; why not pop in for brunch when the two-/three-course menu is £19.95/24.95? Unfortunately, Portrait is restricted in its opening times by the gallery, so it only serves (early-ish) dinner on Thursday and Friday.

RULES *Map pp72-3* Traditional British EE-EEE
% 7836 5314; www.rules.co.uk; 35 Maiden Lane WC2; mains £16.95-21; \dagger Covent Garden
Established in 1798, this very posh and very British establishment is London's oldest restaurant. The menu is inevitably meat-oriented – Rules specialises in classic game cookery, serving up tens of thousands of birds between mid-August and January from its own estate – but fish dishes are also available. Puddings are traditional: trifles, treacles and lashings of custard.

JOE ALLEN *Map pp72-3* American E-EE
% 7836 0651; www.joeallen.co.uk; 13 Exeter St WC2; mains £9-18; \dagger Covent Garden
This long-established late-night (open till 1am most nights) restaurant is always packed with West End actors and crew members and remains a star-spotters' paradise. There's a real buzz here and it gets crowded, so book ahead. Starters and main dishes (lamb chops, grilled halibut etc) are varied, but you won't find its legendary burgers on the menu; just ask. Come here too for breakfast (from 8am weekdays) or weekend brunch (from 11.30am).

SARASTRO *Map pp72-3* Mediterranean E-EE
% 7836 0101; www.sarastro-restaurant.com; 126 Drury Lane WC2; mains £8.50-17.50; \dagger Covent Garden
Any place that bills itself as 'The Show after the Show' has got to be more concerned with entertainment than food. Come to Sarastro, behind the Theatre Royal and round the corner from the Royal Opera House, for opera music (piped and impromptu) and faux baroque décor that is camper than a bunch of Boy Scouts (think kitsch frescoes and fake 'opera boxes'

adorning three sides of the restaurant). It's all quirky good fun and certainly a night you won't forget.

MELA *Map pp72-3* Indian E-EE
% 7836 8635; www.melarestaurant.co.uk; 152-156 Shaftesbury Ave; mains £5.95-15.95; \dagger Leicester Sq
Despite its location in the heart of theatre-land, this bustling Shaftesbury Ave eatery serves some pretty authentic dishes from across India (with an emphasis on tandoor) and there is magnificent choice for vegetarians. We love the décor too, with colourful papier-mâché Ferris wheels and naive paintings of carnivals and fairs (Mela means 'festival' in Hindi).

ROCK & SOLE PLAICE *Map pp72-3* Fish & Chips E-EE
% 7836 3785; 47 Endell St WC2; mains £4.50-14; \dagger Covent Garden
Its cutesy name notwithstanding, the approach at this no-nonsense fish-and-chips shop dating back to Victorian times is simplicity: basic wooden tables and décor and delicious cod, haddock or skate in batter served with a generous portion of chips. Another plus: it's now licensed.

PORTERS *Map pp72-3* Traditional British E-EE
% 7836 6466; www.porters-restaurant.com; 17 Henrietta St WC2; mains £9.95-12.95; \dagger Covent Garden
Porters specialises in pies, long a staple of English cooking but not regularly found on menus nowadays. There are unusual ones such as lamb and apricot or chicken and broccoli as well as the more commonplace steak, Guinness and mushroom pie. It also does a mean a mean fish and chips and roast beef with Yorkshire pudding.

ASSA *Map pp72-3* Korean E
% 7240 8256; 53 St Giles High St WC2; mains £5.50-9; \dagger closed lunch Sun; \dagger Tottenham Court Rd
The best of a trio of Korean restaurants behind the unsightly (and listed) Centre Point building, Assa attracts a rough and very ready crowd of friendly young Asians who come for the cut-price soup noodles, *bibimbab* (rice served in a sizzling pot topped with thinly sliced beef, preserved vegetables and chilli-laced soy bean paste) and potent *soju* (Korean saki).

TO MARKET, TO MARKET

At first glance, London's food markets may seem to have changed beyond recognition in recent years. Borough Market on the South Bank, equal to or even better than anything you'll find on the Continent, is now a top tourist attraction and Broadway Market caters to the capital's Gordon Ramsay and Nigella Lawson wannabes. But for those who still want to experience a traditional London market, where the oranges and lemons come from who knows where and the barrow boys and girls speak with Cockney accents straight out of Central Casting, there's more than ample opportunity.

For information on farmers' markets, which tend to sell much more local, organic and – inevitably – expensive produce, see the boxed text, p251.

Berwick Street Market (Map p68; Berwick St W1; h 8am–6pm Mon–Sat; t Piccadilly Circus or Oxford Circus) South of Oxford St and running parallel to Wardour St, this fruit-and-vegetable market has managed to hang onto its prime location since 1830. It's a great place to put together a picnic or shop for a prepared meal.

Billingsgate Fish Market (Map p160; Trafalgar Way E14; h 5–8.30am Tue–Sat; DLR West India Quay) This wholesale fish market is open to the public, but you'll have to be up at the crack of dawn. People will tell you that you have to buy in bulk here, but most of the wise-crackin' vendors are prepared to do a deal.

Borough Market (Map p126; see also p132) Set up in 1998, this must-see is testament to the British public's increased interest in good food over the past decade. As well as a section devoted to quality fresh fruit, exotic vegetables and organic meat, there's a fine-foods retail market, with the likes of home-grown honey and homemade bread. Throughout, takeaway stalls allow you to sample a sizzling gourmet sausage or tuck into a quality burger. Shoppers queue at the excellent Monmouth Coffee Company, Neal's Yard Dairy, the Spanish deli Brindisa or butcher Ginger Pig, and generally bleed the local cash machines dry on Saturday.

Brixton Market (Map p200; Electric Ave SW9; h 8am–6pm Mon, Tue & Thu–Sat, 8am–3pm Wed; t Brixton) This market is a heady, cosmopolitan mix with everything from halal butchers and fishmongers touting tilapia to yams, mangoes, okra, plantains and other produce on sale in the covered Brixton Village (formerly Granville Arcade). Try the Jamaican *bullah* cakes (gingerbread).

Broadway Market (Map p156; h 9am–5pm Sat; t Bethnal Green, d Cambridge Heath) Offering some serious competition to overextended Borough, this much more manageable market with almost a village feel, south of London Fields E8, has the choicest produce, dairy products and baked goods on offer.

Chapel Market (Map p168; Chapel Market N1; h 9am–3.30pm Tue, Wed, Fri & Sat, 9am–1pm Thu & Sun; t Angel) This rough-and-ready all-day market sells mostly fruit and vegetables along an Islington street called Chapel Market just off Liverpool Rd.

Exmouth Market (Map p150; www.exmouthmarket.co.uk; Exmouth Market EC1; h 11am–6pm Fri, 9am–4pm Sat; t Farringdon or Angel) The latest arrival on the market scene, this small but varied producers' market sells quality produce, meat, fish and cheese.

Leadenhall Market (Map p110; Whittington Ave EC1; h 7am–4pm Mon–Fri; t Bank) This market serves food and drink to City folk and has a fishmonger, a butcher and a cheesemonger. The selection is excellent for an urban market, and the Victorian glass-and-iron market hall, designed by Horace Jones in 1881, is an architectural delight. It's off Gracechurch St. See also p118.

Ridley Road Market (Map p156; Ridley Rd E8; h 8.30am–6pm Mon–Sat; d Dalston) In many ways this African Caribbean and Turkish market in the East End is more colourful than the one in Brixton, and it's certainly less touristed. You'll find more types of Turkish delight and Caribbean tubers than you'll know what to do with.

Roman Road Market (Map p156; Roman Rd E3; h 8am–4pm Tue, Thu & Sat; t Mile End, g 8 or 277) This market along Roman Rd between St Stephen's and Parnell Rds has pretty standard fare on offer, though some people rave about the low prices.

Smithfield Market (Map p110; see also p115) London's last surviving meat market is still clinging on, despite nearly getting the chop for an office development in 2005. While cattle were slaughtered here once, today this is the most modern of its kind in Europe and almost bloodless (though it would still be a vision of hell itself for vegetarians).

JEN CAFÉ Map pp72–3 Chinese E
% 7287 9708; 7–8 Newport PI WC2; mains £5–7.95;
h 11am–8.30pm Mon–Wed, to 9.30pm Thu–Sun;
t Leicester Sq

This is the best place to come for home-made wonton soup and dumplings – bar none. And you can be assured of their freshness by looking through the plate glass window where they're in the process of being made.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT
Map pp72–3 Vegetarian E
% 7836 9072; 31 Neal St WC2; mains £3.10–6.90;
h noon–8.30pm Mon–Sat, to 5pm Sun; t Covent Garden

This tiny vegetarian café is big on sociability and flavour, and small on price and space. Food ranges from soups and salads to stews and stir-fries with brown rice. Dishes might be vegan, organic and/or gluten-free. Food for Thought is earthy, unpretentious and deservedly packed.

Also recommended:

Canela (Map pp72–3; % 7240 6926; www.canelacafe.com; 33 Earlham St WC2; mains £7.50–8.90; t Covent Garden) Tiny café serving tasty Portuguese and Brazilian dishes.

Wahaca (Map pp72–3; % 7240 1883; www.wahaca.com; 66 Chandos PI WC2; mains £3.50–6.50; h noon–3.30pm & 5.30–11pm Mon–Sat, noon–3.30pm & 5.30–10.30pm Sun; t Covent Garden) This delightful cantina styles itself as a 'Mexican market eating' experience and the food is as authentic as you'll find in central London. The misspelling of Oaxaca, the central Mexican city famous for its cuisine, is deliberate.

Scoop (Map pp72–3; % 7240 7086; www.scoopgelato.com; 40 Shots Gardens, WC2; ice creams £2–5; h 8am–11pm; t Covent Garden) This is the only true *gelateria* in London and, boy, does it set a precedent. Storms of ice cream swell in the fridge, all the ingredients are natural and the taste is just divine.

HOLBORN & THE STRAND

MATSURI Map pp72–3 Japanese EEE
% 7430 1970; www.matsuri-restaurant.com; Mid City Place, 71 High Holborn; set menus £22–45;
h closed Sun; t Holborn

This high-quality and very authentic Japanese restaurant on the fringe of the City can sometimes feel a little sterile, although the quality of the food is extremely high. With a sushi counter and stylish dining

room on the ground floor and a large *teppanyaki* (hotplate) room in the basement where the meals are prepared in all seriousness by celebrated chef Hiroshi Sudo, there's plenty of choice.

SHANGHAI BLUES Map pp72–3 Chinese E-EEE
% 7404 1668; www.shanghai-blues.co.uk; 193–197 High Holborn WC1; mains £9.50–42; t Holborn
What was once the St Giles Library now houses one of London's most stylish Chinese restaurants. The dark and atmospheric interior – think black and blue tables and chairs punctuated by bright red screens – recalls imperial Shanghai with a modern twist, and the menu is just as disarming, particularly the 'new style' dim sum served as appetisers, the *pipa* duck and the twice-cooked pork belly. There's a vast selection of teas, some of them quite rare. There's a three-course weekday lunch for £15 and live jazz on Friday and Saturday nights.

SIMPSON'S-IN-THE-STRAND
Map pp72–3 Traditional British EE-EEE
% 7836 9112; 100 Strand WC2; mains £16.95–28.95; t Covent Garden

For traditional English roasts and joints (as in meat) from the trolley, Simpson's is hard to beat. It's been dishing up fleshy fare in a fine panelled dining room since 1848 (when it was called Simpson's Divan & Tavern). It's a gorgeous place, although something of a museum piece these days. Breakfast is available from 7.15am weekdays.

ASADAL Map pp72–3 Korean E-EE
% 7430 9006; www.asadal.co.uk; 227 High Holborn WC1; mains £6.50–11.50; h closed lunch Sun; t Holborn

If you fancy Korean but want a bit more style thrown into the act than what you'll find at *Assa* (p241), head for this spacious basement restaurant next to the Holborn tube station. The *kimchi* (pickled Chinese cabbage with chillies) is searing, the barbecues (£7 to £11.50) are *à table* and the *bibimbab* – rice served in a sizzling pot topped with thinly sliced beef, preserved vegetables and chilli-laced soybean paste – the best in town.

Also recommended:

Hummus Bros (Map pp92–3; % 7404 7079; www.hbros.co.uk; Victoria House, 37–63 Southampton Row WC1; mains £2.50–6; t Holborn) The deal at this new mini

chain is a bowl of filling hummus with your choice of topping (beef, chicken, chickpeas etc) eaten with warm pita bread.

BLOOMSBURY

NORTH SEA FISH RESTAURANT

Map pp92–3 Fish E-EE

☎ 7387 5892; 7-8 Leigh St WC1; mains £8.45-17.95; **h** closed Sun; **t** Russell Sq

The North Sea sets out to cook fresh fish and potatoes, a simple ambition in which it succeeds admirably. Look forward to jumbo-sized plaice or halibut steaks, deep-fried or grilled, and a huge serving of chips. There's takeaway next door if you can't handle the soulless dining room.

SHIOK Map pp92–3

Singaporean E-EE

☎ 7436 9706; 75 Southampton Row WC1; mains £7-15.95; **h** closed Sun; **t** Holborn

Any place whose name means 'fantastic' in Malay slang gets our vote, especially when it serves chilli crab (£14.95), Singapore curry and *char kway teow* (fried flat noodles) as authentic as this. The surrounds are comfortable in a 'minimalist canteen-style' kind of way. Come here for lunch or a midafternoon fix of rice or noodles.

ABENO Map pp92–3

Japanese E-EE

☎ 7405 3211; 47 Museum St WC1; mains £6.50-12.80; **t** Tottenham Court Rd

This understated little Japanese restaurant specialises in *okonomiyaki*, a kind of savoury pancake from Osaka of cabbage, egg and flour that is combined with the ingredients of your choice (there are more than two dozen varieties, including anything from sliced meats and vegetables to egg, noodles and cheese) and cooked on the hotplate at your table. There is quite a range of set lunches (£7.80 to £12.80).

FITZROVIA

HAKKASAN Map p68

Chinese E-EEE

☎ 7907 1888, 7927 7000; 8 Hanway Pl W1; mains £9.50-42; **t** Tottenham Court Rd

This basement restaurant – hidden down a most unlikely back alleyway – combines celebrity status, stunning design, persuasive cocktails and surprisingly sophisticated Chinese food – it was the first Chinese restaurant to receive a Michelin star – to great success. The low, nightclub-

style lighting (lots of red) makes it a good spot for dating, while the long, glitzy bar is a great place for truly inventive cocktails. For dinner in the formal main dining room you'll have to book far in advance and no doubt be allocated a two-hour slot. Do what savvy Londoners do and have lunch in the more informal Ling Ling lounge.

VILLANDRY Map p100

Modern European EE-EEE

☎ 7631 3131; www.villandry.com; 170 Great Portland St W1; mains £11.50-22.50; **h** closed dinner Sun; **t** Great Portland St

This excellent Modern European restaurant with a strong Gallic slant has an attractive market-delicatessen attached (not to mention a bar) so freshness and quality of ingredients is guaranteed. Try the cassoulet (£17) or one of the several daily fish dishes.

BACK TO BASICS Map p68

Fish EE-EEE

☎ 7436 2181; www.backtobasics.uk.com; 21a Foley St W1; mains £13.75-21.75; **h** closed Sun; **t** Oxford Circus

There are two or three other options on the menu (see 'Fish not Your Dish'), but seafood is the focus at this superb corner restaurant run by a bevy of affable young Poles in what's become known as Titchfield Village. A dozen varieties of exceedingly fresh fish, and a dozen original, mouth-watering ways to cook them, are chalked up on a blackboard every day. Two-course set lunch is £10. There's outside seating in summer.

ROKA Map p68

Japanese E-EE

☎ 7580 6464; www.rokarestaurant.com; 37 Charlotte St W1; mains £9.60-18.60; **t** Goodge St or Tottenham Court Rd

This stunner of a Japanese restaurant combines casual dining (wooden benches) with savoury tidbits delivered from the *robatayaki* (grill) kitchen in the centre. It has modern décor, with the dominating materials grey steel and glass. Sushi is £4.90 to £7.90, set lunch is £35.

FINO Map p68

Spanish E-EE

☎ 7813 8010; www.finorestaurant.com; 33 Charlotte St (enter from Rathbone St) W1; tapas £1.80-16.50; **t** Goodge St or Tottenham Court Rd

Critically acclaimed (and it's easy to see why), Fino represents the resurgence of Spanish cuisine in a London all too domi-

nated by dreary and uninventive tapas bars. Set in a glamorous basement on one of the city's premier eating strips, Fino is a tapas restaurant with a difference. Try the Jerusalem artichoke cooked with mint, the prawn tortilla with wild garlic or the foie gras with chilli jam for a feast of innovative and delightful Spanish cooking.

RASA SAMUDRA Map p68

Indian E-EE

☎ 7637 0222; www.rasarestaurants.com; 5 Charlotte St W1; mains £6.25-12.95; **h** closed lunch Sun; **t** Goodge St or Tottenham Court Rd

This bubblegum-pink eatery just up from Oxford St showcases the seafood cuisine of Kerala state on India's southwest coast, supported by a host – eight out of 14 main courses – of more familiar vegetarian dishes. The fish soups are outstanding, the breads superb and the various curries heavenly spiced. The same group runs the South Indian vegetarian restaurant **Rasa** (p266) in Stoke Newington.

BUSABA EATHAI Map p68

Thai E

☎ 7299 7900; 22 Store St WC1; mains £6.40-8.90; **t** Goodge St

We prefer the slightly less hectic Store St premises of this West End favourite, but there are also a couple more locations, including a **Wardour St branch** (Map p68; ☎ 7255 8686; 106-110 Wardour St; **t** Tottenham Court Rd). Here the sumptuous Thai menu greets you via an electronic screen outside and the über-styled interior is softened by communal wooden tables. This isn't the place to come for a long and intimate dinner, but it's a superb option for an excellent and (usually) speedy meal of stir-fries and noodles.

