

CHAMPAGNE
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TATLER

RESTAURANT GUIDE 2013



taste
OF LONDON
20-23 JUNE REGENT'S PARK
BRITISH AIRWAYS

IN ASSOCIATION WITH

CHAMPAGNE
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photographe Iris Veighe

BEST OF BRITAIN

NEW THE GARDENER'S COTTAGE

1 Royal Terrace Gardens, Edinburgh EH7 5DX (thegardenerscottage.co; 0131 558 1221)
The Royal Terrace Gardens' original gardener's cottage had been derelict for ages but last year dynamic duo Ed Murray and Dale Mailley brought it back to life. There is now a lovely dining room, well proportioned and full of light, with shared refectory tables and nice old silverware. The food is imaginative and the herbs are grown outside the door. The only caveat is that it does get very cramped. **££**

LOCKWOODS

83 North Street, Ripon, North Yorkshire HG4 1DP (lockwoodsrestaurant.co.uk; 01765 607555)
A relaxed and well-run bistro with work by local artists on the walls, offering accomplished and occasionally even rather exotic food in a part of the world where good independent restaurants are still thin on the ground. Among many great dishes are a retro baked camembert with cornichons, and Moroccan chickpea stew with Toulouse sausage. Lockwoods also does fab cocktails, including a ginger-snap martini with pear vodka, amaretto and allspice. And a cracking Sunday lunch. **££££**



THE MANOR AT WESTON-ON-THE-GREEN

PURNELL'S

55 Cornwall Street, Birmingham B3 2DH (purnellsrestaurant.com; 0121 212 9799)
Yummie Brummie Glynn Purnell is a serious chef with a sense of humour. His tasting menu delivers thrilling flavour combinations using Great British ingredients – like haddock and eggs with cornflakes and curry oil – prepared with sophistication and served in a comfortable, modern space. Staff are attentive yet unobtrusive, under the command of heartthrob manager Jean-Benoit Burloux. **££££**



LE CHAMPIGNON SAUVAGE

24–26 Suffolk Road, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL50 2AQ (lechampiononsauvage.co.uk; 01242 573449)
The cooking at this restaurant in Cheltenham's pretty Montpellier area is extraordinary and the atmosphere calm and stately. Yes, it's fine dining, so there's foam and translucent cubes, but what really stands out is the flavours – clean, fresh, beautifully British. An amuse of creamed horseradish and poached pear is both sweet and sharp; ox cheek is earthy, dense meat with the most delicate vegetables. A delight. **££££**

CAFE 21

Trinity Gardens, Quayside, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 2HH (cafewentyone.co.uk; 0191 222 0755)
Café 21 has been a fixture on Newcastle's food scene for nearly 20 years; from Michelin-star dining to chichi restaurant to today's incarnation as a smart, sassy bistro where – finally – it seems happy in its skin. The kitchen appears to be having a good time too, sending out grilled halibut on truffled lentils, oysters with spicy pork sausages and good old-fashioned jugged hare. Not outrageous, not posh, just enjoying what it does. **££££**

THE WHEATSHEAF INN

West End, Northleach, Gloucestershire GL54 3EZ (cotswoldswheatsheaf.com; 01451 860244)
We heart this gastropub with rooms. The food is divine and dependable: Jerusalem artichoke soup as smooth as velvet and the fluffiest twice-baked cheddar soufflé. The Bloody Marys are legendary and there are even pigs' ears for four-legged friends. But do book well in advance – weekend tables go as fast as Mo Farah. **££**



THE MANOR AT WESTON-ON-THE-GREEN

Near Bicester, Oxfordshire OX25 3QL (themanorweston.com; 01869 350621)
Re-count the plump sheep in the paddock after dinner at this recently revamped Tudor manor house – the chef is a champion of local produce, and they must tempt him sorely. A confident kitchen sends out dishes like seasonal fungi risotto and salmon with braised baby gem. There are homemade ice creams, British cheeses and dainty chocolates. Oh, and a helipad, should the drive seem onerous. **££££**

NUMBER ONE

The Balmoral, 1 Princes Street, Edinburgh EH2 2EQ (restaurantnumberone.com; 0131 557 6727)
After years away, we returned to this Michelin-starred dining room in Rocco Forte's Balmoral Hotel, where the doorman wears full Highland regalia, and absolutely loved it. The cooking is by turns eclectic and refined – totally right in its environment, the very best of Scotland. The only duff note is the armchairs in the bar, clearly designed by a torturer. But when it comes to restaurants, addresses don't come better than this one. **£££££**

