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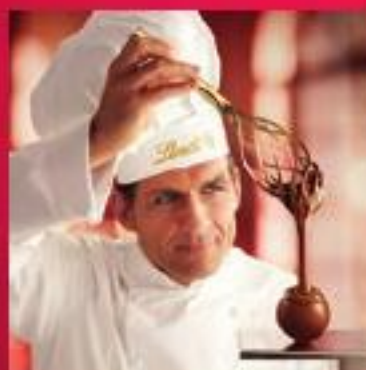


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FRONT COVER:
Photography by Ian Dingle

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EDITOR'S WORD

First things first, is there anything you'd like to tell us? Anything at all you'd like to get off your chest? We know you've got a secret, and we have ways and means of extracting it, so why not just make everyone's lives easier?

That – possibly – is just one of the highly sophisticated techniques we used to grill some of the best bartenders and mixologists in the capital, to find out the cheats, tricks and ingredients that make their drinks stand out from the rest.

In fact, we barely had to coerce them at all, which either says that bartenders are complete pushovers, or that not only are they incredibly passionate about their art, but they want you to be, too. For insider tips from, among others, Mr Lyan of White Lyan/Dandelyan, bourbon guru Andrea Montague, and Richard Woods of Duck & Waffle, head to page 44.

Some of what they said won't surprise you – like salt, for example. As Elliot Ball from Cocktail Trading Co says: "You'd never have food without it, so why should drinks be different?" Others, well – you'll just have to try them. Like wax. Yep, *wax*.

Speaking of mystery ingredients, what if you're trying to create *real* Mexican food but relying on local and seasonal British produce? That's a challenge faced by Thomasina Miers – Wahaca founder, author, and master of all things chilli – who explains how she's addressing it on page 32. And for an inside view of Mexico's thriving domestic food scene in three vibrant cities, turn to page 66. If you don't want to get on the next plane there after reading it, we'll eat our hat – though we draw the line at putting it anywhere near our cocktails. ♪

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— PART 1 —

GRAZE

“IF WE BELIEVED EVERYTHING
THAT’S BEEN IN THE PRESS
LATELY, NONE OF US WOULD
EVER EAT FOOD AGAIN”

RICHARD TURNER, 029



LOCAL HEROES

COOKERY SCHOOLS



1

COOKERY SCHOOL

15b Little Portland Street, W1W 8BW

Not only does the appropriately named Cookery School on Little Portland Street offer everything from taster sessions to more intensive, accredited six-week courses, it's also the only one in London to be awarded an impressive three-star sustainability rating from the SRA. 020 7631 4590; cookeryschool.co.uk

2

FOOD AT 52

96 Central St, EC1V 8AJ

Food at 52's classes have been described as more akin to dinner parties than further education, which we can definitely get on board with. They span basic skills, confidence-building creative classes and niche cuisine, all in a homely, country-style kitchen. foodat52.co.uk



THE FOODIST

With our love affair with coffee in full swing, a huge coffee expo makes perfect sense, writes **Mike Gibson**

AT THE OFFICE recently, I accidentally made a cup of coffee that was so strong that when I drank it, I had a coughing fit. Another day, I made it far too weak. At home, I have a fancy Italian stove-top espresso maker and a milk frother, but I still can't get close to latte art. This is despite the fact that, in another life, I worked at a café in my hometown for three years.

The point is that making a great cup of coffee is not easy. You only have to go to a café like Hackney's Climpson & Sons or Clapham's The Black Lab, or one of the excellent one-man operations outside one of London's Overground stations, and order a cup to see that making a truly delicious coffee isn't something you can blag; and that if you master it, something amazing happens.

So it's a pretty exciting thing when more

than 250 of London's best coffee roasters, baristas, importers and artisans descend on Soho, Shoreditch and Hyde Park for London's biggest celebration of all things caffeinated. That's exactly what'll happen at this year's London Coffee Festival on 7-10 April.

So thriving is the capital's coffee scene that the festival is almost doubling in size from last year, ushering in more than 25,000 coffee drinkers. There'll be latte art throwdowns, masterclasses and food pairings alongside the customary multi-sensory experiences, and what's more, a significant portion of the proceeds will go to Project Waterfall, which helps provide clean water to coffee-growing communities in developing countries. Make mine a double (espresso, that is). **f**

For more info: londoncoffeefestival.com. See our favourite London roastery cafés on page 91

SPECS APPEAL

An empty whisky cask has a few uses: you can use it to age other spirits; you can use it as an enormous decorative ornament; or, as glasses designer Finlay & Co has done, you can do something really cool and use it to make a limited run of designer sunglasses. Made from the



FINLAY & CO; £300

American oak barrels Glenmorangie uses to age its uniquely flavoured whisky, the specs go through the same rigorous, 16-step manufacturing process as the other wooden pairs in its collection. The result is a beautifully engineered product that's the result of not one, but two individual pieces of craftsmanship. glenmorangie.com



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LOCAL HEROES



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+ MORE COOKERY SCHOOLS

3

B&H KITCHEN
 42 Northampton Road,
 EC1R 0HU

It's hard to pin down Bourne & Hollingsworth's strengths – mainly because it has so many of them. It made its name with events like Cocktails in the City, before its Clerkenwell HQ opened up bar and restaurant spaces, under the watchful eye of executive chef Adam Gray. What's more, you can book a session at the newly developed B&H Kitchen and learn his tricks of the trade.
 020 3659 8914;
bournneandhollingsworth.com



4

L'ATELIER DES CHEFS
 19 Wigmore St, W1U 1PH

If you're going to go to a cookery school, it may as well be the UK's most popular. L'Atelier des Chefs, with locations in Piccadilly and St Paul's, boasts a pretty wide range of courses, from street food and pasta to essential kitchen tricks like plating (an essential for aspiring cooks in our book) and knife skills. If you just want to dip a toe in, you can try a half-hour taster (mind the pun) session, or for the more grizzled, hardened amateur chef, you can dive in the deep end with a 4-hour masterclass, all taking place in state-of-the-art kitchens.
 020 7499 6580; atelierdeschefs.co.uk



5

LEITHS
 16-20 Wendell Road,
 W12 9RT

Leiths – or Leiths School of Food and Wine, to give it its full name – is something of an institution when it comes to the pursuit of chefdom. In terms of making the leap from home cook to your first professional kitchen, it's arguably got the best pedigree in London, with recent alumni including Lorraine Pascale and Gizzi Erskine among others. There are courses to cater (sorry) for all tastes – if you're serious enough for a sabbatical, try out a two- or three-term diploma in food and wine and you'll be tearing up a professional kitchen in no time.
 020 8749 6400; leiths.com



Photograph by Freepik; Ben Phillips

★ OUR FAVOURITE (DEFINITELY REAL) CRAFT BEERS ★

ALL WILD UP CRAFT BREW WILDER THAN WILD WILD SOUR

Made like a saison crossed with a *weissbier* by way of a gose, this beer is brewed with Antarctic snow melt, wild fermented and infused with pine cone, North Sea kelp, Highland thistle and puffins.

BIG SMOKE BEERWORKS ASHTRAY STOUT

Peated malts are sprinkled with cigarette ash and smoked with tobacco, giving the beer its characteristic 'old fireplace' finish. Not for the faint-hearted – this clocks in at 24.7% ABV and contains 50mg of tar.

HIGH RISE BREWING CO CAPITAL IDEA LONDON PILSNER

Created on the 26th floor of a former jellied eels emporium and cooperative housing complex in Mile End, with repurposed London sewer water and hops foraged in London Fields by former estate agents.



the LINEA range



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STREET FOOD FIGHT

One's round, the other's square; one's got a delicious filling, the other's piled high with toppings; but they're both made of dough. It's the doughnut vs the waffle

DOUGHNUTS

Dough, deep-fried and dipped. Simple

There can't be many street-food sweet treats better than the doughnut: cream, jam, peanut butter or whatever takes your fancy, neatly contained in a sphere or drizzled over a ring of deep-fried doughy goodness – perfect for stuffing in your gob while on the move. You know you're onto a good one when it's so full-to-bursting that globs of jam/cream [insert delicious filling here] start dripping everywhere.

◆ You Doughnut!; various locations. This street-food favourite smothers its bite-sized doughnuts in anything from mini pretzels to chocolate sauce. @you_doughnut

◆ Crosstown Doughnuts; 4 Broadwick Street. Beetroot, lemon and thyme. Peanut butter and berry. Sea-salt caramel and banana cream. Need we say more? @CrosstownDough



VS

WAFFLES

Batter cooked between two griddle plates and smothered in toppings

Waffles were originally a medieval Dutch snack based on the communion wafer, and their toppings have come a long way since then. You can now get them smothered in sauce or whipped cream and topped with fruit, chocolate or just about anything. Our pick? Crispy bacon with maple syrup.

◆ Waffle On; Maltby St Market. This stalwart adds buttermilk to its batter, so it goes with sweet and savoury toppings. @WaffleOnMarkets

◆ Barnyard; 18 Charlotte Street. This legendary waffle is made with acorn flour, making it the lightest waffle you'll ever eat. @barnyardlondon

THE WINNER IS DOUGHNUTS

Doughnuts clinched 71% of our online vote. Go to foodism.co.uk to see the next face-off.

PIMP YO' DINNER PARTY

THE CLASSIC ONE: LA BELLE ASSIETTE

Can't face cooking for your hungry guests? Choose a set menu online, and this private dining service will select local ingredients, then send round one of its hand-picked chefs to create alchemy the likes of which your kitchen's never seen before. labelleassiette.co.uk



THE ITALIAN ONE:

Il Cudega

If you and your mates like to geek out about food, get a little more esoteric with it, and invite the good people of Hackney's Il Cudega to cook you some fine Lombardian cuisine. Hire the cafe, or a venue of your choice. Saluti! ilcudega.com

THE WINEY ONE: A GRAPE NIGHT IN


Keen to up your wine knowledge? Mates with booze hounds? The girls at A Grape Night In will ascertain your level of knowledge and budget, and put together a fun, approachable tasting evening, with small bites to keep you going. agrapenightin.co.uk

BITE-SIZED FOODISM.CO.UK/NEWSLETTER




An open notebook with a white, textured cover is positioned in the foreground. The left page features the text "SOME EXPERIENCES CAN'T BE DOWNLOADED" in red and black. The right page features a red Texas logo, the text "TEXAS LIVE MUSIC EXPLORE IT AND OTHER THRILLS AT TRAVELTEXAS.COM/LIVEMUSIC", and a brown leather-textured sticker with the word "TEXAS" in black.

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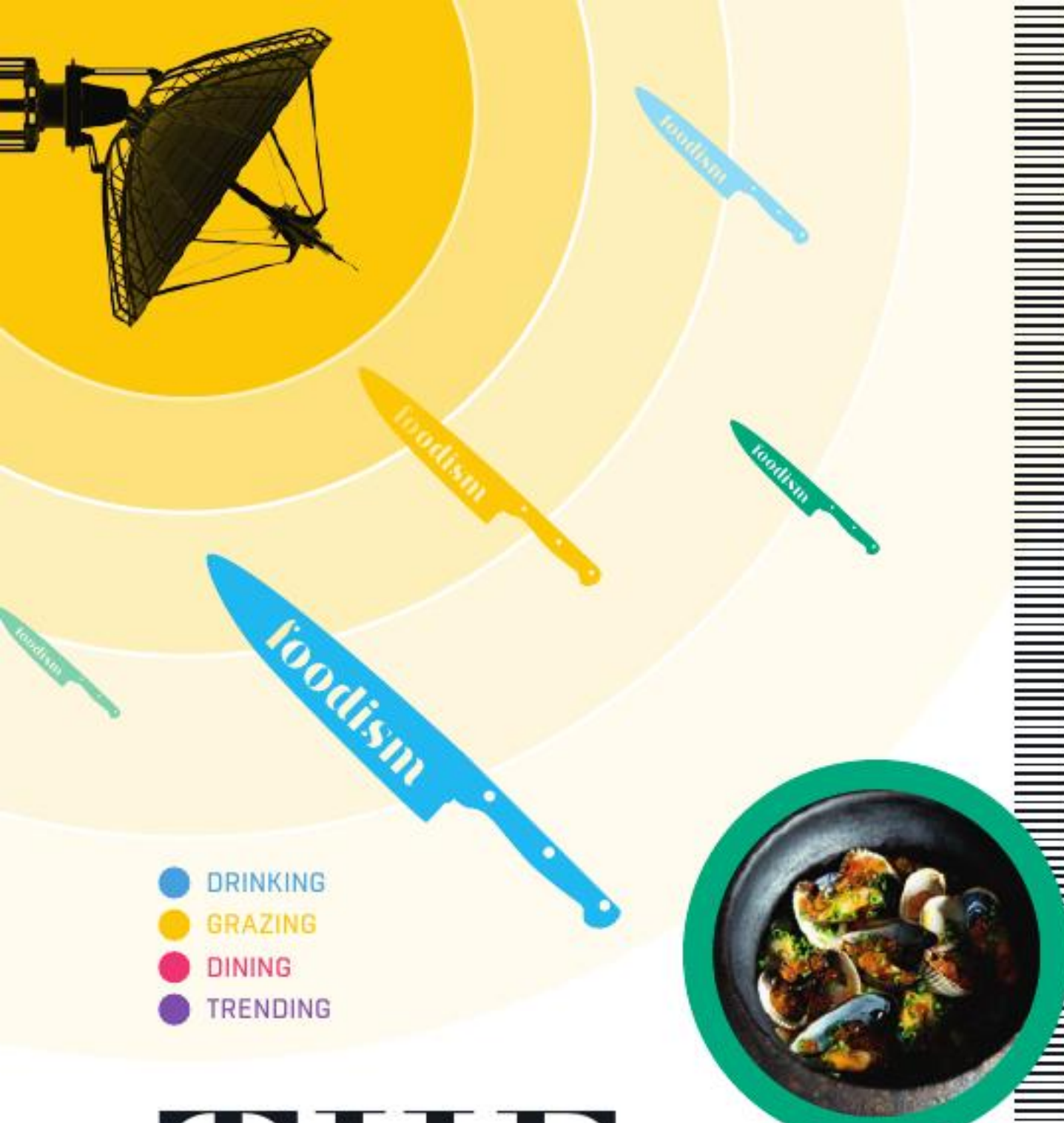
FOOD

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- DRINKING
- GRAZING
- DINING
- TRENDING

THE RADAR

We take you through the best new bar and restaurant openings from today until springtime

Drinking

LITTLE BAT

OPEN NOW

A slew of great new openings have made Islington lean more towards 'destination' than 'neighbourhood' territory in the last couple of years, and the latest – the little brother of Spitalfields cocktail bar Callooh Callay – continues the trend. The place is inspired by the works of Lewis Carroll, and there'll be cocktails from mixologist Barney Toy.

N1 1PX; littlebatbar.com



Dining

PADELLA

29 MARCH

If you say you don't like pasta, we won't believe you. Everyone loves pasta. The founders of Islington icon Trullo know this, which is why they're setting up a smaller location in Borough Market. It will hammer out ridiculously tasty plates of the stuff, all made from scratch in-house, and also aim to bring them in at an approachable price-point. (£7-£10.50 per dish). Which is just fine by us.

SE1 1TQ; padella.co

BITE-SIZED
FOODISM.CO.UK/
NEWSLETTER



foodism



Trending

SOSHARU

OPEN NOW

We were beginning to think it'd been a suspiciously long time since Jason Atherton had announced a new addition to his ever-expanding restaurant empire. Thankfully the wait is over, with the newest, Sosharu, opening earlier this spring. The head chef is Alex Craciun, fresh from a year's preparation in Japan, who's cooking his take on modern Japanese food, overseen by Mr Atherton. There's also a killer adjoining bar, Seven Tales, which will be similarly Japan-tastic.

EC1M 5RR; sosharulondon.com

Grazing

SOM SAA

APRIL

Andy Oliver and Mark Dobbie have been making mouths water all over London for what seems like ages with their Som Saa pop-up, which has had incarnations in Peckham and Hackney, among others.

Now, it seems they feel the time is right to set up permanently, which they'll do this April in a former fabric warehouse on Commercial Street. Som Saa will offer sharing plates, with the aim of pleasing both quick drink-and-snackers and the lingering dinner crowd, too.

E1 6BD; somsaa.com

Grazing

DALLOWAY TERRACE

OPEN NOW

Ready for summer? This new restaurant at the Bloomsbury Hotel is: it's totally al fresco, but there's a retractable roof that can be popped back on when it rains. Just like Centre Court.

WC1B 3NN; dallowayterrace.com



Drinking

BLACK ROCK

OPEN NOW

Whisky fans will love this new bar from the team behind Worship Street Whistling Shop, which will stock over 250 bottles of the good stuff and will set out to further demystify the spirit.

EC2A 2BS; blackrock.bar

Dining

MUSTARD

OPEN NOW

Chef Jason Wild has opened this brasserie in West London's Brook Green, with an emphasis on seasonal British ingredients.

W6 7PD; mustardrestaurants.co.uk





WEAPONS OF CHOICE

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID HARRISON



VIVA LA VIDE

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Don't feel like splashing out on a state-of-the-art sous-vide machine? Dip a toe into the process with Codlo, an innovative device that'll turn most crock pots and rice cookers into functioning sous-vide baths.

codlo.com



2. CODLO RICE COOKER, £39

Don't have one? Fear not – let Codlo's rice cooker handle it.