ST JAMES'S

NOBU Map pp96–7

Japanese E-EEE

☎ 7447 4747; www.noburestaurants.com; 1st fl, Metropolitan Hotel, 19 Old Park Lane W1; mains £5-29.50, set lunches/dinners from £50/70; **t** Hyde Park Corner

A London designer's idea of a Japanese restaurant with some of the best Asian food in town, Nobu is minimalist in décor, anonymously efficient in service, and out of this world when it comes to exquisitely prepared and presented sushi and sashimi. The black cod with miso and salmon kelp roll are divine.

L'AUTRE Map pp96–7

Polish, Mexican EE

☎ 7499 4680; 5b Shepherd St W1; mains £10.60-13.60; **h** closed lunch Mon-Fri; **t** Green Park
How this small restaurant in Shepherd's Market came to serve dishes as incongruous as borscht and burritos is a tale too complex to tell here, but the food and the atmosphere (mock Tudor décor with Georgian elements) work well together. Overall, though, we'd head east for dishes such as *golambki* (stuffed cabbage) and Polish roast pork (£13.50) rather than south of the border.

INN THE PARK Map pp96–7

British EE

☎ 7451 9999; St James's Park; mains £15; **h** 8am-11pm Sun-Thu, 9am-11pm Fri & Sat; **t** Trafalgar Sq

This stunning wooden café and restaurant has cakes and tea, as well as substantial and quality British food. It gets quite busy in the summer, but if you're up for a special dining experience, come here for dinner, when the park is quiet and slightly illuminated.

MAYFAIR

GORDON RAMSAY AT CLARIDGE'S

Map p100 Modern British EEE

☎ 7499 0099, 7592 1373; www.gordonramsay.com; 55 Brook St W1; 3-course set lunch/dinner £30/65; **t** Bond St

This match made in heaven – London's most celebrated chef in arguably its grandest hotel – will make you weak at the knees. A meal in the gorgeous Art Deco dining room is a special occasion indeed; the Ramsay flavours will have you reeling, from the pressed foie gras marinated in white port and the cannon of salt marsh lamb with crystallised walnuts and cumin all the way to the cheese trolley, whether you choose the one with French, British or Irish number plates. Consider the six-course tasting menu (£75).

GREENHOUSE Map p100

Modern European EEE

☎ 7499 3331; 27a Hay's Mews W1; 2-/3-course set lunch £28/32, 3-course set dinner £60; **h** lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat; **t** Green Park

Located in an incongruously uninspiring building in a mews at the end of a wonderful sculpted 'garden', Greenhouse offers some of the best food in Mayfair served with none of the attitude commonly found in restaurants of this class.

Try the veal sweetbreads with hazelnuts and the hare with black truffles. The tasting menu (£75) is only for the intrepid and truly hungry. Greenhouse does out so many freebies – from *amuses-gueule* (literally ‘throat amusers’; snacks or appetisers) and inter-course sorbets to petits fours at the finale – you’ll never get up.

TAMANG GANG Map p100 Asian Fusion EE-EEE
% 7518 3160; www.tamangang.com; 141 Park Lane W1; mains £16-52.50; h dinner Mon-Sat; t Marble Arch

This basement restaurant just metres from the traffic chaos of Marble Arch is an oasis of tranquillity, suffused with incense and buzzing with a smart yet surprisingly informal Park Lane crowd. The interesting menu fuses Indonesian and Malaysian with Chinese and Japanese classics. On our last visit, the crispy aromatic duck roll was superb, while honey-glazed lamb cutlets with crispy lotus was of a similarly high standard but low size.

SKETCH Map p68 Modern European EE-EEE
% 0870 777 4488; www.sketch.uk.com; 9 Conduit St W1; Gallery mains £19-28, Lecture Room & Library mains £39-48; h closed Sun; t Oxford Circus

The stunning collection of bars and restaurants at what was once the Christian Dior headquarters in Mayfair remains a draw for fashionistas, the curious and the downright loaded. The Gallery restaurant downstairs buzzes informally in shimmering white and features video art projections. The Glade on the ground floor is the place for affordable lunch (two/three courses for £19.50/24) and the stunning Parlour patisserie to the right of the main entrance is great for tea and cakes. The ultimate attraction is the more formal Lecture Room & Library upstairs, where the high prices and *haute cuisine* in sumptuous surroundings from three-starred Michelin chef Pierre Gagnaire attract an exclusive crowd (tasting menus £65 to £90). Upstairs you’ll also find the East Bar, with a dozen of London’s most unusual individual loaves.

WOLSELEY Map p68 Modern European E-EEE
% 7499 6996; www.thewolseley.com; 160 Piccadilly W1; mains £9.50-34; h 7am-midnight Mon-Fri, 8am-midnight Sat, 8am-11pm Sun; t Green Park
This erstwhile Bentley car showroom has been transformed into an opulent

top picks

DINING WITH KIDS

- Blue Kangaroo (p272)
- Frankie's Italian Bar & Grill (p253)
- Frizzante@City Farm (p260)
- Marine Ices (p262)
- Nando's (p274)

Viennese-style brasserie, with golden chandeliers and stunning black-and-white tiled floors, and it remains a great place for spotting celebrities. That said, the Wolseley tends to work better for breakfast, brunch or tea, rather than lunch or dinner, when the dishes (choucroute à l'Alsacienne, Wiener schnitzel) are somewhat stodgy and the black-attired staff more than a bit frayed. Daily specials are £15.75.

MOMO Map p68 North African EE-EEE
% 7434 4040; www.momorest.com; 25 Heddon St W1; mains £15-22.50, 2-/3-course set lunches £14/18; t Piccadilly Circus

Sister of the celebrated 404 in Paris' Marais district, this wonderfully atmospheric North African restaurant is stuffed with cushions and lamps, and staffed by all-dancing, tambourine-playing waiters. It's a funny old place that manages to be all things to all diners, who range from romantic couples to raucous office-party ravers. Service is very friendly and the dishes are as exciting as you dare to be, so after the meze (£4 to £6.50) eschew the traditional and ordinary *tajine* (stew cooked in a traditional clay pot) and tuck into the splendid Moroccan speciality *pastilla*, a scrumptious nutmeg and pigeon pie. There's outside seating in this quiet backstreet in the warmer months.

SAKURA Map p68 Japanese E
% 7629 2961; 9 Hanover St W1; mains £6.50-9.50; t Regent St

This very authentic Japanese restaurant has something for everyone throughout the day – from sushi and sashimi (£2 to £5) to tempura, sukiyaki and a host of sets (£9 to £24). Just opposite is a small Japanese shopping centre with grocery store, café-restaurant and pub.

KERALA Map p68 Indian E
% 7580 2125; 15 Great Castle St W1; mains £4.95-8.95; t Oxford Circus
Oxford Circus may seem an odd place to go for Indian food, but this little gem gets consistent thumbs-ups for its South Indian dishes. Try one of its distinctive biryanis or the prawns cooked in masala sauce.

WESTMINSTER CINNAMON CLUB Map pp96-7 Indian EE-EEE
% 7222 2555; www.cinnamonclub.com; Old Westminster Library, 30 Great Smith St SW1; mains £11-32; h closed lunch Sat & all day Sun; t St James's Park
Domed skylights, high ceilings, parquet flooring and a book-lined mezzanine – this just had to be a library in a former life – and the hushed, efficient staff only add to the illusion. The atmosphere is colonial club and the food modern – or perhaps palace – Indian. Set lunches of two/three courses are £19/22.

MARYLEBONE LOCANDA LOCATELLI Map p100 Italian EEE
% 7935 9088; www.locandalocatelli.com; 8 Seymour St W1; mains £20-29.50; t Marble Arch
Cofounder celebrity-chef Giorgio Locatelli has brought some of the best Italian cooking to London in the past decade and the menu here continues to show his inventiveness and attention to detail. It's still hard to get a table here without booking way in advance, but it's worth the effort, especially for the sublime pasta dishes (£8 to £12.50).

PROVIDORES & TAPA ROOM Map p100 Spanish EE-EEE
% 7935 6175; www.theproviders.co.uk; 109 Marylebone High St W1; mains £18-24.50; t Baker St or Bond St
This place is split over two levels, with tempting tapas (£2.80 to £13.40) grazers on the ground floor and full meals along the same innovative lines – Spanish and just about everything else – in the elegant and understated dining room above. It's popular enough to be frenetic at busiest times; don't come for quiet conversation over your plate of chorizo and chillies.

SIX 13 Map p100 Jewish, Kosher EE-EEE
% 7629 6133; www.six13.com; 19 Wigmore St W1; mains £15.50-23.50; h lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Mon-Thu; t Bond St

Central London's poshest kosher restaurant, Six 13 (the name comes from the 613 *mitzvot*, or commandments, that are binding on religious Jews) is certified glatt by the Sephardic Kashrut Authority of the UK. Dishes are relatively inventive but authentic; a three-course set meal is £42.50 but they'll also pack you a selection of five slim sandwiches for £17.50.

REUBENS Map p100 Jewish, Kosher E-EEE
% 7486 0035; 79 Baker St W1; mains £9.95-22; h closed after lunch Fri, all day Sat; t Baker St
This central café-restaurant has all the Ashkenazi favourites: gefilte fish, *latkes* (potato pancakes) and sandwiches as well as more complicated (and filling) main courses. It's pricey for what you get but if you answer to a higher authority, it's money well spent.

SEASHELL OF LISSON GROVE Map p100 Fish E-EE
% 7224 9000; www.seashellrestaurant.co.uk; 49-51 Lisson Grove NW1; mains £9.50-18.95; h closed Sun; t Marylebone
This stylish place around the corner from Marylebone station is mostly about fish and chips (mostly the former) and must be doing something right. It's been in the business for more than 40 years. It does a brisk lunch and takeaway business as well.

WALLACE Map p100 French EE
% 7563 9505; www.wallacecollection.org; Hertford House, Manchester Sq W1; mains £12.50-18; h 10am-5pm Sun-Thu, 10am-11pm Fri & Sat; t Bond St; v
There are few more idyllically placed restaurants than this French brasserie in the courtyard of the Wallace Collection, London's finest small gallery and virtually unknown to most Londoners. Michelin-starred chef Thierry Laborde's seasonal menus are a veritable *tour de France* and cost £32 to £36 for three courses.

LA FROMAGERIE Map p100 French E-EE
% 7935 0341; 2-4 Moxon St W1; mains £7.95-13.40; h 10.30am-7.30pm Mon, 8am-7.30pm Tue-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat, 10am-6pm Sun; t Baker St
This branch of a celebrated French cheese shop in Highbury has a small café attached that turns out exquisite French-inspired dishes at lunch. You can also enjoy

breakfast from opening time and afternoon tea daily from 3.30pm.

GOLDEN HIND *Map p100* *Fish & Chips E-EE*
% 7486 3644; 73 Marylebone Lane W1; mains £6.90-10.60; *h* closed lunch Sat & all day Sun; *t* Bond St

This 90-year-old chippie has a classic interior, chunky wooden tables and builders sitting alongside suits. And from the vintage fryer comes some of the best cod and chips available in London.

EAT & TWO VEG *Map p100* *Vegetarian E*
% 7258 8595; www.eatandtvoveg.com; 50 Marylebone High St W1; mains £8.50-9.95; *t* Baker St

One of the best vegetarian experiences in London, Eat & Two Veg is bright and breezy with charming, friendly staff and a smart 21st-century American-diner look. The menu is international eclectic – Thai green curry, Lankawi hotpot – and the mock meat dishes ('sausage' and mash, cheeseburger and fries) would fool even carnivores. There's plenty on offer for vegans too.

STARA POLSKA *Map p100* *Polish E*
% 7486 1333; 69 Marylebone Lane W1; mains £6.95-9.95; *h* closed dinner Sun; *t* Bond St As authentic a *restauracja polska* as you'll find west of Warsaw, 'Old Poland' serves up simple but well-made favourites to veteran and newly arrived Polish London residents alike. Surely this is just the start of a trend towards 'mom and pop' Polish eateries across London.

Also recommended:

Ping Pong (*Map p100*; % 7009 9600; www.pingpongdimsum.com; 10 Paddington St W1; dim sum £2.99, set lunches £9.90-11.90; *t* Baker St) Marylebone branch of a trendy six-outlet chain that is trying to make dim sum the new sushi (and making some waves).

Le Pain Quotidien (*Map p100*; % 7486 6154; www.lepainquotidien.com; 72-75 Marylebone High St W1; mains £6.25-10.50; *t* Baker St) Simple, stripped-down French-style café serves salads, soups and *tartines* (open-face sandwiches; £6.25 to £8.50).

Quiet Revolution (*Map p100*; % 7487 5683; 28 Marylebone High St W1; mains £5.75-9.95; *h* 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 11am-5pm Sun; *t* Baker St) The omelettes, quiches and salads at this bright café are not 100% vegetarian (there are a couple of meat and fish dishes lurking about) but they're all organic. Excellent (and vigorous) juice combos too.

THE CITY

In the not-so-distant past, the City – that 'Square Mile' of brokers and bankers – could be an irritating place to find a decent and affordable restaurant that was patronised (or, indeed, stayed open) after the stock market closed. But with more people working later hours and living in and around the area (eg Barbican and Hoxton), you can now choose among cutting-edge Modern British, Italian and even Indian restaurants that all keep the welcome mat out at dinnertime. By and large though, the City caters mostly to a well-heeled weekday clientele.

SWEETING'S *Map p110* *Seafood EE-EEE*

% 7248 3062; 39 Queen Victoria St EC4; mains £12.50-27.50; *h* lunch Mon-Fri; *t* Mansion House Sweeting's is a City institution, having been around since 1830. It hasn't changed much, with its small sit-down restaurant area, mosaic floor and narrow counters, behind which stand waiters in white aprons. Dishes include wild smoked salmon, oysters (in season from September to April), potted shrimps, eels and Sweeting's famous fish pie (£12.50).

CITY MIYAMA *Map p110* *Japanese E-EEE*

% 7489 1937; 17 Godliman St EC4; mains £9-25; *h* closed dinner Sat & all day Sun; *t* St Paul's This rather soulless Japanese basement restaurant serves some of the finest sushi in the City, which comes in both 'traditional' and 'new' styles. Set lunches, representing the best deals, are £13 to £25.

WHITE SWAN PUB & DINING ROOM

Map p110 *Gastropub E-EEE*

% 7242 9696; www.thewhiteswanlondon.com; 108 New Fetter Lane EC4; pub mains £8.95-14; *h* closed Sat & Sun; *t* Chancery Lane A gastropub that everyone wishes were in their neighbourhood (and kept weekend hours), the White Swan has a convivial bar downstairs, with everything from fish and chips to lamb burgers (and a stuffed swan in a glass case) and an upstairs dining room with a more ambitious menu (two-/three-course meal £24/29).

PATERNOSTER CHOP HOUSE

Map p110 *British EE-EEE*

% 7029 9400; www.danddlondon.com; Warwick Ct, Paternoster Sq EC4; mains £16.50-20; *h* closed all day Sat & dinner Sun; *t* St Paul's

At this Conran City restaurant next to St Paul's Cathedral delightfully British fare is on offer – from the 'beast of the day' (£21) to a huge shellfish and grill selection and faves such as bubble and squeak (left over veggies from a roast dinner), and haggis. Sunday brunch (noon to 4pm) features a carvery.

ROYAL EXCHANGE GRAND CAFÉ & BAR *Map p110* *Modern European EE*

% 7618 2480; www.danddlondon.com; Royal Exchange Bank, Threadneedle St EC3; mains £12-17.50; *h* 8am-11pm Mon-Fri; *t* Bank This café sits in the middle of the covered courtyard of the beautiful Royal Exchange Bank building. The food runs the gamut from sandwiches to oysters (from £10.75 a half-dozen), fisherman's pie (£18.50) and seafood platters (from £26.50). It's the perfect place for an informal business meeting.

WINE LIBRARY *Map p110* *Modern European EE*

% 7481 0415; www.winelibrary.co.uk; 43 Trinity Sq EC3; set meals £14.95; *h* 10am-6pm Mon, 10am-8pm Tue-Fri; *t* Tower Hill This is a great place for a light but boozy lunch in the City. Buy a bottle of wine at retail price (no mark-up; £4.50 corkage fee) from the large selection on offer at this vaulted-cellar restaurant and then snack on pâtés, cheeses and salads for £14.95.

Also recommended:

Ciro's Pizza Pomodoro (*Map p110*; % 7920 9207; www.pomodoro.co.uk; 7-8 Bishopsgate Churchyard EC2; mains £5.50-10.50; *h* closed Sat & Sun; *t* Liverpool St) Passable pasta and pizza in a sublimely tiled *hammam* (Turkish-style bath) off Old Broad St and dating from 1894.

Place Below (*Map p110*; % 7329 0789; St Mary-le-Bow Church, Cheapside EC2; dishes about £7.25; *h* 7.30am-3pm Mon-Fri; *t* Mansion House) Old-school (pasta, bakes, salads) vegetarian restaurant is in a church crypt.

Salade (*Map p110*; % 7248 6612; 3 Old Bailey St EC4; salads £4-6; *h* 7am-5pm Mon-Fri; *t* St Paul's, City Thameslink) This 'compose your own salad' place offers some of the freshest and most interesting ingredients around – from sprouts and Puy lentils to crayfish.

THE SOUTH BANK

The revitalised South Bank, with the Tate Modern, the replicated Globe Theatre and the splendid Millennium Bridge its drawing cards, offers an array of restaurants unimaginable just a few short years ago. Many, in-

cluding the Oxo Tower and Blue Print Café, take full advantage of their riverine locations, offering a titbit of romance as a prelude to the main course. Borough and Bermondsey, historically important but run-down and almost forgotten in modern times, are no longer just the provinces of smoked and jellied eel; you're just as likely to find yourself sitting in a Victorian market pavilion and enjoying fresh oysters or a perfectly grilled steak.

WATERLOO

OXO TOWER RESTAURANT & BRASSERIE *Map p126* *Modern International EE-EEE*

% 7803 3888; www.harveynichols.com; 8th fl, Barge House St SE1; brasserie mains £16.50-18.25, 2-/3-course set lunch £17.50/21.50, restaurant mains £19.50, 3-course set lunches £31.50; *t* Waterloo The Oxo Tower is about event dining, with the emphasis generally more on the event than the food. In the stunning glassed-in terrace you have a front-row seat to probably the best view in London here, and you're paying for this (not the fusion food) handsomely in the brasserie and stratospherically in the restaurant. Fish dishes – smoked haddock soufflé, Japanese-style scallops, Thai red curry sea bass – make up half the menu.