LE MANOIR AUX QUAT'SAISONS

Church Road, Great Milton, Oxfordshire OX44 7PD (manoir.com; 01844 278 881)
Because standards are never compromised and decor is up to date if not ahead of the game (a frayed cushion? Tired wallpaper? Not here), this Oxfordshire evergreen has stayed young and sexy (spend a night in the Lace suite – *that's sexy*). And chef Gary Jones's five-, six-, seven- and nine-course tasting menus take you on a journey you will not forget. **£££££**

PAUL AINSWORTH AT NUMBER 6

6 Middle Street, Padstow, Cornwall PL28 8AP (number6inpadstow.co.uk; 01841 532093)
Recently awarded a long-overdue Michelin star, Ainsworth and his team are on a roll and clearly revelling in it. With dishes such as blowtorched mackerel framed with edible flowers, and lobster ravioli so magnificent you want to have another portion for pudding, they brilliantly pull off an edible adventure well worth travelling for. **££££**

SIMON RADLEY AT THE CHESTER GROSVENOR

Eastgate, Chester CH1 1LT (chestergrosvenor.com; 01244 324024)
It's held its Michelin star for more than 20 years, and no wonder. Staff are very twinkly, unstuffily delivering impeccable service. The room is cosy and elegantly relaxed, as evidenced by the merry but well-behaved diners, some very big Cheshire cheeses among them. The Hereford, a rib of beef so tender you could almost eat it with a spoon, particularly stood out, as did the tagglio on open ravioli, and the vegetarian tasting menu is – believe it or not – delectable. The bread cart is also a treat, including a five-days-in-the-making sourdough and mouthwatering mashed-potato-and-beer bread. **£££££**



SIMON RADLEY AT THE CHESTER GROSVENOR

SAM'S OF BRIGHTON

1 Paston Place, Brighton BN2 1HA (samsobrighton.co.uk; 01273 676222)
Modern Brit at its most delish, this, in a secret little side street staggering down to the sea. Not that you'd tell by the room – a bit cutesy, perhaps. But the incongruity between that and the quiet wow of the cooking is just part of Sam's charm. Whether from land or sea, all is local and seasonal: roast rabbit saddle stuffed with black pudding, say, followed by a gorgeous confit guinea fowl. And to finish? Creamy, campy brandy Alexanders (very Brighton, that). Service is sweet, discreet. *The place* for a long and ever-so-slightly louche lunch. **££**

THE PIG

Beaulieu Road, Brockenhurst, Hampshire SO42 7QL (thepighotel.com; 01590 622354)
'Oink oink,' we say, for a place that has quickly established itself as a locavore leader. Virtually all of its produce comes from within a 25-mile radius. That might mean Fluffett's Farm duck egg and salt-beef hash for breakfast, or New Forest pheasant breast and confit leg for lunch, but whatever you eat in the lively conservatory, it hits the spot. There's a Pig in Southampton, and later this year the Pig on the Beach will open at Studland Bay in Dorset too. **£££**

AUSTRALASIA

1 The Avenue, Spinningfields, Manchester M3 3AP (australasia.uk.com; 0161 831 0288)
Kick back with a Porn Star (it's a cocktail) at Australasia. The shabby-urban-chic decor with art deco elements may sound complicated but somehow works, and the Asian/Pacific Rim menu – black cod, pepper salt beef, smoked-eel sushi – reads more LA than Manc. This is where the Killers ate when they last played Manchester, and Joe Hart, whom we all adore, adores the place. **££££**



THE PIG

ILLUSTRATIONS: JON ROGERS; STILL-LIFES: SUDHIR PITHWA; JODY TODD; PHOTOGRAPH: MARK BASSETT



LUDO'S

The Coopers Inn, Station Road, Newcastle Emlyn, Carmarthenshire SA38 9BX (no website; 01239 710588)

Frogs' legs in deepest, Welshest Wales? Surely not. Newcastle Emlyn is not the most obvious location for an ambitious young French chef to set up shop. But Ludo Dieumegard is winning over sceptical locals softly-softly, smuggling a deep-fried snail in alongside the wild-garlic soup. There's lots of slow cooking and the sticky toffee pudding, with salty Halen Môn sauce, makes our all-time STP top 10. **££**

