



GO WILD AT SIMON
ROGAN'S FERA

mayfair & st james's

BEST RESTAURANTS mayfair & st james's

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British

CORRIGAN'S MAYFAIR ★★

28 Upper Grosvenor Street W1K 7EH ☎ 020 7499 9943
Price £75 Wine £35 Champagne £79 P. Room 6,10,12,30
Sun-Fri 12N-3pm (Sun-4pm) Mon-Sun 6-10pm (Sun-9.30pm)

"Elegant without being stuffy", this class act combines the high-gloss sophistication of its off-Park Lane address with all the big-hearted, twinkle-eyed charm you'd expect from chef/owner Richard Corrigan. A feeling of warmth suffuses the long, low-ceilinged dining room, from the glow beneath the feathered lampshades to the attentive staff and comforting food. Meat and game are the star turns here – we love the wholesome, slow-cooked pork and bacon pie with a textbook pastry crust, not least for its witty accompaniment of deep-fried pig's ears. Then there's the glory of in-season grouse – roasted with braised red cabbage and game chips, say – and some inspired pairings such as Madeira-braised celery with shin of veal. Fish isn't neglected either, and we've also enjoyed excellent smoked eel with black pudding and the sweetest crab ever in a chilli and lime salad. Three-course Sunday lunches are a steal, and the little-known bar is a good place for a quietly civilised drink.

FERA ★★

Claridge's, Brook Street W1K 4HR ☎ 020 3551 2823
Price £119 Wine £29 Champagne £68 P. Room 12
Mon-Sun 12N-1.45pm 6.30-10pm

It was one of the gastronomic events of 2014 and the excitement surrounding the arrival of Simon Rogan at Claridge's shows no sign of

abating. What was formerly Gordon Ramsay's domain remains a grand art-deco space of ocean-liner proportions, although the look is now "fresher and more modern" – think bare stone and slate crockery referencing the earthy, farming-and-foraging approach that marks out Rogan's two-Michelin-starred L'Enclume. Memorable flavour hits are many and thrilling: a dense whip of potato and Winslade cheese studded with springy diced duck heart; garden-fresh pea wafers with fennel and flowers; a dish of stewed rabbit frilled with crisp ribbons of batter; and a grilled salad involving Isle of Mull cheese, truffle custard and sunflower seeds. On the downside, staff (and chefs) can try too hard to impress, though most readers find their "informal and very personable" approach "an added bonus". Fera is dazzling confirmation of Rogan's arrival in gastronomy's international big league, although prices suggest it's "for very special occasions only".

FORTNUM & MASON

181 Piccadilly W1A 1ER ☎ 0845 602 5694
Price £50 Wine £19.75 Champagne £52
Mon-Sat 7am-9pm Sun 8am-6pm

This bastion of traditional London holds an abundance of dining options. The Parlour, with its showstopping selection of Knickerbocker

Glories and fabulous cakes, is an experience that no young foodies (or their parents) will forget, while the Gallery, giving great views over the bustling Food Hall, is ideal for anyone hungry for what lies below – here you can 'try before you buy' specialities such as ibérico ham and Scottish lobster. For conventional dining, there's the Fountain, a dependable brasserie filled with shoppers meeting friends, or the remarkably good-value 1707 wine bar, which picks up later in the day and offers interesting flights by the glass. But the ultimate once-in-a-lifetime experience has to be the traditional afternoon tea served at the Diamond Jubilee Tea Salon. Note prices that above are for The Fountain.

HAWKSMOOR AIR STREET

5a Air Street W1J 0AD ☎ 020 3641 1893
Price £64 Wine £21 Champagne £55
Mon-Fri 12N-3pm 5-10.30pm (Fri-11pm) Sat-Sun 12N-11pm

In a capacious room above Regent Street, the meat-loving Hawksmoor boys have created yet another restaurant for any gentleman (or lady) to relish. Like its siblings, this branch is big, brash and loud, with a menu that majors on generous slabs of "divine" British-reared beef cooked to flavour-packed perfection on the charcoal grill. Dark wood and green leather lend a clubby feel, softened by slinky art-deco lines, and the bar is perfect for a tippie from the educational, leather-



CORRIGAN'S MAYFAIR



bound cocktail list. Although "glorious steak is king here", fish also gets a good airing – Dover sole, steamed Dartmouth lobster and exceedingly plump mussels are all spot-on, while dishes such as tender summer vegetables with goats' curd show that the kitchen can do subtle and delicate as well as "indulgent". Relaxed, knowledgeable staff receive unanimous applause.

HIX MAYFAIR

Brown's Hotel, 33 Albemarle Street W1S 4BP
 ☎ 020 3589 2118
Price £68 Wine £32 Champagne £77
 Mon-Sat 7-10.30am 12N-3pm 5.30-11pm
 Sun 7.30-11am 12.30-4pm 7-10.30pm

Sitting in Marx Hix's sedate and civilised Mayfair outpost you feel that all is well with the world. A selection of Brit-art hits lend an edge (note the splash of neon from Tracey Emin), but the airy room retains a feel of classic ease with its green-leather booths, wood-panelled walls and moulded white ceiling. The kitchen goes about its business with practiced confidence and a light touch, while very "proper" staff are on hand to recommend the perfect glass to match your choice from a menu that's big on seasonality and sourcing. Here you will find dressed Portland crab, roast rack of Launceston lamb with Scottish girolles, red deer with haggis and a juicy summer pudding accompanied by clotted cream. Tea in a silver pot with a salver of intense petits fours provides a suitably refined sign-off.

MEWS OF MAYFAIR

10-11 Lancashire Court W1S 1EY ☎ 020 3641 1869
Price £55 Wine £21 Champagne £70 P. Room 15,28
 Mon-Sun 12N-3pm (Sun 5pm) Mon-Sat 6-11pm

Step into Mayfair's cobbled side streets and forget your everyday concerns as the charm offensive of these old mews houses takes hold. Here, two 18th-century buildings have been converted to provide any social or business space you might need: a cocktail bar, a late-night lounge, a private dining room under the eaves and a contemporary brasserie where attentive staff bring nibbles of fried salted corn and a menu that's compact but big on provenance. Hits have ranged from a starter of Orkney scallops with sweetcorn purée and girolles to a classy rendition of lemon meringue pie that belies the surroundings. There are also rare-breed steaks from the Jospier grill, salads and bar food for lighter lunches, plus a decently priced wine list.

ALSO CONSIDER

- THE ATHENAEUM** 116 Piccadilly W1J 7BJ ☎ 020 7640 3557
- GREIG'S GRILL** 26 Bruton Place W1J 6NG ☎ 020 3641 5807
- THE GUINEA GRILL** 30 Bruton Place W1J 6NL
 ☎ 020 7768 0285
- INN THE PARK** St James's Park SW1A 2BJ ☎ 020 7451 9999
- KEEPER'S HOUSE** Royal Academy of Arts, Burlington House W1J 0BD ☎ 020 3463 7477
- ROWLEY'S** 113 Jermyn Street SW1Y 6HJ ☎ 020 3544 0688
- THIRTY SIX** Dukes Hotel, 36 Little St James Street SW1A 1NY
 ☎ 020 3544 0674

Fish

BENTLEY'S OYSTER BAR & GRILL ★

11-15 Swallow Street W1B 4DG ☎ 020 7734 4756
Price £63 Wine £29 Champagne £79 P. Room 14
 Mon-Sun 12N-11pm (Oyster Bar)
 Mon-Sat 12N-4pm Mon-Sun 6-10pm (Grill)

It may be close to celebrating its 100th birthday, but this venerable seafood restaurant feels in the same vigorous good spirits as its owner Richard Corrigan. Meet for a glass of fizz in the Champagne bar before moving to the next-door Oyster Bar – expect a real West End buzz as theatregoers and the after-work crowd feast on dressed crab, tuna with soy or herring salad, followed by salt-and-pepper squid or fish and chips. If something more formal is required, head upstairs to the Arts & Crafts-styled Grill – all William Morris fabrics and shiny wooden floors – where shellfish bisque and baked lemon sole with scallop mousse are the order of the day. The results taste "fabulous and fresh", although top billing goes to in-season native oysters, knowledgeably served by the cleverest shuckers in the business. We wholeheartedly agree with fans who insist Bentley's is "always a pleasure to visit".

SCOTT'S

★★★

20 Mount Street W1K 2HE ☎ 020 7495 7309
Price £66 Wine £29 Champagne £65 P. Room 40
 Mon-Sun 12N-10.30pm (Sun 10pm)

Whether you call it "an all-time favourite" or "an all-time classic", Scott's is top of many diners' list of preferred addresses – ours included. "Laid-back glamour" seems to seep from the very fabric of the dining room, whether caught in the shine of the glossy leather banquettes, or the dazzling reflection of seafood on ice in the marble-topped crustacea bar. "Outstanding", "very friendly" staff maintain the spell, delivering invisible service so there is "never an empty glass". And then there's the food – some of "the best fish in town". A meal can be as simple or snazzy as you wish, so you might start with Cornish sardines with lemon, parsley and olive oil or sautéed monkfish cheeks and snails with bacon and Bordelaise, ahead of faultless Dover sole or miso-blackened salmon with seared pak choi and pickled ginger. There's also sashimi and ceviche for the fashion-conscious, calendar highlights including native oysters and game, and both sweets and savouries for afters. Dinners in the private room receive acclaim too ("no detail was left untouched"), but whether your party is big or small (solo dining at the counter is a joy), "every visit here feels so indulgent".

WILTONS

★★

55 Jermyn Street SW1Y 6LX ☎ 020 3544 2395
Price £85 Wine £42 Champagne £60 P. Room 20
 Mon-Fri 12N-2.30pm Mon-Sat 5.30-10.30pm

Like the most inspirational of rags-to-riches stories, Wiltons has gone from 18th-century



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WILL YOU KNOW THAT THE REASON I LAUGH WHEN
 I'M WITH YOU ISN'T BECAUSE YOU'RE
 SO FUNNY, ALTHOUGH YOU ARE? IT'S SIMPLY BECAUSE
 SMILING CAN'T CONTAIN MY JOY.
 WILL YOU KEEP LAUGHING WITH ME FOREVER?

WILL YOU?



TIFFANY & Co.

NEW YORK SINCE 1837



ALAIN DUCASSE AT THE DORCHESTER



BRASSERIE CHAVOT

oyster barrow to the establishment diner of choice for today's captains of industry and toffs up from the shires. Change has come slowly, but recent evolution has ushered in an enticing bar, plus Saturday evening service and an opened-up dining room – though the velvet banquettes and oil paintings remain. Women are still a rare sight – apart from the pinny-wearing waitresses, who briskly advise customers what to eat in the best tradition of 'nanny knows best'. We did as we were told and enjoyed delicate smoked Lincolnshire eel, perfectly sautéed Dover sole bathed in golden butter, and a sugar-dusted cherry and raspberry soufflé – plus some of the best oysters in town. Prices will make you wince but it's worth shelling out for a special occasion.

ALSO CONSIDER
GREEN'S 36 Duke Street St James SW1Y 6DF ☎ 020 3544 0748
PESCATORI 11 Dover Street W1S 4LH ☎ 020 3551 9856

French

ALAIN DUCASSE AT THE DORCHESTER

★★

The Dorchester, Park Lane W1K 1QA
 ☎ 020 3641 8324
 Price £125 Wine £40 Champagne £85 P. Room 7,12
 Tues-Fri 12N-1.30pm Tues-Sat 6.30-9.30pm

The Dorchester's flagship restaurant is sending mixed messages of late: for every visitor who

trumpets the food as "absolutely outstanding", another dismisses it as "quite forgettable". One thing is certain: the combination of "Swiss bank account" prices (don't even ask about the treasure-trove French wine list) and three-Michelin-star status inevitably leads to some of the highest expectations in London. Come with deep pockets and an open mind and you'll find technically flawless cooking which values restraint and harmony, from the signature sauté gourmand of lobster with chicken quenelles and homemade pasta to the just-picked components of the vegetarian 'menu jardin'. But restraint also governs the atmosphere of the blandly beige room, where vast tables feel six feet apart and the fibre-optic curtain of the private 'table lumière' twinkles like a celestial beam. "Fabulously attentive" service gets a universal thumbs-up but, as ever, we recommend first-timers try the all-inclusive lunch before committing to the Ducasse full monty.