SKYLON *Map p126* *Modern International E-EEE*

% 7654 7802; www.skylonrestaurant.co.uk; 3rd fl, Royal Festival Hall, South Bank Centre, Belvedere Rd SE1; restaurant 2-/3-course meals £29.50/34.50, grillroom mains £8-18.50; *h* bar 11am-1am, grillroom noon-11.45pm, restaurant lunch & dinner to 10.45pm; *t* Waterloo

This cavernous restaurant on the top of the refurbished Royal Festival Hall is divided into grill and fine-dining sections with a large bar in the centre of the room separating the two. Floor-to-ceiling windows offer stunning views of the Thames and the City, and the décor of muted colours and period chairs harkens back to the 1951 Festival of Britain when the hall opened. Try the stuffed baby squids with preserved lemon and the smoked halibut with spring artichokes. Weekday lunch is £19.51/24.50 for two/three courses.

ANCHOR & HOPE *Map p126* *Gastropub EE*

% 7928 9898; 36 The Cut SE1; mains £11.50-14.80; *h* closed lunch Mon & dinner Sun; *t* Southwark or Waterloo

The hope is that you'll get a table without waiting hours, because unfortunately you

can't book at this quintessential gastropub. The anchor is the gutsy, unashamedly carnivorous British food. The critics love this place but with dishes such as duck hearts, pink lamb's neck and deep-fried pig's head, it's decidedly not for vegetarians. A second restaurant, **Great Queen Street** (Map pp72–3; % 7242 0622; 32 Great Queen St WC2; t Garden or Holborn) in Covent Garden, is smaller, does not have a pub and – joy of joys – takes reservations.

BOROUGH & BERMONDSEY

ROAST Map p126 Modern British EE–EEE

% 7940 1300; www.roast-restaurant.com; 1st fl, Floral Hall, Borough Market, Stoney St SE1; mains £13.50–28; h closed dinner Sun; t London Bridge

Iqbal Wahhab of **Cinnamon Club** (p247) fame has perched this unique restaurant directly above Borough Market, so he won't have to go far for his raw materials. The focal point here is the glassed-in kitchen with an open spit, where ribs of beef, suckling pigs, birds and game are roasted. The emphasis is on roasted meats and seasonal vegetables, though there are lighter dishes from salads through to grilled fish.

CHAMPOR-CHAMPOR

Map p126 Asian Fusion EEE

% 7403 4600; www.champor-champor.com; 62–64 Weston St SE1; 2/3 courses £23.50/27.90; h lunch Mon–Sat; t London Bridge

Not surprisingly, a restaurant whose name means 'mix and match' serves up some unusual creations. East–west cuisine include herbed ostrich sausages in Sichuan pepper and Japanese miso, veal cutlets crusted with coriander seeds, peppercorn-crusted lamb cutlets with peanut sauce, and several vegetarian options that the waiter will probably have to explain ('baked silk tofu with black vinegar', anyone?). Some dishes work, others don't. The eclectic décor – some Asian, a bit of African – is a delight.

BLUE PRINT CAFÉ

Map p126 Modern International EE

% 7378 7031; www.danddlondon.com; 1st fl, Design Museum, Butler's Wharf SE1; mains £12.50–18; h closed dinner Sun; t Tower Hill
Behind glass on the 1st floor of the Design Museum and aided by opera glasses at each table, customers have stunning views

of Tower Bridge and the so-called Gherkin at 30 St Mary Axe. Food is simple but tasty, with the most straightforward dishes usually working best. Look for Jerusalem artichoke soup, beetroot salad and fish dishes such as bream with seakale, cabbage, clams and bacon.

DELFINA Map p126 Modern International EE

% 7357 0244, 7564 2400; www.delfina.org.uk; 50 Bermondsey St SE1; mains £10.95–16.95; h lunch Mon–Fri, dinner Fri; t London Bridge

It's a crying shame that this upmarket artists' canteen with a woman chef at the helm serves just weekday lunches and one dinner a week as it really does offer some fine modern international cuisine (emphasis on poultry, fish and vegetables). The space is wonderful – large and light-filled – and the menu changes fortnightly. Coffee and cakes are served at the Studio Café from 8am to noon and 3pm to 5pm Monday to Friday.

BERMONDSEY KITCHEN

Map p126 Modern European E–EE

% 7407 5719; www.bermondseykitchen.co.uk; 194 Bermondsey St SE1; mains £9.50–16; h closed dinner Sun; t London Bridge

As it's a great place to curl up on the sofas with the Sunday newspapers or enjoy brunch, it's hardly surprising that many locals seem to have made this their second living room. The Modern European food (with a nod towards the Mediterranean) that comes from the open grill is as homely and unpretentious as the rough-hewn tables, and the refreshingly brief menu (five starters and as many mains) changes daily.

WRIGHT BROTHERS Map p126 Fish E–EE

% 7403 9554; www.wrightbros.eu.com; 11 Stoney St SE1; mains £8.50–15.50; h closed Sun; t London Bridge

Should you be tempted by the offerings of the fishmongers of Borough Market and must have a fix of iodine right then and there, head for this excellent oyster bar and porter house. You'll find up to a dozen different types of the bivalve (£7 to £16.25 for six) available at any given time, along with more substantial main courses.

GARRISON Map p126 Gastropub E–EE

% 7089 9355; www.thegarrison.co.uk; 99 Bermondsey St SE1; mains £6.80–14; h breakfast,

FARMERS' MARKETS

For fresh fruit, vegetables, dairy products, meat and fish, bread and other foodstuffs that taste the way they did when you were a kid, head to one of the growing number of weekend farmers' markets that have been springing up around London in the past decade. Here producers sell their own wares, the atmosphere is sociable and the produce is guaranteed fresh. The following are some of the best and most central; for a complete listing see www.lfm.org.uk.

Blackheath (Map p64; Blackheath train station car park SE10; h 10am–2pm Sun; d Blackheath)

Clapham (Bonneville Primary School, Bonneville Gardens SW4; h 10am–2pm Sun; t Clapham South)

Finchley (Map p166; 02 Centre car park, near Homebase, Finchley Rd NW3; h 10am–3pm Wed; t West Hampstead or Finchley Rd)

Islington (Map p168; William Tyndale School, behind Islington Town Hall, Upper St N1; h 10am–2pm Sun; t Highbury & Islington or Angel) London's original farmers' market, this one sells organic produce and other foodstuffs grown or reared within a 50-mile radius of the capital.

Marylebone (Map p100; Cramer St car park, off Marylebone High St W1; h 10am–2pm Sun; t Baker St or Bond St) The largest farmers' market in town, with 40 producers coming from within a 100-mile radius of the M25.

Notting Hill (Map p175; car park behind Waterstone's, Kensington Pl W8; h 9am–1pm Sat; t Notting Hill Gate)

Pimlico Road (Map pp138–9; Orange Sq, cnr Pimlico Rd & Ebury St; h 9am–1pm Sat; t Sloane Sq)

Wimbledon (off Map p64; Wimbledon Park First School, Havana Rd SW19; h 9am–1pm Sat; t Wimbledon Park)

lunch & dinner daily, brunch Sat & Sun; t London Bridge

The Garrison's traditional green-tiled exterior and minimalist (distressed, rather) beach-shack interior are both appealing and it boasts an actual cinema in its basement, but it's the comfort food (shepherd's pie, kedgeree, lentil and pumpkin vegetarian loaf) that brings the punters to this evergreen gastropub. If you don't fancy nearly bashing your neighbour's elbow every time you lift your fork, though, come for breakfast (8am to 11.30am weekdays) or weekend brunch (9am to 11.15am).

Also recommended:

Masters Super Fish (Map p126; % 7928 6924; 191

Waterloo Rd SE1; mains £7–16.50; h closed Sun; t Waterloo) Superlative fish (brought in fresh daily from Billingsgate Market and grilled rather than fried if desired) at this rather humble-looking institution.

Hartley (Map p126; % 7394 7023; www.thehartley.com; 64 Tower Bridge Rd SE1; mains £8–13; h closed dinner Sun; t London Bridge) Fence-sitter of a pub/gastropub does steak and kidney and lime-mousse *brûlée* with equal aplomb.

Coffee@Bermondsey (Map p126; % 7403 7638; 163–167 Bermondsey St SE1; dishes £2.95–3.50; h 7am–8pm daily; t London Bridge) Natural nosh (some organic, some vegan) at this very relaxed café with internet access and bulletin boards. There's a Spitalfields branch, **Coffee@Brick**

Lane (Map p150; % 7247 6735; 154 Brick Lane E1; t Liverpool St).

HYDE PARK TO CHELSEA

In the early 18th century, the influx of foreign migrants to London, already Europe's largest city, led to the expansion of the working-class areas to the east and the south while the more affluent high-tailed it for the north and, to an even greater extent, the west. Naturally, quality gravitates to where the money is, and you'll find some of London's finest establishments in the swanky hotels and ritzy mews of Chelsea, Belgravia and Knightsbridge. The king of them all, Gordon Ramsay, has three Michelin stars in its crown and resides in Chelsea. Chic and cosmopolitan South Kensington has always been reliable for pan-European options.

CHELSEA & BELGRAVIA GORDON RAMSAY

Map pp138–9 Modern European EEE

% 7352 4441; www.gordonramsay.com; 68 Royal Hospital Rd SW3; 3-course lunches/dinners £40/85; h lunch & dinner Mon–Fri; t Sloane Sq
One of Britain's finest restaurants and still the only one in the capital with three

Michelin stars, this is hallowed turf for those who worship at the altar of the stove. It's true that it is a treat right from the taster to the truffles but you won't get much time to savour it all. Bookings are made in specific eat-it-and-beat-it slots and you dare not linger. The blow-out tasting Menu Prestige (£110) is seven courses of absolute perfection.

CHEYNE WALK BRASSERIE & SALON

Map pp138–9 French EE–EEF

☎ 7376 8787; www.cheynewalkbrasserie.com; 50 Cheyne Walk SW3; mains £13.50–29.50, 2-/3-course set lunches £16.95/19.95, Sun brunches £20/25; 🍴 lunch Tue–Sun, dinner Mon–Sat, brunch Sun; 📍 Sloane Sq

With a reputation for especially tender steaks, the focus of the food preparation at this brasserie is the large open grill in the centre of the ground-floor dining room. However, you might prefer prawns flambéed in pastis sardine with a delightful salad of green beans, pistachio and mint. The *belle époque* decoration is just this side of kitsch, with turquoise banquettes, red leather chairs, chandeliers and crystal lamps topped with pink shades. From the very red star-dotted upstairs cocktail salon are great views of the Thames.

AMAYA Map pp138–9 Indian E–EE

☎ 7823 1166; www.amaya.biz; Halkin Arcade, 19 Motcomb St SW1; mains £7.50–20; 🍴 Knightsbridge

Hidden down a little arcade behind Starbucks lies a swish, stylish restaurant, with low-lit interior, colourful jewelled inlays in the wood, hanging crystal strings and chandeliers. But what will really hold your attention are the chefs at work in the open kitchen, as they slave over an iron skillet (*tawa*), charcoal grill (*sigri*) or clay oven (*tandoor*). Varied set menus (eg a vegetarian tasting one at £22, an express lunch at £19.50) put the emphasis on sharing dishes with your dining companions.

TUGGA

Map pp138–9 Portuguese, Mediterranean E–EE

☎ 7351 0101; www.tugga.com; 312–314 King's Rd SW3; mains £9–15.80; 🍴 lunch Sat & Sun, dinner daily; 📍 Sloane Sq, then G 11, 19, 22, 49 or 319 The psychedelically floral wallpaper and cerise and purple cushions in this King's Rd restaurant make it a favourite with the

Chelsea set, who come to enjoy the Portuguese cuisine (which is sold as modern but is actually more classic). The long menu of *pestiscos* (starters; £4.50 to £7) allows you to sample such classics as roasted chorizo, *caldo verde* (Portuguese green cabbage soup) and *bacalhau à Brás* (dried cod with potatoes, egg and onion).

OGNISKO Map pp138–9 Polish E–EE

☎ 7589 4635; www.ognisko.com; 55 Exhibition Rd SW7; mains £9.90–14.40; 🍴 South Kensington This is Polish of another world and time: a baroque dining room complete with portraits of military heroes (that would be the White Army) and chandeliers and mirrors; it overlooks a verdant square. But stick with the basics at 'The Hearth': *barszcz czwernony* (beetroot soup) and *pierogi* (dumplings stuffed with meat or cheese and potatoes). Outside seating in the warmer months.

KNIGHTSBRIDGE, KENSINGTON & HYDE PARK

TOM AIKENS Map pp138–9 Modern European EEF

☎ 7584 2003; www.tomaikens.co.uk; 43 Elystan St SW3; 3-course set lunches/dinners £29/65; 🍴 lunch & dinner Mon–Fri; 📍 South Kensington

The Tom of the title made his name by picking up two Michelin stars at Pied à Terre by the time he was only 26. He returned with this handsome restaurant in 2003 and, three years later, the even more relaxed *Tom's Kitchen* (see p254) nearby. The food here is excellent, with phenomenal starters such as braised scallops with pork belly and partridge with truffled mash. The tasting menu is £80 (or £140 with accompanying wines).

CAPITAL Map pp138–9 Modern European EEF

☎ 7589 5171; www.capitalhotel.co.uk; Capital Hotel, 22–23 Basil St SW3; 3-course set lunches/dinners £29.50/55; 🍴 Knightsbridge Of the five restaurants in London to have won two Michelin stars, the Capital behind Harrods department store is probably the least known – and so much the better. The modern yet warmth-inducing décor, welcoming and accommodating staff and chef Eric Chavot's award-winning dishes – a large, glass plate like an artist's palate of duck preparations called *assiette Landaise*, pan-roasted lobster with crab ravioli, roasted fillet of venison served with pan-fried foie gras – all remain our secrets. And

now yours. The tasting menu is £70 (add £47 for accompanying wines).

BIBENDUM Map pp138–9 Modern European EE–EEF

☎ 7581 5817, 7589 1480; www.bibendum.co.uk; Michelin House, 81 Fulham Rd SW3; mains £16.50–28, 2-/3-course set lunches £24/28.50; 🍴 South Kensington

Housed in the listed Art Nouveau Michelin House (1911), Bibendum offers upstairs dining in a spacious and light room with stained-glass windows, where you can savour fabulous and creative food, and what, it must be said, is fairly ordinary service. The Bibendum Oyster Bar offers a front-row seat of the building's architectural finery while lapping up terrific native and rock oysters.

BOXWOOD CAFE

Map pp138–9 Modern European EE–EEF

☎ 7235 1010; www.gordonramsay.com; Berkeley Hotel, Wilton Pl (enter from Knightsbridge) SW1; mains £16–28, set lunches £25; 🍴 Knightsbridge Gordon Ramsay's New York-style (almost) café is the kind of place you can come for a single course or a glass of wine, and while the décor is a little bland – way too dark in the depths of the main restaurant – the food is generally first rate. Simple starters such as fried West Mersea oysters with fennel and lemon, salmon ceviche and glazed pea and leek tart are generally tastier than the fussier main courses. Run-the-gamut tasting menus are £46 and £55.

NAHM Map pp138–9 Thai EE–EEF

☎ 7333 1234; www.halkin.co.uk; Halkin Hotel, Halkin St SW1; mains £19.50–21.50, set lunch/dinner £20/26; 🍴 lunch Mon–Fri, dinner daily; 📍 Hyde Park Corner

Australian chef David Thompson is the man behind the excellent tucker at this hotel restaurant, the only Thai eatery in Europe to have a Michelin star. On offer are Thai classics such as *tom yam gai* (hot and sour chicken coconut soup) as well as more exotic fare such as minced trout curry with basil and stir-fried pigeon with bamboo. The surrounds may be somewhat sterile but the leafy views are worth a booking alone. Go for lunch.

AWANA Map pp138–9 Malaysian EE–EEF

☎ 7584 8880; www.awana.co.uk; 85 Sloane Ave SW3; mains £12.50–21, 2-/3-course set lunch £12.50/15; 🍴 South Kensington London's (and perhaps the northern hemisphere's) first fine-dining Malay restaurant,

Awana has all our favourite dishes (beef *rendang*, Hainan-style chicken, butterfish wrapped in banana leaves with herbs and char-grilled) in a dining room done up to look like a relaxed *kampong* (village) house. (The uninitiated may want to consider the Malaysian Journey sampling menu at £36.) The Satay Bar serves delicious skewers of chicken, beef, lamb and prawns accompanied by the restaurant's own spicy peanut sauce. We'll be back.

LUCIO Map pp138–9 Italian EE–EEF

☎ 7823 3007; www.luciorestaurant.com; 257–259 Fulham Rd SW3; mains £16.50–20.50, 2-/3-course set lunch £15.50/19; 🍴 South Kensington One of our favourite Italian eateries in London, Lucio is decidedly top-end but not overly so. Try the exquisitely cooked pasta with clams, the crab ravioli or, when in season, the deep-fried courgette. The surrounds are understatedly stylish, the clientele subdued and the service seamless.

RACINE Map pp138–9 French EE

☎ 7584 4477; 239 Brompton Rd SW3; mains £13.25–19.50, 2-/3-course set lunch £16.50/18.50; 🍴 Knightsbridge Regional French cooking is the vehicle here and all-round, dedicated service to the customer the destination. Expect the likes of *tête de veau* (the classic French veal dish), grilled rabbit with mustard and smoked duck. Being French and very classic, dishes might feel heavy to some, but the sauces and the desserts are all spot on.

FRANKIE'S ITALIAN BAR & GRILL

Map pp138–9 Italian EE

☎ 7590 9999; www.frankiesitalianbarandgrill.com; 3 Yeoman's Row SW3; mains £10.50–13.50; 🍴 Knightsbridge Brain child of jockey Frankie Dettori and seminal chef Marco Pierre White, Frankie's has resuscitated that age-old formula for success in the catering trade: good, solid, old-fashioned food (in this case Italian) – and lots of it. The menu, popular with families, is top heavy with steaks and fish though burgers (£6.95) and pastas (£8.50) also figure.