At £39, it means the whole shebang is much cheaper than most on the market and, with a decent 2.5 litre capacity, if you do choose to use it to actually cook rice, you'll be able to make enough to feed all your friends (and yourself, twice).

codlo.com



FINE CHINA

1. KEN HOM 7 PIECE WOK SET, £24.99

A great kit from the man who brought the wok to the West, which includes plastic bowls, spoons, and wooden utensils.

lakeland.co.uk

2. DEXAM BAMBOO STEAMER, £22

Don't stick to stir fries – this authentic dumpling steamer, made from bamboo, is the perfect way to do dim sum. It's not just for Chinese food, though: you can chuck your veg in, too.

selfridges.com



OUR DAILY BREAD

1. SAGE THE SCRAPER MIXER PRO, £269.99

This classic, no-nonsense stand mixer comes with a dough hook and will last for decades.
selfridges.com

2. CUISINART BREAD MAKER, £150

With your dough prepped, it's time to bake. Choose from one of 12 pre-programmed options – one's bound to be perfect for your artisan sourdough.
selfridges.com

3. LAKELAND DIGITAL SCALE, £24.99

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kitchenprovisions.co.uk





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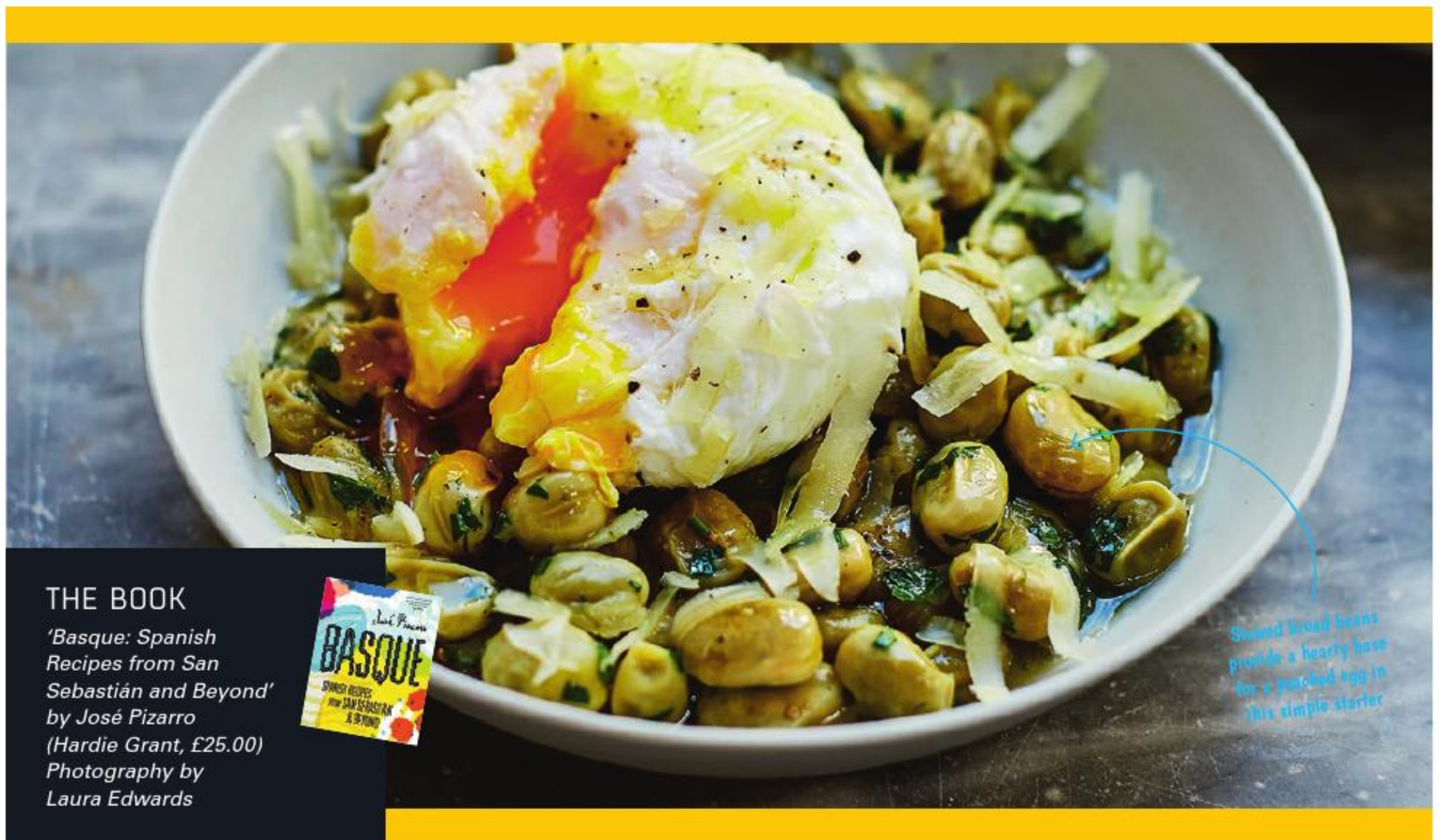
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José Pizarro's

BROAD BEANS

SLOW-COOKED AND SERVED WITH A POACHED EGG, THIS IS A SIMPLE, DELICIOUS STARTER THAT WOULD ALSO MAKE A GREAT BRUNCH DISH



Slow-cooked broad beans provide a hearty base for a poached egg in this simple starter

THE BOOK

'Basque: Spanish Recipes from San Sebastián and Beyond' by José Pizarro (Hardie Grant, £25.00) Photography by Laura Edwards



THIS IS THE first of three recipes from *Basque*, the brilliant new book from José Pizarro, which captures the magic of this unique part of northern Spain and south-west France. "Buy the broad beans as young as you can," he says, "or use frozen beans and keep the recipe up your sleeve for last-minute dinner parties."

Method

- 1 Pod the broad beans. In a saucepan, heat the oil over a medium heat, add the shallots and cook for 10 minutes until lightly golden and soft.
- 2 Add the broad beans and mix well,

cooking for another five minutes.

- 3 Add the wine, bubbling it for a minute or two to reduce the alcohol.
- 4 Add two thirds of the stock, cover and cook for a further 30 minutes, adding more stock if the broad beans start to get too dry.
- 5 Meanwhile, poach the eggs in a medium saucepan of salted simmering water for 3 minutes or until just cooked and ready to serve.
- 6 Spoon the beans into six warmed bowls, top with a poached egg and scatter with the cheese, parsley, black pepper and a generous drizzle of extra-virgin olive oil. **f**

TIME

Serves

◆ 6

Preparation

◆ 5 mins

Cooking

◆ 45 mins

INGREDIENTS

- ◆ 3kg broad beans
- ◆ 100ml olive oil
- ◆ 3 medium French shallots, finely chopped
- ◆ 150ml dry white wine
- ◆ 750ml fresh vegetable stock
- ◆ 6 free-range eggs
- ◆ 150g pecorino, Roncal or Idiazábal cheese, shaved
- ◆ Small handful of finely chopped flat-leaf parsley
- ◆ Freshly ground black pepper
- ◆ Extra-virgin olive oil, to drizzle

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José Pizarro's

WHOLE CHICKEN

STEWED IN CIDER & APPLES, THIS IS A GREAT EXAMPLE OF BASQUE FLAVOURS THAT'LL PEP UP YOUR SUNDAY



INGREDIENTS

- ◆ Olive oil
- ◆ 1 free-range chicken
- ◆ Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- ◆ 1 apple, peeled, cored and halved
- ◆ 2 onions, finely sliced
- ◆ 2 bay leaves
- ◆ 6 sage leaves
- ◆ 1 cinnamon stick
- ◆ 500ml cider
- ◆ 400ml fresh chicken stock
- ◆ 25g unsalted butter
- ◆ 3 apples, peeled, cored and sliced into 8 pieces
- ◆ 1 teaspoon of caster (superfine) sugar
- ◆ 75g sultanas



This chicken's stewed, but the skin's still nice and crispy by way of browning in the pan

THIS CHICKEN DISH really shows both Pizarro's keen sense of place and connection to his ingredients. "My inspiration came from seeing the ingredients together," he says. "When I see them, I just have to create a plate of food out of them."

"When we were in Astarbe in a beautiful cider house, I saw the chickens hopping around the apple trees, and that was it." See - apples don't *always* have to go with pork.

Method

- 1 Preheat the oven to 160°C.
- 2 Heat a layer of oil in a large casserole dish. Season the chicken inside and out, and brown all over in the casserole dish. Set aside and put the halved apple inside the cavity.
- 3 Add the onions to the casserole and fry for 10 minutes to soften.
- 4 Return the chicken to the pan and add the herbs and cinnamon.
- 5 Pour in the cider and bubble for a

few minutes, then add the stock.

- 6 Bring to the boil, then cover and transfer to the oven to cook for 1 hour.
- 7 Heat a little oil with the butter and fry the rest of the apples with the sugar until golden and caramelised. Add the sultanas and toss in the buttery juices. Add to the casserole.
- 8 Remove the lid of the casserole and turn up the oven to 220°C. Cook for 10 minutes more to brown the top of the chicken, then serve. **f**

TIME

- Serves**
 ◆ 6
Preparation
 ◆ 5 mins
Cooking
 ◆ 90 mins



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José Pizarro's

APPLE TATIN

SERVED WITH SALTED HONEY ICE CREAM, THIS TAKE ON THE CLASSIC FRENCH DESSERT IS A STICKY AND DELICIOUS LATE-AFTERNOON TREAT



OK, THE BASQUE connection here might be simply that the region's famous for its apples, but with a recipe this good, we're not complaining. Pizarro gives this classic dessert a twist with delicious-tasting salted honey ice cream.

Method

THE ICE CREAM

- 1 Heat the milk with the sugar until almost boiling.
- 2 Combine the honey, egg yolks and salt together in a bowl and beat until light and fluffy. Pour the hot milk over the egg mixture, stirring until smooth.
- 3 Pour the mixture back into a clean pan, put over a medium-low heat and cook, stirring constantly, until you have a thick, smooth custard.
- 4 Pour into a bowl and, when cold, stir in the cream. Pour into an ice-cream maker and churn until set, then scoop into a container and freeze until ready to serve.
- 5 If you don't have an ice-cream maker, pour the mixture into a deep plastic container and freeze for 2 hours, then beat with an electric hand whisk to break up the crystals and freeze for a further hour. Repeat twice, then freeze until solid.

THE TARTE TATIN

- 6 Pour the sugar into a heavy-based ovenproof frying pan with a 20cm base, and add a couple of tablespoons of water. Stir to mix, then place over a low heat and cook very gently, stirring, until the sugar has dissolved.
- 7 Stop stirring, increase the heat to high and bubble until you have a dark golden caramel.
- 8 Add the butter, stirring quickly until smooth, then put the apples - cut side up - into the pan with the thyme. Return to a low heat and cook for 10

minutes, then set aside to cool.

- 9 Preheat the oven to 200°C.
- 10 Roll the pastry out on a lightly floured surface and cut out a round a bit bigger than the pan. Tuck the pastry over the top of the apples so it sits snugly round the side of the pan.
- 11 Bake for 25-30 minutes until the pastry is golden. Leave to stand for 10 minutes before turning out onto a plate and serving with the salted honey ice cream. **f**

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TIME

Serves

◆ 6

Preparation

◆ 60 mins

Cooking

◆ 30 mins

INGREDIENTS

- ◆ 200g caster sugar
- ◆ 50g unsalted butter
- ◆ A few sprigs of lemon thyme
- ◆ 5-6 dessert apples, peeled, cored and halved
- ◆ 500g all-butter puff pastry
- ◆ Plain flour, to dust

For the ice cream

- ◆ 600ml full-fat (whole) milk
- ◆ 50g caster sugar
- ◆ 190g runny honey
- ◆ 6 free-range egg yolks
- ◆ 1 tsp flaky sea salt
- ◆ 500ml double cream



Salted caramel? Try salted honey on for size - a natural comparison to sticky apple

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Richard H Turner

WELL RAISED

In a market that's dominated by poor-quality meat, how can you be sure you're buying decent produce that's properly farmed and full of flavour?



Photograph by Paul Winch-Furness

I F WE BELIEVED everything that's been in the press lately, none of us would ever eat food again, let alone meat. You like sausages and bacon? They might be as bad for you as cigarettes. Enjoy the odd steak? Then expect to get bowel cancer.

Needless to say, you have to cut through the bullshit to get to the truth, and at the heart of it is one thing: none of these scare stories differentiate between intensively farmed and extensively farmed livestock. Much of the meat eaten here is intensively farmed, so perhaps this is an understandable mistake.

As the name suggests, intensive farming is about getting an animal to its optimum slaughter weight as quickly and cheaply as possible, which involves intensive feeding and factory-like practises. Alarm bells ringing yet?

Extensive farming, on the other hand, is a slower process that allows animals access to pasture or to forage, space to move around, and social interaction. It takes much longer to rear animals this way, so it costs a bit more, but it's worth it – meat raised extensively tastes completely different to meat raised intensively.

Not only do intensively farmed animals suffer a miserable existence, but the way they're farmed makes for unhealthy animals. These animals grow fat quickly, but it's the wrong kind of fat. In some countries, growth hormones are used to achieve weight gain in the shortest time possible.

The aim of these 'animal factories' is quantity over quality, and the flavour of the meat – as well as the nutritional quality – suffers as a result. Intensively farmed animals are also prone to disease, so they're routinely dosed with antibiotics to keep them alive.

Extensively farmed animals, in contrast, graze freely for much of their lifetime, in an ecosystem that's biologically natural and untreated. The character of the pastures changes seasonally, and animals are rotated between different pastures, creating a distinctive flavour profile in the meat.

Natural habitats provide more sanitary conditions, less stress on animals and natural resistance to disease. Good meat comes from animals raised this way.

There is overwhelming evidence that extensively farmed meat can be a healthy part of a balanced diet, not least because it contains less total fat, more antioxidant vitamins and more Omega-3 fatty acids compared with intensively reared meat. Omega-3 fats are particularly important – they're essential for normal growth in humans and are thought to play an important

role in the prevention and treatment of diseases. Aggressive, intensive farming techniques have effectively decreased the Omega-3 fat content in many of our foods, including meats, yet the problem remains – intensively farmed meat dominates the market.

One way to avoid intensively farmed meat is to give up meat altogether. But if you're a dedicated carnivore like me, that's not an option. So what are the alternatives? To start with, you can be much choosier about where you buy your meat. Supermarkets rarely differentiate between good, extensively farmed meat and bad, intensively farmed meat – often mixing the two so there's no way of knowing what you are buying. (Meat roulette!) Look carefully at the labels on supermarket meat, because only two of them really mean something: Soil Association Organic and RSPCA Freedom Food. There are several others designed to fool people into thinking the meat is farmed well – ignore these completely.

It's also possible to buy meat online, but do some research, and ask where the meat was farmed, how it was farmed, the name of the breed and how old it was at slaughter. If a company can answer these questions to your satisfaction, place your order.

But of course, the absolute best way of all is to buy from a butcher. If he or she can answer those same questions, then you've found someone with whom to build a relationship, and someone who will actively support extensive farming. In return they'll reward you with a lifetime of untold meaty delights. **f**



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[032](#) THOMASINA MIERS ON MEXICO | [038](#) MEANINGFUL EATS
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— PART 2 —

FEAST

“THERE’S THIS LOVE OF
BREAKING BREAD TOGETHER
IN MEXICO – THAT COMMUNITY
WAS THE INSPIRATION”

THOMASINA MIERS, [032](#)



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HOT RIGHT NOW

Thomasina Miers brought authentic Mexican food to London when she launched Wahaca in 2007. So have we finally moved on from bad Tex-Mex? Not yet, she tells **Lydia Winter**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID HARRISON
HAIR AND MAKEUP BY SALLY MULBERGE



ABOVE: Thomasina Mjers in the Tottenham Court Road site of her second restaurant venture DF Mexico, which puts an emphasis on Mexican-American fusion food

“**A** PROPER MEXICAN BURRITO is made with a paper-thin, crepe-like flour tortilla,” explains Thomasina Miers, her voice getting ever-so-slightly louder and the words spilling out increasingly quickly. “You can hold them up to the light and see through them and they’re mottled with lovely charred bits. They’re enriched with lard, they’re stretchy and they’re *incredibly* delicious. They have refried beans and meat in them and that’s pretty much it. They’re mouth-watering.” As co-founder of the 20-restaurant-strong Wahaca empire, and its younger, Mexican-American sibling DF Mexico, she knows what she’s talking about.

“They’re not like these things we have, with rice,” she continues, this time with considerably less enthusiasm. “All these burrito places have opened and there’s an idea that this is what Mexican food is, but it’s still not really Mexican in my book.”

Her ‘book’ is a pretty authoritative one – having fallen in love with Mexico’s food on her gap year, Miers spent 13 years thinking about it before, freshly armed with the 2005 Masterchef title, she set up Wahaca in 2007. At that time, Mexican cuisine was synonymous with too much cheese and sour cream, and heavily

LONDON HAS ALL THESE BURRITO PLACES, BUT YOU CAN COUNT ON ONE HAND THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE DOING INNOVATIVE MEXICAN FOOD



influenced by poorly executed Tex-Mex.

That was nine years ago. Since then, Mexican cuisine has been championed by star chefs including Noma’s René Redzepi, Jason Atherton, James Lowe of Lyle’s, and Isaac Hale of The Clove Club, and it’s been touted as one of the biggest food trends of 2016. But just how much have things moved on from these negative preconceptions?

The answer is simple, says Miers: not much. “It’s interesting to me, because we’ve got all these burrito places, but you can count on one hand the number of places doing innovative Mexican food,” she explains.

Given that London is full-to-bursting with international food, most of it at an incredibly high standard, this is surprising. But it’s something that will always be a problem when a cuisine relies so heavily on ingredients that come from thousands of miles away: “The quality issue is still

difficult,” Miers laments. “We ran a series of supper clubs with some leading Mexican chefs at Wahaca last year, and each time they brought a suitcase of ingredients such as fresh herbs and corn over here with them. Those challenges are still very real.”

This is also why, Miers believes, we’re yet to see much high-end Mexican cooking in London. “In the early days, I had a dream of opening a River Café equivalent for Mexican food,” she admits. “The trouble is, when you go to that level, it’s so much more about every single ingredient. And you can’t fake that.”

That said, Miers was never about complicated, technical cooking. “I’m definitely more on the feminine, nurturing side of food,” she says. “I love the street-food element of Wahaca; I love that it brings everyone together. It’s amazing to eat in [higher-end] restaurants, but for me, food is about nurturing and sitting with family

FOR ME, FOOD IS ABOUT NURTURING – FEEDING FAMILY AND FRIENDS AND MAKING THEM FEEL GOOD

RIGHT: Through her restaurants DF Mexico and Wahaca, Thomasina Miers is bringing authentic Mexican food and drinks to London

and friends and feeding people and making them feel good. That's the thing I love about Mexico: there's this love of breaking bread together – it was that sense of community that was the inspiration.

“If you go to a market for breakfast, you might get fruit juice from one stall, but you'll be sitting at a stall that makes *barbecoa*. Someone else will bring you tortillas and you'll get your avocados and spring onions from someone else and then the hot chocolate woman will come along, or someone else will ask you if you want some beers. And everyone works together to give you this amazing experience.”

As a result, Wahaca focuses on Mexico's vibrant, bustling markets. Since its inception, Miers has become an authority on food – and not just Mexican. She's appeared on TV shows; writes a regular food column for the *Guardian*; organised last year's Day of the Dead festival at Wahaca; and has written several cookbooks, including 2014's *Chilli Notes: Recipes to Warm the Heart (Not Burn the Tongue)*, which has helped her become synonymous with the fiery red peppers. It's funny, really, considering she stumbled across them almost by accident: “I turned up in Mexico on my gap year – I was quite wild, I drank a lot of tequila. I remember eating ▶



ORDER FOOD



ABOVE: Miers is committed to changing perceptions of Mexican cuisine, and challenging the images of poor-quality 'Tex-Mex' food

► ceviche and really hot salsa, and trying to sweat it out. It all started from there."