BELLAMY'S

18-18a Bruton Place W1J 6LY ☎ 020 3544 6870
 Price £58 Wine £19 Champagne £70
 Mon-Fri 12N-2.30pm Mon-Sat 7-10.30pm

There's little passing trade on Bruton Place, so Bellamy's has kept in business since 2004 through word-of-mouth alone, ticking all the right boxes for a (sometimes noisy) clientele of fund managers, gallery owners and auction-

house grandees. Iconic Franco-Belgian brasseries provide its inspiration, and while the menu lists classics such as entrecôte, steak tartare, duck rillettes and avocado vinaigrette, the Mayfair location dictates some rather grander dishes like halibut forestière and roast partridge. Nevertheless, the kitchen knows its customers well enough to have some fun, along the lines of bacon and egg croquettes or fish fingers – regulars appreciate the variety. An adjoining oyster bar touts not only shellfish but salads and toasted sandwiches (a Mayfair bargain), plus there are £10 cocktails in the bar proper come the evening. Otherwise, choose something from an all-French wine list that's as Gallic as the decor of prints and posters, banquettes and mirrors. "Courteous and efficient service" gets the thumbs up, too.

BOULESTIN

5 St James' Street SW1A 1EF ☎ 020 3544 0689
 Price £52 Wine £19 Champagne £70 P. Room 40
 Mon-Fri 7am-3pm 5-11pm (Thurs-Fri -11.30pm)
 Sat 11am-11.30pm

After a wobbly start in 2013, this reborn homage to grand French brasseries has found its niche feeding the wealthy burghers of St James's. It's a pleasing enough space, with lots of mirrors and artwork, checkerboard floor tiles, leather seating and a delightful summertime courtyard – although absent-minded service sometimes spoils the party. The food is well presented without being fussy (witness sweet-cured herrings with potatoes and dill), but we recommend gutsier items to get the true Gallic spirit of the place: nuggets of deep-fried brain, excellent grilled calf's liver or one of the best cassoulets this side of Calais – a smoky, salty medley of sausage, pork belly and confit duck. To finish, stay with classics such as lemon tart or the sublime Sauternes custard with Agen prunes. The adjoining Café Marcel does all-day dining and drinking, and private dining is done well too. In short, "heaven for rich French cuisine".

BRASSERIE CHAVOT

★

41 Conduit Street W1S 2YF ☎ 020 7183 6425
 Price £57 Wine £22 Champagne £60
 Mon-Sat 12N-2.30pm (Sat 12.30pm-) 6-10.30pm Sun 12.30-9pm

Eric Chavot has managed to create that rare thing: a local restaurant in the heart of the West End. It may be set in an imperial, high-ceilinged room emblazoned with chandeliers, soaring mirrors, columns and an elaborate mosaic floor, but the close-set tables are great for conviviality, if not confidentiality. Chavot won serious Michelin-starred fame in the 90s, but is clearly enjoying himself in more casual mode: chunkily minced, herby steak tartare comes topped with a soft-boiled egg dusted with espelette pepper; fleshy grilled tiger prawns are pepped up with harissa, and there are splendidly tender pork chops in creamy honey and mustard sauce too – plus classic desserts to treasure (rum baba, crème brûlée, île flottante). The mainly French wine list



ROLEX

OYSTER PERPETUAL DAY-DATE



SWING FROM THE MURANO GLASS CHANDELIER AT THE GRILL AT THE DORCHESTER

has a decent choice by the glass, while likeable staff “who actually seem to enjoy their work” pick up on the mood of general bonhomie.

THE GRILL AT THE DORCHESTER

The Dorchester, 53 Park Lane W1K 1QA
 ☎ 020 7629 8888
Price £105 Wine £40 Champagne £80 P. Room 10,10,16
 Mon-Sun 7-10.30am 12N-2.30pm 6.30-10.30pm

The Grill at the Dorchester looks a million dollars after a makeover that could have cost several times that. Thankfully, all that garish Caledonian kitsch has gone, to be replaced by ornate wall panels, Versailles-style oak parquet floors and a Murano glass chandelier the size of a small country, while the new look (and super-confident service) lends the whole place a sense of occasion that – just about – justifies scary bills. Alain Ducasse protégé Christophe Marleix doesn't go in for high-wire culinary thrills, but his extremely precise style and controlled creativity give grill-room stalwarts such as chicken Caesar salad, salmon steak with béarnaise sauce, rib of beef and roast chicken that je ne sais quoi. This is comfort food of the highest order. To finish, exquisite soufflés (rum and raisin, perhaps). Wines are predictably French, classic and très cher.

HELENE DARROZE AT THE CONNAUGHT ★★

The Connaught, Carlos Place W1K 2AL ☎ 020 3544 1654
Price £132 Wine £39 Champagne £75 P. Room 8,20
 Tues-Fri 12N-2pm 6.30-9.30pm Sat 11am-2pm 6.30-9.30pm

Printed menus are a thing of the past at The Connaught's grand dining room; instead, diners select dishes from a solitaire board with ingredient names written on white marbles. It's a “bizarre” but playful touch typical of the way that this restaurant has become ever more comfortable in its own skin since French star Hélène Darroze arrived in 2007. The reinvented interior still screams “classic fine dining” with its Victorian wood panelling, plaster mouldings, “sumptuous” jewel-coloured fabrics and staff with thick Gallic accents, but the kitchen prepares luxury ingredients with a lightness of touch that is wholly modern. Our asparagus ravioli dotted with blobs of Ricotta and morels could not have been fresher or more flavourful, while cauliflower whipped with sea urchin proved a rich, creamy delight. There are welcome touches from Darroze's native Landes too: peerless foie gras terrine, Bayonne ham sliced at the table and a trolley of Armagnacs. By contrast, the Saturday brunch/buffet is “pure belly-busting bliss”.

HIBISCUS ★★

29 Maddox Street W1S 2PA ☎ 020 3544 0784
Price £124 Wine £28 Champagne £80 P. Room 18
 Mon-Sun 12N-2.15pm Tues-Sat 6.30-11pm (Fri-Sat 6pm-)

While the Relais & Châteaux plaque hanging outside Hibiscus indicates that diners are in for something formally French, it doesn't prepare



HELENE DARROZE AT THE CONNAUGHT



HIBISCUS

visitors for the challenging, “experimental” nature of the cooking. Claude Bosi may have spent his apprenticeship in France but Hibiscus began life in Shropshire and that singular career path is evident in a highly original style, best sampled in the eight-course tasting menu. Intensely flavoured standouts might range from a rich bavarois of Norwegian king crab with sea leaves and cubes of jellied smoked-haddock consommé to chestnut mushroom, coconut and curry ‘en cocotte’, an Asian-accented froth presented in a blue eggshell. A 2014 refurb replaced the previously dreary furnishings with beautiful table settings, striking blue upholstery, art on loan from local galleries and a private room. Hibiscus is firing on all cylinders: from intricate amuse-bouches to “attentive yet not intrusive” service, this is a top-flight gastronomic experiences. Great-value set lunch, too.

LA PETITE MAISON

54 Brooks Mews W1K 4EG ☎ 020 7495 4774
Price £75 Wine £25 Champagne £75
 Mon-Sun 12N-2.30pm (Sat-Sun 12.30-) 6-10.30pm (Sun -9.30pm)

“A little ray of Provençal sunshine in London –

and a whole chicken stuffed with foie gras!” is one fan's succinct snapshot of this airy corner spot in a cobbled mews. The poulet in question (pre-order only) is a famed speciality on a menu that sings of Mediterranean sunshine direct from La Petite Maison's elder namesake in Nice. Tables come pre-loaded with a bottle of olive oil, fat red tomatoes and citrus fruit for your amusement, before well-drilled staff proffer small plates ranging from niçoise classics to refined bourgeois fare – expect pissaladière, salt-cod croquettes, scrambled eggs with white truffles, marinated Agen prunes with gingerbread ice cream, and more besides. The vibe is Mayfair-meets-The Riviera as jet-setting punters “let their hair down” – no doubt fuelled by a French wine list stuffed with big names to match the decidedly haute prices.

LE GAVROCHE ★★★

43 Upper Brook Street W1K 7QR ☎ 020 7499 1826
Price £97 Wine £30 Champagne £64
 Mon-Fri 12N-2pm Mon-Sat 6.30-11pm

A refurbishment at the beginning of 2014 left Le Gavroche looking as newly minted as when



THE RITZ RESTAURANT



ALYN WILLIAMS AT THE WESTBURY

it first opened in 1982 – but legions of devoted fans would be up in arms were anything to change. For many diners, this is quite simply “my favourite restaurant”; certainly, we look forward to a meal here more than almost anywhere else. A recent lunch delivered coeur d’artichaut Lucullus, an artichoke and black truffle mousse filled with sublimely rich chicken mousse and foie gras; and the famous omelette Rothschild, a sweet cloud of apricot and Cointreau soufflé. But the kitchen can do light modernity too: witness the vermouth velouté that makes a plate of salmon and sea vegetables so sophisticated. The bad news is that many main courses cost upwards of £40 and although the all-inclusive lunchtime prix fixe for £54.80 is justifiably famous, the cooking lacks the polish and poise of the à la carte. Long-serving staff and the frequent presence of Michel Roux Jnr himself ensure that this most regal of restaurants has “the personal touch” and remains London’s special occasion restaurant par excellence.

LITTLE SOCIAL ★

5 Pollen Street W1S 1NE ☎ 020 7870 3730
Price £61 Wine £26 Champagne £75 P. Room 7
Mon-Sat 12N-2.30pm 6-10.30pm

From the condensation-beaded silver punch-bowl on the bar to the roomy oxblood-leather booths, Jason Atherton’s loving homage to the Parisian bistro – at least, a modern version of it – extends a generous welcome. This is a place to sit back and relax while you’re cared for and cosseted by an “engaging and professional” team with bags of confidence and charm. A cool, cliché-free soundtrack and the contented hum of conversation provide a sometimes noisy backdrop to cooking that works a winning combination of high-class presentation and bold, no-fuss flavours. Warm smoked eel with beetroot, horseradish cream and watercress has a rich, subtly smoky edge, grilled pork chop gets a charcuterie sauce, and roast cod might appear with porcini, artichokes and peppered bacon. There are burgers and steaks too, while desserts range from wicked maple-glazed doughnuts oozing apple purée to a butter-rich tarte Tatin for sharing – worth ordering as soon as you sit.

THE RITZ RESTAURANT ★

The Ritz London, 150 Piccadilly W1J 9BR
☎ 020 3641 0451
Price £102 Wine £50 Champagne £94
Mon-Sun 7-11am (Sun 8am-) 12.30-2pm 5.30-10pm (Sun 7pm-)

While other grand hotels have moulded their restaurants around the visions of name-above-the-door chefs, The Ritz remains absolutely itself: a parallel universe of Louis XIV grandeur where it seems normal to dine by a gold statue of Neptune, every chap wears a jacket and tie, and an entire string quartet provides accompaniment. The chocolate-box setting is without

MY MAYFAIR & ST JAMES'S

Simon Rogan
CHEF PATRON, FERA AT CLARIDGE'S



Best breakfast: The Wolseley on Piccadilly. Without doubt, the combination of a buzzy ambience and the beautiful large room make it an ideal kick-start to any day – plus the bacon sandwiches are delicious.

Best coffee: Taylor St Baristas on Brooks Mews, tucked just behind Claridge’s – it’s a little hole-in-the-wall, with queues of fans.

Post-work drink: The Running Horse Pub on Davies Street has excellent artisan ales.

Quick bite: Pret A Manger on Avery Row. I often nip out for homemade soup and a sandwich. I enjoy their Asian concoctions.