DAQUISE Map pp138–9 Polish E–EE

☎ 7589 6117; 20 Thurloe St SW7; mains £5.50–13.50; 🍴 South Kensington This place is a real dinosaur – but a loveable little tyrannosaurus indeed – and very

close to the museums of South Kensington. It's a rather dowdy Polish café-cum-diner, with a good range of vodkas and extremely reasonably priced dishes, including the oft-seen *bigosz*, a 'hunter's stew' of cabbage and pork, and ravioli-like *pierogi*.

JAKOB'S Map pp138–9 Armenian £
% 7581 9292; 20 Gloucester Rd SW7; mains £6.50-9.50; † Gloucester Rd
This charismatic Armenian-owned restaurant serves delicious and wholesome (and sometimes organic) salads, vegetarian lasagne, filo pie, falafel and kebabs that you choose at the counter after having laid claim to a table in the back. A plate of three/four choices is £6.50/9.50. Desserts are very good.

Also recommended:

Tom's Kitchen (Map pp138–9; % 7349 0202; www.tomskitchen.co.uk; 27 Cale St SW3; mains £10.50-21.50; † South Kensington) Tom Aikens roughing it round the corner in Chelsea, with less fussy interpretations of 'beef, birds and pork' served at chunky butcher-block tables.

Pizza Organic (Map pp138–9; % 7589 9613; www.pizzaorganic.co.uk; 20 Old Brompton Rd SW7; pizzas £5.90-13.95; † South Kensington) Excellent pizza and pasta at this family-friendly place on a busy corner of South Kensington.

VICTORIA & PIMLICO

ROUSSILLON Map pp138–9 French £££
% 7730 5550; www.roussillon.co.uk; 16 St Barnabas St SW1; 3-course set lunches £35, 3-/4-course set dinners £48/60; † closed lunch Sat & all day Sun; † Sloane Sq

On a quiet side street off Pimlico Rd, Roussillon offers such fine service, lovely muted décor and settings, and fresh English ingredients dexterously cooked *à la française* that we're almost hesitant to show off this sparkling gem to the world. There's no *à la carte*; choose from among eight starters and main courses at lunch or dinner, or there's a more extravagant tasting menu (£70) of eight courses. The Menu Légumes (£60) puts vegetarian cooking in the Michelin league.

KEN LO'S MEMORIES OF CHINA

Map pp138–9 Chinese ££-£££
% 7730 7734; www.memories-of-china.co.uk; 65-69 Ebury St SW1; mains £11.75-34; † closed Sun; † Victoria

The late Kenneth Lo brought Chinese food to new levels in London, and the service and décor of the place reflect that position. The interior is elegant, oriental minimalism and the noise levels are agreeably low. There are several set menus (£18.50 to £21.50) – including a vegetarian one and an unforgettable 'Gastronomic Tour of China' (£30 per person) – and all the well-proportioned dishes feature a splendidly light touch and wonderful contrasts of flavours and textures.

LA POULE AU POT Map pp138–9 French ££-£££
% 7730 7763; 231 Ebury St SW1; mains £15.50-21, 2-/3-course set lunches £16.75/18.75; † Sloane Sq
Lit by candlelight even at lunch, the 'Chicken in the Pot' is a long-established country-style French restaurant that is long on romance and cosiness and somewhat shorter on what it serves. Still, the alfresco front terrace is a lovely spot in the warmer months.

OLIVO Map pp138–9 Italian ££
% 7730 2505; 21 Eccleston St SW1; mains £12.50-17.50; † lunch & dinner Mon-Sat; † Victoria or Sloane Sq
This colourful restaurant specialises in the food and wine of Sardinia and Sicily, and has a dedicated clientele of sophisticates who, quite frankly, would rather keep it to themselves. Not surprising, really, because this place near Victoria station is a true gem. As a general rule, drink Sicilian and eat Sardinian. Excellent pasta dishes (£10.50 to £13.75).

Also recommended:

Jenny Lo's Tea House (Map pp138–9; % 7259 0399; 14 Eccleston St SW1; mains £6.50-8.75; † closed lunch Sat & all day Sun; † Victoria) Good-value place in Victoria for rice and noodles set up by the daughter of the late Chinese food supremo Kenneth Lo.

CLERKENWELL, SHOREDITCH & SPITALFIELDS

A decade ago culinary boundaries between the City, with its mostly expense-account diners, and the hip Hoxton scene were clearly drawn. Now, the lines between 'establishment' and 'stylish' have started to blur, with Spitalfields and Shoreditch accommodating plenty of cool places where even stockbrokers

want to be seen. Less scruffy Clerkenwell is another place where City prices are married with Shoreditch levels of cool. Brick Lane, the centre of what has become known as Bangladeshi town, is lined with Indian and Bangladeshi restaurants. Not all of them are very good – choose carefully.

CLERKENWELL

LE CAFÉ DU MARCHÉ Map p150 French £££
% 7608 1609; 22 Charterhouse Sq, Charterhouse Mews EC1; 3-course set menus £29.95; † closed Sat & Sun; † Barbican
Tradition is a watchword at this quaint French bistro housed in an exposed-brick warehouse down a tiny alleyway near Smithfield Market. The food is mostly gutsy French fare – hearty steaks with garlic and rosemary flavours, fish soup with aioli – and there's piano playing and jazz upstairs. Meals are set-menu only.

SMITHS OF SMITHFIELD

Map p150 Modern British ££-£££
% 7251 7950, 7236 6666; www.smithsofsmithfield.co.uk; 67-77 Charterhouse St EC1; mains £11.50-28.50; † breakfast, lunch & dinner, depending on fl; † Farringdon
After the hubbub of the cavernous bar and café on the ground floor, where you can grab breakfast (all day from £4.50) and lunch, there are three quieter places to dine: the wine rooms on the 1st floor (small plates and sandwiches), the brasserie (mains all £11.50 and £12.50) on the 2nd floor and the rooftop dining room (£16.50 to £28.50) above that, which has great views of Smithfield Market and St Paul's Cathedral. The linking factor is a focus on top-quality British meat and organic produce.

FLÂNEUR Map p150 French/Mediterranean ££-£££
% 7404 4422; www.flaneur.com; 41 Farringdon Rd EC1; 2-/3-course set meals £19.50/24.50; † Farringdon
Dining while shoppers browse in the delicatessen-greengrocers around you may not sound appealing, but it's just part of the charm of this gourmet deli and unsurprisingly excellent restaurant. Beautifully attired in woods with high shelves stocked with all manner of rare and wonderful delicacies, tables are scattered around the shop, and diners keep the place busy for both lunch and dinner.

ST JOHN Map p150 British ££-£££
% 7251 0848; www.stjohnrestaurant.co.uk; 26 St John St EC1; mains £14.50-22; † closed lunch Sat & all day Sun; † Farringdon
Clerkenwell's most famous restaurant and its famous carve-'im-up pig logo has spawned its own book (*Nose to Tail Eating*, by chef Fergus Henderson), and indeed this much-acclaimed, enduringly hip place really is for adventurous carnivores who want to sample old-style English cuisine. The signature dish is roast bone-marrow salad with parsley, and the changing daily menu includes such specialties as chitterlings and chips, calf's brain terrine and smoked eel with beetroot. There are more familiar choices, including the odd vegetarian dish, but St John, with its minimalist white dining room and patient staff, remains a Rabelaisian experience.

CLUB GASCON Map p110 French ££-££
% 7796 0600; www.clubgascon.com; 57 West Smithfield EC1; tapas £8.50-19; † closed lunch Sat & all day Sun; † Farringdon or Barbican
One of Clerkenwell's leading restaurants since it was awarded a Michelin star in 2002, Club Gascon takes a different approach to fine dining, with a selection of tapas-style portions (that would, naturally, leave an ordinary tapas restaurant for dust). They're arranged in five categories, one of which is entirely devoted to foie gras; order from about four per person. A set menu called Le Marché is £42 (or £65 with wine).

MORO Map p150 North African, Spanish ££
% 7833 8336; www.moro.co.uk; 34-36 Exmouth Market N1; mains £14.50-17.50; † Farringdon or Angel
As its name implies, this landmark restaurant run by husband and wife Sam and Sam Clark serves 'Moorish' cuisine, a fusion of Spanish, Portuguese and North African flavours. Some diners love it, while others complain about odd seasonings and small portions; we're in the former camp and have been since we attended launch night in... well, a long time ago. The constantly changing menu might include such dishes as wood-roasted bream with *moros y christianos* (black beans and rice) and fennel cooked in anise and chicken cooked in Pedro Ximenez sherry.

QUALITY CHOP HOUSE

Map p150 British E-EE
% 7837 5093; www.qualitychophouse.co.uk; 92-94 Farringdon Rd EC1; mains £6.95-16.95; h closed lunch Sat; t Farringdon
Subtitled 'For people who love food' (as opposed to those who have stapled their mouths shut?) this chop house is a bit faux-retro for our tastes, but the food is good and harkens back to its past life as a workmen's caf with white-and-black tiled floor and wooden benches. But now the old-fashioned British staples such as eel, sausage with bubble and squeak and salmon fish cakes (£11.95) are set before a middle-class media crowd. There's a two-course set lunch weekdays for £9.95.

MEDCALF Map p150 British EE

% 7833 3533; www.medcalfbars.co.uk; 40 Exmouth Market EC1; mains £10.50-16; h closed dinner Fri & Sun; t Farringdon or Angel
Despite its erratic kitchen hours (the bar itself is open all day), Medcalf is one of the best-value hangouts in Exmouth Market. Housed in a beautifully converted butcher shop dating back to 1912, Medcalf serves up innovative yet relatively affordable British fare. Highlights on our visit were whelks and winkles with parsley and white wine, scrumptious devilled kidneys and goose with black pudding that was cooked to perfection.

EAGLE Map p150 Gastropub E-EE

% 7837 1353; 159 Farringdon Rd EC1; mains £9-14; h closed dinner Sun; t Farringdon
London's first gastropub is still going strong after all these years. Even though the original owners and many chefs have left, the customers still come, at lunch or after work, for dishes that tend to nod in the direction of the Mediterranean. The atmosphere is nicely relaxed and chatty.

COACH & HORSES Map p150 Gastropub EE

% 7278 8990; www.thecoachandhorses.com; 26-28 Ray St EC1; mains £10-13; t Farringdon
Just around the corner from London's original gastropub, the Eagle, this upstart is giving the competition a run for its money. Despite this, it's still easy to get a seat within its traditional walls and absorb the menu, which will include such things as a salad of duck hearts, beetroot and orange, and braised ox cheek.

AKI Map p150 Japanese E-EE

% 7837 9281; www.akidemae.com; 182 Gray's Inn Rd WC1; mains £4.85-11.30; h closed Sat lunch & all day Sun; t Chancery Lane
This charmingly shabby *izakaya* ('sake bar with food' or Japanese-style bistro) is an excellent and very authentic place for noodles (£4.80), sushi (£1.60 to £2.80) or one of the dozen sets, including tempura (£E2) at the dinner.

Also recommended:

Ambassador (Map p150; % 7837 0009; www.theambassadorscafe.co.uk; 55 Exmouth Market EC1; mains £9.50-14.75; t Farringdon) Super find with inventive bistro cuisine and a killer set lunch at £12.50/16 for two/three courses.

SHOREDITCH & HOXTON

LES TROIS GARÇONS Map p150 French EE-EEE

% 7613 1924; www.lestroisgarcons.com; 1 Club Row E1; mains £17.50-33; h dinner Mon-Sat; t Liverpool St
Walk through the door of this enormous erstwhile pub and your jaw will surely drop: giraffe heads stick out from the wall at a right angle, stuffed swans wear tiaras, alligators are crowned and the mirrors are listed. The food – classic French with the likes of duck confit, *riz de veau* (sweet-breads) and plates of pork *charcuterie* (sausage) on offer – is good if not excellent and at least one of the eponymous 'three boys' is usually on hand to meet and greet. Service can sometimes be so attentive as to be almost overbearing.

EYRE BROTHERS

Map p150 Spanish, Portuguese EE-EEE

% 7613 5346; www.eyrebros.com; 70 Leonard St EC2; mains £14-25; h closed lunch Sat & all day Sun; t Old St
Geographically located in Shoreditch, but stylistically with one foot in the City, this dark-panelled, low-ceilinged den with lots of photos on the walls excels with an interesting range of fare inspired by the food of Spain and Portugal. Diners tuck into a largely vegetarian-unfriendly menu, including scallops with *jamón* (ham) *Serrano*, grilled Mozambique prawns *piri-piri* (chilli) and Catalan-style rabbit stew. The Eyre brothers were behind London's first gastropub, the Eagle (left). They still know what they're doing.

FIFTEEN Map p150 Italian E-EEE

% 0871 330 1515, 7251 3909; www.fifteenrestaurant.com; 15 Westland PI N1; mains £9.50-23.50; t Old St
Now an international minichain with branches in Melbourne, Amsterdam and even far-flung Cornwall, this is celeb chef Jamie Oliver's gaff, where he trains and employs 15 young chefs and the profits go to charity. It's difficult to get a reservation, but one-third of the seating in the downstairs trattoria, where breakfast is available from 7.30am on weekdays and from 9am at the weekend, is kept for walk-ins. We've had mixed reviews about the food and bad ones about the high prices (£8 for a fry-up?) but it's for a good cause. Expect a decent selection of fish and vegetarian dishes.

BACCHUS Map p150 Modern European EE

7613 0477; www.bacchus-restaurant.co.uk; 177 Hoxton St N1; mains £12-19; h lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat; t Old St
The speciality of chef Nuno Mendes (see boxed text, p259) – *sous-vide* cooking in which ingredients are slow-cooked in a vacuum for hours and hours – is put to the test at this smart erstwhile pub and succeeds. The rabbit mousse is just this side of absolute perfection but you must try the langoustines with Catalan mix to experience one of Mendes' signature foams (in this case a hot garlic one). For mains, expect the likes of warm cod wrapped in chicken skin and sesame-crusting squab with foie gras.

HOXTON APPRENTICE

Map p150 Modern European E-EE

% 7749 2828; www.hoxtonapprentice.com; 16 Hoxton Sq N1; mains £8.50-16.95; t Old St
The poor man's Fifteen (above) – in celebrity-pulling power, it must be stressed, and not in style or affordability – this is another training restaurant where worthy applicants do their time at the stove. It's pricey for what it is and serves, but we enjoyed a perfect saddle of rabbit with apple and black pudding on a recent visit. Weekday lunches of two/three courses are £9.99/12.99 and, at the weekend, brunches are long (11am to 6pm). Have a look at the 'hall of mirrors' on the mezzanine level.

CAY TRE Map p150 Vietnamese E

% 7729 8662; www.vietnamesekitchen.co.uk; 301 Old St EC1; mains £4.50-7; t Old St

As much as we'd like to, we can't recommend any of the Vietnamese cafés or restaurants in Little Hanoi on Kingsland Rd north of here. Trust us; they smell more of faux than *pho* (noodle soup). Instead stay in Hoxton and head to the 'Vietnamese Kitchen' for classic Vietnamese beef noodle soup, *banh xeo* (a kind of pancake with prawns, chicken and vegetables) and wonderful pan-fried *basa* fish with lemongrass and shallots.

SPITALFIELDS

ST JOHN BREAD & WINE

Map p150 British EE-EEE

% 7251 0848; www.stjohnbreadandwine.com; 94-96 Commercial St; mains £10.20-29; h closed dinner Sun; t Liverpool St
Little sister to St John (p255), this place is cheaper and more relaxed but offers similar 'nose to tail' traditional fare (duck hearts on toast, jellied ham, salt lamb and turnips) in an austere (though airy) space popular with Spitalfields creative types. There's also excellent British cheese and puddings.

MESÓN LOS BARRILES Map p150 Spanish EE

% 7375 3136; 8a Lamb St E1; mains £10.50-17.50; h closed Sat, dinner Sun; t Liverpool St
This restaurant inside Spitalfields Market serves up some very fresh fish main courses but hardly anyone comes here for those. The draw at the 'Barrels House' is the excellent selection of tapas (£3 to £7.95). Sawdust on the floor and air-dried hams overhead add to the rustic market feel of the place.

ARKANSAS CAFÉ

Map p150 North American E-EE

% 7377 6999; Unit 12, Spitalfields Market, 107b Commercial St E1; mains £5.50-16; h lunch Sun-Fri; t Liverpool St
Good ole down-home Arkansas barbecue is what is served up in this unprepossessing unit on the edges of Spitalfields Market. Whether it's platters of pork ribs, corn-fed chicken or steak, you can rest assured they'll be of truly excellent quality, with lots of potatoes, coleslaw and other stuff on the side.

GREEN & RED Map p150 Mexican E-EE

7749 9670; www.greenred.uk.co; 51 Bethnal Green Rd E1; mains £9.50-14.50; h dinner daily; t Liverpool St
Mexican food is enjoying something of a renaissance in London and this bar and

LOCAL VOICES: JOE COOKE *Interviewed by Steve Fallon*

A resident of Chingford, Joe Cooke owns **F Cooke** (see the boxed text, p260), a pie and mash shop that's been on the same Hoxton street for more than a century. Just opposite is **Bacchus** (see the boxed text, opposite), serving a distinctly different cuisine.

Nice name in your trade. Local boy? It's got an 'e' at the end. Yeah, born in Clapton – that's with a 'p' – not Clacton with a 'c' – and I live in Chingford. My family has had a pie shop on this street since 1902 and the business has been in the family since 1862.

Don't people prefer pizza and fried chicken nowadays? Whither goest pie and mash? It's got nothing to do with preferring one over the other. Years ago a High Street had three places to eat in: a caf, a fish and chips place and pie and mash shop. Our portion of the take was one-third. Now every conceivable kind of food is available.

Like molecular gastronomy at Bacchus, across the way. Been there? For every weird food there'll be a weird customer. Nah, I only wish them lots of luck. And I thought the *Evening Standard* was overly harsh on them. Barely gave them a chance to show off how it all works.