Despite her hectic schedule, she still visits Mexico every year, as do her restaurants' chefs, and she brings new discoveries back with her each time. "I feel that a lot of the dishes at Wahaca you could get as a modern adaptation of Mexican food in Mexico City," she says. "It's just made a little more chichi. Maybe the herbs would be a bit more interesting and a bit less British. I use chervil and tarragon a lot because there are these wonderful fresh herbs in Mexico with anise notes, which you can't get here."

It's this willingness to innovate which enables Wahaca to stay as authentic as possible. "Real sticklers sometimes send me emails asking why we've got feta if we're Mexican. We use feta because shipping fresh curd cheese from Mexico is completely insane, and feta is the closest thing we can get to the fresh curd cheese that you get there."

All of Wahaca's tortillas are made by one woman and her "little tortilla machine", while *queso fresco* comes from Gringa Dairy, run by American-born, Peckham-based Kristen Schnepf; all the meat is British, and all the

WE HAVE A SUPER SOFT SOBRASADA MADE BY TREALY FARM IN WALES

fish is MSC-certified. "I'd love to use octopus or tuna, which you see a lot in Mexico, but you can't get MSC certification on them, so we don't use them," she explains.

"We have a super soft *sobrasada* on the menu at Wahaca, which is like the spreading chorizo you get in the markets in Mexico. It's just delicious, and it's made by Trealy Farm in Wales. That, for me, is a fun thing." Even the beer, Lupulo Pale Ale, is brewed for DF Mexico by Brixton Brewery.

Miers isn't daunted by the challenges of remaining as true to Mexican food as possible – a passion shared by her team. "We really wanted to use the authentic process to make the proper corn tortillas, which is called nixtamalization. You actually cook the corn in an alkaline solution, grind it, make the dough and then make the tortillas."

As a result, her development chef, Chris Buckley, spent a week in the Nordic Food Lab – René Redzepi and Claus Meyer's institution devoted to investigating food diversity – with Mexican chefs, trying to replicate the tortillas using European grains such as buckwheat, rye, black beans and mung beans. And this, ultimately, is exactly what Wahaca – and Miers – is all about: "I love Wahaca and I love what we do," she says, "but it's when Mexicans come in and also love what we do that I take the most notice."

"There's always going to be this thing of, 'Who is this British girl who's taken our food? Is she taking it seriously or is she just trying to make money?' They've all gone back to Mexico thinking I'm doing good stuff," she says, with a touch of pride. "They know I care and it's not just a business." And this passion, attention to detail and drive for authenticity is why Miers succeeds where others have failed. Just thank the tequila and chillies. **f**

wahaca.co.uk; dfmexico.co.uk

foodism

THOMASINA'S CHILLI CHEATS

Chillies are for more than sweating out a hangover. "A fresh chilli is like black pepper – it makes a dish sparkle, it brings out the taste of the ingredients and adds an extra layer. And I love them because they make me feel good," says Miers. "When I lived in Mexico, I completely didn't get the flavour, I was perplexed by when to use what, so I started to learn more about chillies' flavour variations." Here, she decodes her favourites.

Ancho (dried)

"Poblano chillies are large, fresh chillies, which look like a green pepper but have a darker, thinner skin. Once ripe and dried they are transformed into ancho chillies, a dark-red chilli with fruity tones, which is delicious in marinades, salsas and *moles*, the staples of Mexican cooking."

Chipotle

"The chipotle is probably one the most famous of dried Mexican chillies and is wonderful in salsas and mayonnaises. Rehydrate them to make a relish called *chipotles en adobo*, a sweet and smoky purée that adds body and a smoky, fiery sweetness to sauces, stews, dressings and mayonnaises."

Chile de árbol

"Chile de árbol are hot, versatile chillies that can be used instead of dried chilli flakes or other dried red chillies (they're a great substitute for Chinese Sichuan chillies). I use them like other people use black pepper, in the base of stews and soups to add a subtle heat – when toasted they take on a deliciously nutty flavour which is amazing in chilli oils."

Fresh red chillies

"The heat level varies a lot with red chillies, so it is worth testing their heat (slice off the tip of the chilli – the end has the least punch – have a taste and it should give you an idea of the rest of the chilli's heat). I especially like to use them at the end of the dish to add a top note of fresh chilli punch."

Turkish chilli flakes

"Various types of red chillies from Urfa to Aleppo are dried in the sunshine in Turkey, rubbed with oil and then gently toasted to bring out all their aromatic flavour. They are much milder than conventional dried red chillies, so they add a subtle heat and depth of flavour to yoghurts, egg dishes and other sauces."

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THE REAL SOUL FOOD

These pop-ups, cafés and restaurants aren't about just filling your stomach, says **Clare Finney** – they've been conceived to support good causes and provide so much more than just food and drink

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PICTURED: Food, atmosphere and education at the Syrian Supper Club



CREATIVITY, WAR-TORN COUNTRIES, owl conservation, mental health: the reasons cited for setting up food joints which serve some sort of 'higher purpose' are as varied as the grub they serve with it.

At heart, though, lies the obvious common denominator: eating is something we all have to do. The need is universal; it transcends divisions of race, religion and – in the case of last year's infamous owl café, which featured actual owls – even species. When done well, in good company, food has an infinite capacity to make everyone feel better. Is it any wonder, then, that the number of cafés, restaurants and pop-ups created to 'make a difference' as well as feed people are starting



LEFT, FROM TOP: A monstrous cake from The Canvas; the store's sign in Shoreditch; chefs cook up a storm at the Syrian Supper Club

▶ to soar? Well, yes and no: for, while the success of, say, the Dragon Café (the UK's first mental health café) or the Syrian Supper Club (which has raised thousands for Syrian refugees) is indisputable, there's no shortage of articles parodying this recent trend. What next, asked the *Guardian* last year, after the owl café flap – a Boris café? A restaurant for families prone to arguments? Raising money through novelty pop-ups is all well and good, but the public – and indeed the organisers – seem to have drawn a line at the Blobfish Café, which was rumored to open last summer.

"Next summer, we are proud to be opening the world's first pop-up aquarium in the heart of east London. We currently have three Blobfish all packed and ready for their London holiday," said the organizers when the news was announced last June. The food and drink would be gourmet, with top chefs and a full, eight-course, deep-sea-themed tasting menu. The specially designed tank would give each customer a view of the blobfish. Yet by July its Facebook and Twitter feed had fallen as silent as the watery depths in which its subjects dwell, and the team stopped responding to emails.

Marine conservation biologist professor Callum Roberts appears to have seen it coming: "As with any deep-sea species, it's quite difficult to get them to survive – it takes a great deal of specialist skill to keep deep-sea creatures in an aquarium. I would question if it's all a prank," he told *Mashable* last year. Maybe he'll be proven wrong: after all, there's no definitive sign the café has been cancelled, and when the pop-up owl-themed café Annie the Owl was besieged by animal rights activists before it even opened (they objected to the potent mix of owls, crowds and cocktails), the organiser *did* respond, by removing the alcohol, reducing the amount of food, and moving the venue from Soho to east London, where space was less of a



THE SPECIALLY DESIGNED TANK WOULD GIVE EACH CUSTOMER A VIEW OF THE BLOBFISH

premium and the owls could be better cared for. The result was spectacularly popular, with a 125,000-strong run on the tickets.

"A lot of people are calling us a café, or a smoothie bar. We are not either of these things," chief organizer Sebastian Lyall announced shortly before the pop-up opened. "You can't order drinks or food – you receive a smoothie and canapés." Profit was bound for an owl charity, and food and drink was conspicuously no longer the focus. When the reviews came out, it received little comment. But while on balance this was a wise move on the part of the owl organisers, it doesn't mean cuisine and good causes are mutually exclusive – especially not if you intend to stay open for more than one week.

Far from it. As far as Ruth Rogers is concerned, it's the food – spiced chickpea mash and avocado sandwich, homemade pie of the day, scrambled eggs and so on – that initially draws people into her Shoreditch meaningful eatery, the Canvas café: "They come for the food, they feel the atmosphere. Then they discover they can write on the walls, do a workshop, see some comedy."

Writing on the walls, the sofa and the occasional table is the hallmark of a venue at which graffiti is not just allowed but actively encouraged: after a successful installation at Edinburgh festival in which Rogers deposited her white living-room sofa on the Royal Mile and encouraged people to write how they felt about their bodies upon it, she felt inspired to establish "a permanent space where people can open up in that way about their bodies and feelings." She helped found Body Gossip, an organisation that campaigns through arts and education to combat self-consciousness and inspire body confidence in people of all ages, sizes and shapes, and she was looking to gather some more stories.

The sofa had drawn reflections even from people for whom the prospect of writing on paper was inconceivable. "I had people's husbands or sisters coming up to me and saying 'I had no idea that she felt like that – thank you.' I thought it would be all penises and swear words," she laughs. "Instead it was honest and brave comments and opinions." You'll find many of these on the café's tempting white walls: scribbled high above tables, tucked away behind chair legs, written large and small, messy and neat.

'Coffee in the morning sun. Dylan in

the background,' says one, in response to a question Rogers wrote on the wall: 'Where is your happy place?' 'What if I fall? Oh, but my darling, what if you fly?' says another, unprompted in a corner of its own. "It affirms your sense of humanity - not just seeing people write responses, but just seeing them reading them, and smiling to themselves." The fact it's a café and not a dedicated arts venue is not just incidental to this, Rogers continues - it's everything. "Cafés are, by their very nature, places where people take the time to think - to open up. When we were thinking of how we could fund this space and encourage people to come along, a café seemed like the best thing."

Just over the river in Borough, fellow mental health campaigner Sarah Wheeler had made a similar observation some years previously. After a psychotic episode robbed her of three years of her life, she was nevertheless left with a feeling that those similarly affected would benefit from a dedicated café. "During those three years I spent a lot of time in cafés and pubs. They were, in effect, my drop-in centres, where I could exist incognito," she explains over tea. "They were places I could go to be on my own but *with* people, to have some nourishing food and somehow feel incrementally better."

Concluding that a café was decisively healthier than a pub, she set about transforming the crypt of St George's Church into the Dragon Café - a venue that, each Monday, could accommodate anyone and everyone who felt the need for a place that had food and activities, and that was "safe", as she explains. "That's what most people say about it. Safe to be your own person, and yet to feel part of something outside yourself, which you can engage in or not as you please."

Does the food contribute to this feeling of safety and wellbeing? Of course it does. You don't need to have suffered from mental illness to know that how you feel affects what you eat, and vice versa. Both Rogers and Wheeler felt it was "our responsibility as a social enterprise to prepare healthy food for people, and to fill them up," Rogers says.

When Wheeler was unwell, she subsisted on a diet of booze and infrequent marmalade sandwiches: dishes like the roasted vegetable coconut curry with couscous and Asian 'slaw - on the Dragon's menu when I visit - were not an option, and even the food provided by official mental health services are not a patch on the rich, colourful bounty that patrons of the Dragon Café enjoy each week.

Being located a mere sourdough loaf's throw from Borough Market has made it

FOR MANY VISITORS, THE FOOD THEY ENJOY AT DRAGON CAFE IS THE ONLY FRESH MEAL THEY GET ALL WEEK

the happy recipient of all the leftovers from Ted's Veg and Bread Ahead. The menu was developed with the chef of the iconic (and now closed) Food for Thought in Covent Garden, and is vegetarian to keep costs down, nutritional content high and food fresh. For many of the visitors, the lunch and dinner they enjoy at Dragon Café is the only fresh meal they get all week.

"At the café it is possible to be seen as a real individual with nothing to hide, and to feel a sense of shared community," enthuses one of the visitors, Jaquie. "I have enjoyed delicious, nurturing and cheap food that has helped me to look after myself when I wasn't eating properly." Ask any one of the 200 people who attend the Dragon Café each week and you'll get a similar response. When Virginia Woolf wrote that "one cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well", she wasn't, I am sure, referring purely to food itself, but to the whole experience. It's to that end that Wheeler and her volunteers ensure each meal at the Dragon Café meets a standard that reflects positively on their patrons: from the raw ingredients to the way they are served: "Attitude is so important. We strive to create a friendly, non-judgemental environment," says Sarah - a philosophy that extends right through to the cutlery and crockery they are using.

"We use proper plates and proper cutlery. All of this has an effect on mental wellbeing - it's not a second-rate offering." As a visitor who chose to remain anonymous pointed out, "everybody feels like somebody here."

It's a far cry from the disposable utensils that dominate the mental health service. Indeed, so stark is the difference, the Dragon Café is increasingly being hailed by local services as a care model. "We hope to work more closely with them to improve the user experience within the sector. That will make our funding, currently from one charity [Maudsley Hospital], more secure in the future, too."

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Dragon Café is not the only food joint filling the holes left by government funding cuts. Old Spike Roastery, another social enterprise, is tackling homelessness through serving coffee and roasting beans. "The inspiration behind it came after one of the co-founders visited a café run by deaf and blind women in Vietnam. He realised it was possible to start a business that had a clear social mission to help vulnerable members of the community," explains Richard Robinson, another co-founder. "As homelessness has been steadily rising, it felt like an obvious sector to focus our attention on. Coffee felt like a great area to use as the foundation of our business, not least because of the amazing growth it has seen in recent years."

More than a mere fundraiser, Old Spike Roastery is a place where the homeless can learn coffee roasting and barista skills ▶



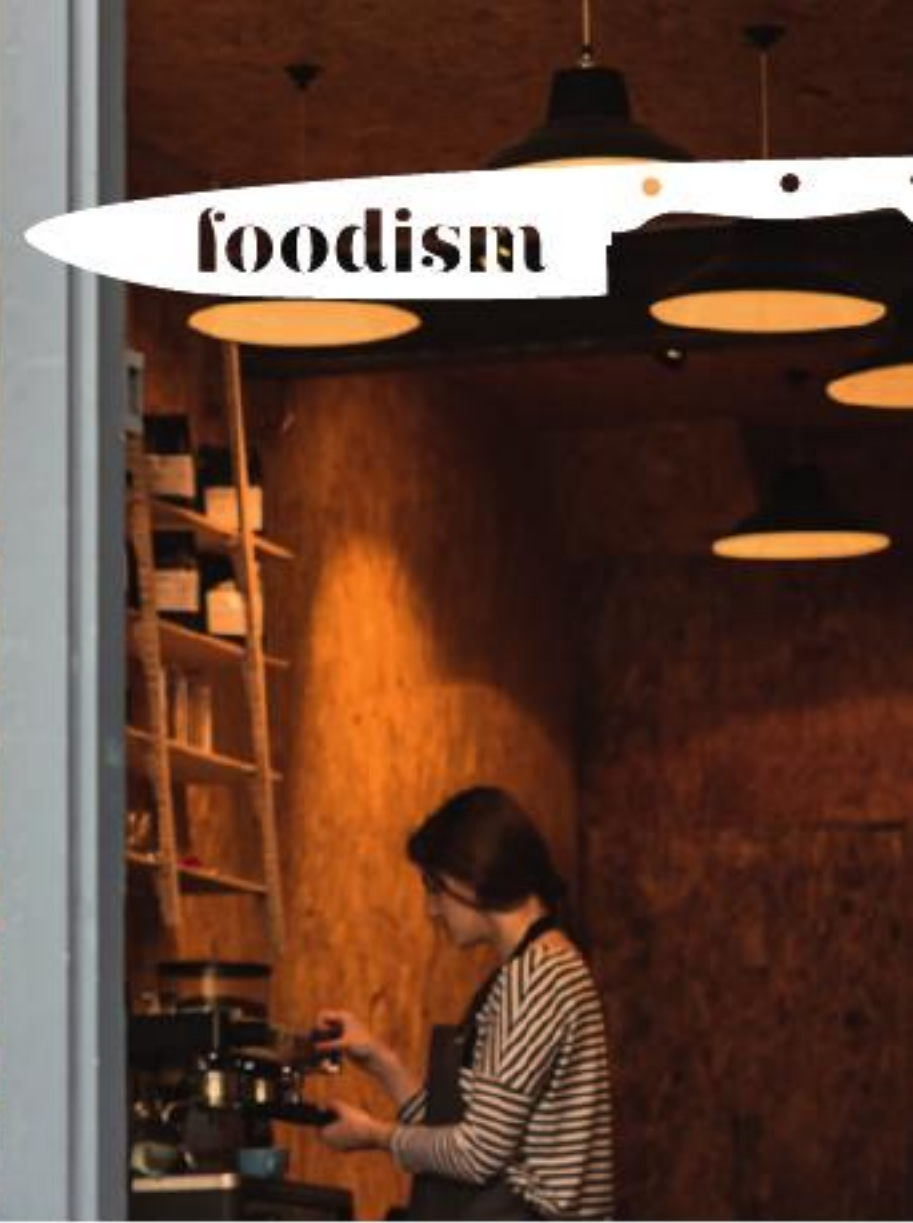
ABOVE (TOP): The Canvas Café's walls, daubed with positive messages from its customers; BOTTOM: Old Spike's machines at work

TOP: Peckham's Old Spike Roastery is a social enterprise café that puts quality and dedication to its ingredients at the top of its agenda; BOTTOM: The Creme Egg Café is a novelty pop up

▶ to improve their job prospects: a similar idea to that behind social enterprise the Unity Kitchen in Camden, which helps disabled people gain catering experience and qualifications.

Of course, social enterprises are nothing new – defined as organisations that use commercial strategies to serve the community and often tackle a social or environmental need, their UK origins appear to lie in the 19th century, with the Cooperative group – the Co-op – set up in Rochdale to provide an affordable alternative to poor-quality and adulterated food and provisions, using any surplus to benefit a community. It's a long way from there to the Dusty Knuckle bakery, which employs youth offenders and early school leavers to make the beautiful artisan loaves served at the Canvas (and now in their own shipping container-turned-café). But then, the history of social enterprises that actually have a targeted, tangible impact has not been continuous. It wasn't until the 1990s that the idea of the social enterprise was resurrected on a small scale – and not until very recently indeed that the connection was made between London's incredible food revolution and doing good.

Rose Lukas is a co-founder and organizer of the Syrian Supper Club, which raises funds and awareness for the Syrian refugee crisis. It was one of the first suppers to 'pop up', as it were, and one of very few to align itself



with a cause. The disparity between the fairly exclusive, £200-a-head meals associated with 'fundraising dinners' makes me reluctant to use the term to describe these monthly, casual affairs serving food at £35 a head and education in the form of a speaker who has recently been in Syria.