Best newcomer: Roka, Mayfair on North Audley Street. It’s near to both Claridge’s and my flat, so it has become a favourite for late evenings. I like the lightness of the dishes, plus the service is great.

equal, yet the food keeps pace: executive chef John Williams has been here since 2004 and combines the luxury the location demands with the light touch modern diners expect. So while you might feast on buttery foie gras terrine or a splendid venison Wellington, portion sizes keep the richness in check – and there’s delicate fish and seafood too, such as a caviar-topped oyster or pearly-fleshed turbot with white truffle. Service is professionalism personified, especially when waiters flambé crêpes Suzette tableside. “A real treat for any occasion”, but especially for “a very memorable anniversary”.

- ALSO CONSIDER**
- AUBAINE** 31 Dover Street W1S 4ND ☎ 020 3589 2732
 - AUBAINE** 4 Heddon Street W1B 4BS ☎ 020 3589 2734
 - THE BALCON** Sofitel St James Hotel, 8 Pall Mall SW1Y 5NG ☎ 020 7968 2900
 - LE BOUDIN BLANC** 5 Trebeck Street W1J 7LT ☎ 020 7499 3292
 - NAC** 41 North Audley Street W1K 6ZP ☎ 020 7493 3443
 - SEVEN PARK PLACE** St James’s Hotel & Club, 7-8 Park Place SW1A 1LS ☎ 020 3641 1851

Modern European

ALYN WILLIAMS AT THE WESTBURY ★

The Westbury, 37 Conduit Street W1S 2YF
☎ 020 3641 1877
Price £75 Wine £24.50 Champagne £62 P.Room 9,20
Tues-Sat 12N- 2.30pm 6-10.30pm

Once you’ve passed the top-hatted doorman and made your way to this diminutive room, you’d be forgiven for thinking you were in for a rather decorous dining experience. The atmosphere is somewhat hushed and “super-attentive” waiters hover as they tend to your every need, but there are also “invigorating gastronomic delights” to be had. Chef Alyn Williams marries finely honed technical skill with a passion for provenance and the joys of the vegetable garden to create a repertoire of tantalising, “precision” dishes. Enthusiastically endorsed tasting menus come with amuse-bouches galore and everything is “done to perfection” – from veggie specials such as



BELUGA Made with pride
 NOBLE RUSSIAN VODKA



LE CAPRICE



POLLEN STREET SOCIAL



GALVIN AT WINDOWS

smoked egg with sweetcorn and preserved summer truffle to Cornish plaice with lobster, sea urchin and courgette or Mangalitsa pig with grilled coleslaw, apple, celery and capers. A well-stocked cheese trolley and lavish wine list complete a "remarkable value" package.

GALVIN AT WINDOWS ★

London Hilton, 22 Park Lane W1K 1BE ☎ 020 3463 0299
Price £100 Wine £25 Champagne £68 P. Room 30
 Mon-Fri 12N-2.30pm Sun 11.45am-3.30pm Mon-Sat 6-10pm

Traffic-choked Hyde Park Corner and the towering bulk of the Hilton Park Lane make an uninspiring start, but press the button for floor 28 and you're whisked up to another world, complete with film-set lights and film-star treatment. Naturally the skyline views are to die for, but they're not left to carry the experience at this special-occasion spot. Service is well-oiled (if a tad "fussy"), big silver trays are carried aloft and the knowledgeable sommelier happily guides guests through the suitably indulgent list. Food arrives beautifully arranged, with clean, deep flavours and French accents across the board: seared scallops with sweetcorn, crispy chicken skin and truffle; tender loin of lamb accompanied by a dollop of 'bolognese' beneath a pillow of buttery mash; peach soufflé with intense cherry sorbet. Hefty prices and minuscule portions are a regular bugbear, but "everyone feels like royalty" at this aspirational high-roller.

THE GREENHOUSE ★★

27a Hay's Mews W1J 5NY ☎ 020 7499 3331
Price £111 Wine £25 Champagne £75 P. Room 12
 Mon-Fri 12N-2.30pm Mon-Sat 6.30-10.15pm

As London goes about its manic ways, this tasteful, glass-walled room in a tucked-away Mayfair mews offers a soothing balm. Walk through the courtyard garden with its rustling bamboo and smooth stone sculptures and

you immediately feel the Zen-like calm descending all around – a sensation enhanced by impeccable but not overwrought staff. Menu descriptions are economical ('native lobster, watermelon, lime, peanut'), but this is expansive, technically accomplished cooking, with modish accents, bags of "seasonal flair" and two Michelin stars to its name – although we detected the odd duff note here and there. A yuzu and black-sesame sauce overpowered our butter-soft beef and delicate pak choy, but other dishes tell a different story – from soft, succulent Limousin veal with prune, Mexican tarragon, plum and kohlrabi to a tangy verbena pannacotta in perfect harmony with fresh apricots, almonds and caramelised brioche. Excellent-value set lunches lure in the business crowd, likewise the carefully curated 3,000-bin wine list.

LE CAPRICE ★★

Arlington House, 25 Arlington Street SW1A 1RJ
 ☎ 020 3641 1873
Price £64 Wine £27 Champagne £63
 Mon-Fri 12N-12M Sat-Sun 11.30am-4pm (Sat 12N-) 5.30-12M

One of the joys of being a regular at Le Caprice (and there are many) is that you know what to order before you've arrived. For some, that will mean the smoky, succulent pleasure of char-grilled octopus with chorizo and Padrón peppers followed by crisp-crumbed chicken milanese, with perhaps some creamed spinach on the side; for others, crispy duck and pomelo salad ahead of daringly rare calf's liver with melted onions and pancetta. But while the prospect of "delicious food, every time" is something to be treasured, nothing can match the genuine warmth of legendary maître d' Jesus Adorno and his "slick and attentive" staff. The dining room's rattan chairs, spotless table linen and renowned David Bailey photos play second fiddle to the "buzz from happy diners": even if you're dining solo at the counter, you feel welcomed into this most inclusive of

parties. Just add a pianist in the evening and live jazz at the weekends.

POLLEN STREET SOCIAL ★★★

8-10 Pollen Street W1S 1NQ ☎ 020 7290 7600
Price £82 Wine £36 Champagne £73 P. Room 14
 Mon-Sat 12N-2.30pm 6-10.30pm

For birthdays or business, romance or carousing, "flawless" Pollen Street Social is "the perfect restaurant" – whether you're wearing jeans or a suit. It really is 'social' too, so start with a cocktail in the "ever-so-cool" bar, a taster of the invention and attention to detail to come. Main man Jason Atherton is opening restaurants at breakneck speed, but this is his special project and the focus of his "imaginative yet approachable" cuisine: scallop carpaccio with kohlrabi, pomelo, yuzu jam, black olive and samphire is an austere assembly of bracing flavours, while playful complexity shows in the signature 'full English breakfast' – an eggshell filled with slow-cooked egg, tomato purée, bacon and mushrooms. The kitchen also knows all about classic creativity – witness roast turbot with capers and brown butter, cobnuts, grapes and caper gnochchi. Peerless staff receive universal praise for their sterling efforts ("no compromise on professionalism here"), and the wine list from group sommelier Laure Patry continues to enthral. "Is Michelin-starred dining supposed to be this much fun?" quips one fan.

QUAGLINO'S

16 Bury Street SW1Y 6AJ ☎ 020 3589 2652
Price £56 Wine £18 Champagne £54 P. Room 16,36
 Mon-Sat 5.30pm-1am (Fri-Sat -3am)

Those famous Quaglino's stairs have still got it – as you sweep down towards the huge and impressive dining room, making an entrance is unavoidable. A lavish revamp has reinvigorated the restaurant's sense of occasion and

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Jules Jean-Maurice Thierry Gasco Baptiste

brought its share of hits and misses, from an impressive marble-topped cocktail bar luxuriating in the centre of the room to the much-trumpeted – but occasionally off-key – late-night entertainment. Otherwise it's business as usual, with plenty of gustatory enjoyment for those with time to linger. Style sometimes wins over substance, although we can recommend the Vendée Label Rouge chicken with Jerusalem artichokes, mushrooms and truffle vinaigrette. The menu also features some show-off seafood including the signature lobster, langoustine and crab cocktail, plus big dishes for two to share – spiced slow-cooked lamb shoulder with spinach, apricots, almonds and goats' curd for example. There are treasures galore on the voluminous wine list.

SKETCH: GALLERY

9 Conduit Street W1S 2XG ☎ 020 7768 0282
Price £68 Wine £25 Champagne £59
Mon-Sat 6.30pm-2am Sun 6pm-12M

Following the success of Turner Prize-winning Martin Creed's designs, the Gallery at Sketch's opulent box of delights is currently playing host to fellow artist David Shrigley. Plush rose-pink velvet banquettes and burnished copper tones now provide the bourgeois backdrop to more than 200 original drawings – never was a wall-facing seat more diverting. Charming staff serve coupes of Billecart-Salmon rosé to a glossy, clued-up crowd and are on hand to demystify the less obvious elements of the wacky menu. Shrigley has also created special ceramic tableware to complement über-chef Pierre Gagnaire's highly idiosyncratic, fun-loving food – think red tuna sashimi with frosted grapes, salted daikon and avocado (homage to Shrigley) or Bresse chicken in vin jaune sauce with ravioli of chicken livers and truffle followed by a frothy combo of lemon foam, bubblegum ice cream, orange blossom and strawberry marshmallow.

SKETCH: LECTURE ROOM & LIBRARY ★★

9 Conduit Street W1S 2XG ☎ 020 7768 0281
Price £116 Wine £25 Champagne £59 P. Room 24
Tues-Fri 12N-2.15pm Tues-Sat 7-11pm

Abandon your reserve as you step into Sketch – a surrealist wonderland full of dazzling delights. Stairs 'melt' into the hallway floor; a trip to the ladies loo finds you inside a giant, crystal-bedecked music box, while stucco ceilings and jewel-coloured armchairs point up the light-filled Lecture Room. Owner Mourad 'Momo' Mazouz and chef Pierre Gagnaire have created a space with a marvellous sense of theatre that manages to cosset and comfort while sending your taste buds into overdrive. Expect refined, multi-layered food and a "total mastery of flavours", with each dish comprising several delicate plates based on "superlative" ingredients. How about langoustines 'addressed five ways', Dover sole with cider reduction, banana mouseline, green curry and wild herb salad or a

combo of roast venison involving cassis marmalade, stuffed turnip, tamarillo ice cream and much more? Thoughtfully matched wines are "beyond compare", and staff look impeccable in their Savile Row tailoring.

THE SQUARE ★★★

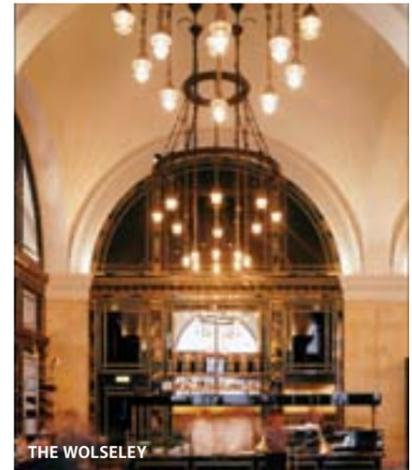
6-10 Bruton Street W1J 6PU ☎ 020 7495 7100
Price £95 Wine £27 Champagne £65 P. Room 18
Mon-Sat 12N-2.45pm Mon-Sun 6.30-10pm (Sun -9.45pm)

Plaudits continue to rain down on Phil Howard's phenomenal thoroughbred. Quite simply, this is the top-end restaurant against which all others must be measured – from its "impeccable service", "excellent atmosphere" and "superb wine matching" to an "exceptional tasting menu" and food that is "without doubt the best in London". Thoughtful touches abound: bespoke tableware for the amuse-bouches; homemade biscuits with the cheese. It's difficult to resist the "exquisite" signature dishes: the luscious sauté of Scottish langoustine tails with Parmesan gnocchi and potato and truffle emulsion has earned "last supper status", while lasagne of Dorset crab with shellfish cappuccino and Champagne foam wraps up the freshest flavours in faultless pasta. Regulars trust the kitchen implicitly, and tartare of milk-fed veal with artichoke cream, and roast duck breast with homemade black pudding were for us just as good as the Square classics: stunningly presented and harmoniously flavoured. Readers also rave about "melt-in-the-mouth" foie gras, "delicately cooked" Cornish cod and "intensely bittersweet" chocolate fondant. The corporate-feeling room might not thrill, but "the fact you can comfortably sit and hear each other talk" is much appreciated – as is service performed without fuss by professional staff totally free from formality. In all, "outstanding" on every front.