Who comes in? There's not a lot of passing trade, but we get all sorts: young and old, locals and tourists. You name it. Yanks, Afghans, Hindus (who are not always necessarily adhering to their dietary laws) and Japanese (who love to take pictures).

And what goes in? The same exact ingredients as when we first opened. Everything is done on the premises. We make all of our own dough, bone all the meat, grind all the parsley for the liquor and jelly the eels. The only big change in recent years is we now sell vegetables pies. Frankly lots of proper pie shops have disappeared because they're a lot of work.

Proper pie shops? If they serve gravy with their pies it's not a real pie and mash shop.

Where do the ingredients come from? The meat's from Smithfield Market, the potatoes are Maris Pipers at the moment and the parsley is English. Eels are local until the season ends in late autumn. Then we get farmed ones from Holland. We tried to import them. Irish ones are the best but the New Zealand ones: ugh, they've got a skin on them like a donkey's foreskin. We've never changed any of the recipes.

Simple as that? Look, if you start off with cream ingredients you'll still have something good even if you balls it all up. Crap ingredients make crap dishes.

When I'm not behind the stove... I'm behind a pot of tea and a rum baba at Maison Bertaux (see the boxed text, p239).

cantina is a welcome addition to Bangladeshi town. The shacklike décor sets the mood for such authentic dishes as slow-cooked pork belly with chillies and orange salt and roasted vegetable in chilli salsa. In the bar downstairs choose your poison from among the more than 100 tequilas on offer.

CANTEEN *Map p150* *British £-££*

☎ 0845 686 1122; www.canteen.co.uk; 2 Crispin Pl, off Brushfield St E1; mains £7-11.50; h 8am-11pm Mon-Fri, 9am-11pm Sat & Sun; t Liverpool St Voted the *Observer Food Monthly's* Best UK Restaurant in 2007, this very stylish yet affordable eatery just west of Spitalfields Market has an all-day menu that will please almost every taste – from macaroni and cheese and shop-made pies to smoked haddock. The management and waiting staff are young and very keen.

Also recommended:

Tas Firin (*Map p150*); ☎ 729 6446; 160 Bethnal Green E2; mains £7.50-13.50; t Liverpool St) The 'Stone Oven' is

just about as authentic a Turkish grill restaurant as you'll find in this neighbourhood.

Café 1001 (*Map p150*); ☎ 7247 9679; www.cafe1001.co.uk; 91 Brick Lane E1; mains £2.50-3.50; h 6am-midnight; t Liverpool St) Popular and huge café with grills and cakes, lounge seating upstairs and live music.

Brick Lane Beigel Bake (*Map p150*); ☎ 7729 0616; 159 Brick Lane E2; filled bagels 70p-£2.90; h 24hr; t Liverpool St) You won't find fresher (or cheaper) bagels anywhere in London than at this bakery and delicatessen; just ask any taxi driver (it's their favourite nosherie).

THE EAST END & DOCKLANDS

The changes that have occurred in the East End dining scene over the past decade have been nothing short of phenomenal. Who would have imagined that a five-star gastropub would land in Hackney just north of Victoria Park? And while the Docklands pretty much remains the land of expense accounts and quick lunches, you can now

find some excellent Asian food there. In fact the East End's multiculturalism means its ethnic cuisine stretches pretty far, with everything from Vietnamese, vegetarian Thai and even Georgian available. But the best – by far – is its Indian and Pakistani offerings. If you fancy the real McCoy, head for the bare-bones subcontinental eateries of Whitechapel – most of them BYO alcohol and all of them halal.

WHITECHAPEL

NEW TAYYAB *Map p156* *Indian, Pakistani £-££*

☎ 7247 9543; www.tayyabs.co.uk; 83-89 Fieldgate St E1; mains £4-11; t Whitechapel, G 25 From the enticing aroma on entering, it's clear this buzzing Punjabi restaurant is in another league to its Brick Lane equivalents. *Seekh* kebabs, *masala* fish and other starters served on sizzling hot plates are delicious, as are accompaniments such as dhal, naan and raita. With New Tayyab now appearing regularly in guidebooks and the huge London Royal Hospital round the corner, you should expect to

wait for a table (and there will always be a doctor in the house).

LAHORE KEBAB HOUSE

Map p156 *Indian, Pakistani £*

☎ 7481 9737, 7488 2551; 2 Umberston St E1; mains £5-10; t Whitechapel, G 25 This restaurant with a large kitchen viewable through glass is not an aesthetic experience, and ever since City workers discovered it the standard of cooking seems to have slipped. Still, it remains popular with the local community and has some excellent meat and chicken biryanis.

MIRCH MASALA *Map p156* *Indian, Pakistani £*

☎ 7377 0155; 111-113 Commercial Rd E1; mains £3.50-10; t Whitechapel, G 25 The new(ish) kid on the block and thus even more eager to please, 'Chilli and Spice' is a less hectic alternative to New Tayyab and the Lahore Kebab House, and the food is every bit as good. Order the prawn tikka as a 'warmer' followed by the *masala karela*, a curry-like dish made from bitter gourd, and a *karahi* meat dish.

LOCAL VOICES: NUNO MENDES *Interviewed by Steve Fallon*

Lisbon-born Nuno Mendes lives in Bethnal Green E2 and is the chef and owner of **Bacchus** (p257), a temple of 'molecular gastronomy' just across the street from **F Cooke's** pie and mash shop (see the boxed text, opposite).

From El Bulli in Barcelona via Jean Georges in New York to a made-over pub in Hoxton. How does that work?

After 14 years in the States I wanted to come back to Europe and there's a lot happening on the London food scene right now. I like what Heston (Blumenthal of Fat Duck fame; see p379) is doing. But it's not just about mimicking. I'm trying to present some of his techniques in a laid-back place.

OK, tick, trendy Hoxton. But why the wrong – northern – end of trendy Hoxton? I wanted to open in East London. This area reminds me of the West Village in New York. I like the 24-hour feeling that this place has.

Sous-vide. What's that all about again? *Sous-vide* is cooking 'under vacuum'. Food is cooked very slowly in a plastic bag at a constant temperature, allowing ingredients to retain their weight, structure and nutrients. It only came about because of advances in cooking science and technology, with things like circulators which keep the cooking temperature to within 1%.

Right. But foam? Isn't that the stuff you skim off soups and jams and tip into the bin? To me, foam is the best way to express the flavour of an ingredient as clearly as possible. No texture. It is nothing but pure taste.

Pork jowl with cinnamon oil and langoustine with rosewater purée. Now that's a lot of tastes on a plate. I start with two ingredients, focusing on two flavours – say lamb and goat's cheese – that work together. I then add ingredients that work with each of them and begin to form a network of flavours.

Have people been receptive to this 'molecular gastronomy'? By and large yes. People like to experiment with food and this is an area of London in which to do it. Hoxton draws lots of creative people; it's an area known for new ideas. A couple of critics didn't like it though.

Will this type of cooking carry on or is it just, err, a flash in the pan? Like everything, cooking will evolve. My cooking is a reflection of new technology and as that changes it will push forward.

When you're not cooking, where are you eating? My cooking and tastes reflect all the places I've worked in. I like a place called **Yauatcha** (p239) which does excellent dim sum. I'm very close to **Green & Red** (p257).

Have you developed a taste for traditional English? I like **St John Bread & Wine** (p257) and I go to the pie and mash place opposite. They don't come here, but I go there.

PIE 'N' MASH SHOPS

Those curious about how Londoners used to eat before everything went trendy, modern and nouvelle should sample a pie made from minced beef and 'mash' (fake mashed potatoes made from powder) available at any of the following establishments for £1.75 to £2.50. Jellied eels, mushy peas and 'liquor' (a green sauce made from parsley and vinegar) are optional extras. A slightly more modern take on this traditional staple is available at the **Square Pie Company** (Map p150; % 7377 1114; Spitalfields Market E1; pies £6.50; h 10.30am-3pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sun).

Castle's (Map p168; % 7485 2196; 229 Royal College St NW1; h 10.30am-3.30pm Tue-Sat; t Camden Town, d Camden Rd)

Clark's (Map p150; % 7837 1974; 46 Exmouth Market EC1; h 10.30am-4pm Mon-Thu, to 5.30pm Fri & Sat; t Farringdon)

F Cooke (Map p150; % 7729 7718; 150 Hoxton St N1; h 10am-7pm Mon-Thu, 9.30am-8pm Fri & Sat; t Old St or Liverpool St)

Manze's (Map p126; % 7407 2985; 87 Tower Bridge Rd SE1; h 10.30am-2pm Tue-Sat; t London Bridge)

BETHNAL GREEN & HACKNEY

LITTLE GEORGIA Map p156 Georgian EE

% 7739 8154; 87 Goldsmith's Row E2; mains £10-11; h closed dinner Tue & Wed; t Bethnal Green, d Cambridge Heath

A charming slice of the Caucasus in East London, LG is an excellent introduction to the cuisine of Georgia (as in Tbilisi, not Atlanta or midnight trains). Here the menu includes dishes such as *nigziani* (red pepper or aubergine stuffed with walnuts, herbs and roast vegetables), chicken *satsivi* in walnut sauce and the Georgian classic staple *khachapuri* (cheese bread). The café is a good place for breakfast and does takeaway lunch (£4 to £5.50).

GREEN PAPAYA Map p156 Vietnamese E

% 8985 5486; www.greenpapaya.co.uk; 191 Mare St E8; mains £5.50-8; h dinner Tue-Sun; d Hackney Central, g D6, 253 or 277

This oasis just south of the landmark Hackney Empire music hall serves Vietnamese food of very high quality and tends to put a 'modern' spin on many of the dishes. Try the *banh tom* (lightly fried strips of sweet potato and king prawns), the banana flower salad and the 'Mama's Pork', slow-cooked with mushrooms and vegetables. The staff are enthusiastic and helpful.

Also recommended:

Thai Garden (Map p156; % 8981 5748; www.thetaigarden.co.uk; 249 Globe Rd E2; mains £4.50-11; h lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat; t Bethnal Green, then g 8) This is a rare bird indeed – a mostly vegetarian (with some

seafood dishes) Thai restaurant in Bethnal Green – and well worth the trip.

Frizzante@City Farm (Map p156; % 7739 2266; www.frizzanteltd.co.uk; Hackney City Farm, 1a Goldsmith's Row E2; mains £4.80-8.75; h 10am-4.30pm or 5.30pm Tue-Sun; t Bethnal Green, d Cambridge Heath) Award-winning family restaurant serving good Italian food next door to one of London's half-dozen city farms for children.

MILE END & VICTORIA PARK

EMPRESS OF INDIA Map p156 Gastropub E-EE

% 8533 5123; www.theempressofindia.com; 130 Lauriston Rd E9; mains £9.50-16.50; t Mile End, g 277

This exquisite, much welcomed pub conversion on the western edge of Victoria Park belts out excellent modern British cuisine, with such fine dishes as sorrel soup with Cheddar scone, saddle of venison and roast suckling pig. We love the elegant bar, the Raj-era murals on the wall, the chandeliers made of mussel shells and the seamless service. Breakfast is available daily from 8.30am.

CAFÉ SPICE NAMASTE Map p156 Indian EE

% 7488 9242; www.cafespice.co.uk; 16 Prescot St E1; mains £12.25-15.75; h closed lunch Sat & all day Sun; t Tower Hill

Chef Cyrus Todiwala has taken an old magistrates' court just a 10-minute walk from Tower Hill and decorated it in 'carnival' colours; the service and atmosphere are as bright as the walls. The Parsee and Goan menu is famous for its searivative *dhansak* (lamb stew with rice and lentils) but just as good are the spicy chicken

frango piri-piri and the Goan king prawn curry. They make their own chutneys here. Another bonus is the little Ginger Garden behind the dining room that's open in the warmer months.

NAMO Map p156 Vietnamese E

% 8533 0639; 178 Victoria Park Rd E9; mains £4.50-9; h lunch Thu-Sun, dinner Tue-Sun; t Mile End, g 277

This very bohemian place takes the Vietnamese dishes so characteristic of nearby Dalston and pulls them into the 21st century; expect things such as chilli jam with your slow-cooked pork and a new take on *bo bun hue* (£7), the signature beef noodle soup. Seating is a bit cramped, but the array of plants and flowers brings nearby Victoria Park even closer.

DOCKLANDS

UBON Map p160 Japanese E-EE

% 7719 7800; www.noburestaurants.com; 4th fl, Holmes Pl, 34 Westferry Circus E14; mains £9.75-29.50; h lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat; t /DLR Canary Wharf

Ubon gets as many rave reviews as its big sister, **Nobu** (p245), which is of course its name spelt backward. While customers argue over whether you really get value for money here (set lunch is a snip at £21 to £31), the selling point has to be the breathtaking Thames views from every corner, including the fabulous sushi bar. The restaurant has its own dedicated entrance next to the Four Seasons hotel and its own lift.

ROYAL CHINA Map p160 Chinese E-EE

% 7719 0888; www.royalchinagroup.co.uk; 30 Westferry Circus E14; mains £7.50-22.50; t /DLR Canary Wharf

Though admittedly just one of four outlets of a chain, including the **Bayswater branch** (Map p175; t 7221 2535; 13 Queensway W2; Bayswater), this is London's best Cantonese restaurant and excels in both standard and unusual dim sum, available daily from 11am to 5pm. This branch has impressive Thames views, especially in the warmer months when tables are set out at the water's edge.

WAPPING FOOD Map p156 Modern European EE

% 7680 2080; www.thewappingproject.com; Wapping Hydraulic Power Station, Wapping Wall

E1; mains £12.50-19.75; h closed dinner Sun; t Wapping

We've all seen converted factories masquerading as restaurants but nothing compares with this erstwhile power station (and now restaurant-gallery-performance space), which has chosen to let all of its hydraulic equipment hang out. The food is modern European bending towards the Mediterranean, the wine list all-Australian and the staff pleasant.

EL FARO Map p160 Spanish EE

% 7987 5511; www.el-faro.co.uk; 3 Turnberry Quay, Pepper St E14; mains £13.95-19.50; h closed dinner Sun; DLR Crossharbour

An E14 address rarely signifies a destination restaurant but hop on the DLR (a picturesque and worthwhile ride) and travel to the 'Lighthouse' for what are acclaimed as the best tapas (£4.25 to £8.50) and Spanish dishes in town. The location on a basin in the Docklands is quite restful and yet within easy walking distance of Canary Wharf.

NARROW Map p156 British E-EE

% 592 7950; www.gordonramsay.com/thenarrow; 44 Narrow St E14; mains £9-12.50; DLR Limehouse This gastropub with commanding views of the Thames may or may not be Mr Ramsay's idea of slumming it – or at least be Gordon without the glam. Housed in what was once the Limehouse Basin dockmaster's residence, the place comes with a lot of history and tradition and the food reflects that. Expect such old favourites as London Particular (pea and ham soup), braised Gloucester pig cheeks with bashed neeps and Huntingdon fidget pie made with bacon, onion and apple.

NORTH LONDON

Whoever said that London was a 'collection of villages' must have had the northern boroughs in mind; nowhere is that old chestnut more applicable to neighbourhoods as disparate as Islington, Camden, Stoke Newington and Hampstead. Once the capital's foodie hub, Islington has definitely lost its '90s cachet as a home of innovation. That said, it's still got more than its fair share of great restaurants, especially along busy Upper St. Multiethnic Camden is another kettle of fish, with a pride of Greek restaurants as well as tasty offerings

of Caribbean, Russian and even Afghani cuisine. Here's where you'll also find a gourmet vegetarian restaurant.

CAMDEN

ENGINEER *Map p166* Gastropub ££
% 7722 0950; www.the-engineer.com; 65 Gloucester Ave NW1; mains £12.95-15.50; t Chalk Farm
One of London's original gastropubs, the Engineer serves up consistently good international cuisine – from Moroccan roast lamb chump and *coq au vin* to miso-marinated cod – and is hugely popular with impeccably hip North Londoners. The splendid walled garden is the highlight.

LEMONIA *Map p166* Greek E-££
% 7586 7454, 89 Regent's Park Rd NW1; mains £9.75-14.75; h closed lunch Sat & dinner Sun; t Chalk Farm
Some people's favourite Greek restaurant in London, this attractive and very popular *taverna* offers good-value food and a lively atmosphere. A selection of meze costs £14 per person and the vegetarian moussaka is excellent. There's a two-course set weekday lunch for £7.75.

MARINE ICES *Map p166* Italian E-££
% 7482 9003; 8 Haverstock Hill NW3; mains £6-14.50; t Chalk Farm
As its name suggests, this Chalk Farm institution started out as an ice-cream parlour (in fact, a Sicilian *gelateria*) but these days it does some savoury dishes as well, including pizzas and hearty pasta dishes. Be sure to try some of the excellent ice cream, which has its own menu.

BAR GANSA *Map p168* Spanish ££
% 7267 8909; 2 Inverness St NW1; mains £13.50; t Camden Town
Bar Gansa is a focal point of the Camden scene, has a late licence and is howlingly popular. The menus – mostly tapas (£1.85 to £4.60) – are good value, especially the weekday lunch menu, when three tapas with olives and bread are £6.50. There's live flamenco on Monday evening.

MANGO ROOM *Map p168* Caribbean ££
% 7482 5065; www.mangoroom.co.uk; 10 Kentish Town Rd NW1; mains £10-13.50; t Camden Town
With delightful pastel décor and genteel service, Mango Room is a kind of decaf

Caribbean experience, although there's no holding back with the food: cod fritters with apple chutney, salt fish with ackee (a yellow-skinned Jamaican fruit that has an uncanny resemblance to scrambled eggs), and curried goat with hot pepper and spices. The early-ska/Jamaican-jazz soundtrack is wicked.

MANNA *Map p166* Vegetarian E-££
% 7722 8082; www.manna-veg.com; 4 Erskine Rd NW1; mains £9.50-13; h lunch Sun, dinner daily; t Chalk Farm
Tucked away on a side street in Primrose Hill, London's most glamorous inner-city village, this little place does a brisk trade in inventive vegetarian cooking. The menu features such mouth-watering dishes as Kashmiri curry, aubergine tempura and organic fennel schnitzel (though some reports suggest that not all dishes are a howling success).