While not officially a social enterprise, it does adopt a sustainable and ethical approach: directing all profit to charity, using good, local food, and putting the motive at the heart of the meal rather than as an after thought. "The three founders had lived and worked in Syria for years, and had to leave in 2011 when the crisis escalated," says Lukas. Far from being a case of blind patronage, the money raised goes straight to the friends they made while living in their house in Damascus; a house where food, she continues – "whether making marmalade, walnut soup and cauliflower cake or roasting quail, frying calf's liver and eating blood oranges" – was always a key ingredient.

"Some guests are Syrian, some want to know more. Some couldn't even point Syria

out on a map," Lukas says simply. They will leave having learned that – and plenty more besides – but the initial draw for the latter diners will probably have been the brilliant, and brilliantly reviewed, food. Guest chefs in the form of Ruth Quinlan of E5 Bakehouse and Greg Malouf have contributed their considerable skills to several events, and more collaborations are in the pipeline.

Like Canvas, Dragon, Old Spike and even the elusive Blobfish café, the Syrian Supper team know the power the promise of good food can wield over Londoners, particularly when coupled with the good design which is so evident in their marketing materials. "I think there is sometimes an inclination for products that are deemed 'charitable' to be seen as lower quality," Robinson of Old Spike observes. Their branding says the contrary: clean lines, quality photography and, inside, a cool, rustic feel suffused with the warm, rich smell of quality beans, expertly roasted. "We really wanted the initial communication around a coffee to be around quality, as opposed to its social benefits. To prove our taste credentials, we felt it important that we used only the highest-quality beans."

Today – in London, at least – the look and taste of the new wave of social ventures are indistinguishable from their for-profit contemporaries. At the same time, there is a growing appetite for something more from our thriving food scene than just, well, food. This need is to some extent being answered by novelty cafés – the Creme Egg Café being the latest to join the throng – but these are by nature short-lived and, as the hoo-ha around the owl café showed, often controversial.

What the more sustainable social eating houses seem to offer is a more holistic way of converting our universal love for food into something philanthropic: for there's nothing like a chilli avocado-topped piece of artisan sourdough toast to show that man really can't live by bread alone. **f**

THE TEAM KNOW THE POWER THE PROMISE OF GOOD FOOD CAN WIELD OVER LONDONERS



Photograph by [bottom] Marcus Mays Productions/Getty Images



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BEHIND BARS

Think you know the key to making a good cocktail? Think again, says **Mike Gibson**, who persuaded some of London's best bartenders to part with their secret ingredients and tips. And they're really not what you'd expect...



IN CASE YOU didn't hear, last October the results of the World's 50 Best Bars competition were announced. And if you'd always thought that New York was the place to sit at a bar and enjoy a drink that tastes so complex and nuanced that it turns your world around, listen to this: London was the best-represented city on the list, with nine bars in the top 50.

We could go on and on about our capital's position as the world's leading city for drinks culture, but it's not the venues or the drinks themselves that make it so; it's the men and women behind them that are leading the charge. That's why we've asked a few of the very best bartenders and bar managers in the city to open up about the tricks of the trade that make their bars so popular - and their drinks so damn memorable.

From making use of simple Maldon sea salt and spices, to alchemic and experimental concoctions, via the underused art of proper communication and the humble notebook, these are the tools you'll need to elevate your cocktail game from good to great. If you've ever looked solemnly at your drinks cabinet before sighing and grabbing a beer from the fridge, this is for you. Read on, sip slow, and definitely *do* try this at home...

YOU'D NEVER HAVE FOOD WITHOUT SALT, SO WHY SHOULD DRINKS BE DIFFERENT? IT DOES SO MUCH TO EMBELLISH FLAVOUR

Elliot Ball, Cocktail Trading Co



MR LYAN
White Lyan/Dandelyan

"My secret ingredient is Maldon salt. If people want to experiment with it, I tell them to make a solution as it's easier to measure. There are some really interesting ingredients, like olive leaf and all the different types of acids, but they're not as universal as salt. You can add it to almost anything - although I don't like it in a martini - and it'll add value. It lifts creaminess, brightens flavours and works across many drinks.

"I'm also a fan of using things with substrata flavours, which have an effect without necessarily being a big, noticeable flavour. Wax is an ingredient we've been talking about for a long time - we use it for both flavour and texture, and it's fun. Ambergris [a wax-like substance produced by whales] is also an amazing ingredient, but it's so expensive that not everyone's going to start throwing it into cocktails!"
mrlyan.com

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COMMUNICATION MAY NOT BE THE FIRST BAR TOOL YOU THINK OF BUT IT'S CRUCIAL FOR EVERY SINGLE BARTENDER

James Manero, The Natural Philosopher



RICHARD WOODS

Duck & Waffle/Sushisamba

"Did Mr Lyan say salt? I knew he was going to say that. I have a salted caramel ingredient that I use, and I use it in every dark cocktail I make – not in exactly the same measurements, but a proportion of it is in every one. Salt enhances flavour; it enhances sweetness; it's an ingredient that every chef uses. It's about how you apply it to a cocktail – whether it's a pinch of salt in a bloody mary, or whether it's the salted caramel liqueur that I use in a manhattan or in a negroni, which gives it that saltiness, but it also has that rich, dark colour as well. It also adds dryness and sweetness to a cocktail. My liqueur is essentially just burnt sugar and salt, mixed in with alcohol and then sweetened slightly, but it adds four or five different things from just 2-3mls.

"I also always carry some form of notebook with me. There are occasions where I don't have a bar spoon or a shaker, you can use jam jars to make cocktails, tea strainers instead of regular strainers – you can substitute bar equipment for almost anything, but the ability to record notes is absolutely crucial."

duckandwaffle.com

ELLIOT BALL

Cocktail Trading Co

"Like others before me, I'm big on salt – you'd basically never have food without it, so why should drinks be different? It really does so much to embellish flavour.

"And a balance of sweetness and acidity is essential to basic, decent drinks. The final elements are two things that almost everyone enjoys: vanilla's smooth creaminess is juxtaposed nicely with the brightness of cardamom – and that's my cheat ingredient. In the past, I've relied on 10-15ml of this in many cocktails that just weren't quite there; so much so that my team refer to it as 'Elliot Mix'.

"Basically, it's a balanced citric and sugar syrup with a dash of vanilla bean curd, a light handful of green cardamom pods and a heaped teaspoon of Maldon sea salt, blended and strained. Replace the water in the syrup with marsala or sherry (and balance the sugar), and you have something pretty special."

thecocktailtradingco.co.uk

Photograph (Richard Woods) by Giles Smith

YOU CAN SUBSTITUTE BAR EQUIPMENT FOR ALMOST ANYTHING, BUT THE ABILITY TO RECORD NOTES IS CRUCIAL

Richard Woods, Duck & Waffle



ED SCOTHERN

Mele e Pere

"As I work in a vermouth- and aperitif-orientated bar, I try to focus on promoting not only classic ingredients but also unknown, small producers. As alternatives to products like Campari, for example, we now have wonderful bitter aperitifs such as Nardini and Contratto, both from northern Italy.

"Amari are digestifs of varying degrees of bitterness to sweetness – so much so, our list of a dozen or so is categorised from approachable to challenging. The beauty is that amari can be a great substitute for vermouth in classics such as the negroni, or used on its own in powerful cocktails with smoky or sour notes. Traditionally I'd serve them with a lump of ice and big wedge of orange after a big evening meal as their medicinal strengths lie in aiding digestion and settling the stomach."

meleepere.co.uk

ERIK LORINCZ

American Bar

"One ingredient that I like to use, and can be applied in any form, is citrus. The juice provides an added freshness to drinks. It's very easy to mix, and works well with all spirits, herbs and other fruits. In addition to fresh juice, citrus skin also carries an exceptional amount of aromatic oil. I love to use the skin, just to squeeze over the drink, extracting the aromatic citrus oils and transferring them to the surface of the drink. When lifting the glass close to your nose, the aroma of citrus notes instantly enhances and reinvigorates your senses. Like the juice, citrus powder also contains sensational aromatic oils that can be used as a foundation flavour in almost any drink."

fairmont.com



ALL OF MY BARTENDERS ARE TRUE SPECIALISTS, RATHER THAN JACKS-OF-ALL-TRADES

Luca Cinalli, Oriole

LUCA CINALLI

Oriole

"I joke that my secret is a clock without hands; as a bar manager I never really stop working. Oriole is the first bar I have had the chance to set up completely from scratch, and my aim was for a high-volume bar that delivered the very highest quality drinks with minimal wait times.

"As a result, my bar setup is closer to a restaurant kitchen line, with three stations, each covering a certain number of cocktails and set up to deliver these specific drinks with razor-sharp precision and speed.

It means that on any given night, my bartenders are specialists rather than jacks-of-all-trades."

oriolebar.com





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Vanilla Daiquiri

Ingredients

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- 10ml Monin Vanilla Syrup

Method

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rondiplomatico.com

drinkaware.co.uk
for the facts



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ANDREA MONTAGUE

Brand ambassador,
Bulleit Bourbon

"My secret ingredient is anything that is crammed into my kitchen spice rack. When I am creating a new cocktail or just fancy spicing up a classic, this is my go-to place for inspiration – I love spice.

"I'm talking about every seed, fruit, root, bark, berry, bud, powder or twig you can imagine. I love that they're so easy and accessible, but that the results are complex and spectacular. Spices are easily applied to cocktails and can completely transform a drink, depending on your personal taste and preference. If I were to name a few to start with: add a little madras curry spice to a rum punch; a dash of smoked paprika to a manhattan; or some crushed coriander seeds or pink peppercorns to a gin fizz. And that's just the tip of the iceberg..."

bulleit.com

Photograph (Natural Philosopher) by Addie Chin



**I LOVE SPICE.
TRY ADDING
A DASH OF
SMOKED
PAPRIKA TO A
MANHATTAN**

Andrea Montague, Bulleit Bourbon

JAMES MANERO The Natural Philosopher

"An essential tool for every bartender should be communication. It's not necessarily the first bar tool you might think of, but it's crucial for every single bartender, whether they work in the best cocktail bar in the world or the local pub. A brief conversation with your customer should give you an insight into their tastes and palate – by discussing the types of spirits and flavour notes they prefer you can ensure that they are ordering the right drink; or, if they are trusting you to choose for them, ensure that you choose something suitable.

"There's no point in having all of the most original ingredients, your great concoctions and the latest in bar equipment if you aren't making drinks that the customer wants to drink. Communication is key."

thenatural-philosopher.com

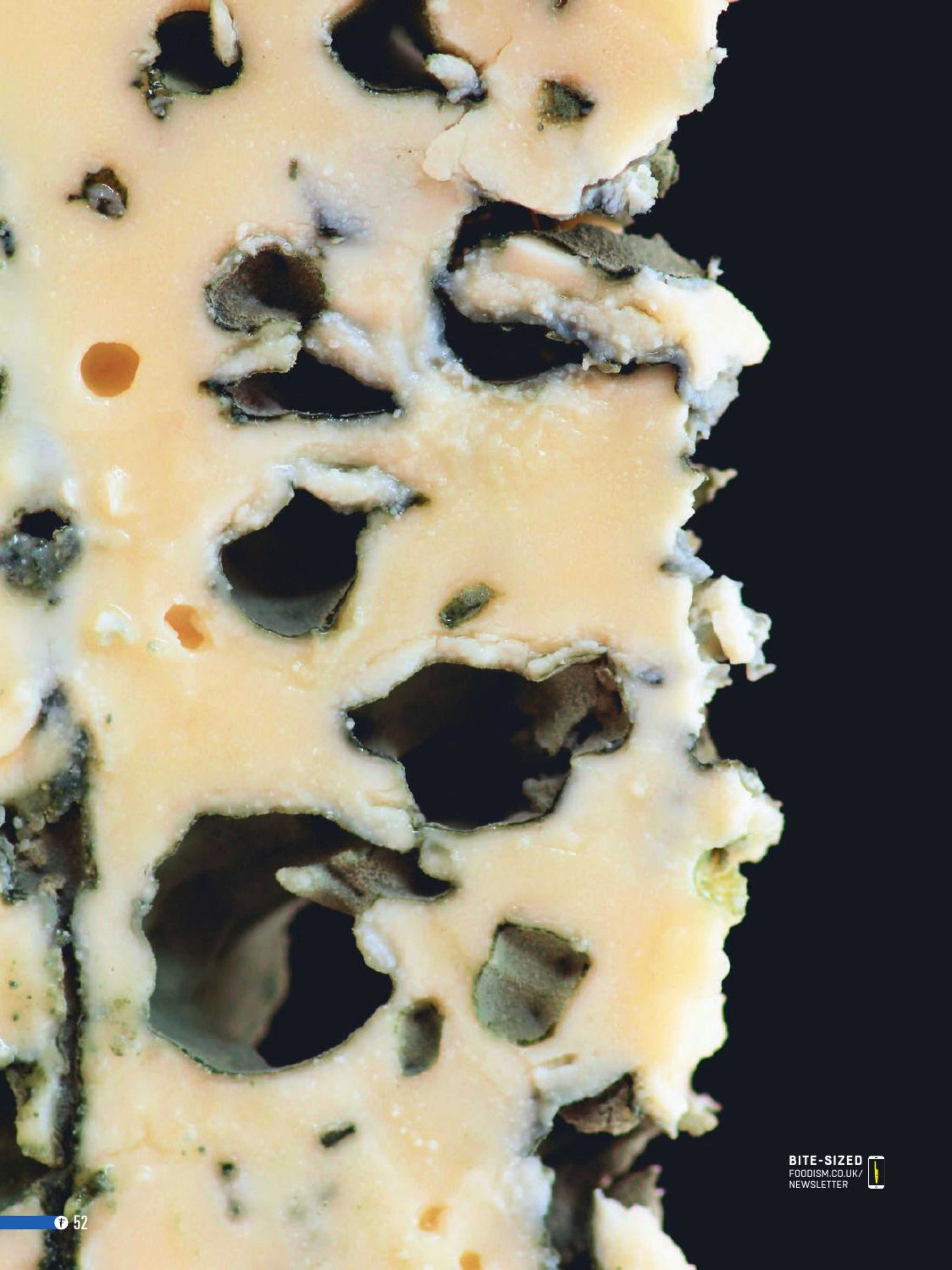
NICO PERATINOS Aqua London

"I like to be a bit of a Willy Wonka with my drinks, so my secret ingredient is chocolate. People can get nervous of chocolate in an unusual concoction but the sheer variety of flavours available can lift a drink to new heights. Chocolate is scientifically proven to make you happy – and if that isn't a potent secret ingredient, nothing is.

"As well as that, I think that nothing makes a drink 'pop' like an interactive garnish and I love to turn a simple cocktail into the centrepiece of a diner's experience at Aqua London. It's just a little bit of fun, and it reminds us all to stop being so serious and remember what it's like to be a kid again. Even something like popping candy can be used in more savoury drinks as a small explosion of excitement for the palate."

aqua-london.com





PASTURES NEW

Forget old caves and rolling fields – **Clare Finney** meets four artisans proving that, when it comes to making cheese, London's landscape works just as well

WE CALL IT a cave, but as you can see, it's a room with a fan in it. What can I say?" Philip Wilton shrugs, chuckling. He's right: we are, irrefutably, in a small room on an industrial estate, being wafted by the sort of fan you'll find in your local hardware shop. The light is dull, the floors are linoleum – yet where, on the grey metal shelves, you would expect to find white boxes and papers, there sit instead dozens of squat, mottled wheels of cheese, handmade here in Tottenham by Billy, a local lad and London's first proper cheesemaking apprentice, and Wilton, the founder of Wildes Cheese.

I'm introduced to each cheese in turn: "This is a collaboration with Beavertown Brewery up the road – a beer-soaked cheese. This is Ally Pally, sitting here taking its time. This is Napier" – named for the road Wilton lives on – "down here minding its own business. It was awarded London's Favourite Cheese in last year's Urban Food Awards," Wilton smiles. He gazes fondly at its soft, dappled grey rind. We might be in a room with a fan, but there is no doubting the devotion of this proud urban cheesemaker to the cheese he's made with no more than an industrial unit, a few bits of kit and milk sourced each morning from a Sussex dairy farmer. "We haven't called it Rose Cottage. We don't pretend to be anything other than urban cheesemakers," he insists, "and we're in Tottenham because we consciously chose to be here."

We leave the cool of Cave Two, as it's called, and retreat to the warmth of Wilton's office/kitchen/reception ("We're not the highlands of Scotland. Space costs here."), as he tells his story. Wildes Cheese was established in 2012 in the wake of the Tottenham riots, when he saw "ordinary people on the streets clearing up with a broom, helping each other, and decided then and there to support our community and be part of a change here." Before that

moment, he'd assumed that to make cheese, he'd have to leave London; he'd just returned from a speculative trip to Wales when the riots happened. Yet today he's one of four producers in London proving otherwise, with cheeses of extraordinary quality and range.

In addition to Wilton, there's Kristen Schnepf, producing Mexican cheese in Gringa Dairy, Peckham. There's Dave Holten, the youngest of London's cheesemakers, making an Australian-style cheese at Blackwoods dairy in Brockley, and there's Bill Oglethorpe, of Bermondsey-based Kappacasein: the dairy behind *that* stall in Borough Market, and whose grilled cheese sandwiches are of international standing. Together, they and their cheese recipes span four continents, drawing customers from

expat communities across the city – and yet they are all somehow a unique reflection of where they are made in London, and of their makers' backgrounds and personalities.

They have terroir – not, perhaps, in the technical sense, which in cheesemaking refers more to natural factors like soil, climate, and environment that gives a cheese its character – but more broadly speaking. These cheeses are the children of their local communities, of their makers, and the conditions of the railway arch, garage or industrial unit in which they are made. Being London-born makes them no less artisanal, or imbued with character by the surrounding area, as Kristen Schnepf points out. "You can make great cheese with the sound of Old Kent Road rather than cows outside. Just because we're not a bucolic village doesn't mean we lack integrity". Her raw milk string cheese – *queso Oaxaca* – for example, won a bronze at the 2014 International Cheese Awards – yet in its conception it remains irreducibly SE15.

Schnepf grew up on Mexican fare, having been raised by her parents in California's central valley before moving to south-east London as a young adult. Mexican cheese was a natural choice, as was her Peckham dairy. "We chose to be urban. We chose to be part of our community here. It's close to the farm, and close to our customers, both Latin American expats and locals." Being made with raw – meaning unpasteurised – milk, *queso Oaxaca* must be made fairly rapidly after milking: hence her sourcing milk from an organic herd in Kent, less than 40 miles away. The taste profile of that day's milk, at the whim of the cows, the climate, the timing and their diet: all is discernible in the soft, mozzarella-like cheese.