WILD HONEY ★

12 St George Street W1S 2FB ☎ 020 3589 1688
Price £63 Wine £28 Champagne £72
Mon-Sat 12N-2.30pm 6-11pm

Rather like a precocious younger child who finds its elder sibling a trifle uncouth, Wild Honey shares a strong family resemblance to Soho's Arbutus – but with a sophisticated Mayfair sheen. The most noticeable likeness comes from the "consistently excellent", expertly balanced and highly seasonal cooking: a salad of pears, bitter leaves, goats' curd and walnuts; venison with chestnuts, celeriac, Brussels sprouts and pickled cranberries; mango sorbet with spiced pineapple salad, coconut and coriander – plus "the finest tarte Tatin in Christendom". The main difference is in the "cosy, calm, relaxing setting", which is all clubby wood panelling, curved leather banquettes and soft lighting, with a counter for solo dining. Wild Honey also scores with its friendly, spot-on service ("attentive, but not too attentive") – although it is alas far from being the bargain it once was, even if the cooking more than merits its price tag. The ever-



thoughtful drinks list ranges from pre-dinner cocktails to global wines by the carafe.

THE WOLSELEY ★★★

160 Piccadilly W1J 9EB ☎ 020 7499 6996
Price £54 Wine £19.95 Champagne £59 P. Room 14
Mon-Sat 7am-12M (Sat 8am-) Sun 8am-11pm

"Consistent food and service"; "fantastic service and superb food": either way, The Wolseley remains a benchmark for graceful, metropolitan dining. Like its smooth-as-silk owners Chris Corbin and Jeremy King, the menu flits suavely between Britain, France and Austria like some dapper 19th-century diplomat: you might start with soupe à l'oignon, dressed Cornish crab or chopped liver ahead of wiener schnitzel, lemon sole St Germain or good old kedgeree. There's also room for salads and grills, but we'd recommend finishing in Mitteleuropa for Black Forest gâteau or apple strudel. The food is "perfectly good" rather than exceptional, but you're not here for gastronomic fireworks; instead, devotees simply enjoy one of the best rooms in London – a cinematic space alive with "an unbeatable atmosphere". Breakfast is a buzzing, bustling scene, while afternoon tea offers a more casual alternative to nearby five-star hotels. Most importantly, The Wolseley



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☎ 020 3544 0682

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THE PUNCHBOWL**

41 Farm Street W1J 5RP ☎ 020 3463 0496
Price £43 Wine £20 Champagne £45
Mon-Sun 12N-11pm (Sun-5pm)

This gorgeous old wood-panelled boozier has seen plenty of Mayfair life over three centuries, including a spell under the ownership of Guy Richie, who drank here with his celeb chums. The former Mr Madonna sold up in 2013, but new owners Cirrus Inns have kept the real ales and essential pubbiness of the bar, and the pretty first-floor dining room retains its gold-painted ceiling and jovial yet more formal atmosphere. Smart staff move deftly between tables, distributing refined British gastro fare such as cured Scottish salmon with punchy lemon curd, or earthy braised beetroot with caramelised goats' cheese. Main-course pork and apple is pepped up with cider sauce, while our generous portion of creamy wild mushroom and spinach ravioli received a textural boost from roasted pine nuts. A Bakewell slice makes a soft, delightful ending, helped by a global wine list that is pitched at regular pub quaffers as well as local Mayfair millionaires.

Italian

AL DUCA ★

4-5 Duke of York Street SW1Y 6LA ☎ 020 3641 1875
Price £45 Wine £18 Champagne £58
Mon-Sat 12N-11pm (Sat 12.30pm-)

In a part of town that's more polished brogue than laid-back loafer, this long-serving Italian a few steps from Jermyn Street is designed to please both the palate and the wallet. Concertina windows open onto alfresco pavement tables when the sun shines, while clean lines, earthy colours and a well-stocked wine rack set the tone for confident, effortlessly simple cooking at "remarkable" prices. Start with a plate of beef carpaccio, green beans, Pecorino, pancetta and lemon dressing, move on to tagliatelle with black truffle and mushrooms, then seared tuna with cannellini beans and sautéed turnip tops. For afters, perhaps try chocolate parmigiana with limoncello mousse, say. Seasonality informs choice on the flexible fixed-priced menu, bolstering a core selection of dishes favoured by the restaurant's many regulars, while wine list offers a decent spread from the Italian regions.

ALLORO

19-20 Dover Street W1S 4LU ☎ 020 7495 4768
Price £62 Wine £20 Champagne £64 P. Room 16
Mon-Fri 12N-10.30pm Sat 6-10.30pm

From the linen-clad pavement tables outside to the parquet floors, bay-leaf (alloro) motifs and pastel shades in the dining room, this low-lit, low-key Italian whispers confident sophistication. It's busy for business lunches, when suits call in for aged beef entrecôte with spinach and rosemary potatoes accompanied by a bottle of red from the wide-ranging, regionally accented wine list. In the evenings, couples and affluent Mayfair locals stop by for antipasti with a light touch (crab and avocado salad with fresh tomato dressing, for example) followed by pea risotto with pan-seared scallops or roast rack of lamb with potato fondant and stewed red cabbage. To conclude, perhaps go for pistachio semifreddo or apricot, nectarine and almond galette. Prices are pitched to fit the neighbourhood, but are not excessive, and "excellent service" from perfectly charming staff is a model of consistency.

CAFÉ MURANO ★

33 St James's Street SW1A 1HD ☎ 020 3371 5559
Price £48 Wine £19.50 Champagne £50 P. Room 25
Mon-Sat 12N-3pm 5.30-11pm

This younger sibling to Murano occupies an old stomping ground for Angela Hartnett, who worked at the site when Pétrus was located here. The Café doesn't attempt to punch at the same weight as its illustrious big brother, yet the high quality cooking, drinks and service deserve to be taken seriously. The interior might seem cramped, but don't let that put you off – the atmosphere is "buzzing", it's fun and the staff are kept on their toes. The cooking is classic northern Italian; start with pork tonnato with rocket and Parmesan or a colourful salad of beetroot, pistachio and wood pigeon. Then move on to fresh crab, chilli and garlic linguine or share a celebratory sea bass with braised fennel and fried courgettes. If there are no tables available, ask to sit at the bar where you can admire the cocktail concoctions being created while tucking in.

CECCONI'S ★★

5a Burlington Gardens W1S 3EP ☎ 020 7434 1500
Price £55 Wine £26 Champagne £47
Mon-Sat 7am-1am (Sat 8am-) Sun 8am-12N

It's typical of Cecconi's glamorous nonchalance that Hugh Grant can be sitting at the bar and no one gives him a second glance. Like the heartthrob movie star, this venue is slick, sharp-suited – and just a bit cheeky, despite its sombre get-up of green leather chairs and monochrome tiled floors. Breakfast is a Mayfair institution (don't turn up without a reservation) and from then on it's a non-stop whirl of air-kissing, bear-hugging – and some very decent eating. Reader recommendations include lobster spaghetti,

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richly sauced crab ravioli and perfect tiramisu; our own favourites include calamari with punchy alioli, juicy veal milanese and crunchy side orders of zucchini fritti – though we're also suckers for a stool at the bar, Prosecco on tap and some anchovies, cured meats and crostini to graze on. It's hardly cutting-edge stuff, but the food's "perfectly reliable" – served by "friendly and attentive" staff full of character – and the good-humoured ambience a failsafe bet for when you want to have a good time.

MURANO ★★

20-22 Queen Street W1J 5PP ☎ 020 7495 1127
Price £75 Wine £21.50 Champagne £65 P. Room 12
Mon-Sat 12N-3pm 6.30-11pm

Angela Hartnett's flagship continues to highlight a talent for refining Italian food that made her into one of Gordon Ramsay's most valued lieutenants in the noughties. Whether you devise your own five-course menu (£85) or plump for just two courses (£50), Hartnett's pasta is a standout: crab ravioli with almond pesto and grilled spring onions displays a masterful flair for handling strong ingredients, while baked potato gnocchi with homemade coppa and kale is typical of the "carefully thought-out", "always memorable" approach. Starters might bring fresh-tasting charred mackerel, mussels, grapes, lemon and ginger; while mains could feature roasted mallard, breast and leg, with baby beetroot, sloes and hazelnuts. The wine list champions organic and biodynamic producers, with Italy to the fore. We've always found the ambience a little too hushed and reverential, but readers value the "tranquil atmosphere" and the "confident and knowledgeable" staff who oversee what feels very much like "an Italian fine-dining experience".



QUATTRO PASSI

QUATTRO PASSI NEW

34 Dover Street W1S 4NG ☎ 020 3463 0537
Price £110 Wine £70 Champagne £95
Mon-Sat 11.30am-3.30pm 6.30-11.30pm

With two-Michelin-starred Quattro Passi in Nerano already under his belt, celebrated Italian chef Antonio Mellino is now delivering the goods in Mayfair – albeit not to the same elevated level. The cooking is apparently inspired by the Campanian coast, but forget any images of sun-dappled cucina povera: instead, the kitchen replaces simplicity with painfully priced ostentation, drawing attention to high-end ingredients and the work required to prepare them. Sardinian pane carasà (aka music-paper bread) is embossed with transparent courgette leaves set like pressed flowers; octopus salad with potatoes and green beans is a fabulously fresh creation; while a golden fried 'Madame Piedmontese' veal chop has beautifully soft, "young" meat pointed up with baby carrots. A phalanx of charming, suited staff work the luxuriously appointed dining room, although there's a slight "stiffness" about the experience of eating here. Overall, terrific food, but indigestible prices.



THEO RANDALL AT THE INTERCONTINENTAL

SARTORIA

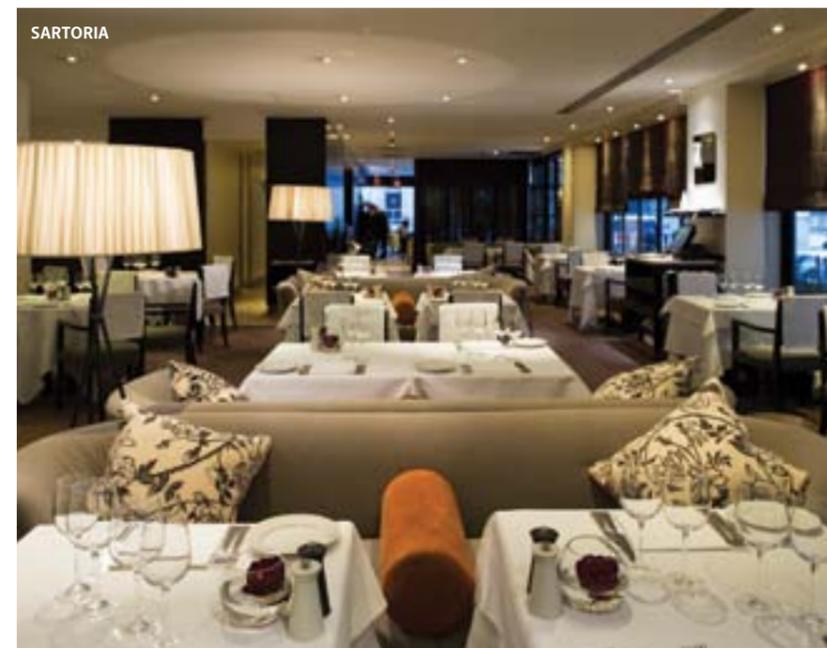
20 Savile Row W1S 3PR ☎ 020 3589 2654
Price £60 Wine £25 Champagne £50 P. Room 24,24,50
Mon-Fri 12N-2.45pm Mon-Sat 5.30-10.45pm

Sharp-suited bartenders serve up slightly over-egged Italian charm in the refined yet relaxed bar at the front of this Savile Row stalwart. The dining room itself is restrained and city-smart, with its monochrome palette, crisp linen, elegant sofas and well-tailored, unobtrusive service, while two of the private dining rooms are popular for "round table" business lunches. The menu is designed to satisfy without taking too many risks, and on our visit it more than fulfilled its brief with tuna carpaccio offset by spelt, pink grapefruit and spiced 'mustard fruits', and rabbit in a tomato sauce spiked with olives, Calabrian sausage and sweet peppers. There's a rich Livornese stew "overflowing with shellfish" too, and desserts keep it familiar with the likes of affogato and tiramisu – all topped off with a well-constructed wine list and savvy sommelier team. We disagree with naysayers who suggest Sartoria is wearing a little threadbare. It remains a good fit for this buttoned-up corner of Mayfair.