CAFÉ CORFU *Map p168* Greek E-££
% 7269 8088; www.cafecorfu.com; 7-9 Pratt St NW1; mains £8.95-12.50; h closed Mon; t Camden Town
Corfu is the best of a host of Greek restaurants in the neighbourhood. Décor is sleek and stylish, the delicious food feels light (modern Greek?) but fills, and there's more than retsina to slake your thirst. A belly dancer and DJ aid the digestion on Friday and Saturday nights and there's live Greek music on Sunday.

TROJKA *Map p166* Russian, Eastern European E-££
% 7483 3765; www.trojka.co.uk; 101 Regent's Park Rd NW1; mains £7.50-10.50; t Chalk Farm
This café-restaurant serves good-value and pretty authentic Russian and Eastern European, with a wide variety of *zakuski* (Russian tapaslike starters) from £2.50 to £7.95 and mains such as Russian *pierog* (a pie of sauerkraut and vegetables), *bigos* (a cabbage 'stew' with mixed meats) and salt beef, in an attractive skylit restaurant frequented by local bohos. Avoid the house wine by bringing your own (£3 corkage). There's live Russian music at the weekend.

EL PARADOR *Map p168* Spanish £
% 7387 2789; www.elparadorlondon.com; 245 Eversholt St NW1; tapas £3.90-6.50; h closed lunch Sat & Sun; t Mornington Cres
This laid-back Spanish place has a generous selection of tapas – try the *empanadillas*

de espinacas y queso (spinach and cheese dish) – from all over Spain. There's a walled garden for when the sun's out and you're feeling moderately Mediterranean; the reasonably priced rioja (from £16.90) should help.

Also recommended:

Belgo Noord (*Map p166*; % 7267 0718; www.belgo-res-taurants.com; 72 Chalk Farm Rd NW1; mains £8.95-17.95; t Chalk Farm) Branch of a Belgian restaurant chain; one of the few places in town that still serves *moules frites* (mussels and chips/French fries; £12.25).

Asakusa (*Map p168*; % 7388 8533; 265 Eversholt St NW1; mains £5.50-12; h dinner Mon-Sat; t Mornington Cres) This somewhat scruffy but clean place has cheap sushi for £1.10 to £1.30 per piece, along with more elaborate set menus (£5.80 to £9.90).

KING'S CROSS & EUSTON

MESTIZO *Map p168* Mexican E-££
% 7387 4064; www.mestizomx.com; 103 Hampstead Rd NW1; mains £9.50-18.50; t Warren St
If your idea of Mexican food is tacos and gluggy refried beans, think again. At this large and very attractive restaurant and tequila bar just down from the Latin Quarter guitar shop you'll find everything from *quesadillas* (cheese-filled pasties) to filled corn enchiladas. But go for the specials: *pozole*, a thick fresh corn soup with meat, and several different preparations of *mole*, chicken or pork cooked in a rich sauce containing everything but the proverbial sink (including chocolate).

ACORN HOUSE *Map p168* Modern European ££
% 7812 1842; www.acornhouserestaurant.com; 69 Swinton St WC1; mains £12-17; t King's Cross St Pancras
London's first totally ecofriendly restaurant with 10 trainees as fresh as the seasonal ingredients they're working with, an open kitchen and monthly changing menus. The dining room is a bit narrow for our taste but it accommodates a well-stocked and very long bar.

SNAZZ.SICHUAN *Map p168* Chinese E-££
% 7388 0808; www.newchinaclub.co.uk; 37 Chalton St NW1; mains £9.80-15.80; t Euston
As one London-based hack who knows a thing or two about Chinese food put it, 'Snazz is almost *too* authentic'. And we

know what he means; tongue in hot oil, pig ear with ginger and special cooked pig blood in casserole just don't cut the mustard even with old China hands like us. But other Sichuan favourites – twice-cooked pork, *gong bo* chicken with chillies and peanuts, a noodle dish with mince called 'ants climbing trees' – are also available at this very authentic restaurant catering almost exclusively to Chinese people. Look for the rickshaw out front.

ADDIS *Map p168* Ethiopian £
% 7278 0679; www.addisrestaurant.co.uk; 40-42 Caledonian Rd N1; mains £6.95-8.50; t King's Cross St Pancras
Cheery Addis serves pungent Ethiopian dishes such as *ye beg tibs*, chunks of tender lamb cooked with onions and spices, and *doro wat*, chicken cooked with hot pepper and spices, which are eaten on a platter-sized piece of soft but slightly elastic *injera* bread. It's normally full of Ethiopian and Sudanese punters, which is always a good sign. The Addis Special Platter (£15.99) lets you sample all the highlights.

DIWANA BHEL POORI HOUSE *Map p168* Indian, Vegetarian, £
% 7387 5556; www.diwanarestaurant.com; 121-123 Drummond St; mains £5-6.95; t Euston or Euston Sq
The first of its kind – and still the best on this busy street, in our humble opinion – Diwana specialises in Bombay-style *bhel poori* (a sweet and sour, soft and crunchy 'party mix' snack) and *dosas* (filled pancakes made from rice flour). Thalís offering a selection of tasty treats are £6.75 to £8.50 and the all-you-can-eat lunchtime buffet (£6.50) is legendary.

Also recommended:

Ravi Shankar (*Map p168*; % 7388 6458; 133-135 Drummond St NW1; mains £3.50-6.95; t Euston or Euston Sq) Not our favourite *bhel poori* house on Drummond St – that would be *Diwana* (above) – but this place with the memorable name is a close(ish) second choice.

HAMPSTEAD & HIGHGATE
BLACK & BLUE *Map p166* Steakhouse E-£££
% 7443 7744; 205-207 Haverstock Hill NW3; mains £8-23; t Belsize Park
This new, very stylish steakhouse with a branch at *Borough Market* (*Map p126*; % 7357

9922; 1-2 Rochester Walk SE1; † London Bridge) is easily identifiable by the bright red life-size plaster cow standing outside. In addition to a panoply of steaks (£13 to £23) there are also gourmet burgers (£8 to £12) with everything.

LA GAFFE Map p166 Italian E£

‰ 7794 7526; 107-111 Heath St NW3; mains £11.95-19.95; † lunch Thu-Sun, dinner daily; † Hampstead

This comfortable, family-run restaurant in an 18th-century cottage that is now a hotel is a Hampstead landmark and serves reliably good Italian dishes. The choice of fresh pasta dishes (£6.25 to £9.95) is especially good. There's a three-course set lunch (£12.50) available weekdays.

WOODLANDS Map p166 Vegetarian, Indian E-EE

‰ 7794 3080; www.woodlandsrestaurant.co.uk; 102 Heath St NW3; mains £5.95-17.95; † lunch Fri & Sat, dinner Mon-Sat; † Hampstead

This South Indian vegetarian restaurant, whose rallying cry is 'Let Vegetation Feed the Nation', sets out to prove that South Indian vegetarian food can be as inventive as any meat-based cuisine and does a pretty convincing job of it. Superb thalis (£15.75 to £17.95) and *dosas* (Indian-style pancakes; £5.95 to £6.95) are highlights. There's also a **Marylebone branch** (Map p100; ‰ 7486 3862; 77 Marylebone Lane W1; † Bond St).

WELLS TAVERN Map p166 Gastropub E-EE

‰ 7794 3785; www.thewellshampstead.co.uk; 30 Well Walk NW3; mains £9.95-15; † Hampstead

The Wells was once a raucous venue for 'clandestine or unpremeditated marriages' at Hampstead Spa. Now it's a popular gastropub, with comfortable sofas and couches, dark walls and big flower arrangements. The modern European food is well above average and, particularly at lunch, offers pretty good value – for Hampstead.

JIN KICHI Map p166 Japanese E-EE

‰ 7794 6158; www.jinkichi.com; 73 Heath St NW3; dishes £3.60-12.90; † lunch Sat & Sun, dinner Tue-Sun; † Hampstead

A disproportionate number of London's Japanese residents live in Hampstead, and a disproportionate number of them eat at this slightly shabby and cramped little place. It's a particularly good bet for *sumi-*

yaki (char-grilled meats) with sets at £8.70 and £10.90, though it does standard stuff such as sushi, sashimi and tempura. Be sure to book.

ISLINGTON

METROGUSTO Map p168 Italian E£

‰ 7226 9400; www.metrogusto.co.uk; 13 Theberton St N1; mains £13.50-17.50; † closed lunch Mon-Thu & all day Sun; † Angel

This laid-back place with delightful modern art on the walls serves progressive, modern (if somewhat pricey) Italian cuisine. Choose something like pizza or pasta (£11.50 to £12.50) or more substantial mains such as the *carne del giorno* (meat of the day) and *pesce di mercato* (fish of the market) from £16.50. Two-/three-course set dinners are £24.50/27.50. Seating is a bit cramped.

CANTINA ITALIA Map p168 Italian E£

‰ 7220 9791; 19 Canonbury Lane N1; mains £12.90-17.50; † Highbury & Islington

Though this funky little trattoria with modern art on the walls and a Sardinian connection does more ambitious *secondi* (mains) such as the stewlike *stincò di maiale* (£13.50), most people come here for the fine pizzas (£4.30 to £8.90) and pasta (£7.90 to £11.90). Don't miss the linguine tossed with *bottarga* (cured mullet roe), oil, garlic, parsley and red pepper flakes.

CASALE FRANCO Map p168 Italian E-EE

‰ 7226 8994; 134-137 Upper St N1; mains £8.50-17.50; † lunch Sat & Sun, dinner Tue-Sun; † Angel or Highbury & Islington

Still our favourite cheap and cheerful Italian on Upper St, Casale Franco offers the usual Italian comfort food (the pizza is excellent) in warm surroundings. Avoid sitting on the 1st floor (nowheresville) and kill for a outside table in the warm weather. Service is friendly and attentive.

DUKE OF CAMBRIDGE Map p168 Gastropub E-EE

‰ 7359 9066; www.dukeorganic.co.uk; 30 St Peter's St N1; mains £9.50-15; † Angel

It may feel like a typical London gastropub, with bare wooden boards, tables and sofas, but the Duke can lay claim to being the only certified organic pub in London and the first – wait for it – in the world when it opened in 1998. Indeed, everything, right

down to the lager is produced without chemicals or pesticides (though the cider is better). The Italian-/French-/Spanish-influenced menu is reliable enough and the idea of eating healthily a bonus.

GLAS Map p168 Swedish E-EE

‰ 7359 1932; www.glasrestaurant.co.uk; 1st fl, The Mall, 359 Upper St N1; mains small £4-7.50, large £11-13.50; † closed dinner Sun; † Angel A favourite when it was in Borough Market, Glas remains a mecca in its new location perched above Upper St in Islington. It's still the best Swedish restaurant in town and its 'grazing' portions (£4 to £7.50) allow you to try a number of specialities, including the phenomenal herring three ways and salmon pudding with horseradish sauce. Two-/three-course set lunch is £12.50/15. The welcome here is always warm and the service friendly.

MASALA ZONE Map p168 Indian E-EE

‰ 7359 3399; 80 Upper St N1; mains £7.75-11.95; † Angel

This spacious place with outside seating set back from Upper St in Islington is one of the best Indian budget options in London. Thoroughly modern in design, it serves up meals centred on its famous thalis, as well as *tandoor* and grilled dishes. There's also a **Soho branch** (Map p68; ‰ 7287 9966; 9 Marshall St W1; † Oxford Circus) serving equally authentic fare.

OTTOLENGHI Map p168 Italian E

‰ 7288 1454; www.ottolenghi.co.uk; 287 Upper St N1; mains £7-9.50; † 8am-10pm Mon-Sat, 9am-7pm Sun; † Highbury & Islington/Angel

The busiest of what is now a three-outlet operation, including the **Notting Hill branch** (Map p175; ‰ 7227 1121; 63 Ledbury Rd W11; † 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, to 7pm Sat, to 6pm Sun; † Notting Hill Gate), this very sleek, very minimalist bakery-cum-restaurant looks as good as its food tastes, and that's saying something. The set menus (£8.50 to £13.50) are great value for food of this quality, although the desserts are the real highlight. The electric cables hanging over the table are actually for toasters at breakfast (£5.20 to £8.50).

BREAKFAST CLUB Map p168 Breakfast E

‰ 7226 5454; www.thebreakfastclubangel.com; 31 Camden Passage N1; dishes £3-9; † 8am-5pm

Mon-Thu, 8am-midnight Fri, 9.30am-midnight Sat, 10am-11pm Sun; † Angel

Still our favourite place for something to wake up to, especially after a tough Saturday night on the tiles, this bright and flowery oasis in Islington's Camden Passage follows in the footsteps of the **Breakfast Club Soho** (Map p68; ‰ 7434 2571; 33 D'Arby St; † Oxford Circus). But, despite the name, breakfast (£3 to £7) is not the only game here and it also does sandwiches, salads and decent pies (£8 to £9).

GALLIPOLI Map p168 Turkish E

‰ 7359 0630; www.gallipolicafe.com; 102 Upper St N1; mains £6.25-7.75; † Angel or Highbury & Islington

A popular, cheek-by-jowl restaurant with fusty Turkish decorations and acceptable food (for its location), including everything from meze to spicy vegetarian moussaka. There's an overspill restaurant, **Gallipoli Again** (Map p168; ‰ 7359 0630; 120 Upper St N1; † closed lunch Mon-Thu & all day Sun) nearby.

AFGHAN KITCHEN Map p168 Afghani E

‰ 7359 8019; 35 Islington Green N1; mains £5.50-6.50; † lunch & dinner Tue-Sat; † Angel

This tiny gem with seating on the 1st floor serves up some of Islington's best-value and most interesting cuisine: traditional Afghan dishes such as *qurma suhzi gosht* (lamb cooked with spinach) and *qurma e mahi* (fish stew) alongside a large vegetarian selection including *borani kado* (pumpkin with yogurt) and *moong dall* (lentil dhal).

Also recommended:

Le Mercury (Map p168; ‰ 7354 4088; 140a Upper St N1; mains £6.45-9.45; † Angel or Highbury & Islington) Budget French, with silverware, white linen and good-quality food that has withstood the test of time.

MUSWELL HILL & CROUCH END TOFF'S Fish & Chips E-EE

‰ 8883 8656; 38 Muswell Hill Broadway N10; mains £8.95-17.50; † closed Sun; † Highgate then G 134

This one-time British chipper of the year is renowned for providing large quantities of fresh fish, beautifully battered and flawlessly fried. It's a friendly place and it does takeaway as well.

CAFÉ ON THE HILL

Café E-EE

☎ 8444 4957; 46 Fortis Green Rd N10; mains £7.95-14.95; † Highgate, then ☍ 134 Largely organic, this place has been a real hit with locals, who come here in droves. It's all you could hope for in a local café – seasonal menus, all-day breakfast, good coffee, light lunches, afternoon tea, relatively adventurous evening meals, newspapers and a welcoming atmosphere.

STOKE NEWINGTON

BLUE LÉGUME Map p64 Vegetarian E-EE

☎ 7923 1303; 101 Stoke Newington Church St N16; mains £5.95-16.95; ☐ Stoke Newington, ☍ 73 This lively but laid-back local has mosaic tables and slightly kooky décor with a little conservatory at the back, though there's nothing odd about the big, late breakfasts. Throughout the day there are light vegetarian snacks and trays of delicate, delicious pastries. Try its signature 'blue vegetable' dish: roasted aubergine with goat's cheese.

MANGAL OCAKBASI Map p156 Turkish E

☎ 7275 8981; www.mangal1.com; 10 Arcola St E8; mains £6.50-8.50; ☐ Dalston Kingsland Mangal is the quintessential Turkish *ocakbasi* (open hooded grill) restaurant: cramped and smoky and serving superb meze, grilled lamb chops, quail and *lahmacun* (Turkish 'pizza' topped with minced meat, onions and peppers). It's been here for almost 20 years and is London's worst-kept secret.

RASA Map p64 Vegetarian, Indian E

☎ 7249 0344; www.rasarestaurants.com; 55 Stoke Newington Church St N16; mains £3.70-5.95; † lunch Sat & Sun, dinner daily; ☐ Stoke Newington, then ☍ 73 Flagship restaurant of the Rasa chain, this superb South Indian vegetarian eatery can't be missed – not with its signature shocking-pink façade! Friendly service, a calm atmosphere, jovial prices and outstanding food from the Indian state of Kerala are its distinctive features. If in doubt, don't bother with the menu and order the multicourse Kerala Feast (£16). *Rasa Travancore* (Map p64; ☎ 7249 1340; 56 Stoke Newington Church St N16) just across the road is more of the same, but with fish and meat.

WEST LONDON

The sheer variety on offer in multicultural West London means rich pickings for those seeking truly excellent restaurants. Notting Hill is the epicentre of this zone and offers a superb range of eateries whatever the size of your belly or purse, from venerated chippers to fashionable fusion. Shepherd's Bush is constantly abuzz with new openings and revamps of old favourites, while Earl's Court offers a good range of cheaper options and some great people-watching. Hammersmith makes up for its lack of sights with some unique eateries, which are well worth travelling for. Both St John's Wood and Maida Vale have some interesting offerings that are well worth the trek out here.

ST JOHN'S WOOD & MAIDA VALE

JASON'S Map p175 Mediterranean EE

☎ 7286 6752; www.jasons.co.uk; Jason's Wharf, opposite 60 Blomfield Rd W9; mains £12.50-18.50; † Warwick Ave

Jason's has cosy outside tables and a main dining room in a high wooden-ceilinged boathouse that feels almost alfresco. After a total overhaul and refit it has moved away from serving predominantly fish and seafood dishes and has headed south to the Mediterranean. Weekend brunch (10.30am to 3pm Saturday, to 4.30pm Sunday) is a treat here – especially in fine weather.

GREEN OLIVE Map p175 Italian EE

☎ 7289 2469; 5 Warwick Pl W9; mains £13-18; † closed lunch Sat & all day Sun; † Warwick Ave The Maida Vale cognoscenti hold this neighbourhood Italian place in high esteem. Dishes, although creative and very tasty, are rather daintily portioned. The plain brickwork, wood floors and art on the walls give the place an upmarket rustic kind of feel.