Making this and her other Mexican cheese is not easy. Schnepf has had to adapt to the standards of the Department of Health, which render this cheese as it's traditionally made in Mexico illegal, "or as good as". The same is true of many of the cheeses which hail from small, rural producers in Europe, ▶

**WE DON'T
PRETEND TO
BE ANYTHING
OTHER THAN
URBAN
CHEESE-
MAKERS.
WE'RE IN
TOTTENHAM
BECAUSE
WE CHOSE
TO BE HERE**

RIGHT: Kappacasein, in Bermondsey, has been selling its cheeses for years at Borough Market

▶ with which we usually associate the word terroir: “many would be banned if someone tried to make them in London today. Even if we could leave milk out overnight to acidify for example, the milk itself is still different,” she continues. Cows here have a diet of silage and grass, rather than the corn which dominates Mexican dairy farming. The fact her cheese has been ratified, not just by judges but by the huge swathe of homesick expats who frequent her dairy, is testimony to the equipment and her skill.

Schnepp is not Mexican. Her family has not been making *queso fresco* for generations, like those making, say, gruyère. She is an American-born Londoner who, like Wilton, learnt her trade after growing disillusioned with the corporate world. She is as far removed from the idyll of the Swiss family milking their cows and making cheese high up in a chalet in Jura as a cheesemaker can get: yet her customers in Peckham and further afield in London’s Mexican diaspora are as formative as any village. “When you are serving expats, you can’t just do your own thing. You have to find a cheese which pleases a range of people, as every region of Mexico has its own slight variant- and it really matters to them, because it’s home.”

Peckham is not, by any stretch of the imagination, a ‘bucolic village’ – “but there is a community here and it is established,” Schnepp says warmly. She sells much of her cheese in the local shops, and employs a delivery driver who has been in Peckham

THESE CHEESES ARE ALL A UNIQUE REFLECTION OF WHERE THEY ARE MADE

his whole life: he’s now in his late 60s. “He approached us for a job because he was tired of dealing with the job centre,” she continues. “We like to do what we can. We are committed to this area.” As for the Mexican expat community, including Mexican chefs, “it is the mothers who decide how good my *queso* is when they’re in town,” she laughs. “If I get their support, I’m okay.”

These chefs are crucial – for Schnepp perhaps more than any of the cheesemakers in London. Their needs dictate her cheese offering: it is they who, generally speaking, encouraged her to expand her range to include another Mexican cheese. The majority of her cheese is cooking cheese and must thus meet certain criteria to be used in, say, their quesadillas or *queso fundido*. This demands consistency, which in turn requires her team to be absolutely in tune with each other. “For us, creating the right environment for a cheese includes camaraderie as much as equipment, and real clarity of communication. We’re not related, but we are family when it comes to cheese.”

It is a science, she continues, but it’s also an art, and “you need to stay in touch with it, and know how and when to react.” Such subtle differences in strength or sense of time are magnified tenfold when it comes to artisan cheese. Kappacasein’s Bill Oglethorpe keeps a logbook, chronicling everything from that morning’s milkman and the weather at the time of milking, to that day’s maker, who in turn notes down exactly what he did at each stage. “There is always a multitude of choices, and everyone is naturally different in their gestures and decisions,” he explains. “It is a very fine balance because of course we need some consistency – but then, too much consistency is exactly what is wrong with industrial cheese.”

Oglethorpe’s dairy in Bermondsey was the first to pioneer making cheese within an anodyne setting. A converted railway arch in a sprawling residential and industrial area is by its very nature devoid of many of the environmental factors which normally go into an artisan cheese. There aren’t the indigenous latent bacteria you might find in, say, an old farmhouse – or at least there are, but you can’t be sure if they’re the sort that you’re after when you first set up. It takes time for a cheesemaker to create the environment that they need, particularly in places with as little character as an industrial unit and a railway arch – even if the latter is closer to a cave than Wilton’s small room.

“The ideal would of course be an *alpage* in the mountains in June, with a pasture

full of wild flowers that have never been cultivated...” Oglethorpe grins. Yet his arch – Victorian, grey-bricked and redoubtable – is beautiful in its own way. Oglethorpe has had to work to forge Alpine-style cheese (gruyère and reblochon are his main models) out of dank London, but being in Bermondsey has helped rather than hindered. For a start, a large railway arch was available here, and having worked as an *affineur* of hard cheese in the maturation arches at Neal’s Yard Dairy for years, he knew these great piles of bricks were perfect for keeping the temperatures low and steady. “The additional cooling system I use” – this is, don’t forget, ‘mountain’ cheese – “I saw in our local Bermondsey brewery, and adapted it to cool for the maturing chambers,” he continues. He disposes of his whey at the London city farms (Kristen’s is collected by a pig farmer in nearby Essex; Blackwoods’ by Shoreditch’s Lyle’s restaurant, for ice cream) and his main markets, Neal’s Yard Dairy, and his own Borough Market stall, are just up the road.

The aged Bermondsey Hard-Pressed he washes regularly with brined water to encourage the bacterial growth we call the rind. “I don’t need to add anything. By making the environment good for them they just grow naturally. These ones are for next December,” he says opening the door of a small chamber in which I can just make out the luminescent pink wheels, silently ageing. “If you compare it to gardening, it’s like creating the right fertility, in order to grow the plant that you want.” The conditions of the arch, his inspired cooling system, and the hundred-year-old copper vat he brought over from Switzerland all play a part in ‘growing’ a cheese which, while it varies subtly according to season, milk and maker, is reliably one of Neal’s Yard Dairy’s best-selling.

“I like this cheese but it takes a long time – 12 to 15 months – to ripen,” Oglethorpe says, quietly shutting the door. In the alpine meadow of Oglethorpe’s imagination, of course, there’s no problem – but on the gold-paved streets of London, that’s basically squatting cheese. Every cheese that’s ageing is a cheese not earning: taking up prime real estate that would arguably be better served by making fresher cheese with a fast turnaround. As Wilton points out, “our milkman gets paid every week, as does the rent and the rates. Every square inch has to be paid for.” Wilton ages for four or five months, max; Oglethorpe can afford to age for longer because he is longer-established – yet all four of London’s cheesemakers must have sufficient quantities of fresh cheeses to ensure a steady income: ▶



FOUR CHEESES

Like something from a fairy tale, the four cheesemakers of London: Gringa Dairy (Peckham); Kappacasein (Bermondsey); Blackwoods (Brockley); and Wildes (Tottenham).

LEFT: Gringa Dairy makes Mexican-style cheeses from the distinctly un-Mexican Old Kent Road



► ricotta at Kappacasein, Ellis at Wildes, and Graceburn at Blackwood's: London's youngest dairy and the least able, financially, to embark on an aged cheese.

"Soft cheeses are fun to mature and make, and the turnaround is quicker: you don't need 12 months of stock before you start selling anything." Dave Houlten hails from Australia, and set up Blackwoods with two friends who, like him, had grown up working in their local dairy near Melbourne, Main Ridge. The big cheese there was marinated 'Persian' feta: soft cow's cheese steeped in a blend of extra-virgin olive and rapeseed oils and herbs. "There was nothing like it here, and yet it was really popular where we were from," he says. "We thought we could make a bit." Two-and-a-half years later, and a hobby has turned into a full-time occupation with Houlten making the 'feta', Graceburn, and three other soft cow cheeses in an industrial unit in their London home, Brockley.

Like Oglethorpe, Houlten too worked at Neal's Yard Dairy's maturation rooms - but in a difference that would prove defining, he worked with soft cheese. Creating young

cheese at Blackwood's was therefore a question not just of taste or finances, but of experience - and, of course, space. "Do I have arch envy?" Houlten laughs, when I ask why he opted for the industrial unit, rather than railway arches. "Not really. They are good conditions for maturing, but, because we don't keep our cheeses that long, the temperature and humidity we require is more variable." He achieves this in his unit by having rooms within rooms - drawing on the help and equipment of a neighbouring carpenter - and covering the snowy cheeses

IT'S THE MOTHERS WHO DECIDE HOW GOOD MY QUESO IS

with plastic sheets to keep the moisture in.

Houlten collects his milk from the same farm as Schepp and Oglethorpe, and with good reason: it's nearby, and the milk is unpasturised and organic. Wilton gets his from a different farm, of similar quality. That the end results are so different is testimony to them and their location - but that starts even from the moment they collect the milk: Houlten collects his in the afternoon; Oglethorpe and Schnepp in the morning. The time of day makes a difference, as does the weather, the cow's diet, the milkman, the starter culture used and whether it is added before the milk is transported or afterwards. All this is before you've even accounted for subsequent stages of processing.

Back to Bermondsey, and Oglethorpe's burnished copper vat, which glows like an orb in his cheesemaking chamber. Though all use different starters, Oglethorpe is the only one of the urban cheesemakers making his own, out of fermented milk from the farm: "I wanted something more holistic - connected to the farm and to here." He gestures around at his arch: clean, solidly comforting, the refined bustle of customers stocking up on Monmouth coffee beans and chutneys nearby. He adds his starter the moment he picks the milk up at the farm; Schepp, Wilton and Houlten follow the more conventional route of buying theirs and adding them at their dairies. Even then, there are differences: Wilton, being the least bound by a rulebook, buys his starters from all over the world and mixes them together. "I can't read French or Italian or Spanish, so I don't. I make it up," he grins. "The Ellis, for example, is a mix of starters for cheddar and French brie." I try some. It's - well, a bit like brie, a bit like cheddar, a bit something else: tangy, fresh, sturdy. I try all the cheese (it's my professional duty) and wonder that the granular, caramelly slice of Bermondsey Hard-Pressed and the luscious, herbaceous Graceburn come from the same city, let alone the same herd of cows.

At the same time, I recall the celebrated oenophiles who can distinguish between neighboring vineyards just through their wine. This might not be terroir that I'm tasting, but it's something: the taste of collaboration, cultural diversity, localism and dogged perseverance. Forget markets and melting pots: if you're looking for a symbol of today's London, look at its cheese. **f**



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PETER'S YARD

SPRING HAS SPRUNG

Banish the dark and embrace the light. Winter's over, and these cocktails – from some of London's top bars and bartenders – prove it. Happy mixing, everyone...

SHORYU

BARTENDER: Maria Victoria Vecchione

COCKTAIL: Kaoru Lavender

Looking for a refreshing cocktail to celebrate the lighter, brighter days? Try this zingy drink from ramen bar Shoryu in Broadgate Circle, which has the addition of an aromatic lavender garnish to remind you that spring is on its way.

INGREDIENTS

- ◆ 30ml St Germain
- ◆ 25ml Josen sake
- ◆ 25ml Jinzu gin
- ◆ 5 limes
- ◆ ½ small peeled cucumber
- ◆ 1 tsp brown sugar
- ◆ Pinch of dry lavender

Muddle the cucumber with the lime and the brown sugar. Add the half teaspoon of dry lavender. Fill up with crushed ice to the top and add the sake, gin and the St Germain last. Mix well.
shoryuramen.com

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SUN TAVERN

BARTENDER: Ciaran Duffy
COCKTAIL: Shergar Fizz

The cocktails on offer at the Sun Tavern are a cut above what's on offer at most Irish pubs – although that's not a surprise when you take into account that it's from the same team as speakeasy Discount Suit Company. This cocktail makes use of parsley and aquavit in addition to some more standard cocktail ingredients.

INGREDIENTS

- ◆ 25ml Konik's Tail vodka
- ◆ 20ml aquavit
- ◆ 20ml lemon juice
- ◆ 3 sprigs flat leaf parsley
- ◆ Dash of egg white
- ◆ Dash of sugar syrup
- ◆ Prosecco, to top

Put all ingredients (except the prosecco and parsley) into a mixing tin with ice, and shake vigorously. Strain into a tumbler and top with the prosecco. Garnish with a leaf of parsley.
thesuntavern.co.uk

NIGHTJAR

BARTENDER: Nikolett Maczo
COCKTAIL: Druid's Botanist Cup

This cocktail is the result of some of London's best bartenders roughing it for a good old-fashioned foraging competition with Islay gin brand The Botanist. They were asked to create a cocktail with their findings – this one, from Nightjar's Nikolett Maczo, won it. Here's a version you can make at home.

INGREDIENTS

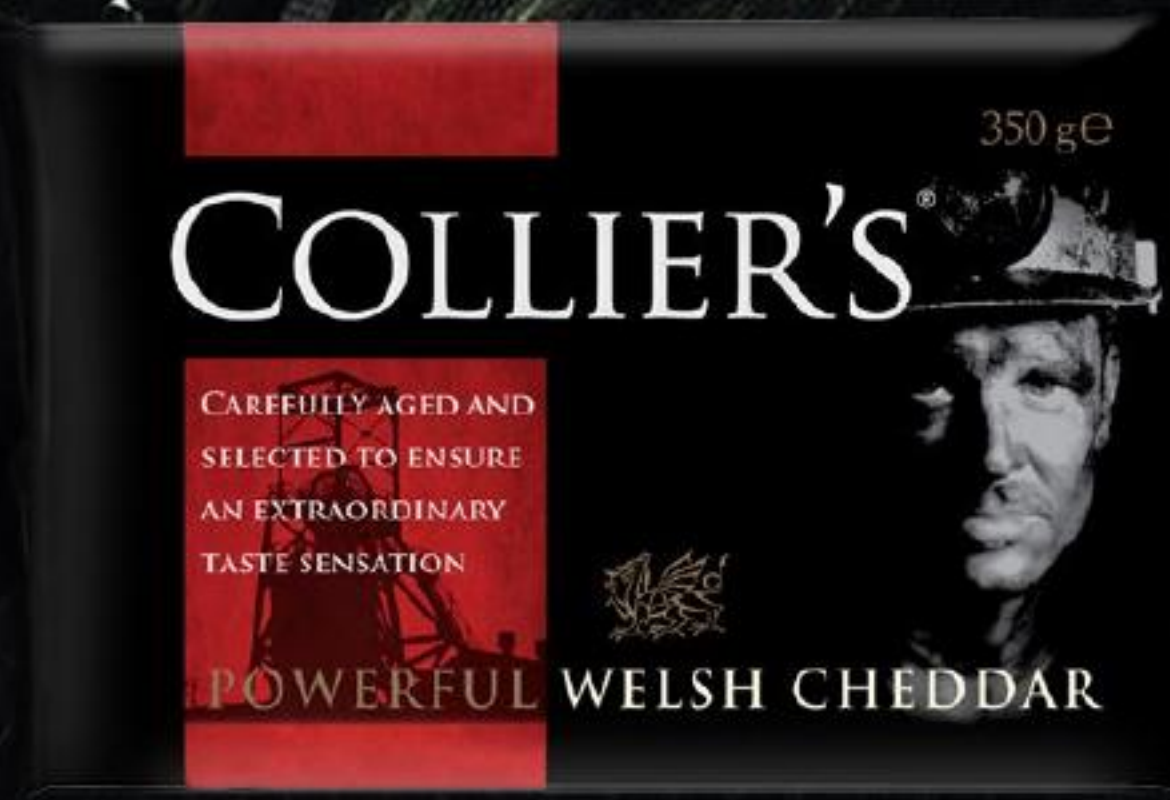
- ◆ 2 tsp plum or prune jam
- ◆ 50ml The Botanist gin
- ◆ 15ml amaro (any available)
- ◆ Juice of ½ lemon
- ◆ 1 tsp honey
- ◆ 1 dash Angostura bitters

Shake all the ingredients and strain into a wooden Tiki cup (a champagne flute will work if you've not got one to hand). Garnish with orange zest and enjoy.
thebotanist.com; barnightjar.com



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BACKCOUNTER

BARTENDER: Leon Shepherd
COCKTAIL: Vauxhall Vesper

This cocktail from Counter Vauxhall's new bar is like the bastard lovechild of a vodka and a gin martini, *and* a manhattan. In a good way.

INGREDIENTS

- ◆ 40ml Bombay Sapphire gin
- ◆ 25ml Tito's vodka
- ◆ 10ml Cointreau
- ◆ 10ml Martini Rosso
- ◆ Dash of The Bitter Truth Orange Bitters

Shake all the ingredients together with ice in a shaker and double strain into a chilled martini glass. Garnish with orange twist. counterrestaurants.com

DRY MARTINI

BARTENDER: Martin Siska
COCKTAIL: The Jigger

This cobbler-style cocktail is a great one for the start of spring. Fill a big old jug with fresh fruit, let the ingredients steep in the juices and rum, and enjoy.

INGREDIENTS

- ◆ Seasonal fruit
- ◆ 10ml lemon juice
- ◆ 10ml sugar syrup
- ◆ 20ml blackberry syrup
- ◆ 60ml grapefruit juice
- ◆ 50ml Bacardi Superior
- ◆ 50ml Ron Zacapa 23

Shake and strain into a jug or vessel, leave for five minutes, and strain into a glass. drymartiniorg.com





BEYOND THE LABEL

How did Campo Viejo go from being a tiny vineyard in Rioja run by two friends to the most sought-after Spanish wine in the world? This is a story about innovation, tradition, regional identity – and making great wine to share with great friends

THERE'S A UNIQUE backstory behind even the world's most recognisable winemakers, and Spanish brand Campo Viejo is no different. You might be used to seeing its trademark yellow and orange labels on supermarket shelves, but the story behind its creation is as romantic as any boutique vineyard's, and its popularity speaks for itself. Without further ado, here are a few things you might not know about this iconic wine producer...

Start small, think big

The first bottle of Campo Viejo was created in Rioja, Spain in 1959. Two winemakers, Beristain and Ortigüela, founded a small winery in the Rioja region of Spain, aiming to create a wine that was sociable by nature, and perfect for sharing. The name Campo Viejo, meaning 'old country', is inspired by the land of Ortigüela's childhood – a former Roman colony where commanders retired to set up wineries – due to the inspiration he found in his homeland.

It's all about the grapes

The main grape used in Campo Viejo's wines is called tempranillo. It's the region's most widely planted and well-known grape, which you'll recognise for its cherry, plum and warming tobacco flavours. Rioja has a *Denominación de Origen Calificada* (shortened to DOPCa). This means that, like in France and Italy, wines made here have to jump through a fair few hoops in order to comply with the standards of the region, including which grape varieties can be used.



Tempranillo may rule the roost here, but Campo Viejo also produces a wine with the more fruit-forward and spicier garnacha grape, too.

Old World, not old fashioned

Rioja may sit in the heart of the 'Old World' in geographical terms, but Campo Viejo is anything but an old-school winemaker. In fact, it brings a progressive touch to almost every step in the winemaking process, whether that's experimentation with the oak barrels

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: A playful installation in the vineyard; grapes being sorted; the wine ages in oak barrels; Rioja and tapas; the four wines in the Campo Viejo stable; corks



it uses to age the wine – a process that gives it its characteristic spicy, toasty and vanilla notes, as well as softening its tannins and adding layers of complexity – or being the first Spanish winery to be certified carbon-neutral by the United Nations. Now that's innovation...