THEO RANDALL AT THE INTERCONTINENTAL ★

InterContinental Hotel, 1 Hamilton Place W1J 7QY
☎ 020 3641 1883
Price £67 Wine £27 Champagne £71 P. Room 24
Mon-Fri 12N-3pm Mon-Sat 6-11pm (Sat 5.45pm-)

Theo Randall's self-named restaurant seems destined to remain something of an insider's secret – a shame, because the unassuming chef deserves to be as well-known as fellow ex-River Café alumni such as Jamie Oliver. Expect the finest Italian ingredients cooked simply (often in the wood-fired oven) with generous portions and top-end prices to match. Some ideas involve complex assemblages (calf's liver with sage, pancetta, roasted delicata squash, cavolo nero, aged balsamic and crème fraîche), but the more unassuming a dish sounds, the more revelatory it is likely to taste: thinly sliced chicory shoots with red wine vinegar, anchovy and capers, say. And if you're ordering pasta, the lobster linguine is a must-have. Randall is often to be seen out front, greeting and chatting, which helps to diffuse any anonymous, corporate chills in the smart but neutral dining room.



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- BABBO** 39 Albemarle Street W1S 4JQ ☎ 020 3641 9303
- BOCCONCINO** 19 Berkeley Street W1J 8ED ☎ 020 7499 4510
- C LONDON** 25 Davies Street W1K 3DE ☎ 020 7399 0500
- FRANCO'S** 61 Jermyn Street SW1Y 6LX ☎ 020 3641 5836
- NOVIKOV** 50a Berkeley Street W1J 8HA ☎ 020 7399 4330
- RISTORANTE FRESCO BALDI** 15 New Burlington Place W1S 2HX ☎ 020 3693 3435
- SAN CARLO CICCETTI** 215 Piccadilly W1J 9HN ☎ 020 7494 9435

International

34

★★

34 Grosvenor Square W1K 2HD ☎ 020 7768 3419
Price £61 Wine £22.50 Champagne £62.50
 Mon-Sun 12N-10.30pm (Sat-Sun 11.30am-)

Initially it may have struggled to compete with siblings Scott's and J Sheekey in the glamour stakes, but this Caprice Holdings outpost is now a firm fixture in every A-lister's address book after Kate Moss threw her 40th birthday bash here. It's a handsome space, classily decked out with orange banquettes, parquet floors and monogrammed cutlery that look the part for both business and high-end pleasure whatever the hour. "Great style and good food for grown-ups" is the name of the game. A custom-made charcoal grill sends out prime steaks from prime sources worldwide, with haute comfort provided by the likes of "fantastic" lobster macaroni or burgers with truffled fried egg. Also expect Caprice Holdings classics such as succulently spicy grilled octopus with chorizo and roseval potatoes or meaty griddled prawns with punchy chimichurri sauce and Padrón peppers. It's expensive, but not outrageously so, and a cracking weekend brunch (buttermilk pancakes, lobster omelette) keeps the good times rolling.



HEDDON STREET KITCHEN

THE COLONY GRILL ROOM NEW ★

The Beaumont, 8 Balderton Street W1K 6TF
 ☎ 020 7499 9499
Price £54 Wine £19.75 Champagne £59
 Mon-Sun 7am-12M

Better-known for grand cafés such as The Wolseley, Chris Corbin and Jeremy King recently opened the "tastefully classy" Beaumont – their first foray into the world of hotels. At first glance, its Colony Grill looks like a cheeky riposte to nearby rival 34: soft jazz plays, the seating glows with rich burgundy leather and murals pick up on the musical theme. Early reports suggest the place is still finding its feet following our promising soft-launch visit, with a catch-all menu offering "solid traditional comfort" rather than fancy-pants trickery. Expect to pay "premium prices" for the likes of chicken liver parfait, shepherd's pie, breadcrumbed veal Pojarski or spot-on calf's liver and crispy bacon, ahead of desserts such as manzanilla-laced sherry trifle. Some readers say The Colony is "bland and uninspiring", but we reckon it has the makings of another Corbin & King classic.

HEDDON STREET KITCHEN NEW ★

7 Heddon Street W1B 4BE ☎ 020 3641 0657
Price £48 Wine £20 Champagne £56 P. Room 12
 Mon-Sun 12N-11pm (Sun-9pm)

Gordon Ramsay's West End version of his Bread Street Kitchen might be a shade more expensive than its neighbours, but it's still refreshingly affordable compared to much of Mayfair. At street level there are yellow leather banquettes, wooden bistro chairs and bare tables, with an open kitchen along one wall, while upstairs feels more butch and bar-orientated – bag a window table overlooking Heddon Street if you can. The approachable, grown-up menu globetrotts from sushi, salads and dude food to some classy, skilfully cooked mains. To start, plump scallops

safely paired with treacle-cured bacon were better than rather meagre tamarind-spiced chicken wings, and we had no complaints about a rose veal chop and rib-eye steak from the grill – though well-considered sides including macaroni cheese with garlic-roasted crumbs almost stole the show. In short, a high-decibel "professional package" for Mayfair's younger crowd, with bonus points for "well-drilled staff", a non-patronising kids' menu and private dining.

HUSH

8 Lancashire Court W1S 1EY ☎ 020 7659 1500
Price £54 Wine £23.50 Champagne £69
 Mon-Sun 12N-11pm (Sun-8pm)

Glimpsed as you pass by on London's most elegant shopping street, Hush's secluded cobbled courtyard exerts a serious romantic pull – especially on sultry summer evenings. Meanwhile, the buzzing ground-floor brasserie offers a slice of subtle glamour with its soft taupe banquettes, antique mirrors and blown-glass lampshades. The wide-ranging please-all menu pulls in ideas from around the globe ("handy if you're with fussy eaters"), moving from New York chopped chicken salad to Mars bar cheesecake with praline ice cream via signature burgers, lobster rolls, tiger prawn risotto with curry and crispy shallots or rump of Welsh lamb with Savoy cabbage and rosemary jus. With Bellini brunches, bubbly high teas and a cracking cocktail bar upstairs, this "classy establishment" is a plum spot for a special treat or celebratory bash after flexing the plastic on nearby New Bond Street.

LANGAN'S BRASSERIE

Stratton Street W1J 8LB ☎ 020 3589 4506
Price £53 Wine £21.50 Champagne £65
 Mon-Sat 12.15-11pm (Fri-Sat-11.30pm) Sun 12N-4pm

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42 Albemarle Street W1S 4JH ☎ 020 7768 6566
Price £50 Wine £25 Champagne £60 P. Room 10,15
Mon-Sat 12N-2.30pm 5.30-10.30pm



Gymkhana has proved the rave reviews greeting its 2013 opening were no mistake. For many, this has become "my new number 1 for posh Indian", yet, gratifyingly, the enterprise isn't so 'posh'. Here, curry-house classics – kebabs, tikkas, biryani – are elevated through expert cooking into "immaculate and appealing" creations. Superbly fleshy lamb chops are marinated to perfection; a crisp, delicate dosa cone hides "delicious" Chettinad duck. Best of all is goat keema, with soft white buns to mop up the sauce. Only the prices deterred us ordering these outstanding, yet modestly portioned, dishes twice. The colonial-themed decor is done "elegantly" (dark-wood booths, rotating ceiling fans), and every detail is fine-tuned: from the cocktails to the spice-friendly wines and bargain set lunches. All in all, a deserving winner of our Restaurant of the Year award – so book well in advance.

Every detail is fine-tuned: from the cocktails to the spice-friendly wines and bargain set lunches



– and no one knows why", exclaims a fan of Langan's, a venerable British institution still held in high regard by many. Though the art collection has been sold off (with the change of ownership) and the glossy 80s glamour is long gone, there's still an air of louche luxury about the dining room, with its bronze busts, alabaster nudes and velvet fabrics. Legions of "well turned out" waiters continue to go about their business with insouciant professionalism, attending to a mixed crowd of families, tourists, suits and the odd celeb, while the menu is mainly unreconstructed Anglo-French with the occasional interloper. Think vichyssoise, oriental duck salad, salmon fishcakes with parsley sauce or veal Holstein followed by date and orange sticky toffee pudding. There's also "great live jazz" on Tuesday nights at this time-warp restaurant that feels like a sleeping giant.

MAZE

10-13 Grosvenor Square W1K 6JP ☎ 020 3551 9861
Price £69 Wine £32 Champagne £58 P. Room 6,10
Mon-Sun 12N-3pm 6-11pm

An early adopter of the now-ubiquitous small-plates format, Maze is no longer a cutting-edge innovator, but its high-ceilinged room with windows overlooking Grosvenor Square is still a destination sure to impress. Bursts of bold colour and a modern soundtrack take the place of starched linen and hushed reverence, while service remains affable, informed and entirely professional. In the kitchen, French finesse mingles with Asian influences to produce dishes "full of flavour and freshness" – from classic ideas such as duck breast and confit legs with wild mushrooms, peas and broad beans to subtle fusion riffs – think

marinated yellowfin tuna with Ibérico ham and avocado purée. To finish, we'd recommend the wicked little profiteroles with dark chocolate and ginger ice cream or the chocolate and peanut bar. A self-contained sushi bar offers added possibilities for those who fancy grazing.

ALSO CONSIDER

- COOKBOOK CAFE** InterContinental London Park Lane, 1 Hamilton Place W1J 7QY ☎ 020 3641 1882
- THE FOYER AT CLARIDGE'S** Brook Street W1K 4HR ☎ 020 3544 1653
- MAY FAIR KITCHEN** The May Fair Hotel, Stratton Street W1J 8LT ☎ 020 3463 0574
- THE PALM COURT** The Ritz, 150 Piccadilly W1J 9BR ☎ 020 7300 2345
- REXTAIL** 13 Albemarle Street W1S 4JH ☎ 020 3589 9980

North American

CUT

★

45 Park Lane W1K 1PN ☎ 020 7629 4848
Price £86 Wine £35 Champagne £95 P. Room 12
Mon-Sun 7-10.30am 12N-2.30pm 6-10.30pm

The London outpost of chef-to-the-stars Wolfgang Puck's stateside steakhouse chain majors in expansive US hospitality. Hotel restaurants can sometimes lack fizz, but this long, clubby room with its sparkling feminine glitz and silver cloud lights creates a stellar ambience – "if it were a fashion essential it would definitely be a Louboutin stiletto". The indulgence begins as soon as you are seated, with treats such as moreish Gruyère puffs, spicy tuna tartare and juicy beef sliders arriving in quick succession to cover your mirrored-glass tabletop. "Exceptional" signature salads speak of California's bounty,

while the meaty cuts themselves range from South Devon Angus and USDA Prime to the ultimate fatted calf, pure-bred Japanese Wagyu – cooked just as you like it with a top-dollar price tag. The wine list has a soft spot for classy Californian numbers, while staff are engaging and well-informed. "Very sexy, very expensive" is one reader's accurate summary.