MANDALAY Map p175 Burmese E

☎ 7258 3696; www.mandalayway.com; 444 Edgware Rd W2; mains £4.40-6.50; † closed Sun; † Edgware Rd Despite looking not unlike a greasy spoon and being located on this grim part of Edgware Rd, Mandalay is actually one of the capital's most wonderful secrets, not to mention its only Burmese restaurant. Burmese cuisine is never going to win any awards on the world culinary stage but the crispy a

kyawfritters of vegetables and shrimps and the spicy bottle gourd soup with noodles make great starters, while the twice-cooked fish curry with tamarind and lime is delicious.

PADDINGTON & BAYSWATER

MANDARIN KITCHEN Map p175 Chinese E-EE

☎ 7277 9468; 14-16 Queensway W2; mains £5.95-24.50; † Queensway

This popular Cantonese restaurant with the naff décor prepares some of the best seafood in town so be prepared to wait for a table at the busiest times (eg Sunday lunch) if you haven't booked. Lobster, prawns, whole steamed grouper – all is excellent and it has a particular way with what must be house-made XO sauce, a newfangled condiment made from crushed dried scallops, chilli, garlic and oil.

LEVANTINE Map p175 Lebanese E-EE

☎ 7262 1111; www.levant.co.uk; 26 London St W2; mains £9.50-19, set lunch £4.95-9.95, set dinner £19.50-27.50; † Paddington

Levantine is an atmospheric *Thousand and One Nights*-themed restaurant (lots of red velvet cushions and brassy stuff) where the set menus (including a vegetarian one) are the best value. The fare is well prepared and delicious, including wonderful renditions of Lebanese staples such as tahini, hummus and *muhammarah* (mixed nuts crushed with red pepper) as well as more complex grills. The inevitable belly dancer makes an appearance at weekends.

COUSCOUS CAFÉ Map p175 Moroccan E-EE

☎ 7277 6597; 7 Porchester Gardens W2; mains £9.95-15.95; † Bayswater

This cosy and vividly decorated place does a faultless line in familiar favourites from all over North Africa but really excels with Moroccan-style couscous and *tajines*, *pastillas* (filled savoury pastries) and slightly exaggerated service. Alcohol is served but you can BYO (no corkage fee).

NOTTING HILL & PORTOBELLO

ELECTRIC BRASSERIE

Map p175 Brasserie E-EE

☎ 7908 9696; www.electricbrasserie.com; 191 Portobello Rd W11; mains £9-28; † Ladbrooke Grove The name comes from the adjoining Art Deco cinema, but it's possible to believe

that it's a comment on the atmosphere here too, as this place never seems to stop buzzing. Whether it's for brunch over the weekend, a hearty lunch or a full dinner, the Electric certainly draws a trendy and wealthy Notting Hill crowd with its British-modern European menu, which includes treats such as crumbed pollock, beetroot and goat's cheese salad and – a personal favourite – lobster and chips (£28).

KENSINGTON PLACE

Map p175 Modern European EE-EEE

☎ 7277 3184; www.egami.co.uk; 201-209 Kensington Church St W8; mains £16.50-21.50, 3-course set lunches/dinners £19.50/24.50 (£39.50 with wine); † Notting Hill Gate

This restaurant has an impressive glass frontage, a design-driven interior and consistently good food, but seating seems cramped and the acoustics are bad. The attached Fish Shop and its mounds of fresh seafood should help you to make up your mind when ordering.

HARLEM Map p175 American E-EE

☎ 7985 0900; www.harlemsoulfood.com; 78 Westbourne Grove W2; mains £9.95-21; † Bayswater or Royal Oak

The funky feel, chunky chandeliers and smiling staff are just the first things that might impress you about this excellent restaurant serving black American cuisine. The menu is just as noteworthy, including such exotica as buttermilk fried chicken, fried catfish and chicken and shrimp gumbo. It's a great place for a meal, and breakfast is served until 6pm every day.

GEALES Map p175 Fish & Chips E-EE

☎ 7277 7528; 2 Farmer St W8; fish & chips £8-12.50; † closed lunch Sun; † Notting Hill Gate Gregarious Geales, established in 1939 and recently overhauled (both premises and menu), has become a popular fixture with locals and tourists alike. The menu now includes fish pie and even sirloin steak. Geales is, of course, more expensive than your everyday chipper, but it's arguably the best there is in London. There's outside seating.

NYONYA Map p175 Malaysian, Chinese E

☎ 7243 1800; www.nyonya.co.uk; 2a Kensington Park Rd W11; mains £6.50-8.50; † Notting Hill Gate One day in the not-too-distant future the world will discover *nyonya* (or *peranakan*)

cuisine as prepared and enjoyed by the so-called Straits Chinese of Malaysia and it will be bigger than Thai and sushi combined. Neither Malay nor Chinese but both, *nyonya* highlights include *laksa* (soup noodles with seafood), Penang *char kway teow* noodles, bean sprouts with salt fish and fiery sambal dipping sauce. The *kuih* desserts are the luridly coloured coconut and jelly concoctions.

COSTA'S FISH RESTAURANT

Map p175 Fish & Chips E

% 7229 3794; 12-14 Hillgate St W8; mains £4.70-6.30; † Notting Hill Gate

This fondly regarded local puts a Cypriot spin on the traditional chippy and has a huge array of fresher-than-fresh fish dishes at market prices, which many prefer to the more upmarket *Geales* (p267) nearby. Not to be confused with Costa's Grill at No 18 of the same street.

CHURCHILL THAI KITCHEN

Map p177 Thai E

% 7792; 1246; 119 Kensington Church St W8; mains £6; † Notting Hill Gate

This leafy little restaurant in a conservatory behind a traditional English pub renowned for its Sir Winston memorabilia (and, bizarrely, chamber pots suspended from a great height) serves some of the most authentic (and reasonably priced) Thai food in West London. All dishes are a uniform £6.

TAQUERIA Map p175 Tex-Mex E

% 7229 4734; www.coolchiletaqueria.co.uk; 139-143 Westbourne Grove; tacos £3.50-5.50; † closed Sun; † Bayswater or Notting Hill Gate

You won't find fresher, crispier tacos anywhere in London and that's *seguro* (definite) because the 'Tacory' (for lack of a better translation) makes it own fresh corn tortillas next door as you'll see through the window. It's a small casual place serving the American version of Mexican food as enjoyed in Texas and California.

Also recommended:

Churreria Española (Map p175; % 7727 3444; 177-179 Queensway W2; mains £5.50-8.50; † Bayswater) This unlikely café serves a variety of cheap dishes, from English breakfasts to a range of Spanish staples, including paella.

Arancina (Map p175; % 7221 7776; www.arancina.co.uk; 19 Pembroke Rd, W11; mains £3-5; † 9am-10pm; † Notting Hill Gate) A fantastic place to indulge in Sicilian snacks, try the *arancini* (fried balls of rice with fillings), the excellent pizza, and get hooked on the creamy desserts known as *cannoli*.

EARL'S COURT

LOU PESCADOU Map p177 Fish E£

% 7370 1057; 241 Old Brompton Rd SW5; mains £13.80-18, 3-course set lunches £10.90; † Earl's Court or West Brompton

Simplicity and elegance meet at this wonderful seafood restaurant, an Earl's Court favourite among the many ordinary eateries on Old Brompton Rd. Should you have trouble understanding the mostly French menu, the staff are happy to help. The wine list is almost all French.

MR WING Map p177 Chinese, Thai E-EE

% 7370 4450; www.mrwing.com; 242-244 Old Brompton Rd SW5; mains £8-14; † Earl's Court or West Brompton

The oddly named Mr Wing is a very smart Asian-fusion place offering the full spectrum of Chinese cuisine with some Thai cooking thrown in. To recommend it are a plush, dark interior filled with greenery and tropical aquariums, helpful staff and a basement where live jazz sessions are held regularly.

Also recommended:

Krungtap (Map p177; % 7259 2314; 227-229 Old Brompton Rd SW10; mains £7.25-12.95; † Earl's Court or West Brompton) 'Bangkok' (in Thai) is a friendly café-style undertaking serving very good-value and authentic Thai food.

Tendido Cero (Map p177; % 7370 3685; www.cambio.detercio.co.uk; 174 Old Brompton Rd SW5; tapas 4.75-8; † Gloucester Rd) Traditional tapas in Chelsea in just about the trendiest Spanish restaurant you've been in outside the Iberian Peninsula.

SHEPHERD'S BUSH & HAMMERSMITH

RIVER CAFÉ Map p177 Italian E££

% 7386 4200; www.rivercafe.co.uk; Thames Wharf, Rainville Rd W6; mains £28-32; † closed dinner Sun; † Hammersmith

The restaurant that spawned the world-famous eponymous cookery books is a serious treat off Fulham Palace Rd, overlooking

Barnes across the river. The simple, precise cooking showcases seasonal ingredients sourced with fanatical expertise. Booking is essential, as it's still a hot favourite of the Fulham set.

BUSH BAR Map p177 Modern European E-£££

% 8746 2111; www.bushbar.co.uk; 45a Goldhawk Rd W12; mains £8.95-16.50, 2-/3-course set meals £22.50/27.50; † closed dinner Sun; † Goldhawk Rd

You have to keep an eye out for this bar-restaurant, housed in a converted warehouse and with its entrance down an alleyway off Goldhawk Rd. It's light and breezy with a wonderful tented terrace, and the decent restaurant and bar attract a trendy media crowd after work with its great cocktails and food. The menu is familiar and comforting – London Particular, salt beef with braised cabbage, smoked had-dock fishcakes – rather than inventive.

GATE Map p177 Vegetarian E-EE

% 8748 6932; www.thegate.tv; 51 Queen Caroline St W6; mains £8.50-13.50; † lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat; † Hammersmith

Widely considered the best vegetarian restaurant in town, Gate has a horrible location surrounded by wasteland and flyovers. But the inventive dishes (Cajun aubergine, shitake wonton and pumpkin laksa), friendly and welcoming staff and the relaxed atmosphere make the trek here all worthwhile. Surprisingly enough, it's the white chocolate and amaretto cheesecake that gets recurring rave reviews, as do the simple but inspired starters and the fine wine list.

BLAH BLAH BLAH Map p177 Vegetarian E

% 8746 1337; www.gonumber.com/2524; 78 Goldhawk Rd W12; mains £9.95; † closed Sun; † Goldhawk Rd

This vegetarian institution has been packing them in for years with imaginative, well-realised food and informal (and recently renovated) surrounds. Dishes lean towards the Mediterranean, though not exclusively, and you can bring your own bottle. Crayons are supplied for doodling on the paper-covered tables while you await your order.

ESARN KHEAW Map p177 Thai E

% 8743 8930; www.esarnkheaw.com; 314 Ux-bridge Rd W12; mains £5.95-8.90; † lunch Mon-Fri, dinner daily; † Shepherd's Bush) Welcoming you back into the 1970s is the very green interior of this superb restaurant

serving food from the Esarn (or Issan), the northeast of Thailand where people munch on chillies like chewing gum. The house-made Esarn sausage and green papaya salad are sublime. If you can handle it the 'Tiger's Cry' of grilled strips of ox liver served with a fiery chilli sauce is as authentic a northeast dish as you'll find west of Nakhorn Ratchasima.

Also recommended:

Patio (Map p177; % 8743 5194; 5 Goldhawk Rd W12; mains £8.50-14.90, set meal with glass of vodka £15.99; † lunch Mon-Fri, dinner daily; † Shepherd's Bush or Goldhawk Rd) Polish restaurant cluttered with curios and antiques and presided over by a kindly matriarch who sees all.

GREENWICH & SOUTHEAST LONDON

It's not that we've been lazy in compiling the following very brief section. It's just that Southeast London's culinary reputation is only starting to emerge, if at all. Even locals despair about where to eat in Greenwich; you'll pass plenty of eateries along the main street, but few places are really any good. Blackheath has a couple of notable eateries and Dulwich – especially Dulwich Village – is starting to support a gastropub culture, but nothing that's really noteworthy has arrived yet. We can only advise you to come back in a few years.

GREENWICH & BLACKHEATH SE10 RESTAURANT & BAR

Map p180 Modern European E£

% 8858 9764; www.se10restaurant.co.uk; 62 Thames St SE10; mains £12.50-17.95, 2-/3-course set lunch £12.50/14.95; † closed dinner Sun & Mon; DLR Cutty Sark

This outwardly scruffy restaurant and wine bar west of the Cutty Sark DLR station hides a light, airy and very warm interior of yellow and gold hues. There's a good concentration of fish dishes – though you'd hardly even know the Thames was at the back door – and traditional British dishes (though with only one mean vegetarian option). The desserts are pure comfort food, especially the sticky-toffee pudding. Sundays host both a breakfast (£3.95 to £4.75) and lunch (two/three courses for £14.50/17.50).

INSIDE *Map p180* Modern European **EE**
% 8265 5060; www.insiderestaurant.co.uk; 19a Greenwich South St SE10; mains £10.95-16.95, 2-/3-course set lunches £11.95/15.95 & early dinners £15.95/19.95; **h** closed dinner Sun & all day Mon; **DLR**/**cl** Greenwich

With white and panelled wooden walls, modern art and linen tablecloths, inside looks quite stuffy, but staff won't bat an eyelid if you turn up in jeans. The crisp food typically includes fresh pea and mint soup, smoked haddock and chives with risotto cake, and desserts such as rhubarb crumble. This is acknowledged to be Greenwich's best restaurant.

ROYAL TEAS *Map p180* Café **E**
% 8691 7240; 76 Royal Hill SE10; dishes £2.25-5.95; **h** 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat, 10.30am-6pm Sun; **DLR**/**cl** Greenwich

Royal Teas is not exactly vegetarian – you can get smoked salmon as part of a cream tea (£5.95) at lunchtime – but dishes are mostly comforting meatless things such as baked beans with melted cheese and Spanish-style eggs, and lots of baguettes and soups. We come for the ginger cake served with cream or ice cream.

Also recommended:

Spread Eagle (*Map p180*); % 8853 2333; 1-2 Stockwell St SE10; 2-/3-course set meals £27/31; **DLR** Cutty Sark) Smart, French-inspired restaurant opposite the Greenwich Theatre in what was once the terminus for the coach service to/from London.

Everest Inn (off *Map p180*); % 8852 7872; www.everestinn.co.uk; 39 Tranquil Vale SE3; mains £5.95-10.95, 2-/3-course set meals £11.95/13.95) Reliable Nepali and Indian dishes in the heart of trendy Blackheath Village.

Dog & Bell (*Map p180*); % 8692 5664; www.thedogandbell.com; 116 Prince St SE8; mains £5.50-9.50; **h** noon-11pm Mon-Sat, noon-10.30 Sun; **cl** Deptford) You probably wouldn't travel any (great) distance for the food at this pub in deepest, darkest Deptford but the choice of beers is a magnet. Despite the plates on the walls with caricatures of famous chefs, the food on offer is hearty pub grub not lean cuisine.

SOUTH LONDON

Most 'northerners' refuse to believe that there's anything of importance down here, but how ignorant they are when it comes to the dope on dining. The choice of restaurants in South London may not be as extensive as it is across the Thames, but the places that do exist

are often stellar. You'd actually travel here just to visit some of the restaurants in Battersea, Wandsworth and Clapham, while Brixton lays out a reasonably priced multicultural spread. Surprisingly, Kennington has one of the best Chinese restaurants in London.

BRIXTON

LOUNGE CAFÉ *Map p200* Café **E-EE**

% 7733; 56-58 Atlantic Rd SW9; mains £5.50-13.50; **h** closed dinner Sun; **t** Brixton
As much a bar as a place to eat, this self-styled 'original urban retreat' has breakfast, day and evening menus with everything from vegetarian fry-ups and burgers to meze platters. It's an excellent place for a cocktail and a nosh, and there's live music.

FUJIYAMA *Map p200* Japanese **E-EE**

% 7737 6583; 5-7 Vining St SW9; mains £5.40-10.75; **t** Brixton
This deceptively small Japanese place behind **Dogstar** (p293), with its welcoming dark-red interior and communal benches, has a large choice of *bento* (meal) boxes, noodles, tempura, miso soups and sushi and sashimi on its lengthy menu.

BAMBOULA *Map p200* Caribbean **E**

% 7737 6633; 12 Acre Lane SW9; mains £7.50-8.50; **t** Brixton
Decorated in the red, gold and green of the Jamaican flag, this takeaway and restaurant is cheap and cheerful, serving jerk chicken, oxtail, curried goat, ackee and saltfish, rice and peas, plantain and other Caribbean classics. Bread pudding laced with rum brings up the rear very nicely.

ASMARA *Map p200* Eritrean **E**

% 7737 4144; 386 Coldharbour Lane SW9; mains £4-7.50, 6-/7-course set meals £25/27; **h** dinner daily; **t** Brixton
A rare Eritrean restaurant, Asmara serves spicy chicken, lamb and beef stews and vegetable dishes that you scoop up with *injera*, the flat, slightly spongy sourdough bread that is a national dish. Staff provide colour in their traditional costumes, while there's a nod to the former colonial power, Italy, with four pasta dishes (£4 to £4.59) on the menu.

Also recommended:

Gallery (% 8671 8311; 256a Brixton Hill SW2; mains £6.95-13.95; dinner Thu-Sun; **t** Brixton) This convivial

restaurant behind a takeaway shop in Brixton has Portuguese food every bit as authentic as you'll find in nearby Stockwell's Little Lisbon.

Satay Bar (*Map p200*; % 7326 5001; 447 Coldharbour Lane SW9; mains £4.95-7.95; **t** Brixton) This local fixture in Brixton just a notch above a fast-food house does acceptable Malay and Indonesian dishes.

BATTERSEA & WANDSWORTH

CHEZ BRUCE *Map p64* French **EEE**

% 8672 0114; www.chezbruce.co.uk; 2 Bellevue Rd SW17; 3-course set lunches £25.50-32.50, 3-/4-course set dinners £37.50/47.50; **cl** Wandsworth Common
This eatery, though Michelin-starred, actually feels more like a quality local than a flash restaurant. The restaurant's rustic façade, beside leafy Wandsworth Common, belies a modern interior. The fixed-price-only set-up means that there's fortunately no need to scrimp on desserts.