MINT AND MUSTARD

134 Whitchurch Road, Cardiff CF14 3LZ (mintandmustard.com; 02920 620333)

At Mint and Mustard, the jewel in Whitchurch Road's rather scruffy crown, murals of extravagantly mustachioed Bollywood actors gaze moodily down on the packed, good-time crowd. We can't overstate how superb this food is: Bombay chaat like little crispy space hoppers; fig and fresh coriander naan, hot from the tandoor. It's a blast, it's a buzz, it's knock-your-block-off brilliant. **££**

THE FAT DUCK

High Street, Bray, Berkshire SL6 2AQ (thefatduck.co.uk; 01628 580333)

Many first-time visitors to the Duck are struck by how low-key it is, but when you're this big you hardly have to shout about it. It's not just Heston Blumenthal's culinary inventiveness – snail porridge, the thermodynamics – that is so winning, it's the whole package. An elderly relative or a callow schoolboy would be equally captivated by the magic. Snagging a table is still tough, though. **£££££**

THE SIR CHARLES NAPIER

Strigg's Alley, Chinnor, Oxfordshire OX39 4BX (sircharlesnapier.co.uk; 01494 483011)

This place has been around for yonks (as have some of the clientele) but owner Julie Griffiths and chef Chris Godfrey won their first Michelin star in 2011. Lunch could be double-baked smoked haddock and cheddar soufflé or braised ox cheek, with salted caramel and honeycomb nibbles to follow. All delicious. **£££**

THE ELEPHANT

3-4 Beacon Terrace, Torquay, Devon TQ1 2BH (elephantrestaurant.co.uk; 01803 200044)

You might already know *chef patron* Simon Hulstone from BBC One's *Saturday Kitchen*.

His pretty townhouse restaurant, on a hilly terrace above the harbour, is split into ground-floor brasserie and first-floor posh option the Room (open only in spring/summer). We especially love the former, where moules marinières followed by tagliatelle with crab make a fine lunch. **££/££££**

THE OLDE BELL

Hurley, Berkshire SL6 5LX (theoldebell.co.uk; 01628 825881)

Olde indeed – some parts of the Bell date from the 12th century – but the rooms and restaurant have recently been renovated by designer Ilse Crawford, so it's smart and well tended, Berkshire-style. Sunday lunch is a non-stop show – busy-busy, everyone hale and hearty and good-looking children all over the place. The lovely garden provides nearly half of all the fruit, herbs and vegetables and in summer there's an outdoor barbecue. **£££**

THE DINING ROOM AT WHATLEY MANOR

Easton Grey, Malmesbury, Wiltshire SN16 0RB (whatleymanor.com; 01666 822888)

A country house of Cotswold stone, with formal gardens and grassland leading to the river. In the two-Michelin-star Dining Room, Martin Burge's cooking gets more exciting by the minute, with dishes such as pig's cheek in Thai spices and venison with bitter chocolate.

Sunday jazz suppers are in the less formal Le Mazot restaurant. **£££££/£££**

HUMPHRY'S

Stoke Park, Park Road, Stoke Poges, Buckinghamshire SL2 4PG (stokepark.com; 01753 717172)

Stoke Park, 40 minutes from Hyde Park Corner on a good day, is an architectural sock-in-the-eye, an 18th- (and part-14th) century pile with attitude. Humphry's restaurant – with its glorious floor-to-ceiling windows and great vases of lilies and orchids – must be seen to be believed, but the biggest surprise is the food. A classic tournedos of beef and a cannon of lamb were two of the best dishes we've eaten in the past 12 months. **££££**

THE DINING ROOM

Pavilion Buildings, Rock Road, Rock, Cornwall PL27 6JS (thediningroomrock.co.uk; 01208 862622)

With the old guard somewhat standing still, new blood is taking the Cornish helm. The Dining Room, so unassuming from the outside, surpasses every expectation. The head chef is a master at balancing lip-smacking creativity with classic combinations. Mackerel tartare and Tamar Valley venison are particularly good choices and the local Camel Valley wine is so good you want to retire early and move to the area. **£££**