MAZE GRILL

10-13 Grosvenor Square W1K 6JP ☎ 020 3551 9862
Price £71 Wine £32 Champagne £58 P. Room 12
Mon-Sun 6.45-10.30am 12N-11pm

While Gordon Ramsay's Michelin-starred Maze offers French food with an Asian twist, his Grill next door serves up a similar take on the American steakhouse in an equally airy setting. A Josper grill does the business on mighty slabs of Aberdeen Angus, USDA prime and Wagyu, as well as sea bass, Dover sole and lobster for the less carnivorously inclined. There's a modest selection of sushi, plus a smattering of east-west crossovers such as chicken sliders, salt-and-pepper squid or chilli and garlic prawns. Add rib-sticking sides like mac 'n' cheese, and end with strawberry cheesecake or a knickerbocker glory. The indulgent breakfast menu is tailor-made for business over a full English or ricotta hotcakes with banana and honeycomb butter. Not everyone is sold on the "ludicrous" iPad wine list.

ALSO CONSIDER

- THE AVENUE** 7-9 St James's Street SW1A 1EE ☎ 020 3589 2076
- BURGER & LOBSTER** 29 Clarges Street W1J 7EF ☎ 020 7409 1699
- GOODMAN** 26 Maddox Street W1S 1QH ☎ 020 7499 3776
- JW STEAKHOUSE** Grosvenor House, 86 Park Lane W1K 7TN ☎ 020 7399 8460



COYA



PEYOTE



MOMO

North African

MOMO

25 Heddon Street W1B 4BH ☎ 020 7434 4040
 Price £52 Wine £21 Champagne £55
 Mon-Sun 8am-12M (Sun -11pm)

Tourists and shoppers may have replaced Madonna and Naomi Campbell at this late-90s artefact (thinks Cool Britannia meets Marrakesh riad), but the quality of the cooking remains as top-notch as ever. You won't find couscous this good anywhere else in London; as light and soft as snow, it soaks up the juices from fork-tender, fragrantly spiced lamb shoulder, chicken, duck and more besides. The sweet and savoury pigeon pastilla still tastes essential, while mezze are a good shout too – think smoky moutabal, cheesy pastry triangles or crunchy deep-fried prawns. The decor is all filigree screens, stone walls, dim lighting and beaten metal, although it manages to steer clear of Vegas naff – thanks to a team of attractive, effortlessly cool staff who clearly love working here. But be warned: “the only thing that comes quickly is the bill”.

South American

COYA ★

118 Piccadilly W1J 7NW ☎ 020 7042 7118
 Price £72 Wine £26 Champagne £58 P. Room 12
 Mon-Sat 12N-2.45pm Mon-Sun 6-10.30pm

Imminent openings in Dubai and Miami tell you a lot about Coya: it's one of those slickly conceived restaurants aimed at the well-travelled international wealthy who work and play

in Mayfair. Owner Arjun Waney has put a South American spin on his successful Zuma formula, touting a bewilderingly long menu of food designed for sharing. Top shouts range from the house ceviche (sea bass, red onion, sweet potato and white corn) and vibrant sides such as shiitake mushrooms with soy and tamarind butter to anything involving beef (ribs, spicy fillet, rib-eye or sirloin with chimichurri). We also like highly creative small plates such as pork belly with fennel, smoked chilli and mint. But while the food is generally well done, the tables are tiny, service can become chaotic at busy times and “raucous” acoustics don't help. On the plus side, Coya has buzz in abundance, plus the bonus of Pisco Sours in the “sexy” bar.

Mexican

PEYOTE

13-14 Cork Street W1S 3NS ☎ 020 7409 1300
 Price £60 Wine £28 Champagne £39.50
 Mon-Sun 12N-2.30pm 6.30pm-2am

Like his nearby Coya, this restaurant sees Arjun Waney jazzing-up Central and South American cuisine for a sophisticated Mayfair audience. Peyote is Mexican, but conspicuously avoids garish design stereotypes – although the lighting is warmly welcoming. However, there's colour and freshness aplenty on the sharing plates, from the fleshy tones of roughly chopped tuna atop a crisp tostada to red onion slivers cutting the richness of slow-cooked shredded pork pibil tortillas. For us, the best dish is a bowl piled high with grilled sweetcorn, chipotle mayo and grated cheese, while readers rate the “flavour-packed” guacamole, “wonderfully presented” dipping

sauces, “outstanding” yellowtail sashimi and “standout” rib-eye with burnt aubergine salsa – plus the Tequila and mezcal selection of course. Alas, things go awry out front: service can be “clueless” and “disorganised”, while placing the open kitchen in the basement makes the downstairs dining room seem claustrophobic.

Indian

BENARES

12a Berkeley Square House, Berkeley Square W1J 6BS
 ☎ 020 3544 1650
 Price £71 Wine £25 Champagne £65 P. Room 6,10,16,34
 Mon-Sat 12N-2.30pm 5.30-11pm

Atul Kochhar was the first Indian chef to receive a Michelin star when he worked at nearby Tamarind – an achievement that he subsequently repeated at Benares. The first-floor dining room suffers from a lack of windows, although a bubbling water feature, carved dark-wood screens and moulded white walls offer some compensation, particularly at night. But the food shines brightly enough, despite the odd gripe about little portions and large bills. Kochhar's cooking melds Indian traditions with top-quality British ingredients and some European ideas: the result is a raft of generally “fabulously presented” and richly flavoured dishes ranging from shami kebabs with mint and tamarind relish or tandoori-spiced quail with wild mushroom biryani, quail's egg and pineapple raita to a dessert involving two riffs on watermelon with rose syrup, melon and mint granita. The low-lit bar is an appealing spot for exotic Asian-style cocktails.

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BENARES

VEERASWAMY ★

Victory House, 99 Regent Street W1B 4RS
 ☎ 020 7734 1401
Price £65 Wine £31 Champagne £51 P. Room 24
Mon-Fri 12N-2.15pm 5.30-10.30pm (Fri -10.45pm)
Sat-Sun 12.30-2.30pm 5.30-10.45pm (Sun 6-10pm)

'Specialising in recipes from palaces and patrician homes', this tourist-friendly, Raj-era grandee has been in London's West End for almost 90 years. Enter past the photographs of maharajahs and take the lift to the first-floor dining room, where you'll be welcomed by name and led to a table under jewel-like ceiling lanterns from Jaipur. This is not your average curry house, and prices reflect the kitchen's sophisticated approach. Raj kachori is an upmarket take on the humble bhel-puri, roast duck vindaloo brings half a slow-roasted Barbary bird, and there's delicious whole grilled sea bass marinated with mint and cumin plus a pineapple curry zingy with mustard and green chilli. The drinks list covers everything from Cobra beer to exotic cocktails, while wines have been chosen to match the spice-heavy menu.

ALSO CONSIDER

CHOR BIZARRE 16 Albemarle Street W1S 4HW
 ☎ 020 3544 6056
RASA 6 Dering Street W1S 1AD ☎ 020 7629 1346

Chinese

CHINA TANG ★

The Dorchester, 53 Park Lane W1K 1QA
 ☎ 020 7768 1132
Price £72 Wine £35 Champagne £75 P.Room 18,18,22
Mon-Sun 11.30am-12M

"Posh Chinese" pretty much sums up the appeal of this glamorous evergreen in the basement of The Dorchester – a busy haven for wealthy hotel guests (celebrities included), Asian expats, Russian oligarchs and summering sheikhs (a halal menu is available). This is not the place to explore the esoterica of regional Chinese cooking; instead, expect faithful versions of the classic Cantonese repertoire (including all-day dim sum) – minus the MSG. Whether your favourite is chicken with cashews, spicy salt-and-pepper prawns, delicately steamed Chilean sea bass or Peking duck (served over three courses) you'll find it here – and probably done much better than elsewhere. The final cost is Park Lane-pricey, but the overall experience is commensurately high-end: the surroundings are a stylish homage to 1930s Shanghai (lots of lacquered woodwork, intricately carved screens etc), with white-uniformed waiters delivering respectful service.

HAKKASAN MAYFAIR ★★

17 Bruton Street W1J 6QB ☎ 020 7907 1888
Price £77 Wine £28 Champagne £48 P. Room 16
Mon-Fri 12N-11.30pm Sat-Sun 12N-1.30am (Sun -12.30am)

We always look forward to visiting razzle-dazzle Hakkasan Mayfair, whether for superlative

CHUTNEY MARY **NEW**

73 St James's Street SW1A 1PH ☎ 020 7351 3131

As we went to press, the owners of this illustrious Chelsea Indian announced that they were moving to the premises formerly occupied by Wheeler's in St James's. The new venture is due to open in April 2015, and we're told to expect the best bits of the original Chutney Mary – really good cooking (including some of our trusty old favourites such as rich chicken butter masala along with the likes of deftly seasoned baked sea bass), plus the same excellent service and a well considered wine list that definitely merits some serious attention. But you can expect plenty of updating too – spiced cocktails and interesting non-alcoholic drinks available in the elegant bar, breakfast during the week and brunch at the weekends, as well as a raft of brand new contemporary Indian dishes.

GYMKHANA ★★★

See p.127 for 'Spotlight On...' review

TAMARIND ★

20 Queen Street W1J 5PR ☎ 020 3551 9850
Price £56 Wine £28 Champagne £69
Sun-Fri 12N-2.45pm Mon-Sat 5.30-10.45pm Sun 6-10.15pm

The first Indian restaurant in the world to win a Michelin star is still shining brightly in its gold-flecked and bronze-toned Mayfair basement, despite reports of service losing some of its sparkle and composure. As you might expect from an establishment like Tamarind, the kitchen deals in refined high-end cooking, grounded in aristocratic Moghul cuisine but updated for a modern cosmopolitan city. Traditional curries, tandooris and kebabs, two types of dhal, familiar vegetable sides and other classics have their say, but it's also worth seeking out more contemporary, lightly spiced crossover ideas such as a salad of steamed shrimps with tilapia, squid, black olives, fennel and ginger dressing if you're feeling adventurous. Set lunches, Sunday deals and pre-theatre menus offer a way round the starry, jet-setting prices, while English sparkling whites and Indian reds pop up on the diverse international wine list.

afternoon dim sum in the ground-floor bar-cum-dining room, or high-octane suppers in the throbbing basement. The kitchen's trick is to refine and reinvent the familiar classics of Cantonese cooking without rendering them unfamiliar. Succulent organic pork ribs are smoked with jasmine and sesame prawn toast comes as a ball of sweet meat wrapped around an oozing centre of foie gras. Elsewhere, the lamb salad with spicy peanut dressing is instantly addictive, while steamed mini New Zealand lobster wrapped in glass vermicelli reminds you why Hakkasan has a Michelin star. Cocktails are excellent – the signature vodka and sake-based Hakka "must be the best drink on earth" raves one fan. The downsides are punishing wine mark-ups, staff who occasionally seem more ornamental than useful, and booming acoustics – although the sultry club vibe is all part of Hakkasan's intoxicating "special treat" appeal.

ALSO CONSIDER

KAI 65 South Audley Street W1K 2QU ☎ 020 3544 0788
PRINCESS GARDEN 8-10 North Audley Street W1K 6ZD
 ☎ 020 7493 3223

Pan-Asian

NOVIKOV ★

50a Berkeley Street W1J 8HA ☎ 020 7399 4330
Price £89 Wine £36 Champagne £75 P.Room 25
Mon-Fri 12N-3.30pm 5.30-11pm Sat-Sun 12N-11pm

Rihanna drops by when she's in town, there's a takeaway menu for private jets, and owner Arkady Novikov runs more than 50 restaurants in Moscow – yet this place is about more than feeding the super-rich. True, the menu lists Wagyu, foie gras, black cod and king crab, but the chefs in the glass-walled kitchen execute the 'oriental greatest hits' repertoire with perfect timing, expert slicing and pin-sharp presentation. While you could fill up on miso baby chicken or spicy veal cutlets, we recommend the small plates – some tuna tartare here, a scallop dumpling there, plus soft-shell crab sushi and a sashimi salad (yellowtail and coriander, say) – or following the suggestions of the clued-up and "attentive" staff. High expenditure is a given, though lunchtime dim sum menus are a relative



HAKKASAN MAYFAIR

snip (20 dumplings for £25). There's also a sedate Italian restaurant on site, but all the excitement is out front here in the Asian room: a sleek space of granite walls and lacquered ebony, where wooden blinds keep out prying eyes.