What's in a label?

Decoding a wine's label is no mean feat – especially a European one, where it's not always easy to tell whether the words on the label refer to the grape variety or to the name of the region.

Thankfully, Campo Viejo's label is easy to get your head around. Underneath the brand's recognisable logo, the word "Rioja" is stamped proudly on the bottle, as well as *Denominación de Origen Calificada*, a reminder of Rioja's status as a wine region with high standards to hit.

On its tempranillo and garnacha wines, the grape's name is displayed; and on its longer-aged bottlings are the words Reserva and Gran Reserva – terms that stand for how long the wine's spent ageing in oak. Then there's the vintage – the year the grapes were harvested – so you know whether you're drinking a young wine, or a mature one.

All of this adds up to the highest seal of approval Campo Viejo could have: a confirmation that it stands as a proud example of wines from this special and historic region. ●

campoviejo.com



YOU MIGHT BE USED TO SEEING ITS TRADEMARK YELLOW AND ORANGE LABELS, BUT THE STORY BEHIND ITS CREATION IS AS ROMANTIC AS ANY BOUTIQUE VINEYARD'S

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— PART 3 —

EXCESS

“THE SMOKED CRAB TOSTADA
WITH HABANERO CHILLI MAYO
HAD A JUST-OUT-OF-THE-SEA,
CITRUSY FRESHNESS”

LAURA MILLAR IN MEXICO, 066





BEYOND THE BURRITO

MAIN COURSE 🌮 🍷 🌍

In 2015, three of the restaurants on the prestigious annual World's 50 Best Restaurants list were in Mexico. And for the past few years, the country's been wowing some serious chefs, from our own Thomasina Miers to Anthony Bourdain. Welcome to the Mexican fine-dining revolution, writes **Laura Millar**

ON MIDWAY DRIVE, a mere ten minutes by car from one of San Diego's most famous attractions, Seaworld, you'll find a branch of one of California's most popular fast-food restaurants: Taco Bell. A byword nationwide for cheap and, er, cheerful Mexican fare since the 1950s, it currently sells the likes of the 'Doritos Cheesy Gordita Crunch' and the 'Double Decker Taco Supreme' to cash-strapped college kids and hungry families who have quite possibly never set foot across the border.

A town called TJ

Just 20 miles south of that branch of Taco Bell is the border town of Tijuana, in the sunny Mexican state of Baja California. A not-especially-attractive conurbation with a population of more than 1.5 million, for the past few decades it's been cursed with the type of reputation that makes even Donald Trump look palatable; riddled with drug cartels, frequent gun battles, cheap prescription drugs and rowdy springbreakers.

But the city has undergone a transformation in recent years, with a crackdown on crime and a new generation of enthusiastic young entrepreneurs embracing the food-truck and craft-beer scenes, who refer to their hometown as 'TJ' - and its stature as a destination for fantastic food is soaring. For one thing - and this might surprise you - it's home to that most ritzy of menu items: the caesar salad.

Yes, here, in a restaurant on the once somewhat sleazy main artery of the Avenida Revolución where underage, sombrero-wearing students would come and party, head chef, owner and Italian immigrant Caesar Cardini knocked up this snack in 1924 for a guest from some leftovers. Today, you can still order it from an immaculately clad waiter sporting a spotless, ankle-length white apron, who will prepare the dish tableside with fresh, crisp romaine lettuce, olive oil, ground mustard, grated parmesan, baked croutons and anchovy fillets in an elegant piece of restaurant theatre.

Caesar's is a little chunk of history - the restaurant still has its original, long, polished wood bar and 1920s espresso machine - but its current co-owner is a man who has been doing much to revitalise not only Tijuana's food scene, but the city itself. Local chef Javier Plascencia has grown up around cooking and restaurants - his father, Juan Jose, started his own pizzeria in the city in 1969, and the family now own several dining establishments. In 2011 he opened Mision

19, a stylish restaurant which uses modern techniques such as cooking sous vide, and which has already won several awards. A year later, he persuaded the city's mayor to create a *zona gastronomica* in an area downtown, in which several good restaurants now thrive.

"I couldn't have opened this 15 years ago," Plascencia admits frankly from the dark wood and red-accented dining room, situated on the fifth floor of a slick office building downtown. He's referring not only to the period when cartels scared away tourists as well as intimidating locals, but to his adventurous and sophisticated cuisine, which now appeals to adventurous and sophisticated diners. One thing he is passionate about, and proud of, is only using local ingredients; a thread which runs through the cooking of all the chefs I meet. "I want to erase the perception people have of 'typical' Mexican food - we've got more to offer than burritos and enchiladas," he says.

Plascencia likes to combine unusual flavours, demonstrated by dishes like foie gras with candied olives, red wine sauce and roasted apricot, or roasted beet salad with pickled carrot, grapefruit jam, pistachio, lentils, beet leaf pesto and goat's milk cheese. I try the tasting menu - incredible value at £28 for seven courses (£39 with wine). Standouts include intense, salted bone marrow with a fiery tomatillo and habanero sauce; meaty, chargrilled octopus with pistachio, elephant garlic, and chickpeas; and the carrot bread pudding with a pretzel and sweet milk gel - like the most heavenly, creamy and crunchy bread and butter pudding you've ever had.

The next morning, I stroll around the city's busy, chaotic and traditional Hidalgo market, where chefs and housewives alike have been flocking for decades to buy pre-prepared *mole* pastes in varying strengths and >

I WANT TO
ERASE THE
PERCEPTION
PEOPLE HAVE
OF 'TYPICAL'
MEXICAN
FOOD



ABOVE: Sample local delicacies from pigskin to grasshoppers at Hidalgo Market
BELOW: Mexico City is home to three of the World's 50 Best Restaurants

► sweetnesses, choose from hundreds of different types of dried chillies, or squeeze fruits such as persimmon, passion fruit or soursop for ripeness.

I stop by El Jerezano, a sit-in stall where I sample the small but smiley owner Josefina Marquez's *gordita de chicharron con salsa rosa* – deep-fried pigskin, a local delicacy, which you'll recognise if you've ever had pork scratchings – before bracing myself at another stall, La Oxaqueria, to try a hearty bowl of... grasshoppers. Known here as *chapulines*, they come seasoned with lime and salt. To my surprise (and relief) they're just crunchy, and worryingly moreish.

Later, I head to the Telefonica Gastro Park, located next to an old telephone exchange, which currently features around 15 different food trucks all serving interesting twists on Mexican food; by lunchtime, regulars and office workers are already filling up the communal bench seating. Passionate, tattooed twentysomething Tijuana Jose Rodrigo Figueros Sanchez spent several months working for acclaimed chef Simon Rogan in the kitchen at L'Enclume in Cumbria, before deciding to go it alone with his truck, Carmelita, named after his grandmother. "I use traditional Mexican ingredients to cook the kind of thing my grandmother would have, but with very modern methods," he explains.

I try his roasted cauliflower taco with homemade *mole* (his features 32 ingredients; more basic ones average around 15), which is earthy, smoky and just a little bit sweet,

before biting into a slab of beef tongue *torta*, the meat utterly tender and surprisingly light, lifted by a sharp salsa. "For me, and the other guys here," he explains, "this is a way to gauge the reaction of our customers for a smaller investment, then hopefully one day open a restaurant of our own." I admire his ambition, and I hope that by the time I return, he – and the others like him – will have made their dreams come true.

The Holy Trinity

In the heart of the sprawling metropolis that is Mexico City, not far from the stately, forested Chapultepec park, is the smart, upmarket neighbourhood of Polanco. Its wide, Bond Street-like boulevards are lined with designer stores, from Gucci to Tiffany, and, fittingly, it's also home to the triumvirate of first-class restaurants that made it onto the World's 50 Best Restaurants list in 2015, including Pujol (16), Biko (37) and Quintonil (35), overseen by chefs Enrique Olvera, Mikel Alonso and Jorge Vallejo respectively.

In Biko's airy, first floor dining room, over a starched-cloth-covered table, the salt-and-pepper-haired, Basque-born Alonso is enthusing about the current Mexican food scene. "There are so many exciting restaurants here, not just in Mexico City, but in the whole country," he says. "The world is getting to know that Mexico is a great place to eat, which is a great thing for us." He studied at San Sebastian's Luis Irizar Cooking School before moving to Mexico 17 years ago with friend and fellow chef Bruno Oteiza; the pair

FIVE MORE TO TRY IN TIJUANA

La Querencia:

Chef Miguel Angel Guerrero calls his style of cooking 'Baja Med', blending the ingredients from the Baja coast with those from the inland, which has a more Mediterranean climate.

Avenida Escuadrón 201;

laquerenciatj.com

Maquina 65 at Telefonica Gastro Park

Don't miss the outrageously good octopus hamburger or the duck and cheese taco at this food truck.

facebook.com/maquina65

La Caza Club

Funky, design-led restaurant where talented chef Ruben Silva serves up local flavours like pork cheeks with avocado, cheese and cucumber.

Miguel Alemán Valdez;

facebook.com/lacazaclub664

The Food Garden

A modern, hawker-style food-hall with dozens of outlets; Javier Plasencias's Erito serves obscenely good *ensenadas de pescado* (fish tacos).

Plaza Rio; facebook.com/foodgardenrio

Fauna

Laid-back, quirky bar and tasting room in Tijuana's craft beer 'district' around the old Plaza Fiesta, offering dozens of locally-brewed beers.

Paseo de los Héroes, Plaza Fiesta;

facebook.com/faunatastingroom



opened Biko together in 2008.

Their signature techniques – a mix of complex and playful – result in dishes like foie gras mousse with pineapple, a chlorophyll and anise foam, and edible begonias, or chocolate ‘soil’ with toasted amaranth, coffee and cookie crumbs. The house mole is aged for months, so the flavours develop in intensity – diners are even informed how old the current base is when they order it. “I want people to know that Mexican cuisine is some of the most complex in the world, that it’s worth the journey,” he expounds. His seven-course tasting menu (£39 without wine, £76 with), encompasses seasonal ingredients, producing picture-perfect, highly Instagrammable plates of food which in some cases are almost too pretty to eat, but which definitely don’t skimp on flavour.

A few streets away, local boy Jorge Vallejo is overseeing his busy kitchen at Quintonil. Front of house, the décor is fun, with astroturf on the walls, the atmosphere less formal than at Biko. After culinary school and a stint on cruise ships and in hotels, Jorge honed his trade working for mentor Enrique Olvera. He then made something of a pilgrimage to Copenhagen to work alongside culinary hero

René Redzepi of Noma (“I wanted to see how the best restaurant in the world works,” he explains), before opening this restaurant with his wife, four years ago.

His philosophy is straightforward: “We use ingredients which are perhaps a little unusual or underrated,” he says, “but I like to make something spectacular out of them, and also make them taste fresh and light. They are things you find in small towns, mostly in peasant cuisine, like cactus or *ayocote* beans, but I find it more challenging and rewarding to make something special out of something simple than out of ingredients like caviar.” I have no hesitation in attacking his popular seven-course set menu; everything is so delicate, so balanced, that by the end there is no bloating, no heaviness, no carb coma. I especially loved the zingy, green cactus ceviche with samphire; the smoked crab tostada with habanero chilli mayo and radishes, which had a just-out-of-the-sea, citrusy freshness; and a sweetened corn crumble pudding with a lemongrass panna cotta, which basically tasted of Thailand.

In a city known for its street food, with hawkers on every corner selling freshly

MEXICO CITY

Pujol
How about a tostada with powdered ants, coffee and sweetcorn? Or a dish of fungus, liver and chicken gizzards? It’s testament to chef Enrique Olvera’s genius that these basic, icky-sounding ingredients taste like heaven.
Calle Francisco Petrarca; pujol.com.mx

Fonda El Refugio
This colourful, family-run inn has been dishing up Mexican favourites like *chiles rellenos* (chillies stuffed with ground beef) and chicken in mole sauce to loyal diners since 1954.
Calle Liverpool; fondaelrefugio.com.mx

Paxia
Hotshot chef Daniel Ovadia, who owns several restaurants, wows with quirky dishes like deconstructed tortilla soup and serves mini-wagons of mole sauce.
Avenida La Paz; paxia.mx

squeezed cactus juice, griddled tortillas with cheese and meat fillings, or simply grilled ears of corn, chefs like Jorge and Alonso are taking inspiration from their roots and elevating it to another level. Combined with the incredible art which runs through Distrito Federal’s veins – vast, striking murals by Diego Rivera, knowing self portraits by Frida Kahlo, colourful trees of life at the folk art museum – it’s definitely a place to come and really whet your appetite.

Earthy flavours

A 45-minute flight from Mexico City is the elegant, colonial town of Oaxaca, capital of the state of the same name (and which gave its name to Thomasina Miers’ Wahaca chain). Ringed by mountains, this Unesco World Heritage site is a feast for the eyes – its Spanish-style buildings are painted in a rainbow of shades, from electric blue to egg-yolk yellow, while every other market stall proffers fabrics and garments in neon pinks, forest greens and tomato reds – as well as the tastebuds. The diverse and delicious Oaxacan cuisine is lauded through the country – the state even has seven signature mole recipes, from intense, dark mole negro, to the sweeter mole *almendrado*, made with almonds.

Just walking through the vast, teeming >



Photographs by Danita Dellmont; filopardo; Angus Dorrn; Maren Caruso/Getty Images

OAXACA

Casa Oaxacavw

This stylish restaurant serves more 'auteur's cuisine'; chef Alejandro Ruiz serves up dishes like lamb in pineapple and vanilla sauce, and venison *tamales*.
García Vigil; casaoaxaca.com.mx

Las Quince Letras

The place to try the huge variety of Oaxaca moles, plus grasshoppers with local cheese wrapped in sage.
Calle de Mariano Abasolo;
lasquinceletras.mx

La Biznaga

Locals and visitors alike jam the courtyard for delicious nouveau-Oaxacan fusion dishes, like turkey tamales in mole negro, or beef fillet in mezcal with plums and pasilla chillies.
García Vigil; labiznaga.com.mx



ABOVE: Mexico is experiencing a culinary revolution. Its home-grown produce is second-to-none, and widely available in the impressive food markets

► 20 de Noviembre food market beyond the central *zocalo*, or main square, will make your mouth water. At its entrance, you run the gamut of the grilled meat section; dozens of stall-holders tend to their smouldering, red-hot coals, offering different cuts and types of meat, which you choose, before selecting a range of vegetables to accompany it. Further in, hawkers are preparing fresh *tlayudas* – their equivalent of pizza – huge, crunchy discs of fried or toasted tortilla, topped with local cheese, salsa, shredded meat, lettuce and avocado. Here, chefs and home cooks alike make the most of the bounty of ingredients they have on their doorstep.

One of them is Aurora Toledo, the matronly chef-owner of Zandunga, a brightly decorated eatery which dishes up hearty, local fare. Like many Oaxacan bars and restaurants, Zandunga has an extensive list of *mezcal*s, the smoky, agave-based spirit native to the region. "I drink it medicinally," she laughs throatily when we meet; "it's good for the throat!". Her signature dish is *estofado*, a long and slow-cooked beef stew cooked with habanero chillies, tomato, onion, achiote paste and coriander, sweetened with apple and pineapple. It's fantastically rich, and is



so highly prized it's often served at weddings. "We're so lucky, here," she says, "we have such a wide variety of flavours, and our food has texture, colour, and history." She calls herself a cook, rather than a chef; self-taught rather than trained, she focuses solely on traditional food, without any twists.

Those who have studied at culinary schools can rightfully call their cuisine *cocina de autor*, or 'cooking by auteur'. At Pitona, one of the town's most lauded restaurants, I meet chef Manuel Rodriguez. He studied in Spain, where he learned many techniques including cooking with liquid nitrogen and spherification (shaping a flavoured liquid into a gel-like sphere). Here, in the relaxed surrounds of the pale-walled dining room, there's a bit more drama to the dishes.

"There's lots of innovation going on in Mexico at the moment," confirms Rodriguez, "and here we combine the traditional with the innovative." I slurp his *sopa di fideo*, a tomato and beef broth containing spheres of local cheese which explode on my tongue, making it taste like the most comforting soup in the world. This is followed by red snapper, served under a bell jar, which is lifted theatrically

to release the smoke that has flavoured it during cooking. It's been cooked with plantain and *chayote* – a green, fibrous local vegetable – and topped with spicy *chile de agua*. The piece de resistance is rice pudding, prepared at the table; the milk, sugar, rice and cinnamon concoction is squeezed into a bowl of liquid nitrogen so it makes a hard, crunchy, meringue-like dessert, served with a jug of hot chocolate. It looks very impressive, and tastes just as good.

My foodie crusade has been a veritable voyage of discovery through a range of flavours, techniques, ingredients and interpretations; trust me, you'll never look at a burrito the same way again. 🍌

GETTING THERE

British Airways flies to San Diego from approximately £612 return, or to Mexico City from approximately £850 return, visit ba.com for offers. AeroMexico flies direct to Mexico City from £570 return. Fly on to Oaxaca with InterJet, which offers return flights from £80, interjet.com. Budget-conscious travellers may prefer to take a luxury coach, prices are reasonable – try Ado Platino ado.com.mx. For more information on Mexico, see visitmexico.com.



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UNDERSTANDING CHARDONNAY: A few years ago, over-oaked, cheap New-World chardonnay gave the grape a bad name. But don't be fooled: it's actually one of the most versatile grapes in the world, picking up more influences from its climate and its winemaking than any other. Cool-climate styles, like those from Chablis in Burgundy, show citrus notes and flinty minerality, while warmer-climate chardonnays, like the best from Napa Valley in California, are full of tropical fruit flavours (largely due to riper grapes) and vanilla notes thanks to oak ageing.