ALLIUM BRASSERIE

Abbey Hotel, North Parade, Bath BA1 1LF (abbeyhotellbath.co.uk; 01225 809467)

Chris Staines, previously head chef at (now defunct) Foliage at Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park, has surfaced at the Abbey. In spite of its name, Allium is not really a brasserie at all. It's more a modern bistro, with contemporary art and a friendly vibe, although what's on the plate is highly sophisticated. Quail glazed in chilli caramel and pan-fried Cornish bream with salsa verde and lemon curd are two first-class dishes we enjoyed here. **££££**

JEREMY'S RESTAURANT

Borde Hill, Balcombe Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH16 1XP (jeremysrestaurant.co.uk; 01444 441102)

Chef Jeremy Ashpool uses the best local ingredients and smokes, cures and cooks them with love for his loyal guests. The home-smoked mackerel is top-notch and local wood pigeon with pearl barley tastes nutty and deliciously rustic. Save room for pudding and homemade marshmallow petits fours. **£££**

MIDSUMMER HOUSE

Midsummer Common, Cambridge CB4 1HA (midsummerhouse.co.uk; 01223 369299)

A pretty Victorian villa on the banks of the Cam is where Daniel Clifford has held two Michelin stars since 2005. His Taste of Midsummer menu is an 11-course gastronomic marathon of exquisitely presented dishes (celery bavaois, goat-cheese cigarillo), and the accompanying flight of seven wines will take you well out of your comfort zone – in a good way, that is. **££££**

THE FEATHERS

Market Street, Woodstock, Oxfordshire OX20 1SX (feathers.co.uk; 01993 812291)

The Feathers has always been a bit of a hoot, ever since Gordon Campbell Gray bought it and gave it a makeover in the early Eighties – though it's long gone from his stable. In the three small dining rooms, service is well-intentioned, if not entirely polished (waiter and sommelier together putting on a somewhat Feydeau-esque show). But the food's the thing – silky mushroom velouté, Evenlode wood pigeon with quince and Périgord truffles, incredibly flavour-packed Longhorn beef. Divine. There's also a seven-course menu based around gin – the Feathers has its own dedicated gin bar. Told you it was fun! **££££**



THE CHEQUERS

Church Road, Churchill, Oxfordshire OX7 6NJ (thechequerschurchill.com; 01608 659393)

Two knockout country restaurants within 15 miles of each other? 'Impossible!' you say. But that clever, charming duo Georgina and Sam Pearman of Wheatsheaf Inn fame have opened buzzy, casual Chequers. It headlines straightforward British food with a few original flourishes: chicken, mushroom and tarragon pie you'll trade your grandmother for and an eyewateringly piquant marmalade pudding. The hottest ticket in the Cotswolds right now. **££**

BRASSERIE DE LUXE

The Caledonian, Princes Street, Edinburgh EH1 2AB (galvinrestaurants.com; 0131 222 8988)

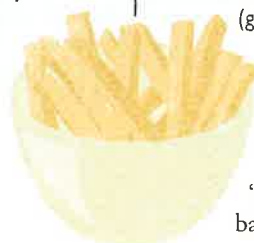
Run by the clever Galvin brothers, this charming, blue-and-white-tiled brasserie in the lavishly restored Cally looks as if it has been here for ever. All the staples are present – Scottish shellfish, tartares, confit de canard and fantastic chips. On the hotel's first floor, meanwhile, the 'fine-dining' Pompadour has reopened under Jeff Galvin's baton and veritably drips Louis XV. **££/££££**

CASTLE TERRACE

33-35 Castle Terrace, Edinburgh EH1 2EL (castleterracerestaurant.com; 0131 229 1222)

Castle Terrace is relatively new on the Edinburgh scene (it opened in 2010) but already boasts a Michelin star. Chef-owner Dominic Jack has worked at some of the greats, like Taillevent and L'Arpège in Paris, and combines phenomenal technical skill with an unerring aesthetic. Standout dishes include spelt risotto and stuffed saddle of Inverurie lamb à la rognonnade (with its kidneys) but, frankly, everything here sparkles. And we love the room, with its bustle and latter-day Scottish pizzazz. **££££**

THE OLDE BELL



ILLUSTRATIONS: JON ROGERS; STILL-LIFES: SUDHIR PITHWA, JODY TODD; PHOTOGRAPH: NICK SMITH