ALSO CONSIDER

INAMO ST JAMES 4-12 Lower Regent Street SW1Y 4PE
 ☎ 020 3641 9313

Japanese
THE ARAKI **NEW** ★

12 New Burlington Street W1S 3BH ☎ 020 7287 2481
Price £300 Wine £50 Champagne £-
Tues-Sun 6.30-11pm

Lovers of Japanese cuisine can hardly believe their luck at the opening of this tiny slice of Tokyo. Mitsuhiro Araki, possibly the world's greatest sushi chef, not to mention winner of three Michelin stars for his original restaurant in Tokyo, has moved to London. Getting a booking isn't easy – despite having two sittings, the venue contains only nine seats, all of them one side of a huge piece of 200-year-old Japanese cypress which acts as the chef's table-cum-sushi counter. Mr Araki himself prepares and serves the dishes on the other side. Though you can expect luxury western ingredients (including lashings of truffle, caviar and foie gras), the basis of the cooking is the highest quality Edomae sushi. The menu is no-choice (but if you don't want something, it will be replaced without fuss) – and at £250 plus wine and service, it's not for the budget-conscious – yet as one wag has commented, it's cheaper than a flight to Tokyo, and the service is better and the loo is more fun.

NOBU BERKELEY ST ★

15 Berkeley Street W1J 8DY ☎ 020 7290 9222
Price £106 Wine £37 Champagne £66
Mon-Sun 12N-2.30pm 6-11pm (Thurs-Sat -12M Sun -9.45pm)

Both London Nobus may have been stripped of their Michelin stars but this hasn't dented their popularity, hence all of Berkeley St's 200 seats are occupied most nights. Consult the restaurant's website before visiting: the Japan-



NOVIKOV



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SUMOSAN



SAKE NO HANA



UMU

meets-the-world menu is bewilderingly long and repays close investigation. For guidance we'd recommend ordering a couple of lobster or scallop tacos (a beguiling combination of soft flesh and firm crunch), expertly chopped salmon tartare, and eat-in-one-mouthful crispy rice with spicy tuna. Continue with something from the wood-burning oven – ibérico pork with 'Nobu sauces' is as tender a piece of meat as you'll ever eat – and to up the luxury ante, order one of the melt-in-the-mouth Wagyu beef specialities. The plum seats in the David Collins-designed interior are to the right of the stairs, though a 12-seat sushi bar and hibachi table for groups prevent the other side from seeming like Siberia – unless you feel the chill of staff "who look down their noses at you". Nobu Berkeley is also home to London's poshest takeaway service (including cocktails!), but you'll have to collect your order yourself.

NOBU LONDON



Metropolitan Hotel, 19 Old Park Lane W1K 1LB
 ☎ 020 7447 4747
Price £80 Wine £34 Champagne £47
 Mon-Sun 12N-2.15pm (Sat-Sun 12.30-)
 Mon-Sun 6-10.15pm (Fri-Sat -11pm)

The first Nobu outside the US opened in 1997 and while countless imitations have rendered its pioneering fusion approach familiar, the collision of Japanese and global cooking techniques has never been bettered. We'd recommend ordering the dishes that made chef Nobuyuki Matsuhisa famous: kushiyaki and anticucho skewers (spicy chicken for preference), tuna

tataki with ponzu, new-style sashimi (seared with a hot sauce for people who dislike raw fish) and the legendary black cod with miso. There's also the finest of classically prepared sushi to remind you that behind the innovation is a rock-solid mastery of Japanese preparation. But while the cooking is as good as ever, some say that "the atmosphere has fallen off" – no bad thing, perhaps. Nobu London is now more family orientated and calmer than its frenetic sibling on Berkeley Street, not least due to the views over Hyde Park and the 1990s minimalism of the interior. Alas, one family trait it seems to share is "surly" service.

SAKE NO HANA



23 St James's Street SW1A 1HA
 ☎ 020 7925 8988
Price £61 Wine £23 Champagne £60
 Mon-Sun 12N-3pm (Sat-4pm) 6-11pm (Fri-Sat -11.30pm)

Its more celebrity-focused rivals may get more coverage, but this Japanese outpost of the Hakkasan group attracts loyal followers. The setting within the brutalist Economist Plaza is impressive, with a bar and sushi counter at street level and an escalator whizzing diners up to the restaurant. Here, an austere design of bamboo and wood gives the impression of eating in a futuristic ryokan. The "really inventive" cooking is marked by top-notch meat and fish served with vibrant accompaniments; yellowtail sashimi is anointed with truffle black-pepper ponzu sauce, for instance. Tempura bears the hallmarks of "immaculate" presentation and the utmost precision, there

are diverting vegetable dishes and salads, knockout modern sushi such as king crab with seared salmon and nashi pear, plus carb-heavy 'iron pot' rice dishes to fill up on and prevent the "tiny" portions sending the bill skywards. As the name intimates, you'll find top-flight saké here (and "very attentive" staff happy to advise), plus equally well-chosen wine.

SUMOSAN



26 Albemarle Street W1S 4HY ☎ 020 3641 5822
Price £69 Wine £35 Champagne £70 P. Room 32
 Mon-Fri 12N-2.45pm Mon-Sat 6-11.30pm (Sun -10.30pm)

This Russian-owned Japanese is a very 21st-century phenomenon, smartly neutral in a noughties sort of way and with a client base largely comprised of wealthy expats. Its melting-pot character also results in distinctively assured cooking with a premium on flavour and quality but scant regard for authenticity – apart from a proper respect for traditional sushi and sashimi. We always order the fragrant T&T (tuna and truffle) roll, a crunchy salmon-topped rice 'pizza', a zippy salad (the lobster riff dressed with shiso sauce is a favourite) and the lamb furikaki (juicy cutlets coated in a crust of sesame, seaweed, salmon skin, almond and spices). Modern classics such as rock-shrimp tempura and black cod are also well handled. But while there's no faulting the food, staff can be inattentive and noise levels uncomfortable – especially when the late-night party atmosphere gets into full swing.

UMU



14-16 Bruton Place W1J 6LX ☎ 020 7499 8881
Price £91 Wine £50 Champagne £85 P. Room 10
 Mon-Fri 12N-3pm 6-12M Sat 6-12M

Ultra-discreet Umu isn't the sort of restaurant you just stumble upon – to eat here you make a date and bring your most flexible credit card. A high-tech 'touch to enter' pad by the front door gives access to a Zen interior of polished wood and a menu of high-class Kyoto cuisine with "incredible fish" as the star turn. Traditional culinary techniques are combined with utterly beautiful, delicately glazed tableware to produce food that is, quite simply, gorgeous – whether you're sampling a lunchtime bento box or the high-art intricacies of the kaiseki banquet menu. Either way, expect supreme lightness, finesse and subtle dishes layered with flavour: generous, blushing cubes of salmon and lightly seared yellowtail; cured seafood with the subtle pepperiness of shiso; Wagyu beef grilled at the table; ginger sorbet atop a slick of sesame paste; glittering, sharp-sweet yuzu jellies and more. Premium sakés "to die for" complement the delicacies on your plate.

ALSO CONSIDER

CHISOU 4 Princes Street W1B 2LE ☎ 020 7629 3931
IKEDA 30 Brook Street W1K 5DJ ☎ 020 7629 2730
KIKU 17 Half Moon Street W1J 7BE ☎ 020 7499 4208



SHOW-OFF SEAFOOD HITS THE SPOT AT REJUVENATED QUAGLINO'S

- MATSURI** 15 Bury Street SW1Y 6AL ☎ 020 3641 1844
- MAZE SUSHI** 10-13 Grosvenor Sq W1K 6JP
☎ 020 7768 0271
- MIYAMA** 38 Clarges Street W1J 7EN ☎ 020 7493 3807
- ROKA MAYFAIR** 30 North Audley Street W1K 6HP
☎ 020 7305 5644
- SHORYU RAMEN** 9 Regent Street SW1Y 4LR
☎ No telephone

Bars

AMERICAN BAR

The Stafford, 16-18 St. James's Place SW1A 1NJ
☎ 020 3641 0625
Wine £39.50 Champagne £88.50
Mon-Sun 11.30am-1am (Sat 12N-) Sun 12N-12M

American by name, run by Frenchmen, yet quintessentially English Establishment, this slightly off-radar Churchillian hero is also known for its bonkers Bertie Wooster-esque decor – plus some of the best Dry Martinis in town. Myriad framed photos, pennants, head-gear, model airplanes and all manner of kitsch souvenirs document a florid past. The hotel was the Allied Air Forces' unofficial wartime mess and has entertained royals, presidents, film stars and hillbillies-done-good over the years: Lord Lucan, François Mitterrand, Clint Eastwood and Dolly Parton have all supped here. Drink in its idiosyncratic charm over Champagne and flawless cocktails served with addictive savouries; otherwise, food is of the retro comfort variety – think baked Camembert, croque monsieur, dressed crab, pies and to-the-memoriam-born puds. Smokers can puff on Montecristo cigars while enjoying the picturesque views from the terrace.

CARTIZZE NEW

4 Lancashire Court W1S 1EY ☎ 020 7518 9388
Wine £32.50 Champagne £65
Mon-Sat 5-11pm

Gucci aviators, Prada loafers and Versace bags sum up the style and dress code at Cartizze – a mix of intimate, ink-toned art-deco salons and alfresco tables in a thronged alley popular with Portofino perma-tans. Related to Mews of Mayfair opposite, the bar takes its name from Italy's premier Prosecco vineyards whose



CARTIZZE

sparkling wine is a savvy alternative to the bar's showier bubbles – try it as the base for a blood-orange Bellini or in Amor Y Amargo (Amaretto, artichoke-tinged Cynar and apricot liqueur). Well-cut suits who come here for sundowners such as olive-oil gin fizz and truffled liquorice Chivas sour also trade up to pricier cocktails made with vintage spirits such as 1930s Martini Rosso. Aperitivi include scallops and smoked pancetta in brioche, figs wrapped in ham, and tuna tartare with candied chilli and cucumber.

CLARIDGE'S BAR & LE FUMOIR

Claridge's, Brook Street W1K 4HR ☎ 020 7629 8860
Wine £48 Champagne £69 P. Room 18
Mon-Sun 12N-1am (Sun -12M)

Timeless elegance, polished service and fine fizz are the hallmarks of Claridge's always-stylish main bar. Births, bar mitzvahs, graduations, engagements, promotions, marriages, anniversaries: whatever the occasion, chinking flutes is a London rite at this magnificent, multi-purpose Mayfair grandee. Whether it's Laurent-Perrier by the stem, something from less trumpeted houses such as Alain Thienot

or a "crack open the Krug" request to celebrate that life-changing deal (Clos d'Ambonnay '96 at £3,300, perhaps), Claridge's stocks it. Alternatively, head to Le Fumoir for cocktails served against a backdrop of fabulous retro film-set loveliness. Worthy of a Helmut Newton fashion shoot, this art-deco, Lalique-panelled, bijou jewel box and dinky horseshoe bar lends itself to intimate confessions and indecent proposals over saucy cocktails – think Hanky Panky, Silk Panties, Blue Passion, Between the Sheets and similarly flirty fixes.

THE CONNAUGHT BAR ★

The Connaught, 16 Carlos Place W1K 2AL
☎ 020 3147 7251
Wine £65 Champagne £75
Mon-Sat 4pm-1am

Having shopped your way through Mount Street's luxe labels, flop into this stunning 1920s Cubist-inspired marble palazzo for a range of distinctive, well-judged cocktails. Set against a backdrop of silver, platinum pink and polished pistachio, the bar delivers immaculately tailored drinks (bespoke or off-the-peg) at suitably Max Mara prices. Stylish calls

include Faraway Collins (a beauty involving London No 3 gin and yuzu), Manila Hotel (a mint julep), and a twisted Manhattan that slips Galliano Ristretto and blackcurrant liqueur into the mix. Otherwise, rare vintage Champagne is always in fashion: 1971 was a great year for Dom Pérignon Oenothèque (£3,350) and for swanky outfits too – the sharp Yves Saint Laurent trouser suit Bianca wore to marry Mick Jagger is the sort of vintage number required to wow the glossy posse who congregate here.