DRINK 🍷 🍹 🍺 🍻

GRAPE WHITE HOPE

The most commonly planted grape in the world, chardonnay is taking back its reputation. We run the rule over five distinct expressions of this malleable grape, plus four great new vodkas, and some killer infused beers

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID HARRISON



Foiled by chardonnay's bad rep? Don't be – this grape's behind some of the finest wines out there. Check out our selection, which spans France, Chile, California and more:

1 DOMAINE CHARLY NICOLLE PETIT CHABLIS 2014, Petit Chablis AOC, Burgundy, France. Coming from northern Burgundy, where the climate is cooler, means this is at the sharp end of the chardonnay scale. 12.5%, 75cl; £13.95, perfectcellar.com

2 BERRY BROS. & RUDD POUILLY-FUISSÉ, OLIVIER MERLIN 2014, Pouilly-Fuissé AOC, Burgundy, France. A cracking example of everything that's good about premium burgundy. 13%, 75cl; £22.95, bbr.com

3 YERING STATION 'THE ELMS' CHARDONNAY 2013, Yarra Valley, Australia. Stone fruit notes, and crisper than a lot of Australian chardonnays. 13%, 75cl; £11.99, majestic.co.uk

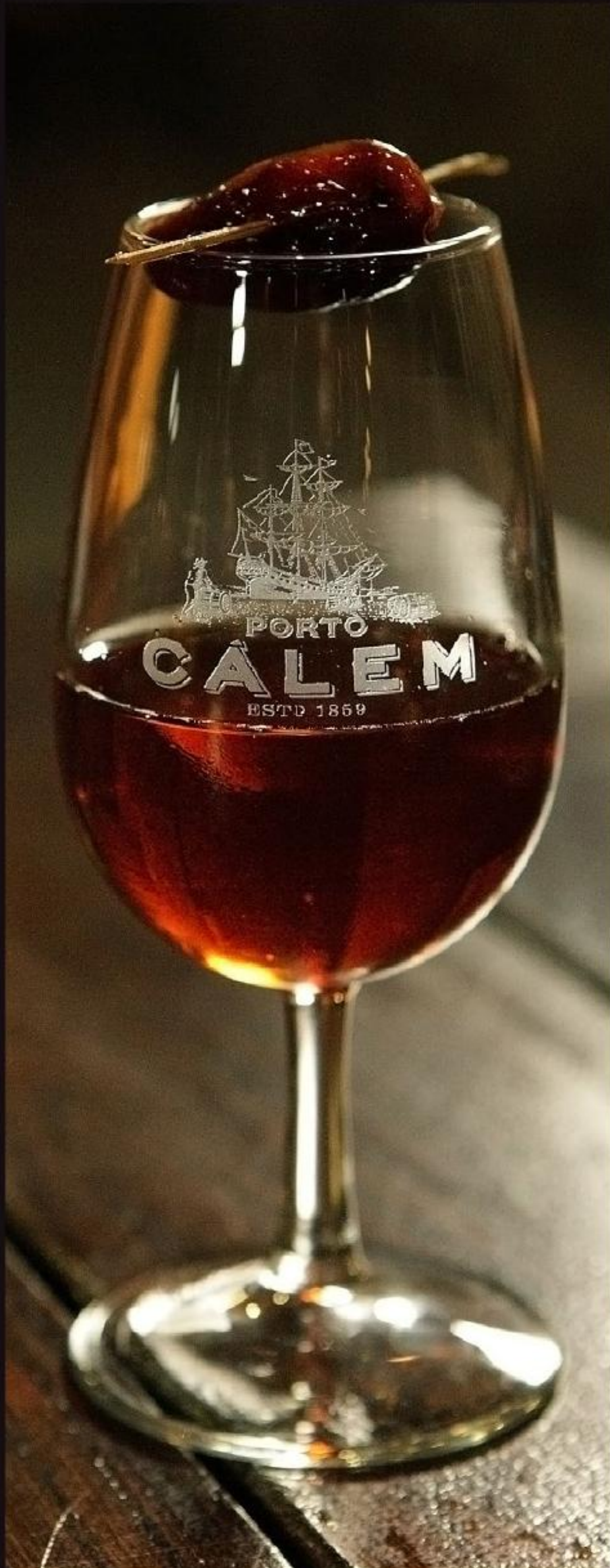
4 ERRAZURIZ WILD FERMENT CHARDONNAY 2014, Casablanca Valley, Chile. Cool sea breezes make for a fresher style, with naturally occurring yeast used to kick-start the fermentation process (hence the name). 13%, 75cl; £12.99, majestic.co.uk

5 NEWTON UNFILTERED CHARDONNAY 2010, Napa Valley, California, USA. Think £42's punchy for a bottle of wine? If you love warm-climate chardonnays, you might never taste one better than this, from Napa's world-leading winemaker Newton. 14.5%, 75cl; £42, mwinestore.co.uk



CÁLEM

Duoro Valley, Portugal



Amathus is a big believer in the versatility of Port and has been working closely with a number of the UK's top cocktail bars to create innovative new cocktails with unique brands like Cálem Port.

Here are a couple of our favourite Cálem Port cocktails for you to try out:



ELDER SOUR

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Top with Dr Polidori's Tonic
Garnish with grapefruit



ANY PORT IN A STORM

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25ml Ron Barceló Gran Anejo
25ml lime juice

Top with ginger beer
Garnish with lime

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- Marlowe Harris, Amathus Drinks



Cálem Port is available at www.amathusdrinks.com

AMATHUS
DRINKS TO THE WORLD



- 1 **OUR/LONDON VODKA**, London, UK. Wheat-based vodka created by a community of distillers in cities including Berlin and Detroit. This one's made in a micro-distillery in Hackney. 37.5%, 35cl; £18.95, 31dover.com
- 2 **AVAL DOR CORNISH POTATO VODKA**, Cornwall, UK: Award-winning vodka made by a family of potato farmers in the far reaches of Cornwall. 40%, 70cl; £39, aval-dor.co.uk
- 3 **NAKED CHASE VODKA**, Herefordshire, UK. The team at Chase turn their hands to cider apples to make this five-times-distilled vodka. 42%, 70cl; £35, chasedistillery.co.uk
- 4 **BLACK COW VODKA**, Dorset, UK. A great vodka made from milk. Yep, milk. Honestly. We did say you could make it from pretty much anything... 40%, 70cl; £27.95, 31dover.com

UNDERSTANDING VODKA: Pretty much anything that can be fermented can be used to make vodka, including (but not limited to) potatoes, grapes, wheat and other grains. It's a neutral spirit, meaning almost no identifiable flavour will be imparted by whatever you use to distil it.



UNDERSTANDING INFUSED BEERS: No, we're not talking about bright purple 'cider' or lime-flavoured lager. Brewers in Europe have been infusing beers with fruits and other natural flavours – either before or after the fermentation process – for years.



- 1 **MAD HATTER MEMBRILLO TRIPEL**, Liverpool, UK. Based around the tripel style of strong Belgian ale and infused with quince paste. 9%, 330ml; £3.85
- 2 **WHITE HAG BEANN GULBAN**, Sligo, Ireland. A classic sour beer, flavoured with delicate wild heather and fermented with naturally occurring yeast. 7.5%, 330ml; £2.75
- 3 **YEASTIE BOYS GUNNAMATTA**, Wellington, New Zealand. A classic new-school, sparkling IPA, with the addition of earl grey tea. 6.5%, 330ml; £2.90
- 4 **SIREN POMPELMOCELLO**, Wokingham, UK. The lovechild of a saison and an IPA, brewed with grapefruit juice and zest added for flavour, and lactose for texture. 6%, 330ml; £3.60
- 5 **THREE BOYS BELGIAN WHEAT**, Christchurch, NZ. Brewed in the classic Belgian *weissbier* style, with added coriander and citrus zest. 5%, 330ml; £3.40

All available from honestbrew.co.uk



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THE DIGEST

Ear to the ground? No? Don't worry – we've rounded up all the food and drink industry news you need

LIGHT BITES   

MOVING ON UP

It's so hard to say goodbye – especially to a beloved London restaurant. But fear not: although Anthony Demetre and Will Smith's vaunted Soho paradise Arbutus – which has held a Michelin star since 2007 – is closing its doors, the two aim to bring its essence to a new location post-haste. Details aren't clear at this stage (even the name isn't set) but given the track record of the co-founders, we're choosing to be excited, not sad. And that's not at all because we're in denial – honest...



POP GOES THE RAWSON

What do you do when you've won a Young British Foodies award and left your acclaimed British-Peruvian restaurant on your own terms before you've even hit your peak? If you're former Pachamama head chef Adam Rawson, you head to some of Europe's most exciting food destinations and come back full of recipes and ideas to make into pop-up menus in restaurants around the capital. We went to his recent pop-up Baskaria – inspired by a trip to San Sebastian – at the Newman Arms, and it was superb. Next on the agenda is Morocco, Sardinia, Turkey and Croatia, among others. We can't lie – we're pretty excited.

Buy tickets at billetto.com

HAIL TO THE CHEFS

We'll admit it, we don't watch *The X Factor*. But that doesn't mean we're not suckers for a big old talent-scouting competition, and this one's arguably the biggest of the lot when it comes to food and drink. The S.Pellegrino Young Chef 2016, which will be the second iteration of the competition, will hand-pick regional contenders from the tens of thousands of chefs under 30 who enter, culminating in a cook-off final in Milan, the brand's home, during which they'll be coached by luminaries such as Claude Bosi and Ollie Dabbous. "I was delighted and honoured to be named S.Pellegrino Young Chef 2015," says last year's winner Mark Moriarty, from Ireland. "The journey was an unforgettable, one-off experience that I will always remember. It's made an incredible difference to my career."

Applications close on 31 March;

finedininglovers.com





STOCKING UP

Since the pop-up format has become popular, more and more chefs at the top end are using it as a way to break from tradition and experiment. Alyn Williams is one such chef, reprising his popular CHEFstock collaborative dinners for a third year. Partnering with him in the Westbury kitchen will be British chefs Marc Wilkinson and Nigel Haworth, as well as Finn Sasu Laukkonen and Italian Riccardo Camanini. Oh, and they all have a Michelin star... See you there. 5-25 April; call 020 7183 6426 to book



ACTION STATIONS

We love food for a good cause, and there's arguably no company doing more for food, with food, than Action Against Hunger. As well as its annual Auction Against Hunger, which will bring together some of the capital's best chefs for a street-food event and charity auction at Street Feast's Hawker House in Canada Water on 26 May, the charity is also planning some pretty tasty one-off experiences for 2016. Alongside the recent experimental supper at its new restaurant partner Duck & Waffle, there'll also be the 'Peru at New Heights' dinner – a one-off collaboration between Claudio Cardoso and Andreas Bollandos of Sushisamba and Virgilio Martinez and Robert Ortiz of Lima. Oof. actionagainsthunger.org.uk

FEELING GOOD

Healthy food's far from a fad, and Jasmine and Melissa Hemsley have hit the nail on the head when it comes to creating food that's both super good for you and that you genuinely, *really* want to eat. Their second book, *Good + Simple*, launched last month, but even more exciting is the opening of their first café in Selfridges on 4 April. "It means we can engage with our customers and help them choose to eat well," the sisters told us. [Read more on foodism.co.uk](http://foodism.co.uk)



BRIGHTON ROCKS

When you're deep into the London food scene, it's easy to forget other towns and cities a) exist and b) have thriving scenes bursting with talent all of their own. That's certainly the case with Brighton – jump on a train, spend a weekend there, and you'll realise this historic, vibrant beachside town has been quietly making a case for one of the best food destinations outside of the capital in the country. And no event emphasises the point more than the inaugural Brighton Food Awards, held in February, which brought the best culinary talent together to celebrate the biggest influencers on the scene. Michael Bremner's 64 Degrees, recently awarded a Bib Gourmand in the 2016 *Michelin Guide*, topped the lot, while The Salt Room and Silo were also represented among the top five. brightonsbestrestaurants.com

METAL ONE

Change of season got you feeling old? This'll make you feel better: Dutch vodka brand Ketel One is about to celebrate its 325th birthday. Yep, the Nolet Distillery in Schiedam, Netherlands, has been producing Ketel One for absolutely ages, and to celebrate the landmark, there's a shiny new bottle made from bright copper – a nod to the stills used to make the vodka. Happy birthday, old fella... Buy at harveynichols.com; for more info: ketelone.com









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RED SQUIRREL

Thirsty? Pop into nightspot Red Squirrel, a cool bar and restaurant with a huge emphasis on craft beers from Scotland and beyond. It's dark, and you can expect beards aplenty, but a sneering hipsters' haven this is not: the cocktail list is bang-on (if you try just one, make it the Bloody Mary), there are some absolute gems among the beer selection (the Franciscan Wells Chieftan IPA was a favourite of ours) and the kitchen serves up quality burgers and smokehouse-style meat dishes.
21 Lothian Road, Old Town, EH1 2DJ;
redsquirreledinburgh.co.uk

EDINBURGH



INSIDER

Edinburgh is a food and drink lover's paradise. Here's how to make the most of it, from beers to burgers

Nira Caledonia

A breathtaking castle; a profoundly beautiful city centre; those cobbled streets. Stop it, Edinburgh, you're showing off. But beyond all the pretty stuff is a city whose food culture isn't always near the top of the list when it comes to reasons to visit. Nira Caledonia, a townhouse-style hotel not far from the heart of the city's Old Town, exemplifies why it should be: its rooms are the requisite level of chic, spacious and comfy, but its restaurant, Blackwood's Bar & Grill, is a cracker.

Given the Edinburgh's proximity to the Scottish coastline, it'd be remiss to stick to local fare and not dip a toe into the

seafood scene, and at Blackwood's that's exactly what the menu encourages. You can start off with cocktails before diving into some genuinely stunning seafood, like the smoked moules marinière, with freshly baked bread to mop up - an absolute showstopper - and great scallops with parma ham. There's also a beautiful half lobster with all-too-moreish mustard mash (we washed ours down with a Wente Hayes Best Foot Forward chardonnay), or grab a sumptuous mixed grill with a malbec.

There aren't too many restaurants in the city whose food could top it.

10 Gloucester Place, EH3 6EF;

niracaledonia.com



USQUABAE

If you're up for something a little more intimate, it'd be a crime not to check out Usquabae, a self-proclaimed "whisky bar and larder" on Hope Street: great food is accompanied by more than 400 bottles of whisky, ranging from approachably priced to pretty punchy (the guy next to us at the bar ordered a dram of pre-war Macallan for £200). The staff are friendly, not pushy, and eager to help you find a few whiskies that suit both your palate and your wallet. A must-visit destination for experts and novices alike.
2-4 Hope Street, EH2 4DB;
usquabae.co.uk

EDINBURGH

- ◆ Population: 495,360
- ◆ Area: 264 km²
- ◆ Area code: 0131



A beautiful Old Town, a big old castle, and fare ranging from fresh Scottish seafood and whisky to deep-fried Mars bars? Sign us up.

GALVIN BRASSERIE DE LUXE

Of course, being a big, royal city, there are a few knockout dining options for a special occasion. If you're that way inclined, the Galvin brothers' enormous brasserie at the Waldorf Astoria in the Old Town is a standout – it serves a lot of what you've come to expect from the Michelin-starred duo's restaurants, with the addition of boat-loads (and field-loads) of great Scottish produce. Perthshire lamb fillet? Check. Orkney scallops? Check. Oh, and there's also a prix fixe menu if you want to keep half an eye on the bill.

Waldorf Astoria Edinburgh – The Caledonian, Rutland Street, EH1 2AB; galvinbrasserie deluxe.com



GETTING THERE

British Airways currently flies from London City to Edinburgh up to 12 times a day, with a flight duration of 1hr 20 mins. Each-way hand baggage-only fares are priced between £52 and £63, dependent on one way or return travel. Flights are available to book on ba.com/londoncity

EDINBURGH GIN

It's not just London that excels at gin making – a few other towns and cities around the UK are setting up distilleries and creating unique spirits with a genuine sense of place thanks to the use of local botanicals. Edinburgh is one such place, and at the Edinburgh Gin distillery, in the city's West End, you can book a tour ranging from a quick in-and-out (45 minutes for £10) to a three-hour gin-making masterclass (£75). You can keep the bottle you create, too. edinburghgindistillery.co.uk



BURGER

If time is of the essence but you still need feeding, you could do a hell of a lot worse than the simply named Burger (no prizes for guessing what it sells). Pop into one of its three branches, take a seat and peruse the menu of juicy burgers slathered with oozing toppings and accompanying fries (which also come slathered with oozing toppings, if you want them to) and pig out till your heart's content. The off-the-wall option came in the form of a chicken katsu burger, although we stuck to one with blue cheese, bacon and ranch dressing.

Various; burgeruk.co.uk

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VITABIOTICS
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KITCHEN KUNG FU

Leading Chinese sauces brand Lee Kum Kee is harnessing the power of new film Kung Fu Panda 3 to teach you how to be a master of 'kitchen kung fu' at home. Here's how...

DID YOU KNOW that kung fu isn't just about high kicks and the legendary Wuxi finger hold? It's actually to do with anything that takes patience, energy and time to master. And that includes cooking.

Lesson one: be prepared

1. PLATE UP

Got lots of ingredients? As you prepare, pop them clockwise on a big plate in the order you'll need to use them for your recipe. That way, you'll know what to grab next.

2. IT PAYS TO MARINATE

A couple of tablespoons of Lee Kum Kee Oyster Sauce can go a long way. Smother your meat and leave it to soak up the rich, salty flavour before you roast or stir-fry.

3. HOW TO PEEL – PRONTO

Use a small spoon to peel ginger. It's safe, super-quick and won't waste any of the fiery goodness. When it comes to garlic, dunk the clove into some water at room temperature. It will puff up a little – making it a breeze to peel.

Lesson two: try stir-fry

1. GET YOUR WOK SMOKING HOT

That way, you'll cook ingredients in a flash – keeping all that juiciness inside.

2. THE WORLD IS YOUR OYSTER (SAUCE)

Just a tablespoon or two of Lee Kum Kee Oyster Sauce with some stir-fry-friendly greens will bring vegetables to life for even the pickiest little eaters.

3. SWAP WASHING UP LIQUID FOR BOILING WATER

All you need to clean your wok is a splash of steaming water. Pour it in, bring it slowly to the boil and your wok will be ready for its next kitchen adventure.

Lesson three: Get steamy

1. THE TOOLS OF THE TRADE

If you don't have a bamboo steam basket, don't worry. Simply place your ingredients on a plate, then rest that on a metal rack above a bubbling pot, close the lid and let the steam do its magic.

2. FULL STEAM AHEAD

Plenty of water equals loads of steam. So make sure you've got enough in your pot before getting started. That way, you'll cook your food lightening-quick.

3. IT'S ALL IN THE TIMING

Once your water is boiling and there's a

good cloud of steam, 400g of ingredients will cook in around 10-12 minutes.

Lesson four: braise up

1. GO LOW

When braising, the golden rule is 'low and slow'. A low temperature will break down toughness and fat, leaving you with meltingly tender morsels of meat. You'll also end up with a flavour-filled dish – and an amazingly rich sauce.

2. THE LONGER, THE BETTER

The trick to tenderising is to cook your meat for at least 30 minutes. As it bubbles away, you've got the perfect excuse for practising kung fu moves.