BUTCHER & GRILL *Map p200* British **E-EEE**

% 7924 3999; www.thebutcherandgrill.com; 39-41 Parkgate Rd SW11; mains £8.50-25; **h** closed dinner Sun; **t** Sloane Sq, then **g** 19 or 319
This combination grill and butcher shop has made quite a slap south of the river, winning awards as fast as it sizzles T-bones. But while not everyone likes the idea of seeing their meat *au naturel* on entry, the quality of the ingredients, the wide choice of sauces and the views from the main dining room (all brickwork and exposed ducts) are more than compensation.

RANSOME'S DOCK

Map p200 Modern British **EE-EEE**

% 7223 1611; www.ransomedock.co.uk; 35-37 Parkgate Rd SW11; mains £10.50-21.50; **h** closed dinner Sun; **t** Sloane Sq, then **g** 19 or 319
Diners flock to this restaurant not because it's trendy or on the dock of a bay (rather a narrow inlet of the Thames) but for fresh and very thoughtfully prepared food: smoked Lincolnshire eel fillets with buckwheat pancakes and crème fraîche, duck breast with apple sauce, red cabbage organic lamb noisettes with roast root vegetables. Weekday two-course lunch is £14.75.

SANTA MARIA DEL BUEN AYRE

Map p200 Argentine Steakhouse **E-EE**

% 7622 2088; www.buenayre.co.uk; 129 Queens-town Rd SW8; mains £7-19.80; **h** lunch Sat & Sun,

dinner daily; **cl** Queenstown Rd Battersea, **g** 77, 137 or 345

This new branch of the much beloved Argentine steakhouse in **Hackney** (*Map p156*; % 7275 9900; Broadway Market E8; **t** Bethnal Green, **cl** Cambridge Heath) caters to carnivores south of the river with grilled meats and sausages. The brave will go for one of the *parilladas* (braziers; £13.50 to £19.80) to share.

CLAPHAM

GRAFTON HOUSE

Map p200 Modern International **EE**

% 7498 5559; www.graftonhouseuk.com; 13-19 Old Town SW4; mains £12.50-15.50, 2-/3-course set meals £22/27; **t** Clapham Common

The A-list of Clapham rub shoulders in this very stylish bar-restaurant with marble floors, tropical hardwood tables and curved leather sofas. The menu is modern international – simple but with that extra class (pumpkin risotto, venison and plum burger, lobster, crab and salmon fishcake) – and brunch is a big deal here, served daily from noon to 4pm. There's live jazz on Sunday evenings.

VERSO *Map p200*

Italian **E-EE**

% 7720 1515; 84 Clapham Park Rd SW4; mains £7.80-14.90; **h** lunch Sat, dinner Wed-Mon; **t** Clapham Common

This unpretentious neighbourhood restaurant serves consistently excellent pizza (£5.70 to £8.50), including such unfamiliar varieties as rocket, grilled prawn and courgette pizza *bianca* (without tomato paste). Pasta (£7.80 to £10.90) is also excellent, as are the seafood dishes and terrific homemade desserts.

CINNAMON CAY

Map p200 Modern International **EE**

% 7801 0932; www.cinnamoncay.co.uk; 87 Lavender Hill SW11; mains £10.75-14.50, 2-course set lunches Mon & Tue £12; **h** lunch & dinner Mon-Sat; **cl** Clapham Junction, then **g** 77A or 137
This neighbourhood restaurant offers a lively atmosphere, small open kitchen and Southeast Asian-influenced fusion. The Thai fish cake with mango salad and the sesame-crustured seared tuna with piperade are favourites and vegetarians are well catered for with such tasty exotica as Penang laksa with pumpkin, tofu and okra. Service is efficient and friendly.

KENNINGTON, OVAL & STOCKWELL

LOBSTER POT Map p198 Fish EE

☎ 7582 5556; www.lobsterpotrestaurant.co.uk; 3 Kennington Lane SE11; mains £14.50-18.50; 2-/3-course lunches £11.50/14.50, 3-course dinner £21.50; **h** closed Mon; **t** Kennington or Elephant & Castle

This charming French-owned restaurant hidden in the wastelands south of Elephant & Castle turns out excellently prepared fish and seafood dishes *à la française* (think lots of butter and garlic) to an appreciative local cognoscenti. An eight-course tasting menu is £39.50.

DRAGON CASTLE Map p198 Chinese E-EE

☎ 7277 3388; 100 Walworth Rd SE17; mains E7-18.50; **t** Elephant & Castle

It's hard to imagine that what just might be the best nonchain Chinese restaurant in London is hidden within one of the brutalist buildings of deepest, darkest Kennington. But it's true and even the incomparable food critic Fay Maschler of the *Evening Standard* concurs. The duck, pork and seafood (deep fried crispy oysters, crab with black bean) are renowned but come instead for the dim sum (£1.90 to £3) especially at weekend lunch.

Also recommended:

Kennington Tandoori (Map p198; 7735 9247; www.kenningtandoori.com; 313 Kennington Rd SE11; mains E5.95-9.95; **t** Kennington) This local curry house is a favourite of MPs from across the river, including former Prime Minister John Major.

SOUTHWEST LONDON

Although not universally known for its cuisine, this area of London can lay claim to a number of decent gastronomic outposts, some of which are well worth crossing town for. If you're in Fulham, wander down Fulham Rd, up New King's Rd and along Wandsworth Bridge Rd for a good choice. In Putney, head down the High Street or the roads heading off it. In keeping with its high standard of living along the gentrified banks of the river, restaurants in places such as Richmond and Kew are usually exquisitely presented, featuring superlative food and wine lists.

FULHAM

BLUE ELEPHANT Map p205 Thai EE-EEE

☎ 7385 6595; www.blueelephant.com; 4-6 Fulham Broadway SW6; mains E10.60-28; **h** lunch & dinner Sun-Fri, dinner Sat; **t** Fulham Broadway The sumptuous surroundings, attentive staff and excellent food of this Fulham institution with branches around the globe make dining at the Blue Elephant a memorable (if expensive) experience. The atmosphere is romantic, with candlelit tables, fountains and lush 'jungle' foliage though the 'gift shop' at the front is a bit naff. The best time to come is for the fab Sunday brunch (£22).

LOTS ROAD PUB & DINING ROOM

Map p205 Gastropub E-EE

☎ 7352 6645; www.lotsroadpub.com; 114 Lots Rd SW10; mains E7-14; **t** Fulham Broadway No one has a bad thing to say about this tucked-away gastropub, aside from the minor affectation of listing prices in hundreds of pence. Light floods through the windows into the high-ceilinged, wood-lined curved dining area and onto the black and chrome bar, where choice wines are sold by the glass. The regularly changing menu reads as pretty standard fare – roast pork, salmon, lamb – but it's all delicious and dependable. For dessert, try the sticky-toffee pudding or the honey-roasted figs.

BLUE KANGAROO Map p205 Brasserie E-EE

☎ 7371 7622; www.thebluekangaroo.co.uk; 555 King's Rd SW6; mains adult E6.95-13.80, child E5.45; **h** 9.30am-7pm; **t** Fulham Broadway This very family-oriented restaurant allows you to enjoy a meal while watching, via CCTV, your under-eights run wild in the downstairs playroom (E3 to E4.50). Adult nerves are soothed with grilled goat's cheese, Thai king prawns and mushroom tagliatelle. The children's menu has homemade fish fingers, nuggets and pizza. There are different activities scheduled each day.

PUTNEY & BARNES

CHAKALAKA Map p205 South African EE

☎ 8789 5696; www.chakalakarestaurant.co.uk; 136 Upper Richmond Rd SW15; mains E13.95-19.95; **h** lunch Sat & Sun, dinner daily; **t** East Putney This South African restaurant done up in brash tiger patterns and colours serves

springbok and kudu (both types of antelope), ostrich, zebra and other creatures that are usually seen grazing – not being grazed on – and is probably best visited on a dare. It also has *bobotie* (E9.95), a very South African dish of spiced minced meat baked with a bread custard topping, on the menu. Good selection of South African wines.

CHOSAN Map p205 Japanese E-EE

☎ 8788 9626; 292 Upper Richmond Rd SW15; mains E3.80-15.90; **h** closed Mon; **t** Putney Bridge, **cl** Putney This little Japanese restaurant whose name means Korea in Korean (go figure) doesn't look like much from the outside – or the inside for that matter – but it does turn out excellent sushi and sashimi as well as tempura and *kushiyage* (more deeply fried than tempura) dishes.

ENOTECA TURI Map p205 Italian EE

☎ 8785 4449; www.enotecaturi.com; 28 Putney High St SW15; mains E10.50-14.50, 2-/3-course set lunches E14.50/17.50; **h** closed Sun; **t** Putney Bridge, **cl** Putney The atmosphere at this stylish place is serene, the service charming. Enoteca Turi devotes equal attention to the grape as to the food, which means that each dish, be it a shellfish *tagliolini* or saddle of new season lamb, comes recommended with a particular glass of wine (or you can pick from the enormous wine list if you have ideas of your own).

MA GOA Map p205 Indian E-EE

☎ 8780 1767; www.ma-goa.com; 242-244 Upper Richmond Rd SW15; mains E7.85-10.50; **h** dinner Tue-Sun; **t** Putney Bridge, **cl** Putney The speciality here is the subtle cuisine of Portugal's erstwhile colony on the west coast of India. Dishes include the homemade chorizo topped with a spicy onion sauce; and fish *caldin*, a sour-sweet coconut-based concoction.

RICHMOND

FISHWORKS Map p208 Fish E-EEE

☎ 8948 5965; www.fishworks.co.uk; 13-19 The Square, Old Market TW9; mains E9.50-25; **h** closed dinner Sun; **t** Richmond Spawning at a rate that can only discourage confidence, this Bath-based chain now

counts 10 outlets in London alone, including an *Islington branch* (Map p168; ☎ 7353 1279; 134 Upper St N1; **t** Angel). But as FishWorks was London's first truly French *poissonnerie* (fishmonger) with a restaurant attached, its entranceway counters piled high with shaved ice, crustaceans and fish, we return regularly, especially for the sublime Dartmouth crab eaten cold and the incomparable *zuppa del pescatore* (fisherman's soup; E19.90), a symphony of delights from the deep.

PETERSHAM NURSERIES CAFÉ

Map p208 Modern European EE-EEE

☎ 8605 3627; www.petershamnurseries.com; Church Lane, off Petersham Rd TW10; mains E16-24; **h** lunch Tue-Sun; **t** **cl** Richmond, then **g** 65 In a greenhouse at the back of the gorgeously situated Petersham Nurseries is this award-winning café straight out of the pages of *The Secret Garden*. Well-heeled locals tuck into confidently executed food that often began life in the nursery gardens – organic vegetable dishes, such as artichokes braised with preserved lemon sage and black olives, feature alongside seasonal plates of, say, roasted quail with walnut sauce or white polenta with squid and sherry butter. There's a *teahouse* (**h** 10am-4.30pm Tue-Sat, from 11am Sun) should you have failed to book at the café (and well in advance).

CHEZ LINDSAY Map p208 French EE

☎ 8948 7473; www.chezlindsay.co.uk; 11 Hill Rise TW10; mains E12.85-16.75, 2-/3-course set lunches E14.50/17.50 & dinners E16.50/19.50; **t** Richmond, **cl** Richmond Offering a slice of Brittany at the bottom of Richmond Hill, Chez Lindsay's simply furnished dining room draws visitors with its wholesome Breton cuisine, comfortable ambience and river views. The house specialities include galettes (E3.30 to E9.25) with a myriad of tasty fillings, washed down with a variety of hearty (and very dry) Breton ciders.

DON FERNANDO'S Map p208 Spanish E-EE

☎ 8948 6447; www.donfernando.co.uk; 27f The Quadrant TW9; mains E7.95-11.75; **t** **cl** Richmond The Izquierdo family have been serving superb cuisine from their native Andalucía for nigh on 20 years now, and their enthusiasm shows no signs of waning. With

THE LONDON CHAIN GANG

While, of course, the usual bleak offerings of chain restaurants are to be found all over the capital, London also boasts some excellent chains of inventive and interesting restaurants, which locals patronise frequently. Here are some of our favourites; check their websites for a full list of outlets.

Carluccio's

Inventive and authentic, these Italian restaurants (www.carluccios.com) in London have a great ambience, helped along by the open space created by the deli-counter at each of the 20-odd outlets, including the **Fitzrovia branch** (Map p68; ☎ 7636 2228; 8 Market Pl W1; ￯ Oxford Circus).

Giraffe

There's a kind of sunny Californian feel to family-friendly Giraffe (www.giraffe.net), where the likes of coarse-cut chips, burritos, vegetarian salad wraps and burgers are on the menu, and friendly service is a given. There are 20 outlets, including an **Islington branch** (Map p168; ☎ 7359 5999; 29-31 Essex Rd N1; ￯ Angel)

Gourmet Burger Kitchen

The burgers at Gourmet (www.gbkinfocouk.co.uk) are the real deal, made from prime Scottish beef and enlivened by specially created sauces and superb chips (vegetarian versions available). Of the 17 outlets, the **Bayswater branch** (Map p175; ☎ 7243 4344; 50 Westbourne Grove W2; ￯ Royal Oak) is probably the most useful.

Hamburger Union

Highly recommended, Hamburger Union (www.hamburgerunion.com) delivers gourmet, calorific fast-food favourites to you in six smart and perennially packed central London locations, including a **Soho branch** (Map p68; ☎ 7437 6004; 22-25 Dean St W1; ￯ Tottenham Court Rd). All meat is additive free and free range, while vegetarians are guaranteed a minimum choice of two main meals each day.

Nando's

Among the better fast-food options in London Nando's (www.nandos.co.uk) offers chicken *a la portuguesa* by way of Africa and Brazil from dozens of high-street outlets in London, including a **Camden branch** (Map p166; ☎ 7424

an exhaustive list of tapas (£3.50 to £7), Spanish beers, wines and culinary specialities, including (unusually) some vegetarian options along with cheerful service, this makes a great place for a good lunch or a slow supper.

KEW

GLASSHOUSE Map p64 Modern European ££
☎ 8940 6777; www.glasshouserestaurant.co.uk;
14 Station Pde TW9; mains £16.50-19.95; ￯ /
☐ Kew Gardens

A meal at this splendid restaurant is a great way to cap off a day spent at the botanical gardens in Kew. Its glass-fronted exterior reveals a delicately lit, low-key interior, whose unassuming décor ensures that the focus remains on the divinely cooked food. Punters choose from such mains as a rump of veal with caramelised calf's tongue

and sweetbreads and roast fillet of cod with creamed white polenta that combine traditional English mainstays with modern European innovation. The Glasshouse is sister restaurant to **Chez Bruce** (p271) in Wandsworth.

NEWENS MAIDS OF HONOUR

Map p64 Traditional British £
☎ 8940 2752; 288 Kew Rd W9; set tea £6.50;
h 9.30am-1pm Mon, to 6pm Tue-Sat; ￯ /☐ Kew
Gardens

The name of this quirky Kew tearoom a short distance from the main entrance to Kew Gardens comes from its famed dessert, supposedly created by Anne Boleyn, Henry VIII's ill-fated second wife. It is made of puff pastry, lemon, almonds and curd cheese, and anyone visiting should try it at least once (£2.25).

9040; 57-58 Chalk Farm Rd NW1; ￯ Camden Town). The décor is colourful and upbeat, the ambience laid-back and the signature *peri-peri* (chilli) sauce fiery.

Real Greek

This ever-expanding chain of Greek restaurants (www.therealgreek.com) serving souvlaki (Greek kebab) and meze now counts a half-dozen outlets, including the original **Hoxton branch** (Map p150; ☎ 7739 8212; 15 Hoxton Market N1; ￯ Old St), which is a work of art in itself. There's a meze sharer and a few salads for vegetarians.

Strada

A cut (and a slice) above when it come to chain pizzerias Strada (www.strada.co.uk) serves only what comes out of its wood-burning ovens at some two dozen outlets, including a **Clerkenwell branch** (Map p150; ☎ 7278 0800; 8-10 Exmouth Market EC1; ￯ Farringdon). The pasta is also recommended.

Tas

This is a chain of goof Turkish restaurants (www.tasrestaurant.com) with a roll call of stews and grills that never disappoint. There are seven outlets spread all over London, including a **Waterloo branch** (Map p126; ☎ 7928 1444; 33 The Cut SE1; ￯ Waterloo), but our favourite is **Tas Pide** (Map p126; ☎ 7928 3300; 20-22 New Globe Walk SE1; ￯ London Bridge), which specialises in *pide* (Turkish 'pizza' for lack of a better word), well placed opposite Shakespeare's Globe in Bankside.

Wagamama

There's nothing new or exciting about this chain of noodle bars (www.wagamama.com) with two-dozen London outlets, including a **Marylebone branch** (Map p100; ☎ 7409 0111; 101a Wigmore St W1; ￯ Bond St); it's 'slurp, bam, thank you m'am' and you're out. But the food's reliable and cheap (for London) and the bench seating excellent for solo travellers.

Yo! Sushi

Smart makeovers and modernisations in the past few years have made London's original conveyer-belt sushi chain (www.yosushi.com) a fun place to come again. The original **Soho branch** (Map p68; ☎ 7287 0443; 52 Poland St W1; ￯ Tottenham Court Rd) is among the 18 outlets spread across London.

Also recommended:

Olé (Map p205; ☎ 8788 8009; www.olerestaurants.com; 240 Upper Richmond Rd SW15; tapas £1.75-6.95, mains £9.50-15.50; ￯ Putney Bridge, ☐ Putney) Very un-Spanishlike restaurant in Putney with lots of light and blond-wood furniture serves excellent tapas.

Kew Greenhouse (Map p64; ☎ 8940 0183; 1 Station Pde TW9; mains £6.50-8.75; h 8.30am-6.30pm daily; ￯ Kew Gardens, ☐ Kew Gardens) When in Kew it's worth paying a visit to this delightful botanically themed café will help set the mood for a visit to nearby Kew Gardens.

© Lonely Planet Publications. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'