THE DORCHESTER BAR

The Dorchester, 53 Park Lane W1K 1QA
☎ 020 7629 8888
Wine £48 Champagne £85 P. Room 20
Mon-Sun 12N-1am (Sun -12M)

After the Sultan of Brunei announced the imposition of sharia law on his people, a celebrity-led embargo resulted in The Dorchester's bar becoming off-limits to London's more liberal-minded liquor lovers. What the conscientious objectors are foregoing is a shimmering bronze, art-deco beauty that has, sadly, been blighted by another unfortunate imposition in the shape of gauche high-backed banquettes operatically speared by shards of red glass like props from some camp production of Wagner's Götterdämmerung. That said, laissez-faire die-hards still come here for bottles of grande marque Champagne and Giuliano Morandin's nifty cocktails: fans of the theatrical will dig the 1930s-style atomiser-spritzed Martinis and Belling poured from teapots, but there are textbook Tom Collins, butch Old Fashioneds and drams of rare single malt too. "Nibbles, darling?" At The Dorchester, everything is possible...at a price.

DUKES BAR ★

Dukes Hotel, 36 St James's Place SW1A 1NY
☎ 020 7491 4840
Wine £32 Champagne £80
Mon-Sat 2-11pm Sun 4-10.30pm

Many hold that this old-school lounge is home to London's best Martini. Did it really inspire Ian Fleming to create James Bond, the MI5 man who made the drink synonymous with jet-set

glamour and life lived on the edge? Alessandro Palazzi, currently head honcho at the hotel's main bar, certainly has unlimited licence when it comes to cocktails: his Fleming 89 – a gin Martini perfumed with 007's preferred eau de cologne (from Floris) – will floor any unsuspecting rookie faster than Goldfinger's hat-throwing hit-man, Odd Job. Puffing cigars and sipping fine Cognac in the tented 'garden' (more of a lighted patio) is another option, while wannabe Miss Moneypennys may prefer afternoon tea, canapés and Champagne cocktails in the pistachio and pink PJ lounge (as in Perrier-Jouët, not pyjamas).

GALVIN AT WINDOWS

London Hilton on Park Lane, 22 Park Lane W1K 1BE
☎ 020 3463 0299
Wine £25 Champagne £68
Sun-Fri 11am-1am (Thurs-Sat -2.30am Sun -10.30pm Sat 3pm-)

High above Hyde Park on the 28th floor of the London Hilton, this popular 1960s moderne lounge enjoys stunning vistas that are all the more rewarding when viewed on red-sky 'shepherd's delight' nights. To the west, you may be able to make out Notting Hill (represented on the drinks list by a passion fruit and mango virgin cooler); on a more southerly tack, Le Moulin Rouge beckons in the form of a cocktail blended from Havana Special rum, Chambord, pineapple and raspberry. Underscoring a current trend, there are barrel-aged cocktails available for sampling as well – try Indulgence (Mandarin Napoléon, crème de cacao and trendy Yamazaki 12-year-old Japanese whiskey) or Feline Touch (an Appleton rum, Dubonnet and orgéat sour) at £16. Snacks such as devilled Toulouse sausages and king prawn brochette with sweet garlic cover all bases.

MAHIKI

1 Dover Street W1S 4LD ☎ 020 7493 9529
Wine £19 Champagne £55 P. Room 25
Mon-Sat 6pm-3am

Avid readers of glossy gossip columns need no introduction to Mahiki, a tiki-style party pit that attracts the Hollywood rat pack, royals, rappers and reality-show rejects. Its cheesy ground-floor Caribbean beach-shack bar is a laid-back spot for 7pm sundowners, but the vibe turns febrile as the action cranks up in the lurid jungle basement – "I'm a celebrity wannabe, get me in there!" Lose your inhibitions to Baron Samedi's Brew, Monkey Brains, Raratonga and other brain-blasters rum slugs served in kitsch vessels or siphon off the bar's notorious Armada 'treasure chest' – a good-times grog of limited-edition Pusser's rum topped up with Cristal for rich renegades to share at £650. There are also Eurasian savouries including Hawaiian pizzas, crab sliders, club sandwiches, ribs, wings etc – should you happen to be remotely interested in that kind of thing.



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DUKES BAR



THE CONNAUGHT BAR



GALVIN AT WINDOWS



MAY FAIR BAR

MAY FAIR BAR

The May Fair, Stratton Street W1J 8LT ☎ 020 3463 0618
Wine £38 Champagne £62
 Mon-Sun 8am-11pm (Wed-Sat -1am Sun -10pm)

Attracting its fair share of tabloid mag fixtures, WAGs and spray-tanned glamour queens, this girly go-to can feel more Manchester than Mayfair at times. Cocktails at the May Fair's electric blue, art-deco bar are competently executed: well turned-out Mojitos, Martinis, Margaritas and designer recipes created according to seasonal trends come into their own when the place gets its buzz on during London Fashion Week: try a Sharp Shooter (Wild Turkey and apple juice blended with pineapple) or a Vodka Espresso laced with butterscotch

schnapps. Otherwise, bottles of Mercier and Moët Champagne are perennially perfect accessories, while a range of mocktails should ensure that everyone stays in trim. To eat, sharing platters and bento boxes are suitably fashionable fixes, but in terms of London edge, this style lounge ultimately feels a bit behind the zeitgeist.

MR FOGG'S ★

15 Bruton Lane W1J 6JD ☎ 020 7036 0608
Wine £28 Champagne £70
 Mon-Sun 5pm-1am (Thurs-Fri 4pm-Sat 3pm-)

In lesser hands, the idea of theming a bar around 'eccentric British adventurer Phileas J Fogg's Mayfair mansion' might have been a *Hi-de-Hi!* horror, but Messrs Gilkes and Strong

are old stagers at this kind of thing – witness Barts and Bunga Bunga. Filled with wacky booty, supposedly from Fogg's colonial forays, this (almost) convincing Victorian gentlemen's club is great fun, particularly when it comes to cocktails with evocative names like Penny-Farthing and Platinum Pocket Watch (vodka, pink grapefruit juice, Cointreau and maraschino). Drinks are proffered to guests by their own personal Passepartout, one of a battalion of Eton-fringed boys in period livery. Prices are distinctly un-Victorian: Crimean Cup (a sharing punchbowl) requires an investment of £110, while a half-bottle of Krug with a couple of toff's toasties or similar tiffin weighs in at £95.

THE RIVOLI BAR

The Ritz, 150 Piccadilly W1J 9BR ☎ 020 7493 8181
Wine £50 Champagne £94
 Mon-Sat 11.30am-12M Sun 12N-10pm

The Ritz is synonymous with retro glitz – no more so than in its opulent, marble-clad and Lalique glass-panelled cocktail bar with its camphor woodwork and animal-print chairs channelling Elizabeth Regina as well as Elizabeth Taylor. Acceptably attired punters with deep pockets can look forward to silver service, grand marque Champagne from just under £100 and the sort of posh grub served in a palace near you – think beluga caviar with French fries and a jeroboam of Ruinart. A minimum charge of £15 applies from 5pm, but given that the cocktail list kicks off with a Manhattan and seasonal Rum Swizzle at £19, that information seems redundant. Outraged Scots may scream 'sacrilege!' as they sip vintage Rob Roys made using Japanese Hibiki 30-year-old whisky, 1960s Angostura bitters and Carpano Antica sweet vermouth.



THE RIVOLI BAR



SKETCH: THE PARLOUR

SKETCH: THE PARLOUR

9 Conduit Street W1S 2XG ☎ 020 7768 0284
Wine £25 Champagne £59 P. Room 50
 Mon-Sat 8am-2am (Sat 10am-) Sun 10am-12M

Witty interior design alone makes Sketch a must-see – but where do you start. Open to suitably stylish non-members before 9pm, the "zany" Parlour is the sort of toff's drawing room where milord and milady might park up for pink bubbles, tip-top cocktails, savoury snacks or afternoon tea (including "the best cakes in London"). Alternatively, the East Bar is a Bladerunner-esque dreamscape rocked by DJs until 2am most nights. If you're on a date, check out a third option, The Glade – a magical late-night hole-up comprising a découpage fantasy forest with rattan furniture seemingly rescued from an am-dram production of *The King and I*. Expect to pay high-end hotel prices for decadent Martinis, twisted classics, fabulously fruity Champagne flutes and dangerous shots such as the Marquis de Sade – a bodice-ripping thrill by all accounts.

THE WHIP

NEW

50 Davies Street W1K 5JE ☎ 020 7493 1275
Wine £17 Champagne £65
 Mon-Sat 12N-12M

Canter upstairs at The Running Horse to discover distiller James Chase's latest wheeze, a dinky cocktail bar. Inside, themed retro decor comes with a touch of refinement – think the Epsom Derby circa Lester Piggott, not Ladies Day at Aintree 50 years on. That other much-watched annual Derby, held in Louisville USA, is represented by racy variations on the traditional Kentucky julep. Served in chilled silvered cups with a strainer, our winner by a head is the Rittenhouse rye and raspberry version, followed by Final Furlong (an apple vodka Martini) and Steeplechase (an apple brandy and pear flip). Elsewhere, The Paddock (Woodford Reserve, ginger, plum syrup and ginger beer) is



THE WHIP

technically a mule, but like the rest of a short boozy field whipped up by dudes dressed as Downton stable boys, it's a thoroughbred.

ALSO CONSIDER

- 28°-50°** 17-19 Maddox Street W1S 2QH ☎ 020 3463 7475
- AMARANTO** Four Seasons London at Park Lane, Hamilton Place, Park Lane W1J 7DR ☎ 020 7499 0888
- THE ARCH BAR** InterContinental London Park Lane, One Hamilton Place, 1 Park Lane W1J 7QY ☎ 020 7409 3131
- THE AVENUE** 7-9 St James's Street SW1A 1EE ☎ 020 3589 2076
- BABBLE** Lansdowne House, 59 Berkeley Square W1J 6ER ☎ 020 7758 8255
- BAR 45** 45 Park Lane W1K 1PN ☎ 020 7493 4545
- THE COBURG** The Connaught, 16 Carlos Place W1K 2AL ☎ 020 7499 7070
- CHINA TANG** The Dorchester, 53 Park Lane W1K 1QA ☎ 020 7629 9988
- DAVY'S AT ST JAMES'S** Crown Passage Vaults, Pall Mall SW1Y 6QY ☎ 020 7839 8831
- THE DONOVAN BAR** Brown's Hotel, 33 Albemarle Street W1S 4BP ☎ 020 7518 4062
- HUSH** 8 Lancashire Court W1S 1EY ☎ 020 7659 1500
- ICEBAR LONDON** 31-33 Heddon Street W1B 4BN ☎ 020 7478 8910
- KEMIA** Momo, 25 Heddon Street W1B 4BH ☎ 020 7434 4040
- THE LUGGAGE ROOM** London Marriott Hotel Grosvenor Square W1K 6JP ☎ 020 7514 1679
- THE MET BAR** Metropolitan Hotel, 19 Old Park Lane W1K 1LB ☎ 020 7447 5758
- MEWS OF MAYFAIR** 10-11 Lancashire Court W1S 1EY ☎ 020 7518 9388
- NOBU BERKELEY ST** 15 Berkeley Street W1J 8DY ☎ 020 7290 9222
- PALM BEACH BAR & KITCHEN** 30 Berkeley Street W1J 8EH ☎ 020 7493 6585
- POLO BAR** The Westbury Hotel, 37 Conduit Street W1S 2YF ☎ 020 7629 7755
- SALVATORE'S** Playboy Club London, 14 Old Park Lane W1K 1QS ☎ 020 7491 8586
- SARTORIA** 20 Savile Row W1S 3PR ☎ 020 3589 2654
- ST JAMES'S BAR** Sofitel London St James, 6 Waterloo Place SW1Y 4AN ☎ 020 7968 2900
- TRADER VIC'S** London Hilton, 22 Park Lane W1K 1BE ☎ 020 3641 0726
- THE WHISKY ROOM** The Athenaeum, 116 Piccadilly W1J 7BJ ☎ 020 7499 3464

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