Kung fu is more than just a martial art: it's an outlook and a way of life, where patience and dedication can make someone a master, whether in martial arts or in the kitchen. ●

Lee Kum Kee sauces can be found in the World Food sections in Tesco, Waitrose or most big retail supermarkets. Upload your receipt to KungFuLKK.com to claim your exclusive Kung Fu Panda 3 noodle bowls.



4 Los Dulces



12 Las Salsas Gourmet



7 Los Chiles



6 Los Jarritos



14 El Mezcal



9 El Chipotle



18 El Molcajete



10 Las Tortillas



13 Los Nopales



17 Las Salsas Habaneras



1 El Tajin



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2 La Tortilladora



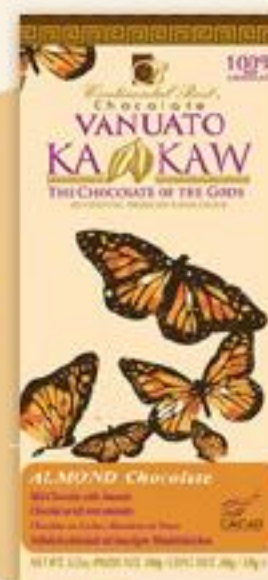
19 La Cerveza



8 El Achiote



15 El Chocolate



20 Las Especies



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THAT'S THE SPIRIT

In Bournemouth's Conker Spirit, Dorset has its first gin distiller. And it does things its own way, producing small batches of a gin with a big flavour and a unique story

IF YOU CREATE something brilliant, sometimes you just don't need to shout about it. Case in point: Conker Spirit, Dorset's first and only gin distillery, a small, homely operation tucked away in the sandy backstreets of Bournemouth, quietly creating some of the best gin in the

YOU GET A
SENSE OF PLACE
THAT CAN ONLY
COME FROM
BOTANICALS
SOURCED FROM
THE AREA

South West, and presenting a genuine challenge to the London Dry style.

Dorset Dry is just that: it's a dry gin, based around juniper, but with characteristic New Forest gorse, marsh samphire and elderberries to ensure that when you taste Conker's gin, you're getting a sense of place that can only come from using ingredients and botanicals sourced from the area. "Wild gorse is incredible," says founder Supert Holloway. "On the plant, you are hit by a wall of coconut and fresh nectarines. Once dried and distilled through our copper pot still, it brings sweet honey-like notes of camomile and nectar."

And don't be fooled into thinking Conker is just a 'gin and tonic' gin; with light, fresh and aromatic notes coming from the Dorset botanicals, not only does it taste great in a G&T, but it also makes a great martini – or, if you want to get even more puritanical about it, its

complexity and lightness means it also tastes fantastic sipped over ice.

Given its backstory, it's no surprise that the spirit is such a labour of love. Holloway was a chartered surveyor before he left his job to pursue his passion for gin. It means Conker is all about making the spirit his way, with the aim of giving Dorset a gin it can be proud of. Distilling in small amounts – 60 bottles per batch, to be exact – means that dedication and attention is carried through to every bottle. And with a flavour that good, as well it should be. ● conkerspirit.co.uk

CONKER
SPIRIT

Restaurants with eco-conscious credentials, bars with more gin than you can shake a tonic at, and cafés that use only the best in-house roasted beans... Whatever you're craving this month, consult our recommendations first

THE SELECTOR

1 Grain Store

Granary Square, 1-3 Stable Street, N1C 4AB

With chef Bruno Loubet and drinks maestro Tony Conigliaro at the helm, there was never any question that King's Cross's Grain Store would be anything other than absolutely superb. Food is inspired by Loubet's extensive travels and his veg patch, and the restaurant carefully manages its waste and energy consumption, works with sustainable suppliers, and raises environmental awareness among its diners and staff.

020 7324 4466; grainstore.com

THE SELECTOR

LEAN & GREEN

Want to feel less guilty about gorging on food? Here are our favourite eco-conscious eats

BEST OF THE REST

2 The Three Stags

67-69 Kennington Road, SE1 7PZ

Winning the RSA's Three Star Sustainability Champion is a tall order – you have to source local, seasonal food; focus on animal welfare; and engage with the environment through recycling, and waste and energy management – so winning it for three years in a row is no small feat. The Three Stags does a cracking, reasonably priced roast, too, which is always an added bonus, as is an extremely well-stocked wine cellar.

020 7928 5974; thethreestags.london

3 Clerkenwell Kitchen

27-31 Clerkenwell Close, EC1R 0AT

Committed to traditional farming methods and fair trade, the Clerkenwell Kitchen works exclusively with local producers that share its values. The café's daily-changing menu of six choices revolves around sandwiches, tarts and soups. Sign us up.

020 7101 9959; theclerkenwellkitchen.co.uk

4 Poco

129A Pritchards Road, E2 9AP

Having started out in Bristol, Tom Hunt brought his eco-friendly tapas menu to London last September. The restaurant even keeps a tight lid on its surplus with a daily 'weigh the waste' policy.

020 7739 3042;

pocotapasbar.com

5 Riverford at The Duke of Cambridge

30 St Peter's Street, N1 8JT

This pub residency is the result of a marriage, and then business partnership, between two of our favourite sustainable businesses.

020 7359 3066;

dukeorganic.co.uk

1



2



3



4



5



BEST OF THE REST

2 Old Spike Roastery

54 Peckham Rye, SE15 4JR

With Peckham's ascent into the food spotlight comes, inevitably, great coffee houses, and Old Spike is leading the charge. It sources beans from Central and South America and Africa, and you're encouraged to drop by and watch the roaster, Torberg, in action. Old Spike runs a handy subscription service on the side, too. oldspikeroastery.com

3 Ozone Café

11 Leonard Street, EC2A 4AQ

There are loads of great cafés around this part of town. Ozone, however, roasts beans in-house - which it'll then put through everything from a Marzocco machine to a siphon brewer before it lands in your cup. 020 7490 1039; ozonecoffee.co.uk

4 AllPress Roastery Café

55 Dalston Lane, E8 2NG

If there's one thing our Antipodean mates do well, it's coffee. AllPress made its name in New Zealand before venturing to Australia and then the UK. You'll find its huge roastery in an old joiners' building in Dalston, and it's also got an espresso bar in Shoreditch. 020 7749 1780; uk.allpresspresso.com

5 The Roastery

789 Wandsworth Road, SW8 3JQ

This café has all the hallmarks: fantastic coffee served by chilled-out staff, great pastries and decent sandwiches. Beans are sourced by Bullet Coffee before they're put through the huge brass roaster. 020 7350 1961; bullet-coffee.com

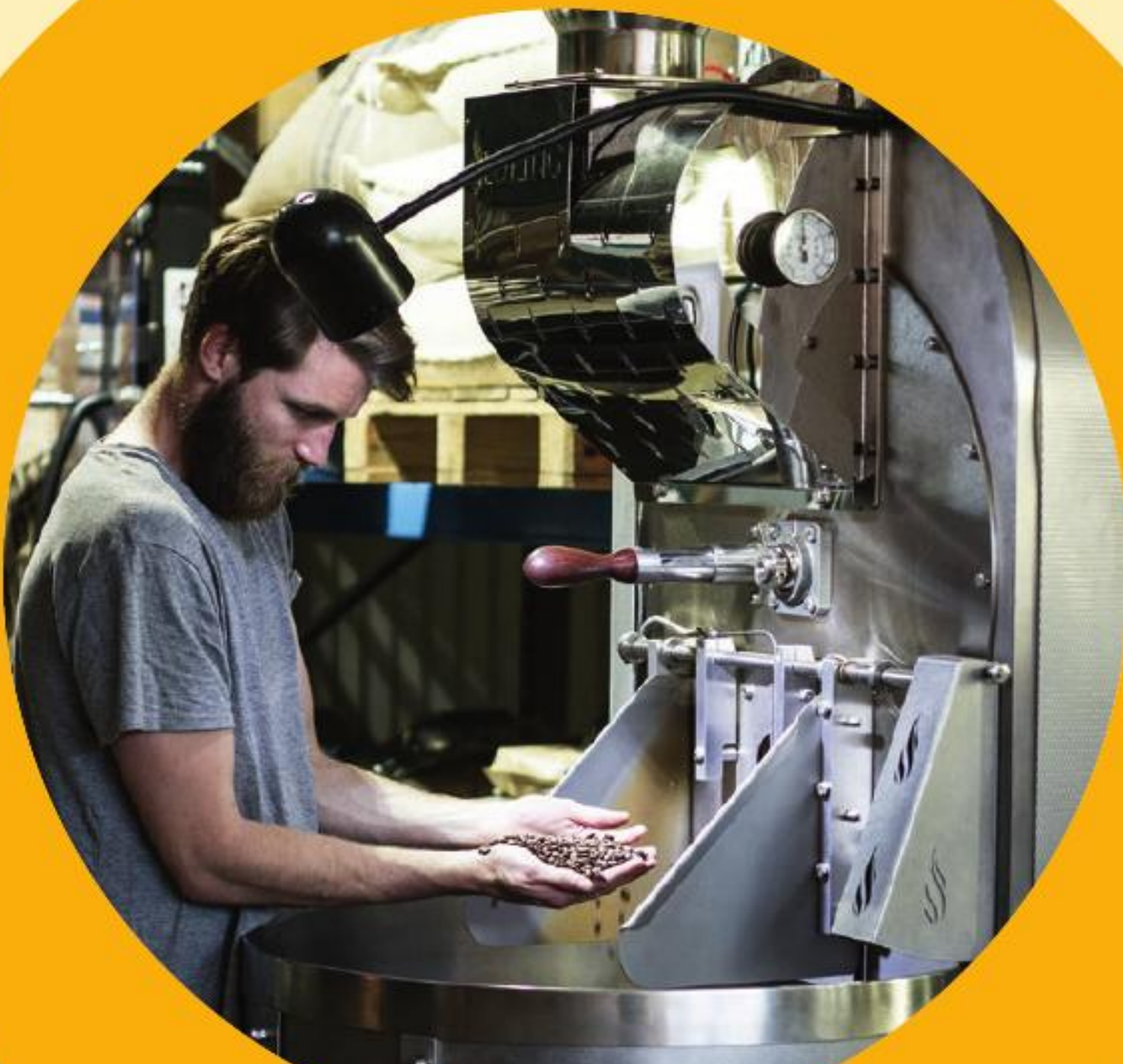
THE SELECTOR

ROAST WITH THE MOST

Roasting coffee beans in-house = better-flavoured coffee. Fact. Here's our pick of the best roastery cafés



1



1 Climpson & Son

67 Broadway Market, E8 4PH

If, like us, you're something of a coffee nerd, you'll already know about east London's premier roastery and café. It's got a roving coffee stall you'll find at a few food markets and, obviously, a big old roastery in a railway arch - where it roasts single-origin beans, but also holds regular parties and food pop-ups. Climpson's flagship, though, is the excellent café on Hackney's Broadway Market. You'll find it full-to-bursting every Saturday. climpsonandsons.com



1

THE SELECTOR

GRAZY FOR YOU

Sometimes you want dinner; sometimes you just want lots of snacks. These restaurants are for the latter

1 Jidori

89 Kingsland High Street, E8 2BP

You might be familiar with the name Brett Redman already - he's the man who brought us The Richmond in Hackney - in which case you'll definitely want to try his latest venture, Jidori, which opened late last year. It's a bit of a departure from his usual style, though: it's a Japanese *yakitori* restaurant, focusing on Tokyo-style street food, with a century-old Kama-Asa Shoten grill in the open kitchen. Veg and greens are sourced direct from Nama Yasai in East Sussex, which means they'll be squeaky-fresh, and meat is painstakingly sourced from Redman's handpicked suppliers. 0207 686 5634; jidori.co.uk



BEST OF THE REST

2 **Flesh & Buns**

41 Earham Street, WC2H 9LX

Don't know what an *izakaya* is? Think of it as the Japanese equivalent of the pub you go to for a few bevies after work - except with more food. Flesh & Buns, a sister restaurant to the hugely popular Bone Daddies, specialises in DIY steamed buns: it does a variety of cooked meats and fish, each with a different marinade and a different pickled veg.

020 7632 9500; bonedaddies.com/flesh-and-buns

3 **Donostia Social Club**

POP Brixton, 49 Brixton Station Road, SW9 8PQ

Donostia is the Basque name for its most

important city, San Sebastián, which is a bit of a giveaway in terms of what you'll get if you go here. Instead of taking inspiration from the city's Michelin-starred fare, it serves up *pinxtos* typical of the region's easygoing bars, from a mobile bar, alongside a selection of wines, sherries, cavas, ciders and beers.

donostiasocialclub.co.uk

4 **Tozi**

8 Gillingham Street, SW1V 1HJ

Victoria is quietly turning itself into a genuine food destination, but Venetian *bacaro* Tozi was there before it was cool. You can go all-out on the sharing plates for dinner if you like,

but if you just want a glass of red and a few snacks to keep you going, it's among the best in the area. Grab the zucchini fries or a plate of charcuterie depending on your mood - and a *pizzette* or two is essential.

020 7769 9771; tozirestaurant.co.uk

5 **The Drunken Monkey**

221-222 Shoreditch High Street, E1 6PJ

Dive into Shoreditch's Drunken Monkey and you'll find more than just a spacious pub - it does noodles and curries, but we suggest taking your pick of dim sum from the extensive menu and grazing the night away.

020 7392 9606; thedrunkenmonkey.london



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BEST OF THE REST

2 Good Egg

93 Stoke Newington Church Street, N16 0AS

Good Egg has ruffled a few feathers (sorry) with its New York- and Middle Eastern-inspired menus, and if you haven't seen its *shakshuka* with your own eyes (no, Instagram doesn't count) join the queue as soon as possible. As in half an hour ago - it's usually pretty long. But that's half the fun, right? 020 7682 2120; thegoodeggco.com

3 Senzala

Brixton Village Market, SW9 8PS

This creperie was one of the first to bring

SW9 to the forefront of south London's food movement. The good news for egg lovers is you can add one to the top of any of its crepes - try it on the 'Picante', which is stuffed with spicy beef, jalapeños and cheese.

020 7274 2211; senzalacreperie.co.uk

4 The Bad Egg

City Point, EC2Y 9AW

Despite the name, Neil Rankin's latest venture isn't just about eggs: it draws inspiration from the US to Korea, resulting in a menu that sits somewhere between a fully loaded brunch buffet and a barbecue of dreams:

think everything from huevos rancheros and pancakes to kimchi hot dogs.

020 3006 6222; badegg.london

5 Duck & Waffle

Heron Tower, EC2N 4AY

When Duck & Waffle revealed its signature dish - confit duck leg and waffle with a duck egg and mustard maple syrup - not everyone was convinced. Then they tried it, and all of London was sold. It does lots of other lovely egg dishes too, like the duck egg *en cocotte*, with wild mushrooms, gruyère and truffles.

020 3640 7310; duckandwaffle.com

THE SELECTOR

EGG ON YOUR PLATE

Cheap and cheerful, or not so cheap (but still cheerful): London's best places for eggs

1



1 Eggbreak

30 Uxbridge Street, W8 7TA

A couple more restaurant openings making full use of the egg and you've got yourself a movement. Soho House's Eggbreak - a successful Notting Hill pop-up that's newly reopened with a head chef and a proper focus on dinner as well as its killer brunch - doesn't buck this trend. The menu is short and sweet, and as well as eggs in various guises (we'll take the ones with the hot honey butter and bacon thanks, or perhaps the ones with corn cakes and sriracha hollandaise) there are burgers and bigger plates to choose from, too. 020 3535 8300; eggbreak.com





FOR THOSE WHO SEEK FINER THINGS IN LIFE

Located on the top floor of this cutting edge design building, the Urban Coterie restaurant and bar offer an alternative perspective of London's landscape. Take in the views whilst experiencing Chef patron Anthony Demetre and Head Chef Killian Lynch's ingredient-led seasonal cooking matched with carefully sommelier-selected wines and impeccable service.


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18:00 – 22:30 on Friday & Saturday*



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BEST OF THE REST

2 The Trading House

89-91 Gresham Street, EC2V 7NQ

Housed in the old Bank of New Zealand, The Trading House recently broke the world record for the largest gin tasting ever held. The grand venue is a homage to British eccentricity, full of taxidermy curios and chandeliers – the perfect setting for a proper gin-drinking odyssey.

020 7600 5050; thetradinghouse.uk.com

3 Portobello Star

171 Portobello Road, W11 2DY

This pub in Notting Hill is a gin powerhouse. Yes, it's an excellent boozier, but it also blends its own gin – aptly named Portobello Road – as well as running The Ginstitute – a tiny museum paying homage to London's beloved spirit, which also runs masterclasses.

020 3588 7800; portobellostarbar.co.uk

4 Graphic

4 Golden Square, W1F 9HT

Now for the cool one: Graphic's arty interior brings gin bang up to date, ignoring the verve for all things antique and displaying an impressive collection of urban art. Gin doesn't take a back seat – the team have scoured the four corners of the earth to piece together one of the largest gin lists in the UK.

020 7287 9241; graphicbar.com

5 214 Bermondsey

214 Bermondsey Street, SE1 3TJ

There are 80 gins on offer at 214 Bermondsey. Eighty. We recommend against sampling them all at once, and suggest you enlist the help of the staff to guide you when it comes to making a choice. It also makes its own tonic water, btw. It's called, er, BTW.

020 7403 6875; 214-bermondsey.co.uk



THE SELECTOR

TAKE IT ON THE GIN

Drinking gin is one of London's greatest traditions. Right?

1

1 Worship Street Whistling Shop

63 Worship Street, EC2A 2DU

If you like your gin with a dose of Victorian-style glamour, head to Worship Street Whistling Shop's underground bar near Liverpool Street. The cocktails are anything but antique, though – the guys at the helm pride themselves on using all sorts of weird and wonderful techniques to infuse their delicious drinks with a plethora of unconventional ingredients. But of course, if gin's your thing, you can try the range of almost 70. Make ours a double.

020 7247 0015; whistlingshop.com





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You can eat it on pizzas, in salads and stews; roasted, steamed or grilled; you can dip the leaves in sauce or eat its juicy heart. But Whatever you do with it, the artichoke is king. Fact

QUEEN OF HEARTS: California produces 100% of America's artichoke crop, with the town of Castroville declaring itself the 'Artichoke capital of the world'. Marilyn Monroe was even crowned Castroville's first 'Artichoke Queen' in 1948.

IN A PRICKLE: An artichoke is a perennial Mediterranean thistle, and the bit you eat is actually the bud before the flower has bloomed.

ANCIENT HISTORY: The artichoke is one of the world's oldest cultivated foods. The Greeks and Romans considered artichokes to be a potent aphrodisiac – a belief that was widely held until the 16th century, when many countries still banned women from eating them.

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